



**Discussion Paper:  
Towards a National Volunteer Strategy**

**September 2008**

Authorised By:  
Cary Pedicini  
Chief Executive Officer  
Volunteering Australia  
Suite 2, Level 3  
11 Queens Road  
MELBOURNE VIC 3004  
P: (03) 9820 4100  
F: (03) 9820 1206  
[www.volunteeringaustralia.org](http://www.volunteeringaustralia.org)  
cary.pedicini@volunteeringaustralia.org

# CONTENTS

|          |  |           |
|----------|--|-----------|
| <b>1</b> | <b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....</b>   | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>2</b> | <b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>  | <b>4</b>  |
| <b>3</b> | <b>ABOUT VOLUNTEERING IN AUSTRALIA .....</b>   | <b>4</b>  |
| <b>4</b> | <b>RATIONALE FOR A NATIONAL STRATEGY ON VOLUNTEERING .....</b>                           | <b>6</b>  |
| 4.1      | <i>EMERGING NATIONAL PERSPECTIVES .....</i>  | 6         |
| 4.2      | <i>VOLUNTEER RELATED GOVERNMENT ACTIVITY: ACTION PLANS, LEGISLATION AND REFORM .....</i> | 7         |
| 4.3      | <i>REGULATORY REFORM.....</i>  | 8         |
| 4.4      | <i>CORPORATE PARTNERSHIPS: SUPPORT BEYOND GOVERNMENT.....</i>                            | 9         |
| 4.5      | <i>A NATIONAL VOICE FOR A NATIONAL STRATEGY .....</i>                                    | 9         |
| <b>5</b> | <b>BEYOND A NATIONAL AGENDA ON VOLUNTEERING .....</b>                                    | <b>11</b> |
| <b>6</b> | <b>RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NATIONAL VOLUNTEER STRATEGY .....</b>        | <b>12</b> |
| <b>7</b> | <b>CONCLUSION .....</b>  | <b>13</b> |
|          | <b>APPENDIX 1: ABOUT VOLUNTEERING AUSTRALIA – AN OVERVIEW.....</b>                       | <b>14</b> |
|          | GoVOLUNTEER.....   | 14        |
|          | RESEARCH SUPPORT UNIT.....   | 14        |
|          | POLICY SUPPORT UNIT .....  | 16        |
|          | MANAGEMENT OF THE NATIONAL VOLUNTEER SKILLS CENTRE (NVSC).....                           | 17        |
|          | <b>APPENDIX 2: DEFINITION AND PRINCIPLES OF VOLUNTEERING .....</b>                       | <b>18</b> |
|          | DEFINITION OF FORMAL VOLUNTEERING .....  | 18        |
|          | PRINCIPLES OF VOLUNTEERING.....  | 18        |

## 1 Executive Summary

A strong and vibrant volunteer sector is one of the most effective mechanisms Government can employ to further a Social Inclusion agenda in Australian society for the benefit of individuals, communities and government alike. The legacy of the volunteer sector is strong but complacency about the constraints under which the sector currently operates and the future challenges it will face, undermines its sustainability.

Notwithstanding significant advances made over the past decade, Volunteering Australia believes there remain considerable opportunities to improve the effectiveness and efficiencies of volunteer support infrastructure through greater cooperation between the sector and all levels of government.

To this end, Volunteering Australia, as the national peak body for volunteering in Australia, is calling for the development of a National Volunteer Strategy that will engage the sector and gain the support of all levels of government. As an outcome of the International Year of the Volunteer 2001, a *National Agenda on Volunteering* was developed by Volunteering Australia. This comprehensive action plan lays the groundwork for a new National Volunteer Strategy that establishes a long term vision for the sector.

In the spirit of “co-operative federalism”, a National Volunteer Strategy would provide connection and co-ordination across governments to better support the depth and breadth of the volunteer sector and use resources more effectively. A National Volunteer Strategy would focus on co-ordinating research, consultation with the sector and implementation of reforms to support the sector at an organisational and individual level. A truly national strategy must provide an opportunity for coordinated policy development and decision-making at the national, state and local levels that will be reflected in specific national, state and local actions.

To this end, Volunteering Australia recommends the following:

1. That all levels of government make an in principle commitment to the development of a National Volunteer Strategy with a long term vision to strengthen volunteering in Australia;
2. That an appropriate level of government funding be allocated to support the development and ongoing viability of a National Volunteer Strategy;
3. That a National Volunteer Strategy be sector-driven with input and support from all stakeholders – community, government and business;
4. That the development of a National Volunteer Strategy would serve to expand volunteering infrastructure of national, state and regional organisations avoiding duplication of resources in the creation of parallel infrastructure.

## **2 Introduction**

This discussion paper will:

- Present an overview of the current state of volunteering in Australia;
- Provide a rationale for the development of National Volunteer Strategy;
- Identify the challenges and opportunities for the volunteering sector;
- Outline the focus of a National Volunteer Strategy.

Volunteering has a high social value and is critically important in maintaining social capital. It should be viewed within the broader context of civic engagement, community participation and social inclusion.

While recognising that volunteering is only one mechanism by which social capital develops, community capacity grows and citizens become engaged, the unique role of formal volunteering needs to be recognised and supported by Government as does the more informal forms of voluntary participation and engagement.

Formal volunteering structures and opportunities are an effective means by which people join together in groups to provide a service or generate activities for others, and at the same time find expression of their own citizenship. Many of the services provided by the Australian community service, health and welfare sectors are underpinned by the work and contribution of volunteers, not to mention the important role of volunteers in providing safe and enjoyable community environments through their work in the emergency services, sport and recreation sectors and the environment.

This is not to say that informal participation and mechanisms for broader civic engagement are not important or valid. Indeed they are critical and more study into the linkages between formal and informal participation and the creation of social capital and strong communities is needed.

Protecting and building on the contribution of volunteers requires that public policy and legislation recognise and are supportive of volunteering, and that investment in the volunteering sector itself is geared towards building the capacity of the sector and sustaining it.

## **3 About Volunteering in Australia**

In Australia there are more than five million active volunteers over the age of 18. They represent around 34% of the adult population and between them provide approximately 713 million volunteer hours per annum<sup>1</sup>. The volunteer sector is a key contributor to the social and economic well-being of Australia. In 2000,

---

<sup>1</sup> Voluntary Work, Australia, 4441.0, 2006 Australian Bureau of Statistics

Ironmonger estimated that volunteering was responsible for around \$42 billion of economic activity annually<sup>2</sup>. A national extrapolation of Ironmonger's recent research on the economic value of volunteering in Queensland<sup>3</sup> suggests that this figure increased to \$70 billion in 2006.

ABS data from 1999-2000 shows that although most not for profit organisations do not have paid staff, they are responsible for 3.3% of GDP, and if you include the financial value of volunteer activity the figure rises to 4.7%<sup>4</sup>. Ironmonger's most recent research estimates the value of volunteering to be at or above 7% of GDP for 2006<sup>5</sup>.

Volunteering in Australia is an ever-adapting movement. Volunteers are strongly represented across areas of diversity including gender, age, ethnicity, and disability as well as educational and economic divides.

Though ABS data shows that the total number of volunteers has increased over recent years<sup>6</sup>, a recent Volunteering Australia survey shows that almost one in five organisational respondents have experienced a decrease in volunteer participation over the past 12-24 months<sup>7</sup>. The sectors of community/welfare, education/training, sport/recreation, parenting/children/youth and health and aged care were the top six sectors that expressed a decline in volunteer participation.<sup>8</sup> A detailed analysis of this data is yet to be published.

Sector specific review and analysis also indicates areas of decline. For example, Meals on Wheels (New South Wales) reports "increasing difficulty in attracting volunteers" particularly from the younger generation, while the majority of their existing volunteers are aged 50 and over<sup>9</sup>.

In relation to aged care in general, the Productivity Commission's current research project (yet to be published) anticipates that as Australia's population ages, a growing number of aged Australians will prefer to be independent and favour using non-residential aged care services, including those available from community care programs<sup>10</sup>, many of which are heavily volunteer dependent.

---

<sup>2</sup> Ironmonger, D Federation Press 2000 *Volunteers and Volunteering*

<sup>3</sup> Ironmonger, D. *The Economic Value of Volunteering in Queensland*, May 2008, Queensland Government, Department of Communities.

<sup>4</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Non-profit Institutions Satellite Account, Australian National Accounts 1999/2000*. Catalogue No. 5256.0, ABS, Canberra, 2002.

<sup>5</sup> Op cit, Ironmonger 2008

<sup>6</sup> Op cit, Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006

<sup>7</sup> Survey to Investigate Volunteer Participation Rates in Australia, Volunteering Australia, August 2008 (yet to be published).

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Leslie MacDonald, CEO NSW Meals on Wheels, House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family, Community, Housing and Youth Roundtable, May 2008

<sup>10</sup> Trends in the demand and supply of aged care services – some implications. Research Project, Productivity Commission, expected release date August 2008.

A recent report on the Volunteer Based Emergency Services Organisations pointed to three major operational problems facing volunteer-based fire services:

- (a) a shrinking brigade memberships in many small remote rural (and ageing) communities—in parts of South Eastern Australia this is likely to be exacerbated by climate change and declining agricultural production;
- (b) static brigade memberships in new population growth centres; and,
- (c) lack of volunteers able to turn out to emergencies during business hours—especially in growing urban/rural fringe communities.<sup>11</sup>

Though sector requirements vary, there are many aspects of volunteer involvement in organisations that are the same. A national perspective on the recruitment, management and retention issues for volunteer-involving organisations is a cornerstone of a National Volunteer Strategy.

## **4 Rationale for a National Strategy on Volunteering**

Future challenges we will face as a nation such as the diverse needs of an ageing population, advances in and reliance on technology, and the impacts of climate change, to name a few, will necessitate greater support for our volunteer sector to help keep our communities resilient and strong. As the evidence suggests, volunteer participation cannot be taken for granted and a national approach to engage, recruit and retain volunteers could deliver untold rewards across all sectors utilising volunteers.

The development of a sector-driven National Volunteer Strategy will provide an historic opportunity for all sectors, including representatives of all levels of government, to focus on a co-ordinated and strategic approach to addressing the diverse and ongoing needs of the volunteer sector.

### **4.1 Emerging National Perspectives**

As a result of meetings of Commonwealth, State and Territory Government ministers and representatives of Local Government, and reviews of policy and legislation, many significant legislative, policy and social issues currently dealt with at state or regional levels are now being co-ordinated under uniform national systems and strategies. Some recent examples include:

- “At an historic inaugural meeting held on the NSW North Coast today, Australian ministers responsible for ageing and aged care, as well representatives of the Australian Local Government Association, agreed to

---

<sup>11</sup> *Issues Facing Australian Volunteer-Based Emergency Services Organisations: 2008 – 2010, A Report Prepared For Emergency Management Australia (EMA) as a Response to a Request by the Ministerial Council for Police and Emergency Management, Jim McLennan (PhD), La Trobe University, June 2008*

work together and respond to Australia's changing ageing population." *Department of Health and Ageing Media Release: Ministers for Ageing tackle tough aged care issues, 13 June 2008.*

- "The importance of harmonised OHS laws has been recognised by the Council of Australian Governments, the Productivity Commission and the States and Territories in their work in this area to date. The Australian Government has committed to work cooperatively with State and Territory governments to achieve the important reform of harmonised OHS legislation within five years. Following the recent meeting of the Workplace Relations Ministers' Council, all States and Territories have agreed to work together with the Commonwealth to develop and implement model OHS legislation as the most effective way to achieve harmonisation." *Terms of Reference, Australian Government's National Review into Model OHS Laws, April 2008.*
- "The Australian Government has committed \$2.6 million to work with all levels of government, child protection workers and the community sector to establish a national framework to protect all children." *Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs Media Release: National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children, 13 May 2008.*
- "The Rudd Government will develop Australia's first ever National Men's Health Policy – in recognition of the fact that men often have poorer health than women, are likely to die earlier, and are at greater risk of suicide." *Department of Health and Ageing Media Release: First Ever National Men's Health Policy, 8 June 2008.*

Developing and formalising a national strategic approach to the issues that impact upon the volunteering sector will strengthen the sector's capacity to continue its contribution to Australia's social and economic well-being into the future. It also provides an opportunity for proactive and productive steps in line with the Government's Social Inclusion agenda.

#### 4.2 Volunteer Related Government Activity: Action Plans, Legislation and Reform

In recent years, various State and Territory Governments have enacted legislation, reformed related legislation or developed specific action plans to tackle issues relevant to the sector. For example:

- Volunteer Protection Act 2001 (SA); Wrongs and Other Acts (Public Liability Insurance Reform) Act 2002 (Vic); Civil Liability Act 2003 (Qld); The Civil Act 2002 (NSW); Volunteer (Protection from Liability) Act 2002 (WA); Personal Injuries (Liabilities and Damages) Act 2003 (NT); Civil Law (Wrongs) Act 2002 (ACT); Civil Liability Act 2002 (Tas).

- Strengthening Non-Government Organisations Strategy 2005 (Qld)
- Community Services Act 2007 (Qld)
- The Victorian Government's Action Plan: Strengthening Community Organisations (2008)

The establishment of government offices and Ministers of volunteering (ie: Office for Volunteers in South Australia, Office of Volunteering in Queensland, Minister for Volunteering and Office for Volunteering in New South Wales, Federal Parliamentary Secretary for the Voluntary Sector) is demonstration of government recognition of the importance of volunteering, but it does raise the concern of overlap and duplication of resources across governments in relation to the volunteer sector.

Given the considerable variation in arrangements between jurisdictions, and therefore in the level attention that volunteering issues receive, there is both a need and an opportunity for national leadership. Review and discussion of the merits of each State and Territory initiative designed to strengthen communities and volunteering can provide an opportunity for learning across all levels of government and benefit the development of a National Volunteer Strategy.

#### 4.3 Regulatory Reform

The rationale for developing a National Volunteer Strategy is further supported by discussion and outcomes at the most recent COAG meeting in which key reforms to cut red tape for business were adopted<sup>12</sup>.

In common with the business sector, the not-for-profit sector faces great cost and complexity as a result of regulation, compliance and red tape. Occupational health and safety, insurance, background checking (police and working with children checks), funding applications, accountability and reporting can create significant stresses for organisations that operate with limited resources and uncertain funding futures. The variation across states and jurisdictions adds another level of complexity to the sector.

“Governments in the last 20 years have put a lot of effort into creating a single corporate regulator and a single corporate law to govern incorporation and fundraising by small, medium and large corporations. We need that kind of effort and that kind of persistence to sort out the huge mess that encompasses, entwines and binds down non-profit organisations in this country.” *Professor Mark Lyons, School of Management at the University of Technology, Sydney*

---

<sup>12</sup> Council of Australian Governments' Meeting, 3 July 2008, Business Regulation and Competition Working Group.



Each year, Volunteering Australia conducts a national survey<sup>13</sup> which identifies the public policy issues of most importance to volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations. The survey confirms that the red tape issues mentioned above have significant negative impact on the effective operations of volunteer involving organisations and personal engagement opportunities of individual volunteers.

A National Volunteer Strategy would enable the regulatory constraints and burdens that affect the volunteer sector (and not-for-profit sector in general) to be acknowledged and actioned at a national level with the support of government. Increasing effectiveness and efficiency is as important to the volunteer sector as it is to business – to work smarter, not harder to achieve critical societal objectives.

#### 4.4 Corporate Partnerships: support beyond Government

An emerging trend, nationally and internationally, is for the development of stronger corporate / not-for-profit partnership models that support shared vision and values around corporate / community investment. This approach goes beyond traditional cheque book partnering, with corporations now looking for long term and sustained partnerships that provide aligned goals and measurable outcomes.

Volunteering Australia therefore believes that engagement of the business sector is important to the development, growth and enduring impact a National Volunteering Strategy.

#### **Question for Discussion:**

How relevant is a National Volunteer Strategy to the future of volunteering in Australia?

#### 4.5 A National Voice for a National Strategy

Current research within the volunteering sector supports the development and strengthening of one national organisational voice on volunteering and improved connection and co-ordination on volunteering across and within government. The Borderlands Co-operative in its comprehensive research report on strengthening volunteering and civic participation<sup>14</sup> found that the main influences on volunteering are from peak volunteering bodies and government. It follows therefore that there needs to be clear means of liaison and co-ordination in matters relating to volunteer work within government, between governments and between the government(s) and the national and state's peak volunteering bodies. The evidence from VA's scan of stakeholders suggests that this environment exists to varying degrees in some states but there is not universal consistency.

<sup>13</sup> National Survey of Volunteering Issues, Volunteering Australia 2006, 2007, 2008

<sup>14</sup> Strengthening Volunteering and Civic Participation (Civil Society Work) Key challenges facing government and community in the Eastern Metropolitan Region of Melbourne, Borderlands Co-operative, February 2008

Volunteering Australia, in development of its future strategic direction, recently consulted broadly at an international, national and regional level about its role and significance as the national peak body for volunteering in Australia. Resoundingly, stakeholder feedback reaffirmed the importance for the volunteer sector of Volunteering Australia taking a leadership role in the development of a National Volunteer Strategy and strengthening its representative role in the sector.

The process of strategic review highlighted the need for Volunteering Australia to seek a new relationship model between key stakeholders - state volunteering centres, metropolitan and regional volunteer resource centres, all levels of government, the research community and the corporate sector. A consistent theme emerging from this research was the need for a strengthened national focus on volunteering to reduce the levels of duplication and fragmentation that currently exist.

At the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family, Community, Housing and Youth Roundtable held in May 2008, various participant comments supported increasing national connection and reducing duplication and fragmentation across the sector:

“It is interesting, when you talk to coordinators from other volunteer centres, to see the different funding and the different levels of government they are involved with. One of the big pushes I am really into, which will come out later in my closing statement, is for a national perspective so that there is uniformity among the volunteer centres. I believe a national perspective is a priority and.... a commission into the future of volunteering is essential. I have a statement the VCN (Volunteer Co-ordinators’ Network) wanted me to pass on: the government has the right and responsibility to change the focus of government funding priorities. We support that. We need to be a part of the review and the change process.” *Catherine Grear, Volunteer Co-ordinator, Wagga Wagga Volunteer Resource Centre.*

“There needs to be a much more critical analysis of where those (volunteering) centres and the connections can be strengthened. We probably have a unique opportunity now across all tiers of government. One of the major areas of volunteer delivery is through local government. To me, having better levels of cooperation in that area is a way we could really strengthen volunteering.” *Cary Pedicini, CEO Volunteering Australia*

“The other key point that I would like to leave you with is: if you could consider very carefully funding and resourcing Volunteering Australia and all the peak bodies as well as the referral centres, that would create the connection so that this can happen.” *Alan Bates, Manager, Volunteer Services, Wesley Mission*

## 5 Beyond A National Agenda on Volunteering

In the International Year of Volunteers 2001, Volunteering Australia (and its partner Australian Volunteers International) conducted a nation-wide consultation and survey to determine the major volunteering issues. A legacy of the consultations was the development of *A National Agenda on Volunteering* to guide progress in the sector over three to five years.

In the development of the *National Agenda on Volunteering* community, volunteer-involving organisations, business and government were called to work together and adopt actions under six major objectives.

*A National Agenda on Volunteering* articulated the following as its ambitious objectives in 2001:

1. Publicly respect and value in enduring, formal and tangible ways, the essential contribution that volunteers make to building and sustaining the Australian community.
2. Ensure that volunteers have legal status and are afforded protection through every piece of legislation and public policy that affects them and their work.
3. Ensure that all new legislation, by-laws and public policies developed at any level of government, which may affect volunteers and their work, work only to facilitate and sustain volunteering.
4. Acknowledge that the activity of volunteering is not without cost and develop means by which Australian volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations are supported and funded to provide valuable services.
5. Ensure excellence in all levels of volunteer involvement and volunteer management in order to encourage, protect and enhance the work of volunteers.
6. Ensure that volunteering is a potent, dynamic and unifying social force for community benefit by acknowledging that it is a diverse and evolving activity.

Though progress has been made in addressing actions under each of the major objectives<sup>15</sup> in the *National Agenda*, it has been a result of persistent effort within the sector rather than a co-ordinated and strategic response across all sectors, including government. There still remains much to be done.

---

<sup>15</sup> Snapshot 2004: Volunteering Report Card, Volunteering Australia

### Questions for Discussion:

What issues need to be addressed in a National Volunteer Strategy?

What resources are required for the development of a National Volunteer Strategy?

What would success of a National Volunteer Strategy look like for you?

## 6 Recommendations for the Development of a National Volunteer Strategy

Volunteering Australia's vision is to continue to build on the foundations already laid by strengthening a compact of volunteers and volunteer involving organisations with Commonwealth, State, Territory and Local Governments so that we achieve "the golden age of volunteering."<sup>16</sup>

To achieve this Volunteering Australia recommends the following:

1. That all levels of government make an in principle commitment to the development of a National Volunteer Strategy with a long term vision to strengthen volunteering in Australia;
2. That an appropriate level of government funding be allocated to support the development and ongoing viability of a National Volunteer Strategy;
3. That a National Volunteer Strategy be sector-driven with input and support from all stakeholders – community, government and business;
4. That the development of a National Volunteer Strategy would serve to expand volunteering infrastructure of national, state and regional organisations avoiding duplication of resources in the creation of parallel infrastructure.

### Question for Discussion:

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the stated recommendations for the development of a National Volunteer Strategy?

---

<sup>16</sup> Senator Ursula Stephens, Speech to Volunteering NSW Forum: Diversity and the Volunteer Workforce, Towards a 2020 Vision for Volunteering., March 2008.

## **7 Conclusion**

Volunteering is a vibrant and essential part of Australia's social fabric and well-being that produces enormous economic output. It is not a movement that will cease, but it cannot be taken for granted. Matching supply with demand requires an increasingly sophisticated approach which is evidenced by the fact that while the culture of volunteering remains strong, certain sectors are experiencing declines in volunteer participation, which has serious implications for future service provision and social inclusion endeavours.

Volunteer involving organisations face increasing regulatory requirements and challenges. These trends and impacts require full attention at a national level to enable the volunteer sector to achieve greater efficiencies and for individual volunteer effort to thrive.

Volunteering Australia takes the lead in calling for discussion of the merits of a National Volunteer Strategy to map the future of volunteering in Australia with input from all sectors – community, business and all levels of government.

Investment in a National Volunteer Strategy will have the benefit of greater co-ordination of effort and resources, minimisation of duplication and fragmentation across the sector, and provide the wealth of opportunities, flexibility and satisfaction that volunteers seek. An increasing national focus on many other aspects of Australian public policy, legislation and social issues augurs well for taking the same national approach to volunteering in Australia.

## **APPENDIX 1: About Volunteering Australia – an overview**

### **Volunteering Australia – Key Service Areas**

As the national peak body for volunteering, Volunteering Australia provides a unified voice on volunteering that is recognised and respected across all sectors – community, corporate and government.

Volunteering Australia Inc was established in 1993 and receives funding from the Commonwealth Government, including under its National Secretariat Program.

Volunteering Australia is governed by a board taken from its member organisations, including the State and Territory peak bodies on volunteering. Volunteer based organisations across all sectors, including environment and conservation, arts, business, tourism, education, emergency services, health, sport, recreation and leisure are represented through their respective state/territory peak bodies.

Since its inception, Volunteering Australia has established strong partnerships with key stakeholders and developed a solid base of research and resources, including definitive foundation documents that remain relevant today and for the future as an important framework for volunteering in Australia. These foundation documents include:

- The National Agenda for Volunteering: Beyond the International Year of Volunteers;
- The National Standards for Involving Volunteers in Not-for-Profit Organisations;
- The Definition and Principles of Volunteering;
- The Volunteering Policy Consultation Framework;
- The Research Framework.

### **Specific service areas include:**

#### **GoVOLUNTEER**

**GoVolunteer** ([www.govolunteer.com.au](http://www.govolunteer.com.au)) is Australia's **first** volunteer recruitment website. It is a **not for profit** website that provides **free** Internet advertising for not for profit community organisations looking for volunteers. GoVolunteer provides volunteers with all they need to find a volunteer opportunity, and to help them make the best match possible between their personal requirements and their choice of volunteer work. GoVolunteer is a **free, fast** and **efficient** way to link volunteers and organisations.

#### **Research Support Unit**

Volunteering Australia aims to advance and encourage research into volunteering in Australia with the aim of developing an ethos of inquiry leading to increased

understanding of volunteering processes and practices and ultimately assisting in building the long-term sustainability of volunteering.

Volunteering Australia provides valuable consultation services to business, government, researchers and students, media and community organisations who are interested in Australian volunteering issues. Volunteering Australia provides a number of services and continues to seek new avenues to support and advance the development of volunteer research.

Current services of the Research Support Unit include:

### **Publications**

- ***The Australian Journal on Volunteering*** encourages informed discussion, debate and research on contemporary issues of importance to volunteering. Blind peer review research articles, papers from the field and book reviews are published. This mix of articles provides a meeting ground for theory, policy and practice. The AJV is published twice annually. The AJV is available both in print and online from the Volunteering Australia website;
- Research Bulletins;
- National Survey of Volunteering Issues;
- Volunteering Research Framework;
- Policy Consultation Framework;
- A National Agenda on Volunteering: Beyond the International Year of Volunteers.

### **Library of resources**

The library currently contains a broad collection of books, journals, reports, statistics and other key research resources related to volunteering from Australian and international sources. This library is networked with libraries in state volunteer centres.

### **Database of researchers**

The database provides a connection between not for profit organisations, volunteers and researchers on volunteering.

### **Research Partnerships**

Volunteering Australia works in partnership with organisations and researchers. A current example of such collaboration is:

- ***New Partnerships: promoting development in outback towns through voluntary programs for Grey Nomads.*** This current project is funded through an ARC grant. Chief investigators are Professor Jenny Onyx UTS, and Associate Professor Rosemary Leonard UWS.

### **Information service**

Available to students and scholars. Requests range from:

- Seeking references;
- Research/researchers: updates on current research;
- Up to date information on the latest trends in best practice for volunteer management and involvement.

### **National Volunteering Research Symposium**

The Symposium presents a unique opportunity for researchers to share their work with fellow researchers and to discuss the practice, priorities and possibilities of research for the advancement of volunteering. Papers undergo a blind peer review process.

### **Policy Support Unit**

Volunteering Australia works to influence public policy and highlight its impact on Australia's more than five million active volunteers and the organisations that involve them. Volunteering Australia is funded under the National Secretariat Program to advocate for policy outcomes that strengthen volunteering in Australia.

Public policy has a critical role to play in creating, enabling and facilitating an environment that assists volunteering to flourish. Volunteering can also be adversely affected by public policy that is indifferent to the concerns of volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations.

We are active in a number of policy activities, including:

- Contributing submissions;
- Lobbying and advocacy;
- Sitting on key policy forums such as the national roundtable for nonprofit organisations.

Our work in this area also informs the development of volunteering information resources such as:

- Information sheets;
- Research bulletins;
- Quick guides and other publications.

Our work is informed by a range of influences:

- Inquiries from the sector;
- Stakeholder consultation;
- Volunteering literature;
- Research and official statistics.

It is important for us to be in touch with our stakeholders. Volunteering Australia's policy work helps give stakeholders (individual volunteers or local volunteer



organisations) a voice on the national stage. In turn, talking to stakeholders helps Volunteering Australia to grow knowledge on issues of importance. The Volunteering Australia ***Policy Consultation Framework*** outlines our ongoing task of consultation on volunteering policy issues.

### **Management of the National Volunteer Skills Centre (NVSC)**

The National Volunteer Skills Centre (NVSC) project was originally conceived as one of six elements of the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs' (FaHCSIA) National Skills for Volunteers Program. The program was one of several linked initiatives within the Stronger Families and Communities Strategy.

Managed by Volunteering Australia, the three key goals of the NVSC project are to:

- Support volunteers and organisations to build their skills and knowledge
- Strengthen networks and encourage collaboration and the sharing of information;
- Reduce the duplication of resources and the costs associated with skills development and training.

The NVSC actively encourages organisations to adopt best practice in the involvement and management of volunteers and has developed a number of resources and provides a range of services including:

- Nationally accredited qualifications for volunteers and managers including the highly successful Certificates in Active Volunteering (and its 'Be An Effective Volunteer' unit) and the Certificate in Volunteer Management;
- A broad range of free training resources and materials for volunteers, trainers and managers of volunteers (e.g. Subject Guide to Involving Baby Boomers in Volunteering, toolkit on Conducting a Training Needs Analysis, etc);
- Best practice tips and advice for not for profit organisations and volunteers including access to a free information and advice line;
- An online Training and Events Calendar, highlighting professional development and networking opportunities in the breadth and depth of all volunteering sub-sectors;
- An online National Trainer's Database where volunteer sector trainers can promote themselves to not-for-profit organisations looking for trainers.

## **APPENDIX 2: Definition and Principles of Volunteering**

### **Definition of Formal Volunteering**

Formal volunteering is an activity which takes place in not for profit organisations or projects and is undertaken:

- To be of benefit to the community;
- Of the volunteer's own free will and without coercion;
- For no financial payment; and;
- In designated volunteer positions only.

### **Principles of Volunteering**

Volunteering benefits the community and the volunteer.

Volunteer work is unpaid.

Volunteering is always a matter of choice.

Volunteering is not compulsorily undertaken to receive pensions or government allowances.

Volunteering is a legitimate way in which citizens can participate in the activities of their community.

Volunteering is a vehicle for individuals or groups to address human, environmental and social needs.

Volunteering is an activity performed in the not for profit sector only.

Volunteering is not a substitute for paid work.

Volunteers do not replace paid workers nor constitute a threat to the job security of paid workers.

Volunteering respects the rights, dignity and culture of others.

Volunteering promotes human rights and equality.