

MEDIA RELEASE

Tuesday 14 February, 2017



Volunteering Australia kicks off advocacy campaign with event at Parliament House

Today, on Valentine's Day, Volunteering Australia and our State and Territory Peak partners hosted the 'Share the Love' for Volunteer Support Services event at Australian Parliament House to kick off a national volunteering advocacy campaign. Minister for Social Services Christian Porter MP and Shadow Assistant Minister for Families and Social Services Louise Pratt spoke at the event, attended by politicians and representatives of volunteer support services from around the country.

Volunteering Australia Chief Executive Officer, Ms Adrienne Picone said, the event was an opportunity for the volunteering sector to raise our concerns directly with politicians, about the new Strong and Resilient Communities grants program and the value that volunteering support services offer.

"We have known since the release of the 2016-17 Federal Budget that the Federal Government would undertake a redesign of the Strong and Resilient Communities grants to take effect from 1 January 2018, but until the last few weeks it has not been clear what form that redesign would take," Ms Picone said. "We now know that the volunteer management stream of funding which has been specifically allocated to volunteer support services will be eradicated, and that volunteering will be forced to compete alongside other worthwhile projects from across the community services for broader pools of funding that respond to themes of disadvantage."

"This is just one step in the gradual devaluation of volunteer management that we have watched with concern over recent years. Another example of this is the decision a few years ago to move volunteering out of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, which was an accurate reflection of our role as a community partner that touches every portfolio of Government."

"We are concerned that these proposed changes to funding have the potential to rip the heart out of place-based volunteering support services," Ms Picone said. "This year, the Strong and Resilient Communities grants are delivering over \$7.4 million in funding to on-the-ground programs as part of the volunteer management stream of funding. To lose this would be an enormous blow to communities who rely on the volunteering programs that this funding delivers."

"Today was an important opportunity to share stories about the vital role that volunteer support services play in delivering place-based, effective volunteering in Australian communities. We are asking our Federal representatives to retain funding for volunteer management and to recognise the impact that our work has at the heart of Australian communities," Ms Picone said.

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