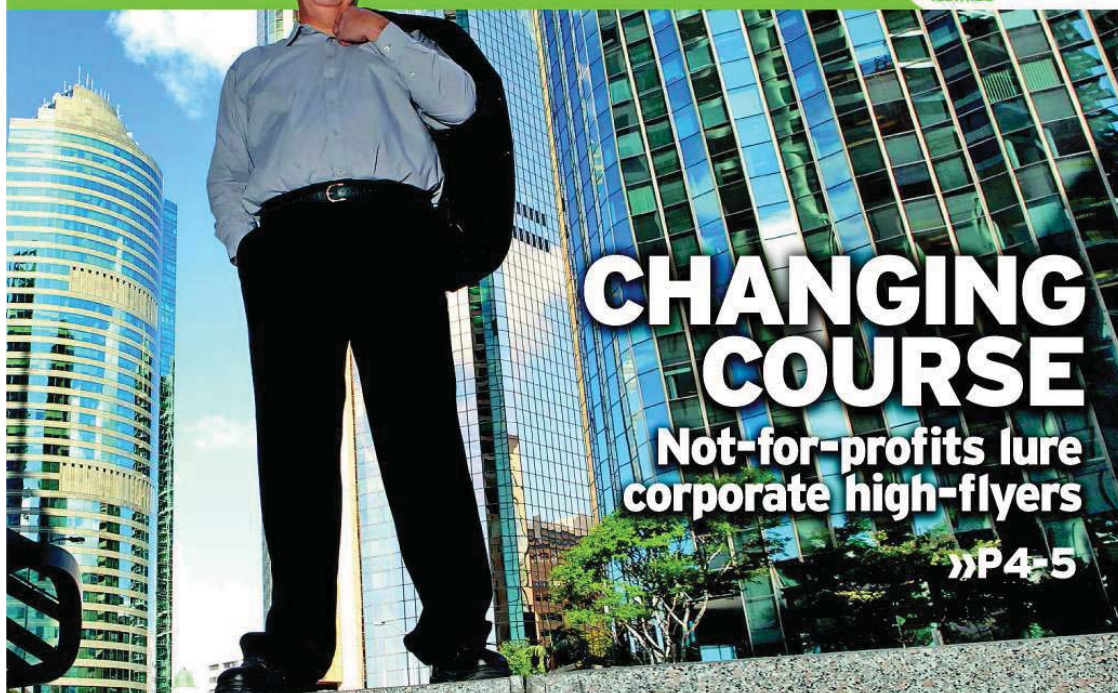




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# In business for a need, not greed

More high-flyers are giving up the buzz of big business to try and make a difference, writes **Fran Metcalf**

FROM the cut and thrust of boardroom deal-clinching to the frugal world of government-funded social services.

That's the move that Robert Hannaford made when he left his six-figure income in the corporate sphere to take a job at less than half the salary with not-for-profit organisation, Kyabra Community Association.

Asked by a corporate colleague to join the board of Kyabra, Hannaford identified a glaring difference between the high-flying life he was leading and the needy lives of those treated worst in society.

"Kyabra's board was dealing with people who had no homes, children who were abused – all kinds of abuse," he says.

"I felt I needed to do something. It was not a mid-life crisis but I wanted to make a difference.

"I needed to use my skills to help the organisation look after other people."

Hannaford is an example of a growing trend in the not-for-profit sector, says Queensland University of Technology management senior lecturer Dr Cameron Newton.

The sector is shedding its long-standing reputation as a breeding ground for altruistic do-gooders by seeking and attracting top corporate performers.

"The sector is definitely undergoing a change towards more corporatisation, more thinking about their organisations as businesses," Newton says.



"There's a displacement of services from government to the not-for-profit area and as the funding to organisations increases to provide those services, there is some spectacular growth and, with that, the need to really start thinking like corporations."

Hannaford eventually left his six-figure job in the construction industry to take a position at Kyabra which paid \$45,000 a year.

Since then, he's used his business networks, corporate know-how and experience to create two income-generating companies for the organisation. One is Lighthouse Resources which provides training for community and social services workers and the other is Livingin Independent Living which builds homes for ageing people and those with disabilities.

"I joined the Kyabra board to contribute and it's just grown from there," Hannaford says.

Unlike Hannaford, Mark Henley has only ever known the not-for-profit sector, starting at the Spinal Injuries Association as an accountant more than 20 years ago and moving up the ranks to his current post of chief executive officer.

"There's been enormous changes in the organisation in the number of services we provide and the growth of those services," Henley says.

When he joined the organisation, there were about 10 staff providing two services to about 400 members and clients throughout Queensland.

"Twenty years ago we operated out of the downstairs area of a building zoned by council as car park," he says.

"We would pull up the roller door and there was the reception. You would wonder where the next dollar was coming from and whether you could pay the wages each fortnight."

These days, Henley oversees 600 staff and 2000 members and clients throughout Queensland.

One of the biggest changes to services under his leadership has been the focus on getting people with spinal injuries back to work.

"The employment service has evolved from being a sheltered workshop-style environment," Henley says.

"We said we didn't support it about 15 years ago and that we believed people should be working in an open environment.

"Over 100 clients in that service are going into every day jobs. We have one person who is a horse trainer, one who is an architect. We have lawyers and accountants and blue collar workers too."

Henley says it's fulfilling work and has become specialised as well as highly skilled.

"A lot of people think they want to work in the not-for-profit industry because they might find a cushy job without high demand but they would be wrong," he says.

"It's rewarding but there's high levels of expectations and demand for quality work.

"Expertise is required in every job these days and the not-for-profit sector is no different.

"We treat it as a business just like any other business."

Apart from the employment service, the association now provides a range of services to people with spinal injuries including in-hospital support by people who have suffered spinal injuries themselves, in-home care for 400 people throughout Queensland, an information service, equipment hire and advice on health and lifestyle issues from workers who have backgrounds in occupational therapy, physiotherapy, nursing and more.

SIA also provides advocacy for members facing discrimination, access or other issues as well as an injury prevention arm which involves talking to 110,000 school children across the state each year and community-based programs which link into local councils and services.

It's become a diverse organisation, Henley says, and one which expects high outcomes for its members.

"NFPs are focussed on service delivery and sustainability whereas

commercial businesses are interested in profit and their return on investment but as far as the issues each face, they are similar," he says.

"We all face workforce issues. staff engagement, professional development, marketing and promoting our businesses, partnering etc etc so we can grow our businesses."

Henley says he'd move to the corporate world if he felt the same passion for his work.

"I hear people say that they feel the corporate world is too money driven and that they lack a sense of purpose," he says. "Working for the Spinal Injuries Association offers a reality check in life – no room for egos."

Every once in a while Hannaford misses the buzz of the big end of town but the 55-year-old is finding ways to mesh his corporate networks and experience with his professional life while helping those most in need.

Livingin has joined a venture with QUT and the Design Institute of Australia to build accessible houses, not just for the disabled but for the aged as well.

"That's the area where I put my corporate skills the most to good use," Hannaford says.

"We really want to be part of the solution for government in dealing with the ageing population.

"Business people want to help but they don't know how. I offer ways they could contribute through products, teaching skills and developing those things that not-for-profits don't have.

"All our Livingin houses are being built by people from Skilling Queensland who have been long-term unemployed and who are learning construction skills and what it's like to be part of the work force.

"I'm constantly looking for things that could make money for the organisation so it can make more programs and appoint more staff and help more people."

More info at [www.livingin.org.au](http://www.livingin.org.au) and [www.spinal.com.au](http://www.spinal.com.au).

