



Volunteering and Settlement in Australia

A Snapshot

Acknowledgements

This paper was prepared by Volunteering Australia and the Settlement Council of Australia. SCoA and Volunteering Australia are grateful to all who took the time to complete the survey and provide honest, considered and insightful input, which was integral to preparing this collaborative report.

About Volunteering Australia

Volunteering Australia is the national peak body for volunteering, working to advance volunteering in the Australian community. Volunteering Australia's vision is to promote strong, connected communities through volunteering. Our mission is to lead, strengthen, promote and celebrate volunteering in Australia. We work collectively with the seven State and Territory volunteering peak bodies to deliver national, state/territory and local volunteering programs and initiatives in accordance with the Government's priorities. As the primary link between the volunteering sector and federal government, Volunteering Australia provides feedback into key decision making. All feedback is informed by research, evidence and consultation with the volunteering sector.

About the Settlement Council of Australia (SCoA)

SCoA is the national peak body for Australia's dynamic settlement services sector. SCoA represents approximately 100 agencies in the settlement sector, which comprise the vast majority of agencies across Australia providing settlement support to recently arrived migrants, including those from a refugee background. Our members work directly with a wide range of new arrivals from diverse backgrounds, as well as the mainstream Australian community and various stakeholders.

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Thank you to SCoA member AMES Australia for contributing to the cover image.

Volunteering and Settlement in Australia

May 2019

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Glossary

Volunteer - Those who give their time willingly for the common good and without financial gain

Volunteering Australia - the national peak body for volunteering, working to advance volunteering in the Australian community.

SCoA - Settlement Council of Australia is the peak national body for settlement representing settlement agencies across Australia.

Volunteer Involving Organisation (VIO) - Any organisation/company/department that engages volunteers.

Volunteering Support Services (VSS) - These are place-based organisations that promote, resource and support volunteering in local communities. They empower people to volunteer and help ensure that their experience is positive and safe.

Introduction

Volunteers are the lifeblood of Australian communities, with over 5.8 million Australians, or 31 per cent of the population engaging in formal volunteering activities and programs.¹ There is strong evidence of the economic impact of the contribution of volunteering, which delivers a \$4.50 return for every dollar invested.² Nationally, this is an estimated annual economic and social contribution of \$290 billion.³

Volunteering Australia defines volunteering as “time willingly given for the common good and without financial gain.”⁴ Volunteering is critical to delivering the Australian Government’s priorities of building strong and resilient communities, by encouraging economic participation, mitigating isolation and loneliness, and increasing social inclusion, community resilience, participation and social cohesion.

Volunteering is an incredibly diverse activity, extending to every corner of society. From the arts, education, emergency services, sports, environment, health, the private sector, aged care, disability, and community welfare; volunteering has woven itself into the fabric of everyday life, and Australian society increasingly depends on volunteering activities and programs.

Recent data indicates that people from diverse backgrounds are very engaged in volunteerism. While Census data has its limitations (only capturing formal volunteering through an organisation or institution), it does tell us that of the 3.6 million people who volunteer over the age of 15 years, almost a third are born overseas.⁵

In the settlement sector we know that the capacity of many Settlement Council of Australia (SCoA) member organisations is greatly enhanced by the large numbers of volunteers who support the work of the settlement sector. Anecdotal evidence suggests that across the settlement sector, many volunteers regularly engage in formal volunteering. Many of these volunteers are themselves from a migrant or refugee background.

Volunteering Australia and the Settlement Council of Australia have conducted a National Survey on Volunteering and Settlement in Australia to inform our findings. Some key insights from the survey include:

- ◆ 65% of new arrivals to Australia engaged in volunteering within the first 18 months of their arrival to Australia;
- ◆ New migrants and refugees are very involved in volunteering;
- ◆ Motivations to volunteer differ for everyone, however respondents were largely looking to contribute to society, make friends, improve their English or gain local work experience;
- ◆ There was a number of personal and professional benefits gained from volunteering by volunteers;
- ◆ Organisations also reaped many benefits from volunteer engagement, with the support proving invaluable;
- ◆ More support is needed to engage volunteers from diverse backgrounds.

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2015), General Social Survey, Summary Results, Australia, 2014, <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4159.0>

² Volunteering Western Australia (2015), The Economic, Social, and Cultural Value of Volunteering to Western Australia, https://volunteeringwa.org.au/assets/downloads/vwa_report%20book_web.pdf

³ Flinders University (2014), Volunteering worth \$290 billion a year, <https://news.flinders.edu.au/blog/2014/10/31/volunteering-worth-290-billion-a-year/>

⁴ See <https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/definition-of-volunteering/>

⁵ Australian Bureau of Statistics, “2016 Census QuickStats”, 2016 Census, http://www.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/036?opendocument

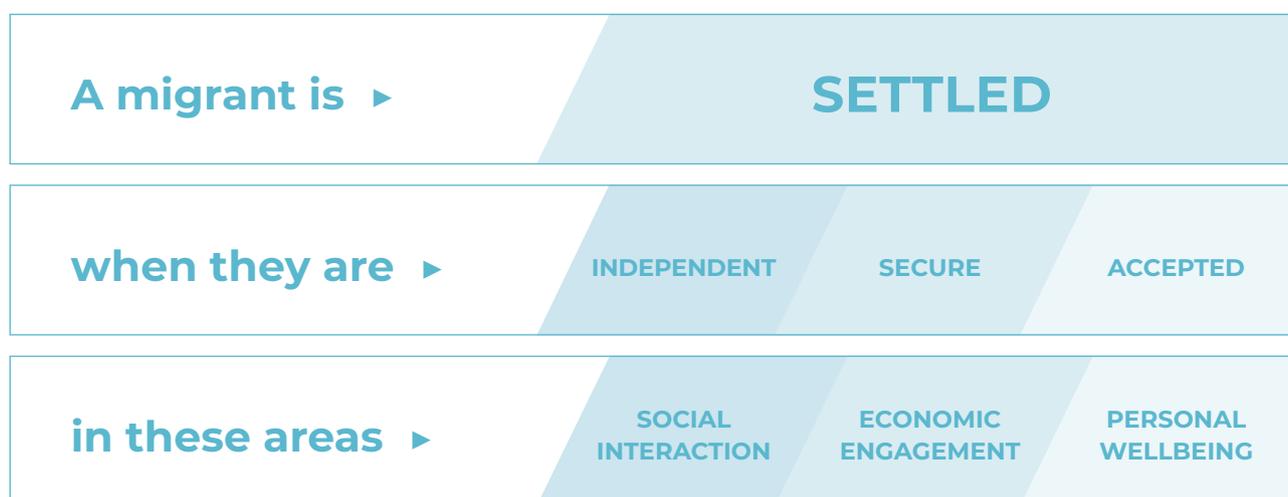
This snapshot aims to synthesise the survey's findings into useful data for Volunteering Australia, SCoA and their members and stakeholders, and identify possible themes for further research, policy development and advocacy.

Settlement in Australia

Australia is a nation which has been built on immigration and strengthened by diversity. The 2016 Census indicates that 49 per cent of Australians are either born overseas, or have one or both parents who were born overseas.⁶ Australia's Migration Program, inclusive of its Humanitarian Program, continues to bring a plethora of benefits to all aspects of Australian society.

Settlement is an important and complex part of the migration journey. New migrants, including those from a refugee background, each have a unique settlement experience. The Australian Government generally considers the first five years of permanent residence after arrival to be the settlement period.⁷ It is, however, important to recognise that while some new migrants may feel 'settled' by this time, others may take longer.

SCoA has developed an infographic that outlines the journey to being 'settled':



Australia has a long and proud history of delivering services that are tailored to meet the needs of new arrivals in a way that is effective, efficient and achieves the best possible settlement outcomes. The Australian settlement sector is delivering state-of-the-art and world-leading settlement services that generate countless positive outcomes, both for migrants and refugees and for the Australian community as a whole. This would not be possible without the committed and passionate people that work and volunteer throughout the settlement sector.

⁶ 2016 Census, Australian Bureau of Statistics

⁷ Department of Social Services (2016), National Settlement Framework
https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/11_2016/the_national_settlement_framework.pdf

Methodology

Volunteering Australia and SCoA conducted a National Survey on Volunteering and Settlement in Australia to inform our findings. This short and anonymous survey was distributed primarily to SCoA members and Volunteering Australia stakeholders, with the aim of assisting the development of a strong evidence base for future policy development.

In November 2018, Volunteering Australia and SCoA disseminated an anonymous online survey which sought to gauge the levels and impact of volunteering among members of the settlement sector and to catalogue the many benefits that brings, both to the new Australians who receive direct support (and are often volunteers themselves) and the broader Australian economy.

Even though there was a short time frame for distribution,⁸ the survey received 94 responses from managers of volunteers and Volunteer Involving Organisations, predominantly in the settlement sector. Survey respondents overwhelmingly highlighted that they relied on volunteer support for operation of their services and requests for additional training, resources and funding for volunteer engagement.

The survey consisted of 16 questions, including a combination of closed and open-ended questions, and had a total of 94 respondents. Of the 94 respondents that were surveyed, 79 identified as a Volunteer Involving Organisation. A further 49 per cent of respondents stated they were a member of their state and territory Volunteering peak body, while approximately half of all respondents stated they were a SCoA member organisation.

Survey findings show that 53 per cent of all respondents reported accessing services provided by their local Volunteering Support Services (VSS). This compared to 31 per cent who stated they 'had not' accessed a VSS and 16 per cent who were unsure. We do highlight that some respondents may be unaware what a Volunteering Support Service is, as this is a volunteering sector industry term. As such, there may be survey respondents who have accessed a VSS and have answered "No".

Figure 1.

Does your organisation access any of the services provided by local Volunteering Support Services, including training and resources?



The majority of respondents (81 per cent) reported that recruitment of volunteers typically occurred in a structured way, for example through a specific program or service (see Figure 2).

Figure 2.

In the last financial year did your organisation recruit any volunteers in a structured way? This includes through a specific program or service.



⁸ Joint SCoA and Volunteering Australia Survey on Volunteering and Settlement ran for approximately two weeks from 29 November - 14 December 2018.

When respondents were asked how many people their organisation recruited as volunteers, 39 per cent of respondents engaged 'more than 50', while 36 per cent engaged 'between 10 and 50', and 11 percent engaged 'under 10' (see Figure 3). This shows that more than two-thirds of organisations rely on their many volunteers.

Figure 3.

Please provide an estimate of how many different individuals your organisation engaged as volunteers in the last financial year.



Nearly two-thirds of survey respondents reported involving volunteers who were from both migrant and refugee backgrounds, at 65 per cent. The next largest group engaged as volunteers were migrants at 23 per cent, followed by both refugee and non-identified at 5 per cent (see Figure 4).

Figure 4.

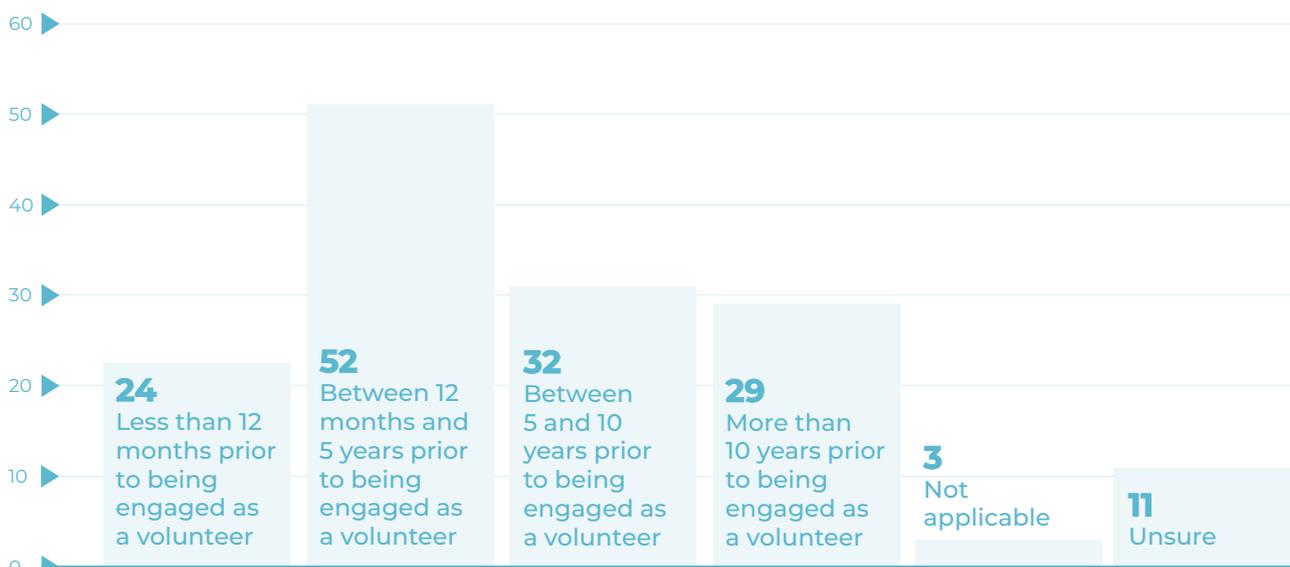
Were any volunteers engaged by your organisation persons who would identify as being from a migrant or refugee background?



Survey findings indicated that the majority of volunteers engaged by organisations had arrived in Australia between 12 months and 5 years before becoming volunteers (see Figure 5).

Figure 5.

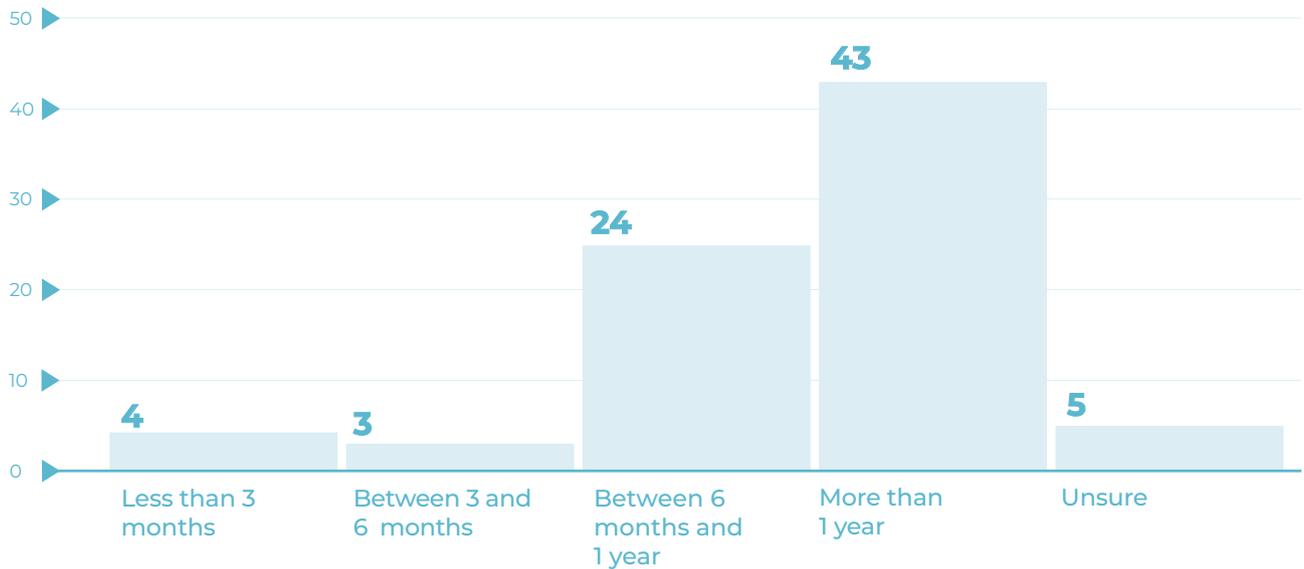
Were any of the volunteers engaged by your organisation persons who had arrived in Australia:



A majority of respondents indicated that the average time a volunteer was engaged within the organisation was primarily 'more than one year' or 'between 6 months and one year' (see Figure 6).

Figure 6.

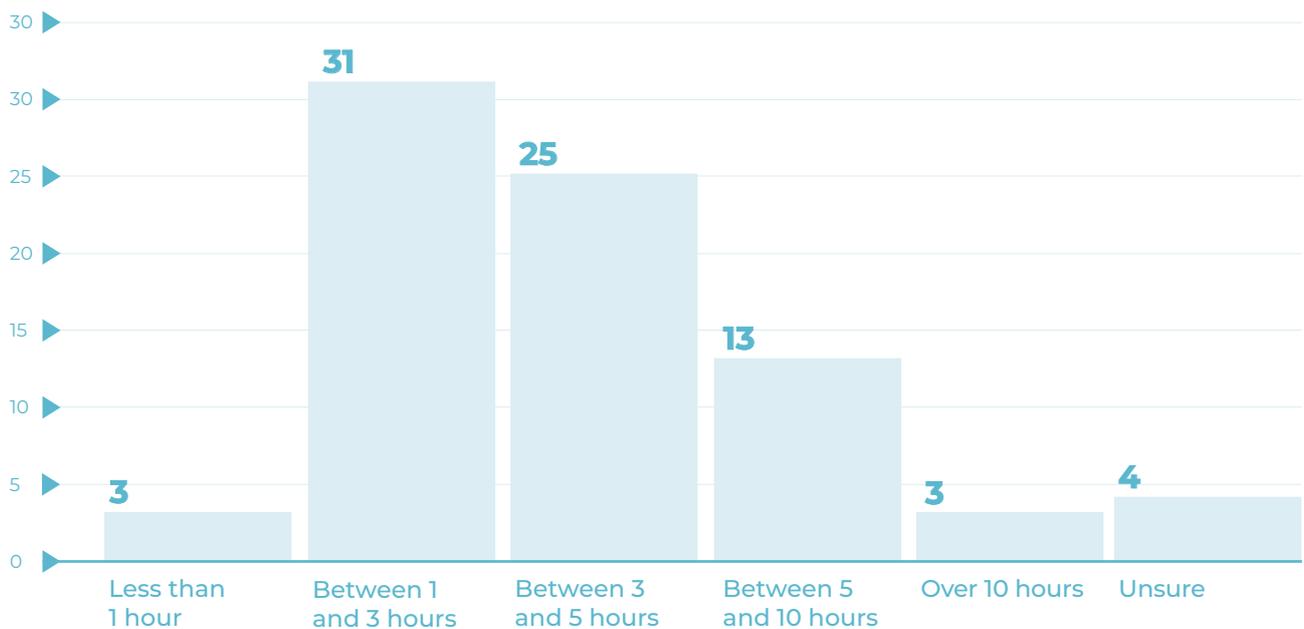
On average, how long are volunteers involved by your organisation?



Responses demonstrated a variation in the average time a person spent volunteering for their organisation, with the most common being 'between one and three hours' and 'between three and five hours' per week (see Figure 7).

Figure 7.

On average, how many hours per week does a person spend volunteering for your organisation?



Survey Findings

Benefits of Volunteering

Volunteering has many benefits for both the volunteers and organisations. Volunteering is critical to building strong and resilient communities by encouraging economic participation, mitigating isolation and loneliness, and increasing social inclusion, community participation and cohesion. Volunteering can also lead to employment, by increasing workforce participation and helping people to develop key skills.

Survey respondents highlighted numerous benefits to having volunteer support in their organisation and for new arrivals to Australia engaging in volunteerism. People highlighted that volunteers made a significant contribution to their organisations:

“

Volunteers make a significant contribution

to our organisation through a range of different activities. The organisation is governed by a voluntary board that provides the strategic direction. Other programs made possible by volunteer involvement include reception, technology tutoring, learner driver program, visiting, administration, gardening and form help. These programs are only possible because of volunteers.

Our organisation would have limited reach without volunteers.

We have connected volunteers with new arrivals for practical, social and emotional support, as well as for ongoing English practice. Since we just had 4 paid staff, the volunteer team multiplied our reach by about 400%.

”

Organisational Benefits

Impact on Operations

In Australia, charities rely on the efforts of volunteers for many of their activities. Volunteers encompass 2.97 million members of the charitable sector workforce, compared to one million paid staff members.⁹ The *Giving Australia 2016* report on non-profits and volunteering has also found that 62.3 per cent of organisations in the not-for-profit sector actively recruited volunteers.¹⁰

⁹ Australian Charities Report (2015), Centre for Social Impact and Social Policy Research Centre, UNSW Australia

¹⁰ Giving Australia (2016), Giving and volunteering: the non-profit perspective, https://www.communitybusinesspartnership.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/nonprofit_report_final_4dec17.pdf

Survey respondents comprise a mixture of organisations with and without charitable status. With this in mind, many survey respondents identified that their organisations were totally sustained and operated through volunteer engagement and noted:

“

We could not survive without volunteers to run the clubs and games.

Volunteers support our organisation every day and we would not be able to provide the hands on support for current and new refugees without our volunteers.

The volunteers have been crucial in helping newly arrived refugees navigate the health and transport systems.

We can't deliver our programs and services without volunteers.

Volunteers do the work that our staff don't have the capacity to.

Allowed us to provide **increased support to clients and program.** Connection and learning between refugees, migrants and wider population.

”

Survey findings reiterate the critical role the volunteer workforce plays in the delivery of key programs, supports and services, and the need for Governments to adequately fund the volunteer workforce to ensure uninterrupted service provision. Respondents identified that volunteers were integral to the delivery of successful programming and service delivery:

“

We are a Volunteer Involving Organisation whose team, with the exemption of myself as a paid employee, is staffed wholly by volunteers. We do not receive funding to cover running costs and **would not be able to continue our services without the valued volunteers.**

Directly assisted with our service delivery to our clients, (refugees) our volunteers support our clients with tasks pre-arrival and ongoing, supporting their settlement. **It would be harder to function** as well as an organisation, without the support of our volunteers.

Our programs and projects are understaffed. **Their contribution in terms of time to help the workers in paid roles is crucial** with surveys, taking phone calls, setting up at different events and engaging with clients.

We have 335 volunteers and 35 staff, so our capacity is significantly enhanced through regular volunteers. **Some of our programs are not able to be delivered without volunteers.** We benefit from their experience, expertise, skills, knowledge, local knowledge and connections, energy, ability to speak other languages, lived experience, cultural understanding.

”

Many organisations in the community sector rely on Government funding. While volunteers are frequently considered “free”¹¹, the training, equipment, management and other administrative overheads all have cost implications for the organisation. Very often, volunteer labour is not accounted for in grants and funding, with organisations having to wear the cost for engaging volunteers.

¹¹ Volunteering Australia (2015), Definition of Volunteering, <http://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/policy-andbest-practise/definition-of-volunteering/>

Diversity Dividend

There are many benefits to having a more diverse workplace that is reflective of the Australian cultural and linguistic landscape. Research from McKinsey¹² has found that companies that are more diverse are more likely to improve their customer orientation, employee satisfaction, and decision making. Further, companies that are more ethnically diverse are 35 per cent more likely to perform better than their industry partners.¹³

Anecdotal evidence from the settlement sector further reinforces the benefits of diversity in organisations. Many SCoA members report that engaging volunteers or employees with lived experience, common stories or shared languages, is something that is highly valued by the newly arrived communities they support. This is reflected in the survey responses below.

“

Hugely, especially with interpreting for clients. We also have a large number of Australian born volunteers who helps refugees better understand life in Australia.

It has enriched our organisation as many of our volunteers have been culturally and linguistically diverse. The volunteers are a huge help in shaping our sector and also advancing our work in the office.

Bringing and contributing a wealth of lived and professional experience to support paid staff and assisting in the day-to-day functioning of the program. Some long-term volunteers have a lot of autonomy & responsibility overseeing certain aspects of service delivery themselves such as assisting clients with their citizenship application paperwork.

Volunteers have helped during our annual events, **supporting newly arrived refugees to settle** in QLD, supported in office roles, provided language support for programs with no funding for language support, provided cultural support, provided homework help for children and high school students.

”

Individual Benefits

Pathway to Employment

Volunteering can lead to employment by increasing workforce participation and connecting people to career paths that are better paid and more stable.¹⁴ Research conducted by SEEK Volunteer has found that:

95%

of employers believe

that volunteering can be a credible way of gaining real-work experience to add to your resume.

85%

of recruiters believe

that volunteering is just as credible as paid work as long as it is relevant to the role or industry the person works in.

92%

of employers said

that relevant volunteer experience gives candidates an advantage in job interviews.¹⁵

¹² McKinsey (2018), Why diversity matters, <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/organization/our-insights/why-diversity-matters>

¹³ McKinsey (2018), Why diversity matters, <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/organization/our-insights/why-diversity-matters>

¹⁴ Indicators of Community Strength in Victoria, op. cit., p17.

¹⁵ SEEK (2018), Get ahead by volunteering in 2018, <https://www.seek.com.au/career-advice/get-ahead-by-volunteering-in-2018>

For new arrivals to Australia, such as recent migrants and refugees, having skills and qualifications recognised is vital to attaining employment. Volunteering is important to gaining local work experience or an Australian referee. This was also emphasised by survey respondents who stated, “Volunteers have benefited by: learning about, and gaining a greater understanding of different cultures, skill acquisition, workplace experience which may be useful in paid employment (especially useful for recent migrants or refugees without Australian work experience), providing the volunteer with a written reference, or Australian referee to be used in their resume for job applications.”

Volunteering can be particularly valuable in helping people from diverse backgrounds to engage with the workforce and build key employable skills. This is significant for those who are culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) or refugees, who can face multiple barriers to finding paid employment, such as discrimination, and are often excluded from the labour market.

While volunteering provides no financial incentive it does promote community connections and a strong self of positive self-worth by preparing refugees to enter the workforce. Volunteering has been found to have direct positive benefits for new arrivals physical and mental health, improved access to healthcare and promoted cultural and social integration. These factors have a direct correlation to successful settlement and has subsequently improved the overall wellbeing of individual wellbeing. A strengths-based approach demonstrates how volunteering is a critical tool to seeking both purpose and ongoing personal and professional development.

“

Having local experience and relevance to their background for future jobs as well as learning different culture[s] and sharing their talents and knowledge.

We have many volunteers who move on to paid employment or further education, we have given volunteers **a safe environment that has enabled them to grow in confidence.** We also enable those people who are alone to come and feel less isolated.

Volunteering at our organisation assists a volunteer with gaining local work experience. Volunteering also **assists people to learn about Australian systems and settlement.**

Volunteers from a refugee background are helpful when assisting recently arrived migrants, as they understand the challenges and opportunities throughout that journey.

”

The BMC Public Health report has found that volunteering engenders a sense of self-fulfilment and belonging by facilitating successful integration of new arrivals into communities. Volunteering encourages new skills and allows individuals to build key employable skills, which in turn ensures an adequate standard of living, access to healthcare, food and other basic services.¹⁶

“

We have many employees today within our organisation **who started as volunteers**. All our volunteers have many skills and knowledge and enjoy supporting our organisation and are always encouraged to learn and apply for jobs with our organisation.

Viable pathway to paid employment, training and development

Provided hands-on experienced for jobseekers. Connection and learning between refugees, migrants and the wider population.

Volunteering is an important entry point to local business and gaining local experience. Getting local work experience to enhance preparation for jobs. Getting mentored by staff and managers. Learning from buddies and staff. Practicing and learning about Aussie workplace culture (WHS, etc.) and getting great references.

Work experience, making new friends and connections, having **the opportunity to assist people generally not accessible to them** had it not been through the organisation.

Volunteers have been provided with knowledge and skills to be more confidence and be able to get a job.

It can give a volunteer a degree of self-worth and accomplishment, in some cases, a purpose. It can give them exposure to potential work as well as experience.

”

Volunteering can also be an effective way of improving English language skills by allowing recent arrivals to Australia to immerse themselves in an Australian workplace or organisational setting, network, being introduced to cultural norms and practice their language skills among peers. This was pointed out by respondents who stated that volunteering led to individuals:

“

Our organisations rely upon the support of volunteers for the successful implementation of a variety of programs, ranging from Homework Support Programs (HSP) to Playgroups, as well as public transport orientation. Moreover, direct **volunteer engagement with clients provide incidental English conversational skill development,** as well as fostering greater awareness of Australian cultural norms amongst our clients. This serves to support our organisation in successful settlement service delivery.

Gaining knowledge and skills, **improving English language,** social networking, making connections, feeling included, boosting self-esteem and confidence.

Connections with people, increased skills, becoming work ready, improved understanding of systems, **improved English,** sense of purpose – giving back to their new society, etc.

”

¹⁶ BMC 2019, Qualitative exploration of the impact of employment and volunteering upon the health and wellbeing of African refugees settled in regional Australia: a refugee perspective, <https://bmcpublichealth.biomedcentral.com/track/pdf/10.1186/s12889-018-6328-2>

Social Connections and Community Cohesion

Evidence indicates that people who volunteer are happier and healthier individuals. Recent studies have indicated that 96 per cent of volunteers say that engaging in volunteering “makes people happier”¹⁷, while 95 per cent of volunteers say that volunteering is related to feelings of wellbeing.¹⁸

In fact, only a few hours of volunteer work has an impact on an individual's happiness and mood, and sustained volunteering is associated with better mental health.¹⁹ The experience of helping others provides meaning, a sense of self-worth, a social role and health enhancement.²⁰ Volunteers have also identified personal benefits from their involvement in volunteering activities including, “improved wellbeing and a community connection, and (they) believe they have made a notable contribution to common good.”²¹ For example survey respondents noted that they felt they were:

“

Given purpose. Assisted in learning new skills. Promoted positive mental health outcomes. Pathway to paid employment. Sense of belonging – bonding as a team.

A chance to contribute practically (fundraising, events, homestay, etc) and a chance to have an advocacy voice on refugee and asylum policy.

”

Volunteering can provide a great way into the labour market, as well as a rich source of social capital, allowing for the development of meaningful relationships and the reduction of social isolation.

“

Volunteers have reported feeling valued by our clients and organisation and feeling they have really helped. Volunteering has also contributed to at least 2 volunteers getting full time jobs.

”

It can be particularly useful for new arrivals to Australia. When asked ‘How has volunteering with the organisation been beneficial for the volunteers?’, seventy responses elicited several benefits of volunteering by the individual.

“

Builds relationships, provides sense of contribution, sense of purpose, enables demonstration of active citizenship, helps to build resumes, social interaction.

We offer professional development opportunities, references for employment, social connectedness to each other and their community.

”

¹⁷ Post, S. G. 2011, ‘It’s good to be good: 2011 5th annual scientific report on health, happiness and helping others’, The International Journal of Person Centred Medicine, vol. 1, no. 4, p814.

¹⁸ Volunteering ACT, 2013, ‘Selfless Service: The State of Volunteering Report in the ACT 2013’, p6.

¹⁹ Post, S. G. 2011, op. cit., p816.

²⁰ Musick, M. A. and Wilson, J. 2003, ‘Volunteering and depression: the role of psychological and social resources in different age groups’, Social Science and Medicine, vol. 56, p267.

²¹ Post, S. G. 2011, op. cit., p814.

Volunteer Management

It is important to recognise that volunteering requires considerable leadership and investment to ensure safe and effective volunteering. This is provided by managers of volunteers and Volunteering Support Services, and supported by Volunteer Involving Organisations.

Volunteer management plays a critical role in successful volunteer engagement. The role of managers of volunteers in recruitment, induction, training, support and management is indispensable to ensuring safe and effective volunteering.

Similarly, place-based services such as Volunteering Support Services also provide the critical support required for effective and sustainable volunteering. They are responsible for promoting, resourcing and supporting volunteering in local communities, and assist thousands of organisations across the country to recruit, retain and manage their volunteers. There are 52 Commonwealth government funded Volunteering Support Services who deliver 70 programs across each State and Territory.

Volunteering Australia's recent report into The Value of Volunteering Support Services highlighted that Volunteering Support Services "saw themselves as an important custodian of the culture of volunteering in Australia"²², and in 2017 alone, these organisations enabled nearly \$12.3 million volunteer hours.

To support safe and effective volunteering, Volunteering Australia recommends having policies and procedures in place. Survey data indicates that 79 per cent of respondents reported having a formal policy governing the engagement of volunteers, 13 per cent did not, and 8 per cent were 'unsure'.

Does your organisation have a formal policy governing the engagement of volunteers?



To support Volunteer Involving Organisations, Volunteering Australia has developed The National Standards for Volunteer Involvement, which is the best-practice framework for volunteer management. Volunteering Australia recommends the use of the Standards to help organisations attract, manage, recognise and retain volunteers, and to manage risk and safety with respect to volunteers.²³

The Standards cover eight fundamental areas of volunteer involvement and encourage organisations to consider the role of volunteers within their organisations, and the impact that effective volunteer involvement can have on achieving both strategic and operational goals. Training and webinars on the Standards are delivered by the seven State and Territory volunteering peak bodies.

²² Volunteering Australia (2018), The Value of Volunteering Support Services, <https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/wp-content/uploads/The-Value-of-Volunteering-Support-Services.pdf>

²³ See Volunteering Australia's *National Standards for Volunteer Involvement* <https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/policy/national-standards-and-supporting-material/>

Barriers to Volunteering

Volunteers can face a number of barriers that can detract from their volunteer experience. Volunteers frequently report that increasing red tape, a lack of flexibility and organisations refusing to reimburse for out-of-pocket expenses can act as an enormous deterrent and inhibit the things they do as volunteers.

Volunteering Australia's *2016 State of Volunteering in Australia Report* highlights that volunteers were deterred from volunteering due to lack of flexibility, personal expenses incurred, a lack of reimbursement for out-of-pocket expenses and burdensome administrative requirements. In fact, the biggest barrier to people volunteering into the future is out-of-pocket expenses at 27 per cent.²⁴

Survey results indicate that of the 76 respondents, 47 per cent of organisations reported reimbursing their volunteers for general expenses incurred in volunteering, and 53 per cent did not.

Does your organisation reimburse its volunteers?



Volunteering Australia recommends that all volunteer out-of-pocket expenses are reimbursed. This is because as volunteers are giving their “time willingly”, the organisation must ensure they are not out-of-pocket for any expenses incurred during the course of their volunteering. It is also recommended that there is a policy and procedure regarding volunteer reimbursement for organisations to refer back to.

We note that this survey instrument had limitations and did not delve deeper into whether organisations insured their volunteers and what specific policies and procedures organisations had in place to manage their volunteers.

A large proportion of respondents (66 per cent) reported that they would greatly benefit from additional support to help engage volunteers.

Would your organisation benefit from greater support to assist it in the engagement of volunteers?



Respondents were asked to specify what tools, resources and support would assist with the engagement of volunteers. Support identified included:

- ◆ coaching
- ◆ mentoring
- ◆ training
- ◆ resources
- ◆ general information
- ◆ legal support

²⁴ Volunteering Australia (2016), *State of Volunteering in Australia*, <https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/wp-content/uploads/State-of-Volunteering-in-Australia-full-report.pdf>

Other areas that were highlighted as important for volunteering in the settlement sector were:

- ◆ additional funding to enable organisations to provide volunteers with training and better equipment.
- ◆ the facilitation of partnerships with local firms or industries.
- ◆ a sector network group.
- ◆ capacity building for the community.
- ◆ more information regarding government requirements and volunteering (such as Jobactive and volunteering and volunteering and tax).

Respondents noted that additional funding for internal and external training, new equipment and support to ensure volunteer reimbursement would be viewed as highly important.

Volunteering Australia's 2016 *State of Volunteering in Australia* report indicates that volunteers have envisaged a benefit in more training and professional development opportunities, as well as feedback on performance.²⁵

“

We want to train all our volunteers, and this costs money. We have a training coordinator who delivers internal and external training, but her position isn't funded. So she delivers training to volunteers and the programs they are 'attached to' for their training.

”

Recommendations

Out of pocket expenses can be a barrier to volunteering for people from a migrant or refugee background. Formal policies governing volunteering can help protect the organisation and the volunteers in the workplace.

Volunteering Australia and SCoA recommend best-practice volunteer engagement throughout the settlement sector. This includes reimbursing volunteers, to help navigate barriers that may prevent newly arrived migrants or refugees from volunteering.

Organisations should develop their own formal policies governing volunteering in line with Volunteering Australia's *National Standards for Volunteer Involvement*.

²⁵ Volunteering Australia (2016), *State of Volunteering in Australia*, <https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/wp-content/uploads/State-of-Volunteering-in-Australia-full-report.pdf>

Cultural Competency

Cultural competency is the ability to understand and incorporate understandings of diverse cultures into everyday interactions and operations. An understanding of the unique and diverse needs of volunteers from a refugee and migrant background can significantly enhance the volunteering experience, for both the volunteer and the organisation.

In fact, international comparisons from New Zealand indicate that Volunteering Support Services may have different views on the role of new arrivals in volunteering and what meaningful volunteering entails which can be problematic for effective volunteer engagement. There is great benefit to providing cultural competency training and resources to better place organisations to engage with volunteers from diverse backgrounds.²⁶

The survey found that there was strong interest (88 per cent of respondents) reported in the development of culturally appropriate volunteering resources and training models. Further research or action is needed to determine what types of culturally appropriate volunteering resources are needed for the settlement sector. This includes additional consultation with the volunteering, migration and settlement service sectors.

Would you be interested in culturally appropriate volunteering resources and training models?



Recommendations

Work with Government to ensure settlement service providers have the funding they need to enable safe, effective and sustainable volunteering.

²⁶ Volunteering New Zealand (2018), Recent Migrant Volunteering Strategy, <https://www.volunteeringnz.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/FINAL-Recent-Migrant-Strategy-for-consultation.pdf>

Conclusion

This snapshot has allowed for the volunteering and settlement sectors to collaborate and form a baseline understanding of giving activities in the settlement sector.

The results of this survey offers an interesting insight into the nature of volunteering in the settlement sector. It demonstrates the extensive presence of migrants and refugees as volunteers within these organisations, and the many benefits of volunteering for both organisations and individuals.

Most organisations are interested in culturally appropriate training resources, and over two-thirds of respondents reported the desire for greater support through funding, training programs, collateral, new partnerships and resource sharing.

SCoA and Volunteering Australia highlight that there is additional opportunities to conduct future research, consultation and collaboration with the volunteering and settlement sectors to work out what is needed in order to develop culturally appropriate training materials and models.

Appendix

Volunteering Australia and Settlement Council of Australia – joint survey

Introduction:

“Volunteering is a tower of strength in our communities with 5.8 million Australians or 31 per cent of the population volunteering in formal volunteering activities and programs.”¹ Research demonstrates that volunteering yields a 450 per cent return for every dollar invested. Nationally this is an estimated annual economic and social contribution of \$290 billion.²

In the Settlement Sector alone, we know that the capacity of many SCoA member organisations is greatly enhanced thanks to the many volunteers who contribute to settlement work.

Volunteers are those who “give their time willingly for the common good and without financial gain”³ and anecdotal evidence suggests that across the Settlement Sector many hundreds of volunteers are engaged in formal volunteering (through an organisation or institution) on a regular basis.

The purpose of this survey is to collect evidence that will enable us to gauge the levels of volunteering among members of the Settlement Sector and to catalogue the many benefits that brings, both to the new Australians who receive direct support (and are often volunteers themselves) and the broader Australian economy.

Volunteering Australia and the Settlement Council of Australia seek input from Settlement Sector organisations through this anonymous survey in order to progress our research and assist in the development of a strong evidence base for future policy development.

Questions:

A Volunteer Involving Organisation (VIO) is any organisation that engages volunteers. This does not include interns.

1. Is your organisation a VIO?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Unsure

2. Is your organisation a SCoA member organisation?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Unsure

Volunteering Support Services are place-based services who use their local knowledge to promote, resource and support volunteering in local communities across Australia. There are 52 federally funded Volunteering Support Services (VSS) across the country. These are also known as Volunteer Support Organisations (VSO)/Volunteer Resource Centres (VRC). The State/Territory Volunteering Peak Bodies are also VSS. To find out more visit: <https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/research/value-of-volunteering-support-services/>

3. Is your organisation a member of their State/Territory Volunteering peak body?

- a. Yes
- b. No

4. Does your organisation access any of the services provided by local Volunteering Support Services, including training, resources?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Unsure

Formal volunteering refers to volunteering that takes place within organisations, institutions or agencies. This differs to informal volunteering, which can include assisting people in the community (excluding one's own family members. For example, looking after children, property or pets).

5. In the last financial year, did your organisation recruit any volunteers in a structured way? This includes through a specific program or service.

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Unsure

6. If yes, please provide an estimate of how many different individuals your organisation engaged as volunteers:

- a. Under 10
- b. Between 10 and 50
- c. More than 50

7. Were any volunteers engaged by your organisation persons who would identify as being from a migrant or refugee background?

- a. Migrant
- b. Refugee
- c. Both
- d. No
- e. Unsure

8. Were any of the volunteers engaged by your organisation persons who had arrived in Australia:

- a. Less than 12 months prior to being engaged as a volunteer
- b. Between 12 months and 5 years prior to being engaged as a volunteer
- c. Between 5 and 10 years prior to being engaged as a volunteer
- d. More than 10 years prior to being engaged as a volunteer
- e. Unsure

Volunteering Australia recommends that volunteers should undertake no more than 16 hours of volunteer work per week for one organisation, unless they choose to do more.⁴

9. On average, how long are volunteers involved by your organisation?

- a. Less than 3 months
- b. Between 3 and 6 months
- c. Between 6 months and 1 year
- d. More than 1 year
- e. Unsure

10. On average, how many hours per week does a person spend volunteering for your organisation?

- a. Less than one hour
- b. Between 1 and 3 hours
- c. Between 3 and 5 hours
- d. Over 5 hours
- e. Unsure

11. How has volunteer engagement benefitted your organisation? Please specify:

12. How has volunteering with your organisation been beneficial for the volunteer/s?

According to Volunteering Australia's [State of Volunteering in Australia report](#), reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses is important to the volunteering experience.

13. Does your organisation reimburse its volunteers?

- a. Yes
- b. No

Volunteering Australia recommends the use of the [National Standards for Volunteer Involvement](#) as a best practice framework for volunteer engagement. The Standards are specifically designed to help organisations attract, manage, recognise and retain volunteers, and to manage risk and safety with respect to volunteers.

14. Does your organisation have a formal policy governing the engagement of volunteers?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Unsure

15. Would your organisation benefit from greater support to assist it in the engagement of volunteers?

- a. Yes
- b. No

If yes, what?

16. Would you be interested in culturally appropriate volunteering resources and training modules?

- a. Yes
- b. No

¹ See <https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/policy/towerofstrength/>

² Australian Bureau of Statistics (2015), General Social Survey, Summary Results, Australia, 2014, <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4159.0>

³ See <https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/wp-content/uploads/19102018Common-Languages-Guide-FINAL.pdf>

⁴ Volunteering Australia (2017), Definition of Volunteering – FAQs Supplement May 2017, <https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/wp-content/uploads/Definition-FAQs-Supplement-May-2017.pdf>

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