

19 January 2007



Addressees: The Hon Peter Costello MP, Treasurer
The Hon John Howard MP, Prime Minister
The Hon Philip Ruddock MP, Attorney General
The Hon Mal Brough MP, Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
The Hon John Cobb MP, Minister for Community Services
Mr Kevin Rudd MP, Leader of the Opposition
Ms Julia Gillard MP, Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Shadow Minister for Social Inclusion
Secretary, Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
Secretary, Department of Health and Ageing
Secretary, Department of Employment and Workplace Relations
Secretary, Department of Education, Science and Training

Federal Budget Submission 2007

In Australia there are over six million active volunteers. The high participation rate of volunteers in Australia is attributable to Australians' strong voluntary and community ethos and the contribution of government in supporting volunteering. Volunteers work in all spheres of the community, and make a vast contribution to the Australian economy. Ironmonger (2000) estimates that volunteering is responsible for around \$42 billion of economic activity annually. In 2000 the Australian Bureau of Statistics calculated the direct value of volunteer work at \$8.9 billion.

There is, however, considerable scope for Australia's voluntary contribution to be further strengthened through expanded, strategic investment in volunteering. Ahead of the Federal budget, Volunteering Australia wishes to highlight two important developments in the volunteering sector. The work of the Costs of Volunteering Taskforce and the paper *Strengthening and Sustaining Volunteering in Australia* provide timely opportunities for the Australian Government to build on its support for volunteering.

Strengthening and sustaining volunteering in Australia

Government has a pivotal role in sustaining and advancing volunteering into the future by continuing to build on existing supports. The *Strengthening and Sustaining Volunteering in Australia* paper outlines 18 major steps to further develop volunteering in Australia. These steps encompass measures for volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations emerging from the *National Agenda on Volunteering*, new and specific funding to volunteering infrastructure organisations; and investment in a purpose-built information technology system to facilitate volunteering across a range of organisations. Progression of some or all of the steps outlined in *Strengthening and Sustaining Volunteering in Australia* will represent significant progress in the development of volunteering in Australia ahead of the 10th anniversary of the International Year of the Volunteer in 2011.

Please find attached the paper *Strengthening and Sustaining Volunteering in Australia*.

The rising costs of volunteering

Over the past six years consultation and research within the volunteering sector has consistently provided evidence that the rising cost of volunteering to the individual is becoming an issue of concern. Unacceptable out-of-pocket costs are leading some volunteers to consider either reducing their involvement or ceasing involvement altogether.

In the second half of 2006 Volunteering Australia brought together a taskforce of experts to look at the issue of rising costs of volunteering to individual volunteers and to determine some possible solutions. The Costs of Volunteering Taskforce examined a range of options for reducing costs to volunteers. Six options, both outside and inside the taxation system, were assessed according to the principles of equity, universality, simplicity for volunteers, simplicity for organisations, simplicity for government, transparency, not undermining the Principles of Volunteering, positive impact on recruitment and retention of volunteers, cost and availability of new funding.

The Costs of Volunteering Taskforce recommended the Australian Government consider the six options examined in the report *The Rising Costs of Volunteering*, and adopt one or a combination of these for implementation in order to support the work of volunteers by providing tangible recognition of the costs they incur in volunteering.

Please find enclosed a copy of the report *The Rising Costs of Volunteering* and appendices. The report was presented in late 2006 to the Prime Minister, Treasurer, the Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and the Minister for Community Services. The report will be publicly released on 22 January 2007.

The Australian Government has a critical role to play in realising the vision of a dynamic and sustainable future for volunteering in Australia. We urge you to consider these reports and allocate additional funding in the 2007/08 budget to provide the vital support needed by volunteers and volunteering.

Yours sincerely,

Sha Cordingley
Chief Executive Officer
Volunteering Australia