

# MEDIA RELEASE

Tuesday 9 May, 2017



## **This National Volunteer Week: Don't weaken effective volunteering**

This week, 8-14 May is National Volunteer Week 2017 - Give Happy Live Happy. National Volunteer Week is celebrated annually to acknowledge the valuable contributions made by Australia's volunteers. Volunteering Australia, as the peak body for volunteering in the country, held an event at Parliament House in Canberra to celebrate the generous contributions of Australia's volunteers and support services.

Volunteering plays a critical role in Australia's national identity. There are 5.8 million Australians or 31 per cent of the population who engage in volunteering activities and programs, making an estimated annual economic and social contribution of \$290 billion.

Volunteering Australia CEO Adrienne Picone said, "Volunteering has a range of benefits. It is essential to building strong and resilient communities, and encourages economic participation, mitigates isolation and loneliness, and increases social inclusion and community participation. Volunteers also, gain valuable skills, and develop personally and professionally from their involvement in volunteering."

However, following the redesign of the Strong and Resilient Communities grants, (which take effect from 1 January 2018), there will be a removal of the volunteer management stream of funding specifically allocated to Volunteering Support Services. This will result in support services having to compete for funding with those who were previously in other funding streams.

Volunteer Support Services (VSS) are place-based organisations that empower volunteers. They are responsible for promoting, resourcing and supporting volunteers to ensure the effective, professional and safe management of volunteers.

In recognition of this, Volunteering Australia are urging Australians to sign a petition to retain designated funding for volunteering support services.

The petition asks the Senate to:

1. Recognise the important role that Volunteering Support Services have in building strong and resilient communities;
2. Retain funding for volunteer management and Volunteering Support Services at the current level of \$5.7 million in the 2017/18 budget

"The Tower of Strength campaign highlights the crucial role Volunteering Support Services play in the promotion of sustainable volunteering programs. The loss in funding poses a real risk to safe and effective volunteering activities. We therefore, call on the Federal Government to maintain designated funding for Volunteering Support Services", said Ms Picone.

The petition will be presented to the Senate in June. To sign the petition and find out more about the campaign visit: <https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/towerofstrength/petition/>.

### **MEDIA ENQUIRIES:**

Kylie Hughes, Volunteering Australia

E: [kylie@volunteeringaustralia.org](mailto:kylie@volunteeringaustralia.org)

P: 02 6251 4060

M: 0402 497 138