

## HEARING VOICES NETWORK AUSTRALIA

### NATIONAL ENTITY ESTABLISHMENT PROJECT

#### Overview

In conjunction with assessing and deciding on a preferred national framework and structure, we need to consider to what extent, if any, the individual state networks need to change (in structure), to best compliment their relationship with the national entity.

As we are aware, the only “stand alone” state network is HVNNSW, which is an incorporated association, owned and controlled by its members, and administered by a management committee. The other current state networks, ie WA, Victoria and Tasmania, are not legal entities in their own right, rather form part of other organisations, ie Richmond Fellowship and Prahran Mission. The operations of these networks come under the direct control of their parent organisations.

Ideally separate network entities in each state (similar to HVNNSW) would be the “cleanest” and most effective basis. This would make each state network a legal entity in its own right, owned and controlled by its members. This would give rise to a proper consumer/member driven organisation (in each state), which ultimately filters through to the control and administration of the National Entity.

The following questions then emerge:

1. Do the current administrators of these networks support, in principle, this type of structure?
2. Would their parent organisations support such a structure?
3. If the answer is no to (1) and/or (2) above, what are the alternatives and how does that impact on the type of National Structure we establish?

Hand in hand with the above is the underlying issue/question of “**What do we see, and agree, is the Role of a National Entity**”. This is the key and fundamental element which will ultimately dictate the way ahead.

#### **Role of National HVN Entity**

Our discussions to date have derived that all would prefer a “Non Governance Approach” to a national framework. That is, the national entity would not “control” or “Govern” the activities of the state networks. Each state network would remain independent entities with their own aims and objectives, policies, strategies and administration.

In essence, the reverse would apply whereby the state networks “own” and “control” the activities of the national entity via representation on the national board/committee from each of the state networks.

We have identified some of the functions we perceive a national entity could provide:

- National Funding opportunities.
- Sharing of intellectual property
- Development of generic training and promotional materials
- Development and delivery of national HV events/conferences
- Communication with government at a national level
- National representative/spokesperson at international events
- Marketing HV movement (web site, newsletters etc)

Other could be:

- Establishment of Networks in other states of Australia
- Research projects
- National Help/Hotline for voice hearers and carers
- State HV support (ie human resources, administration support etc)

Naturally there would be others. And there would need to be “care” that national functions did not “cut across” or “compete against” state based activities.

In regard to Mission statements, Role, Aims etc, as previously mentioned, each state network could retain their own, as long as the “core elements” in each case were consistent across the board in their definition and purpose.

In regard to the national entity itself, its mission and role is to support the state networks, and as a result, their membership base. Therefore, the mission statement of the national entity could simply be:

***“To provide a framework that supports and augments the operations of the Hearing Voices Networks in each state of Australia, stimulating growth, awareness, and promoting the Hearing Voices Movement and its purpose on an national basis”***

Or something else along those lines.

## **National Structure Options**

In Joe Calleja's paper "**Options for Establishing HVNA as an Organisational Entity**", Joe identified the 3 options available to us in moving forward with a National Entity.

These are:

- **Option A** - Remain an auspiced unincorporated network supported by RFWA.
- **Option B** – Establish a national incorporated body
- **Option C** – Form a company limited by guarantee.

These options need to be considered in tandem with the comments under "Overview" and "Role" above.

Attached is a chart depicting a framework structure.

There are many issues and complexities associated with each, which will need to be investigated and with appropriate legal advice.

### **Option A**

This current structure could be retained; however the lack of a "legal entity" would preclude a number of potential key elements of the desired role, eg National Funding etc. It also does not give rise to a "consumer driven" organisation, if, in fact we see that as a pre-requisite.

### **Option B & C**

Essentially, both these options could provide a sound entity base for the national network. A national incorporated body lends itself more to a "membership" controlled framework than a company, however it could be achieved with a company but perhaps a bit more complex.

Again, the ultimate structure of each state network would lend weight to which of these may or may not be more suitable than the other. This issue needs to be addressed up front, and the outcome will lay the platform for the preferred approach.

With both these options comes a degree of responsibility, accountability and risk for those who will administer the National Entity, be it as a director, office bearer and/or committee member.

Individuals should seek independent advice as to their potential exposure in this regard.

### **Ownership and Board**

Each state network, as an entity, represents the interests of its membership base in their particular state.

Therefore, each state “entity” would have an equal share in the “ownership” of the national entity.

As new state networks are established, they would receive an equal share of the ownership ‘pie’.

The basis of ownership will differ between option B and C but the result and intent will be the same.

In regard to the board or management committee, each state would be entitled to equal representation, and hence voting rights.

Owners of the national entity would be restricted to HVN state entities. Members of the board/management committee would be restricted to nominated representatives from each state network. Individuals/independents would not be eligible to sit on the board/management committee.

### **What Next**

At some point we will need to document our broad agreement on the “essential elements” of a national structure. This could be in a simple deed or memorandum of understanding.

We would prepare a brief for legal scrutiny, advice and preparation of the agreement. Once this is done, we can formulate an action plan.

In the first instance, a phone hook up to discuss this paper (and anything else) would be a starting point.