

MEDIA RELEASE

Wednesday 10 May, 2017



Volunteering overlooked in 2017-18 Federal Budget

Volunteering Australia, as the peak body for volunteering in the country, is disappointed in this year's 2017-18 Federal Budget, with volunteering overlooked.

Volunteering plays a critical role in Australia's national identity. It is disappointing that volunteering has not been identified as an important part of the budget given there are 5.8 million Australians or 31 per cent of the population who engage in formal volunteering activities and programs, making an estimated annual economic and social contribution of \$290 billion.

Volunteering is essential to building strong and resilient communities, encourages economic participation, mitigates isolation and loneliness, and increases social inclusion and community participation. Volunteering is also a pathway to employment, with volunteers building valuable work skills, and developing personally and professionally from their involvement in programs and activities. However, this has not been acknowledged at all in last night's Budget.

Some highlights outlined in the budget that relate to the volunteering sector include:

- From 1 January 2018, the Strong and Resilient Communities Activity will replace the current Strengthening Communities Activity.
- \$10.0 million will be allocated to Volunteer Grants in 2017-18.
- The Government will provide \$84.1 million over five years from 2016-17 to consolidate seven working age payments and allowances into a new JobSeeker Payment. Under this measure, there will also be a strengthening of the participation requirement of job seekers. Part of this equitable participation framework, to apply from the 20 September 2018, will include aligning the participation requirements for recipients aged 30 to 49 with those for recipients under 30. Recipients aged 55 to 59 will only be able to meet half of their participation requirements through volunteering, while recipients aged between 60 and the Age Pension age will have a new activity requirement of 10 hours per fortnight that can be met through volunteering.
- There are a range of measures in this budget targeted at transitioning people to work, and providing them with valuable employment skills or work experience, to boost their employability. Volunteering Australia would like to reiterate our position that volunteering is a valuable pathway to employment, allowing people to develop personally and professionally. We look forward to working with the Government on the measures outlined in the Budget.
- Funding for Community Development Grants Fund, with to date, assured funding of more than \$941.2 million to more than 750 projects including more than 450 projects from the 2016 Federal Election.
- A \$19.6 million investment in community broadcasting in the 2017-18 period via the Community Broadcasting Program.

MEDIA ENQUIRIES:

Kylie Hughes, Volunteering Australia

E: kylie@volunteeringaustralia.org

P: 02 6251 4060

M: 0402 497 138

MEDIA RELEASE

Wednesday 10 May, 2017



- A \$29.6 million investment in 2017-18 that will allocate learning tools and resources, including assistance for community organisations located in metropolitan and regional areas to provide one-on-one tutoring and support to older Australians.

Volunteering Australia CEO Adrienne Picone said, “While we acknowledge the distribution of volunteer grants that have been provided over the past few weeks, this funding pales in comparison to the sustained investment that is required to ensure safe, effective and sustainable volunteering. Volunteer managers and Volunteering Support Services provide the stable and secure volunteering infrastructure needed to support volunteers and volunteer programs on the ground every day.”

This week, 8-14 May is also National Volunteer Week 2017, where we celebrate and acknowledge the valuable contributions made by Australia’s volunteers. In recognition of this, Volunteering Australia are urging Australians to sign a petition to retain designated funding for Volunteering Support Services.

“Volunteering Australia would like to reaffirm that the streamlining of funding, following the redesign of the of the Strong and Resilient Communities grants, poses a real risk to the critical role Volunteering Support Services play, as they will now have to compete for funding with those previously in other funding streams”, said Ms Picone.

The petition will be presented to the Senate in June. To sign the petition and find out more about the campaign visit: <https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/towerofstrength/petition/>.

MEDIA ENQUIRIES:

Kylie Hughes, Volunteering Australia

E: kylie@volunteeringaustralia.org

P: 02 6251 4060

M: 0402 497 138