



Submission to the Select Committee on COVID-19  
11 June 2020

## Submission to the Select Committee on COVID-19

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### Introduction

On 8 April 2020, the Senate resolved to establish a Select Committee on COVID-19 to inquire into the Australian Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

We welcome the opportunity to provide evidence to the committee on the impact of COVID-19 on volunteering and the response of the Australian Government. Our submission only focuses on the Australian Government's response as pertaining to volunteering.

This submission was drafted by Volunteering Australia in collaboration with the State and Territory peak volunteering bodies. Our submission draws on some recent strands of activity:

- The State and Territory peak volunteering bodies and Volunteering Australia have undertaken surveys of their members in recent weeks to understand better the impact on the sector and the concerns of volunteer involving organisations.
- Volunteering Australia commissioned the Australian National University (ANU) Centre for Social Research and Methods to undertake research into the experience of volunteers during COVID-19. To date, this is the only national analysis of the impact of COVID-19 on volunteers and volunteering.
- Throughout the COVID-19 crisis, Volunteering Australia and the State and Territory peak volunteering bodies have met on a weekly basis to share experience and plan responses. This submission draws on that collective expertise.

### Overview

Volunteering has been severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our assessment is that the Australian Government has not engaged strategically with volunteering during the pandemic. The lack of engagement and response from the Australian Government in relation to volunteering has risked the safeguarding of volunteers and ignored the critical role that volunteers play during emergencies. Volunteering has been absent from COVID-19 related guidance emanating from the Australian Government and from key institutions and frameworks set up to manage the response. This is despite the scale of the volunteer workforce and its social and economic power.

To ensure that volunteers are protected and enabled to make their contribution as we learn to live with COVID-19, we recommend the following:

- **A package of measures to reinvigorate volunteering**

This would include the urgent inclusion of volunteers in COVID-19-related guidance emanating from the Australian Government and investment in a 'safe-return-to-volunteering' awareness campaign.

Volunteering Australia commissioned the Australian National University to analyse the impact of COVID-19 on volunteering. This research revealed nearly two thirds of volunteers have stopped volunteering and that this has had significant consequences for their mental health and wellbeing. The reinvigoration of volunteering will help safeguard the mental health of the millions of people

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who volunteer, in addition to the wider contribution that volunteers make to the Australian community.

### - **A seat at the table in response and recovery institutions**

Volunteering needs to be involved in key institutions and forums set up by the Australian Government to guide the nation's response and recovery. Without this, the voices of millions of people who have a critical role to play in the social and economic recovery will be missing. Each year, nearly 6 million people volunteer.<sup>1</sup> Volunteers play essential roles in community, health and welfare services, many of which are anticipating an increase in service demand in coming months.

### - **A whole of government National Volunteering Statement**

The lack of strategic and co-ordinated response from the Australian Government needs to be addressed. Responsibility for volunteering sits with the Department of Social Services yet volunteers contribute to public policy concerns across government, such as disability, health and aged care services, the sustainability of sports and the arts, and emergency management and planning.

A National Volunteering Statement would enable a much-needed strategic approach to volunteering and guide future government action and investment.

This submission covers the following:

- The impact of COVID-19 on volunteers and volunteering
- The response of the Australian Government
- The response of the volunteering sector
- Recommendations for now and the future

## The impact of COVID-19 on volunteers and volunteering

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a major impact on volunteering. We have witnessed the following trends:

- A sharp reduction in people volunteering
- Volunteer Involving Organisations closing volunteer programs but also adapting and innovating to meet service demand
- A rise in informal volunteering and self-organising groups
- Strong interest from the public in volunteering to support the emergency response
- Increased demand for advice and guidance from volunteers and Volunteer Involving Organisations

### Sharp decline in volunteering overall

Overall, there has been a sharp decline in people volunteering. Volunteering Australia commissioned the ANU Centre for Social Research and Methods to undertake analysis of the experience of

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/4159.0Main%20Features152014?opendocument&tabname=Summary&prodno=4159.0&issue=2014&num=&view=>

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volunteers during COVID-19. The research<sup>2</sup> reveals that the decline in volunteering during COVID-19 has been substantial, with nearly two thirds (65.9 per cent) of volunteers estimated to have stopped volunteering between February and April 2020. The researchers estimate that this reduction in volunteering is equivalent to 12.2 million hours per week.

As discussed below, this dramatic decline in volunteering has significant consequences for organisations providing important community services. However, it also a significant concern for volunteers themselves. The ANU research was able to look at the impact of COVID-19 on life satisfaction, psychological stress and loneliness. Those who were able to continue volunteering during the COVID-19 had better life satisfaction and psychological stress outcomes than those who had to stop or who had never volunteered in the first place. Those who continued volunteering experienced less loneliness. This research demonstrates the protective mental health value of volunteering.

### Volunteer Involving Organisations adapting

This finding is supported by member surveys<sup>3</sup> undertaken by the State and Territory peak volunteering bodies and a survey by Volunteering Australia. Most Volunteer Involving Organisations across the States and Territories reported having to stand down some or all of their volunteers because of social distancing restrictions. However, many organisations also reported being able to innovate and adapt, for example shifting face-to-face services to remote volunteering (for example, on-line or telephone).

At the same time as coping with reduced volunteers, many organisations experienced an increase in demand for services, particularly those engaged in community and welfare services such as food relief and homelessness support services. Many of these organisations are not normally on the front line of an emergency response, and there has been a sharp learning curve for these organisations (for example, the need to use Personal Protective Equipment during pandemics.)

Volunteer Involving Organisations have been affected in other ways. Many organisations stopped recruiting volunteers and are now less prepared for meeting future need. (For example, rural fire services would normally keep recruiting this time of year to ensure volunteers have undergone training well in advance of the bushfire season.) Fundraising activities have also stalled throughout the crisis, so most are having to deal with a loss of revenue and depleted resources.

### Informal volunteering/self-organised groups

There is evidence across the country of individuals self-organising and volunteering support to people affected by COVID-19, including people in social isolation or healthcare workers. This includes local neighbourhood groups and Facebook groups (such as 'mutual aid'<sup>4</sup>) reaching out to people in their communities. Volunteering Australia and the State and Territory volunteering peak bodies

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<sup>2</sup> <https://csrcm.cass.anu.edu.au/research/publications/experience-volunteers-during-early-stages-covid-19-pandemic>

<sup>3</sup> See for example, <https://www.volunteeringvictoria.org.au/volunteerismduringcovid/> and [https://www.volunteeringact.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/2020-Member-Survey\\_Infographic-V5.pdf](https://www.volunteeringact.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/2020-Member-Survey_Infographic-V5.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> <https://theconversation.com/the-community-led-movement-creating-hope-in-the-time-of-coronavirus-134391>

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recognise the vital role that this ‘informal volunteering’ plays, particularly in times of crisis. As discussed further below, we have endeavoured to play our part in ensuring that it is undertaken safely, and volunteers do not put themselves and others in the community at risk.

### Spontaneous volunteers supporting the emergency response

We also witnessed a surge in interest from the public in wanting to support the emergency COVID-19 response. In partnership with their relevant Governments, the State and Territory peak bodies for volunteering have established registration and matching platforms to organise assistance from spontaneous volunteers. For example, Volunteering Queensland in partnership with the Queensland Government has received over 28,000 registrations for the ‘Care Army’<sup>5</sup>. Volunteering Queensland and the other State/Territory Volunteering peak bodies are now working hard to keep prospective volunteers engaged and interested in future volunteer opportunities as they become available.

### Increased demand for advice, guidance and support

Perhaps unsurprisingly, there has been a sharp increase in demand for advice and support from both volunteers and Volunteer Involving Organisations. The volunteering peak organisations (in each state and territory and at the nation level) and other Volunteer Support Services have all experienced a surge in inquiries and an increase in demand for guidance. How the sector responded is discussed further below. However, first we turn to the Australian Government’s response to the impact that COVID-19 was having on volunteering. This helps put our response in context.

## The response of the Australian Government

The Australian Government acted swiftly to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in Australia and the establishment of the National Cabinet has provided strong leadership and promoted national cohesion at a time of crisis. However, in relation to volunteering, our assessment is that the Australian Government did not engage strategically with volunteering although some actions have had a positive outcome for volunteers and Volunteer Involving Organisations.

### Positives for volunteers and Volunteer Involving Organisations

The following actions by the Australian Government have had a positive impact on some volunteers and Volunteer Involving Organisations:

- Access to Job Keeper Payment - Volunteer Involving Organisations typically employ paid staff in addition to their volunteer workforce. The introduction of the Job Keeper Payment should help organisations that are eligible to come through the COVID-19 crisis in better health and able to return to more normal business operations. Many Volunteer Involving Organisations are charities and have benefited from the broadening of eligibility criteria for charities and the exclusion of government grants from the turnover test for not-for-profits. As with many other organisations and businesses, Volunteer Involving Organisations are fearful that the Job Keeper payment is being withdrawn before there has been time to recover.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://volunteeringqld.org.au/volunteers/care-army>

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- The pause in mutual obligations - Many job seekers currently volunteer as part of their mutual obligation requirements. As many volunteering programs were suspended or altered operations, job seekers became unable to fulfil their mutual obligation requirements through no fault of their own. In addition, many people were self-isolating and so unable to fulfil their mutual obligation requirements. We welcomed the pause on mutual obligation requirements, particularly because it enabled many who are very vulnerable to continue to receive income support during these challenging times. Further, pausing mutual obligation requirements reduced the burden on Volunteer Involving Organisations to find work for mutual obligation participants where these organisations have pared back their operations to respond to the risks of COVID-19. We are concerned that the Australian Government is already reintroducing mutual obligations, albeit in a three-staged approach<sup>6</sup>.
- Willingness for contractual flexibility – there has been a willingness by government departments (for example the Federal Departments of Social Services and Health) to be flexible with contractual requirements so that Volunteer Involving Organisations which have been required to close or change their business operations due to COVID-19, are not penalised for failing to meet their contractual obligations. As discussed, many Volunteer Involving Organisations are having to operate with reduced volunteer capacity, and this affects their ability to meet contractual requirements.

### How the Australian Government's response could be improved

In relation to volunteering, the Australian Government's response could have been more positive and strategic. There was little recognition by the Australian Government that volunteering was being affected by COVID-19 and that this was having an impact on volunteers, the wider community and the delivery of key services. Of additional concern, there was no engagement of the volunteering sector in the national emergency management response despite volunteers typically being a key resource for surge capacity during emergencies.

This meant that volunteering was missing from important aspects of the COVID-19 response:

- Official advice - official statements and advice from the Australian Government during COVID-19 to date has made no references to volunteers and volunteering activity. For example, COVID-19 advice coming from the Federal Department of Health only references employees<sup>7</sup> despite there being important differences in how volunteers and employees are safeguarded in the workplace. This could have been easily corrected. At the State and Territory level, better practice exists. For example, the Tasmanian Government has consistently provided advice covering and referring to volunteers as well as paid employees throughout the pandemic.
- Key institutions set up in response to COVID-19 – institutions, such as the National COVID-19 Co-ordination Commission, do not have a volunteer voice. A not-for-profit working group has recently been established (18 May 2020) to provide recommendations to lessen the social and economic impacts of COVID-19 on the most vulnerable people in society and the

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<sup>6</sup> <https://ministers.dese.gov.au/cash/gradual-return-mutual-obligation-requirements>

<sup>7</sup> For example, Department of Health advice for vulnerable workers refers only to employees <https://www.health.gov.au/news/australian-health-protection-principal-committee-ahppc-advice-to-national-cabinet-on-30-march-2020>

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sector that supports them, and we understand that this is considering how to reinvigorate volunteering. However, we are not at the table. Further, given the size of the volunteer workforce (nearly 6 million people volunteer in any one year<sup>8</sup>) and its importance to critical social services, volunteers should have been considered at an earlier stage.

- Official data - to date, no official data has been collected on the impact of COVID-19 on volunteering and the volunteer workforce. For example, the new ABS COVID-19 Household Impact Surveys which have been developed to assess how the Australian population is faring during the crisis have not yet covered volunteering. This is despite the scale and impact of the volunteer workforce and the economic and social value of volunteering<sup>9</sup>.

### Poor engagement with volunteering in emergency management

Under Australia's federal system, states and territories have primary responsibility for matters related to emergency management. This is supported by legislation, policy, consultative and reporting lines as well as formal emergency management plans. While volunteers are generally referenced in these plans, our experience suggests that practice and engagement of volunteers and peak bodies is highly variable across jurisdictions and, at times, between different emergencies in the same state or territory.

The Australian Government provides support for emergency management through some funding mechanisms, research undertakings and at times, coordination assistance. However, the increasing frequency and scale of emergencies in Australia is creating the need for greater clarity to rapidly, safely and effectively mobilise volunteers who are vital to the response to and recovery from emergencies.

The current National Royal Commission into Black Summer Bushfires is examining a range of matters in a natural disaster context including issues of responsibilities and coordination between all levels of Government. The terms of reference include examining accountability for disaster risk management, preparedness, resilience and recovery as well as the legal framework for requests for Commonwealth assistance and the ability to declare a state of national emergency. COVID-19 is providing another example where national coordination is required.

The Australian Government has responded with a raft of measures including activating the National Coordination Mechanism and convening National Cabinet. The interplay of these national mechanisms, which differ from emergency to emergency, with the formal powers, legislation and responsibilities of state and territory governments, creates significant complexity in the operating environment for Volunteer Involving Organisations. Volunteer Involving Organisations have similar obligations to protect the health and safety of volunteers as employers without, in many cases, the resource capacity.

Most formal engagement during emergencies takes place within government with inconsistent involvement and consideration of volunteering peak bodies, Volunteer Involving Organisations and

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<sup>8</sup><https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/4159.0Media%20Release102014?opendocument&tabname=Summary&prodno=4159.0&issue=2014&num=&view=>

<sup>9</sup> See national and State/Territory 'State of Volunteering' reports, for example [https://www.volunteeringtas.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/State-of\\_Volunteering\\_Summary\\_Report-Summary\\_2019.pdf](https://www.volunteeringtas.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/State-of_Volunteering_Summary_Report-Summary_2019.pdf)



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volunteers who are crucial to the response. This risks poor whole of community outcomes, inefficiencies in response and recovery and the safety of volunteers and community members. In the COVID-19 context, this meant that there was:

- No consideration of volunteers in emergency management planning at the national level - despite what we know about the role of volunteers in supporting surge capacity during emergencies. For example, Emergency Management Australia resources make reference to the role of volunteers in emergency management (see for example, the Australian Disaster Preparedness Framework<sup>10</sup>) and yet the volunteering sector was not been brought into any national conversations about the COVID-19 response<sup>11</sup>.
- Little engagement with the volunteering sector on whether national coordination of emergency volunteers would be needed. Typically, emergency volunteers are co-ordinated and managed at the State and Territory Level. However, recent crises such as the 2019-20 bushfires and COVID-19 have cast a light on what the role of the Australian Government and national institutions and frameworks should be in co-ordinating across jurisdictions. The national co-ordination of emergency volunteers needs to be considered further, and the volunteering sector should be a critical partner in this.

### Overall a lack of understanding and recognition of volunteering

The response of the Australian Government to volunteering during COVID-19 to date follows years of diminished funding and a lack of strategic engagement with volunteering from the Australian Government. Responsibility for volunteering sits with the Department of Social Services yet volunteers contribute to public policy concerns across government, such as disability, health and aged care services, the sustainability of sports and the arts, and emergency management and planning.

It would seem that there is little understanding across government that:

- Volunteers are a significant economic workforce (in addition to their social and cultural value) and many key services such as healthcare, aged care, mental health, disability and community welfare services are reliant on volunteers.
- Volunteering does not just happen – significant investment is required to recruit, onboard, train, manage and lead volunteers.
- Volunteers are critical in times of emergency – they are often on the front line and we rely on volunteers for surge capacity, yet this is not planned for.

### The response of the volunteering sector

Volunteers and Volunteer Involving Organisations have shown great resilience and innovation during the COVID-19 crisis. As highlighted above, organisations responded quickly to safeguard volunteers

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<sup>10</sup> See here <https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/emergency/files/australian-disaster-preparedness-framework.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> The peak volunteering bodies were contacted briefly by the Community Services Capability section of the National Coordination Mechanism (Operations) in the Department of Home Affairs, but this section was put on standby capacity in early May and we have had no further engagement.



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and closed or adapted programs. Many organisations were able to adjust their operations to ensure essential services could be delivered. This has been an extremely challenging time for volunteer managers and leaders, with organisations having to undertake risk assessments and business continuity planning in conditions of great uncertainty as official advice evolved. Typically, volunteer insurance does not cover pandemics, and this had to be factored into organisations' risk assessments.

Volunteering Australia and the State and Territory peak volunteering bodies have supported the sector in a number of ways during the crisis. Our main priorities have been to safeguard volunteers and to facilitate the continued engagement of volunteers during the crisis. We responded by encouraging Volunteer Involving Organisations to cease non-essential face-to-face programs and involvement with vulnerable cohorts. We are now working to support programs re-starting with the attendant social benefits (for volunteers and beneficiaries alike) as well as economic benefits (as volunteer programs contribute to positive economic outcomes).

### The response of peak volunteering bodies

In the sector, we have sought to align with the Australian Government on the overall task despite the lack of specific consideration or recognition of volunteers.

- We created resources (for example, factsheets, checklists and tailored webpages) to support and provide guidance to volunteers and Volunteer Involving Organisations. Examples can be found on the State/Territory volunteering peak body websites<sup>12</sup>, which are tailored to local restrictions and conditions. Our approach has been to draw on, and refer people to, sources of official advice where possible and adapt to volunteering considerations.
- We monitored the evolving COVID-19 situation closely to ensure our advice is current.
- We responded to inquiries from volunteers, Volunteer Involving Organisations and members of emerging informal volunteer groups seeking advice.
- We supported Volunteer Involving Organisations to adapt volunteer programs safely and working with organisations who are not used to being on the front-line during emergencies, such as food relief agencies.
- We worked closely with State/Territory governments, including to initiate and manage emergency volunteer recruitment and matching. Emergency Volunteer websites are now live across states and territories.
- We ensured coherence across the peak network through a weekly COVID-19 network meeting (involving Volunteering Australia and the State/Territory peak volunteering bodies) to share experiences, learn from each other and develop common positions<sup>13</sup> and guidance<sup>14</sup>.
- We engaged regularly with a range of other key organisations and peak bodies with an interest in volunteering to ensure consistent advice is given, such as Justice Connect, ACOSS and CCA.
- We reinvented National Volunteer Week (18-25 May) as an online campaign to celebrate volunteers and volunteering during these challenging times.

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<sup>12</sup> See end of this document

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/volunteering-and-covid-19/#/>

<sup>14</sup> <https://volunteeringqld.org.au/covid-19>

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At the national level, Volunteering Australia has been liaising with officials and advisers within the Australian Government and advocated on behalf of the peak network. Volunteering Australia has written to all key Ministers and the National COVID-19 Co-ordination Commission to highlight gaps in the Australian Government response, sending Positions Papers which detail the impact on volunteering. The Department of Social Services, as the lead agency for volunteering in the Australian Government, has responded but is unable to address many of our concerns as the responsibility sits elsewhere in government. As we discuss further below, the crisis has reinforced the need for a ‘whole of government’ approach to volunteering given its broad relevance and value.

Our response to COVID-19 has been achieved through the expertise and relationships that have been developed over many years. We have coped, but at a cost. We now have a much greater challenge ahead of us – of reinvigorating a diminished volunteering sector - and many staff are exhausted.

### Recommendations for now and the future

We have considered two aspects of the challenge facing the volunteering sector: what is needed now in order to support the sector through the next stage of the pandemic and to reinvigorate volunteering and; how to make sure the volunteering sector is better prepared for the future, including in future pandemics and other emergencies.

#### Reinvigorating volunteering now

***To ensure volunteers can return and that volunteering can play its role in the social and economic recovery, we need:***

- ***a package of measures to reinvigorate volunteering***
- ***a seat at the table in response and recovery institutions***

Reinvigorating volunteering will require action by a range of organisations and institutions, such as the peak volunteering bodies (Volunteering Australia and the State/Territory peak volunteering bodies), Volunteer Support Services, Volunteer Involving Organisations and we will need to draw on the patience and resilience of volunteers themselves. Given the remit of the Select Committee, our recommendations relate primarily to the actions that the Australian Government could take to facilitate this transition.

As COVID-19 restrictions are lifted and we learn to live with COVID-19 for the foreseeable future, Volunteer Involving Organisations will need to re-engage with their volunteer workforces and to recruit new volunteers. Re-engaging existing volunteers and recruiting new presents significant challenges and will require resources and coordinated effort. Safely restarting volunteer programs during changing COVID-19 restrictions is complex and resource-intensive.

Australian Government guidance for employers/employees on the safe return to work is helpful but it does not cover volunteers and Volunteer Involving Organisations. Safely restarting volunteers entails additional complexities especially where volunteers, or people being supported by volunteers, are in vulnerable categories, such as over 70s or people with disabilities. Small Volunteer Involving Organisations without dedicated human resources staff will find restarting volunteer programs even more difficult. Typically, volunteer insurance does not cover pandemics and

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organisations and individuals should not be expected to return to volunteering without adequate protection during COVID-19.

With the possible long-term withdrawal of some existing volunteers due to COVID-19, encouraging new volunteers will be critical to the continuing operations of organisations. Many organisations do not have the capacity and/or capability to recruit, induct, train and manage new volunteers during the complex, safe return-to-work environment. Volunteer programs will need to adapt to new engagement methods necessitated by COVID-19, and this process of adaptation will be challenging for some organisations.

A large proportion of volunteer work is conducted with young people and other vulnerable cohorts. Current processes for volunteer credential checks, such as Working with Children Checks (WWCC) and police checks, are onerous for potential volunteers, costly for organisations and likely to impede volunteer recruitment.

Reinvigorating volunteering will only be possible with support and investment from the Australian Government. This includes:

- The Australian Government (and State/Territory governments) to include volunteers in any future guidelines, resources and programs focusing on safe return to work.
- A 'safe-return-to-volunteering' communications campaign (funded by the Australian Government and developed in collaboration with Volunteering Australia) to promote a safe and expedient return to volunteering.
- The Australian Government to fund a practical tool-kit for volunteer recruitment and management and free training in the National Standards for Volunteer Involvement, building on existing best practice work.
- Free Working with Children Checks and police checks for volunteers for six months to reduce the costs of recruitment.
- Australian and state/territory governments to fast-track the national harmonisation of Working with Children Checks as outlined in the recommendations from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.
- The Australian Government to coordinate work with the Insurance Council of Australia, the Australian Financial Complaints Authority, the Australian Prudential Regulation Authority, Justice Connect and Volunteering Australia to urgently scope and implement a solution to the pandemic insurance gap. Organisations and individuals should not be expected to return to volunteering without adequate protection during COVID-19.

Volunteering Australia needs to be brought into key institutions and forums established to progress the response and recovery phases. Without this, the voices of millions of volunteers who have a critical role to play will not be heard.

### Preparing for the future

***To ensure a more strategic response in the future, including in future pandemics and emergencies, the Australian Government needs to co-design a National Volunteering Statement with the volunteering sector.***

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The lack of understanding and recognition across the Australian Government of the social and economic value of volunteering needs to be addressed. This should help the lack of strategic approach to volunteering which has been evidence throughout the pandemic to date, and which has long been profiled by the volunteering sector.<sup>15</sup>

In this pandemic, the swift response of the Australian Government in relation to international travel and social distancing, and the response of the Australian public, meant the spread of COVID-19 slowed quickly. In future pandemics, this may not be the case and national coordination of an emergency volunteer workforce may be needed. Institutions and platforms to facilitate national cooperation and coordination of volunteers currently do not exist.

To ensure volunteering is better prepared for the future, including in future pandemics and emergencies, we suggest the following:

- The Australian Government to co-design a National Volunteering Statement with the volunteering sector. A whole-of-government Volunteering Statement is a clear step towards a more comprehensive and strategic approach to supporting the volunteer workforce. By showing strong leadership and articulating a vision for the volunteering sector, a Volunteering Statement will help guide departmental action and investments over the long term. A National Volunteering Statement would include:
  - Formal recognition of the enormous contribution that volunteers make to our organisations, communities, economies and government programs.
  - The principles underlying the Government's commitment to support and enable the volunteering sector.
  - A commitment to ensuring the long-term sustainability of the volunteering workforce and supporting the sector through major transitions and future crises (such as sector reforms led by government, as in the aged care and disability sectors, or demographic shifts and the changing nature of work, and emergencies such as future pandemics and bushfire seasons).
- The inclusion of volunteering in emergency response planning at the national level so that volunteers can safely and efficiently play a role in meeting surge capacity. This should include having a volunteer voice on national platforms that facilitate communication, coordination and collaboration during emergencies.
- The Australian Government to fund a joined-up approach to existing volunteer matching platforms (ongoing and emergency platforms), with the view to supporting and promoting the adoption and ongoing funding, management and development of one nationally accessible, inclusive digital volunteer matching and recruitment platform.

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<sup>15</sup> <https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/2020-21-pre-budget-submission/#/>

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## Authorisation

This submission has been authorised by the Chief Executive Officer of Volunteering Australia.



Mr Mark Pearce  
Interim Chief Executive Officer

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## Endorsements

This position statement has been endorsed by the seven State and Territory volunteering peak bodies.



## About Volunteering Australia

Volunteering Australia is the national peak body for volunteering, working to advance volunteering in the Australian community. The seven State and Territory volunteering peak bodies work to advance and promote volunteering in their respective jurisdictions and are Foundation Members of Volunteering Australia.

Volunteering Australia's vision is to promote strong, connected communities through volunteering. Our mission is to lead, strengthen, promote and celebrate volunteering in Australia.

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### State and Territory Volunteering Peak Bodies

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#### **The Centre for Volunteering (NSW)**

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#### **Volunteering Victoria**

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#### **Volunteering WA**

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#### **Volunteering Tasmania**

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