

MEDIA RELEASE



Wednesday 13 May 2020

Wave your appreciation for volunteers

- This year has tested our Aussie spirit as we have dealt with an onslaught of natural disasters and a global pandemic
- In an ordinary year, volunteers contribute an estimated 743 million hours to the community¹, however, 2020 has seen us call on volunteers like never before
- Alongside the emergency volunteers who have worked tirelessly, many volunteers have been stood down due to age, health concerns or volunteer programs being suspended
- This National Volunteer Week (18 May–24 May), Volunteering Australia is calling on all Aussies to ‘wave your appreciation’ to volunteers

This year has tested our Australian spirit as we have dealt with devastating droughts, fires and floods, not to mention a global pandemic that will change the way we live. While we go through this time of change, our country will continue to be held together by our resilient volunteers who dedicate their time to the community.

Amidst the pandemic, while many of us have stayed home, volunteers in essential services have remained on the frontline. Volunteers have been packing food deliveries, checking in on the elderly, supporting families and helping others through these tough times.

In an ordinary year, a third (31%) of Australians volunteer their time, contributing 128 hours of their time to the community². This year however, we have called on our volunteers to go above and beyond.

With over 200,000 volunteers in emergency services³ risking themselves to save others, emergency management volunteers are more important than ever, working alongside other essential volunteers in affected communities.

Volunteering Australia is working closely with State and Territory Volunteering Peak Bodies to advocate for the continued safeguarding of volunteers and adequate resourcing for Volunteer Involving Organisations.

CEO of Volunteering Australia, Adrienne Picone says this extraordinarily challenging year has shone a spotlight on the power of the unpaid workforce in Australia.

“With such need, we are working hard to promote safe and effective volunteer working conditions and encourage Volunteer Involving Organisations to do the same.

“It is more important than ever that we thank and recognise volunteers this National Volunteer Week.” Adrienne says.

Alongside the emergency volunteers, many volunteers have been stood down due to age, health concerns or volunteer programs being suspended. Adrienne says that while face-to-face or event volunteering is put on hold there are still other ways that people can donate their time.

¹ ABS General Social Survey data (2014)

² ABS General Social Survey data (2014)

³ ABS General Social Survey (2014) which estimates that 217,100 people (or 3.8% of volunteers in Australia) had volunteered for emergency services in the previous 12 months.



“Some Volunteering Involving Organisations are currently seeking volunteers with roles such as community support, telephone volunteers, delivery drivers and digital mentors currently advertised on the GoVolunteer website. It’s important for people to remember that once COVID-19 restrictions lift, most volunteering programs will resume as normal and will be actively re-engaging with their volunteers and possibly seeking new volunteers,” Adrienne says.

National Volunteer Week is supported again in 2020 by Aon Australia. Gavin Deadman, Client Director Not for Profit at Aon Australia says, “Volunteering is the life blood of the Australian economy providing charities and not-for-profits the ability to exist. As the exclusive sponsor of National Volunteer Week, Aon is proudly providing innovative insurance solutions to assist in these endeavours including webinars on managing COVID-19 from a risk management perspective in these challenging times”

This National Volunteer Week (18 May –24 May), Volunteering Australia is calling on all Australians to ‘wave your appreciation’ for volunteers by sharing a photo of themselves waving their hand of thanks using the hashtags #NVW2020 and #waveforvolunteers.

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/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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