

**MAGAZINE #99**

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# Charities are a powerful ally to corporates

*The Conscious Consumer Research Report 2023 reveals just how much nonprofits can help companies solve social problems and gain credibility to win customer loyalty*

By [Georgia McIntosh](#)



In a post-pandemic world, what do Australians think about companies and brands doing good and supporting charities? Do Australians believe corporates are greedy and ruthless or do they believe corporates have the greatest potential to solve social problems? Do they want companies to partner with nonprofits and will they switch brands to support a cause they care about?

Australians — whether they're employees, shareholders, activists or consumers of products and services — influence corporate behaviour.

We commissioned research to uncover the attitudes of Australian consumers about the role corporates and brands play in solving social problems and how they should go about it. Our findings reveal that Australians want more action from corporates and brands, and better communication around corporate social responsibility (CSR). They believe that corporates are not doing enough and that those doing good are not communicating it well.

# GROWING ANGER AT INACTION

Australians are overwhelmed and concerned by the big issues — climate change, political unrest, AI and social inequality, to name a few. Additionally, there are day-to-day issues such as job security, rising interest rates, soaring rent, food costs and so on. These stressors are fuelling public anger at companies for not doing enough to protect the environment and benefit society. The Conscious Consumer Research Report 2023 reveals that Australians' anger at corporate inaction is growing. While overwhelmed, they're not helpless. Australians know they can influence corporate behaviour through the tools at their disposal — their wallet, skills and voice.

Australians will switch brands to support those doing good and boycott those that are not. They will refuse a job or quit if the company has a poor reputation in CSR. And they will leverage their voice via social media to spread positive stories about companies doing good and negative stories about those stuck in the old model of 'profit no matter what'.

Once a small minority of activist citizens, the Conscious Consumer movement is now a global phenomenon that spans the generations. Our research confirms that it's alive and kicking in Australia. Consumers are demanding a systemic reset. They want corporations, companies and brands to evolve. They want business to not just meet inadequate legal obligations or address their impact on society and the environment, but become active agents of change. They want to do business with companies that take responsibility for their impacts on society and vigorously take action to make things better.

This is a significant opportunity for nonprofit organisations. You are already working at the frontline, addressing social and environmental problems, and you know the solutions required. It's time to fully embrace partnering with corporates (rather than just taking a donation) and demonstrate that you are a powerful ally in helping companies meet consumer expectation as well as engendering customer loyalty, inspiring staff and engaging the public through powerful storytelling.

## A SNAPSHOT OF THE FINDINGS

### Corporates need to be held accountable

The research found that 88% of Australians believe companies should be made more accountable with bigger fines when causing damage to the environment or society. Amidst the cost-of-living crisis with Aussies donating less to charity, 76% agreed that companies should step in and invest more in charities.

Rising anger is evident. Some 70% of Australians believe corporates are greedy and ruthless — that all they care about is profit and they'll do anything to get it, even damage society and the environment in the process. And it's not just their behaviour they're angry at. Consumers have something to say about the way corporates communicate their social and environmental activism too. A hefty 76% agree that it's good when a company or brand use its promotional channels to amplify a topical cause or issue, but if they can't see a genuine commitment to that cause, it's just a PR stunt or 'wokewashing'. Australians can spot a PR stunt when they see one.

## Charities gives credibility

When Australians see a corporate or brand getting behind a cause, 72% agreed that its more genuine and credible if they're partnering with a charity or nonprofit to effect social change. When asked the ways in which consumers prefer a company or brand to support a charity, partnership came out on top: 46% of Australians said they preferred a "long-term partnership giving cash and a range of resources to achieve a specific goal" such as planting a million trees or funding a crisis line; 36% want companies to provide valuable products to charity (food, computers, transport etc); and 28% are keen to see a product promotion (cause related marketing). Clearly goal-based, visible partnerships between corporates and causes is very much desired by consumers. And companies are intent on giving consumers what they want. So be ready!.

### Definition of a Conscious Consumer

Conscious Consumerism is a broad term, which simply means having more awareness of how your consumption impacts society at large and using the power of your purchase to bring about change. In our research, we focus on CSR within business models and, in particular, doing good through partnering with charities.

## Switching to support a charity

How much does aligning with a charity influence consumer purchase behaviour? In the past year, 27% of Australians have switched from their normal product or service because of support for a charity they care about. This rose to 37% amongst Millennials (aged 29-43), who are the largest consumer group.

In the coming year, 54% of Australians said they would 'Definitely/Probably' switch brands to support a cause they care about. We know from prior research and anecdotal evidence that survey responders who state 'Definitely/ Probably' are very likely to follow through with the behaviour in real-life situations.

## Top 5 causes prompting a switch

What causes prompt this switching behaviour? As Australians are concerned about a range of both global and local issues, there was no clear 'winner'. 'Climate Change/Global Warming' tied first with 'Healthcare: Illness Prevention and Medical Research' at 18%. 'Environmental Conservation/Reducing Waste & Pollution' followed closely at 17%. Next came 'Mental Health Services' (16%) and 'Domestic & Family Violence' (16%).

## WHAT THIS MEANS FOR NONPROFITS

The research confirms that Australians want corporates to take tangible action to solve social problems — and partnering with a cause or charity is the way to go.

Too many nonprofits operate from a scarcity mindset, obsessing over what they lack, be it time, money, or resources. This gives power to corporates. I witness nonprofits giving away their valuable brand for far less than it's worth, essentially allowing corporates to dictate the terms.

With these statistics in your arsenal, it's time to step into your true power. A reframe of how corporates view nonprofits and how nonprofits view themselves is necessary. A charity isn't a needy beneficiary but a potent partner that can help companies meet consumer expectations, solve social problems, engender customer loyalty, motivate staff, differentiate a brand, increase engagement through emotive stories and much more.

## HOW TO USE THE STATS

If you are in those top five causes, you need to communicate to current and prospective corporate partners that your cause can motivate Australians to switch brands to support you. Use the statistics in our report to demonstrate that your cause is front of mind for Australians and that it's not just a 'feel good' opinion — it's playing out at the checkout when they purchase goods and services.

The most important question for your cause is this: Are you ready to form mutually beneficial partnerships with corporates and brands?

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To determine your organisational readiness to partner, give our free Readiness Q&A a go: <https://www.bepartnerready.com/readinessq&a>

*The Conscious Consumer Report 2023 can be downloaded free. You're welcome to cite any of these statistics on your website or in presentations to corporate prospects, however, ensure to reference the stat otherwise it lacks validity: The Conscious Consumer Report 2023, SenateSHJ/BePartnerReady.com®, October 2023*



## **The Research Methodology**

The Conscious Consumer Research Report 2023 contains 20 statistics and insights, covering corporate behaviour, corporate communication and consumer behaviour. The online survey took place in mid-July 2023. We used a sample size of 1000 Australians resembling our population by gender, age, state and location. It's normal practice to extrapolate the findings to apply to the total population.