

Volunteering and the Jobs and Skills Summit

- ***Volunteers contribute extensively to the workforce in key sectors, including emergency management and the care and support sector.***
- ***Volunteers are crucial to Australia's charities, which employ more than 10 per cent of people in Australia.***
- ***Volunteering creates opportunities to develop skills and facilitates pathways to employment.***

Background

This Briefing was drafted to coincide with the Jobs and Skills Summit being held on 1-2 September 2022 and sets out the importance of volunteering to the issues being discussed at the Summit.

The goal of the Summit is to find common ground on how Australia can build a bigger, better trained and more productive workforce; boost real wages and living standards; and create more opportunities for more Australians. The [discussion paper](#) to inform the Jobs and Skills Summit and a proposed White Paper has been released.

The Summit and subsequent Employment White Paper will focus on:

- keeping unemployment low, boosting productivity and incomes
- delivering secure, well-paid jobs and strong, sustainable wages growth
- expanding employment opportunities for all Australians including the most disadvantaged
- addressing skills shortages and getting our skills mix right over the long term
- improving migration settings to support higher productivity and wages
- maximising jobs and opportunities from renewable energy, tackling climate change, the digital economy, the care economy and a Future Made in Australia
- and ensuring women have equal opportunities and equal pay.

Volunteers are part of the nation's workforce

In many sectors and services, volunteers are a significant element of the workforce. For example:

- Volunteers are crucial to the Australian emergency services sector.
 - Over 200,000 volunteers work in fire services organisations and around 25,000 volunteers work in State and Territory Emergency Service.¹
 - A further 200,000 volunteers are engaged in over 1,000 registered emergency and relief charities.
- Volunteers contribute extensively to the care economy.
 - Almost 65,000 people volunteer in mental health and crisis intervention charities and not-for-profits.
 - Almost 60,000 volunteer in charities and not-for-profits which identified people with disability as their main beneficiaries.

¹ <https://www.pc.gov.au/research/ongoing/report-on-government-services/2022/emergency-management>

- Over 43,000 volunteer in charities and not-for-profits which identified veterans and/or their families as their main beneficiaries.
- 30,883 volunteers are engaged across Commonwealth aged care services.²
- Lifeline engages 10,000 volunteers across Australia. In 2018, these volunteers answered 739,481 calls and initiated 5,840 emergency interventions for Australians in need of crisis support.
- 30,883 people volunteered across Commonwealth aged care services according to the 2020 Aged Care Workforce Census.
- Charities:
 - Volunteers support the charitable sector. Australia’s 55,000 charities employ over 1.38 million people, about 10.5 per cent of all employees, and engage 3.4 million volunteers.³

Volunteers should be considered in any national workforce strategy as an essential, but distinct, component of the overall workforce.

Volunteering develops skills and supports pathways to paid employment

The capacity of volunteering to facilitate pathways into paid employment is well established.

- Undertaking voluntary work can equip applicants with work-relevant skills and experience.
 - Research undertaken by employment company SEEK found that 95 per cent of employers identify that volunteering is just as credible as paid work.⁴
 - 92 per cent of employers identified that relevant volunteering experience gave a candidate an advantage in job interviews.⁵
 - A quantitative study from the US found that people who volunteered were 27 per cent more likely to find employment than those who did not volunteer.⁶
- Volunteering can help reduce barriers for people seeking employment, including people with disability.
 - In qualitative research, people with disability have indicated that their volunteering helped them to build personal skills, access networking opportunities, and find paid roles.⁷
 - Volunteering among people with disability can reduce feelings of alienation and loneliness and allow an individual with disability to shift from being a recipient of welfare services into an empowered provider of services to others.⁸

² <https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2021/10/2020-aged-care-workforce-census.pdf>

³ <https://www.acnc.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2022-06/Australian%20Charities%20Report%20-%208th%20edition.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.seek.com.au/career-advice/article/3-reasons-volunteering-can-put-you-ahead-of-the-pack>

⁵ *ibid*

⁶ https://americorps.gov/sites/default/files/evidenceexchange/FR_2013_VolunteeringasaPathwaytoEmployment_1.pdf

⁷ Galit Yanay-Ventura, ““Nothing About Us Without Us” in Volunteerism Too: Volunteering Among People with Disabilities,” *Voluntas* 30, no. 1 (2018): 147,163, doi:10.1007/s11266-018-0026-7

⁸ *ibid*