

2016 FEDERAL ELECTION: VOTE FOR VOLUNTEERING



Imagine Australia without Volunteers

Volunteering supports the work of the federal Government – every day, in every community.

Whether it's:

- The volunteer conservationists who keep our local rivers clean and beautiful
- The volunteer story-time readers who enrich our local libraries
- The volunteer meals on wheels drivers who support our home and community care workers to care for our elderly neighbours
- The volunteer sportspeople who coach Australia's future sporting champions
- The volunteer arts practitioners who run our local community arts festivals
- The volunteers at the rescue centre who ready abandoned puppies for their new homes
- The volunteer firefighters who protect Australia's bush
- The volunteer lifesavers who patrol Australia's beaches
- or even the volunteers who staff your polling booths on election day,

86%
OF VOLUNTEER INVOLVING
ORGANISATIONS NEED MORE
VOLUNTEERS

Volunteering spans Government portfolios and supports Australia and Australians in every walk of life. An estimated 5.8 million Australians, or 31% of the population, volunteer each year, contributing an average \$290 billion to our economy.

Australia wouldn't work without volunteers. But recent data shows that the number of volunteers in Australia is decreasing – just as we need volunteers more than ever. In 17 years, there are predicted to be 55 dependants for every 100 workers in Australia as our population hits 32 million. Volunteering Australia's recent State of Volunteering report found that 86% of volunteer-involving organisations have vacancies for volunteers that they need to fill. And there is particular need for volunteers in sectors such as youth and ageing – two dramatically growing demographics.

ADDITIONAL VOLUNTEERS REQUIRED BY STATE



We can't do it without you.

Volunteering doesn't happen by accident. For a volunteer program to work effectively, it requires strong and effective management that is properly resourced. Volunteer managers work within volunteer-involving organisations or as part of volunteer support organisations, linking volunteers with opportunities in their community. They provide training, placement and support. They make sure the volunteering community experience is welcoming and safe.

The uncertainty of short-term grants-based funding, combined with constant changes to the policy space in which we operate, is hurting the volunteering sector. Over the last five years, federal government funding to volunteering has reduced. There's been no announcement of the next round of DSS funding for volunteer management in 2016-17. This lack of cohesion makes it impossible for volunteer-involving organisations to build strong programs that will thrive into the future.

We need leaders in the federal parliament who will support the volunteering community to grow and thrive.

This Federal Election, we're asking you to take the pledge and Vote for Volunteering.

By taking this pledge, I acknowledge that volunteering supports the work of the federal government through the delivery of core programs, making a significant contribution to the Australian economy and society. I further acknowledge that the delivery of successful volunteering programs requires adequate funding that must keep pace with the growth in demand. I am concerned by reports that the number of volunteers in Australia is decreasing and believe Government must show the leadership required to encourage more people into volunteering.

I pledge to work in partnership with the volunteering sector to support the work of volunteers, volunteer managers and volunteer-involving organisations if elected on July 2.

What this looks like to the sector:

- **A new National Volunteering Strategy** that is non-partisan and developed in partnership with Volunteering Australia and other relevant sectors
- **A commitment to increased federal funding to volunteering** that is managed sustainably, consistently and transparently, and that is allocated as a result of independent research and collaboration with the sector in the form of a Productivity Commission inquiry
- **An acknowledgement that the work of volunteering crosses all portfolios of the Government**, and must be administered accordingly
- **An increase in support for volunteering in areas with critical gaps**, such as aged care, disability services, emergency management and youth.

volunteeringaustralia.org/vote4volunteering





The Vote for Volunteering Platform:

A new National Volunteering Strategy

In 2011, the Federal Government of the time released the National Volunteering Strategy, a ten-year plan for the future of volunteering in our country. Amongst the Strategy's goals were the need to strengthen volunteer management and training, goals that we agree are vital and would like to partner with the Government to achieve.

Five years on, many of the objectives contained within that Strategy have not progressed. We are seeking a new National Volunteering Strategy that embodies a genuine partnership between Government and the sector. We believe this is the best way to create a strategy that has buy-in from the sector, sets meaningful goals and has shared oversight for implementation.

A commitment to increase federal funding

Volunteering Australia supports an Australian Productivity Commission inquiry into the true cost of volunteering. This would give the Government the opportunity to engage the sector in consultation and to properly measure the impact of volunteering on Australia and its economy. We're confident this inquiry will demonstrate what we already know – that volunteering is critical to the delivery of Federal Government programs and policy initiatives. It would provide an accurate measure of the investment needed to keep volunteering programs and volunteer management sustainable.

Federal Government funding to support volunteering has reduced over the past five years. Volunteering support services and infrastructure have had their total funding reduced in real terms due to a lack of increased critically needed investment and indexation adjustment to reflect growing costs. There has also been a massive cut to volunteer grants of \$6 million a year.

This year, there's been no announcement of a new DSS funding round for volunteer-involving organisations who missed out on previous volunteer management grant opportunities, or who have developed innovative new programs and are applying for the first time. Instead, the Department has extended the current round of grant programs by six months at a time. This isn't in line with the Government's own recommendation, which commits the Department to five year grant agreements in recognition of the fact "that five year agreements allow community organisations to better undertake long-term business planning and provide consistency of services".

An acknowledgement that volunteering crosses all portfolios of Government

In 2013, Departmental responsibility for volunteering programs transferred from the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet to the Department of Social Services. This was a shift in priorities which the volunteering sector felt did not adequately recognise the scope of our work or the communities in which we provide it.

Whilst it is certainly true that volunteering hours spent in the human and social services are significant, in reality volunteers operate across every Government portfolio – in sport and recreation, in emergency services, in the natural and built environment, in the education and health sectors, in science and in the arts and culture, and of course social and welfare services. A return to the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet would not only fully recognise the national contribution of volunteering, it would also align with the aspirations of the Prime Minister's Community Business Partnership.

¹Australian Government (December 2015) 'Response to the Senate Community Affairs References Report Committee: Impact on service quality, efficiency and sustainability of recent Commonwealth community service tendering processes by the Department of Social Services', available https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/01_2016/sentate_inquiry_response.docx

An increase in support for volunteering where there are critical gaps

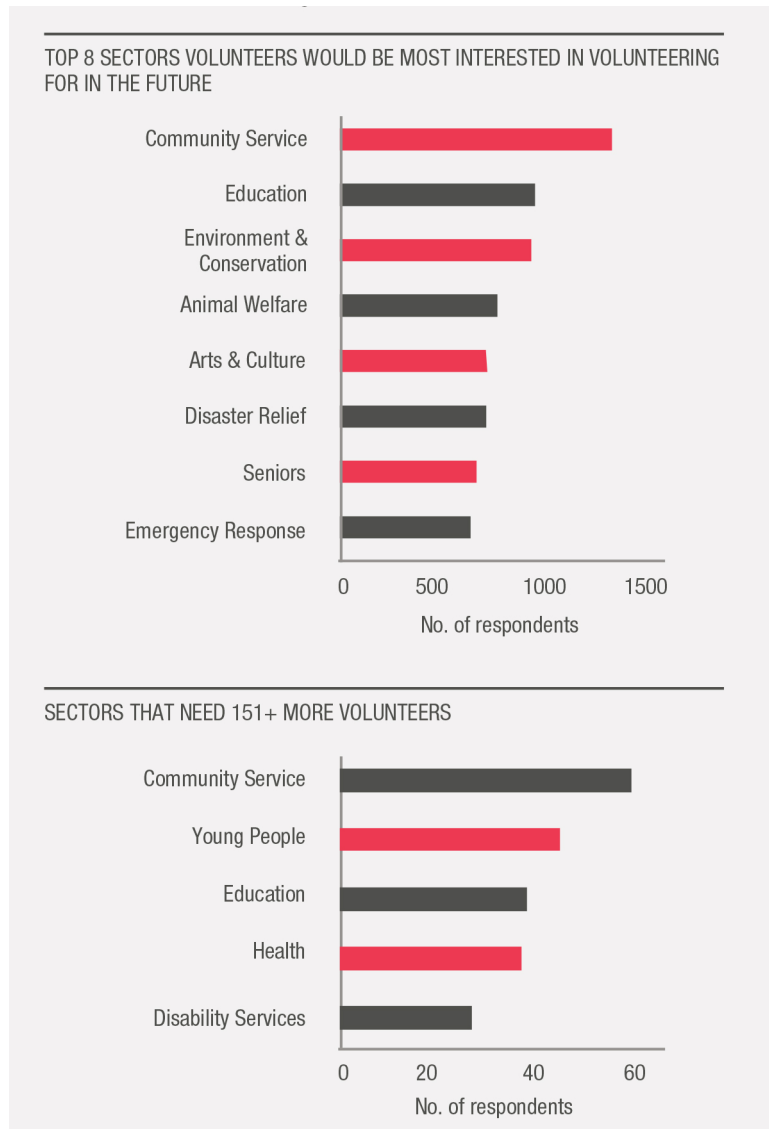
The 2016 State of Volunteering report identified that 86% of volunteer-involving organisations are in need of more volunteers. Sectors with the highest vacancies include community services, youth, health and disability services. These are areas of express need, but growth in volunteer numbers requires additional federal funding to support required training, management and infrastructure.

A Federal Government campaign in the aged services sector saw a 55% increase in volunteer numbers between 2000 and 2009. Today, volunteers contribute around 2.5 million hours in aged care per year, saving the sector around \$49.5 million in equivalent wages. Yet a 2011 Productivity Commission report which explicitly identified a need for greater funding for volunteer management in the aged services to keep pace with volunteer hours, has gone unheeded.

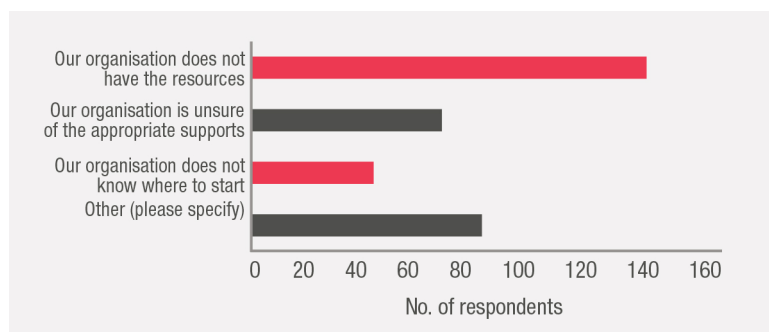
More recently, the Government has identified an increase in volunteer engagement as an objective of the NDIS. We agree that more volunteers are required in disability services, which is the fourth-most commonly advertised sector on the GoVolunteer portal. Again, however, there has been no commitment to funding, infrastructure or specialist training to match any increase in volunteer numbers. This space is especially complex as 46% of volunteer-involving organisations report that they do not have the infrastructure capacity to engage volunteers with barriers.

Support for our youth is also a way that volunteering contributes to the Government's objectives. Recent Government decisions have supported the transformative power of innovation and internships to encourage young people into the workforce. There is strong evidence that volunteering can build the skills required to help young people transition into paid work. Investing in volunteer management instead of or in addition to paid internships in the for-profit sector is a great way to support youth volunteering as a pathway to employment.

Australia would not work without volunteers, We need you to be a leader in federal parliament who supports the volunteering community to ensure volunteering grows and thrives. Take the pledge and Vote for Volunteering.



WHAT CHALLENGES TO RECRUITING AND ENGAGING VOLUNTEERS WITH BARRIERS DO YOU ENCOUNTER



Source: Volunteering Australia and PwC Australia (2016), *State of Volunteering in Australia: Help Create Happiness*, April 2016, available at: <http://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/wp-content/uploads/State-of-Volunteering-in-Australia-full-report.pdf>