



Office for the Community Sector

Department of Planning
and Community Development



Wish you had 20/30 vision?

The 2009 Not For Profit Futures Summit

The 2009 Not for Profit Futures Summit Report

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a. Introduction

It is widely accepted that the Victoria of the future will be very different to that of today.

There will be significant growth in population over the next decades, and overall the population will be much older, with people living longer. This will bring significant new and different demands to community organisations that provide services and support throughout the State. The changing climate and an unpredictable global economic environment will also impact on community need and thus the role of community organisations.

The Victorian Government is aware that this will require the sector to change. The Government is confident that the not-for-profit (NFP) community sector can adapt and will continue to develop new ways that will ensure Victorians are well supported.

The Government recognised that there were actions it could take to work closely with the sector to support ongoing sustainability of the sector. The *Victorian Government's Action Plan: Strengthening Community Organisations* provides a framework for the Office for the Community Sector (OCS) to ensure progress is made. The Not For Profit Futures Summit held on 19th September 2009, in the Victorian Arts Centre, provided an opportunity for the OCS to begin a process of thinking to the future; what will change and what might be needed. The following is a summary of the ideas and discussion arising in the summit.

b. Overview

The Summit was opened by the Minister for Community Development, Mr Peter Batchelor MP. Minister Batchelor welcomed the 200 participants. He highlighted the importance of the NFP sector, which was demonstrated so powerfully during the Victorian bushfires. He also spoke about the resilience and adaptability of the sector over history, which was tested by the recent Global Financial Crisis. The Minister highlighted some of the challenges which Victoria will face in the coming years, such as population growth, rapidly evolving technology, and climate change.

This event brought together members of Victoria's not-for-profit sector, local government and the Victorian State Government to begin to plan for the future. The participants represented the diverse roles and interests of the NFP sector:

- Accommodation/housing
- Aged Care
- Arts
- Chronic Illness
- Children's services
- Community Education
- Culturally and Linguistically Diverse groups
- Disability
- Drug and alcohol
- Employment
- Health
- Information services
- IT
- Legal
- Mental health

- Neighbourhood Houses
- Philanthropy
- Social enterprise
- Sport and recreation
- Unions
- Welfare
- Women
- Volunteering
- Youth/students

The focus of the day was on identifying trends and changes in Victoria which will challenge the NFP sector in the future.

The morning session was dedicated to highlighting the population projections and other demographic changes that can be expected to bring challenges to all involved with ensuring Victoria continues to be a good place to live, work and be part of community life.

Jeremy Reynolds, Demographer from the Department of Planning and Community Development, presented information about the future demographic changes across the state, and what these changes might mean for the NFP sector; many more older people, proportionately fewer taxpayers, larger populations in the cities of Melbourne, Geelong and Bendigo and declining small rural towns. Jeremy saw a future with potentially increasing demand for support and more volunteers to become engaged in providing supports.

Jason Clarke, Mindworker from Minds at Work, challenged participants to be creative and strategic in their thinking about how to respond to the emerging environment. Jason highlighted the importance of striving for a vision, rather than being caught up in questions of practicality – ‘what would we like to do?’ rather than allowing innovation to be driven by ‘what can we do?’.

The morning workshop followed these speakers. Participants – 8 per table – worked with colleagues from different sectors to identify ‘What challenges lie ahead for the not-for-profit sector?’ A panel discussion followed the workshop, providing the opportunity for the workshop groups to share their findings with the larger group and hear responses from Jeremy Reynolds and Jason Clarke.

After lunch, the focus shifted towards discussing possible solutions to these challenges. The whole group was presented with vignettes that proposed what the new needs might be and what the sector might look like in 30 years’ time. The participants were then asked to explore solutions for one of six key challenges that had been identified during the morning session.

c. **Workshop 1 – *What challenges lie ahead for the not-for-profit sector?***

During the first workshop, participants were asked to work in their table groups to think about the possible challenges the changing demographic make up of Victoria might mean for the sector.

Tables were then asked to focus on the challenges identified, and enter them into the iMEET! live database. The challenges identified by participants fell broadly under the following categories:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Accountability & regulation | 8. Organisational models |
| 2. Funding | 9. Partnerships & collaboration |
| 3. Resources | 10. Planning for changing needs |
| 4. Governance | 11. Technology |
| 5. Leadership & innovation | 12. Workforce issues |
| 6. Service delivery | a. Paid employees |
| 7. Environment & geography | b. Volunteers |

There was much overlap and commonality between groups as participants identified a complex range of current and future issues and the challenges that these issues might bring to community organisations. The ways the participants recorded their views about the challenges is summarised below under these categories.

1. Accountability & regulation

- The complex regulatory environment needs to be reviewed to make accountability as easy as possible.
- Accountability and regulatory burden is high. For example, the burden of multiple reporting requirements for multiple funding agreements from different government departments (for relatively small amounts of money).
- The administrative cost of compliance is high, and is even greater when there are multiple changes across different government departments and State and Federal Departments.
- Are there alternative ways to report and be accountable, such as social accounting?
- For organisations, there is a balance between risk management and accountability on one hand and engagement and involvement on the other. For example, during the Victorian Bushfires, people wanted to make sandwiches but couldn't as they didn't have a food handling certificate.

2. Funding

- Current government funding processes are competitive, inflexible, and short-term, which does not encourage sustainable change and **innovation**, or

working **collaboratively** to share knowledge and **resources**. It is also unstable, and risk-averse. There is a need for flexible investment in long-term projects, and opportunities to take risks.

- Low pay rates for NFP organisations continue to be an issue.
- The true cost of **service delivery** is not covered by funding. Many costs are not included in funding agreements, such as management costs, evaluation, and compliance. Is there a way to include some of these costs in funding agreements, such as including a standard overhead/management rate?
- What defines 'success' for funding bodies may be different to what defines success for NFP organisations. When performance measures are set by the funding body, they may not be 'in sync' with the organisation. For example, funding bodies want simple outcomes for complex issues.
- The sector relies on funding from government. How can that reliance be reduced, especially in light of the growing demands in services?
- Funding models and programs do not necessarily recognise the differences in matching **service delivery** with needs in rural, regional, interface and metropolitan Victoria. There are also differences within these categories, for example, development in Portsea compared with Werribee.

3. Resources

- NFPs need affordable access to financial, legal, and HR resources.
- Can existing resources be used more effectively? NFPs need buildings to deliver services, as web-based services will not be the only answer. Could business and NFPs co-locate more effectively?
- NFP organisations need access to capital for infrastructure, investment, research and development.
- Will organisations' ability to fundraise be impacted by the ageing population?
- Creating and sustaining **partnerships** requires resources, which can be difficult in the competitive funding environment.

4. Governance

- Governance models for NFPs need to be updated.
- Utilising corporate governance models has the potential to restrict participation and engagement by local communities.

5. Leadership & innovation

- How can we retain our role as advocates for the community without strong leadership?
- How do we develop leadership from within the sector?
- How can the sector function as one, not just separate entities in the arts, aged care, etc?

- There is a culture of fear around risk, and we need strong leadership to shift the focus away from risk-management so we don't miss opportunities for innovation.
- We need to continue to inform government about needs and work of the community sector. Community organisations need to take a leadership role to government to advocate on issues and service needs.
- The sector needs leadership/cultural change to encourage innovation. How do we create creative environments? How can this innovation be translated into **service delivery**?
- Leadership capacity and succession planning is compromised by lack of time for reflection, and this can be particularly challenging for small organisations.

6. Service delivery

- The objective of service delivery is that it is efficient, equitable, flexible and responsive.
- We need to break the welfare mindset and strive for broader outcomes, such as a connected and cohesive community.
- Is the case management model the best service delivery model?
- How can clients with multiple needs be best cared for? What is the best way to coordinate services?
- The shift to client-directed services (where consumers manage their own individual budgets), rather than client-centred services will require the delivery of more services.
- The move away from general services towards more specialised services has led to a round robin of referrals.
- Organisations need to allow/enable more risk taking to allow more creative and **innovative** service delivery.

7. Environment & geography

- Climate change will change the way people participate in the community, for example, the impact of availability and cost of fuel on individuals/families and the way the sector delivers services.
- Location of services – there are limited NFPs in the growth and regional areas, and there is a limited capacity to move services to growth areas quickly.
- Local government and NFPs should **partner and collaborate** more in local areas. NFPs from different sectors (eg disability, arts, drug and alcohol) should work together in local areas.
- Sustainability and viability of delivering services to rural and remote areas from regional centres, significant time and environmental cost.

8. Organisational models

- A cooperative business model might be one solution – it would combine a range of **resources** to meet the needs of client groups.

- There is a tension between operating as a sustainable business and honouring the vision of why you're there in the first place.
- How do small organisations remain small and productive? Not all agencies want to "grow".

9. Partnerships and collaboration

- Competitive **funding** frameworks are a barrier to partnerships.
- It is challenging to retain independence and autonomy while collaborating and sharing **resources**.
- There are opportunities for NFPs to work more closely with businesses.

10. Planning for changing needs

- Sector is required to be increasingly sophisticated, flexible and adaptable, and the more complex working environment requires different skills. Is the sector at risk of fragmentation?
- Greater demand in services and in creating and sustaining **partnerships** represents increased workloads, and may exceed the capacity of organisations to deliver.
- There will be higher expectations of service delivery, and diverse needs for a diverse client base. It is not possible to anticipate what these higher expectations may be – for example, we know that there will be a greater need for services for the ageing population, but what will they want/need, and where will they be? Needs may not be uniform across the ageing population, for example, CALD communities might have different needs.
- Urban growth areas face particular crisis in relation to lack of physical infrastructure for community services, especially around housing, employment and health.
- There will be a decreasing population base in regional areas. How can isolated people be reached and connected with society. What brings people together?
- Engaging communities and empowering women is vital to respond to disadvantage in rural areas and encourage participation in community issues.
- Disadvantage can be the catalyst for community involvement and engagement.
- Services may no longer be provided for free.

11. Technology

- Sector struggles to use it effectively as part of **service delivery**.
- There is the perception that the application of new technology is time consuming, and will impact on already heavy workloads.
- Technological innovation in the human services field is often considered outside of the "real work", rather than a tool to work more effectively.
- Will the uptake of new technology compromise human interaction?
- Challenge of adapting to and accepting new technologies may assist in overcoming barriers to engage with younger staff and clients.

- Strong and affordable access to ICT infrastructure and expertise is needed to be able to deliver services in a different way. Systems need to be interoperable so that information can be shared efficiently, eg client referrals.
- Digital divide: over 70% of the population has access to internet, but the digital divide creates challenges in reaching the other 30% who don't have access?

12. Workforce issues

a. Paid employees

- We know we will need more employees in the future. Do we have enough people in the sector? How can we encourage them to stay in the sector? Where will we find more people? How can we make sure that they are competent?
- Low rates of pay in a competitive employment environment are problematic.
- Need a diverse workforce (culture, age, expertise).
- There will be opportunities for people to work in the community sector after working in corporate sector (in retirement?).
- Cost of recruiting is significant.
- Why do people work in the sector? Reasons vary, but generally the individual is passionate about cause.
- Workforce development support across sector needs to be more focussed.

b. Volunteers

- Trends in volunteering, such as:
 - I. Decrease in volunteering – sense of people being time poor
 - II. Young people desire different types of volunteering work – project-based/ structured internships
 - III. **Environmental** impacts on volunteering eg cost of travel
 - IV. False expectation of baby boomers' contribution
- There is increasing legislative and **regulatory** requirements for volunteering. We need a legal framework to encourage volunteering.
- The strategic recruitment, deployment, management and support of appropriately skilled volunteers is costly.
- How to recognise and value the contribution of volunteers? Board members and coaches take on a huge responsibility as volunteers.
- NFPs also need to recruit skilled members to boards and committees of management for succession planning
- How do we engage different generations and cultural groups, who all have different values, to make sure we can deliver more and different services? How can new migrants be engaged and encouraged to volunteer?

d. Workshop 2 – *Responding to future challenges*

The focus of workshops and discussions after lunch was on thinking about responding to the identified future challenges.

Workshop 2 began with three vignettes from Richard Dent, EW Tipping Foundation, David Brown, Delfin Lend Lease, and Jurgen Schaub and Lyn Jenkin from InfoXchange. Richard and David proposed ideas of what communities might look like in ten to 20 years' time, what services might be needed, and how those services might be delivered. Jurgen and Lyn gave a performance on their idea of a meeting in the future, where sophisticated technology can be used anywhere to share information with a swish of the wrist.

Participants, at their tables were then asked to focus on one of six challenges that had been identified by the majority of participants during the morning's session:

1. Partnerships and collaboration
2. Service models
3. Organisation/sector capacity
4. People and technology
5. NFP business models
6. Leadership capacity.

Tables were asked to address four aspects of their particular challenge:

- a) What is this really about?
- b) What are we trying to achieve?
- c) Possible actions
- d) Next steps.

Not all tables addressed all four aspects – some groups focussed on defining the challenge in answering a) and b).

Following this small-group discussion, the tables which had considered the same challenge joined up for a facilitated discussion of their views. The outcomes of the facilitated discussion were reported back to all participants.

1. Partnerships and collaboration

“If our ‘whys’ are the same, our hows can be as diverse as you like.”

The group reported that it examined this issue in the context of the sector’s shared community values, highlighting that the sector is generally good at collaborating, but a cultural shift is needed to enable the sector to think forward while retaining our values.

Partnerships and collaboration cost money, and the sector needs to consider new models for generating funds, such as low income loans, and tax concessions. However, partnerships and collaboration also offer opportunities: procuring goods and services in bulk, and using ICT to enable collaboration.

In the table discussions, groups focussed on the first two questions

a) What is this challenge really about?

- Why are we doing the work we do? Is this the most efficient way of doing it?
- We need to Identifying successful partnerships – who is involved in them? Can lessons be learnt from outside the sector, such as private/corporate partnerships?
- There is a need to review the structure of funding arrangements to eliminate competition and foster collaboration.

b) What are we trying to achieve?

- Identifying commonalities, synergies and ways of working together more strategically, especially as sub-sectors are siloed.
- We are trying to achieve the best funding/service models to optimise outcomes for clients.
- Competition for ideas – leads to innovation

2. Service models

“Work cooperatively as a sector, share information and see what’s possible.”

Collaboration and sharing resources were themes that emerged from this group’s facilitated discussion. The group highlighted the importance of achieving independence, self-determination and choice in new modes of operation. One example given was for a community-based range of services, rather than a ‘stand-alone’ program, this might be in the form of a community hub where physical resources are shared by multiple organisations, while the diversity of organisations is respected.

Specific proposals by the group included: new approaches to sharing both vision and risk, consideration of standardised management packages, and new models for infrastructure and facilities

In the table-discussions, groups focussed on the two questions, and made some suggestions about possible actions.

a) What is this really about?

- Focus on community and people, not business. Tailoring services to the needs of individuals and communities, rather than being constrained by funding arrangements or business needs.
- Different ways of sharing information, resources and infrastructure.

b) What are we trying to achieve?

- Community ownership – a culture of working *with* the community rather than *for* the community. A community development service model where participation and involvement is active rather than passive.
- Enhanced outcomes for clients: self-determination, choice, geographical convenience, and inclusion. Not compromising outcomes for clients to keep organisations financially sustainable.
- Balanced approach to sharing resources and infrastructure so that there is a genuine increase in efficiency through collaboration.

c) Possible actions

- One option might be to collate information on multiple models (eg mentoring models) on one website, sharing information on what worked and what was learnt. This could include an interactive 'Q & A' section.
- Develop a risk scale to assess the possibility of senior managers from corporate or government sectors participating in internships in the community sector.
- Standardisation of **technology**/management tools to assist with collaboration. For example, HR packages

3. Organisation/sector capacity

"Seek alliances in and out of sector, anchored in community values."

Values were central to this group's discussion of this challenge.

The group highlighted the need for the development of quality corporate resources that are values driven, and which support the sector's independence and ability to deliver services to and advocate on behalf of communities. The group proposed the advancement of strategic relationships both within and outside of the sector, based on shared community values.

The group discussed the issue of increasing the sector's capacity to deliver services without increasing resources, and developing an environment to allow fresh thinking and adaptability.

In the table-groups, all four questions were addressed:

a) What is this really about?

- Increasing the capacity of organisations/the sector to delivery services without an equivalent increase in resources.
- Developing organisational models that combine the best of corporate and community structures, and are driven by values.

b) What are we trying to achieve?

- Services/activities which are viable, sustainable, values-driven and independent.

- More services delivered to more (diverse) clients without compromising quality
- Maintain services as well as the advocacy role which the sector plays.

c) Possible actions

- Thinking differently, approaching issues outside the square to adapt current management and increase efficiency.
- Build alliances within and outside of the sector anchored in community sector values, use the skills and resources that are currently within the sector to develop new approaches to problems.

d) Next steps

- Strategic alliances and collaboration with NFP organisations, philanthropy, business, and government.

4. People and technology

“In the future... IT literacy may create a whole new divide...”

This group raised concerns about future technology as potentially exacerbating the ‘digital divide’ – while using online communications tools might save time and money, it may contribute to feelings of loneliness and isolation.

The group proposed the development of a central database for NFPs to assist with client management by multiple agencies.

In the table-groups, all four questions were addressed:

a) What is this really about?

- Difficulty in attracting and retaining both paid employees and volunteers.
- IT skill development for workforce – including both paid employees and volunteers. Adaptation of current workforce (including an ageing workforce in the sector) to new technologies.
- Interconnectivity between agencies. How is the data managed/stored? Who owns the data?

b) What are we trying to achieve?

- Attracting people (employees and volunteers) to the sector.
- Creating or supporting an IT-savvy workforce, which uses the latest technology.
- Aligning technology with service provision, to allow technology to improve services. For example, technology could provide better and more cost-effective access to interpreters or immediate access to services.
- Technology to allow efficient sharing of data amongst relevant service-provider organisations.
- Community connectedness – ‘virtual communities’ – should be explored, but electronic interaction should not completely replace human interaction, as this would exacerbate isolation for some groups.

c) Possible actions

- Attract new workers by marketing the sector to non-traditional labour sources – for example, older workers. Offer skills development opportunities to retain current workers, including volunteers (for example, technology training).
- Establish and agree to privacy rules, and trial and share new technology. For example, basic client referral data, and in-home care data could be accessed electronically.

d) Next steps

- Market the sector better – improve online information about the sector, target information to possible employment markets, and increase awareness about the advantages of working in the sector.
- Explore opportunities to share information – are there any barriers? If so, what are they?
- Identify opportunities to share IT applications and resources. Explore options for purchasing freely-available software to ensure standardised systems.

5. NFP business models

“Keep challenging ourselves about what ‘Business Model’ means.”

Sector values were also central to this group’s discussion of possible NFP business models. The group asked: what does ‘Business Model’ mean? Is it good for the sector? How can the sector retain its values? They suggested that the sector should have its own definition of ‘profit’, which might be the growth of social capital.

The group highlighted the importance of finding new models of funding that are not all focussed on government, and that the sector explores opportunities to procure goods and services more easily.

In the table-groups, discussion focussed on the two questions and suggested some possible actions:

a) What is this really about?

- ‘Business’ language can be problematic for the community sector.
- Investigating alternate models, such as social enterprises and consortiums – pooling resources for greater benefits.

b) What are we trying to achieve?

- A model that supports community ownership, engagement and benefits, and is sustainable.
- More diversified sources of funding.
- Efficient service delivery.
- Supporting communities to be involved in developing NFP business models.

c) Possible actions

- Identify different sources of funding, and different opportunities to partner and collaborate.
- Encourage research of different models of NFP businesses across the world.

6. Leadership capacity

“Celebrate success and have a culture of ‘why not?’ – not ‘why?’”

This group discussed the importance of a cultural shift in the sector from ‘crisis response’ to ‘envisaging the future’, where the sector knows what success looks like, and makes the time and space to think, dream, innovate and lead. This would allow leaders to plan for success, and adequately resource research and development.

They proposed **Leadership sans frontiers**, where leaders are not bound to the sector, but are selected by organisations based on an ability to achieve the organisations’ vision.

The group highlighted that the sector shies away from celebrating success, but it should be proud of its work.

In the table-groups, all four questions were addressed:

a) What is this really about?

- Planning, research, development, visioning.
- Creating environments that encourage people to take risks and form new ideas.
- Developing capacity at a local/organisational level, which is professional, experienced, strategic, democratic and inclusive.

b) What are we trying to achieve?

- Sustainability for the sector. Creating change, so that we are not still having this conversation in 30 years’ time!
- Organisational capacity and succession planning.
- Empowering leadership at a local level – from within the community and within the sector to reflect diversity.

c) Possible actions

- Establish the resources required to foster leadership.
- Be creative and deliberately think differently about leadership.
- Identify potential leaders for nurturing, development, and recognition. Mandate leadership opportunities – some leaders might not nominate themselves for leadership development, so they need to be encouraged and supported.
- Share leadership development across sub-sectors and regions. For example, work cooperatively in a particular region to develop a cohort of leaders – not just one organisational leader. This could be brokered by state or local government.
- Create career pathways while developing leadership skills – leaders do not need to remain in one organisation to be effective or valuable.
- Create mentoring opportunities for young leaders, and opportunities for emerging leaders to pursue ad hoc projects with experts.

d) Next steps

- Explore opportunities to include leadership development in university curriculum.

e. Panel discussions

Panel discussions closed each of the two workshops, with many ideas and themes recurring throughout the day, such as sector values, leadership and innovation, changing demand for services, partnerships and managing change.

Values and value

The overarching theme of the day was the feature of the NFP sector which makes it unique: the sector's shared values and its contribution to broader society.

During panel discussions, participants highlighted the sector's identity, and the commonality between different parts of the sector as being highly valuable, and unifying attributes.

Some participants emphasised the importance of language, 'Not for Profit' defines what the sector is not, it is an economic definition of the sector, rather than one based in values and outcomes.

The group discussed ways to measure and evaluate the value of the sector's work. The French Government has moved towards measuring national social capital, and Bhutan measures national happiness, but here in Australia, we measure via the balance sheet.

Leadership and innovation

Ideas about leadership were discussed throughout the day. In particular, leadership was closely associated with innovation. The group identified that there is a clear and distinctive need for leadership NOW, so that organisations can plan for the future well, including: training, guidance, planning and innovation – which are also needed NOW.

Innovative ideas about how the sector could lead changes in service delivery were discussed. For example, given the significant increase in demand for services, and decrease in resources, should the NFP sector consider systems that do not require any funding, like Alcoholics Anonymous?

The group discussed the challenge for current leaders in finding time to reflect and plan. Participants highlighted their commitment to continuing the conversation around leadership, innovation and future planning.

Preparing for growth

Jeremy Reynolds' presentation on demographic trends in Victoria over the coming 30 years challenged participants to think strategically about the magnitude of change which will be required of the NFP sector.

Many participants highlighted that understanding the patterns of growth and change will help the sector to prepare for the future.

The group discussed what makes a community. DPCD has observed that children are often a focus for building communities, and fringe suburbs have high levels of social capital because there are lots of children bringing people together, but areas like the Docklands, which has few children, has little sense of community. Consumer behaviour determines how communities operate – the closure of small strips of shops

is driven by poor levels of patronage, but consumers also complain about having to travel to larger centres.

Participants highlighted the issue of a disengaged population, and suggested that the NFP sector should advocate on behalf of communities to effect change.

Planning for future service delivery was highlighted as a particular challenge, given the geographic profile of changes. The group discussed the centralisation of specialised services, and how to provide services for small regional communities, when specialists do not necessarily want to move to regional centres.

Partnerships

The group discussed the relationship between consumers/customers and government. Points made included questions around understanding current partnerships, including funding, engagement, and policy.

David Brown from Delfin Lend Lease, spoke to the group about the importance of the partnerships model in future planning; meaning commercial companies and sector organisations working together, to improve outcomes for communities, as Delfin Lend Lease has been doing. There is the potential for the commercial sector to assist the NFP sector to realise visions for communities.

Managing change

Jason Clarke's presentation challenged the group to think differently about the way they work – both as individuals and organisations.

Jason offered advice about alternate approaches to facilitating and managing change, and supporting innovation within organisations.

- **Give people the right to fail.** Mistakes enable learning, and the trick is to allow people to fail – quickly, cheaply and in private – so that there is no cost to failing.
- **Think *AND* instead of *OR*.** For example, rather than a definition of commercially minded OR community minded, the two definitions do work together.
- **We get meaner as we get richer.** The creative brain will invent what it needs as it goes.
- **Work out how to package ideas** is the best way to take new ideas forward.
- **Collaboration is fundamental.** Organisations need to understand that while there are risks associated with collaborating, there are significant risks to not collaborating. Organisations are facing problems that they do not have the expertise or resources to address, but there are people who could help, and the sector needs to establish networks to provide access to such knowledge and expertise.
- **Networks do not require physical proximity.** Shared values are the key to creating networks. For example, some of the most successful networks today are physically disparate, such as Al Qaeda!
- **Promote yourselves!** The sector does so much good, but is not very good at celebrating or promoting successes.

f. Priority areas for the future

There were four main themes that emerged from group discussions, workshops and panel sessions throughout the day. These themes are consistent with the findings of the Victorian Government's *Strengthening Community Organisations Project (SCOP)* and the priorities of the Office for the Community Sector, as set out in the *Victorian Government's Action Plan: Strengthening Community Organisations*.

1. Leadership and Innovation

The need to foster leadership was a strong theme throughout the Summit.

Leadership was closely linked with innovation. Participants felt that strong leadership was crucial to successful innovation, visioning and planning – at the organisational level as well as the broader level of the whole NFP sector.

The group identified that there is a clear need to support leadership now, so that the sector can retain its independence and continue to advocate on behalf of communities, as well as deliver much-needed services, into the future.

2. Update models of work

The group agreed about the need for the sector to update the way that it works, and consider new ways to operate. This was felt to be particularly important given the significant demographic changes for Victoria in the near-future, meaning greater demands for services to address increasingly complex issues, with fewer resources.

The idea that the sector is going to have to work 'smarter', not 'harder' resonated with all of the participants.

As identified by the group, key aspects of the sector's work which would benefit from an update include:

- Harnessing technology, to assist organisations to deliver services more efficiently, and to access relevant information and resources more easily.
- Collaborating with other organisations, within and outside of the sector to access a greater range of resources – such as partnering with corporate property development companies in growth areas, or partnering with other sector organisations to purchase goods and services in bulk.
- Organisational structures and modes of service delivery.
- Governance models.
- Ways of cultivating or accessing leadership.

3. Workforce issues: attracting and retaining skilled and qualified paid workers and volunteers.

With significant levels of population growth expected in the future, it is vital that the sector has a strong and sustainable workforce. Some participants reported that their organisations are already experiencing such an increase in demand for services, which they are struggling to meet with current workforce resources.

The whole NFP sector has highlighted its difficulty in attracting and retaining appropriately skilled employees, and one of the problem areas identified is the issue of pay equity.

Many parts of the sector rely on volunteers, and participants reported that the shifting trends of volunteering – such as the shift from ‘reliable’ and regular long-term volunteering by older volunteers to more professionalised short-term ‘internships’ preferred by younger volunteers – require a strategic response.

Recruiting, training, managing and supporting paid employees and volunteers is resource-intensive, and participants reported that the high employee turnover and short-term volunteering means that these investments are not returned.

***NOTE:** Recent news from the Australian Services Union and the Deputy Prime Minister indicates that pay equity for community service workers will be on the Federal Government’s agenda in 2010.*

4. Reducing the burden of compliance

Participants discussed the burden of multiple regulatory requirements.

Similarly to workforce issues, the group felt that in order to meet the increased demand in services and reduction in resources in the future, there is a clear imperative to reduce the burden of compliance – so that precious resources are not unnecessarily tied up with administrative burden.

Overarching all of these themes was the feature of the NFP sector which distinguishes it from other sectors – the sector’s **shared values** and its **contribution to society**.

The 2009 Not For Profit Futures Summit represented part of the Office for the Community Sector’s commitment to consulting with the sector, and this consultation is the foundation of how the OCS takes issues forward.

The OCS will be holding another summit on 20 July 2010, which will focus on innovation and leadership, which have been identified by both the NFP sector and government as crucially important priority areas.