[Day] [Date] [Month], 2017

Dear [Name]

**Re: Tower of Strength Campaign**

Volunteering lies at the heart of the contribution made by Australians to the public good, with 5.8 million Australians per year contributing an estimated $290 billion in economic and societal benefit, acting as a vital community-based support to Commonwealth, State and Local Government programs including the NDIS, aged care, sporting excellence, and efforts to support Australians in their transition into the paid workforce. For the first time in almost twenty years, the number of people volunteering in Australia was reported as declining in 2014, down from 36% in 2012 to 31%.

Now, more than ever we need to be investing in volunteering because safe and effective volunteering does not ‘just happen’ and it is not free. It requires leadership, local knowledge and workforce management. Under the Department of Social Services *Strengthening Communities Grants,* the Federal Government currently allocates $5.7 million to regionally based Volunteering Support Services to promote, resource and support volunteering in local communities. Volunteering Support Services provide social infrastructure and increase the number of people empowered to volunteer and ensure that their experience is positive, leading to strong retention and engagement rates.

Recently it was announced that the Strengthening Communities Grants would be redesigned and replaced by the Strong and Resilient Communities (SARC) Grants, from 1st January 2018. Under the SARC Grants there is no dedicated funding stream for Volunteering Support Services, showing a complete disregard for their vital role in enabling effective volunteering and creating strong and resilient communities.

**We are of the strong view that the Federal Government should,**

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**

We are asking all members of the community to show their support for Volunteering Support Services by signing our petition and sharing the campaign amongst their networks. The removal of this funding seriously threatens the ongoing viability of many Volunteering Support Services and weakens volunteering at a time when it is struggling to adapt to societal changes and economic pressures. It poses an enormous blow to communities who rely on the volunteering programs that this funding delivers.

We would be delighted to have the opportunity to speak with you further about our campaign, either over the phone or in person.

Yours sincerely,