

Leading a Culture of Giving in Australia



Volunteering
AUSTRALIA

2019 Federal Election Policy Platform

Volunteering Australia is the national peak body committed to advancing volunteering in the Australian community. In the lead up to the 2019 Federal Election, Volunteering Australia calls for all parties to adopt a policy platform that responds to the needs of the volunteering sector and grows a culture of giving in Australia.

This election, we are striving for volunteering to be clearly articulated in policy commitments through acknowledgement and recognition of the contributions and impacts of volunteering in Australia. This also requires an understanding at all levels, of the breadth of volunteering as a cross-portfolio issue, spanning across a diverse range of sectors, organisations, portfolios and communities.

The global volunteer workforce sits at “109 million full-time equivalent workers”ⁱ - a number far exceeding that of many major global industries. There is strong evidence reinforcing the economic impact of volunteering in Australia, with volunteering yielding a 450 per cent return for every dollar invested.ⁱⁱ Nationally this is an estimated annual economic and social contribution of \$290 billion.ⁱⁱⁱ This revenue surpasses sources including mining, agriculture, defence and retail.^{iv}

Of this, 30 per cent is volunteering that takes place formally through organisations, institutions or groups.^v In Australia, more than 5.8 million Australians or 31 per cent of the population engage in formal volunteering activities and programs.^{vi} However, while volunteers donate their “time willingly”^{vii} their contribution is not free. The operational cost of delivering innovative and agile volunteering programs that are responsive to the needs of Australian society requires a sustained and concentrated investment.

Volunteering activities in Australia are incredibly diverse and society is increasingly dependent on the activities and programs delivered through the support of volunteers and the organisations that involve them. Volunteering extends across our society to the arts, education, emergency services, sports, environment, health, aged care, disability, community welfare, the private sector and other vital programs.

Volunteering is crucial to building strong and resilient communities, by encouraging economic participation, mitigating isolation and loneliness, and increasing social inclusion, community participation and cohesion. Volunteering also increases workforce participation by building skills and connecting people to employment pathways.

While we acknowledge current contributions to the volunteering sector by the federal government, there is much more that needs to be done to support Volunteer Involving Organisations, Volunteering Support Services, and volunteers to continue to engage in all areas of Australian society. The policy proposals outlined in this platform outline a critical path for sector development and continued innovation.

Volunteering Australia highlights that targeted policies are required to address barriers to growth for the sector, to invest in the prosperity of volunteering, provide stability for the volunteering sector and protect volunteers.

Volunteering Australia’s key policy proposals centre on three priority areas:

- The need for all parties to value the role of volunteering peaks, volunteers, Volunteer Involving Organisations and Volunteering Support Services in supporting and strengthening communities;
- For all parties to commit to investing in the future of volunteering in Australia and the subsequent benefits it provides to the community; and
- For all parties to commit to amplifying the positive gains already being achieved by the sector.

These policies address current issues affecting the volunteering sector and acknowledge that the sector is a cross-portfolio, whole-of-community activity, with social, cultural and environmental benefits, as well as a significant impact to Australia’s gross domestic product (GDP).

Key Policy Proposals

Volunteering Australia is seeking all parties' make a commitment to the following policies:

Part I: Value Volunteering

1. A Strong Volunteering Infrastructure

- Federal recognition for volunteering that includes strengthening the national peak body.
- The repositioning of volunteering to Prime Minister and Cabinet.
- The appointment of an Assistant Minister for Volunteering.
- The establishment of a National Volunteering Strategy.
- Adoption of Volunteering Australia's definition of volunteering across Government.

2. Grants and Funding

- Five-year funding contracts for community sector funding (with the application of indexation) to ensure fiscal certainty for volunteer programs.
- A commitment to the continuation of the ERO supplementation where affected grants rise to incorporate the supplementation.
- Ensure volunteering is recognised and resourced in core services (such as mental health and the NDIS).

3. Volunteer Rights and Protections

- Provide stronger protections for volunteers in Commonwealth legislation.
- The establishment of a national service to provide information, advice and referrals on volunteer rights
- Harmonised Working with Children Checks (WWCCs) scheme, with a view to expanding the scheme nationally to include all vulnerable people.
- A review of the stringent National Police Check Identity Proofing Requirement.

4. A Pathway to Employment

- Redesign of the punitive welfare to work system.
- Invest in volunteering as a pathway to employment (including digital volunteering platforms)
- Fund Volunteering Support Services to place participants in volunteer roles.

Part II: Invest in Volunteering

1. Volunteer Grants
 - A restoration of the Volunteer Grants funding to 2010 levels at \$21 million p.a. (currently \$10 million p.a.).
2. National Volunteer Week
 - Allocation of \$250,000 p.a. to support Volunteering Australia to acknowledge and celebrate the contributions of Australia's volunteers through National Volunteer Week.
3. Volunteer Management
 - Commitment to ongoing, designated (indexed) funding for Volunteering Support Services post-2021.
 - Funding to develop an Application Programming Interface or 'API' to automatically connect the Volunteer Management Database VIKTOR to the Data Exchange (DEX) and remove duplicative reporting.
4. Youth Volunteering
 - Invest in Volunteering Support Services to create and manage structured volunteering programs for use by schools and Volunteer Involving Organisations.
5. Disaster Management and Climate Change
 - Support community sector organisations to respond to climate change, including training for all workers (including volunteers).
 - Investment in existing volunteering platforms that manage spontaneous volunteers during and after disasters.
 - Updating the National Climate Resilience Adaptation Strategy 2015 to identify the role of volunteers.

Part III: Amplify Volunteering

1. Advance Volunteering
 - A national campaign to support and boost volunteer numbers, particularly in the high-demand community services.
2. A Blueprint for the Sector
 - Work collaboratively with the not-for-profit and charitable sector to develop a blueprint for the sector that includes extensive consultation, economic modelling of future scenarios, strategies to respond to emerging opportunities, risk and limitations.
3. Charitable Fundraising
 - 'Fix fundraising' under Australian Consumer Law to ensure a nationally consistent, fit-for-purpose fundraising regime.
4. Prime Minister's Community Business Partnership
 - Restructure the Prime Minister's Community Business Partnership to address the current imbalance in representation between philanthropic giving and volunteering, allow the volunteering sector to have greater input, and support the sector on disaggregated data collection in relation to volunteering.

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About Volunteering Australia

Volunteering Australia is the national peak body for volunteering. We work to advance volunteering in the Australian community.

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

We work collectively with the seven State and Territory volunteering peak bodies to deliver national, state/territory and local volunteering programs and initiatives in accordance with the Government's priorities.

As the primary link between the volunteering sector and federal government, Volunteering Australia provides feedback into key decision making. All feedback is informed by research, evidence and consultation with the volunteering sector.

Part I: Value Volunteering

1. A Strong Volunteering Infrastructure

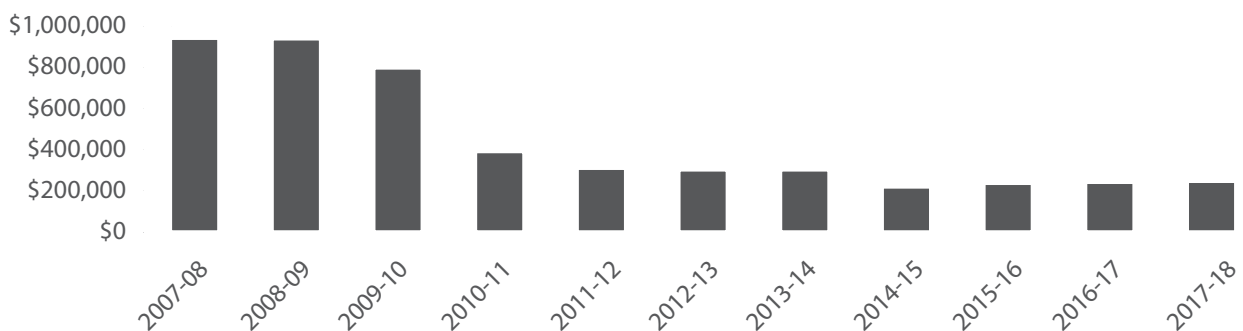
- **Federal recognition for volunteering that includes strengthening the national peak body.**
- **The repositioning of volunteering to Prime Minister and Cabinet.**
- **The appointment of an Assistant Minister for Volunteering.**
- **The establishment of a National Volunteering Strategy.**
- **Adoption of Volunteering Australia’s definition of volunteering across Government.**

Strengthening the national peak body

As the national peak body for volunteering, Volunteering Australia is funded to provide support to the sector, contribute to government policy and service delivery outcomes, and channel information between government and our membership. We strongly advocate for effective volunteering, representing the views of the volunteer movement by ensuring support for innovative, meaningful and best-practice volunteer management, and encouraging public interest and participation in volunteering.

Volunteering Australia currently receives funding under the Department of Social Services Families and Communities Service Improvement (FCSI) Activity funding stream to a sum of \$240,000 per year for a period of three years, plus CPI (see figure 1 below). As the graph below indicates, Volunteering Australia’s funding has been significantly reduced over the past decade, which has had an impact on staffing levels, operational outputs and desired outcomes for the volunteering sector.

Figure 1. Volunteering Australia – Grant Income



The national office currently operates with 3.2 FTE. While not unusual in the community sector, we highlight the risk of staff burnout and ability to service a sector of 6 million formal volunteers if the national office is to continue operating with only 3.2 FTE. Volunteering Australia stresses that at current projections, the organisation is due to cease operations in four years unless there is a significant investment.

We call for a commitment to increase funding to the national peak body that will see investment in core strategic activities required to lead a culture of giving in Australia and provide a consistent national voice on volunteering.

Repositioning volunteering to Prime Minister and Cabinet

Volunteering is a national priority, with cross-portfolio relevance and important social, economic and cultural significance. In our view, volunteering should fall within the remit of Prime Minister and Cabinet at the federal level. In fact, prior to the 2013 election there was a period where volunteering activities fell under the responsibility of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. This demonstrated the prioritisation of volunteering, and an understanding of its whole-of-Government reach and significance. In the Portfolio Overview of the 2013-14 Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio Budget Statement, social inclusion, the non-profit sector and volunteering was also listed as one of the portfolio's "principle responsibilities".^{viii}

Following the 2013 federal election, Volunteering Australia's peak body funding, the Volunteer Management Activity (VMA) and volunteer grants were all located back to the Department of Social Services – where it currently resides. This limited interpretation of volunteering to activities in the families and communities' area, and more recently in the area of settlement services, excludes the diversity of the activity.^{ix} Volunteering extends across all sectors, including (but not limited to), the arts, education, community welfare, emergency services, health, aged care, disability, STEM, agriculture, infrastructure, employment, the environment, energy and many more. It is critical that this sector is positioned effectively within government.

Assistant Minister for Volunteering

Volunteering Australia calls for the appointment of an Assistant Minister for Volunteering. There have been Ministerial positions at the State and Territory level with Victoria, South Australia, New South Wales and Western Australia all having a Minister for Volunteering in the past. There is insufficient attention given to calculating, recognising and investing in supporting volunteers, managers of volunteers and the organisations that support them. An increase in gains for the sector is possible if there is greater emphasis on building sector capacity and investing in the volunteering infrastructure. The appointment of an Assistant Minister for Volunteering at the federal level would ensure appropriate attention to volunteering issues, especially given it is a cross-portfolio activity.

National Volunteering Strategy

Volunteering Australia calls for assurances from all parties for the development and resourcing of a National Volunteering Strategy. In July 2017, former Senator for South Australia Skye Kakoschke-Moore raised a motion in the Senate for the development of a National Volunteering Strategy based on the successful South Australian model. The motion passed unanimously, with strong support from the then Minister of Social Services, the Hon Christian Porter MP. Since this time, Volunteering Australia has been looking at ways to progress this Strategy.

The Strategy would employ a partnership approach between all levels of Government, the volunteering sector, and business, and be inclusive of the interests of a broad range of volunteers, Volunteering Support Services, and Volunteer Involving Organisations across Australia. A National Volunteering Strategy will also complement existing, and successful, State Strategies, by building on the current good work progressed by the States/Territories.

Volunteering Australia emphasises that a National Volunteering Strategy would fill a key gap for a nationally consistent approach to volunteering in the country and provide a strategic direction for the sector. Furthermore, the Strategy will allow for the identification of emerging trends, challenges and issues, and allow for a considered approach in responding to them. Therefore, we are seeking funding to advance the project, and estimate the cost of developing and implementing the Strategy at \$3.36 million.

Adopt Volunteering Australia's definition of volunteering across Government

Volunteering Australia recommends all Government Departments adopt Volunteering Australia's definition of volunteering. At present, there are multiple definitions being used by government, with some using Volunteering Australia's, the Australian Bureau of Statistics', the ATO's and Fair Work Australia's. Volunteering Australia's definition (reviewed in 2015) includes both formal and informal volunteering and brought the definition in line with the United Nations definition of volunteering.

"Time willingly given, for the common good and without financial gain."^{xi}

There is strong indication to suggest that the Government should adopt Volunteering Australia's definition of volunteering, which is a community accepted standard in Australia. It also provides the most comprehensive definition of volunteering of all aforementioned definitions. Adopting this definition will allow for national consistency when referring to volunteering, a better understanding of the cross-portfolio relevance of volunteering, as well as benchmarking for data collection, policymaking, program development and service delivery standards.

2. Grants and Funding

- **Five-year funding contracts for community sector funding (with the application of indexation) to ensure fiscal certainty for volunteer programs.**
- **A commitment to the continuation of the ERO supplementation where affected grants rise to incorporate the supplementation.**
- **Ensure volunteering is recognised and resourced in core services (such as mental health and the NDIS).**

Volunteering Australia stresses that while short-term funding cycles are common within the community sector, they do not allow for the strategic workforce planning that is required to operate and deliver successful programming. Longer-term, ongoing funding that includes the application of indexation is essential to build stability, retain high quality staff and ensure valuable outcomes within the sector.

The volunteering sector experiences many challenges due to short-term funding, funding uncertainty, and competitive grants programs. There is a common misconception that involving volunteers is free. Very often volunteer labour is not accounted for in grants and funding, with organisations encountering reasonable expenses for the induction, training, management, resources and ongoing support of volunteers. There are also administrative overheads, such as insurance and reimbursement. This puts an enormous strain on the sector, with many community sector organisations asked to increase their operational output, with a critical lack of funding and resources.

It is also important to acknowledge that volunteering requires considerable leadership and continued investment to ensure safe and effective volunteering. This is provided by managers of volunteers. Long-term funding supports the capacity of Volunteer Involving Organisations to engage volunteers and supports the critical work provided by managers of volunteers.

The limitations enforced by short-term grants has been recognised by the Senate Community Affairs References Committee Report, which agreed that grant terms offered by the Department of Social Services should ideally be five-years in length in order to "allow community organisations to better undertake long-term business planning and provide consistency of services"^{xii} and ensure that "community organisations are able to dedicate more resources to service delivery, rather than administrative processes, in turn providing valuable support to vulnerable Australians"^{xiii}

Volunteering Australia recently surveyed the sector, with the majority of respondents stressing that funding periods should be five years in length. Respondents highlighted that this would allow services and programs to plan, assessments to take place, as well as ensure certainty for both service recipients and to attract and retain quality staff. The longer contracts would also mean more time spent on developing and delivering services, as opposed to preparing funding applications.

Commitment on the Equal Remuneration Order supplementation

Since 2012, the federal government has delivered additional funding to community sector organisations through the form of the Equal Remuneration Order (ERO) supplementation payments. This payment has been delivered to community sector organisations through the landmark ruling by the Fair Work Commission in 2012 that sought to address the gendered nature of work performed in the community sector.^{xiv}

The payment is provided to organisations with programs commencing prior to 2012 to meet higher wage costs that

they have incurred as a result of the 2012 Equal Remuneration Order. Organisations with programs commencing after 2012 have had the ERO costs factored into their grant.

Volunteering Australia is very concerned that the federal government will no longer pay the ERO supplementation from 2021/22^{xv}, nor will the base rate of grants affected increase to include the supplementation. This will essentially deliver a funding cut to affected community sector organisations. This also affects organisations jointly funded between the State and Commonwealth and receive the ERO supplementation, such as National Partnership Agreements. Volunteering Australia is calling for a commitment from all parties for a continuation of the ERO supplementation, where affected grants rise to incorporate the supplementation.

Recognising and Resourcing Volunteering in Core Services

There needs to be a focused investment in grants and funding that clearly identify, acknowledge and value the voluntary workforce and its place as part of the wider Australian workforce. This includes volunteers, managers of volunteers and the organisations who involve and support them.

With limited resource allocation for volunteering in mental health, and no dedicated investment in the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), services are forced to absorb costs and use existing funding to support their volunteer workforce. Volunteering Australia is calling for a commitment from all parties to ensure volunteering is recognised and appropriately resourced in core services.

Volunteers play a significant role in the provision of supports and services in mental health by mitigating isolation and loneliness, encouraging participation, social inclusion and improving wellbeing. Volunteers can provide “an extra social connection and community participation, and the value of lived experiences.”^{xvi} However, while volunteers give their “time willingly”,^{xvii} volunteer labour is not free, with management, training and resources needing to be factored into all grants and funding. Community mental health is particularly reliant on volunteers and additional investment is required in this area.

Similar issues exist with the rollout of the NDIS. Despite the reliance of volunteers, the volunteer workforce has not been costed in the NDIS. The NDIS interacts with volunteers in two key ways:^{xviii}

- Volunteers are engaged to work within disability support service organisations;
- The NDIS engages people with barriers more inclusively into society, either through volunteering as an end unto itself, or using volunteering as a pathway to paid employment.^{xix}

The NDIS roll out began before costings were considered, and since this time, there has been little attempt to properly consider the role of volunteers in supporting people with disability, as well as volunteering as a mechanism to improve social connectedness, wellbeing and health outcomes. There are also very few avenues to channel issues with the current approach.

In disability support, training is specialised and can be resource-intensive. This was similarly identified in a 2011 Productivity Commission Report in regard to a substantial increase in the number of volunteers in the aged care workforce. The Report noted, “Funding for services which engage volunteers in service delivery should consider the costs associated with volunteer administration and regulation; and appropriate training and support for volunteers.”^{xx}

3. Volunteer Rights and Protections

- **Provide stronger protections for volunteers in Commonwealth legislation.**
- **The establishment of a national service to provide information, advice and referrals on volunteer rights**
- **Harmonised Working with Children Checks (WWCCs) scheme, with a view to expanding the scheme nationally to include all vulnerable people.**
- **A review of the stringent National Police Check Identity Proofing Requirement.**

The legal status and protection for volunteers remain an ongoing area of concern for volunteers and the volunteering sector. There is currently a patchwork of laws providing inconsistent protections against, and remedies for, volunteers in relation to equal opportunity matters and work, health and safety. In some jurisdictions there is no legislation to prevent and remedy issues such as sexual harassment or discrimination.

Volunteering Australia recommends that all parties prioritise law reform and the harmonisation of Commonwealth, State and Territory legislation to close legislative gaps that do not protect volunteers. With volunteers not being covered by awards or workplace agreements, volunteers may not feel empowered or adequately supported to escalate complaints or to file a complaint with an external body, even if it is available to them. The federal government can address this by taking the following steps:

- Take the lead among government agencies in enshrining and protecting the rights of volunteers in appropriate legislation. This leadership roles would encompass convening an inter-departmental working group to review Commonwealth legislation to ensure that it provides the relevant protections for volunteers.
- Commit to leading the development of an intergovernmental working group to identify all relevant legislation across jurisdictions and develop a process to achieve legislative change and amendments.
- Prioritise working toward a nationally consistent Working with Children Checks scheme which incorporates recommendations outlined in the Working with Children Checks Report released as part of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse,^{xxi} with a view toward amending and expanding WWCC to also include all vulnerable people, as is outlined in the ACT.^{xxii}

We also call for the establishment of a professionally staffed national service to receive complaints from volunteers who believe their rights have been breached. This national help could operate like the Carer Line in NSW, which provides callers with emotional support, confidential referrals, resources and information. The federal government should fund a scoping study to inform responsive legislation and policy solutions.

Volunteering Australia also calls for a review into recent changes to identity proofing requirements to National Police Checks that have formed a barrier for many people seeking to volunteer. While Volunteering Australia is supportive of the impetus of the policy change, which aims to crack down on identity fraud, there has not been enough thought given to the impact of the change on Australia's diverse volunteering community. The stringent identity proofing requirements form a particular barrier for people from migrant and refugee backgrounds, rural, regional and remote areas, stolen generations, foster children, or for older Australians. We are aware that people wishing to volunteer from these groups are having to obtain more than one statutory declaration in order to satisfy identity proofing requirements. While some exemptions exist, seeking this can be time consuming, burdensome and costly to the volunteer.

4. A Pathway to Employment

- **Redesign of the punitive welfare to work system.**
- **Invest in volunteering as a pathway to employment (including digital volunteering platforms)**
- **Fund Volunteering Support Services to place participants in volunteer roles.**

The goal of the social security system should be to support people experiencing financial hardship and ensure individuals have adequate income to access food, transport and secure housing. The reality is quite different, with the current system insufficiently addressing joblessness, far too “compliance-focused”, and not addressing the needs of those who are long-term unemployed.^{xxiii}

Volunteering Australia emphasises that volunteering is a potential pathway to employment by increasing workforce participation and connecting people to career paths that are better paid and more stable.^{xxiv} Recent SEEK Volunteer research has found that:

- 95 per cent of employers believed that volunteering can be a credible way of gaining real-work experience to add to your resume;
- 85 per cent of recruiters believe that volunteering is just as credible as paid work as long as it is relevant to the role or industry the person works in; and
- 92 per cent of employers said that relevant volunteer experience gives candidates an advantage in job interviews.^{xxv}

Volunteering can also be valuable in assisting jobseekers who may face barriers to finding paid employment and thus are often excluded from the labour market (older people, culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD), or people with disability) in finding paid employment.

Volunteering Support Services frequently use their local knowledge to assist mutual obligation participants to find a volunteer role with pre-approved Volunteer Involving Organisations. However, these organisations are currently not funded to perform this function, delving into existing resources to support jobseekers. This includes assisting jobseekers to ensure they meet their mutual obligation requirements, boosting the confidence of jobseekers, placing them in a volunteer role or providing them with training. Volunteering Australia calls for all parties to commit to funding Volunteering Support Services for the important work they are doing in employment services.

Transitions to a digitised employment system should also look to technological solutions to enable and encourage potential jobseekers to volunteer. For example, the ‘Volunteering E-portfolio’ allows volunteers to access an automated skills record of their volunteering experiences; a portfolio that can then be used by jobseekers to demonstrate the suite of skills they have gained as volunteers. This service facilitates the skills recognition of volunteering and assists jobseekers in a tangible way.

Investment in the national online volunteering recruitment platform GoVolunteer

GoVolunteer is an initiative of Volunteering Australia, that aims to match people interested in volunteering with an appropriate volunteering opportunity. Volunteering Australia's national database of volunteering opportunities, GoVolunteer, combined with SEEK Volunteer, retains the market share of volunteer opportunities in Australia at 89 per cent. It is used by over 8000 Volunteer Involving Organisations nationally and the data it holds is shared with a number of partner websites including SEEK Volunteer, resulting in exposure to over 2 million people per year and 140,000 expressions of interest in volunteering opportunities to Volunteer Involving Organisations from potential volunteers. The digital platform allows jobseekers undertaking volunteering activity to access thousands of potential volunteer roles.

GoVolunteer and the GoVolunteer app have a number of functions including:

- Search for volunteering opportunities
- Show volunteer opportunities by geographic region
- Quickly express interest using information on the user's Volunteer Profile

GoVolunteer has serviced the needs of the volunteering sector for the past nineteen years and is strongly supported by Volunteering Australia and all State and Territory volunteering peak bodies. The platform holds a significant amount of volunteering related data and statistics, which is critical for policy making and programming. However, as the volunteering sector evolves, and the way in which people volunteer continues to change, the platform and GoVolunteer app requires enhancements and ongoing maintenance to remain relevant to users.

Volunteering Australia is calling for additional resourcing for the helpdesk to service client needs and address growing demand in virtual volunteering. Volunteering Australia estimates the cost of system enhancements to the platform and the app to be a one-off payment of \$450,000, with ongoing maintenance costing approximately \$100,000 p.a.

Part II: Invest in Volunteering

1. Volunteer Grants

- **A restoration of the Volunteer Grants funding to 2010 levels at \$21 million p.a. (currently \$10 million p.a.).**

Volunteering Australia calls for a restoration of Volunteer Grants funding to 2010 levels at \$21 million p.a. to foster volunteering in Australian communities. The Grants are aimed at supporting the efforts of Australia's volunteers, with grants of between \$1,000 and \$5,000 provided to organisations and community groups to assist their volunteers to purchase equipment, for training or fundraising. However, in the last decade the sector has seen an ongoing reduction to Volunteer Grants.

There was \$21 million allocated to Volunteer Grants in 2010, but this was reduced to \$16 million in 2011-13, \$20 million in 2015 (a combined 2014-15 round), and then \$10 million in 2016. This represents an overall reduction of 52.3%.^{xxvi} We note that there is \$20 million for volunteer grants available in 2018-19 which represents a combined allocation from the 2017-18 (which was not administered).

2. National Volunteer Week

- **Allocation of \$250,000 p.a. to support Volunteering Australia to acknowledge and celebrate the contributions of Australia's volunteers through National Volunteer Week.**

National Volunteer Week (NVW) is the annual celebration of our nation's volunteers, and a time to acknowledge the generous contributions they make to society. For one week in May, thousands of events are held across the country to say thank you to the 6 million formal volunteers and millions of informal volunteers who give their time to strengthen our communities. The week-long celebration is about encouraging more people to get involved and promoting the benefits of volunteering to the Australian community.

Despite volunteering being a cross-portfolio activity, with impact in communities across Australia, National Volunteer Week currently receives no Commonwealth support. All promotions, marketing, communications and merchandising relating to National Volunteer Week is conducted within current staffing capacity and existing resources. Similar events hosted by other national peak bodies receive federal funding and support to carry out their activities. Volunteering Australia estimates that the cost of supporting this national week to be \$250,000 p.a.

3. Volunteer Management

- **Commitment to ongoing, designated (indexed) funding for Volunteering Support Services post-2021.**
- **Funding to develop an Application Programming Interface or 'API' to automatically connect the Volunteer Management Database VIKTOR to the Data Exchange (DEX) and remove duplicative reporting.**

Volunteering Support Services are place-based services that provide the critical infrastructure required for safe, effective and sustainable volunteering. In 2017 alone, Volunteering Support Services enabled nearly 12.3 million volunteer hours.^{xxvii} This volunteering is worth \$477.5 million and would not have occurred without the engagement of Volunteering Support Services. These services are responsible for the promotion, resourcing and support of volunteering in local communities, and assist thousands of organisations across the country to recruit, retain and manage their volunteers.

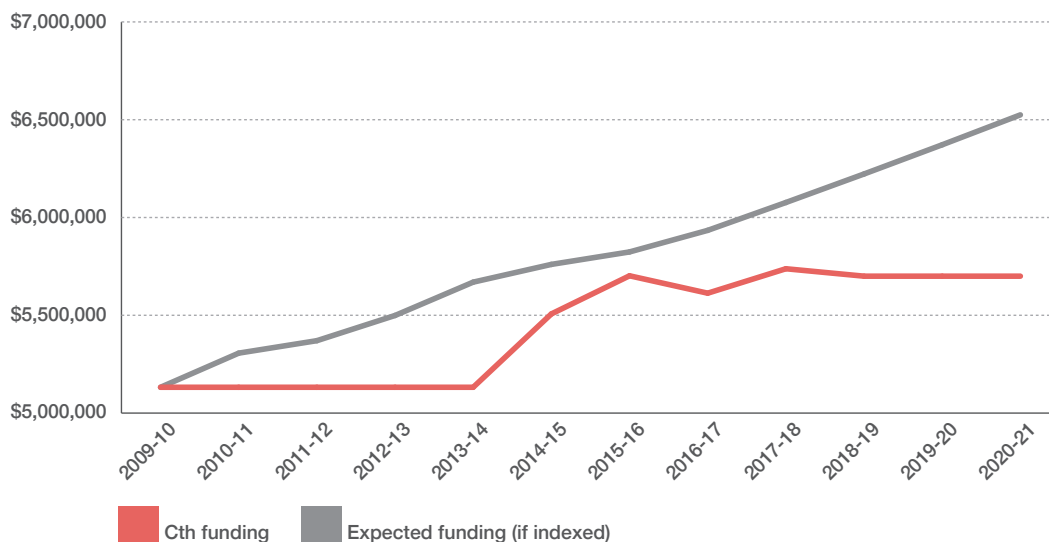
Volunteering Support Services currently receive an allocation of \$19.95 million for the Volunteer Management Activity (VMA) from 1 January 2018 through to 30 June 2021. The recent federal budget has indicated a commitment to continue funding for the Volunteer Management Activity post-June 2021, with forward estimates projecting funding till 2022-23.

We note that there has been a government review undertaken of the Volunteer Management Activity to identify a best practice model for volunteer management. The outcome of the review was due in June 2018, but the sector is still waiting for it to be publicised.

There has also been the inclusion of funding indexation for the program from 2019-20. This is incredibly positive, with the Volunteer Management Activity never receiving indexation in its history (including previous iterations). However, Volunteering Australia has been advised that any commitment to the program from July 2021 is a matter for Government.

The impact of the program not receiving indexation has also been significant and meant that since 2009, funding for the program has reduced by \$829,770 or 14.5 per cent in real terms due to an inability to keep pace with indexation.^{xxviii} Economic modelling shows that with indexation, the level of funding for the Volunteer Management Activity is expected to naturally increase (see figure 2 below).

Figure 2. Funding for Volunteering Support Services matched with expected funding (if indexed)^{xxix}



Volunteering Support Services would not exist without the \$5.7 million per year investment from the Commonwealth. This represents a return on investment of \$83 for every dollar invested.^{xxx} Volunteering Australia stresses that there must be a commitment to ongoing, designated (indexed) funding for Volunteering Support Services into the future, given the critical role they play in advancing volunteering in the Australian community.

VMA funded services are also required to collect data under the Data Exchange system or DEX. Volunteering Australia is also asking for an allocation of \$35,000 to align the Volunteer Management Database VIKTOR so that it is compatible with DEX, to eliminate duplicative reporting and allow for automatic processing. The data collected through DEX is used by the Department, Ministers and other funding bodies to make decisions in relation to funding. Volunteering Australia highlights concerns that the current data being collected is not fit-for-purpose and could have an adverse effect on current or future decisions.

VMA organisations are very supportive of collecting data, and already collect data as part of their work, but stress that any data collection should be purpose-driven, accurate, reflective of the services being provided by these organisations and should not increase or duplicate the administrative and red tape burden on organisations that are already stretched. While DEX is a client focused system, there is a disconnect with gathering data through DEX as volunteers and Volunteer Involving Organisations are not clients. Volunteering Australia highlights that there has been acknowledgement from the Department of Social services that DEX in its current form does not match with the way these services operate.

4. Youth Volunteering

- **Invest in Volunteering Support Services to create and manage structured volunteering programs for use by schools and Volunteer Involving Organisations.**

While volunteering can improve educational outcomes for young people and prepare them for success, it is not free and requires investment. Volunteering Australia calls for an investment in schools to create and manage structured volunteering programs and support for teachers through training. It is vital that schools and teachers are not expected to create and manage structured volunteering programs from within their existing resources. It is essential that there is recurrent, needs-based funding for Australian schools and teachers to support students personal and professional development. Volunteering Australia estimates the cost of this to be \$25 million.

The Report of the Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools made recommendations on “strengthening school-community engagement to enrich student learning through the establishment of mechanisms to facilitate quality partnerships, including engagement in mentoring, volunteering and extra-curricular activities, between schools, employers, members of the community, community organisations and tertiary institutions.”^{xxxix}

Volunteering Australia recommends a partnership approach on the development of volunteering programs in schools. Volunteering Australia and the State/Territory volunteering peak bodies have the professional expertise to facilitate community engagement, advise schools on program development and collaboratively engage with governments. For example, the South Australian Government has been working in partnership with Volunteering SA&NT to encourage young people to “feel a sense of belonging”, “contribute to social and economic life”, and “influence the decisions that affect them” through a structured volunteering program in schools.^{xxxiii}

5. Disaster Management and Climate Change

- **Support community sector organisations to respond to climate change, including training for all workers (including volunteers).**
- **Investment in existing volunteering platforms that manage spontaneous volunteers during and after disasters.**
- **Updating the National Climate Resilience Adaptation Strategy 2015 to identify the role of volunteers.**

Volunteers actively work to advance climate action by building the resilience of communities to climate disasters and other environmental, social and economic emergencies, advancing climate adaptation and progressing disaster risk management.

In 2018, Australia experienced more than 40 declared disasters, including floods and cyclones.^{xxxiv} The increases in natural disasters and extreme weather events has seen a growth in spontaneous volunteering and has required a more coordinated approach to managing these volunteers. Volunteering Australia highlights that organisations must be supported to adapt to climate change and to improve organisational resilience. This includes promoting existing volunteering platforms managed by State/Territory volunteering peaks to manage spontaneous volunteers during and after disasters.

There should also be additional funds provided to community sector organisations to adapt to climate change, including training for all workers, including volunteers and managers of volunteers, to better prepare for emergencies and disasters, and to ensure the continuity of service.

Given volunteers are at the forefront of disaster risk reduction, climate mitigation, adaptation and management strategies, it is vital that their roles are clearly articulated. Volunteering Australia calls for the National Climate Resilience and Adaptation Strategy 2015 to be updated to specifically identify the role of volunteers in climate resilience adaptation.

Part III: Amplify Volunteering

1. Advance Volunteering

- **A national campaign to support and boost volunteer numbers, particularly in the high-demand community services.**

Volunteers play a crucial role in the delivery of community and emergency services, however the recent Public Trust and Confidence in Australian Charities report found that “while more individuals are volunteering or are in contact with charities, they are volunteering their time less frequently.”^{xxxv} While a decline in volunteers has an impact across all Australian communities, the effects are felt more acutely in regional areas, where communities are reliant on volunteers to provide essential supports and services.

Our State of Volunteering in Australia report identified numerous barriers to attracting and retaining volunteers, with 86 per cent of Volunteer Involving Organisations struggling to attract the volunteers they required for adequate operations. Many Volunteer Involving Organisations surveyed (86 per cent) also stated that they required more volunteers and resources.^{xxxvi} Volunteering Australia is calling for a national promotions strategy to boost volunteerism in Australia, particularly in areas with the highest unmet need and current areas of growth.

As volunteering is a cross-portfolio activity, Volunteering Australia calls for a partnership approach to promotions. The strategy should link volunteering resources to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, taking note of recommendation 12, 14 and 15^{xxxvii} from the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Inquiry. There should be particular measures to encourage more Australians to volunteer in high-demand community services, such as disability support, the NDIS, aged care, mental health and emergency services. Volunteering Australia estimates that the cost of this will be \$3 million to begin with, with priority funding needed for volunteer management and other overheads.

2. A Blueprint for the Sector

- **Work collaboratively with the not-for-profit and charitable sector to develop a blueprint for the sector that includes extensive consultation, economic modelling of future scenarios, strategies to respond to emerging opportunities, risk and limitations.**

There is no plan or strategy about the future viability or sustainability on current levels of growth across the not-for-profit and charitable sector. The development of a blueprint for the sector will allow for the development of clear goals and outcomes measurement of what the sector is seeking to achieve.

The future of Australia’s not-for-profit and charitable sector is critical to the stability of Australia’s economy. In Australia, charities are reliant on the efforts of volunteers, with volunteers encompassing 2.97 million members of the charitable sector workforce, compared to one million paid staff members.^{xxxviii} The Giving Australia 2016 report on non-profits and volunteering found that 62.3 per cent of organisations in the not-for-profit sector actively recruited volunteers.^{xxxix}

Volunteering Australia is pleased to be part of a coalition of key interest groups progressing work on a blueprint for the sector that includes the Community Council for Australia, Philanthropy Australia, Impact Investing Australia, the Centre for Social Impact, Pro Bono Australia, Community Broadcasting Association of Australia, Our Community, the Australia Scholarships Foundation and Justice Connect. With the federal government as a key partner and supporter, we can progress a blueprint for the sector.

3. Charitable Fundraising

- **'Fix fundraising' under Australian Consumer Law to ensure a nationally consistent, fit-for-purpose fundraising regime.**

In Australia, charities are reliant on the efforts of volunteers for many of their activities, including fundraising. However, the increase in fundraising activities by organisations outside of the charity sector is increasingly putting pressure on charities to ensure a return on investment and long-term viability.^{XL} However within the volunteering sector, fundraising is a significant source of regulatory burden and evidence indicates that charities are being deterred due to too much red tape.

Most of the charitable sector is small to mid-size, and don't have the resources or human capital (such as in-house counsel) to navigate the current complex fundraising system. These organisations engage volunteers to assist with all sorts of activities, including fundraising. The 2015 Australian Charities Report found that around 1 in 4 charities are dependent on giving and philanthropy for 50 per cent or more of their total income.^{XLI} Smaller charities tend to depend on giving and philanthropy for a higher proportion of their income compared with larger charities. Time and staffing resources could be better spent going toward the issues and causes they are fundraising for. Organisations are currently required to work across multiple jurisdictions for fundraising, often spending already stretched resources and capacity on duplicative compliance and reporting burdens.

Volunteering Australia calls on all parties to commit to implementing a cohesive and nationally consistent fundraising system, which includes repealing fragmented State and Territory laws, removing duplicative regulatory requirements and ensuring changes do not increase the regulatory burden. We also recommend the establishment of a code of conduct for all fundraisers, ensuring that the role of volunteers is clearly articulated.

4. Prime Minister's Community Business Partnership

- **Restructure the Prime Minister's Community Business Partnership to address the current imbalance in representation between philanthropic giving and volunteering, allow the volunteering sector to have greater input, and support the sector on disaggregated data collection in relation to volunteering.**

The Prime Minister's Community Business Partnership aims "to bring together leaders from business and community sectors to promote a culture of philanthropic giving and volunteering in Australia, and help build a strong civil society".^{XLII} We commend the Government on this initiative, however note that while expertise in philanthropy and charitable giving is strongly represented in the membership of the partnership, there is a lack of professional expertise and emphasis on volunteering.

We acknowledge the important work undertaken by the Partnership, including the contribution to Giving Australia 2016, but stress that volunteering must have a distinct voice from philanthropy on the partnership. Volunteering Australia stresses that volunteering (or time giving) plays an indispensable and fundamental role for individual and community resilience and wellbeing and encourages a commitment to address the current imbalance in representation on the Partnership.

We also stress that strong research and data are essential for supporting sound policy, sector development and service delivery. Volunteering Australia emphasises that a key focus for the Prime Minister's Community Business Partnership should be to support the volunteering sector on disaggregated data collection, including working with all relevant agencies, such as the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), to ensure data is reflective of the current state of volunteering.

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Authorisation

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



Ms Adrienne Picone
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Endorsements

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



VOLUNTEERING
and
CONTACT ACT



Glossary

- VA Volunteering Australia is the national peak body for volunteering in Australia. We work collectively with the peaks to deliver national, state and local volunteering programs and initiatives.
- VIO Volunteer Involving Organisations are organisations that engage volunteers as part of their workforce.
- VSS Volunteering Support Services (also known as Volunteer Resource Centres or Volunteer Support Organisations) provide place-based volunteer support services to volunteers and VIOs in their locality.