

Volunteering Community Reference Group

20 August 2024

Communique #14

The Volunteering Community Reference Group (VCRG) is convened by Volunteering WA to provide community input to the Minister for Volunteering. This communique refers to the meeting held on 20 August 2024. In attendance were:

Representing	Name
Hon Minister for Volunteering	Hon Don Punch MLA Tina MacDonald DPC
NFP volunteering sector	Craig Spencer, Chair Dan Minchin, Chorus
Volunteer Resource Centres	Elizabeth Acaon, Swan VRC Vicki Pollard, Peel VRC
Individual volunteer (consumer)	Esme Bowen
Volunteering WA (VWA)	Meredith Blais
WALGA	Hannah Godsave
Department of Communities (Communities)	Sue Fielding

The Chair acknowledged the traditional owners of the land on which we met, the Wadjuk people of the Noongar nation, and paid his respects to elders past and present.

The Hon. Donald Punch MLA, Minister for Volunteering and all members of the Group were welcomed to the meeting.

Minister Punch noted that the EoI process to renew membership of the group was underway and thanked the VCRG for its contributions to the volunteering sector. A newly formed VCRG, including some continuity of existing members, is expected to meet for the first time in November 2024. The Minister offered to further explore the reimbursement of travel costs of regional representatives. This matter has been raised previously but remains unfunded.

Other topics discussed:

1. Insurance for volunteers

Volunteering WA wrote a summary paper on this matter and provided to the Minister for Volunteering and the VCRG for discussion and consideration. It noted that there are numerous gaps in the coverage of volunteers, which is leading to them being financially and physically exposed and at a disadvantage to paid workers.

Addressing the gaps could require actions at Commonwealth and State Government levels, as well as by the insurance industry and volunteer organisations.

It was agreed that this is a significant matter and that more need to be done to protect volunteers. As a first step, the Department of Communities is investigating insurance coverage of the 17 WA State Government agencies that currently involve volunteers.

This matter will be followed up at future meetings, with a view to taking action to address.

The discussion paper is available here [volunteers-in-western-australia-and-insurance-gaps.pdf \(volunteeringwa.org.au\)](#)

2. Productivity Commission Report

The Australian Government released the Productivity Commission’s final report “Future Foundations for Giving”. Volunteering WA made a number of formal submissions to the enquiry, presented at the Public Hearing and co-hosted a roundtable to discuss volunteering with the sector.

The VCRG supports the primary recommendations that impact volunteering: for governments at all levels to consult with volunteers and the sector before making changes to settings that affect them and also to reinstate the General Social Survey undertaken by the ABS, as a key source of information on volunteering. It is pleasing to note that the ABS has commenced work to rescope this survey, which is expected to be in the field in 2025.

The full report is available here [Future foundations for giving \(pc.gov.au\)](#).

3. Spontaneous volunteering in emergencies

The VCRG received a presentation from Volunteering WA on work in the coordination of spontaneous volunteers in emergencies. As part of this work a report has been released that summarises lessons learned from recent emergencies in WA – including a cyclone, bushfires, a flood and the pandemic.

The VCRG congratulated Volunteering WA on the report, which is available here [spontaneous-volunteer-engagement-report-vwa-july-2024.pdf \(volunteeringwa.org.au\)](#).

Members also raised several issues for discussion at future meetings including:

- Concerns regarding the process for WA State Government Volunteer Police Checks
- The need for a volunteer passport, shared training and credentialling
- The growing ‘epidemic’ of loneliness and the potential role for volunteers

4. Forthcoming events

Special events 2024	
International Volunteer Managers’ Day	Tuesday 5 November
IVD Garden Party	Thursday 5 December

More information on the Volunteering Community Reference Group, including Terms of Reference and membership, is available [here](#).