



21 June 2016

Mr Tim Jackson  
President  
Volunteering Australia  
Level 2, 202 City Walk  
Canberra ACT 2601

Dear Mr Jackson,

Thank you for the opportunity to outline Labor's plan to support for volunteers in our community. Labor understands the critical role played by Australia's community and not-for-profit sector and its volunteers in building the capacity of individuals and communities, delivering critical services, strengthening community cohesion, addressing inequality and harnessing opportunity.

Labor is committed to a strong, vibrant and sustainable community sector. That is why Labor has a comprehensive plan for supporting the community sector and working with community organisations and their volunteer networks to tackle complex social and economic issues.

A Shorten Labor Government will involve the community sector and communities themselves in designing, directing and controlling local priorities, services and solutions.

Labor is committed to a relationship of genuine engagement.

That's why last year, Labor's convened a Community Sector Partnership, which brought together leaders from the community sector to outline priorities for social policy reform and set a new agenda for working together to deliver positive social change.

Under a Shorten Labor Government, the Community Sector Partnership will meet regularly to continue to inform and advise on the best approaches to tackling new and emerging community issues. This builds on Labor's strong record of working in partnership with the community sector.

In 2010, the then Labor Government and 23 foundation signatories signed up to the National Compact with the Third Sector. This was an agreement to:

- Document and promote the value and contribution of the sector.
- Protect the sector's right to advocacy irrespective of any funding relationship that might exist.
- Recognise sector diversity in consultation processes and sector development initiatives.
- Improve information sharing including greater access to publicly funded research and data.
- Reduce red tape and streamline reporting.

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- Simplify and improve consistency of financial arrangements including across state and federal jurisdictions.
- Act to improve paid and unpaid workforce issues.
- Improve funding and procurement processes.

The National Compact provided a solid foundation for engagement between government and the community and not-for-profit sectors.

A Shorten Labor Government will work with foundation signatories as well as members of Labor's Community Sector Partnership to reinvigorate the National Compact with the Third Sector, providing a new platform for engagement and partnership between government and community organisations.

In consultation with the sector, Labor will examine ways of strengthening the Compact as a genuine platform for partnership into the future.

Labor also recognises and values the vital role that volunteers play in our community.

A Shorten Labor Government will commit \$10 million in 2016-17 to offer Volunteer Grants of up to \$5,000 aimed at assisting community organisations to build their capacity to find and retain volunteers.

Grants can be used to purchase small equipment that will assist their volunteers, assist with the reimbursement of fuel costs incurred by volunteers, assist with transport costs for volunteers with disability who are unable to drive, or contribute to the cost of training courses and background screening checks for volunteers.

One of the first acts of the Abbott-Turnbull Government in 2013 was to disband both the Office for the Not-for-Profit Sector and the Social Inclusion Unit.

The Office for the Not-for-Profit Sector was responsible for the National Compact along with the National Volunteering Strategy and social investment initiatives. These strategies have all been left to languish under the Liberals.

The Abbott-Turnbull Government also tried to abolish the Australian Charities and Not-For-Profit Commission, despite widespread support from across the community sector, but Labor successfully fought this.

You can find out more about Labor's plan to support the community sector and volunteers at [http://www.100positivepolicies.org.au/labors\\_plan\\_for\\_a\\_strong\\_vibrant\\_and\\_sustainable\\_community\\_sector\\_fact\\_sheet](http://www.100positivepolicies.org.au/labors_plan_for_a_strong_vibrant_and_sustainable_community_sector_fact_sheet)

Yours sincerely,

**ALP Information Services Unit**

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