



# STATE OF VOLUNTEERING IN AUSTRALIA

HELP CREATE HAPPINESS | APRIL 2016



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Our report has been limited to assessing the current state of the volunteering sector as at April 2016, based on results collected through a national survey. The findings of the report have been collaboratively developed by Volunteering Australia and PwC and are based on a literature review, survey responses and Volunteering Australia's industry knowledge. The broad nature of the analysis is such that the results are intended to be indicative only and do not reflect the opinion or views of PwC.

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STATE OF VOLUNTEERING  
IN AUSTRALIA

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Volunteering Australia works within a collaborative network, particularly with the State and Territory peak volunteering bodies listed above. We thank the staff of Volunteering ACT and all other State and Territory volunteering peak bodies for their assistance with this significant project.



We collectively also sincerely thank all *State of Volunteering* survey participants, including volunteers, volunteer involving organisations and corporates for their valuable feedback for this report.

Volunteering Australia also acknowledges and thanks PwC as principal consultant for this report which has been supported by the Prime Minister's Community Business Partnership, the Australian Government Department of Social Services and Volunteering Australia's principal corporate partner Beyond Bank Australia.

**Beyond Bank**  
AUSTRALIA

**This document is an excerpt of the full State of Volunteering in Australia report. It provides a high level overview of the findings. To see the full report go to [www.volunteeringaustralia.org](http://www.volunteeringaustralia.org).**

**The full report details the **trends, demographics, challenges** and **successes** in the volunteering sector in Australia. Volunteering Australia and PwC have conducted a survey to analyse the current state of volunteering in Australia, and to identify opportunities to maximise the potential of the volunteer workforce.**

The report investigates the following headline question:

- Are the current volunteer engagement and management practices appropriate for the future?
- Is there alignment between the types of roles volunteers want to undertake, the sectors they are interested in volunteering in, and the needs of volunteer involving organisations?
- What is the appropriate framework to support informal volunteering?
- What are the necessary steps that need to be taken to future proof volunteering?

# **VOLUNTEERING IS A CORE PART OF OUR COMMUNITY**

**99%**

**OF VOLUNTEERS WOULD  
CONTINUE TO ENGAGE IN  
VOLUNTEERING IN THE FUTURE**

**93%**

**OF VOLUNTEERS SAW POSITIVE  
CHANGES AS A RESULT OF  
THEIR VOLUNTEERING EFFORTS**

*'Appreciated by community, improved wellbeing of others, improved own sense of place in the world.'*

**67%**

**OF VOLUNTEER INVOLVING ORGANISATIONS  
STATED THAT VOLUNTEERS BRING NEW  
INSIGHTS INTO THEIR ORGANISATION**

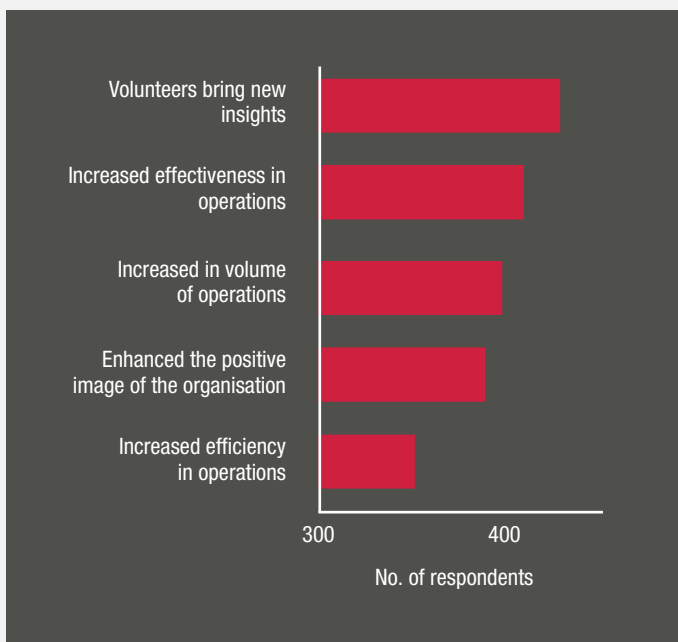
64% also believed that engaging volunteers increased effectiveness in their operations

**57%**

**OF STAFF IN VOLUNTEER  
INVOLVING ORGANISATIONS  
ARE VOLUNTEERS**

# 60%

**OF VOLUNTEERS IMPROVED  
THEIR PATIENCE SKILLS  
THROUGH VOLUNTEERING**



**Organisational benefits of volunteering**



**Benefits to volunteers as seen by organisations**

# MATCHING PEOPLE TO VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES

## KEY FINDING 1

**Responses suggest there is a disconnect between the volunteering roles that people are interested in and the roles that organisations are offering.**

Comments from volunteer involving organisations highlight that, generally, many involve volunteers as manpower as opposed to developing volunteer roles to suit individual skills and experience.

*'Lack of utilisation of volunteer skills is a big problem, possibly due to a store manager not being chosen for her expertise in management.'*

Moreover, several respondents to the survey for volunteers felt that volunteers were undervalued and their roles were not designed strategically to accommodate for skills and interests, especially relative to paid staff.

*'Despite rhetoric that the contribution of volunteers is valued equally with contributions of paid staff there are still many organisations who treat volunteers as individuals who will do all the tasks staff do not want to do.'*

*'In my experience, both complacency and ignorance of the enormous value volunteers contribute results in a lack of regard of volunteers as strategic assets.'*

## SOLUTION

- Promoting changes in human resource management strategies could result in a more efficient and effective use of available volunteer time.
- Utilising the *National Standards for Volunteer Involvement* resources and tools.

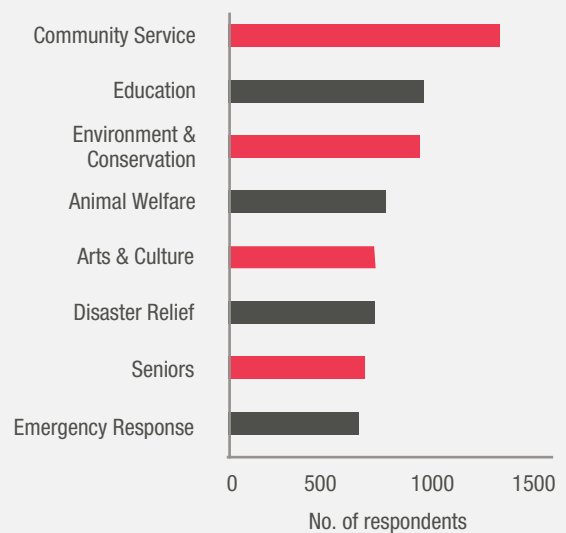
## KEY FINDING 2

**There is misalignment between the sectors volunteers are interested in and the sectors with the most positions advertised.**

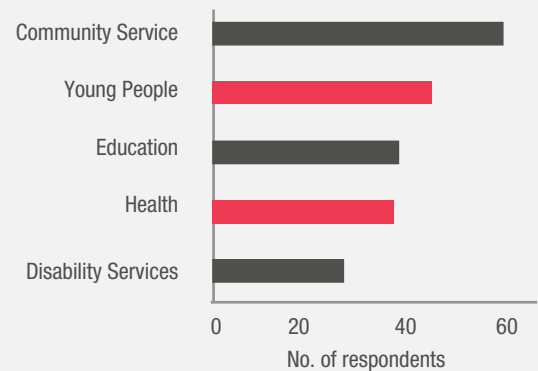
An analysis of the sectors volunteer would like to volunteer for in the future compared with the sectors that have the greatest shortages of volunteers suggested that there is an oversubscription to some sectors of volunteering whilst others are undersubscribed.

As shown in the below graphs, sectors including Animal Welfare and Arts and Culture are oversubscribed, while other areas including Disability Services, Young People and Health have a high number of volunteer vacancies needing to be filled.

TOP 8 SECTORS VOLUNTEERS WOULD BE MOST INTERESTED IN VOLUNTEERING FOR IN THE FUTURE



SECTORS THAT NEED 151+ MORE VOLUNTEERS



## SOLUTION

- To improve the balance of subscription of volunteers to different sectors of volunteering, the volunteering peak bodies, in collaboration with volunteer involving organisations, should support the development and delivery of targeted marketing and recruitment campaigns to promote volunteering in undersubscribed sectors.



# SUPPORT FOR INFORMAL VOLUNTEERING

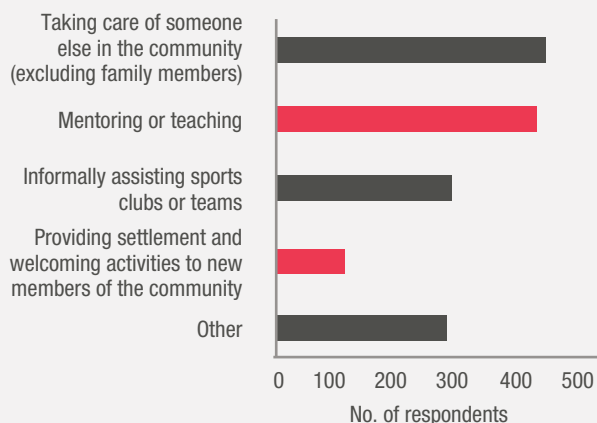
## KEY FINDING 3

**Informal volunteering is time willingly given for the common good and without financial gain, taking place outside the context of a formal organisation. The findings of this report suggest that informal volunteering is prevalent in society. Specifically, 46% of respondents participated in informal volunteering in the last 12 months.**

When asked what support volunteers would like for informal volunteering, 33 per cent would like help to find informal volunteering opportunities.

*'Knowing when opportunities to help come up. We don't always hear when they want help.'*

### WAYS RESPONDENTS INFORMALLY VOLUNTEER



## SOLUTION

- Investigate options for a technical platform to connect informal volunteers with those that require assistance. This platform would play a role in making connections and, at the same time, outline the risks of engaging in informal volunteering without the structures of formal volunteering, such as insurance.

# 77%

**OF INFORMAL VOLUNTEERS WERE MOTIVATED TO INFORMALLY VOLUNTEER TO SUPPORT THOSE IN THEIR COMMUNITY**

# NECESSARY FUTURE STEPS

## KEY FINDING 4

**Volunteers are deterred from volunteering because of lack of flexibility, personal expenses incurred, lack of reimbursement for out of pocket expenses, and burdensome administrative requirements.**

Volunteers were asked whether they would engage in volunteering in the future. 1 per cent (33 respondents) stated that they would not engage in volunteering in the future. The biggest barrier to people volunteering into the future is work commitments (27 per cent), and out of pocket expenses being overbearing (27 per cent).

Of the volunteer respondents, 60 per cent incurred out of pocket expenses through their volunteering role and of these, only 18 per cent requested reimbursement. Of these respondents, 49 per cent received reimbursement in full, 44 per cent received reimbursement in part, and 7 per cent did not receive any reimbursement.

Several respondents found that administrative requirements for volunteering have been a significant deterrent.

*'The ever-increasing red tape, e.g. police checks every time you volunteer for a different organisation, the restrictions in what volunteers can undertake, the ongoing surveillance, health and safety structures, all of these things do inhibit volunteers'*

## SOLUTION

- Volunteering peak bodies and volunteer involving organisations should further advocate for red tape reductions to reduce administrative burdens.
- Explore avenues of virtual volunteering (such as online volunteering tasks), to accommodate for flexibility needs, as well as to leverage services already paid for by volunteers (such as internet and phone) (see Key Finding 7 for more information).
- Encourage compliance with the National Standards for Volunteer Involvement, specifically with regards to reimbursement of out of pocket expenses.

## KEY FINDING 5

**Volunteer involving organisations generally lack resources, both human and financial, and this can inhibit their ability to engage volunteers with barriers (e.g. people with a disability, people with language barriers). Lack of resources may also reduce an organisation's ability to recognise their existing volunteer base, and engage with corporates through Employee Volunteering Programs.**

# 86%

## OF VOLUNTEER INVOLVING ORGANISATIONS NEED MORE VOLUNTEERS

Respondents suggest that the shortage of volunteers is driven by the following:

- 30 per cent of organisations were unable to engage their optimal amount of volunteers because there were not enough suitable candidates, or the organisation was unable to locate them. More common reasons include internal barriers such as time constraints, and limited funds to manage more volunteers (both 12 per cent)
- 28 per cent of volunteers stated that the organisation they volunteer for could improve their experience through recruiting more volunteers.

Of the volunteer involving organisation respondents, 46 per cent of respondents were unable to recruit or engage volunteers with barriers, most commonly stemming from organisations not having the requisite resources (51 per cent).

## SOLUTION

- More resources are required to enhance the capacity of volunteer involving organisations to engage volunteers with barriers and to engage with employee volunteering programs.
- Further advocacy needs to be undertaken with regards to the economic impact of the contribution of volunteering to enhance central funding opportunities. This includes additional funding to further resource and support volunteer involving organisations and volunteer recognition programs.

## KEY FINDING 6

**Volunteers are not getting responses from volunteer involving organisations about opportunities fast enough.**

Of the respondents to the volunteer survey, 6 per cent had not volunteered in the last 12 months. Several respondents noted that the reason they had not engaged in volunteering was a lack of response from organisations.

*'I tried to sign up for information about volunteering but wasn't contacted again'*

*'I am disappointed in that I have applied for a position and had to firstly send a request twice before I was acknowledged and then after I expressed my interest have not been contacted'*

## SOLUTION

- Volunteer involving organisations need to ensure a timely response to volunteer expressions of interest.
- Enhancements to the GoVolunteer platform could provide further tools to assist organisations with responding to prospective volunteers.

## KEY FINDING 7

**Online methods of recruitment and volunteering could complement the needs of future volunteers.**

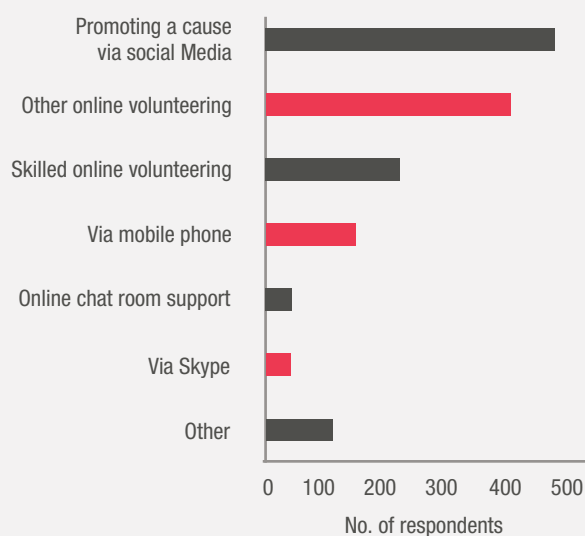
To address the misalignment in the types of roles people are looking for and the roles organisations are offering there is a call for volunteer involving organisations to adapt to technological change. This would be beneficial in two key areas: recruitment and virtual volunteering.

Volunteers under 24 years old used an online source (i.e. GoVolunteer or Seek Volunteer, or the volunteer involving organisation's website) to look for volunteering opportunities (28 per cent).

44 per cent of volunteers have engaged in virtual volunteering in the last 12 months, with 19 per cent interested in doing so in the future. This involves undertaking volunteering tasks online, such as managing social media.

To continue to engage a wide range of volunteers, employing online methods of recruitment and facilitating virtual volunteering is essential.

WAYS VOLUNTEERS HAVE PARTICIPATED IN VIRTUAL VOLUNTEERING



## SOLUTION

- There should be information and training for volunteer involving organisations on workforce planning, including how to adapt volunteering roles and how to change program policies.
- Provide technological platforms that organisations can use.
- Provide training on technologies that would assist VIOs with recruitment and the ability to provide flexible volunteering roles, such as virtual volunteering.

