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Dear Sir/Madam,

### ***Consultation on Statistics for Volunteering and Giving***

Philanthropy Australia welcomes the opportunity to make a brief submission to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) in response to its consultation on statistics for volunteering and giving.

As the peak body, Philanthropy Australia's purpose is to serve the philanthropic community to achieve more and better philanthropy.

The community we serve consists of funders, grant-makers, social investors and social change agents working to achieve positive social, cultural and environmental change by leveraging their financial assets and influence.

Our membership consists of approximately 800 trusts, foundations, organisations, families, individual donors, professional advisers, intermediaries and not-for-profit organisations.

Philanthropy Australia believes that the provision of more and better data on the giving of money is essential.

Giving is rightly regarded as highly positive activity which benefits the community. This is reflected by government support through mechanisms such as tax incentives and giving structures, as well as initiatives such as the Australian Government's Prime Minister's Community Business Partnership.

Given there is a desire, shared by the community and government, to grow giving, it is important to have data by which to measure changes in giving over time.

In this regard, positive progress has been made in recent years.

With the establishment of the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC), we now have data available which measures the share of charity income sourced from giving.<sup>1</sup> This data is compiled from charities' 'Annual Information Statements' lodged with the ACNC, however

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<sup>1</sup> See the Australian Charities Report, available here: <http://australiancharities.acnc.gov.au/>

it only covers giving to charities, and not to other not-for-profit and community organisations.

The Australian Taxation Office's (ATO) Taxation Statistics also provide information on the amount of tax deductible donations made by individual taxpayers.<sup>2</sup> However, tax deductible donations represent only a proportion of giving in Australia, with most charities not able to accept tax deductible donations.

In addition, the Australian Government has funded the Giving Australia 2016 project. This is a major examination of giving trends in Australia, including a household survey to derive data on giving by individuals. This is a comprehensive report grounded in strong research and analysis, however it is irregular – with the previous project undertaken in 2005.<sup>3</sup>

Given that we have these sources of data on giving, two of them regular, Philanthropy Australia would not propose to ask that the ABS collect new data on giving at this stage.

However we do note with interest that ABS data on whether people make charitable donations is already available from the GSS, and the amount people donate is collected through the Household Expenditure Survey (HES).

We believe this could be very valuable data, which could possibly become an 'official' measure of annual giving in Australia.

We would therefore ask that the ABS make this data publicly available. The data could either be released by the ABS and then analysed by external researchers, as occurs with the ATO's Taxation Statistics, or it could form part of a relatively simple annual release which includes some basic analysis as part of the ABS catalogue, or both.

In conclusion, Philanthropy Australia again thanks the ABS for the opportunity to make this brief submission.

We would also welcome the opportunity to discuss this submission further and explore ways in which we can improve the availability and quality of data on giving.

The relevant contact at Philanthropy Australia is Krystian Seibert, Advocacy & Insight Manager ([kseibert@philanthropy.org.au](mailto:kseibert@philanthropy.org.au) or 03 9662 9299).

Yours Sincerely,



Sarah Davies

**Chief Executive Officer**

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<sup>2</sup> This information is analysed by the Australian Centre for Philanthropy and Nonprofit Studies at Queensland University of Technology, with the most recent analysis available here:

<https://eprints.qut.edu.au/96750/>

<sup>3</sup> More information about Giving Australia 2016 is available here:

<http://www.communitybusinesspartnership.gov.au/about/research-projects/giving-australia-2016/>