

Laurie Leigh:

My name is Laurie Leigh and I'm the CEO of National Disability Services. NDS is the peak organisation representing disability service providers across Australia. We have around 1200 members who range from large multi-state charities with turnovers in the hundreds of millions to very small single locality services, which may have a turnover of less than 100,000. Our members all serve the disability sector and provide services for people with disability and NDS's role is to represent their views and advocate for them to government, as well as to help and support them to deliver high quality services.

For charities, the governing document is fundamentally important because it sets out what the organisation's charitable purpose is. This is the guiding star for the charity, why it was founded and what it should be doing. Other documents, such as a strategic plan can outline how that purpose is being brought to life and implemented over the next period of time. The governing document is the foundation stone. In the disability sector, a typical example of purpose may be to provide support services to people with disability that recognise their choice and preference and enable each person to live as an equal and empowered citizen.

Apart from setting the purpose, the governing document must also clearly state that the charity is running on a not-for-profit basis. The governing document provides the rules for running the charity, and these include who your members are, how they become, or stop being your members. The process for calling meetings and consulting with your members and the appointment of directors and positions on the board such as Chair or President. The governing document can also outline whether the Board develops a committee structure to provide it with greater focus in certain areas.

A typical structure for a charity providing disability services might include an audit and risk committee to examine financial performance and risks across the charity. A Quality or Customer Experience Committee looking at the services provided in any incidents or complaints, and also maybe committees such as governance, nominations or immigration to oversee constitutional arrangements, membership issues or the CEO performance. The governing document sets out how the Board and Committee meetings are called and run, what the decision making powers of the Board, as well as things like the hiring and firing of the CEO and Company Secretary.

Stephen Kerr:

Hi, my name is Steve Kerr and I serve as the Executive Director of the CMA Standards Council. Our goal is to build faith and trust in Christian organisations by improving their governance, transparency and accountability. We do that by way of a five step process. First, we developed a set of standards of good governance, transparency and accountability, which are based on legal requirements. For example,

the ACNC Governance Standards, and Federal and State legislation. We've also looked at standards applied by other Australian and international governance organisations.

And finally, we've done our own research into the academic literature. Second, we rate our applicants against those standards. This involves the applicant providing information and evidence of its processes and procedures, which we have a look at. We also carry out our own independent investigations. Third, if the organisation doesn't meet our standards, we help them get there. And we do that by equipping them with tools and providing training opportunities. Fourth, when they finally meet the standards, we accredit them as partners, enabling listing on our directory and use of our seal.

Fifth, we carry out an annual review of our partners to ensure that they continue to meet our standards. So the end result of all of this is that we help our partner organisations move from compliance to effectiveness to excellence. Our process is more than just meeting legal requirements or signing up to a code of conduct where you self-assess if you follow it or not. But it involves throwing open your governance to independent review by a third party. And this leads to better outcomes for your organisation, enhanced trust from your stakeholders, and a better reputation generally with the public. So that's how we work to embed good governance in our partner organisations.