

Dear Prime Minister, Hon. Anthony Albanese MP,
 Hon. Dr Jim Chalmers MP, Treasurer
 Hon. Tanya Plibersek MP, Minister for Social Services
 Hon. Dr Andrew Leigh MP, Assistant Minister for Charities



It's time to protect charities' voices.

We write to urge your government to deliver on your promise and prioritise long-overdue reforms to protect the essential and vibrant democratic voices of the charity sector within the first year of the 48th parliament.

We are calling for the passage of reforms that will

- Recognise that advocacy benefits the public,
- Prohibit government officers from restricting the voices of charities when they are receiving government funding, and
- Require the merit-based and transparent appointment of the Commissioner of the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC).

These reforms are simple to implement and budget-neutral and were also endorsed by the government-commissioned Not-For-Profit Sector Development Blueprint. Importantly, they would deliver meaningful protection for the democratic role of charities, **ensuring we can continue to speak up on critical societal challenges without fear of political interference.**

In the past, our advocacy role has been vulnerable to attacks by governments, threatening charities' essential role in helping to create a healthy democracy in Australia. Without the proposed protections, our participation in public debates remains at the mercy of the politics of the day.

The charity sector plays a vital role in the Australian economy and democracy, contributing approximately 8% of GDP, employing 1.3 million Australians, and engaging around 3.4 million volunteers. We have been subject to multiple reviews in the past, with only 21 out of 160 recommendations from these reviews fully implemented. The sector patiently engaged with two further review processes during the previous term of your government – it's time for action. The government's own Blueprint Expert Reference Group's submission report expressed dismay that most reported issues and their solutions had been long known and had lacked action by successive governments.

The Labor Government is in a commanding position to ensure its already stated commitment to not-for-profits and charities becomes a reality early on in its new term of government. After much patience, perseverance and constructive engagement with the government, we call on you to fulfil your promise to our sector and our democracy to protect charities' voices.

Sincerely,

103 Members and Supporters of the Stronger Charities Alliance

