Australian Government

Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission

MEET THE REGULATORS

Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission

Cate Bennett, Assistant Commissioner – Legal Counsel and Regulatory Services
Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC)

6 October 2026

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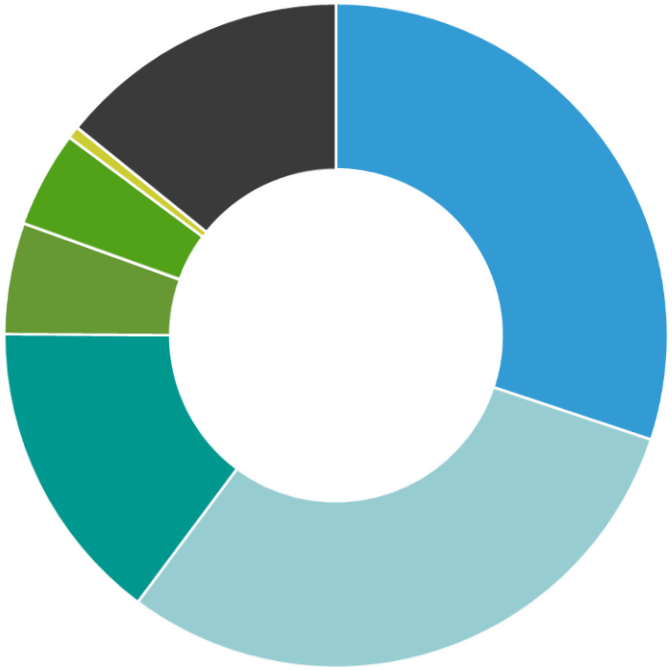
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The ACNC acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community.

We pay our respects to them and their cultures and Elders past and present.

SECTOR AT A GLANCE – ANNUAL REVENUE

Australian Charities Report 12th edition - acnc.gov.au/charitiesreport



30.1%	Extra small (less than $50,000)
30.1%	Small ($50,000 - $500,000)
14.9%	Medium ($500,000 - $3 million)
5.4%	Large ($3 million - $10 million)
4.7%	Very large ($10 million - $100 million)
0.6%	Extra large ($100 million or more)
14.2%	Size unknown – Basic Religious Charity – These charities are not required to report financial information.

VOLUNTEER AND WORKFORCE DATA

- 53% of charities have no paid staff
- The charity sector employs 1.6 million staff, or 11% of the Australia's workforce
- Volunteer report – Charity by numbers: The volunteer effect, published 2025
  - 22,000 charities entirely volunteer run
  - Comprise 43% of the charity sector
  - Half a million volunteers
  - Rely on donations and bequests
  - Most are extra-small with revenue of less than $50,000
  - acnc.gov.au/volunteereffect



WHAT THE ACNC DOES

1. Maintains a charity register
2. Registers new charities
3. Regulate charities (reporting and compliance)
4. Provides advice, guidance and education
5. Reduces red tape for charities

CHARITY REGISTRATION

To be eligible to be registered as a charity with the ACNC, an organisation must:

- be not-for-profit
- have only charitable purposes that are for the public benefit
- comply with the ACNC Governance Standards, except Basic Religious Charities
- comply with the ACNC External Conduct Standards if operating overseas, including Basic Religious Charities
- not have any disqualifying purposes (which are engaging in, or promoting activities that are unlawful or contrary to public policy; and promoting or opposing a political party or candidate for political office), and
- not be an individual, political party or government entity.
- **Tax concessions:** The ACNC registers organisations as charities for Commonwealth purposes, the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) remains responsible for the decision to endorse charities for tax concessions.

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ONGOING OBLIGATIONS EXPLAINED



Continue to be a not-for-profit and have a charitable purpose for public benefit



Notify the ACNC of changes at your charity



Keep records



Report annually through completing an Annual Information Statement (AIS)



Comply with ACNC Governance Standards, and ACNC External Conduct Standards (if operating overseas)

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RECORD-KEEPING



Financial records
Examples include assets list or register, cash book records, banking records, tax invoices and other relevant tax records, and more.



Operational records
Examples include governing documents, meeting minutes, annual reports, donor reports, contracts and agreements, and more.

Requirements for keeping records

- Any format (electronic or paper)
- Readily accessible and easy to find
- Keep for 7 years
- In English, or a form that can be easily translated
- Only provided to ACNC if requested
- Extra requirements for overseas activities

REPORTING

Annual reporting

Charities must report annually to the ACNC.

Annual reporting supports our work to:

- maintain, protect and enhance public trust and confidence in the sector through increased accountability and transparency
- promote the reduction of unnecessary regulatory obligations on the charity sector.



If a charity does not meet their reporting obligations, it may have its charity registration revoked.

AN INFORMED CHARITY REGISTER

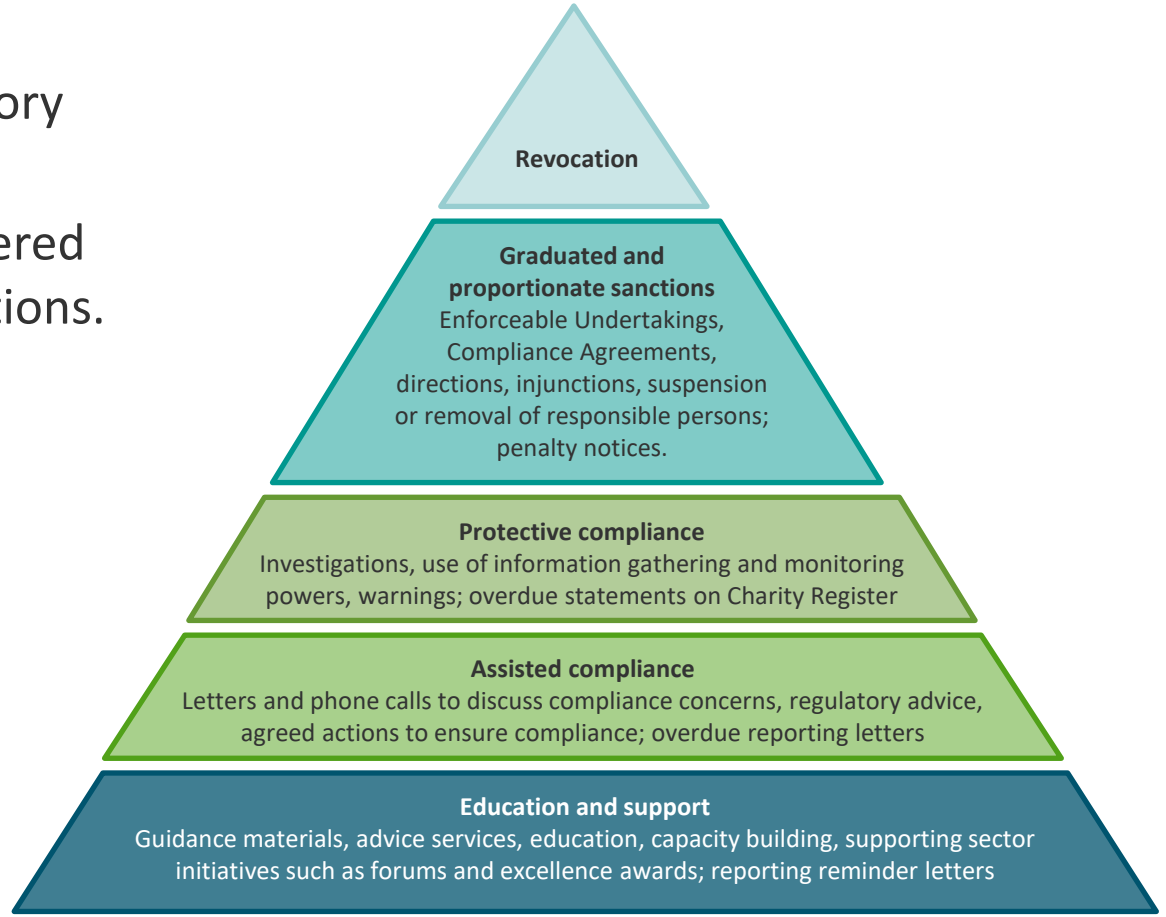
The ACNC Charity Register contains information about Australia's registered charities. It is free to search and is available to everyone. Each listing on the Charity Register shows:

- details about a charity and its purposes
- names of the people involved in running the charity
- financial information and annual reporting
- If the ACNC has taken action against the charity for not complying with certain obligations.

The Charity Register can be used to check if a charity is registered, to find specific details about a charity's operations, or even to find charities to donate to or volunteer with. For charities, a listing on the Charity Register is a great place to show their current details and demonstrate accountability and transparency.

OUR REGULATORY APPROACH

- We approach regulation responsively and make deliberative and flexible choices about the regulatory strategies applied.
- We provide guidance and education to help registered charities understand and comply with their obligations.
- We apply a risk-based approach to regulation.
- We will act firmly where vulnerable people or significant charity assets are at risk, where there is evidence of serious mismanagement or misappropriation, or if there is a serious or deliberate breach of the ACNC Act or ACNC Regulations.



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GOVERNANCE STANDARDS

1

A charity must be not-for-profit and work towards its charitable purpose. It must be able to demonstrate this and provide information about its purposes to the public.

2

A charity that has members must take reasonable steps to be accountable to its members and provide them with adequate opportunity to raise concerns about how the charity is governed.

3

A charity must not commit a serious offence (such as fraud) under any Australian law or breach a law that may result in a penalty of 60 penalty units or more.

4

A charity must ensure they are not controlled by people who may pose a risk to the charity's financial position or the pursuit of its charitable work.

5

A charity must take reasonable steps to make sure that its Responsible People meet certain duties.

6

A charity must take reasonable steps to become a participating non-government institution if they are, or are likely to be, identified as being involved in the abuse of a person.

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RESPONSIBLE PEOPLE

Duties of Responsible People

Governance Standard 5 requires charities to take reasonable steps to make sure that its Responsible People meet certain duties. These include:

- to act with reasonable care and diligence
- to act honestly and fairly in the best interests of the charity and for its charitable purposes
- not to misuse their position or information they gain as a Responsible Person
- to disclose conflicts of interest
- to ensure that the financial affairs of the charity are managed responsibly, and
- not to allow the charity to operate while it is insolvent.

EXTERNAL CONDUCT STANDARDS

1

This standard covers the way a charity manages its activities overseas, how it is required to control the finances and other resources it uses overseas and the requirement to comply with Australian laws.

2

This standard covers the requirements for a charity to obtain and keep sufficient records for its overseas activities on a country-by-country basis.

3

This standard covers the requirements for a charity to have processes and procedures that work to combat fraud and corruption and identify and document any actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interests in its overseas operations.

4

This standard covers the requirement for a charity to protect the vulnerable people that it works with when conducting its overseas operations.

COMMON COMPLIANCE ISSUES

Board changes occur but are not reflected with the ACNC

Late AIS submissions

Reporting deadlines are missed

Constitutions out of date

Governing documents no longer reflect current operations.

Poor conflict of interest management

Conflicts are declared inconsistently or not recorded

Lack of board oversight

Boards focus on operations and not governance responsibilities

Inadequate records

Important decisions cannot be evidenced through minutes or documentation.

Most compliance issues arise from **processes breaking down** rather than **deliberate wrongdoing**.



COMPLIANCE HEALTH CHECK

- Are all Responsible People current on the Charity Register?
- Is our constitution up to date?
- Have we lodged our AIS?
- Do we know our next reporting deadline?
- Are meeting minutes complete and accessible?
- Do we have a conflict-of-interest process?
- Are financial records current and secure?
- Do board members understand Governance Standards?
- Has the charity changed anything that must be reported to the ACNC?

DATA PROTECTION, CYBERSECURITY AND AI

Queensland government department loses $800,000 in cyber attack

By Sarah Richards | Cyber Security

Posted yesterday at 8:38am



Cyber security is essential for all charities and not-for-profit organisations.

Cyber threats are on the rise in Australia, with charities and not-for-profits prime targets for cybercriminals. In the 2022-23 financial year, ASD received nearly 94,000 cybercrime reports. This averages to one report every 6 minutes.

Home » For charities » Manage your charity » Governance Hub » Governance Toolkit » Governance Toolkit: Cyber security

GOVERNANCE TOOLKIT: CYBER SECURITY

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acnc.gov.au



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1.00pm – 5.00pm VIC/NSW time



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