

Senate's wholesale charity reform proposal welcome: PilchConnect

PilchConnect – Australia's first dedicated community legal service providing free assistance to not-for-profit organisations – today welcomed the Senate's recommendations for wholesale regulatory reform of the not-for-profit sector.

The Senate Standing Committee on Economics' inquiry into disclosure regimes for charities and not-for-profit organisations tabled its report to Parliament today. Sue Woodward, PilchConnect Manager, says the report adopts the vast majority of recommendations made by PilchConnect and is a positive and necessary step towards reform of the sector. However, she warned that recommendations without action will further fatigue a sector whose health is already at risk because of a complex and inconsistent regulatory scaffold.

"PilchConnect welcomes the release of the report. We commend the Committee for grasping the sectors' concerns and responding to the call for urgent regulatory change," said Ms Woodward.

"The Committee has adopted PilchConnect's key recommendations for reform, including:

- a single, independent, national regulator for the not-for-profit sector
- nationally consistent laws on legal structure and fundraising
- a Minister for the Third Sector with responsibility for the unique issues that this important sector faces, and
- an expert taskforce to look at implementation of the recommendations."

"This Inquiry is the latest in a long line of inquiries and reports, including the comprehensive *Charities Definition Inquiry* in 2001, none of which have been acted upon by Government. More words without actions are useless to the sector."

"The sector has spent vast resources providing submissions to government to explain the complex regulatory issues they face in their day-to-day operations. This diverts limited resources away from their core operations in assisting marginalised and disadvantaged Australians.

"With today's report as the road map of what is needed, we urge the Rudd and State governments to work together to implement the key changes. Urgent reform is vital for a sector that has immense economic and social significance, but is struggling under regulatory red-tape.

"In particular, we urge the Rudd government to appoint the expert implementation taskforce. These recommendations need to be implemented urgently to give the not-for-sector the regulatory underpinning and support it needs to continue to provide much needed services to the community during these economically difficult times."

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For PilchConnect submission to Senate Inquiry and more about PilchConnect at: www.pilchconnect.org.au