

Review and renewal of the Australian Sports Diplomacy Strategy

The Office for Sport and Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

September 2018

Introduction

Volunteering Victoria and Volunteering Australia welcome the opportunity to provide feedback to the Office for Sport and Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade on the *review and renewal of the Australian Sports Diplomacy Strategy*.

The renewal of the Strategy is a key priority of *Sport 2030* and aims to amplify on the four key goals outlined in the Australian Sports Diplomacy Strategy 2015-18 (the Strategy). These are:

- Connecting people and institutions
- Enhancing sport for development
- Showcasing Australia
- Supporting innovation and integrity

In this submission, Volunteering Victoria and Volunteering Australia highlight the need for the Strategy to prioritise volunteering to deliver on the objectives of sports diplomacy both in Australia and overseas, as well as the need for resourcing, acknowledgement and investment in the sector to realise these objectives.

Sport and Volunteering

Sport in Australia is delivered through the generous efforts of volunteers. In 2010, the sport and physical recreation sector attracted the largest number of volunteers (2.3 million people).ⁱ The Australia Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2014 General Social Survey also indicates the most common types of organisations for which people volunteer are those relating to sport and physical recreation at 31 per cent.ⁱⁱ Sporting and recreational organisations also have the highest hours of volunteer involvement at 157.5 million hours, with religious organisations placing second at 147.6 million hours and welfare/community placing third at 141.1 million hours.

Despite these figures, formal volunteer participation in Australia has declined, with 31 per cent of Australians in 2014 participating in volunteering compared to 36 per cent in 2010.ⁱⁱⁱ Anecdotal evidence points to a shift toward informal or more episodic forms of volunteering, and this poses a huge risk to sectors reliant on volunteering, such as sports.

Volunteering Australia's *State of Volunteering in Australia 2016* report highlighted the rise in the number of people who identified as informal volunteers. There were 29 per cent of respondents who indicated they were informal volunteers, assisting in sports clubs or teams. When asked "what sector would you be most interested in volunteering for in the future?", only 14.7 per cent of respondents indicated sport and 12.8 per cent indicated recreation – the fifth-lowest and third-lowest responses respectively, out of twenty-two possible options.^{iv}

Individual motivations to volunteer are varied, and increasing participation in sectors, such as sport, requires management, planning and strategy. Strategies developed by and for the sport and recreation sector very often focus on parents or family members to fill volunteer roles.

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A sport volunteer could be:

- Someone who has recently moved to a new area and is looking to establish connections or friendships
- Has an injury or a disability that precludes them from playing sport, but is a fan, passionate or knowledgeable about the sport and wants to be involved in some way (i.e. canteen or committee member)
- Studying in a field related to sport, recreation, youth or community affairs and is looking for professional development opportunities by volunteering
- Wants to give back to the community^v

Volunteering Victoria and Volunteering Australia recommend that the sector would benefit from the diversification of its pool of volunteers to include those who have knowledge of the sector, have a passion for the sport, or can give “time”, irrespective of being a parent or relative of a participant.

Recommendations

- Promote skills-based volunteering through the Strategy to overcome perceptions that volunteering in sport is not as worthwhile as paid work and to encourage volunteering in sport.
- Offer short-term opportunities for overseas volunteering in connection with major sporting events or aligned with secondary and tertiary education holiday periods.
- Work with secondary education institutions to leverage higher volunteer participation rates among secondary students to encourage volunteer participation as part of the Strategy.
- Adequately support youth volunteers through scholarships, bursaries or funding, and arrange reimbursement for any out-of-pocket expenses.
- Engage well-trained volunteer managers or coordinators to ensure effective support for youth volunteers, and support them in their work.
- Provide financial support for volunteer engagement and acknowledge the value of volunteering in administering and supporting major sporting events and initiatives.
- Make use of Volunteering Australia’s *National Standards for Volunteering Involvement* for any volunteer programmes or initiatives developed as part of the Strategy.
- Diversify the pool of volunteers and take steps to ensure the sporting sector is equitable, and accessible to underrepresented groups.
- Include education and training opportunities to encourage diverse groups to pursue volunteering opportunities in the sector, and to address harmful stereotypes.

We recommend The Office for Sport and Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade work collaboratively with volunteering peak bodies to realise these recommendations.

Connecting People and Institutions

Volunteering Victoria and Volunteering Australia are supportive of Australia's efforts to build strong, reciprocal and long-term relationships with partners in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond through sports diplomacy. This includes the work being done to diversify participation in sports and recreation.

Sport can play an integral role in connecting people in local communities, allowing people to stay active and improve their communication skills. It can also encourage community members to volunteer, and the engagement of multicultural volunteers is an important step toward improving multicultural engagement in sport.^{vi}

Skills-based volunteers can contribute to the execution of the Strategy through capacity-building for sporting organisations, person-to-person engagement and the building of cross-cultural links. An emphasis on professional or skills-based volunteering roles could go a long way to combating perceptions that volunteering in sport and recreation is less legitimate than paid work.

The Strategy provides an opportunity for volunteers to participate in the sporting sector domestically and internationally both as a means of personal and professional development, and as a mutually beneficial way to contribute to the sector.

Additional efforts should be made via the Strategy to provide mentoring and leadership opportunities with sector partners, private sector partners and sports businesses to nurture emerging leaders and encourage knowledge sharing opportunities.

Recommendation: We recommend that international sports volunteering be directly marketed to volunteers as an opportunity for professional development. By offering formal, structured volunteer programs, the Strategy can provide opportunities for sport and recreation volunteers to further develop and transfer their skills into a more substantial experience.

Volunteering Victoria and Volunteering Australia recommend additional support and investment in the volunteering sector to build formalised structures for leadership and the management of volunteers. This will empower countries in the region to recruit volunteers, and allow for a more inclusive, effective sporting sector. It will also give potential volunteers the opportunity to utilise their skills to appropriately fill key gaps, and allow them an opportunity to engage with their communities and build relationships.

Enhancing Sport for Development

Inactivity and obesity are on the rise in Australia and the Asia-Pacific region. Over 50 per cent of adults in Australia live sedentary or low activity lifestyles, while two-thirds of adults and one-quarter of children are either overweight or obese. At the current rate, Australians are at risk of transitioning to a nation of passive sport consumers.^{vii}

Volunteering Victoria and Volunteering Australia recognise the power of sport in delivering on development objectives, increasing social inclusion and improving health outcomes. Volunteering in the sporting sector also contributes benefits to health and wellbeing, improves outcomes in core academic fields for children, teaches life skills, and is a rich source of social capital.

In fact, 96 per cent of volunteers state that engaging in volunteering "makes people happier"^{viii}, while 95 per cent of volunteers state that volunteering is related to feelings of wellbeing.^{ix} Even just a few hours of volunteer work has a direct impact on an individual's happiness and mood, and sustained volunteering is

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associated with better mental health.^x In addition, the experience of helping others provides meaning, a sense of self-worth and a social role, and enhances general health.^{xi}

The sport and recreation sector in Australia and in the Asia-Pacific region has a lot to gain from engaging volunteers. 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.”^{xii}

Increasing volunteering in sport encourages volunteers to become more active. Market Segmentation from the Australian Sports Commission in 2014 reveals that at that time there were 34 per cent of sports club volunteers in the segment^{xiii}, and of those who did not volunteer, 45 per cent of the segment would volunteer in the future.^{xiv}

Recommendation: Volunteering Victoria and Volunteering Australia recommend the Strategy ensure that volunteers will be engaged in all programs and initiatives given the immeasurable social, mental, health and lifestyle benefits associated with volunteering in sport.

Showcasing Australia

Australia has a proud history of participation in sporting activities and events, which creates significant economic benefits for the nation. Every year “8.4 million adults and 3 million children participate in sport”^{xv}, “while 8 million attend live sport events every year.”^{xvi}

The sporting sector is Australia’s largest in terms of volunteer contribution. Major sporting events are important for collective community spirit, aiding social inclusion and building connections. Volunteer participation in these events brings the community together, and increases community wellbeing, which produces substantial economic benefits for the nation. The *Intergenerational Review of Australian Sport 2017* highlighted that, “the economic contribution (of the sector) is equivalent to 2 per cent of Australia’s GDP, employing more than 220,000 people and attracting 1.8 million volunteers.”^{xvii}

Volunteers are engaged in 158 million hours of sport each year. This is the equivalent in time of nearly 90,000 additional full-time jobs and \$3 billion in economic value.^{xviii} The direct economic, productivity and volunteer benefits from sport creates a total economic value of approximately \$50 billion annually. This contributes \$83 billion to Australia annually.^{xix}

The recent Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games engaged 15,000 volunteers, with a staggering 47,000 people applying. There were also an additional 3,000 volunteer performers at the opening and closing ceremonies. Volunteers saved Commonwealth Games organisers \$20 million.^{xx}

Recently, the Australian workforce has evolved to become highly casualised, more insecure, and contract-based, with individuals reporting less time, resources, and risk appetite to spend on recreational pursuits such as sport and volunteering. The Australian Sports Commission’s 2014 Market Segmentation emphasised that “without volunteers, sport in Australia could not survive.” The same Market Segmentation also stressed the need to develop effective volunteer recruitment and retention strategies given the reliance on volunteers in the sporting sector.^{xxi}

Recommendation: Renewing the Strategy provides opportunities to consider these aspects on a broad scale and invest in frameworks to support the critical volunteer resource. The Strategy must financially support volunteer engagement to attract a diverse pool of volunteers. It must also acknowledge the value of volunteering in administering and supporting major sporting events and initiatives.

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Supporting Innovation and Integrity

Encouraging Youth Participation in Volunteering

Volunteering Victoria and Volunteering Australia highlight that the Strategy should include a targeted program to boost youth volunteering both in Australia and the Asia-Pacific region. Volunteer engagement is highest among 15-17-year olds at 41.6 per cent. However, this figure declines as students enter tertiary education, with participation at its lowest among 18-24-year olds (26 per cent).^{xxii}

There are a number of barriers to youth volunteering. These include inflexible programs, limited information on roles, prohibitive costs, a lack of skills training and life experience for the role, a lack of time to commit to a role due to education or study.^{xxiii}

Recommendation: The Strategy should address the barriers to youth volunteer engagement by offering short-term opportunities for overseas volunteering in connection with major sporting events or aligned with secondary and tertiary education holiday periods. This can include structured volunteering opportunities or group volunteering programs created in partnership with the Volunteering Australia Network, and secondary and tertiary educational institutions. We also recommend working with secondary education institutions to leverage higher volunteer participation rate among secondary students to encourage volunteer participation as part of the Strategy.

Youth volunteers should be effectively informed about volunteer programs through comprehensive information sessions, education and training, as well as sufficient funding and/or reimbursement for any out-of-pocket expenses through the provision of grants or scholarships. Volunteering Victoria and Volunteering Australia also recommend that there are well-trained and supported managers of volunteers or volunteer coordinators to ensure effective support for volunteers during their experience.

Education and Training

It is our view that the Strategy should facilitate the upskilling and integrity of sports volunteers by providing guidance on existing volunteer standards, responsibilities and obligations. Volunteering Australia's *National Standards for Volunteering Involvement* will streamline processes, and provide guidelines on practice for sporting bodies, organisations, local clubs, players, and volunteers.

The *National Standards for Volunteer Involvement* are a best-practice guide for volunteer participation and have been developed in consultation with the Australian volunteering sector to support the involvement of volunteers.

Any volunteer programs included in Strategy must develop and implement volunteer support and management frameworks that ensure:

- volunteers receive induction and training
- volunteers are made aware of their rights
- volunteers are provided with information on how and where to seek help if they need it, and are actively encouraged to do so
- volunteers are given the opportunity to provide feedback on their experience, and the feedback is considered in the design of future programs

Recommendation: The use of the *National Standards for Volunteer Involvement* in the process of developing volunteer programmes or initiatives as part of the Strategy.

Facilitate Diversity in Sport Volunteering

It is our view that volunteers play a critical role in the sporting sector and the Strategy needs to clearly articulate and develop mechanisms to facilitate and enhance the contributions of a diverse pool of volunteers.

As such, the sporting sector can greatly benefit from diversifying, and improving its access and equity. For example, the sector has opportunities to:

- Encourage female participation in sport and recreation;
- Assist Indigenous communities to close the gap;
- Support the social inclusion of migrants (including new arrivals), and encourage the formation of social connections;
- Support the settlement of refugees, including learning English, assisting them to become part of a community, and make new friends;
- Alter community perceptions of people with disability, and provide an opportunity for people with disability to become more engaged with the community;
- Provide connections for older Australians, and mitigate isolation; and
- Foster community engagement for those with mental health issues.

Women account for a higher proportion of the volunteer workforce, with the 2014 General Social Survey indicating that 33.5 per cent of females engaged in volunteerism, compared to 29.1 per cent of males^{xxiv}. Despite female volunteers being overrepresented in most sectors, women are underrepresented in the sport and recreation volunteer workforce.^{xxv}

Likewise, the *2016 Victorian Gender Equality Strategy* found that while women account for majority of the overall volunteer workforce at 32.5 per cent, compared to 28.2 per cent of men; the only two sectors where this is not the case are the emergency services, and sport and recreation.^{xxvi}

Steps should also be taken to foster opportunities for Australians from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds to participate in volunteering as part of the Strategy. Current estimates indicate that 26.5 per cent of Australia's resident population is born overseas,^{xxvii} and a fifth of Australians speak a language other than English at home.^{xxviii} The volunteer participation of migrants is markedly lower than those born in Australia, and there is a substantial gap in participation by migrants who don't speak English well or at all.^{xxix}

Recommendations: Volunteering Victoria and Volunteering Australia recommend The Office for Sport and Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade should make the sporting sector more accessible and equitable for diverse groups, including women, migrants, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and people with disability, to engage and volunteer in the sporting sector in Australia and internationally.

Volunteering Victoria and Volunteering Australia highlight that the Strategy, with its overseas volunteering placements, should encourage Australians in all their diversity to participate in volunteerism, leveraging diversity of experience, background, language and skills. We recommend education and training opportunities to encourage diverse groups to pursue volunteering opportunities in the sector, and to address harmful stereotypes within the sports and recreation sector.

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Conclusion

Volunteering Victoria and Volunteering Australia appreciates the opportunity to provide feedback to The Office for Sport and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade on the Strategy.

It is our view that it is critical to consider the economic, social, cultural and health contributions of the volunteering sector when reviewing and renewing the *Australian Sports Diplomacy Strategy*. Any new Strategy must consider the contributions of the volunteering sector to sport both domestically and internationally.

Volunteering Victoria and Volunteering Australia would welcome further opportunities to consult or expand on any recommendations raised in this response, and look forward to working with The Office for Sport and Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade on the renewal of the Strategy.

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About Volunteering Victoria

Volunteering Victoria is the state peak body for volunteering and we have a singular and specialised focus on volunteering.

Through our dynamic and transformative leadership, we will promote and build a vibrant, prosperous and strong volunteering community that is inclusive, respected and sustainable. Our vision is resilient communities and empowered and active citizens through volunteering.

We provide support to volunteers and to organisations that involve volunteers in their workforce, support volunteering in their communities, or offer volunteering programs for their employees.

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Volunteering Victoria is endorsed as a Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR)

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.

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ⁱ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2010), General Social Survey, as published in Australian Bureau of Statistics, Volunteers in Sport, Australia, 2010 (cat. no. 4440.0.55.001).

ⁱⁱ ABS General Social Survey (2014), Summary Results, Australia, <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/mf/4159.0>.

ⁱⁱⁱ Volunteering Australia (2015), Are time poor Australians abandoning volunteering?, <https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/2015/07/are-time-poor-australians-abandoning-volunteering/>.

^{iv} Volunteering Australia and PwC (2016), State of Volunteering in Australia, <https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/wp-content/uploads/State-of-Volunteering-in-Australia-full-report.pdf>.

^v Volunteering Victoria (2016), Valuing Sport and Recreation, <http://volunteeringvictoria.org.au/priority/valuing-sport-recreation/>, p4.

^{vi} Volunteering Victoria (2016), Valuing Sport and Recreation, <http://volunteeringvictoria.org.au/priority/valuing-sport-recreation/>, p5.

^{vii} Australian Sports Commission, Intergenerational Review of Australian Sport 2017, Executive Summary, p4.

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- ^{xvi} *Ibid.*
- ^{xvii} *Ibid.*
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- ^{xix} *Ibid.*
- ^{xx} Gold Coast Bulletin (2018), Priceless contribution to the future of our city, *Local Legends*, Gold Coast Bulletin, Friday April 27 2018.
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