

MEDIA RELEASE



Wednesday 12 May 2021

Volunteering integral to achieving Federal Budget priorities

The Federal Budget has allocated significant and welcome new funding to aged care provision, mental health services and building community resilience, with each of these relying on the contribution of volunteers. In taking forward these reform agendas, the role of volunteers needs to be explicitly recognised with dedicated investment ensuring volunteering is safe and sustainable into the future.

Volunteering rates have been declining over time, from 36% in 2010, to just 29% in 2019. Then the COVID-19 pandemic hit and two thirds of volunteers (66%) stopped volunteering altogether, equating to an estimated loss of 12.2 million hours per week. Recent ABS data shows nearly one in ten Australians have not returned to volunteering in the past year.

Volunteering Australia asked the Australian Government to invest in volunteering to ensure it can support the nation's social and economic recovery. This included investing in a Reinvigorating Volunteering Action Plan to bring back volunteers and to support services and programs that rely on a volunteer workforce. We again call on the Australian Government to partner with the volunteering sector to develop and implement a package of measures to address the impact of COVID-19 and the longer-term challenges that the sector has been facing.

Even with the new funding, the Federal Government's reform agendas on aged care, mental health and community resilience will stall without investment in volunteers:

- Over 80 per cent of residential facilities and half of home support programs engage the services of volunteers
- Mental health services, such as Lifeline, rely heavily on a volunteer workforce
- Volunteering builds community resilience, preparing people to connect and work together in advance of disasters and emergencies.

Volunteering Australia welcomes the additional one-off funding of \$6.6 million for the Volunteer Management Activity which will support the transition to the new Volunteer Management Activity program and the investment of \$3.4 million towards improving volunteer management IT infrastructure.

Chief Executive Officer of Volunteering Australia, Mark Pearce said, "The Federal Budget demonstrates that the government is starting to recognise the importance of volunteering and the need to think strategically about how volunteering contributes to societal and economic outcomes. We continue to call upon the government to initiate a National Volunteering Strategy to address the decline in volunteering and enable key government-funded services to be sustainable.

"The role and value of the volunteer workforce needs to be explicitly recognised and better understood in the Budget reform agendas, and further measures taken to promote sustainable volunteering into the future.

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"We have taken on the challenge to reinvigorate volunteering for the nation's social and economic recovery, but we can't do it alone. Governments have a distinct and vital role to play in partnering with the sector, providing strategic leadership and investing in initiatives and infrastructure that will enable volunteering to thrive."

Next week is National Volunteer Week. This year's National Volunteer Week theme acknowledges that it is time to recognise, reconnect and reimagine volunteering in Australia. By recognising volunteers, reconnecting by giving our time and reimagining how we better support volunteers, Volunteering Australia believes we can reinvigorate volunteering for the future.

[Volunteering Australia's – Highlights of 2021-22 Federal Budget Measures May 2021](#)

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