

# Volunteers as Social Activists – making a difference

Anne Clear, PhD Student.

Supervisors: Dr Megan Paull and Dr David Holloway.

School of Management & Governance,  
Murdoch University, Western Australia.



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# Purpose of nonprofit organisations

- Provision of goods and services
- Goods and services that government and private sector are unable or unwilling to provide
- Role in Community:
  - Education
  - Voice social demands
  - Strengthen democracy
  - Be involved in policy processes
  - Engage individuals in policy making processes
  - Act as watchdogs





Goods  
and  
services

Social  
Capital

Marginalised Cohort



Australian Government

Advocacy

Funding



NON-PROFIT SOLUTIONS



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# Advocacy: Definitions

- Active interventions by organisations on behalf of the collective interests they represent, that have the goal of influencing public policy
- To advance the interest of a group by influencing policy makers or other decision makers



# Advocacy: also known as...

activism, advising, campaigning, commenting,  
consulting, dialogue, engagement, education,  
giving voice, influencing, informing, input,  
lobbying, negotiation, participation, policy work,  
promoting improvements, social action, impact  
analysis ...

# Advocacy: How?

- Institutional Advocacy or Insider tactics
  - eg. Membership on Government committees, meeting with policymakers, developing relationships with policy makers.
- Radical Advocacy or Indirect tactics
  - eg. Public comments on proposed legislation, attending public workshops, rallies, letter writing campaigns, boycotts, public meetings with local members.
- BUT – ‘bite the hand that feeds them’!

# Research study

- Do nonprofit organisations engage in advocacy activities?
- How are nonprofit organisations engaging in advocacy without risking their current and future sources of funding?
- Two case studies of Western Australian nonprofit organisations in the human services area.
- The data was obtained through interviews, observations, annual reports, and the non-profit organisation's website, and media.



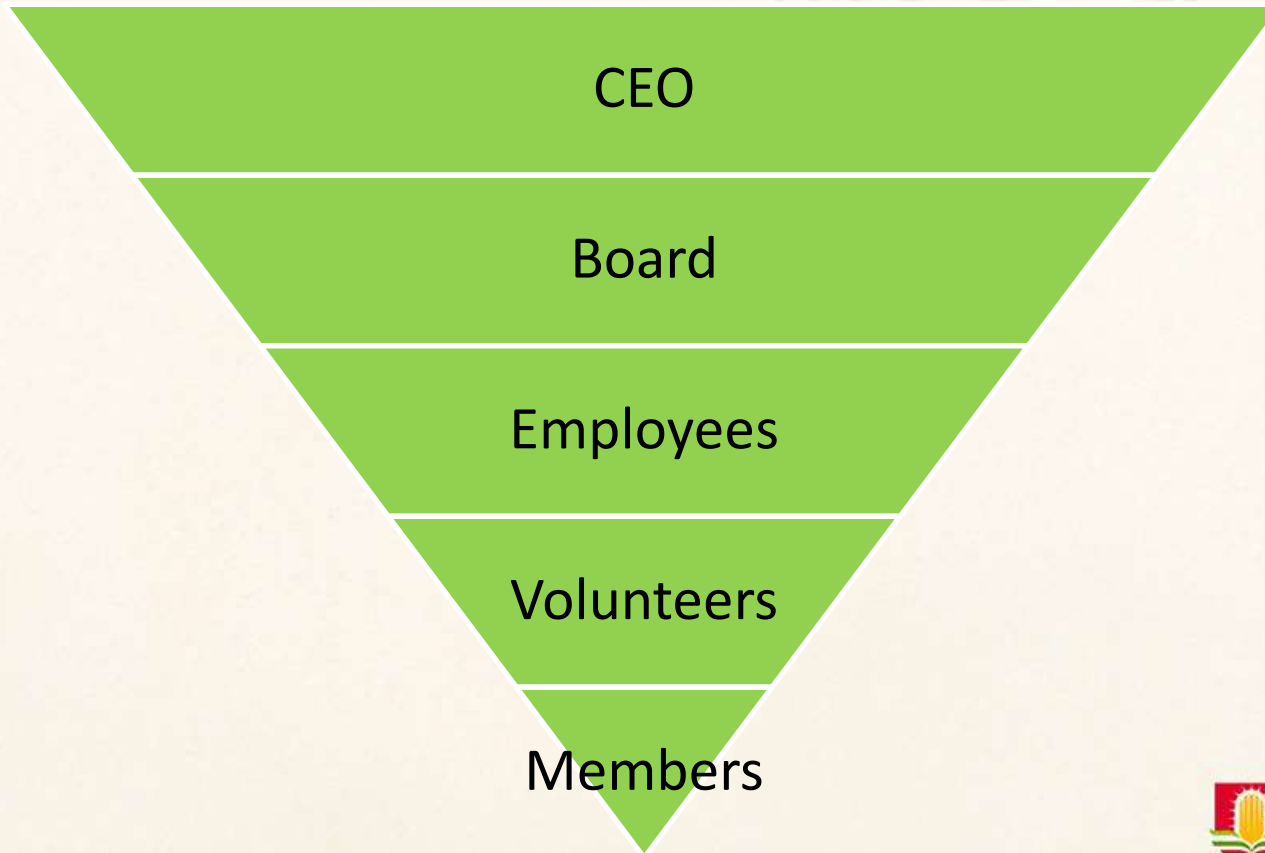
# Findings from research

## Case Study 1:

- Medium sized, 100% government funded
- CEO principle advocate for the organisation
- Chairman engaged in advocacy
- Members and volunteers engaged in advocating legislative reform in the sector



# Advocacy relationships in Case 1



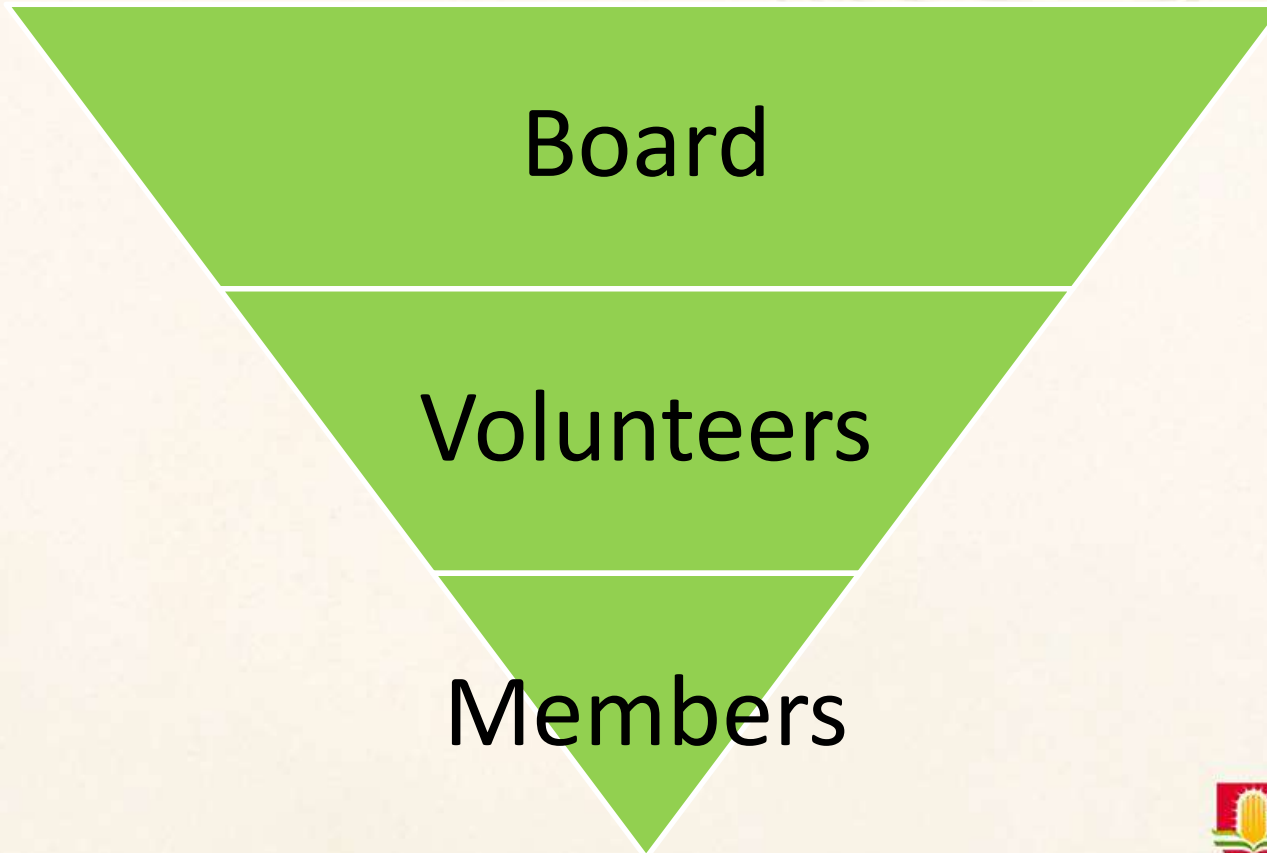
# Findings from research

## Case Study 2:

- Small, No government funding
- Only 1 part time administrative employee
- Board are volunteers; responsible for fundraising, profile and mission of the organisation including advocacy
- Mission and services provided by volunteers who also engage in advocacy through letter writing, public prayer sessions, demonstrations, petitions.



# Advocacy relationships in Case 1



# Key Findings

- Nonprofit organisations are advocating in the sector
- Identifying what they see to be the appropriate advocacy practices
- Volunteers are important advocates for both case study organisations
  - Activities restricted and controlled by the external environment
  - Community involvement to spread the mission
  - Impact
  - Limited resources – funding & staff
- Limitations of findings



Thank you  
and questions...



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