

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## **DSS Funding Changes show Volunteer Support Services continue to be undervalued by the Federal Government**

An announcement today from the Department of Social Services that volunteer support services will no longer be eligible for their own pool of grants funding has disappointed Volunteering Australia, who say that the move demonstrates the Federal Government's continued undervaluing of the role of volunteering in building strong and resilient communities.

Volunteering Australia was today invited to attend a consultation with The Department of Social Services on the redesign of the Strengthening Communities grants program into the new Strong and Resilient Communities (SARC) grants program from 1 January 2018.

Volunteering Australia Chief Executive Officer, Ms Adrienne Picone said that the Strengthening Communities Grants Program is currently the primary source of funding for volunteer support services – but that the changes outlined in today's DSS meeting would make such funding much harder to access.

"What we learned today is the Strong and Resilient Communities grants program does not provide specific funding for volunteer support services," Ms Picone said. "This is yet another example of the deprioritisation of volunteer management by the Government and a lack of recognition for the role volunteer support services play in promoting, resourcing and supporting volunteering in local communities across Australia."

"We are concerned that this proposal does not fully consider the impact of not providing discrete grants for the infrastructure that supports volunteering and volunteer involving organisations. Volunteering Australia and the sector as a whole feel their concerns have not been heard and the fact that volunteering contributes more value to the community than many other major industries, which receive substantial funding from Government, continues to be ignored."

"Effective, safe, productive and efficient volunteering does not "just happen" and it is not free. It requires expertise, leadership and local knowledge, as well as effective workforce management. Volunteer support services provide infrastructure in communities to lead, enable and build capacity to recruit and retain volunteers in a wide variety of organisations and services, from the human services and civil society groups, to environmental, animal welfare and sporting groups."

Volunteering Australia and our State and Territory Peak partners are hosting an event at Australian Parliament House next Tuesday 14 February. Representatives of Volunteer Support Services will join us to meet with decision makers about the work they do and the impact that it is having in helping the Government to achieve its goal of building strong and resilient communities. "The event will also be an opportunity for the volunteering sector to raise our concerns directly with politicians, including Minister Christian Porter and Shadow Assistant Minister Louise Pratt, about the new Strong and Resilient Communities grants program and the value that volunteering support services offer," Ms Picone said.

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