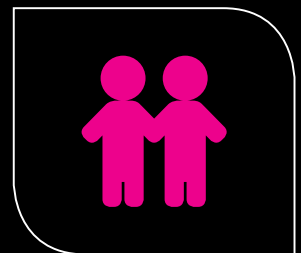
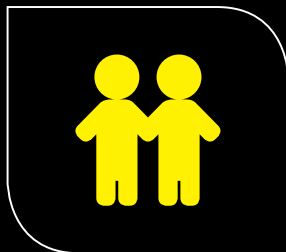
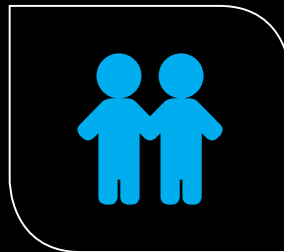
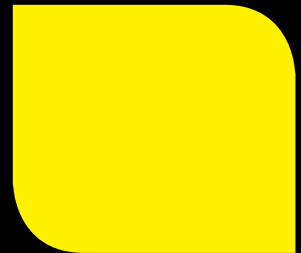
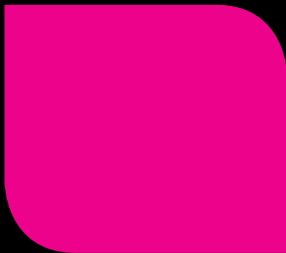




Australian Government

# NATIONAL VOLUNTEERING STRATEGY



AUSTRALIA VOLUNTEERS **INSPIRING THE VOLUNTEER IN YOU**



International Year of Volunteers  
10th anniversary  
2011

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Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet  
PO Box 6500  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

# MINISTER'S FOREWORD



Australia has a strong tradition of volunteering. Volunteers reflect the character of our nation—our distinctly Australian spirit of lending a hand and helping out.

We are a generous nation. Each year, more than 6 million Australians contribute their time, energy and expertise to volunteering activities. Australian volunteers contribute more than 700 million hours of unpaid work each year to their local communities.

Every week, volunteers do everything from helping disadvantaged children learn to read to providing companionship to the elderly. Their assistance in times of natural disaster is crucial and so, too, is their contribution to preserving our environment.

Volunteering is an essential part of an inclusive society in which all Australians have the opportunity for meaningful social participation. Volunteering connects us, strengthens our sense of belonging and creates positive relationships that build stronger local communities.

To mark the 10th anniversary of the United Nations International Year of Volunteers, the Australian Government has developed the National Volunteering Strategy.

In the strategy, the Australian Government sets out a vision for the future of volunteering in Australia, in which volunteering is encouraged, supported and recognised.

The strategy explores emerging issues and challenges for the volunteering sector and provides a set of strategic directions to address them. The directions include responding to trends which are changing the way people volunteer, harnessing information technology, reducing the complexity of regulation and risk management requirements, strengthening volunteer management and training, improving advocacy for the sector and increasing the recognition of volunteers.

Creating and sustaining a stronger volunteering sector will require a whole-of-sector effort. The strategy is a call to action for governments, businesses, not-for-profit organisations and the Australian community.

The National Volunteering Strategy is the product of extensive consultation with volunteers and the organisations they work for, peak bodies, and state and territory governments. The National Volunteering Strategy Advisory Group and the International Year of Volunteers Plus 10 Advisory Group also provided valuable comment on the strategy as it developed.

I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to this strategy, and I hope that all will share a commitment to realising its aims.

I look forward to working together to ensure that volunteering is encouraged, supported and recognised across the country over the next 10 years.



**Tanya Plibersek**  
**Minister for Social Inclusion and Minister for Human Services**



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## OVERVIEW

### **Ensuring that volunteering is encouraged, supported and recognised is a priority for the Australian Government.**

The National Volunteering Strategy sets out the Australian Government's vision for volunteering in Australia over the next 10 years. The aim of the strategy is to ensure that by 2021 volunteering is encouraged, supported and recognised by all Australians.

The volunteering landscape is changing as a result of wider social, economic and technological change. Technology has transformed the way we communicate and work. Governments, businesses, not-for-profit organisations and communities now work together in different ways.

While traditional forms of volunteering are still popular, new forms are emerging. As society changes, the ways in which people want to volunteer are also changing. More people want volunteer roles that are flexible, or require shorter hours or a shorter-term commitment. Governments, businesses, organisations that use volunteers and the wider volunteering sector must all respond to such changes.

Volunteering benefits our nation, our local communities and individual Australians. The strategy is a call to action for Australia's volunteering community. It provides strategic directions for all levels of government, the business sector, the not-for-profit sector and the broader volunteering sector.

We can all work together to encourage and support volunteering in Australia.

## **WHAT ARE THE KEY FOCUS AREAS OF THE STRATEGY?**

The National Volunteering Strategy sets out six focus areas for action:

**Focus area 1. Respond to trends in volunteering:** A better understanding of emerging trends in volunteering will enable the development of better tailored strategies to attract and retain volunteers.

**Focus area 2. Harness technology:** Information technology can better match people to volunteering opportunities and increase participation in volunteering. Technology can also be used to increase engagement among volunteers and enable collaboration between organisations that use or support volunteers. The National Broadband Network will further enable this.

**Focus area 3. Better regulation and risk management:** Easier access to reliable information and simpler, more effective regulation will reduce the complexity of volunteer protection and insurance requirements.

**Focus area 4. Strengthen management and training:** Good volunteer management and training are central to attracting and engaging volunteers. This can be achieved by providing more effective information and resources to volunteer managers and volunteers.

**Focus area 5. Strengthen relationships and advocacy:** Governments, the volunteering sector and other key stakeholders must all work together to build a stronger volunteering sector. Intermediaries, such as peak bodies and volunteer resource centres, provide vital support and advocacy for many volunteers and organisations. The quality of the volunteering experience will be improved by strong representation and advocacy.

**Focus area 6. Recognise and value volunteering:** Greater recognition of volunteers and the contribution they make to Australian society will inspire more Australians to volunteer.

## DEVELOPMENT OF THE STRATEGY

The National Volunteering Strategy has been informed by detailed research and broad consultation in 2010 and 2011.

The Productivity Commission's research report *Contribution of the not-for-profit sector*<sup>1</sup>, released in January 2010, provided significant analysis of issues facing not-for-profit organisations, including the challenges of volunteering.

Public consultations were held in June and July 2010 with a broad cross-section of the volunteering community. Feedback was sought through a consultation paper seeking written submissions and an online survey. The report on the consultation was published in early 2011.<sup>2</sup>

More detailed consultation was also undertaken through the establishment of the Volunteering Policy Advisory Group in 2010 and the International Year of Volunteers Plus 10 Advisory Group in 2011.

The Australian Government has engaged with a range of stakeholders, including state and territory governments, peak bodies, not-for-profit organisations and volunteers, to inform the strategy.

## IMPLEMENTATION AND FUTURE ACTION

The Australian Government is committed to ongoing dialogue, engagement and collaboration with all key stakeholders to ensure that the goals of this strategy are achieved.

Over the next 10 years, the government will:

- carry out the priority government actions outlined in the strategy
- use the strategy to guide its own policy development, decision making and investments
- continue to develop ways to implement the strategy
- report on progress and evaluate the strategy's implementation and effectiveness.

The government will do this in close consultation with the volunteering sector, other governments and business.



# SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

The National Volunteering Strategy commits the Australian Government to the following new and ongoing priority actions:

## PROMOTE GREATER ENGAGEMENT OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN VOLUNTEERING

- by providing seed funding to the Foundation for Young Australians to support the development of the *Young People Without Borders* volunteering program
- by encouraging educational providers to promote, support and recognise volunteering in schools and universities
- by initiating an online ad competition—young people will be invited to create a short online audiovisual advertisement promoting volunteering.
- by offering up to 20 places in the Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development Program each year to young volunteers aged 18–20. Priority will be given to suitable applicants from regional and rural areas and those from Indigenous and disadvantaged backgrounds.

## RESPOND TO TRENDS IN VOLUNTEERING

- by developing a volunteer information pack for older Australians, to be provided through a variety of government and non-government outlets
- by providing over \$5 million to volunteer resource centres in 2011–12, to encourage local volunteering opportunities which facilitate greater social participation and social cohesion in local communities
- by providing information on volunteering to jobseekers through Centrelink
- by supporting projects to enhance Australia's resilience to natural disasters, including projects that support emergency management volunteers
- by developing the National Sports Volunteer Strategy in 2012 to better engage, support, train and recognise sports volunteers.

## HARNESS TECHNOLOGY

- by providing a portal that enables Australian volunteers to find opportunities to match their interests and availability to volunteer in developing countries as part of the Australian development aid program
- by collaborating with volunteering organisations to co-fund the development of data sharing capability, to enable volunteers to do a single search of roles and organisations to publish each role once and have it widely accessible
- by rolling out the National Broadband Network (NBN) to connect 93% of homes, schools and businesses to high-speed broadband and allocating \$12.4 million under the Digital Enterprise program to help not-for-profit organisations in targeted communities to understand how to maximise opportunities enabled by the NBN.



## BETTER REGULATION AND RISK MANAGEMENT

- by focusing funding to help organisations understand and manage their regulatory obligations and improve their risk management
- by supporting Volunteering Australia's commitment to strengthen the National Standards for Best Practice in the Management of Volunteers and to develop support tools to make the use of the standards easier
- by implementing the reform agenda for the not-for-profit sector to create more effective regulation and reduce reporting burdens for the sector
- by establishing the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission by July 2012, implementing a 'report once, use often' reporting framework, and establishing a public information portal
- by pursuing nationally consistent regulation with the states and territories, including a statutory definition of 'charity', and by ensuring that the new harmonised work health and safety laws support greater national consistency in regulation
- by working with the states and territories to progress a nationally consistent approach to working with children checks.

## STRENGTHEN MANAGEMENT AND TRAINING

- by reviewing the way the Australian Government currently supports volunteer management to ensure best practice. Funding will be targeted to ensure information, resources and tools are developed that support volunteer managers
- by working with state peak bodies to improve the delivery of training.

## STRENGTHEN RELATIONSHIPS AND ADVOCACY

- by developing a Consultation and Policy Development Code of Best Practice to provide a framework for how government engages with the sector on policy and program design
- by working with volunteering peak bodies and resource centres to better support the volunteer sector and strengthen their capacity to advocate to government on volunteer-related issues.

## RECOGNISE AND VALUE VOLUNTEERING

- by conducting a national volunteer awards program in 2011 and 2012, in which awards will be presented by members of parliament in their electorates.

## IMPROVE INFORMATION ABOUT VOLUNTEERING

- by working with Volunteering Australia, state and territory peaks and volunteer resource centres to sharpen the focus of data capture and research, including through national and local surveys and performance reporting
- by reporting publicly every three years on volunteering in Australia
- by exploring the potential for cross-sector partnerships that support new high quality research into volunteering.

# VOLUNTEERING IN AUSTRALIA

**Volunteering involves freely giving time to help others or support a cause. All volunteering has this in common, but volunteers contribute their support in a wide variety of ways.**

Volunteering can be regular or episodic, formal or informal, pre-planned or a spontaneous response to emergencies. It can be done through an organisation, the workplace or individually, in person or online. It can involve professional or other work skills, generic skills or manual labour. Some people are reimbursed for the cost of volunteering; others are not. Volunteers work in the private and public sectors and for not-for-profit organisations.

## WHO VOLUNTEERS IN AUSTRALIA?

More than 6 million adult Australians formally volunteered in 2010, which was 36% of the population aged over 18. The proportion has grown from around 24% of adults volunteering in 1995. While the number of Australians who volunteer is increasing, the median number of hours spent volunteering has decreased, from 74 hours per volunteer per year in 1995 to 56 hours per volunteer per year in 2006<sup>3</sup> (Table 1).

**Table 1: Voluntary work in Australia (all organisations)**

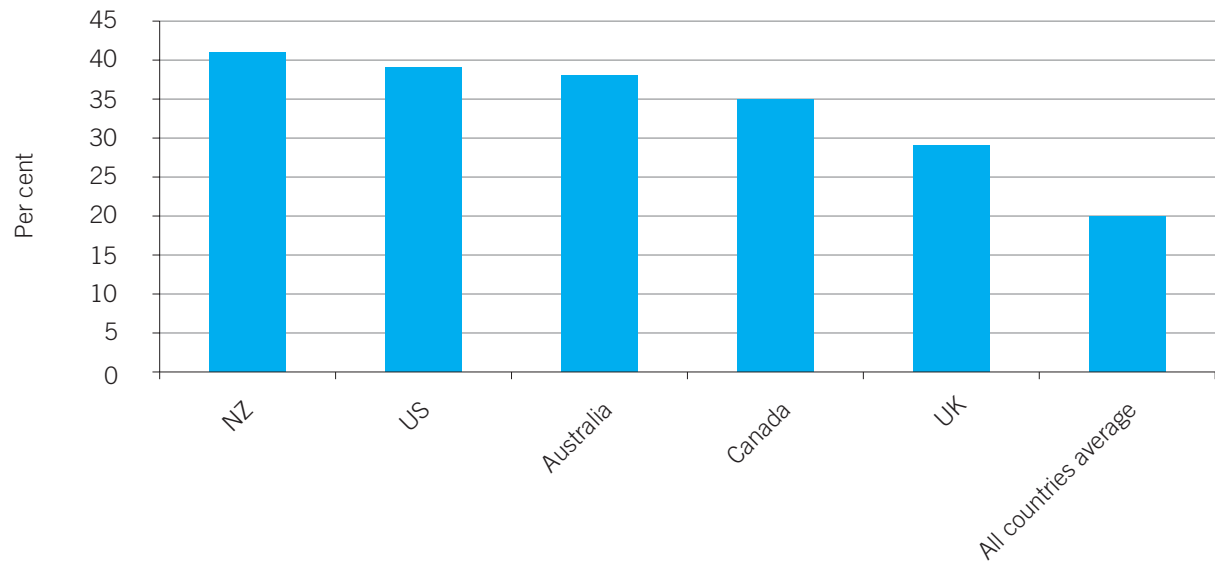
	Total volunteers (million people)	Rate of volunteering (percent)	Total hours (million hours)	Median hours per person (hours)
1995	3.2	24	511.7	74
2000	4.4	32	704.1	72
2006	5.2	34	713.1	56
2010	6.1	36	(not collected)	(not collected)

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2007, *Voluntary work, Australia, 2006*, and ABS 2011, *General Social Survey: Summary Results, Australia, 2010*.<sup>4</sup>

Volunteering rates in Australia are comparable with those in other OECD countries, although reliable comparisons are difficult because definitions and collection methods differ. The 2010 World Giving Index survey found that on average 20% of people surveyed had volunteered for an organisation in the month before the survey (Figure 1).<sup>5</sup> In Australia, the reported rate was 38%, compared to 39% in the United States, 35% in Canada and 29% in the United Kingdom.<sup>6</sup>

**Figure 1: International comparisons**

Rate of volunteering in the previous month

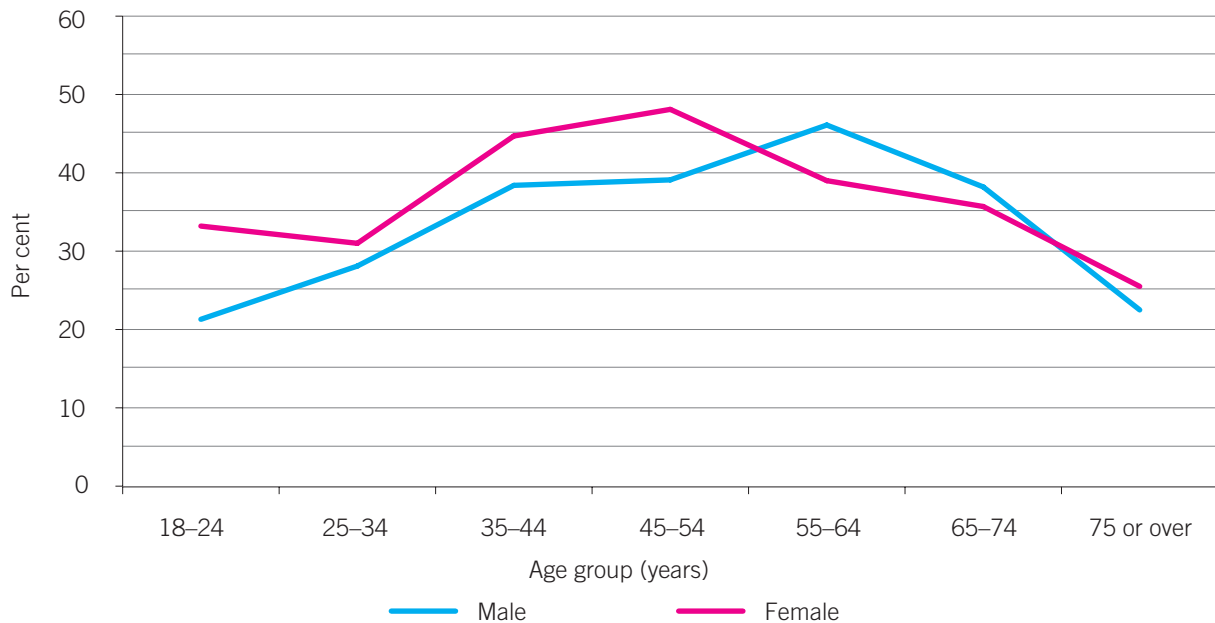


Source: Charities Aid Foundation 2010, *The World Giving Index 2010*.

Women are slightly more likely to volunteer (38%) than men (34%). People living in the most socioeconomically disadvantaged areas are less likely to volunteer (27%) than those in the least disadvantaged areas (41%).<sup>7</sup> People in the major cities are less likely to volunteer (34%) than people in other areas (42%).<sup>8</sup>

Rates of volunteering also vary with age and life stage. Figures 2 and 3 show a peak of volunteering in the 45–54 age group with a gradual decrease after that.

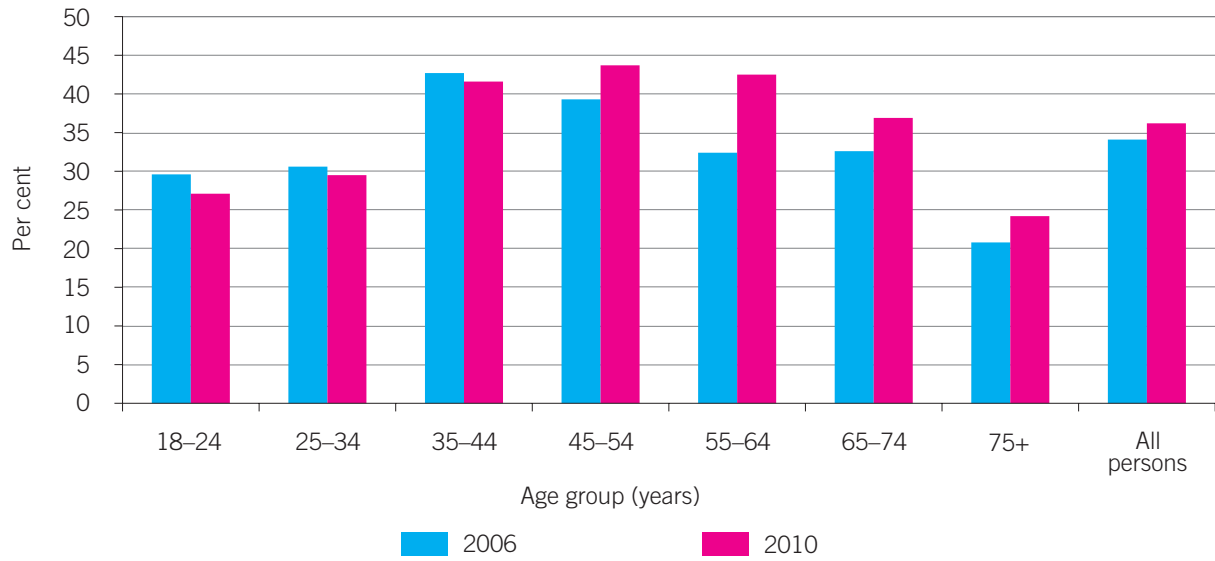
**Figure 2: Volunteering rate, by age**



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2011, *General Social Survey 2010*.

**Figure 3: Changes in volunteering rate over time, by age group, 2006 to 2010**

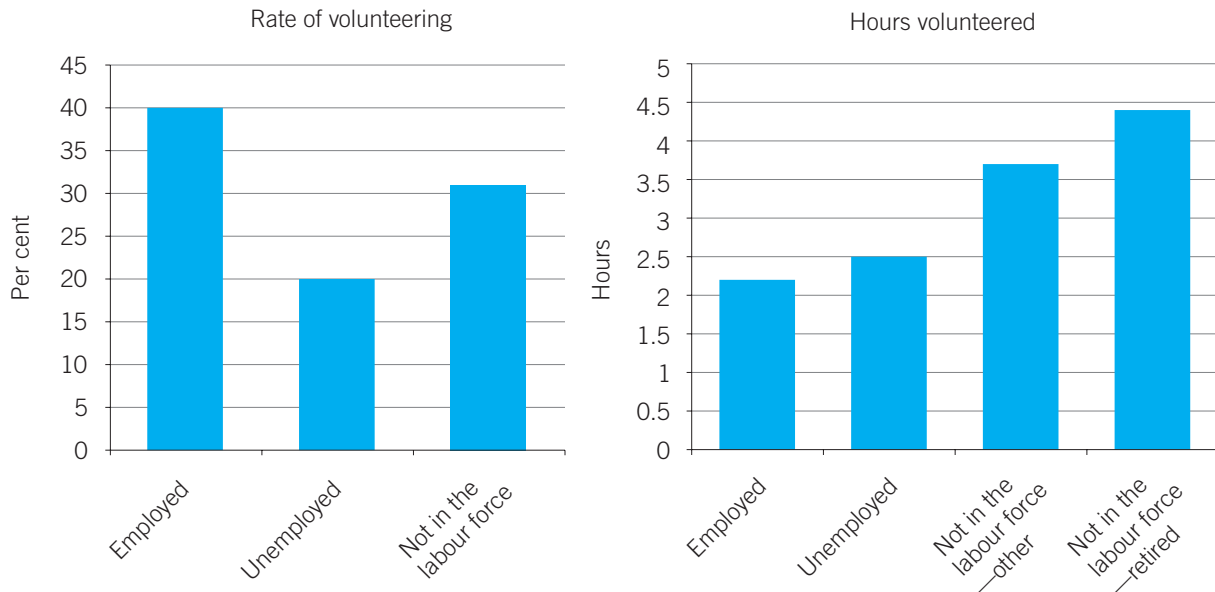
Percentage of population, by age group



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2011, *General Social Survey 2010*.

As Figure 4 shows, people who work are more likely to volunteer (40%) than people who are unemployed (20%) or not in the labour force (31%). However, people who are not in the labour force volunteer for more hours per week on average (3.7 hours) than those who are employed (2.2 hours) and those who are unemployed (2.5 hours). People who have retired and are not in the labour force volunteer for the highest number of hours per week on average (4.4 hours).

**Figure 4: Rate of volunteering and hours volunteered, by employment status**



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2007, *Voluntary work, Australia, 2006*, and ABS 2011, *General Social Survey: Summary Results, Australia, 2010*.

## WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF VOLUNTEERING?

The benefits of volunteering are significant for our nation, for our local communities and for individuals. The benefits are economic, social, cultural and environmental.

Volunteers are the foundation of the not-for-profit sector in Australia. Of the estimated 600,000 not-for-profit organisations in Australia, only 60,000 have paid staff. Outside of the not-for-profit sector, local communities also rely on the work of volunteers. For example, in local government, schools, museums and art galleries.

Australian volunteers contribute more than 700 million hours of unpaid work each year to their communities. The value of that unpaid labour in 2006–07 was estimated to be over \$14.6 billion.<sup>9</sup>

Volunteers play a significant role in local communities across Australia. Australians contribute their time, energy and expertise in many sectors, but particularly in the community, education, religion and sport sectors. Volunteers' assistance during natural disasters is crucial, as is their contribution to the arts and environmental sectors.

Volunteering strengthens community connectedness and social cohesion.<sup>10</sup> Social connections, such as those developed through volunteering, can provide meaning, purpose and satisfaction in people's lives. The experience of helping others can lead to stronger social ties with different groups of people, and to higher levels of trust.<sup>11</sup> Volunteering can also contribute to broader community benefits, such as reduced crime.<sup>12</sup>

For individuals, volunteering brings health and wellbeing benefits, such as reduced stress, better physical and mental health and greater longevity. For example, the Longevity Project found that becoming a volunteer, getting involved in the community and being dedicated to things and people beyond oneself is a major predictor of a long life.<sup>13</sup>

Given the enormous benefits from volunteering, all sectors of society can do more to encourage and support it.





# ■ FOCUS AREA 1: RESPOND TO TRENDS IN VOLUNTEERING

**Understanding emerging trends in volunteering and what motivates different people to volunteer will enable the development of more tailored strategies to attract and engage with volunteers.**

## TRENDS AND ISSUES

- More people are volunteering, but for less time than in the past.
- The overall rate of volunteering grew from 24% in 1995 to 36% in 2010.<sup>14</sup>
- Growth in volunteering is uneven. Rates of volunteering have grown in sport, religion and education, but have declined in community services and emergency management.<sup>15</sup>
- The average number of hours per volunteer has gone down, from 74 hours per year in 1995 to 56 hours per year in 2006.<sup>16</sup>
- More volunteers want roles that are flexible, or require shorter hours or a shorter term commitment. Volunteers are now more likely to spend shorter periods of time in multiple roles.<sup>17</sup>
- People are increasingly time poor, and volunteering activities compete with greater work and caring responsibilities.<sup>18</sup> People are also more mobile than in the past, making it less likely that a volunteer will stay for many years in a single role.
- The frequency of natural disasters requires a ready supply of skilled emergency management volunteers.

## ENGAGING YOUNG PEOPLE

Attracting young people to volunteering today is vital for volunteering in the future. Young people aged 18–24 volunteer for different reasons and in different ways from volunteers in the past, and efforts to engage them need to reflect these changes. Flexible, project-based roles, meaningful work with room for autonomy, innovative use of technology and rewarding social connections are vital in attracting today's young volunteers.

People aged 18–24 volunteer less (27%) than the Australian average (36%).<sup>19</sup> Encouraging volunteering from a young age is important in establishing a lifelong pattern of volunteering.<sup>20</sup> Forty-two per cent of adults who had volunteered as a child were volunteering in 2006, compared to 34% of adults overall.<sup>21</sup>

Volunteering can be an important way for young people to develop confidence and skills, which can clear a pathway to future social and economic participation. For Indigenous young people and young people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities, volunteering in their local communities is one way they can build skills, confidence and a track record of achievement in a relatively low pressure, familiar environment.

Young people have different interests and expectations of their volunteer experience from those of older volunteers. Their motivations are often linked to their sense of identity and a desire to participate in new experiences.<sup>22</sup> In the United Kingdom, the Russell Commission found that some of the most successful and inspirational volunteering experiences for young people are those that are led by young people, and that a youth-led approach to developing volunteer opportunities for young people should be adopted wherever possible.<sup>23</sup>

Young people are often much more linked in to social media and online networks than older volunteers. Organisations that communicate with young people using the media they use, and create roles and experiences that appeal to them, successfully engage youth as volunteers.

## EXAMPLES OF WHAT IS ALREADY BEING DONE

- Educational institutions are increasingly providing opportunities to engage and support young people in volunteering. Many schools and universities have introduced volunteering programs for students, not just to increase graduates' employability but to develop a sense of social responsibility, connectedness and leadership. In some cases, students gain academic credit for completing volunteering or service learning electives.
- In the United Kingdom, Vinspired encourages youth volunteering and provides information, promotion, volunteer opportunities, grants and awards.<sup>24</sup> It provides an online community linked with more than 500 not-for-profit groups, where young people can build a profile, upload photos and log their volunteer work for their friends to see. Vinspired is supported by sponsorship from 150 corporations, trusts and private individuals.
- Not-for-profit organisations increasingly provide volunteer opportunities that are tailored to young people. Conservation Volunteers Australia offers short-term, project-based volunteering opportunities for young people through the Conservation Connect website. Members of Young People and the Arts Australia provide opportunities for artistic endeavour.<sup>25</sup>

## WHAT THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT WILL DO

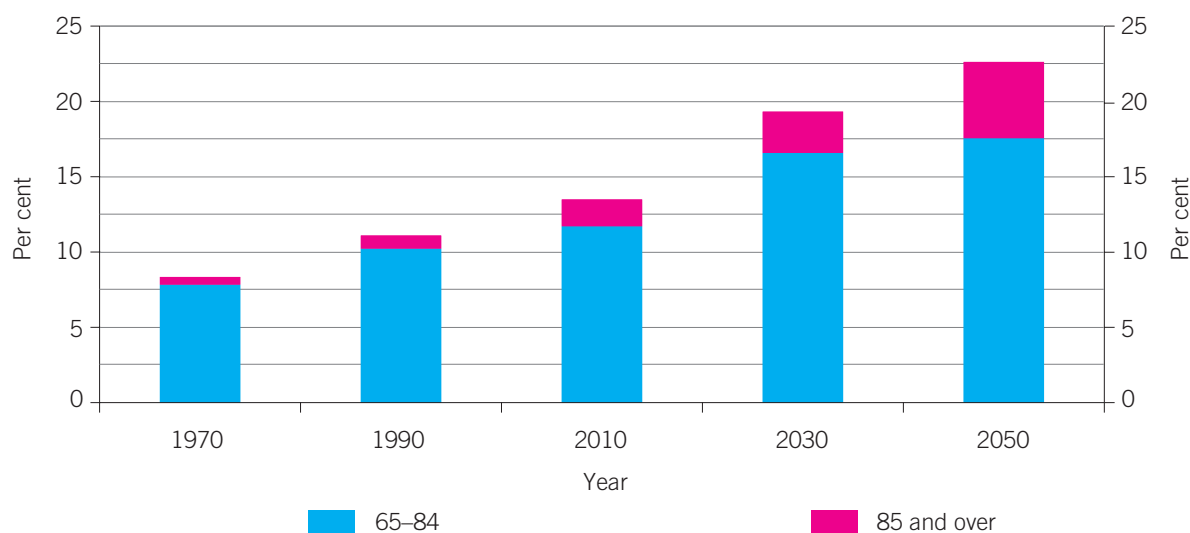
- The Australian Government, through the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, is providing one-off funding to the Foundation for Young Australians to support the Young People Without Borders volunteering program. The program will support young people to undertake a gap year, linked to programs of social action learning and engagement throughout high school years 8–12. The funding will help ensure the participation of disadvantaged young people who may otherwise miss out on these volunteering opportunities in the program. The government's contribution also aims to encourage business and philanthropic donors to support this program so that it can become self-sustaining.
- The Australian Government, through AusAID, will offer up to 20 places in the Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development Program each year to young volunteers aged 18–20, meeting all volunteer costs, including pre-deployment training, airfares and allowances. Priority will be given to suitable applicants from regional and rural areas and those from Indigenous and disadvantaged backgrounds.
- The Australian Government will work with state and territory governments and education providers to promote, support and recognise volunteering programs in educational institutions.
- The government will initiate an online ad competition. Young people will be invited to make and submit a short advertisement promoting volunteering, which will be published online. Members of parliament will promote and support the competition in their electorates.



## ENGAGING OLDER AUSTRALIANS

Over the next 10 years, the proportion of the population in retirement or semi-retirement will increase (Figure 5). Over 40% of baby boomers already volunteer, but there is an opportunity to engage more of them in volunteering activity as they approach retirement.

**Figure 5: Proportion of the Australian population aged 65 and older, 1970 to 2050**



Source: Australian Government, 2010, *Australia to 2050: future challenges* (Intergenerational Report 2010)

Baby boomers have a higher average education and skill level than the generation that came before them.<sup>26</sup> As a consequence, they have high expectations of their volunteer experience<sup>27</sup>:

*... baby boomers want [volunteer] work that is interesting, challenging and meaningful, temporary and flexible—they want to be supported and work for a well organised organisation.*<sup>28</sup>

*Baby boomers want to utilise the skills they have acquired over their working lives through meaningful and 'valued' volunteering opportunities.*<sup>29</sup>

Not-for-profit organisations, employers and other organisations that succeed in engaging older volunteers respond to the needs and expectations of baby boomers.

Organisations are likely to be most successful if they approach baby boomers when they are still considering retirement options, and if they tailor the volunteer role to the skills and interests of the individual.

### EXAMPLES OF WHAT IS ALREADY BEING DONE

- In 2010, the Australian Government established the Golden Gurus program to give Australians aged 50 years or older a range of opportunities to support community organisations and small businesses through skilled volunteering or small business mentoring.<sup>30</sup>
- Many regional towns and organisations are tapping into the skills of 'grey nomads', a network of older people who have retired and are travelling around Australia. Many grey nomads act as temporary or long-term volunteers during their travels, and some grey nomad websites post volunteering opportunities.
- The University of the Third Age (U3A) draws on the skills of retirees and older Australians to provide educational courses for U3A members, allowing older people around the world to take part in lifelong learning for pleasure. U3A and U3A Online rely on volunteers to support all of their activities, including developing and leading courses and administration. Staff and tutors are volunteer subject experts, writers and editors.<sup>31</sup>
- Greatconnections connects older volunteers (aged 50 or over) who have professional skills and business experience with not-for-profit organisations. It enables older volunteers to use their skills to make a difference and give back to their communities.



## WHAT THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT WILL DO

- In 2012, the government will encourage older Australians to include volunteering in their retirement planning by releasing a volunteer information pack tailored to them. The information pack will be distributed online and through Centrelink and Medicare customer service centres, volunteer resource centres, Job Services Australia providers, and COTA for Older Australians, a national organisation which promotes, improves and protects the circumstances and interests of older people in Australia.
- The Government's Advisory Panel on the Economic Potential of Senior Australians recognises the enormous contribution of older people as volunteers. It notes that people aged 65 to 84 years contribute the highest number of volunteer hours, even though they are not the largest group of volunteers. The Panel will release a series of reports in the second half of 2011.

## BUILDING INCLUSIVE VOLUNTEERING

Volunteering is an essential part of an inclusive society in which all Australians feel valued and have the opportunity for meaningful social participation.

Volunteering can contribute to a greater sense of belonging and help individuals feel more connected to their local communities.<sup>32</sup> For some people, volunteering can also provide important pathways to participation and employment.

The experience of helping others can lead to stronger social ties with different groups of people, and to higher levels of trust.<sup>33</sup>

Engaging volunteers with a diverse range of experiences and backgrounds enables organisations to build stronger links to their local communities. This can create greater social cohesion.

## EXAMPLES OF WHAT IS ALREADY BEING DONE

- With Community Connections and the Reichstein Foundation, Volunteering Victoria has supported a capacity-building project for the Mildura Aboriginal Corporation, a community and welfare service provider that provides employment and volunteering opportunities for Indigenous people living in the Sunraysia area.
- The Archie Graham Community Kitchen provides volunteer opportunities for young people with a disability, who are supported and mentored by a team of mature aged volunteers. The mentor–volunteer relationship builds the confidence of participants to move into supported employment.
- Volunteering WA has developed the Enhancing Access E-Learning Resource Kit, a tool for volunteer managers who are interested in making their volunteer teams more inclusive and diverse. The kit includes resources to help make volunteer teams more open to people with disabilities and those recovering from mental ill health.
- The Albany and Regional Volunteer Service has established 'volunteer pet' positions in aged care facilities, enabling volunteers with a disability and their pets to visit and develop a rapport with the residents.
- Surf Life Saving's successful On the Same Wave national program, developed with funding from the Australian Government, supports Australians of all backgrounds to participate in surf life saving volunteering and increase Surf Live Saving's openness to cultural diversity.
- The Volunteering—A Gateway to Communities project builds on the success of On the Same Wave. In 2010, the South Australian Government partnered with a range of volunteer organisations, including Surf Life Saving South Australia, the Red Cross, Emergency Services, a health service and a local council, to develop tools and resources to help organisations engage newly arrived migrants and culturally and linguistically diverse communities in their volunteer programs.

## WHAT THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT WILL DO

- The Australian Government provides over \$5 million to volunteer resource centres annually. As part of this funding arrangement, the centres support socially inclusive volunteering opportunities in local communities.
- In 2012, the Australian Government will develop an information pack to promote volunteering among jobseekers. The pack, which will be distributed through Centrelink offices, will assist jobseekers to engage in volunteering as a way of building social and economic engagement, and to use volunteering as a pathway to develop the confidence and skills needed for training and work.
- The Australian Government will develop a National Sports Volunteer Strategy in 2012 to better engage, support, train and recognise sports volunteers from all sectors of Australian society.

## GROWING VOLUNTEERING IN WORKPLACES

Increasing numbers of public and private employers support staff volunteering. They recognise that it creates benefits for their businesses, as well as for individual employees and their communities.

Not-for-profit organisations increasingly use employee volunteers from a range of industries. Organisations that make innovative use of employee volunteers' professional and other work skills can build their organisational capacity significantly.

Most large corporations provide programs to assist their employees to volunteer. For businesses, volunteering can result in better attraction and retention of staff<sup>34</sup>, improved reputation and brand value and, in some cases, advantages in product development and marketing. Many employers encourage their staff to volunteer as part of their broader community engagement strategy, aligning their social and business goals to create longer term competitive advantage.<sup>35</sup>

## EXAMPLES OF WHAT IS ALREADY BEING DONE

- Almost 50% of not-for-profit organisations surveyed by Volunteering Australia in 2010 had engaged corporate volunteers in the previous 12 months.<sup>36</sup>
- In 2010, the Australian Government facilitated the Professional Partnership Project, which links pro bono assistance from the four largest accounting firms in Australia to 30 social enterprises in need of business and financial advice. Deloitte, Ernst & Young, KPMG and PricewaterhouseCoopers agreed to jointly provide \$1 million in pro bono assistance for the project.<sup>37</sup>
- Community Legal Centres (CLCs) have a long history of obtaining and coordinating volunteer and pro bono support from private lawyers and other professionals. It is estimated CLCs are leveraging more than \$23 million worth of free legal assistance every year.
- United Way Australia established a coalition from the banking, legal, local government, property development and community services sectors, to work with rough sleepers in Woolloomooloo. The coalition successfully involved homeless people in defining their problem and identifying possible solutions. This work was used to put together a business case and work with government to create permanent housing for 70 rough sleepers in Woolloomooloo.
- Some larger businesses with diverse workforces support staff volunteering with paid volunteer leave. National Australia Bank and ANZ Banking Group both have not-for-profit partnerships that include staff volunteering. These businesses also use volunteer matching intermediaries to help staff find suitable roles with a broad range of not-for-profit organisations.

## SUSTAINING EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT VOLUNTEERING

The Australian Government provides assistance to improve disaster management capability and recovery throughout Australia, in support of state and territory governments, who have primary responsibility for safety and protection of life and property under legislation. In Australia, the states and territories are responsible for most emergency management.

Australian communities rely on volunteer efforts, not only in responding to and recovering from disasters and emergencies, but also in preventing and preparing for emergencies.<sup>38</sup> There are more than 500,000 volunteers in Australia<sup>39</sup> who assist in floods, storms, cyclones and bushfires, as well as road accidents and marine rescues. Emergency management volunteers also contribute to community education programs, events support and administrative roles, as well as nationally accredited emergency training.

The rate of natural disasters in Australia is predicted to increase in coming decades<sup>40</sup>, and emergency management volunteering is facing a range of challenges.<sup>41</sup>

Declining numbers of emergency management volunteers are an issue for many Australian communities. The commitment required of volunteers in time, training, periods away during emergencies and associated costs is great.<sup>42</sup> In many rural communities, the population is declining and so too are the numbers of volunteers.

Training requirements for emergency management volunteers have also grown substantially. The community increasingly expects that volunteers and emergency organisations will operate at a highly professional standard. Organisations are now expected to provide both paid and unpaid staff with high levels of training, which can result in significant costs both to the volunteer and to the organisation.<sup>43</sup>

The Attorney-General's Department has identified the recognition of volunteer effort and the effective management of volunteers at the local level as areas needing improvement.

Uncoordinated responses can make an emergency even more chaotic. Effectively and safely engaging large numbers of spontaneous volunteers is a challenging task. Volunteers need to be coordinated, engaged at the right time, and matched to the right task with the right training.

If people register or present themselves to volunteer and cannot be engaged straight away, they can be disappointed and discouraged from volunteering in the future. Organisations must manage the expectations of spontaneous volunteers and be clear that they may not be needed straight away. Responding quickly to registrations with opportunities to volunteer later can also help to maintain people's interest.



## EXAMPLES OF WHAT IS ALREADY BEING DONE

- The National Emergency Management Committee is reviewing existing systems for coordinating volunteer efforts in the immediate clean-up stage after natural disasters.
- The Attorney-General's Department provides funding to the states and territories under the Natural Disaster Resilience Program to support projects to enhance Australia's resilience to natural disasters, including projects that support emergency management volunteers. In 2011–12, the Australian Government provided over \$34 million for the program.
- Australian governments are responding to the current National Action Plan for Attraction, Support and Retention of Emergency Management Volunteers. Key actions include the provision of volunteer leadership training, an employee recognition scheme and a community awareness campaign.
- The Attorney-General's Department supports the Australian Emergency Management Volunteer Forum as a national peak body; it conducts a national emergency volunteer forum approximately every five years; and, through the Australian Emergency Management Institute, provides leadership training, support and scholarships for volunteers to attend a range of other relevant courses at the Institute.
- Support for emergency volunteers is a recognised priority in the National Partnership Agreement on Natural Disaster Resilience between the Commonwealth and states and territories and administered by the Attorney-General's Department.
- With the support of the Australian Government, the Australian Red Cross developed the Spontaneous Volunteer Resource Management Kit. The kit enables consistent good practice across jurisdictions, municipalities and organisations that engage spontaneous volunteers in emergencies.
- Emergency management volunteer organisations, such as the Red Cross and Green Cross, are exploring ways to provide more flexible volunteer opportunities. People will be able to engage for shorter periods or fewer hours, but still be skilled appropriately. The two organisations are also making their volunteer programs more accessible and appealing.

## WHAT THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT WILL DO

- The Australian Government will review the National Action Plan for the Attraction, Support and Retention of Emergency Management Volunteers to ensure consistency with the National Strategy for Disaster Resilience and consider ways to ensure its implementation.
- The Australian Government will support the ongoing delivery of the Volunteer Leadership Program run by the Australian Emergency Management Institute. This four day program provides emergency services and emergency management volunteers with the skills and knowledge they need to become strong leaders in their organisation. The program will run at least twice a year.
- Additionally, the Volunteer Leadership Program is being extended to provide wider coverage and to build capability throughout regional Australia. This extended program will result in at least eight courses across Australia over the next two years. This will enhance state and territory capacity to deliver leadership programs by trained facilitators. Initial developmental training will occur at the Australian Emergency Management Institute.

## FOCUS AREA 2: HARNESS TECHNOLOGY

**Greater use of information technology can enhance volunteer involvement and management. Information technology provides opportunities to increase engagement with and among volunteers and enable collaboration among organisations using or supporting volunteers.**

### TRENDS AND ISSUES

- The capabilities of online technology have grown significantly over the past decade.
- The number of online volunteer matching services has grown. Some target specific groups, but many are general matching sites. There is little systematic sharing of data, meaning organisations looking for volunteers may need to publish the one vacancy to a number of separate websites.
- People are increasingly connecting online, and the way they use technology is changing. Some volunteer organisations are making innovative use of IT and social media such as Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and YouTube.
- Virtual or 'cloud' models of IT application service provision have made it cheaper and easier for organisations to use online services.

### IMPROVING VOLUNTEER MATCHING

An increasing number of organisations that use volunteers use technology to engage with and inform a range of audiences and to advertise volunteering opportunities.

Many not-for-profit organisations use their own websites and social media to engage with a diverse range of potential volunteers and match them to suitable roles. Several intermediary websites match volunteers on behalf of other organisations. Few of these websites share their data, so community organisations waste time publishing roles on multiple websites. In addition, repetitive searching for roles is time consuming for volunteers and may yield duplicate results, discouraging participation.

Improving data sharing between organisations will enable volunteers to do a single search of all available roles, saving time and yielding more matches. Data sharing also saves time for organisations, which only need to publish each role once for it to be widely accessible. This also helps achieve closer matches between the volunteer's skills and interests and the specific needs of the organisation. Better IT infrastructure is needed to enable this.

Online matching can also be improved by using 'push' delivery to alert volunteers to suitable volunteering roles, rather than volunteers having to return to a website to search. This method can be used to target under-represented groups, such as youth, or large groups of skilled volunteers, such as the members of a professional body. Social media and user-generated content capability can also enable volunteers to form groups and work together on projects initiated by the organisation or by the volunteers themselves.

Private labelling is another innovation, where common content is presented via a tailored website that bears a partner organisation's branding. Volunteer roles can be filtered to present only those that are relevant to the skills and preferences of a particular group, such as corporate employees or members of industry bodies.

## EXAMPLES OF WHAT IS ALREADY BEING DONE

- AusAID's Australian Volunteers for International Development portal ([www.usaid.gov.au/volunteer](http://www.usaid.gov.au/volunteer)) filters overseas volunteering opportunities by country, sector or skills, partner agency and duration, enabling volunteers to find opportunities to match their interests and availability.
- In the United States, [www.allforgood.org](http://www.allforgood.org) uses data integration to enable volunteers to search multiple websites for opportunities at the one time and [www.volunteermatch.com](http://www.volunteermatch.com) offers an array of services for businesses and community organisations to support employee volunteering.
- Volunteering Australia has announced that it will significantly enhance its GoVolunteer service to better share data and to include social media functions.

## WHAT THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT WILL DO

- The Australian Government will collaborate with volunteering organisations to co-fund the development of volunteer data sharing capability. This will enable volunteers to do a single search of all available roles and organisations to publish each role once and have it widely accessible.
- The National Broadband Network (NBN) will connect 93% of homes, schools and businesses to high-speed broadband. The NBN will offer better access to volunteer opportunities, allow volunteers to work remotely in some cases, and enable greater connectivity within the not-for-profit sector.
- The government has allocated \$12.4 million over three years to establish the Digital Enterprise program, which will help not-for-profit organisations (including local cultural organisations) in targeted communities to better understand how they can maximise opportunities from the greater digital engagement enabled by the NBN.

## PROMOTING ONLINE OR 'VIRTUAL' VOLUNTEERING

Increasing numbers of organisations are using online volunteers. The Internet enables online access to a national or even global supply of skilled volunteers. This mode of volunteering is well suited to meet the growing demand for flexible, geographically mobile and short-term volunteering opportunities.

Virtual volunteers can undertake a variety of activities, such as translating documents, research, web design, writing, copy editing, database design, graphic design, providing expert advice, tutoring, mentoring and moderating online discussion groups.

## EXAMPLES OF WHAT IS ALREADY BEING DONE

- The Australian Government, through AusAID, supports the United Nations Online Volunteering Service (UNV), which connects non-government organisations, governments and UN agencies with volunteers and supports their online collaboration. Funding of \$600,000 over three years from 2011–12 will increase the number of UNV online volunteering assignments and encourage greater participation of Australians as UN online volunteers.
- iTrack is an online mentoring program run by the Smith Family that focuses on the school-to-work transition. It aims to provide students with information about workplace, study and career opportunities to enhance their move from school to work or further study. The program works by matching secondary school students with adult professionals drawn mainly from the Smith Family's corporate partners, who then engage in a predominantly online relationship over the course of approximately two school terms (or around 19 weeks).
- The National Library of Australia uses more than 5,000 online volunteers to help correct millions of lines of text as part of the library's Australian Newspaper Digitisation Program.
- [www.Sparked.com](http://www.Sparked.com) is a US microvolunteering network that also offers an application to enable microvolunteering tasks to be done on a smart phone or other mobile device.

## FOCUS AREA 3: BETTER REGULATION AND RISK MANAGEMENT

**Easy access to reliable information, appropriate training and simpler, more effective regulation will reduce the cost and complexity of managing risk in organisations that use volunteers.**

### TRENDS AND ISSUES

Managing risk and legal liability is important for all not-for-profit organisations, but it can be complex and expensive.<sup>44</sup> Volunteer protection legislation has been enacted in the states and territories since 2001.<sup>45</sup> Consequently, all organisations have a legal obligation to protect their volunteers from risk while they are working. Volunteers also have a duty of care to others when they work within organisations. It can be daunting for some organisations and volunteers to navigate insurance requirements, police checks, workplace health and safety regulations and risk management.<sup>46</sup>

The complexity of requirements means that some organisations risk being underinsured, being unaware of regulations that apply to them, or investing scarce resources in duplicate insurance or police checks. In addition, many organisations feel that the cost of obtaining appropriate insurance prevents them from using volunteers.<sup>47</sup>

### IMPROVING ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Not-for-profit organisations currently invest significant time and effort to understand risk management, particularly their obligation to obtain appropriate insurance for their volunteers. Such organisations may require insurance to cover accidents, professional indemnity insurance, and public liability insurance for volunteer workers and board members. In addition to the complexity of insurance requirements, the cost of insurance can restrict or prevent the use of volunteer staff by organisations, particularly small ones.

Differences in volunteer protection legislation in each state and territory alter the risks for which organisations need to seek additional insurance cover and add to the complexity of legal liability requirements.

The costs of that complexity can be reduced when organisations have easy access to accurate, relevant and comprehensive information about legal obligations and risk management. Collaboration in the development and sharing of information materials and training are vital to avoid duplication of effort.

### WHAT IS ALREADY BEING DONE

- To reduce the cost and complexity of volunteer insurance, intermediary organisations such as the Council of Social Services of New South Wales and Volunteering ACT have partnered with insurance agencies to offer group volunteer insurance for small not-for-profit organisations.
- PilchConnect provides legal help to Victorian not-for-profit community organisations. Legal services include a legal information web portal, a low-cost legal seminar series for not-for-profits, and referrals for eligible organisations for pro bono legal assistance.
- Ourcommunity.com.au provides advice and tools, including information on insurance, for Australia's 600,000 not-for-profit community groups and for state, private and independent schools.





## WHAT THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT WILL DO

- Australian Government funding for Volunteering Australia, state and territory peak bodies, and volunteer resource centres will be targeted to provide up-to-date and accurate information to help organisations understand and manage their regulatory obligations and improve their risk management.
- The Government supports Volunteering Australia's commitment to strengthen the National Standards for Best Practice in the Management of Volunteers and to develop support tools to make the use of the standards easier. Australian Government funding is provided to Volunteering Australia to support its work as a peak body, such as maintaining the national standards.

## SIMPLIFYING REGULATION

Regulatory and legislative protection for volunteers and organisations is vital, but it is complex and varies across jurisdictions.

For some activities, regulations require that a volunteer undertake a police check for working with children or vulnerable people, and that the check be updated periodically. Even when background checks are not required by regulations, organisations often use them as a risk management strategy. Often, each check incurs a fee, and the costs can add up for people who volunteer for multiple organisations or for organisations that engage multiple volunteers.

There is currently no single national framework setting out the requirements for obtaining a working with children check or vulnerable people check<sup>48</sup>, and there are important differences between jurisdictions. The Productivity Commission has recommended that governments introduce a system of working with vulnerable people checks to allow portability between organisations, and that national portability for police checks be explored.<sup>49</sup>



## EXAMPLES OF WHAT IS ALREADY BEING DONE

- In June 2010, the Australian Government and the state and territory governments agreed to develop a nationally consistent approach to working with children checks, as a priority under the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009–2020. Ministers considered progress on this work at the Community and Disability Services Ministers Council meeting of October 2011.
- Harmonised work health and safety laws, due to come into effect in all jurisdictions in 2012, will provide greater national consistency, protect volunteers in their capacity as workers and contain safeguards to ensure that voluntary participation in community-based activities is not discouraged.
- The Australian Government will continue to work with states and territories to ensure the new harmonised work health and safety laws are implemented and support greater national consistency in regulation.
- The South Australian Government offers free police checks for volunteers working with vulnerable groups.
- The ACT is creating a centralised background checking system for employees and volunteers working with children and vulnerable people. Checks will be portable between organisations for three years.
- The Queensland Blue Card is a three-part system involving an initial screening to determine a person's eligibility to work with children and young people based on their past known behaviour, ongoing monitoring of police information about all card holders, and a requirement for organisations to have risk management strategies in place.

## WHAT THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT WILL DO

- The Government will implement its reform agenda for the not-for-profit sector to create more effective regulation of the sector and reduce reporting burdens on organisations.
- The Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission will be established by July 2012 to regulate the not-for-profit sector at the national level. It will implement a 'report once, use often' reporting framework, provide education support and establish a public information portal. Nationally consistent regulation of not-for-profit organisations, including the introduction of a statutory definition of 'charity' and the regulation of fundraising, will be progressed through the Council of Australian Governments from 2011.
- The Government will continue to work with the states and territories to progress a nationally consistent approach to working with children checks.
- The Government will encourage the states and territories to agree on mutual recognition arrangements for volunteer police checks for emergency and disaster response and recovery.



Photo courtesy of *The Border Mail*

## FOCUS AREA 4: STRENGTHEN MANAGEMENT AND TRAINING

**Good volunteer management and training are central to attracting and engaging volunteers. Good management practice must be supported by up-to-date and effective information, tools and resources.**

### TRENDS AND ISSUES

The effective recruitment, deployment, protection and recognition of volunteers require not-for-profit organisations to have strong management and planning capabilities. Volunteer management today requires managers with the right knowledge and skills.

Many organisations rely on being able to access good information and support online, or through intermediaries such as specialist volunteer resource centres and peak bodies, and a range of other intermediary bodies that work to support the capacity of the not-for-profit sector. Some organisations are run entirely by volunteers.

Better volunteer management is important to improve the effectiveness of volunteers and to improve the volunteer experience. Volunteers are often unsatisfied if boundaries and expectations are unclear, if grievance procedures are poor, or if they do not participate in decision making or have their ideas heard.<sup>50</sup>

### IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT

While there are many highly professional, passionate and innovative volunteer managers in Australia, not all organisations have the resources for a dedicated volunteer manager or have plans and strategies in place for using volunteers. A lack of staff skilled in volunteer management is an impediment that can prevent organisations using more volunteers.<sup>51</sup>

Organisations that invest in volunteer management are more likely to attract and retain their volunteers as valuable and effective members of their teams.

Successful organisations are prepared for the volunteer, plan and organise their placements well, develop roles that use the skills of the volunteer and, where necessary, provide support to build new skills.

Boards, team managers and staff working in organisations that successfully engage volunteers have the necessary skills and knowledge to manage volunteers professionally and meet their regulatory obligations. They collectively provide strategic direction, manage risks, accept responsibility for decisions, and provide guidance and support for all staff, including volunteers.

Volunteering peak bodies and volunteer resource centres have an important role in assisting not-for-profit organisations to improve their volunteer management, particularly through the provision and coordination of information, training and management tools. Stakeholders consulted during the preparation of this strategy considered that more standard governance training and national regulation and standards would assist volunteer managers, and that collaboration and greater sharing of resources and tools would reduce the administrative burden.

Working with the sector, Volunteering Australia developed the National Standards for Involving Volunteers in Not-for-Profit Organisations in 2001. With the support of Australian Government funding for its peak body role, Volunteering Australia will update the standards and prepare new support tools to help organisations adopt contemporary volunteer management practices.

## EXAMPLES OF WHAT IS ALREADY BEING DONE

- The Australian Government provides funding to support Volunteering Australia, as the national peak representative body for volunteering activity. It also contributes funding to seven state and territory peak bodies and 43 regional volunteer resource centres to provide quality volunteer management and training activities.
- Volunteer resource centres across Australia are active in providing support, training and information to not-for-profit organisations to help them adopt and implement the national standards for volunteer management. For example, the Albury Wodonga Volunteer Resource Bureau has developed the Way2Go Volunteering Toolkit, available nationally, to provide information and tools for the development and management of volunteer programs.
- Dedicated Certificate IV, diploma or advanced diploma courses in volunteer management provide managers with nationally accredited qualifications.
- Some private sector businesses provide pro bono support to not-for-profit organisations. For example, Juno Consulting provides some free training for paid and unpaid staff of community organisations; Nous Group discounts its leadership and organisational capability consulting services by up to 50% and provides some occasional free training places; and Westpac Banking Group staff volunteers provide mentoring and leadership advice to not-for-profit organisations to enhance their long-term business sustainability.

## WHAT THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT WILL DO

- The Australian Government will review the way it currently supports volunteer management to ensure best practice. Funding will be targeted to ensure information, resources and tools are developed that support volunteer managers across Australia.
- The Australian Government will work with state peak volunteering resource centres to improve the delivery of training, to promote greater take-up of training, and to ensure equitable and flexible training options.

## MEETING THE COSTS OF VOLUNTEERING

Although volunteers give their time freely, some incur significant personal expenses to support their volunteering, such as the costs of transport. The costs can be a deterrent for people who want to volunteer.

Many not-for-profit organisations cite the costs of training and managing volunteers as a significant barrier to the engagement of volunteers. Cost pressures also arise from having to deal with complex insurance requirements and the increasing burden of police checks. Some of these costs are exacerbated by the increased number of volunteers undertaking episodic or short-term and project-based volunteering.

Greater awareness of the costs of volunteer management is needed. Not-for-profit organisations often get asked, including by governments and businesses, to organise volunteers for local programs or events, without any recognition of the costs incurred in doing so. Meeting some of the costs of volunteering in local programs and events, more innovative approaches and increased collaboration can reduce the burden on participating not-for-profit organisations.

## EXAMPLES OF WHAT IS ALREADY BEING DONE

- Since 2001, the Australian Government has provided volunteer grants for not-for-profit organisations to meet equipment, fuel and other costs. In 2011–12, the government is providing \$16 million.

## WHAT THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT WILL DO

- The Australian Government is providing funding to the states and territories under the Natural Disaster Resilience Program to support projects to enhance Australia's resilience to natural disasters, including projects that support emergency management volunteers.
- The Australian Government will encourage businesses and other governments to better acknowledge and meet some of the costs of volunteering and volunteer management when seeking the assistance of not-for-profit organisations to run programs and events.



## ■ FOCUS AREA 5: STRENGTHEN RELATIONSHIPS AND ADVOCACY

Governments, volunteering organisations and other stakeholders working together can build a stronger volunteering sector.

### TRENDS AND ISSUES

There are 600,000 not-for-profit organisations in Australia, operating in sectors as diverse as arts and heritage, sport and physical recreation, disability, ageing and community services.

Many rely heavily on the contributions of volunteers. Some organisations are very small; only 60,000 have paid staff.

Peak sector and volunteering organisations advocate on behalf of the not-for-profit sector. There are many voices in the sector and governments need clear information and feedback to inform policies and programs on volunteering.

In 2010 the Australian Government and the not-for-profit sector developed the National Compact: *working together*. The compact is an agreement between the Australian Government and the not-for-profit sector to find new and better ways of working together, based on mutual trust, respect and collaboration, to improve the lives of Australians.



## IMPROVING ADVOCACY THROUGH STRONGER RELATIONSHIPS

The volunteering sector is represented by a national peak body, Volunteering Australia, by state and territory peaks and volunteer resource centres. These provide channels for representation and advocacy on behalf of the whole sector. Many volunteers and organisations rely on them for support and to advocate on their behalf on volunteer-related issues.

Other organisations with a national presence, such as the Australian Red Cross, St Vincent de Paul and the Salvation Army advocate directly to government on emergency management and other volunteering issues. They do so on their own behalf and often on behalf of other organisations in the broader sectors of which they are part.

The effectiveness of these organisations depends significantly on the strength of the relationships they have with each other, with not-for-profit organisations, with businesses and, importantly, with governments. Their effectiveness also depends on how well organisations work together, support and communicate with each other.

The Australian Government is committed to working with Volunteering Australia, other peak bodies and individual organisations to improve relationships and connections across the volunteering sector. The Australian Government is also working with state and territory governments to ensure the alignment of volunteering policy and the coordination of approaches to strengthen volunteering infrastructure.

### EXAMPLES OF WHAT IS ALREADY BEING DONE

- National Compact advocates have been appointed in Australian Government departments to promote the compact, drive implementation, and respond to concerns raised by not-for-profit organisations. Details of compact advocates can be found at [www.nationalcompact.gov.au](http://www.nationalcompact.gov.au).
- The Australian Government established the Office for the Not-for-Profit Sector in October 2010 to drive and coordinate the not-for-profit sector policy reform agenda and the National Compact: working together. The reforms focus on smarter regulation, reduced red tape and increased social investment and volunteering. The government's Not-For-Profit Sector Reform Council, which includes representatives from the voluntary sectors, provides advice of the implementation of reforms affecting the sector.
- The Australian Government supports the Australian National Conference on Volunteering hosted by Volunteering Australia. The conference provides delegates with opportunities to learn about and debate the latest research findings, to be challenged in their views through plenary and workshop discussions, and to network and share experiences with volunteers and volunteer managers from a wide range of sectors.
- In addition to funding support for volunteer resource centres, the Australian Government funds the Australian Emergency Management Volunteers Forum, to facilitate communication within the sector and provide advocacy. The Forum meets quarterly and is a key source of information and advice to the Australian Government on issues for emergency management volunteers.

### WHAT THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT WILL DO

- The Australian Government, together with the Not-for-Profit Sector Reform Council, is developing a Consultation and Policy Development Code of Best Practice. The code will provide a framework for how government engages with the sector on policy and program design.
- The Australian Government will work with volunteering peak bodies and resource centres to better support the volunteer sector and strengthen their capacity to advocate to government on volunteer-related issues.

## FOCUS AREA 6: RECOGNISE AND VALUE VOLUNTEERING

**It is vital that more Australians recognise the contribution that volunteers make to our nation, to their communities and to individuals.**

### TRENDS AND ISSUES

Most volunteers want to be recognised and valued for the work they do by the organisations they work with. In the Volunteering Australia survey, 38% of respondents identified 'being accepted as a valuable team member' as the form of recognition most important to them.<sup>52</sup>

There are widely varying opinions about how best to recognise volunteering. Many consider that recognition should include practical measures, such as improved resourcing, accredited training and skill development, more paid leave for staff to volunteer, and greater recognition of the role of volunteer managers.

We have a long history of volunteering in Australia, but we need to continue to build a modern culture of volunteering by raising awareness and recognition of the value of volunteering to individuals, communities and the nation.

Not all volunteering is done formally through organisations. It also occurs through informal networks that link the volunteer and the person or cause in need. The work of informal volunteers, as well as the support that is offered within families by carers and others, is just as valuable, but it is less visible than formal volunteering.

Some groups are markedly under-represented in data on volunteering because they contribute to their communities in ways that they do not see as volunteering. Culturally and linguistically diverse communities and Indigenous communities, in particular, often give large amounts of time to supporting others but report lower rates of formal volunteering.<sup>53</sup>

### RECOGNISING VOLUNTEERING

Increased recognition in ways that are meaningful to individual volunteers is vital to keeping volunteers engaged. Recognition needs to be tailored to volunteers' motivations for being involved and the ways they like to be engaged.

For people motivated by 'giving back to the community' or 'making a difference', forms of recognition and reward include:

- making them feel like part of the team—listening to them, seeking their feedback or ideas and including them in decision making
- personal, informal acknowledgement that shows their efforts are valued and that they are making a difference
- celebrating achievements through certificates or social gatherings
- nominating them for public awards

For people motivated by a desire to acquire skills and training, including those who are using volunteering to improve their employability, recognition can be provided through:

- teaching new skills and sharing experiences on the job
- formal accredited training (either provided directly or provided by subsidised external trainers)
- duties or projects that 'stretch' them, giving them opportunities to gain new skills or take on greater responsibilities
- statements or certificates of attainment that recognise the skills they have acquired and the contributions they have made
- references to use in future job or education applications

For people motivated by social interactions and the opportunity to meet people and make new friends, the best approach may be to create opportunities for them to share and network, including through social media, to celebrate important occasions and achievements.

Governments, businesses and volunteer organisations can use opportunities such as National Volunteer Week and International Volunteer Day to celebrate the contributions of their volunteers and promote the benefits of volunteering. These events provide ideal opportunities to thank and reward volunteers publicly.

## EXAMPLES OF WHAT IS ALREADY BEING DONE

- In 2011 the Australian Government is conducting a national volunteer award program. The awards will be presented by participating members of parliament for International Volunteer Day on 5 December 2011.
- Volunteer ambassadors are role models who inspire others to volunteer. They are chosen for their contributions to volunteering and for their profile in the community. For example, Adam Goodes, the AFL Brownlow medallist, was chosen as NSW Volunteer of the Year Ambassador in 2010 for his work with troubled Indigenous youth, including those in youth detention centres. He co-founded the Goodes O'Loughlin Foundation, which aims to empower the next generation of Indigenous role models from all walks of life.
- Many organisations celebrate and recognise volunteers during National Volunteer Week or on International Volunteer Day through awards or 'thank you' activities.

## WHAT THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT WILL DO

- The government will invite members of parliament to participate in a local volunteer recognition program in 2012.

## IMPROVING INFORMATION ABOUT VOLUNTEERING

Research focusing on volunteering plays a vital role in improving the effectiveness of volunteer policy and programs.

Evaluations of initiatives and the sharing of best practice will enable the volunteering sector to effectively target young people, older Australians, Indigenous volunteers and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. They will also make it easier for organisations to develop strategic and effective volunteer programs.

Many organisations and governments currently collect data and information about volunteering, alongside the national data collected by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. Governments should also leverage opportunities to collect better data. For example, social impact measurement frameworks will be developed through implementation of the Social Enterprise Development and Investment Funds.

Opportunities exist for researchers and the volunteering sector to work together to make the best use of existing data and information, coordinate research and survey work, and shape the research agenda to meet contemporary challenges in volunteering.

In the future, there may be potential to use standardised not-for-profit reporting through the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission to capture better information about volunteering.

As well as improving the quality of information about volunteering, peak volunteering and research organisations have a role in collating and disseminating findings to ensure that information is easy to find, accessible and relevant.

## EXAMPLES OF WHAT IS ALREADY BEING DONE

- The Australian Bureau of Statistics' General Social Survey provides information on Australians' participation in volunteering. The Not-for-Profit Satellite Account provides information on the economic value of volunteering.
- The Centre for Social Impact (CSI) brings together the business, government, philanthropic and not-for-profit sectors to build community capacity and facilitate social innovation. CSI's research practice and knowledge hub provide the evidence base to demonstrate and measure social impact ([www.csi.edu.au](http://www.csi.edu.au)). Another leading social impact measurement framework is the Global Impact Investing Network and its Impact Reporting and Investment Standards.
- The United Kingdom's Institute for Volunteering Research is a research consultancy specialising in volunteering. Its research connects theory and practice, provides an evidence hub, disseminates knowledge and improves understanding of volunteering. The institute also evaluates volunteering policies and programs ([www.ivr.org.uk](http://www.ivr.org.uk)).
- The Australian Unity Wellbeing Index, conducted by Deakin University, highlights the wellbeing reported by volunteers from all employment groups, including people out of the workforce and the unemployed. In all groups, those who volunteer report greater levels of wellbeing than those who do not volunteer ([www.australianunitycorporate.com.au/community/auwi/](http://www.australianunitycorporate.com.au/community/auwi/)).

## WHAT THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT WILL DO

- The Australian Government will engage with Volunteering Australia and with state and territory peaks and regional volunteer resource centres to sharpen the focus of data capture and research, including through national and local surveys and performance reporting.
- The Australian Government will explore the potential for cross-sector partnerships that support new high-quality research into volunteering.

## MEASURING VOLUNTEERING IN AUSTRALIA

Efforts must be made to share and improve data and to monitor and report on volunteering in Australia.

The Australian Government will produce a report card on trends in volunteering every three years. The report cards will enable the Government to report on the progress of the strategy— whether the key goals of the strategy are being met by the efforts of governments, business, the not-for-profit sector and the broader volunteering sector.

The report card will draw on existing available quantitative data, such as data from:

- ABS General Social Survey.
- Census small area analysis.
- ABS Time Use Survey.
- Household Income and Labour Dynamics Survey (HILDA).
- Australian National University Life Course Survey.

The report card will also draw on qualitative data from the Volunteering Australia survey and case studies.

The Australian Government will work with Volunteering Australia to ensure that its annual survey aligns with the key strategic directions within the strategy.



## ENDNOTES

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