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The National Association of Charitable Recycling Organisations

2011 Annual Conference - Kerry Caulfield



October 2011: The NACRO 2011 annual conference was held on 10th – 11th October 2011 at the Esplanade Hotel in Fremantle in Perth. The 64 delegates, most of who were charitable recycling practitioners travelled from all around Australia, arriving on Sunday afternoon and Monday morning to participate in the two-day event. Located on the coast just 30 minutes from Perth's city centre, the bustling and dynamic port city of Fremantle was the perfect backdrop to the NACRO conference.

With a stimulating mix of 21 presentations, a conference dinner and a tour of the Good Samaritan Industries facility, the conference program provided participants with the rich opportunity to explore relevant issues within charitable recycling and the policy environment within which they work.



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Many conference participants submitted online evaluations, with 100% declaring that the conference provided them with valuable information and 75% confirming that it provided them with a useful means of meeting valuable contacts.

Deep appreciation was expressed by NACRO members who valued the opportunity to meet as a collective force and to stand tall as an industry. As to its value, one participant observed, "This was the most useful conference ever, it provided excellent opportunities to learn about new developments in our field and for me to feel positive about the future of charitable recycling".



Figure 1: Dr Brad Pettitt, Mayor of Fremantle

Given that the function of charitable recycling can be enabled or hindered by council and government policies in the increasingly regulated environment in which members operate, where possible we include those who can influence the mercurial world of policy. To that end, Dr Brad Pettitt, Mayor of Fremantle welcomed delegates and opened the conference with a presentation on sustainable planning for sustainable cities. He outlined some initiatives to revitalised parks and plazas, putting roads on diets and public transport and cycle path initiatives that had been

undertaken in cities like New York, Vancouver and Portland (Oregon). Fremantle, he explained is the second carbon neutral local government in Australia after City of Sydney. However, when challenged by NACRO members, the Mayor hadn't considered charitable recycling as part of the city's sustainability policy agenda and subsequently committed to "looking into" the city's policy on charitable recycling donation bins.

Senator Rachel Siewert, Australian Greens Senator for WA spoke passionately and knowledgeably on effectively engaging in policy development with governments, leaving us with the impression that she would welcome more overt lobbying by NACRO in Canberra in the future.



Figure 2: Senator Rachel Siewert, Greens Senator



Figure 3: Tim Wilson, Institute of Public Affairs

With the Carbon tax dominating news circles we were fortunate to have secured Tim Wilson, Director of Climate Change Policy at the Institute of Public Affairs who provided an overview of the policy and what opportunities may be available to charities. Tim is nationally and internationally sought after to speak on climate change policy and it was clear that he isn't a fan of the carbon tax.

Harry Cator, CEO of DMP, an asset management company outlined the challenging growing disparity between real house prices and the average weekly earnings that no doubt affect charitable giving. His slide on the average gambling losses per adult resident in Australia assured the audience that the need for charitable services will not abate in the foreseeable future. And to add some spice to the program, contrary to David Crosbie's presentation, Harry advised the conference that charities should start to think and behave like commercial businesses.

According to David Crosbie who is CEO of the Community Council for Australia (CCA) and member of the NFP Sector Reform Council, the NFP sector is in better shape than it has ever been, with more people buying into the idea of helping others through the third sector. His heartening words were welcomed by those of us who were concerned that opportunity shops would be a target of the not for profit reforms.

Innovations in charitable recycling were profiled in presentations by Jeff Moon, General Manager, Social Enterprises Strategy and Business Development, Brotherhood of St Laurence (VIC) and also Steve Gillespie, Metropolitan Centre Manager, St Vincent de Paul Society NSW.



Fig 4: Kerry Caulfield, NACRO & David Crosbie, CCA

Jeff profiled Brotherhood Books which is a portal for selling second hand books online. Having invested a lot of time and money in the back end platform, the portal is now a robust, scalable solution for on-line transactions. The good news is that BSL is getting higher average book prices and higher margins through selling books online. Jeff assured the audience that as a charitable recycling venture, Brotherhood Books is a low cost model reliant on donated product and volunteers. Overheads are minimal and the business model is a simple one.



Given that sales through the portal are commensurate with the amount of books on offer, there is logic in like-minded charities to also retail their books on-line through the portal. The collaborative nature of this venture is of significant interest to NACRO, given that competition is not in the spirit of charitable recycling – and that we can all benefit from low cost models.

A least two charities showed interest in joining the portal validating Jeff's presentation and journey to Perth.

Steve Gillespie shared his experience of researching and developing a safer and more user friendly donation bin collaboratively with Work Cover NSW and Corrective Services NSW. The new Vinnies bins feature an easy to use pull-out cage with an opening door that will prevent back injuries and also head injuries (from people bumping their heads inside the older style units) and have also reduced shute bottle necks.

Charitable recyclers in other states are sure to adapt elements of the new design in any new models.



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As is customary, the annual AGM was held during the afternoon of the first day of the conference. Opening the AGM was a presentation by NACRO CEO Kerry Caulfield, who outlined "the year that was." Kerry's presentation highlighted the increasing advocacy role that NACRO is playing with council, state and federal authorities. Issues around waste and waste policy and the advent of for-profits misrepresenting charitable recyclers were the main areas of government interaction. Also evident was NACRO's increasing use of the media to profile the challenges of charitable recycling and to provoke change. As a result, media coverage this past year has been greater than ever before.

NACRO E-News continues to resonate with members. Its function is twofold, Kerry explained in that it serves to unite the charitable recycling community by informing members of industry news and activities; and the secondary and vital function is to inform the council, state and federal authorities on the industry and the challenges that charitable recyclers face.



Figure 5: Kerry Caulfield, NACRO

Her presentation confirmed that the political imperatives surrounding waste management and resource recovery will continue and the unintended consequences of ill informed policy (by governments and councils) will affect the charitable recycling sector – if not checked. All of which calls for a NACRO to play a strong leadership role on behalf of the sector.

In recognition that many charities are now national, the proposed changes to allow the introduction of a national membership category to its constitution were passed unanimously. Clauses prohibiting membership by those charities that sell their brand name to enable for-profits to misrepresent and take a lead role in charitable recycling were also tightened.

John Hillier of Lifeline took the opportunity to stand again as the NACRO Chairman, and Steve Gillespie stood as Treasurer and Public Officer.

Day two of the conference

The Federal Government generously funded the attendance of Kelly Pearce Assistant Secretary Waste Policy Branch, Environment Quality Division, Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities to provide us with an overview of the product stewardship scheme. On 22 June, the Federal parliament passed the Product Stewardship Act that provides

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an umbrella of provisions for product stewardship, including voluntary schemes; co-regulatory schemes and mandatory schemes. The National Television and Computer Product Stewardship Scheme is one of these schemes and will require importers of televisions, computers and computer products to deliver national television and computer recycling services through 'Approved Arrangements'. The activities of an Approved Arrangement will include collection, recycling and community education and will be implemented across Australia. Given the cost impost of managing and disposing of e-waste, this program should lessen the current financial obligation for charities.



Figure 6: Ann Cunningham, Good Samaritan Industries, Elizabeth Acaon, Save the children, Kerry Caulfield NACRO, Piers Verstegen, CCWA, Sean Burgess, Salvos WA, Mika Leandro, CCWA, Frank Brown, Vinnies WA

Earning applause from the audience, Piers Verstegen, Director of the Conservation Council of Western Australia (CCWA) opened his presentation by declaring himself as an addicted op-shopper. Correlating the mining boom with the "story of stuff", Piers described how the good citizens of Western Australia dig up stuff, just to transport it, and then refine it, then to make things, then to use things, then to dump these things. Piers said that "If we don't get policies right then the mining economy is equivalent to a wasting economy." He continued to describe the CCWA's campaign and policy on Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) and the minimising effect it would have on waste and the environment.

Mara Basanovic, CEO of Volunteering WA outlined how her organisation makes a difference by connecting thousands of volunteers to many community organisations and also the challenges of encouraging volunteers in regional areas. Mara's presentation was capped off with a magnificent multimedia video on the Social Media revolution. No delegate was left in doubt of the impact of social media and the fundamental shift in the way we communicate that it has enabled.

"We don't have a choice on whether we DO social media, the question is how well we DO it."

– Erik Qualman

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Certainly a highlight of the conference was a presentation by long term NACRO member Dorothy Reeves, Manager of the Uniting Church opportunity shop in Humpty Doo in Northern Territory who spoke candidly on the challenges of charitable recycling in remote areas and redistributing donated goods to worthy towns like Jabiru. Humpty Doo is just south of the Arnhem Highway, between Darwin and Kakadu. Dorothy's account of the day-to-day operations of a charitable recycling operation in Humpty Doo mesmerised the audience. Dorothy apprenticed under NACRO conference loyalist Jenny Pickering who was conspicuous by her absence. While we welcome Dorothy, we also miss Jenny's positive influence on NACRO conferences and wish her well with her move to be closer to family. Given that the 2011 NACRO conference was Dorothy's first conference and first ever public speaking engagement (generously enabled by Dorothy's fellow parishioners), the audience was blessed by her presentation.



Figure 7: Dorothy Reeves and Ruth Johns, Living Water Church WA



The challenges of distributing donated food to communities in need are strikingly similar to those of charitable recyclers, in that they share distribution, human resource and cost-for-benefit challenges. Greg Hebble, CEO of Foodbank WA described how Foodbank distributed 2.3million kilograms of good food that would have otherwise been dumped in landfill in 2010 to over 600 community and welfare agencies. Greg anticipates that by 2015, Foodbank WA will be distributing 5million kilograms of food (with hopefully the majority being fresh fruit and vegetables) through effective relationship and partnerships with other NFP's and schools.



Figure 8: Mara Basanovic, Volunteering WA; Irina Cattalini, WACOSS; Dorothy Reeves, Living Water Church; Kerryn Caulfield, NACRO

Ensuring that children are provided a nutritional breakfast to start their day of learning at school, as of 30 September 2011, Foodbank provided food to over 13,488 children. This breakfast was made up of over 300,000kg of food, including about 50,000kg of fruit and vegetables.

Continuing the social enterprise theme, Irina Cattalini, CEO of WA Australian Council for Social Services spoke on the two speed economy in WA and the need for social services, particularly in the areas of housing

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affordability, health, domestic violence and wages. Irina explained that there are strong economic indicators for WA's \$150 billion state economy and that robust forecasts were driven by an expectation of a strong resurgence in resource investment; however these positive indicators also foster more sinister trends in average levels of household debt, and high levels of housing stress all of which steer families into welfare. The two-tiered community is compounded by existing and historical disadvantage, particularly for Indigenous people.

Acknowledging the power of the brands within the NACRO membership, Hailey Cavill, of Cavill + Co and Sophie Susman, the Corporate Social Responsibility Coordinator for Country Road presented on the way by which NFP organisations, can capitalise on the trend for the corporate sector to foster partnerships with NPOs in order to buy credibility. Hailey described how brands increasingly must stand for something beyond just rational items. Corporate social responsibility efforts will need to be believable, sustained, and engaging. Some of the strongest will come from those brands that connect the public and the personal in today's financially-strained world. The end result is that corporate sector will increasingly seek out association with charitable brands.



Figure 9: Hailey Cavill, Cavill + Co, Kerry Caulfield, NACRO and Talei Manners, Te for Two



Figure 10: an example of a confusing retail message to consumers

In recognition that visual merchandising is an important factor in all retail outlets, particularly charitable recyclers, the conclusion of the conference featured a workshop by Talei Manners a retail stylist and designer. Describing visual merchandising as "the art of displaying merchandise to enable maximum sales and the communication between a customer and a product", Talei provided the audience with a series of practical tips in merchandising. Delegates provided valuable feedback through the conference evaluation survey that informed NACRO that this subject is one that should be perpetual.