

MEDIA RELEASE

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National Strategy
for Volunteering



JUST RELEASED

Australia's first National Strategy for Volunteering in a decade

Following a rigorous and inspiring 12-month co-design journey Australia has a new shared agenda for a reimagined future for volunteering. Launched today at the biennial National Volunteering Conference, the National Strategy for Volunteering, co-created by stakeholders from across the volunteering ecosystem, provides a blueprint for the next ten years that will enable volunteering in Australia to thrive.

Volunteering Australia CEO Mark Pearce highlighted the importance of this momentous occasion, “the National Strategy for Volunteering was designed and will be owned by all of us. It presents our collective vision for a future where volunteering is at the heart of Australian communities.”

Thousands of stakeholders participated in online consultations, interviews, participatory design workshops, working groups, surveys, and a bespoke research project to build the National Strategy for Volunteering. The culmination of this process identified a unifying vision, three focus areas and aims, and eleven strategic objectives.

The National Strategy for Volunteering identifies what needs to be prioritised to ensure volunteering is safe, supported, and sustainable in the future. These priorities are captured under the three focus areas of the new strategy. First, collective efforts must be directed towards enhancing the volunteer experience, including improving accessibility and inclusion. Second, a more comprehensive understanding of the value of volunteering to Australian communities and society is needed, which enables volunteering to be better recognised and supported. Third, the right policy conditions, infrastructure, and support need to be in place to maximise the impact of volunteering.

The National Strategy for Volunteering was funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services, led by Volunteering Australia, and co-designed by the entire volunteering ecosystem. Speaking on the importance of this process Mr Pearce said, “as far as we are aware, this is the first time globally that a project of national significance has been undertaken in this way. We are grateful to the Department of Social Services for their partnership on this historic piece of work and we thank the thousands of stakeholders who contributed their time and expertise.”

Minister for Social Services Amanda Rishworth thanked Volunteering Australia for their work in developing the strategy. She said the Strategy will address the increasing demand for volunteers and boost sustainability in the sector.

“The National Strategy for Volunteering is the blueprint for how we will create a future in which volunteering can continue to be a rewarding experience for those who volunteer and for those in our community who benefit from it.”

“We know the Strategy will not provide all the answers to the problems we face, but it will provide expert guidance to face these challenges head on.”

The Volunteering in Australia research, undertaken as part of the National Strategy project, confirms findings from official data sources that the rate of formal volunteering in Australia continues to decline. Volunteering has not recovered to pre-COVID rates, and, combined with the current cost-of-living crisis, the importance of implementing the National Strategy for Volunteering cannot be understated.

“We are at a formative time in Australia’s history. Volunteering has always been part of Australia’s cultural and social fabric; however, we cannot take volunteering for granted. The National Strategy for Volunteering is a vital piece of national policy infrastructure. Without a concerted effort to share accountability for implementation, the future of volunteering is not assured,” said Mr Pearce. “Together, we imagined a powerful future for volunteering. Now we need to work together to make that future a reality.”

The National Strategy for Volunteering can be downloaded from volunteeringstrategy.org.au.

MEDIA ENQUIRIES:

Kylie Hughes

Communications Manager, Volunteering Australia

E: media@volunteeringaustralia.org | Ph: 0460 852 336