Visual Media Association

Vypr




# Giving That Connects:

## The Role of Mail in Driving Trust and Donations in the Charity Sector

**November 2026**

# In brief

Australians are not short of goodwill towards charities. The Vypr research finds that **92% donate at least sometimes**, yet only **12% give monthly**. The stronger opportunity is therefore not simply to find people willing to give, however to understand what turns goodwill into confident action.

Across the evidence, trust is the connecting thread. In the Vypr research, **38%** say trusting the charity is likely to make them donate, **39%** want a clear explanation of where their money goes and **45%** are motivated by personally caring about the cause. Roy Morgan's broader trust research also places established charities firmly within Australia's trusted brand landscape.

Physical mail has a useful role in that trust journey because it earns time and creates a tangible point of reference. Two independent studies produce almost the same result: **67%** of Australians in the Vypr study open addressed charity mail and look through or read most of it, while Open Up To Mail reports that **69%** of charity-letter recipients review the mail they receive.

That does not make this a mail-versus-digital story. Digital channels provide speed and convenience, while physical mail can help create recognition, legitimacy and a reason to engage. In the Vypr findings, **37%** would visit a charity website after receiving a physical appeal that interests them and **25%** would search for the charity online first. At the same time, **62%** say scam concerns often or very often stop them clicking donation links in email, text or social media.

The opportunity is therefore a connected donor journey: use mail to make the cause tangible, demonstrate impact and establish confidence; then make digital verification and donation simple. The strongest appeal is not defined by one channel. It is defined by how well trust, relevance and action are joined together.

# Highlights



**Trust and transparency are conversion factors: 38%** nominate trust in the charity and **39%** a clear explanation of where the money goes as reasons likely to make them donate.

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**Two independent studies converge on charity-mail engagement: 67%** in the Vypr research open and review or read addressed charity mail; Open Up To Mail reports **69%** of charity-letter recipients review it.

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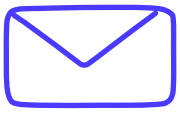

**Physical mail has staying power:** Open Up To Mail finds nearly four in ten charity-letter recipients file the material for future reference, extending the opportunity beyond the first exposure.

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**Mail can trigger digital action: 37%** would visit the charity's website after an interesting physical appeal, **25%** would search for the organisation online and **21%** would use online or mobile banking.

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**Digital convenience comes with verification friction: 62%** say scam concerns often or very often stop them clicking donation links through digital channels, reinforcing the value of recognisable, credible touchpoints.

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# Methodology

This report brings together three complementary evidence sources to provide a broader view of trust, charity communications and donor action in Australia. The sources use different samples, question wording and research methods, so figures are not combined into a single statistical estimate.

The Vypr findings are based on research conducted in August 2026 with a sample of 200 Australian consumers per research question, weighted to population data across age and gender. The survey provides directional evidence on donation behaviour, channel attention, trust, engagement and response.

Open Up To Mail is a multi-year Australian and New Zealand research program commissioned by the Visual Media Association and conducted by independent insights firm The Source. The 2025 national Australian research cited in this report involved more than 5,000 respondents and provides larger-sample context for letterbox use, trust, digital fatigue and charity-mail engagement.

Roy Morgan's Risk Monitor continuously measures trust and distrust across more than 1,000 brands and 27 industries. Its 2026 Trusted Brand Awards and charity-sector trust analysis are used here as external context for the importance of organisational credibility and social licence.

## To conduct the Vypr research, we used the following:

**Sample Size and Question Types:** We conducted surveys with a robust, national representative sample of 200 consumers. This sample size ensures the data is representative of the broader population, allowing us to draw meaningful conclusions across different demographics.

**Single and Multi-Answer Multiple Choice Questions:** These questions offered respondents a range of predefined options, enabling us to measure consumer preference and behaviours with precision.

# Executive summary

The clearest way to read the research is through the donor decision rather than through a contest between channels. Australians are already willing to give: **92% donate at least sometimes**. The question for charities is how communications can turn that broad willingness into action by establishing relevance, trust and confidence.

Trust and transparency sit at the centre of that decision. In the Vypr study, **45%** say personally caring about the cause is likely to make them donate, **39%** want clarity about where their money goes and **38%** need to trust the charity. These are not channel mechanics; they are the conditions that need to be created before the donation ask can succeed.

Mail has a meaningful role because it can create a tangible, recognisable moment of engagement. The Vypr study finds **67%** open addressed charity mail and look through or read most of it. Open Up To Mail independently reports that **69%** of charity-letter recipients review the material they receive, while nearly four in ten file it for future reference.

Addressing and relevance matter. In the Vypr findings, **15%** are most likely to pay attention to addressed charity mail compared with **3%** for unaddressed mail, while trust rises from 2% for unaddressed mail to **19%** for addressed mail. The difference suggests that recognition, targeting and personal relevance strengthen the credibility signal.

Digital remains essential to the journey, particularly as a response and verification channel. After receiving a physical appeal that interests them, **37%** would visit the charity website, **25%** would search for the organisation online and **21%** would use online or mobile banking. At the same time, **62%** say scam concerns often or very often stop them clicking digital donation links.

The strongest strategy is therefore connected rather than channel-specific. Mail can create attention, legitimacy and a reason to care; digital can support verification, provide more information and make the donation easy to complete. The opportunity is to design the entire donor journey around trust and action.

# Trust Is the Starting Point for Giving

The results are most useful when viewed through the donor decision rather than as a comparison between channels. Several findings can appear weaker when respondents are required to choose a single “most likely” channel. A more useful interpretation is to follow the donor decision itself: relevance, trust, attention, verification and then action.

This matters because charitable giving is unusually dependent on confidence. People are transferring money on the promise that an organisation will use it for a social purpose. The appeal therefore has to make both the cause and the organisation feel credible before a response mechanism can do its job.

Roy Morgan provides useful external context. Its 2026 Trusted Brand Awards named The Salvation Army as Charity of the Year, reinforcing that established charities can occupy a strong position in Australia’s trust landscape. The practical implication is that trust is an asset to be actively built and protected throughout the donor journey.

### Caring, clarity and trust are the strongest donation triggers

The leading drivers in the Vypr research are fundamental: **45%** are most likely to donate when they personally care about the cause, **39%** want a clear explanation of where the money goes and **38%** need to trust the charity. Demonstrating what a donation can achieve is also important at **28%**.

This suggests the strongest appeal should answer three questions quickly: why should I care, what will my contribution achieve and why should I trust this organisation? Tactical devices can support the response, however they are unlikely to create motivation without those foundations.

**What is most likely to make people donate after a charity appeal?**

% choosing each reason (respondents could pick several)

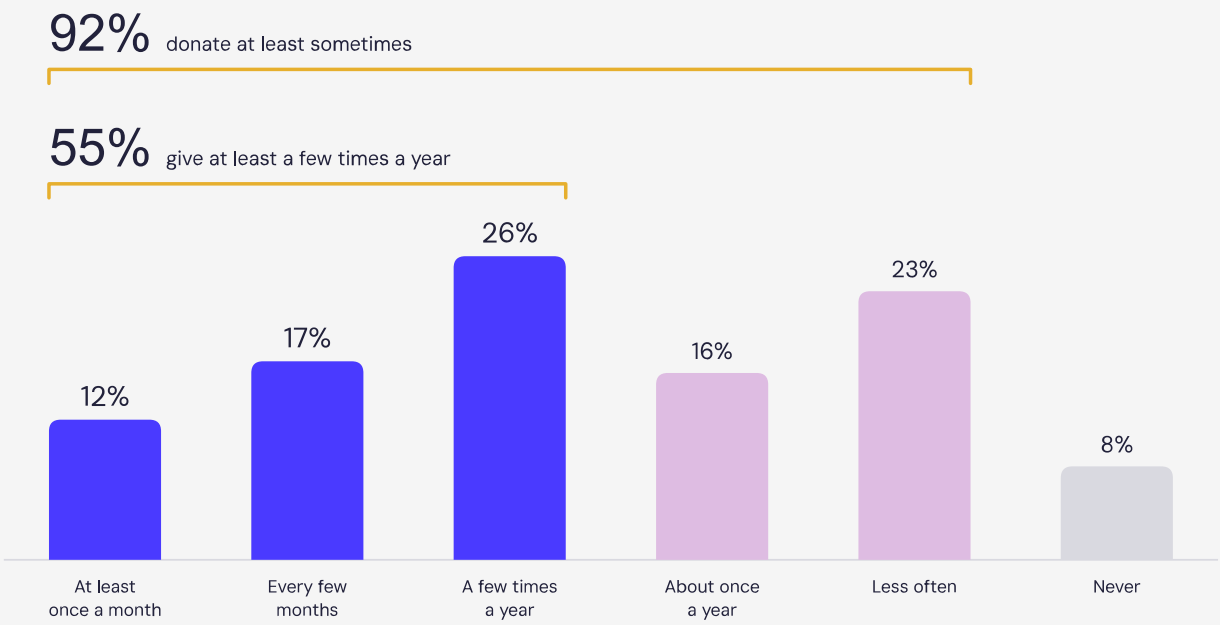


## Giving is widespread, however much of it is occasional

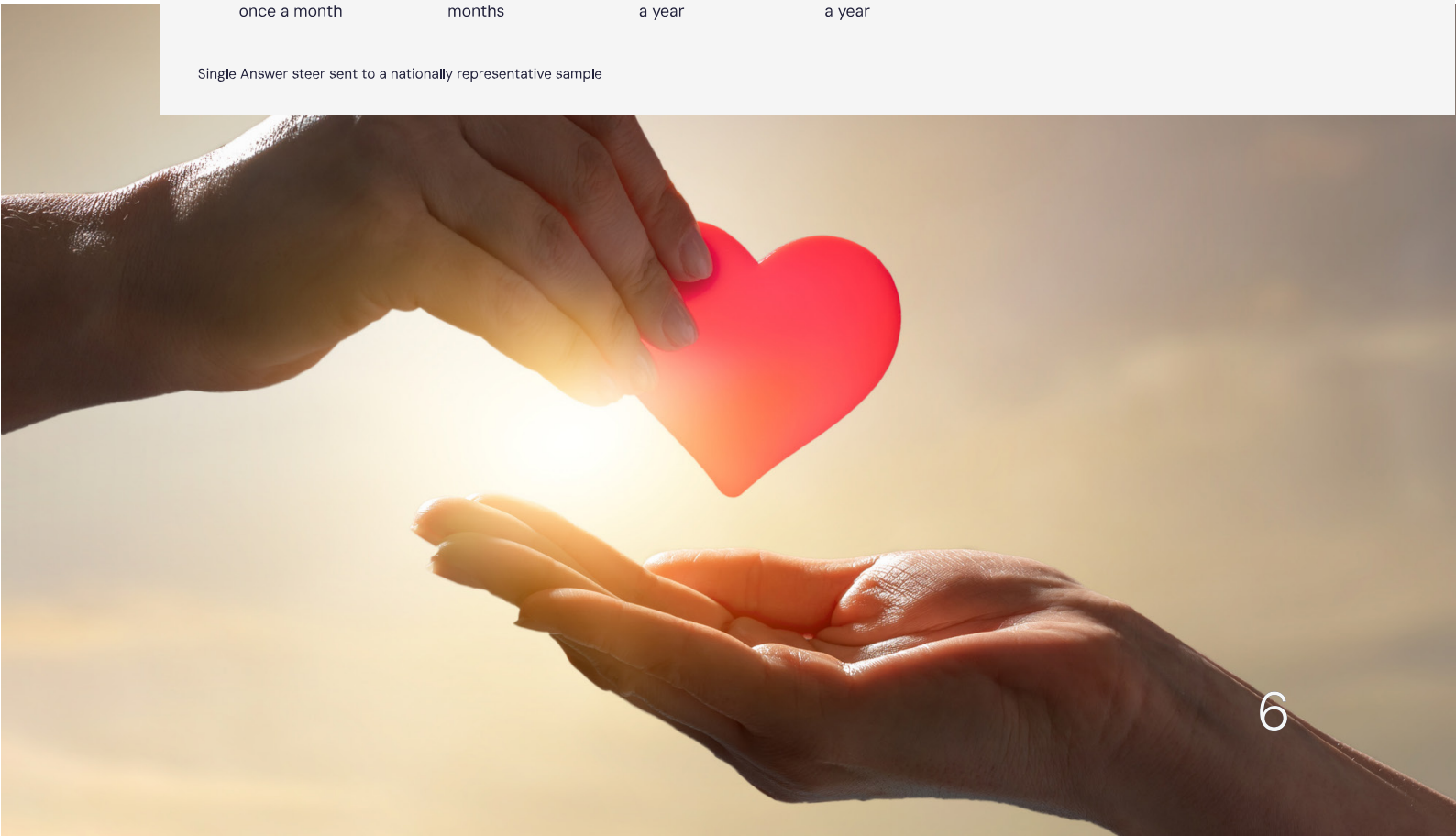
While **92%** of Australians donate at least sometimes, only **12%** give monthly. More than half give at least a few times a year, meaning the market includes a substantial group that is already open to giving however needs the right cause, message and moment to act.

That reframes the growth opportunity. The task is not simply to recruit entirely new donors; it is also to give occasional donors more compelling reasons to engage, verify and respond when an appeal reaches them.

**How often do people donate money to charity?**




Single Answer steer sent to a nationally representative sample



# Mail Earns Attention and a Place in the Home

The strongest validation of the Vypr findings comes from Open Up To Mail. In the Vypr study, **67%** open an addressed charity letter and either briefly look through it or read most of it. Open Up To Mail, using a much larger research base, reports that **69%** of charity-letter recipients review the material they receive.

The near-identical result across two separate studies is more compelling than either figure on its own. It suggests that charity mail is routinely reviewed once it enters the home, even when it is not the channel through which the final donation is completed.

### Physical mail creates a longer engagement window

Open Up To Mail also shows that charity letters are not always disposed of after first contact. Nearly four in ten recipients file them for future reference, and earlier findings show that charity letters can be kept in visible or “to-do” locations around the home.

The Vypr results tell a similar story. 18% put an appeal aside to look at later, **18%** discuss it with someone else and **16%** keep it somewhere visible. This means the value of a physical appeal can extend beyond the first read and beyond immediate response.

For causes that rely on reflection and emotional connection, that additional time can be valuable. The letter can become a physical reminder that is revisited when the recipient has more time, when a household discussion occurs or when they are ready to give.

### Impact-led content earns the strongest attention

The strongest message in the Vypr study is not a particular format or creative device. **51%** say clear examples of what donations achieve are most likely to capture their attention. Emotional engagement is strongest when the cause has affected the recipient or someone they know at **47%**, and when the appeal shows exactly what the donation could achieve at **44%**.

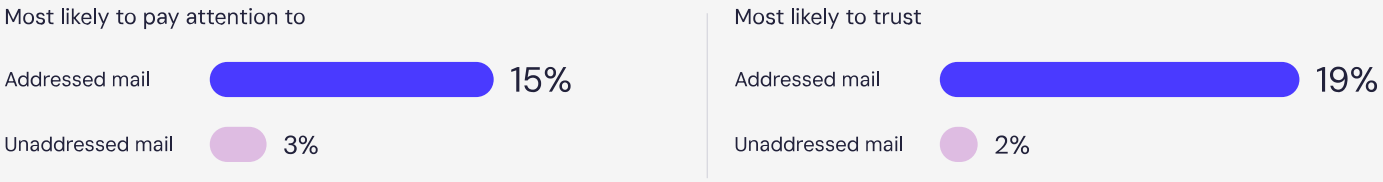
The strongest physical appeals should therefore lead with substance. A response device can make acting easier, however the communication first needs to give people a compelling reason to care by making the human outcome of their contribution clear.

# Relevance and Addressing Strengthen the Trust Signal

The Vypr results show a sharp difference between addressed and unaddressed charity mail. When asked which channel they are most likely to pay attention to, **15%** select addressed physical mail compared with **3%** for unaddressed mail. On trust, the difference is **19%** versus **2%**.

These figures are better read as evidence about relevance and recognition than as a verdict on physical media overall. An addressed letter carries cues that the organisation knows who it is speaking to and has made a deliberate contact.

### Which charity mail format do people notice and trust?




Single Answer steer sent to a nationally representative sample

## Personal relevance matters more than generic reach

For charities, this makes targeting, database quality, personalisation and a recognisable sender identity central to performance. Simply reaching the letterbox is not enough; the communication needs to look intentional, credible and relevant to the person receiving it.

This is particularly important for established charities, where familiarity can reinforce trust, however it also matters for organisations seeking new supporters. A relevant cause and clear proof of impact can help a less familiar organisation overcome the absence of an existing relationship.

## Trust signals need to be visible throughout the appeal

Recognisable branding, clear charity identification, transparent use-of-funds information and obvious ways to verify the organisation all help reduce uncertainty. The appeal should make it easy for a recipient to confirm that the request is genuine without interrupting the emotional connection created by the story.

# Mail and Digital Solve Different Parts of the Same Problem

The data does not support an either-or channel strategy. It supports a sequence. Digital channels are convenient and familiar, however they can also create hesitation when the request involves money. In the Vypr research, **62%** say scam concerns often or very often stop them clicking donation links in email, text or social media, and **90%** say this happens at least sometimes.

Physical mail can therefore play a useful verification role before the donor moves online. The appeal can create recognition, explain the cause and establish legitimacy, while the website or banking channel provides a convenient way to research or donate.

### A physical appeal can be the beginning of a digital journey

After receiving a physical charity appeal that interests them, **37%** say they would visit the charity's website, **25%** would search for the charity online first and **21%** would donate using online or mobile banking. The physical appeal is not competing with the website; it can be the reason the website visit happens.

This distinction is important when measuring channel performance. If the donation is recorded online, the communication that created the attention, reassurance or emotional motivation may have occurred somewhere else.

### Integrated journeys are already preferred by many donors

When communication preferences are considered together, **33%** select some form of combined physical-and-digital journey: 18% prefer a combination, **9%** prefer physical mail followed by digital and **6%** prefer digital followed by physical.

The implication is not that every donor needs the same sequence. Younger donors are generally more receptive to digital touchpoints, while addressed mail becomes more prominent among older groups. The strongest plan varies the path without changing the core trust story.

# From Trust to Action: Designing the Donor Journey

A stronger way to tell the overall story is to map the evidence onto the donor journey: first make the cause relevant, then establish trust, earn attention, make verification easy and provide a convenient route to action.

This model resolves the apparent tension in results where relatively few people select physical mail as their only preferred response channel. Mail can still be highly valuable if its role is to create the confidence and motivation that lead to a digital search, website visit or donation.

### Lead with impact, not process

Show exactly what a donation can achieve and make that proof specific enough to feel real. Beneficiary stories, tangible outcomes and transparent use-of-funds information should do the heavy lifting before the appeal asks the recipient to act.

### Design deliberately for mail-to-digital movement

A short URL, search-friendly charity name, clear website identity and QR code can make it easy to move from a physical appeal to an online donation without forcing the donor to act immediately. The physical communication should remain useful even days or weeks after delivery.

### Plan for delayed action and multiple response routes

Because charity letters are often retained, the creative should still make sense when revisited later. Donors should be able to respond in the way that feels most comfortable, whether that is a website, online banking, a physical form, QR code or another route.

The strongest fundraising strategy is therefore not channel-first. It is donor-first: understand who is being targeted, what they need to trust the appeal and which sequence of physical and digital touchpoints makes the journey easiest to complete.



# Key takeaways



Here are some of the top strategic takeaways for brands:

1. **Trust is the starting point**
   Australians are most likely to donate when they care personally about the cause, understand where their money goes and trust the organisation. Communications should establish those conditions before asking for action.

2. **Charity mail is being read, not simply delivered**
   Two independent studies converge: **67%** in the Vypr research open and review or read addressed charity mail, while Open Up To Mail reports **69%** of charity-letter recipients review the material they receive.

3. **Addressed and relevant mail sends a stronger credibility signal**
   Addressed mail substantially outperforms unaddressed mail for both attention and trust in the Vypr research. Targeting, recognition and personal relevance matter to how the communication is received.

4. **Mail can create the moment; digital can complete the action**
   A physical appeal can trigger online research, website visits and digital donations. Measuring channels only by where the final transaction happens risks overlooking the earlier touchpoints that created trust and motivation.

5. **The strongest donor journey is connected**
   Mail and digital should be assigned complementary roles. Mail can create a tangible, trusted point of engagement; digital can support verification, information and convenient response.

# Conclusion

The evidence tells a more positive and more useful story when it is viewed through trust rather than through a simple contest between channels. Australians remain willing to support charities, however the decision to donate depends on relevance, transparency and confidence in the organisation.

Physical mail has a meaningful role because it creates a tangible and recognisable point of contact, is routinely reviewed once it enters the home and can remain available for later consideration. Open Up To Mail strengthens the Vypr findings by independently showing very similar levels of charity-mail engagement and evidence of retention in the home.

Digital channels remain essential, particularly for verification and donation, however scam concerns can create hesitation. That makes the relationship between physical and digital especially important: a trusted physical appeal can create the reason to engage, while digital provides the fastest route to research and action.