

Charities are rising to the challenges – let us be part of the solution.

With the ongoing pandemic, Australia is not in a great place. Many people are locked down, some are suffering hardship and mental health problems, and there is increased anxiety about our future. Times are tough, and this makes the work of charities even more important to many Australians.

Charities know this is a crisis. We are seeing people we have never seen before seeking emergency relief, food, shelter. We are seeing frustration, anger, concern, particularly in our more exposed communities where many are not buffeted by comfortable houses and work or study from home options. People who have lost jobs, closed businesses, been unable to provide for their families or been isolated, are in danger of being left behind.

While the measurements of public trust show it falling in government, trust remains high in community groups. It is this trust that offers both hope and a better way forward. We know we can change things for the better.

It is charities that can take vaccinations into their communities if empowered to do so – like Life Without Barriers who were given the opportunity to set up very successful vaccination hubs for people living with disabilities and their families.

It is charities like Settlement Services International working with their local communities that not only break down fear and boost vaccination rates, but also connect people to the support they need.

It is charities that can deliver vital emergency relief – like OzHarvest working with many local councils to and charities to ensure there are enough food hampers available to every family that needs one.

It is the work of the Smith Family and others helping bridge the digital divide, ensuring students have a workable internet connection, a device available, and on-line tutors for home schooling.

Charities can also provide invaluable data to inform practical solutions, like the Infoxchange 'Ask Izzy' service which has clearly identified an 800% increase in the need for emergency relief support in locked down communities.

The list of charities already making a difference is endless, from mental health to domestic violence services, the local church or an arts and recreation group virtually connecting people, or even the countless volunteers helping out in so many ways at borders and vaccination hubs.

We ask governments around Australia to engage with us, enable us to do our work, serve our communities. We should not be ignored, dismissed, or seen as an afterthought. Include us in the planning and delivery of what is needed. We are already part of the solution, part of building hope back into our communities. We stand ready right now to work with philanthropists, governments, businesses and local groups to increase the vital services needed for Australians. Collectively, we can all make Australia a better place.



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