

**20** NATIONAL  
**23** VOLUNTEERING  
CONFERENCE  
THE FUTURE IS NOW

## **D5: Volunteering in aged care settings**



# Volunteering in Aged Care



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# Why volunteers in Aged Care are important

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- Volunteers are an essential part of the aged care system
- Volunteers support to older Australians by providing:
  - **Companionship and conversation**
  - Running **leisure activities** - reading, music, bingo, arts and craft, trivia
  - Access to and support in **outdoor spaces** for physical activities
  - **Practical assistance and emotional support** for people living with dementia
  - **Administration** support (e.g. answering calls, internal message running)
  - Extra **help in aged care homes** - cooking, cleaning, laundry and gardening
  - **Transport** - bus drivers
  - **Pastoral care** and religious services
  - Translation and **in-language assistance**
  - In-formal **information technology lessons**



# Impacts of the COVID pandemic

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- Participation of volunteers has been declining for well over a decade, with **aged care volunteering particularly badly hit** since the onset of COVID-19.
- Trends from 2016 onwards\*:
  - **49% decline** in volunteers in **residential care**
  - **33% decline** in volunteers in **home care**
  - **57% decline** in volunteers in the **Commonwealth Home Support Program**



# About the Community Visitor Scheme

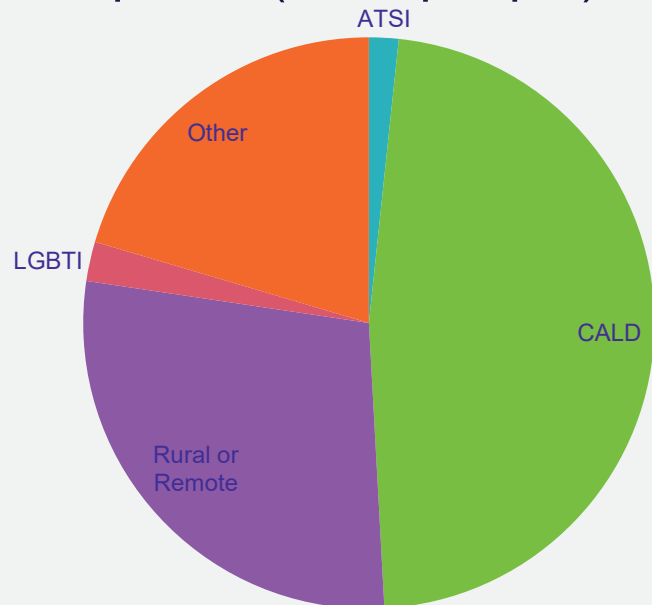
- The CVS supports community organisations (auspices) to recruit **volunteers to visit and provide friendship and companionship to older Australians**, with the aim of improving quality of life for people in care



# The Community Visitor Scheme experience

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- In 2021-22 we funded **181 Auspices** with approximately **9,245 volunteers** making around **250,700 visits**.
- 66% of visits to residential aged care homes
- 34% of visits to older Australians receiving aged care services at home
- Recipients (older people) with **special** or **additional needs** (by type):

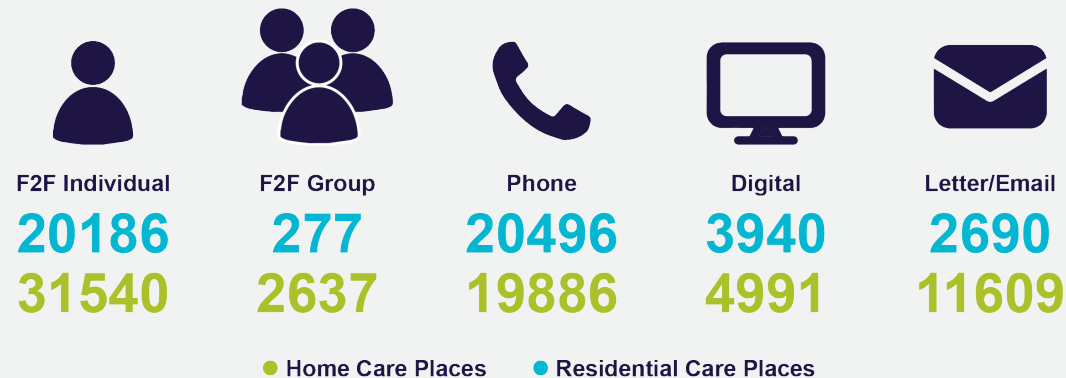


# Types of Community Visitor Scheme visits

## Visit Type by Activity Type: Jan to June 2022



## Visit Type by Activity Type: June – December 2020



# Community Visitors Scheme and COVID

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- \$10 million additional funding for CVS providers over 2019-20 and 2020-21 for support due to COVID-19 pandemic

## Challenges:

- **Increased demand** for the service from older people
- Significant **administrative** and **volunteer support needs**
- Lockdowns and **restrictions on in-person visits**
- **Loss of volunteers**



*Volunteer recruitment and retention is exhausting, time consuming. Sometimes it is effective and successful, and sometimes unfortunately without success, but with a lot of time invested\**



# Community Visitors Scheme and COVID

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## Positive outcomes

- **Innovation and resilience**
- **Increased awareness** of the impact of social isolation



*When asked why they would like to volunteer, many reported that they had been separated from their Grandparents due to COVID-19 and missed having this special connection with their elders\**

- **Recognition** of the **value** and **importance** of volunteers

*One care recipient's biggest fear was dying alone. When he became unwell and entered hospital, the ACF and the facility went out of their way to ensure he did not die alone and his volunteer was given access to his room and was present when he passed\**

# Re-engaging volunteers in residential aged care facilities (RACFs)

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- Aims of the Program:
  - provide non-clinical care and social support to people in RACFs to improve the emotional wellbeing of residents
  - relieve pressure on the workforce, allowing them to focus on clinical and high-care roles
  - reverse the decline in volunteer participation in RACFs
- The re-engagement program ran from March to September 2022
  - **453** volunteers were matched to an older person
  - **591** volunteers were trained
  - **224** residential aged care facilities participated RACFs



# Re-engaging volunteers in residential aged care facilities (RACFs)

## Lessons learned

- Volunteers pathways
- Lead-in times
- Targeted local communications
- Consistent approach across all RACFs
- Simplicity and access to training and screening



# Where to from here?

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We will be **seeking feedback** from **aged care volunteers** and **aged care providers** in 2023 on:

- the role and use of volunteers across the sector
- requirements for volunteer coordination and induction training
- successes or barriers in engaging and retaining volunteers
- the role and needs of volunteer coordinators
- training needs, priorities, and preferences of volunteers in the aged care sector





# Any questions?

 Get involved: [AgedCareEngagement.health.gov.au](https://AgedCareEngagement.health.gov.au)

 Email us: [AgedCareVolunteer@health.gov.au](mailto:AgedCareVolunteer@health.gov.au)

