

STRATEGIC PLAN

2021-2024



FOREWORD *i*

Out-going Chair Michelle Ewington

What a privilege it has been to contribute to the strategic governance of the volunteering sector over the past 13 years.

In 2008 I joined the Board of Volunteering Tasmania, from a desire to better understand and contribute to the new sector I was working in as a Volunteer Manager.

I joined the Board of Volunteering Australia (VA) in 2013 – as a representative member of the Tasmanian Peak Body. With a small operational team and an enormous effort and commitment from the Board, VA hosted a global conference alongside the International Association for Volunteer Effort in 2014. Through this event I witnessed firsthand the energy, commitment, and drive of volunteering across the globe.

I am grateful for the opportunities my role with VA has availed me and the role I have played leading a journey of change for the organisation.

My time contributing to the strategy and development of VA has been one of constant change. There have been four CEO's leading the organisation and I am proud of my role in the recruitment of the two most recent who have been instrumental in propelling VA into a new and contemporary model of operating and delivering on its mission.

2018 was a significant year that saw VA transition its governance model from representative to a skills based independent Board. This undertaking is probably one of my proudest achievements and a catalyst to the strength and success we now see for VA.

In 2021, I've had the delight in seeing VA awarded funding of significant national pieces of work to further strengthen the sector.

As a strong advocate for the voice of volunteers, the act of volunteering and those that support the work of volunteering, I am immensely pleased to see the current board demonstrating such passion and commitment to creating a contemporary and forward thinking organisation.

As I step away from my role of Chair, I've had the pleasure of helping shape the next strategic plan and I look forward to seeing the organisation (and sector) thrive.



In-coming Chair Professor Michael Drew

Aristotle once said that the essence of life is, *“to serve others and do good.”* Volunteering enables us to help people in need, worthwhile causes, and the wider community. Volunteering makes us happier with time spent dedicated to the common good increasing our overall life satisfaction.

Research undertaken by Volunteering Australia shows that the global pandemic has impacted volunteering in many ways. This includes fewer opportunities for people to participate in their community, challenges for community-facing organisations reliant upon volunteers, and the risk that many of those who have stopped volunteering during the COVID-19 period will not return to voluntary work and at least some will be volunteering less.

It is out of our research agenda that this strategic plan has been developed. It has been the culmination of hard work and collaboration between our Board, Leadership Team, and stakeholders, and will inform the direction of VA over the next three years. In that respect the following themes emerged:

- Volunteering provided extra meaning and social interaction for those who were able to volunteer during this most difficult of times.
- Strong and resilient communities are built on and sustained by participation. Now is the time to build on this ‘community spirit’, invest in the strategic adaptation of volunteering and ensure volunteering is effective, inclusive, and sustainable into the future.

- Volunteer involving organisations innovated to continue to meet community need but must continue to adapt to provide safe and supportive pathways to allow more Australians to volunteer.
- It is important for Governments, at all levels, to engage with the volunteering sector, to find ways to make volunteering easier and more accessible for time-poor or vulnerable Australians.

The strategic plan provides an overarching framework and set of priorities from which projects and budgets will be developed, implemented, and regularly reviewed by the Board and Leadership Team, with our priorities adjusted as necessary. As the saying goes, ‘The art of progress is to preserve order amid change and to preserve change amid order’.

Over the next three years, as Australia’s peak volunteering body, we must reflect thoughtfully on the challenges of living with COVID-19, act decisively and change our practices as circumstances dictate, and yet at the same time remain steadfast to the values that have made volunteering in Australia so great.



VISION

A strong, connected, and resilient Australian community through volunteering

PURPOSE

To lead, strengthen, and celebrate volunteering in Australia



PRINCIPLES

Leadership

We are the recognised national peak body for volunteering in Australia and play an important leadership role among our members, the ecosystem, and to the community more widely.

Collaboration

We work hard to build strong, productive, and mutually beneficial partnerships, and believe the best results arise from effective collaboration with governments, businesses, for-purpose organisations, and individuals.

Trusted

Our priorities, decisions, policies, and activities are based on sound evidence and credible research, and we actively seek to support and encourage the research that is needed to advance volunteering.

Sustainable

We understand and appreciate the importance of good governance, financial management and reporting to maintain our reputation as a credible, trustworthy, and sustainable organisation.



STRATEGIC PILLARS

Our strategic pillars provide the foundation for our overarching vision.

Policy, Advocacy and Research

Drive and inform advocacy through credible evidence-based public policy. We will:

- Positively influence policies and programs that impact upon volunteering.
- Advocate on matters of national importance.
- Leverage research outcomes to inform and improve best practice in volunteering.
- Research and identify evidence of the social and economic benefits of volunteering as a contribution to community resilience.

Leadership and Sector Development

Enhance and invest in the sustainable infrastructure and inclusive practices of the volunteering ecosystem. We will:

- Develop and promote frameworks, systems and tools that innovate and improve the volunteering experience.
- Enable the inclusion of all Australians to ensure the removal of obstacles to increase volunteering.
- Drive and encourage best practice in the volunteering ecosystem.
- Be recognised as a national thought leader on volunteering.

STRATEGIC PILLARS

Stakeholder Engagement and Communication

Develop and sustain strategic relationships to ensure volunteering is recognised as a valued and integral part of society. We will:

- Develop and implement effective stakeholder engagement to build collaboration and seek investment for volunteering.
- Raise awareness of volunteering.
- Strengthen our brand and reputation as the national peak.
- Work collaboratively within the volunteering ecosystem and the broader community.

Organisational Sustainability and Resilience

Build our capacity and capabilities to ensure organisational agility and longevity. We will:

- Strengthen governance models and business practices.
- Attract and retain a skilled and knowledgeable workforce.
- Establish a diverse portfolio of sustainable income streams.
- Monitor the emerging characteristics of the sector and develop capabilities to adapt.

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