

The Board of Taxation
C/. The Treasury
Consultation on the Definition of a Charity
Langton Crescent
PARKES A.C.T. 2600

14 May 2004

Dear Board,

I am writing on behalf of SPARK Resource Centre Inc's Board. SPARK has 'Charity Status' and we are a small dedicated agency working for the betterment of sole parent families: legally, educationally, economically and to be accepted by society with out prejudice or discrimination. We have active workshops; provide submissions (often in request by government agencies), advocate for sole parents (as individuals and also as groups).

SPARK offers counselling, advocacy, education, free clothing goods; emergency relief to sole parent families. We are particularly concerned about the **disqualifying criteria** SPARK's role can be seen to be interpreted as a "cause" – constitutionally we have been set up to promote the well being of sole parents and pregnant women, it is core activity and cause.

We have (rarely) supported political candidates who have aware supportive insights to sole parent issues. Many politicians have been unsupportive (and critical) of the needs of sole parent families. Some politicians have requested accurate data re sole parent families ...

Government policy (up until 1972) was hostile to women who were sole parents and also to women who had "ex nuptial births". These women were forced (through economic hardship and social stigmatising) to give up their children for adoption. For the past 31 years sole parents have received the Sole Parents' Benefit – but there have been numerous politicians (and policies) who have NOT supported sole parents. SPARK could not, ethically or constitutionally, ignore political platforms which actively aim to discredit, disempower or prejudice against sole parents.

We strongly feel that government policies need to be informed and transparent: we are often consulted re government (proposed) policy BY THE GOVERNMENT of the day – yet these disqualifying criteria would have a huge impact on SPARK.

It is also not clear what is an ancillary / incidental percentage of activities for a charity: if, I the director am actively involved in meetings with government officials, focus groups, writing submissions (as I am) how much of my time (per annum) would be seen as “ancillary activities”. If the work was undertaken by the president or a key volunteer how would that be interpreted – SPARK has very involved and active volunteers.

We do not feel this part of the recommendations are workable in their present form – and although we have only discussed our charity’s (potential) difficulties we feel this argument would be very viable to other dedicated organisations.

Yours sincerely

Kathy Silard OAM BA SRN PRN
Director
Senior Counsellor / Adult Educator