

MEDIA RELEASE



Monday 20 May 2024

Charting a new course for volunteering: emerging opportunities in challenging times

- In the challenging economic climate, volunteers are vital in supporting our communities and helping those in need
- There's growing demand for volunteers nationally, yet a quarter of young people in Australia don't volunteer for financial reasons and over half of volunteers have incurred costs while volunteering
- This National Volunteer Week (20th – 26th May), Volunteering Australia is showcasing the benefits and flexibility of volunteering and highlighting that there's a volunteer role for everyone

As the cost-of-living crisis bites, volunteers are vital in supporting our communities and helping those who are struggling in the challenging economic climate. A new report from Volunteering Australia features the latest national volunteering data, providing insights into how volunteering is changing including the challenges faced by the community.

Despite the challenges, the report also highlights new areas of opportunity which are being highlighted this National Volunteer Week (20th – 26th May). More flexible volunteering opportunities have emerged, and the wellbeing benefits of volunteering are particularly important in challenging times.

Unmet demand for volunteers in sectors traditionally supported by the volunteering community has increased due to the ongoing impacts of the cost-of-living crisis. People are finding it difficult to prioritise volunteering, or afford the potential costs associated, such as transport or fuel. In fact, a quarter (26%) of young people say they don't volunteer due to financial reasons, while just over half (54%) of volunteers say they've incurred out-of-pocket expenses from volunteering¹.

Formal volunteering, where people volunteer through organisations, has gradually declined over the past 10 years but is still highest among people aged 40-54 years. Informal volunteering, where people volunteer directly in the community, is significantly more common among people aged 25-39 years, and rates of online – or remote – volunteering has continued to grow in recent years. The latest data also reveals the proportion of people in Australia engaging in online volunteering has increased by 21 percentage points¹, highlighting the adaptability of volunteers in embracing new modes of engagement.

CEO of Volunteering Australia, Mark Pearce, says that this year's National Volunteer Week theme, 'Something for Everyone', highlights the abundance of new opportunities for people to participate and contribute towards change, despite the challenges.

"There is a diverse array of opportunities for people in Australia to volunteer within their community alongside something they're already passionate about. Problems in community are best addressed in community, and volunteers are a big part of that. People in Australia are already volunteering for a wide variety of organisations, from sport and recreation (25%) to environment (7%) and animal welfare (5%)¹," Mr Pearce says.

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“Getting involved in volunteering can be as simple as sharing your expertise and interests, helping out in your local community, or drawing on your lived experience to support others. There really is a volunteer role for everyone.”

The National Strategy for Volunteering ten-year blueprint commences its establishment phase this year and aims to make volunteering more inclusive and accessible while reshaping the public’s perception of volunteering².

Pearce concludes, “We have every reason to be optimistic despite the challenges being faced. We know volunteering helps people to maintain social connections and gives people a powerful sense of purpose. In coming together to create a thriving and effective volunteering ecosystem, volunteers are maintaining social cohesion and helping others who are struggling. With the National Strategy for Volunteering as a guiding framework, we are charting a course for a future where volunteering is at the heart of Australian communities.”

People looking to start their volunteering journey, are encouraged to visit the GoVolunteer website, contact their state or territory Volunteering Peak Body or approach organisations in their local community.

National Volunteer Week (20th – 26th May) is Australia’s largest annual celebration of volunteering. Recognising the gap between current volunteers and the wider community, Volunteering Australia is encouraging all people who’ve thought about volunteering to take the leap and know that there’s a volunteer role for everyone. For more information people can visit volunteeringaustralia.org.

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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 create a strong, connected and resilient community through volunteering. Their mission is to lead, strengthen and celebrate volunteering in Australia. Volunteering Australia works collectively with the seven state and territory Volunteering Peak Bodies to support volunteers across Australia.

About the Citations

¹ The latest report from Volunteering Australia, [‘Navigating change and charting a new course: volunteering in recent times’](#), outlines the evolving landscape of volunteering in Australia, showcasing resilience, innovation, and adaptation. Using recent national data, it highlights how volunteering has been affected by recent challenges, changing patterns of volunteer involvement, and the trends that are likely to shape volunteering in the future.

² [National Strategy for Volunteering 2023 – 2033](#). Following a rigorous and inspiring 12-month co-design journey Australia has a shared agenda for a reimagined future for volunteering. 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.

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