



**Creating a Vision for the Future of  
Volunteering and the Voluntary Sector in  
Australian Society**

***Strengthening Communities and Supporting  
Working Families – Australia 2020 Summit  
Submission***

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# **Australia 2020 Summit Submission – Strengthening Communities and Supporting Working Families**

As an enduring legacy of the Australia 2020 Summit, Volunteering Australia calls for the establishment of **The Commission On The Future Of Volunteering In Australia**

This paper sets out Volunteering Australia's proposal for creating a vision for the future of volunteering and the voluntary sector in Australian society.

## **Introduction**

While so much about volunteering shifts and changes, so much stays the same. We recognise the changing trends in volunteering; we acknowledge the challenges for volunteers and organisations involving them, and we respond to the changing policy landscape that affects the sector. At the same time, the magnitude of volunteer contribution is undeniable; the benefits and satisfaction derived from volunteering are unquestionable; and the value of volunteering within our communities is almost unquantifiable. Volunteering is a key tenet of our societal wellbeing.

By 2020, some of the challenges we will face, such as the growing needs of an ageing population, advances in technology and reliance on it, and the impacts of climate change, will necessitate greater support for our volunteering sector to help keep our communities strong. A united force that maintains a national focus and combines the diversity and effort of communities, business and government is required.

Notwithstanding the significant advances made in the development of volunteer infrastructure over the past decade Volunteering Australia believes there remain considerable opportunities to improve the effectiveness and efficiencies of the sector through greater cooperation between the not-for-profit sector and all levels of government.

## **The Contribution of Volunteers**

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. Ironmonger (2000) estimates that volunteering is responsible for around \$42 billion of economic activity annually<sup>1</sup>. The total imputed dollar value of the time donated to welfare service alone by volunteers (\$27.4 billion) is almost double the total cash amount spent by all governments and non-government sources (\$13.7 billion) in Australia.<sup>2</sup>

Australia has in excess of 700,000 third-sector organisations, the majority of which involve volunteers in some capacity. ABS data shows that although most of these 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>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Ironmonger, D Federation Press 2000 *Volunteers and Volunteering*

<sup>2</sup> Michael Bittman and Kimberly Fisher, Social Policy Research Centre, University of New South Wales 2006, *'Exploring the economic and social value of present patterns of volunteering in Australia'* Pg 5

<sup>3</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Non-profit Institutions Satellite Account, Australian National Accounts 1999/2000*. Catalogue No. 5256.0, ABS, Canberra, 2002.

## ***About Volunteering Australia***

Volunteering Australia is the national peak body for volunteering in Australia, providing a unified voice on volunteering that is recognised and respected across all sectors – community, corporate and government. Part of its current role under the Australian Government’s National Secretariat Program is to generate policy on volunteering and to advocate for policy outcomes that support and facilitate volunteering in Australia’s diverse nonprofit sector.

Over the past decade, Volunteering Australia has established strong partnerships with key stakeholders and developed a solid base of research and resources, including definitive foundation documents that remain as 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 Volunteering Policy Consultation Framework
- The Definition and Principles of Volunteering

## ***Volunteering Australia’s Vision for the Future of Volunteering***

Volunteering Australia’s vision for 2020 is to continue to build on the foundations already laid by strengthening a compact of volunteers and volunteer involving organisations with Commonwealth, State and Local governments so that “volunteering becomes part of the DNA of our society”.<sup>4</sup>

A stronger partnership committed to sustaining a strong and vibrant volunteer sector is a way in which Volunteering Australia can harness the goodwill and commitment of the Australian community, many members of which volunteer to enrich individual and community well being and provide essential services.

Volunteering Australia is eminently placed to continue its leadership role with a national focus to achieve the “golden age of volunteering”<sup>5</sup> and it proposes the following:

As an enduring legacy of the Australia 2020 Summit, Volunteering Australia recommends the establishment of **The Commission On The Future Of Volunteering In Australia**

The terms of reference for this commission set out below have been modeled on the terms of reference developed by the England Volunteering Development Council and provide the blueprint for shaping the future of volunteer effort in Australia.

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<sup>4</sup> The Commission on the Future of Volunteering, *Manifesto for Change*, UK, January 2008

<sup>5</sup> Speech to Volunteering NSW Forum: Diversity and the Volunteer Workforce, *Towards a 2020 Vision for Volunteering*, Senator Ursula Stephens, March 2008.

## **Terms of reference - The Commission On The Future Of Volunteering In Australia**

### **High level aim**

The commission on the future of volunteering will develop a long term vision for volunteering in Australia through to 2020

### **Commission activity**

The commission will give due attention to all sectors that engage and utilise volunteers and include both formal and informal volunteering within its remit.

The commission will also consider any specific issues relating to barriers to volunteering by and within CALD, indigenous, regional and remote communities.

The commission will consider the current volunteering landscape and will review existing materials, listening to the opinion and experience of volunteers, academics, experts, and practitioners.

The commission will publish its thinking as it develops, in order to inform and encourage wider debate.

The commission will develop its thinking on the future by consulting widely.

The commission will produce a final report that describes the state of volunteering in Australia as it is and as it should be in the year 2020; and will make recommendations about what is needed to make these aspirations come true, including proposals for delivering on any recommendations the commission makes.

The report of this commission shall be completed by and presented at the 21<sup>st</sup> International Association for Volunteer Effort (IAVE) World Conference in 2011 as Australia's contribution to the United Nations International Year of the Volunteer +10.

### **Commission structure**

The commission will be led by an independent figure of national credibility.

Members of the commission will include policy makers, opinion formers, practitioners and academics.

The results of the commission's activity will be seen to be clearly independent of government, the corporate sector or any one agency in the voluntary and community sector, whilst retaining the confidence of all.

It is proposed that the commission be convened as a partnership between the National Roundtable of Nonprofit Organisations and Volunteering Australia giving it a broad cross-sectoral support base and credibility.