



Changemakers Australia

NEWS

Autumn 2009 Edition

Report from our 2008 AGM and Strategic Planning Day

Changemakers held its 2008 AGM on the 26th November 2008. We were fortunate enough to secure Heather Gray, a then-partner at law firm Holding Redlich, and now at DLA Phillips Fox, was our guest speaker.

Heather spoke about the Victorian Women Lawyers Association successful test case against the Australian Taxation Office regarding its charitable status. The Association successfully argued that their objective of working for law reform as part of their overall charitable purpose did not preclude them from being classified a tax exempt charity. The presentation was well received and sparked a great deal of interesting dialogue.

A transcript of the presentation can be viewed at our website www.changemakers.org.au

In December last year the Management Committee held a Strategic Planning Day to chart the direction for the organisation in 2009. The Charity Law Reform project and workshops with a focus on Social Change will be key activities as is the launch of the Navigating Social Change tool. Improved communications with our present and future supporters and partners will be achieved through regular newsletters and a much improved website.

Keeping social change philanthropy on the agenda in a climate of growing immediate need is a priority that CmA embraces.



Nina Collins

Welcome to our Autumn Newsletter.

Please let me know if you would prefer to receive our newsletter via email only:

info@changemakers.org.au



CmA is very pleased to welcome **Robert Ellum** to the Management Committee.

Robert Ellum has been involved in the financial services industry for over 44 years and brings a wealth of experiences to the Committee.

He held various roles in the banking industry developing considerable experience and expertise in managing people, money, systems and compliance. He worked for National Westminster Bank in the UK, and ANZ and HongKong Bank in Australia.

For the last 10 years he has owned a small business in suburban Melbourne offering financial planning services under the RetireInvest and IRIS Financial Group Ltd brands.

He offers this experience to CmA in managing our financial affairs and compliance in support of our the advocacy efforts.

Launch of the Victorian Women's Link Project

In celebration of Harmony Day 2009, the Victorian Immigrant and Refugee Women's Coalition invites you to the launch of the **Victorian Women's Link** project.

"A project funded under the Diverse Australia Program to link migrant and refugee women's groups and women's service clubs to promote community harmony."

March 20 Friday, 1.30pm - 3.30pm at the Multicultural Hub, 506 Elizabeth Street, Melbourne CBD.

For catering purposes please RSVP to the VIRWC office on 9654 1243 by March 18.



Spotlight on The Greenlining Institute's Democratizing Philanthropy Program

The Greenlining Institute is a multi-ethnic advocacy, research, leadership development, and public policy organization whose ultimate goal is to increase the role that low-income and minority Californians play in the civic arena in order to create equitable policies and improve quality of life for all communities.

Their mission is to empower communities of color and other disadvantaged groups through multi-ethnic economic and leadership development, civil rights and anti-redlining activities. The Encyclopedia of Chicago defines 'redlining' as 'the practice of arbitrarily denying or limiting financial services to specific neighborhoods, generally because its residents are people of color or are poor'.

The Greenlining Institute, through their Democratizing Philanthropy program, will create win-win partnerships with philanthropic institutions throughout the country. Greenlining firmly believes that private-public partnerships between community organizations and foundations can lead to synergistic opportunities that create long lasting change.

The Greenlining Institute envisions a fair, just and democratic society in which communities of color and other underserved groups are adequately represented in all areas of public policy. Their vision is for a robust minority-led nonprofit sector that has the capacity and resources to engage in public-policy and is empowered to provide an effective voice for all communities.

The Applied Research Center, a think tank on racial justice conducted a study in 2004 entitled Short Changed: Foundation Giving and Communities of Color. A major finding in the study was that "grants to communities of color fell from a peak of nearly ten percent of all grants in 1998 to seven percent in 2001."

Recognizing that foundations traditionally prefer to fund established national and local institutions, Greenlining conducted research in 2005 to determine foundation investments to minority-led non-profit organizations. They were shocked when they found that a mere 3 percent of foundation dollars went to minority-led non-profits in 2002. They followed this with a report the next year that had similar findings - only 3.6 percent was being invested in minority-led non-profits.

Overall, Greenlining will work to positively engage foundations on issues related to diversity, effective grant-giving to communities of color, responsible foundation asset management, and other pertinent issues. Philanthropy, if utilized effectively, could lead us to this strong democracy.

Further information available at:

<http://greenlining.org>

Nonprofit Advocacy Network Announcement: The Foundation of Change

In the January 26, 2009 edition of The Nation magazine, Alliance for Justice President Nan Aron challenges advocacy groups and foundations to seize the moment generated by the historic election of Barack Obama.

There is such excitement in this country—from old, young, immigrant and American-born individuals of all backgrounds and socio-economic classes. The election has reenergized advocates as we wait for the incoming government to undo the damage created by eight years of marginalizing supporters of social justice causes.

However, Obama and his administration will not and cannot bring about the change we need on their own. They need our help to accomplish these goals. Nonprofits, foundations and individual donors must work together to bring about the meaningful change we seek. In doing so, funders should keep a few key principles in mind:

- *Think big*
- *Coordinate*
- *Invest now*
- *Involve advocates with hands-on experience*
- *Make unrestricted, general support grants*

Advocacy is needed now more than ever. As Aron says, "if we don't fight for systemic change and prevent further government cutbacks in vital services, the [economic] crisis will only get worse for those living at the margins. Groups that empower working people and the poor will be critical to building lasting strength that won't vanish at the first sign of defeat."

Now is the time to bring about the change we can all believe in...and the change that will help usher in a new day for every American.

To read Nan Aron's full article

The Foundation of Change, visit

www.thenation.com/doc/20090126/aron

Congratulations SecondBite

SecondBite is committed to making a positive difference to people by identifying good quality nutritious food that would otherwise go to waste and redistributing it to over 70 food relief agencies providing thousands of meals for people in need. Formally established in 2005, SecondBite was the idea of Ian and Simone Carson who decided they could no longer watch good food go to waste whilst people went hungry.

In April 2008, SecondBite began talks with the Tasmanian Government regarding the introduction of a Good Samaritan Act to allow food businesses to donate quality produce to not-for-profit community groups free from common law liability. Tasmania was one of only two states in Australia not to have an Act of this type.

In June, the Premier David Bartlett tabled the legislation and the Civil Liability Amendment Bill 2008 was passed. Mr Bartlett also announced a grant to allow SecondBite to start distributing food around the state.



SecondBite has undertaken research as to the needs of 300+ agencies across Tasmania. By sending questionnaires, we have been able to ascertain the level of need state wide.

The first food run began in November last year with Moorilla Estate pledging a weekly supply of a delicious dish to Bethlehem House. Since then other food donors have come on board, the most recent being 'Pete's Patch' at the Royal Botanical Gardens. This wonderfully fresh produce will be distributed to a variety of local not-for-profit organizations offering food relief to people in need.

Once adequate resources are available SecondBite aims to begin full scale operations to provide its service free of charge to not-for-profit organizations across Tasmania.

Further information available at:
www.secondbite.org



ruMAD?

The ruMAD? (Are You Making A Difference?), Program is a dynamic mix of education, action, advocacy and events. Think of ruMAD? As a toolkit that enables young people to lead social change and become active citizens. It is focused on values and led by students but benefits the whole community.

Case Study

In 2008, ruMAD? teamed up with 'The Big Issue' to deliver a schools program associated with the Homeless World Cup. The aim was to raise awareness of the issue of homelessness and the power of sport to turn people's lives around. A MAD Day conference was held at Brighton Secondary College that focused on the question: "Can a ball change the world?"

The focus was specifically on soccer (Homeless World Cup) but also had representatives from the AFL [Australian Football League] and the ARL [Australian Rugby League] run workshops on the day to look at how sport has created opportunities for them to better their lives, gain employment and set goals in life.

Allan Murray (St Kilda Football Club) spoke about the Unity Foundation, which he co-founded. The Unity Foundation supports young Indigenous Australians in accessing housing and employment and the development of leadership skills through sport.

Dan Adams spoke about his experiences in South Africa with the Oaktree Foundation as the cluster 'adopted' the team of South Africa for the Homeless World Cup.

Workshops on the day centered on homelessness, sport, judgments and stereotypes, and how to take action.

Navigating Social Change Update

The Navigating Social Change project enters an exciting new phase. With much of the work behind us, we are now focusing on making a fresh and accessible online resource for the philanthropic and community sectors alike.

This resource provides guidance for groups through the development of their planning, activity and evaluation phases, and also refers them to other tools for more refined direction. CmA is looking forward to the next round of community trials before the public launch of the tool later in 2009.

Test case to examine charity status

Efforts by the Australian Tax Office to strip a small organisation of its charitable status will reach the Federal Court this week in a test case with wide implications for the nation's charities.

The organisation, Aid/Watch, was stripped of its charitable status by the ATO in October 2006 on the grounds it was a lobbying and advocacy organisation.

The ATO contended Aid/Watch was not a charity because its purpose was to monitor Australia's international aid program rather than to deliver aid, and that it also tried to influence government aid programs.

The organisation, which had charitable status for about 12 years, claimed it was being gagged for criticism of the former federal government and said the decision was an attack on free speech.

The decision was overturned in the Administrative Appeals Tribunal but the ATO's appeal to the Federal Court will begin tomorrow.

The matter is the latest chapter in a long-running saga to define the meaning of "charity". James Goodman, a member of the Aid/Watch management committee, said: "Charities address the causes as well as the symptoms of social problems. To do so they must be able to speak up without fear of penalty."

An ATO ruling in 2005 allows charities to undertake political activities that are in aid of charitable purposes. But how much political lobbying is appropriate and exactly what a charitable purpose is remains a grey area.

Adele Horin, *The Age* February 11, 2009

Henry Taxation Review

Changemakers Australia believes that charity and taxation laws must be changed to ensure that organisations engaging in advocacy to further charitable purposes - including seeking to change laws or government policies –are not for that reason excluded from taxation benefits of FBT exemptions and DGR status.

The review of Australia's future taxation system, chaired by Ken Henry, provides an opportunity to voice concerns about how the current law and practice inhibits advocacy for social change.

A Consultation Paper released by the Henry Review in December 2008 includes a chapter on Not For Profit organisations.

The consultation questions in that chapter do not directly address CmA's concerns. However, we believe that it is vital that the Review does consider the failings of the current laws to support what should be legitimate charitable activities designed to address the underlying causes of social ills, such as poverty, inequality, abuse of human rights and environmental degradation.

CmA will be making a submission before the due date of 1 May 2009 and hopes that others who share our concerns will also grasp this important opportunity to be heard.

The Consultation Paper can be found at http://taxreview.treasury.gov.au/Content/downloads/consultation_paper/Consultation_Paper.pdf

Join Us

If you are passionate about achieving a more just and equitable society, there are several ways you can join us in determining how social change philanthropy can make a difference:

Become an affiliate member

There is currently no cost to become an affiliate. You will receive our quarterly bulletin, advance details of events and other planned activities, and you can nominate to participate on relevant sub-committees or working groups. Most importantly, you will be showing your support for the principles CmA stands for.

To become an affiliate please visit our website to download the application forms.

Co-fund a project

There are educational/research projects CmA is involved in at present, and more planned for the future. These will provide ideas and tools to assist in exploring social change philanthropy in action. If you would like more information about financially supporting a project connected to CmA, you can contact any member of the Management Committee.