

The Hon. Malcolm Turnbull, MP
Prime Minister of Australia
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Friday 9th of June 2017

RE: Civil Society Support for Commissioner Susan Pascoe and the Independent Charities Regulator

Dear Prime Minister

We write to you concerned about the future of the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission (ACNC). We all want to see it continue and expand its impressive work.

We are therefore very disappointed that the fifth Minister appointed by a Coalition government to oversee the work of the ACNC, who has never met with the ACNC Commissioners, has now indicated he will not be renewing the contract of the ACNC Commissioner Susan Pascoe AM. This is despite positive support from the Treasury and the ACNC Advisory Board. By any measure, Commissioner Pascoe has done an impressive job in leading the ACNC. In November 2016 Commissioner Pascoe was the winner of the prestigious Outstanding Contribution in Public Administration Award – highlighting her world class leadership and professionalism.

Several of your Ministers, including the Treasurer Scott Morrison, have publicly acknowledged the importance of the ACNC and supported its continuing role. This has been a welcome and important reversal of previous policies and enabled your government to build a better relationship with the charities and not-for-profit sector. Unfortunately, it seems not all members of the government are supportive of the very important role played by the ACNC.

We believe Commissioner Pascoe should be reappointed, at least for another 12 months to enable the five-year review of the ACNC to be conducted without excluding her extensive knowledge and experience of how the organisation operates and performs.

Failing this reappointment, we would like you to ensure there is a transparent, fair and consultative process to appoint the best possible replacement. One of the critical criteria for this role is a deep understanding and experience across the charities and not-for-profit sector. Ideally the sector itself would be represented in the selection process. Given what has happened with Commissioner Pascoe, it is very difficult for the sector to have any confidence that the new appointment process will reflect the need for a strong, effective, independent charities regulator.

You have demonstrated in your actions and leadership as a philanthropist that you understand how charities and the broader not-for-profit sector are at the heart of Australian communities. Our organisations are there in the good times and bad. They provide support to the most

vulnerable; lift our sights and our hearts through culture, sport, education, welfare, support for the aged or the unwell; promote our spirituality; protect our animals and our environment; play our part internationally, and ensure those less able can still participate. The not-for-profit sector also makes a major economic contribution, employing more than one million Australians and turning over in excess of \$134 billion each year. Governments all know we need a strong not-for-profit sector in this country if we are to be both economically strong, and enjoy healthy fulfilling lives.

The establishment of an independent national charities regulator was first seriously proposed through a Howard Government review of the definition of charity in 2001, and has been supported by many, including the Productivity Commission, the Henry Review, and several Senate Inquiries involving hundreds of submissions and numerous public hearings.

Since its establishment under the leadership of Commissioner Pascoe, the ACNC has done outstanding work including: developing Australia's first ever on-line up-to-date searchable database of registered charities; registering over 11,500 new charities; de-registering over 19,000 charities that were either no longer in existence or failing to meet appropriate standards; winning numerous awards for innovation and digitalization of data; producing informative research reports on the nature and extent of Australian charities and their activities; providing world leading education and support services to charities including fact sheets, guidelines, templates and information sessions across the country. The ACNC has also done what few new regulators achieve – improve public trust and confidence while gaining widespread support across the sector it is regulating.

Again, we urge you to revisit the decision not to re-appoint Commissioner Pascoe or, at the very least, put in place a process our sector can have confidence in for the selection of her replacement.

The vital work of the ACNC must be maintained, for the benefit of charities, not-for-profits and the many communities they serve.

Signatories

Sandra Dill AM, CEO

AccessAustralia

Jenny Macaffer, CEO

Adult Learning Australia

Rob Foggo, CEO

Anglican Community Care

Randa Kattan, CEO

Arab Council Australia

Ainslie Cahill, CEO

Arthritis Australia

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Sam Mostyn, President

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Cassandra Goldie, CEO

Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS)

Amanda Martin, CEO

Australian Environmental Grantmakers Network

Bethwyn Serow, Executive Director

Australian Major Performing Arts Group (AMPAG)

Alice Campbell, CEO

Baby in Mind

Sandie de Wolf AM, CEO

Berry Street

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Carers Australia

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Caritas Australia

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Nigel Spence, CEO

Child Fund Australia

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Christian Ministry Advancement (CMA)

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Church Communities Australia

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Churches of Christ in Vic/Tas

Murray Coates, CEO

Community Based Support

Jon Bisset, CEO

Community Broadcasting Association of Australia

Don Perlgut, CEO

Community Colleges Australia

Rev Tim Costello AO, Chair

Community Council for Australia

David Crosbie, CEO

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Consumers Health Forum of Australia

Denise Cauchi, Director

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English Family Foundation

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Family Life

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Fragile X Association of Australia

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Friends of the Earth Australia

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Good2Give

David Ritter, CEO

Greenpeace Australia Pacific

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Habitat for Humanity

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Inner North Community Foundation

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International Women's Development Agency

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Jaramas Foundation

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Justice Connect

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Launch Housing

Mark Pershin, CEO and Founder

Less Meat Less Heat

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Life Without Barriers

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Live and Learn Australia

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Madden Sainsbury Foundation

Lynne Madden, Trustee

Madden Sainsbury Foundation

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Musica Viva Australia

Denis Moriarty, Group Managing Director

Our Community

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Oxfam Australia

Hugh Chalmers, Chair

OzHelp

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Palmerston

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Philanthropy Australia

Ian Wishart, CEO

Plan International Australia

Nicola Clyne, Fund Manager

PMF Foundation

Genevieve Timmons,

Philanthropic Executive

Portland House Foundation

Michael Moore, CEO

Public Health Association Australia

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RESULTS International (Australia)

Ross Knowles, Trustee and Founder

Ross Knowles Foundation

Rod Wellington, CEO

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Paul Ronalds, CEO

Save the Children Australia

Violet Roumeliotis, CEO

Settlement Services International

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St John Ambulance Australia

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Starlight Children's Foundation

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Swifts Creek Bush Nursing Centre

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Sydney Missionary & Bible College

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TEAR Australia

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The Australian Charities Fund

Gemma Rygate, CEO

The Centre for Volunteering

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The Ethicos Group

Lisa Cotton, Co-Founder CEO

The Funding Network

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The Keith and Jeanette Ince Fund, Sub
Fund of Australian Communities
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Henry Rischbieth, Trustee

The Letcombe Foundation

Sue Mathews, Trustee

The Mullum Trust

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The NonProfit Alliance

Elizabeth Mellick, Executive Director

The Norman Wettenhall Foundation

Jenny Stephens, Chair

The R. E. Ross Trust

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The Shepherd Centre for deaf children

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Volunteering Australia

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Volunteering Queensland

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Volunteering SA & NT

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Wesley Mission

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