

MEDIA RELEASE

Thursday 22 June 2017



Petition to retain designated funding for Volunteering Support Services tabled in Senate

Volunteering Australia's petition to retain designated funding for Volunteering Support Services (VSS) was tabled in the Senate yesterday by Labor Senator for Western Australia Louise Pratt.

The petition asked 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 redesign of the *Strong and Resilient Communities* grants program, which comes into effect from 1 January 2018, removes designated funding for volunteer management, which are delivered by place-based Volunteering Support Services. This removal of specific funding threatens the ongoing viability of many Volunteering Support Services and weakens effective volunteering at a point when volunteering is evolving to adapt to social and economic changes.

Volunteering Australia CEO Adrienne Picone said, "Volunteering Support Services provide the critical infrastructure required for safe, effective and sustainable volunteering. It is essential to sufficiently fund Volunteering Support Services, as they support and resource local volunteering programs, while empowering and ensuring the safe management of volunteers."

"Volunteering Australia's Tower of Strength campaign highlights the vital role Volunteering Support Services play in the promotion of sustainable volunteering programs. The removal of designated funding poses a real risk to safe and effective volunteering across the country, with many Volunteering Support Services set to cease operating. We reiterate our calls for the Federal Government to maintain designated funding for Volunteering Support Services", said Ms Picone.

Volunteering Australia also had the opportunity to witness Senator Pratt address the Senate on the value of volunteering and Volunteering Support Services to Australian communities.

Volunteering plays such a critical role in Australia's national identity, with 5.8 million Australians or 31 per cent of the population engaged in volunteering activities and programs. It also contributes an estimated annual economic and social contribution of \$290 billion. It is encouraging that through the combined advocacy efforts of the volunteering sector, community and members of Parliament, consideration is being given for this issue.

Volunteering Australia would like to extend our thanks and gratitude to everyone who signed the petition and supported the campaign for effective volunteering. There's been a fantastic response with over 3700 signatures. This momentum could not have been achieved without everyone's support.

[Read the Hansard Transcript of Senator Pratt's address on page 30 and 31](#)

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