



Summary Analysis of Key 2018-19 Federal Budget Measures

The Treasury

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Volunteering Australia Contacts

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About Volunteering Australia

Volunteering Australia is the national peak body for volunteering. We work 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.

Introduction

Volunteering Australia has provided a summary analysis of the key budget measures from the 2018-19 Federal Budgetⁱ, as well as how it will impact the volunteering sector.

While we acknowledge the Government's contributions to the sector through the Volunteer Management Activity and annual Volunteer Grants, we are disappointed there is no strategic approach to grow a culture of giving in these budgetary measures.

Volunteering Australia outlined a number of recommendations in our 2018-19 Federal Pre-Budget Submission, following extensive consultation with volunteers, managers of volunteers, Volunteer Involving Organisations and Volunteering Support Services. The recommendations were aimed at comprehensively building sector capacity, fiscal resilience and growth.

Despite some positive budget measures more broadly in aged care, the NDIS, mental health, sport and education, and others aimed at increasing social capital, getting people healthy and active, increasing workforce participation, and improving community involvement, the recommendations made by Volunteering Australia in our pre-budget submission have been overlooked.

This is especially relevant given that volunteering is an activity with the highest multiplier effect of any government spending. Research demonstrates that volunteering yields a 450% return for every dollar invested. Nationally this is an estimated annual economic and social contribution of \$290 billion.ⁱⁱ

At Volunteering Australia, we define volunteering as "time willingly given for the common good and without financial gain."ⁱⁱⁱ While volunteers donate their time willingly, it comes at a cost. The operational cost of delivering innovative and agile volunteering programs that are responsive to the needs of Australian society is increasing, and requires significant investment.

We stress that volunteering is not free, with an operational cost attached to the engagement of volunteers. Organisations encounter reasonable expenses with the induction, training, management, resources and ongoing support of volunteers. There are also administrative overheads, such as insurance, that organisations need to account for. It is essential that the volunteer workforce is accounted for within future budgets.

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Key Measures outlined in the 2018-19 Federal Budget

Grants and Funding

Volunteering Australia

Volunteering Australia is funded under the Families and Communities Service Improvement Activity, which is part of the Families and Communities Program in the Department of Social Services. Funding is expected to remain steady over a three and a half year period.

Volunteer Management and Volunteer Grants

The Department of Social Services administers two streams of funding to support volunteering – the Volunteer Management Activity and Volunteer Grants. In 2018-19 \$5.7 million will be provided for the Volunteer Management Activity to support the delivery of Volunteering Support Services and one-off innovation and collaboration projects. These funds have been administered as of the 1 January 2018. The Government also provides funding for Volunteer Grants, with \$19,990,000 million allocated in 2018-19. This figure represents a combined allocation of \$10,000,000 million from the 2017-18 period (which has not been administered) and \$9,990,000 million for the 2018-19 period.*

Emergency Services

Emergency Services volunteers are housed in the recently established Home Affairs portfolio. In this years' budget, the Government has stated they will bolster the resilience of regional Australia to financial and economic impacts of hazards. In addition, the Government will continue to provide \$2.1 million per year to strengthen communities, individuals and institutions to minimise adverse effects of disasters through the Disaster Resilience Australia Package.

Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission

The Government is providing \$1 million in to the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC) in the 2018-19 period to meet the costs of 'anticipated litigation' as the ACNC pursues its role in regulating charities and charity registration.

Health

Health funding is expected to increase from \$78.8 billion in 2018-19 to \$85 billion in 2021-22. The Government has signed a new public hospital agreement which aims to deliver more than \$30 billion in additional funding between 2020-21 and 2024-25. This is a 30 per cent increase over the previous five years.

Mental Health

There will be an \$82.5 million investment for mental health services in residential aged care facilities to combat loneliness. Volunteering Australia applauds this announcement, highlighting that volunteers play a significant role in assisting people in residential settings by developing meaningful relationships and reducing social isolation. Volunteers have the ability to provide "an extra social connection and community participation, and the value of lived experiences."^{iv}

* This represents a reduction of \$10,000 in real terms. Volunteering Australia has sought clarification and can advise that grant funding programs are subject to minor fluctuations from year to year, either up or down. It is projected in the forward estimates however, that \$9,990,000 million will be allocated in the year 2019-20 and \$10,010,000 in 2020-21.

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Announced prior to the budget was the \$33.8 million funding boost to Lifeline Australia to enhance its telephone crisis services and funding for *beyondblue* and the Way Back Support Service. The funding for Lifeline Australia is focused on modernising the operating environment and expanding the workforce capacity. There has also been a \$3.9 million investment over three years to ensure multicultural communities receive culturally-responsive and appropriate care. This will be delivered by Mental Health Australia, FECCA and NEDA. These budget measures are welcome, and will be vitally important to supporting and resourcing the organisations strong volunteer contingent.

There has also been a budget measure announced to provide early intervention support for children and young people experiencing early symptoms of mental health. A total of 52 Family Mental Health Support Services (community mental health services) will receive a funding injection of \$46.3 million in 2018-19, to deliver support in 858 regional or remote locations. While these announcements are welcome, Volunteering Australia emphasises that there is great need for additional funding for the volunteer workforce involved in mental health services to address issues across the policy continuum.

Aged Care

The Government is providing an additional 14,000 high level home care packages in 2021-22 period. This adds to the 6,000 places provided in the previous budget. While Volunteering Australia welcomes the additional provision in home care, we highlight that there is currently a waiting list of 100,000 people.

The new Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission will be established from 1 January 2019. A commitment has been made to ensure that regulations will be made more transparent. With “83 per cent of residential facilities and 51 per cent of home care and home support outlets engaging volunteer staff”^v, and “23,537 volunteers providing 114,987 hours of care to older Australians in residential facilities”^{viiiviii}, Volunteering Australia welcomes this announcement.

The Government has also announced \$22 million to protect older Australians from abuse, including the funding of trials of specialist elder abuse support services. The Government has stated they will work collaboratively with States and Territories to establish a national online register for enduring powers of attorney. Volunteering Australia welcomes the National Plan on Elder Abuse and looks forward to working with the Government on this measure.

Finally, funding of \$20 million will be invested to pilot services for older Australians to help them remain connected to their communities, while \$22.9 million will be allocated to boost the physical activity of older Australians.

National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)

Volunteering Australia cautiously welcomes the Government’s pledge to fully fund the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). However, we echo concerns by our civil society colleagues, and hope there are no trade-offs for NDIS funding.

Existing funding for the NDIS expires on 30 June 2019, when the NDIS reaches full scheme in most States and Territories. The Government will provide \$92.1 million to ensure support continued for those transitioning to the NDIS, but not currently eligible. From 1 July 2019, existing clients of transitioning Commonwealth programs who are ineligible for assistance under the NDIS will have access to support consistent with what they currently receive through four Continuity of Support packages including Mental

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Health, A Continuity of Support Fund, Mobility Allowance (from July 2020), and the National Auslan Interpreter Booking and Payment Service.

With the NDIS workforce projected to grow to 162,000 full time equivalent workers by 2020, the provider market will also need to grow to meet the needs of the expected 460,000 participants. The Government will invest \$64.3 million over four years from 2017-18 for a new NDIS Jobs and Market Fund to support NDIS workforce and provider growth. The fund aims to strategically target workforce and market gaps, and will also assist the NDIS local care workforce. An allocation of \$15.8 million will also be invested in the 2018-19 period to assist disability and aged care providers to expand their workforce. Volunteering Australia welcomes this measure, with volunteers considered essential to the provision of supports and services that are integral to the NDIS. The volunteer workforce has been critical to the roll-out of the NDIS to-date, as well as the delivery of key NDIS programs, supports and services.

Volunteering Australia welcomes the announcement that the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission will be operational from 1 July 2018 starting in New South Wales and South Australia, other States and Territories from July 2019, and Western Australia by July 2020. The Commission is a product of the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Framework (released February 2017), and aims to provide nationally consistent protections. The Commission will offer safeguards for an estimated 460,000 people, of which 160,000 are in regional areas.

The Government will also invest a further \$11.2 million in the NDIS Appeals program, to ensure people with disability affected by reviewable decisions of the NDIA have access to support. Funding for legal assistance will be made available for complex cases.

Education

Schools

The Government has allocated \$243.5 billion for the Quality Schools Reform package, which will see recurrent needs-based funding for Australian schools, and better support for teachers and parents to help students achieve their best from 2018-2027. The recurrent funding will grow from \$17.5 billion in 2017 to \$29.5 billion in 2027.

Volunteering Australia contributed a submission to the *Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools*, that informed the Quality Schools Package. It was identified that volunteering, mentoring and other extra-curricular activities are effective forms of engagement to support the personal development and learning growth of students. A specific recommendation has been made to strengthen school-community engagement to enrich student learning, with volunteering identified as a key activity. Volunteering Australia looks forward to progressing this measure as part of the package.

Early Childhood

The Child Care Subsidy (legislated in 2017) will be introduced from the 2 July 2018. Families on incomes of \$187,000 or less will not have an annual limit on the amount received. This amounts to more than 85 per cent of families with children in child care. As part of the Child Care Subsidy, support will be provided for rural and remote families to transition to the new Subsidy, with specific funding in the Community Child Care Fund (CCCF). Budget Based Funded services are being offered, and will operate in primarily rural and remote areas.

Volunteering has raised concerns with the Minister for Education and Training on the activity requirements pertaining to the Subsidy. The exclusion of giving time to Parents and Citizens Committees, working in the

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school canteen and coaching of a child's sporting team as permitted volunteering activities are concerning, with these activities coined as "parental duties". Volunteering Australia highlights that these assertions contradict the definition of volunteering, with parents giving their "time willingly for the common good". Furthermore, parent volunteers play an important role in maintaining the health, lifestyle and wellbeing of children, and contribute immense support to the education sector. With such a short time-frame before the Child Care Subsidy will take effect, Volunteering Australia urges the Government to revise the scope of permitted volunteering activities.

The Government has allocated \$440 million to extend the National Partnerships Agreement on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education for the 2019 calendar year. This takes total preschool funding to \$870 million over 2018/2019. A total of 348,000 children will have access to 15 hours of preschool per week.

Sport

The Government has pledged \$154.3 million over five years to support Australians to live healthier and more active lifestyles. It will include initiatives for water and snow safety, grants to sports and physical activity providers to increase participation in physical activity, an expansion of the Local Sporting Champions program, training and resources for community-based sports organisations to improve the safety of sports participation by children, and the continuation of data collection nationwide to see what motivates people to participate in sport. This overall commitment will also go toward a National Sports Plan, which will be released later in 2018. Volunteering Australia welcomes this contribution, with volunteers a vital constituent of the sporting sector.

The motivations behind this funding commitment are to ensure people who are inactive start participating in sports, and to contribute to chronic disease prevention. The initiative will be delivered in partnership with national organisations capable of delivering in rural and remote locations. Volunteering Australia strongly supports these measures, with volunteering in sport an important way to deliver on a range of health, social and economic benefits, particularly with clubs and sporting organisations playing a vital role in connecting individuals and communities.

As part of this package, a provision of:

- \$11.8 million will be made to expand the Local Sporting Champions program to support youth participation in sporting competitions.
- A \$28.9 million grants program will be established for National Sporting Organisations to deliver new programs to promote active living.
- A further \$41.7 million will be invested in the Sporting Schools Program, extending its reach to 500 secondary schools (300 schools are currently involved), while continuing to provide funding for 5,200 primary schools
- \$29.7 million to upgrade local community sporting facilities. A competitive community sport infrastructure program will fund small to medium-scale projects, with infrastructure grants available between \$10,000 and \$500,000.

The Government has delivered \$15.5 million over five years (starting from 2017-18) to support water and snow safety organisations, Surf Life Saving Australia, Royal Life Saving Society Australia, AUSTSWIM, Laurie Lawrence Swimming Enterprises and Australian Ski Patrol Association, to distribute key programs and services (including water safety education) and reduce the incidence of injury and drowning.

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Employment

The Government has allocated \$250 million for its Skilling Australians Fund, with a further \$200 million set aside to assist 'mature-age' job seekers to adapt their skills to ensure they are able to stay in the labour market. Job seekers over the age of 45 will have access to skills and training incentives to adapt to the digital economy.

Under More Choices for a Longer Life, the government will provide an additional \$17.4 million over four years to establish a Skills Checkpoint for older workers program that will support employees aged 45 and 70 to remain in the workforce. The Skills Checkpoint will also look at a participant's involvement in the community, including volunteering activities, to see whether those skills will translate to a new career path.

Social Security

There have been no increases to Newstart, Youth Allowance and other related payments. Newly arrived migrants will experience a waiting period of four years from the 1 July 2018, before they can access income support. The Government has also extended the debt recovery and fraud detection program from 2019-20, with a projected saving of \$299 million.

Work for the Dole

There has been no change to the Government's Work for the Dole program from the 2017-18 Budget. While Volunteering Australia is pleased to see that volunteering remains a permitted activity for job seekers as part of the Work for the Dole scheme, we highlight our concerns around a lack of consideration on our recommendation to ensure Volunteering Support Services receive additional funding for placing participants through Mutual Obligation and Work for the Dole schemes.

At present, Volunteering Support Services use their local knowledge and professional experience to assist private job service providers with the placement. This is done within existing resources and funding, while job service providers receive primary funding. Volunteering Australia reiterates its disappointment that no additional funding has been provided for Volunteering Support Services in this budget to place participants, despite the substantial role they play in this interaction.

Women's Safety

The Government will maintain \$6.7 million in the 2018-19 period to fund DV-alert. This is a nationally accredited training program aimed at frontline community workers such as teachers, early childhood educators, volunteers and medical practitioners. The program assists frontline staff to recognise and respond to the signs of domestic and family violence, as well as ensure they are able to refer clients experiencing or at risk of violence. To find out more about DV-alert visit www.dvalert.org.au.

Environment

The Government is providing over \$22 million over four years from 2016-17 through the Improving Your Local Parks and Environment Program to create more accessible green spaces, and support communities to revitalise, maintain and improve local parks, nature, reserves, rivers, coastal areas and community facilities.

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Conclusion

This budget has done little to build sector capacity, acknowledge the contributions, and recognise the impact of volunteering in Australia, as well as the depth and breadth of volunteering as a cross-portfolio issue, spanning across a diverse range of sectors, organisations, portfolios and communities. As such, Volunteering Australia calls upon the Government to ensure that there is adequate support and investment by all levels of government to assist Volunteer Involving Organisations, Volunteering Support Services, and volunteers, to continue to engage in all areas of Australian society.

Volunteerism supports the Government's keys objectives in delivering jobs and growth, disability and aged care services, emergency services, multiculturalism, communications and the arts, health and other important community programs. With the Government's support through ongoing funding, recognising the economic and social contributions, and the value of volunteering as a legitimate pathway to employment, the volunteering sector can continue to deliver vital services.

Volunteering Australia recommends that the volunteering sector is appropriately celebrated, supported and acknowledged, and looks forward to working with the Government on advancing measures that invest in the social, cultural and economic outputs made by the sector.

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Authorisation

This submission has been authorised by the Chief Executive Officer of Volunteering Australia.



Ms Adrienne Picone

Chief Executive Officer

Endorsements

This submission has been endorsed by the seven State and Territory volunteering peak bodies.

Glossary

VA	Volunteering Australia is the national peak body for volunteering in Australia. It works collectively with the peaks to deliver national, state and local volunteering programs and initiatives.
VIO	Volunteer Involving Organisations are organisations that engage volunteers as part of their workforce.
VSS	Volunteering Support Services (also known as Volunteer Resource Centres or Volunteer Support Organisations) provide place-based volunteer support services to volunteers and VIOs in their locality.

ⁱ The Treasury, Budget 2018-19, <https://www.budget.gov.au/>.

ⁱⁱ Flinders University (31 October 2014) 'Volunteering worth \$290 billion a year', <http://blogs.flinders.edu.au/flinders-news/2014/10/31/volunteering-worth-290-billion-a-year>

ⁱⁱⁱ Volunteering Australia (2015) 'Definition of Volunteering', <http://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/policy-and-best-practise/definition-of-volunteering/>.

^{iv} Extended Families Australia, Inclusion Melbourne, Interchange Incorporated and People Outdoors (2015) 'Volunteering and the National Disability Insurance Scheme: A Survey of Victorian Disability Organisations'.

^v The Senate (2017), Future of Australia's aged care sector workforce, Community Affairs References Committee, p13.

^{vi} Volunteering SA&NT Inc (2017), *Committee Hansard*, p34.

^{vii} Flinders University (2017), *Committee Hansard*, National Institute of Labour Studies, Table 4.21, p26.

^{viii} The Senate (2017), Future of Australia's aged care sector workforce, Community Affairs References Committee, p36.