

2021–2026 Volunteer Management Activity Impact

Creating a thriving and inclusive volunteering ecosystem across Australia



Australia's State and Territory volunteering peak bodies acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of Country throughout Australia where we work, learn and live.

We recognise the continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay respects to their cultures and Elders, past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.

Each peak body is committed to forging stronger relationships and a deeper respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

By acknowledging and respecting the diversity and history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, we will continue to strengthen recognition, respect, and genuine partnership.

We are committed to ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have a seat at the table, a voice in volunteering, opportunities for sharing knowledge, and to celebrate the ways in which First Nations people contribute to and enhance Australia's communities.



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should be advised this document may contain images of deceased persons.

National Network for Volunteering

Australia's volunteering peak bodies work together to maximise shared resources, knowledge, and capabilities.

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Message from state and territory volunteering peak bodies

Volunteering ACT | The Centre for Volunteering (NSW) | Volunteering Queensland
Volunteering SA&NT | Volunteering Tasmania | Volunteering Victoria |
Volunteering WA

We, the state and territory volunteering peak bodies are delighted to present this Impact Booklet, which showcases just some of the people and stories behind the activities and statistics delivered through the Volunteer Management Activity 2021–2026. Our powerful national network and collaboration drive meaningful change in the community by designing and delivering programs and services that sustain volunteering, increase participation, and support volunteer involving organisations across the country.

This booklet showcases the evolution of the Volunteer Management Activity (VMA) over the past five years and the development of place-based, volunteer-centred projects that respond to a changing volunteering ecosystem and address barriers to participation within our communities.

Looking forward

This successful sector-designed model has laid a strong foundation, but the work is only just beginning. Looking forward, we aim to further utilise the success of VMA to achieve outcomes of the National Strategy for Volunteering, building on the current foundations of awareness and engagement and deepen our impact through innovation and adoption, all to drive meaningful and lasting cultural change. See the Next Phase priorities for the VMA at the end of this Booklet.

This is just the beginning: The work we have delivered with support from the Australian Government Department of Social Services is a starting point, and with continued commitment from Government, we will increase the capability and sustainability of the not-for-profit and volunteering sectors, which contribute so much to the Australian community and economy.

As Australia's volunteering peak bodies, we plan to grow our impact, accelerate reform, and continue to strengthen volunteering. Continued funding over the next five years will secure this momentum, unlock even greater community outcomes, and ensure that volunteering remains at the heart of the Australian community.

We extend our sincere thanks to the Minister for Social Services, The Honourable Tanya Plibersek MP, Assistant Minister for Social Services, The Honourable Ged Kearney MP, and the Department of Social Services for their support, investment, and ongoing collaboration in volunteering.

We also acknowledge the vital local partnerships in each jurisdiction and community that make the delivery of the program possible. Our gratitude goes to the organisations that provide critical insights and expertise, and to the volunteers and volunteer managers who are at the heart of our work to build the capacity and capability of volunteering across Australia.



This Booklet introduces the:

- Context of volunteering within key Australian sectors and Government priorities
- National strategic approach of the volunteering peak bodies
 - Responding to changes in volunteering: The trends and issues we are addressing
 - Delivering the Volunteer Management Activity aligned with the National Strategy for Volunteering
- Stories of people, programs, organisations and communities supported by the national collaboration, through the support of the Australian Government Department of Social Services
- Recommended next phases for the Volunteer Management Activity

This booklet shares only a small fraction of the impact achieved through the peak bodies over the past five years. Further reading has been linked throughout.

Where to find a copy of this Booklet –

This Booklet is available to download as a PDF and accessible Word document.

Having trouble accessing? We take care to provide accessible resources. If you need help to access or a different format, you may like to contact your peak body.

Volunteering in Australia

Volunteering is essential to the fabric of Australian society. It brings social, cultural, and economic benefits to the nation.

Australia's communities and lifestyle are underpinned by the contributions of volunteers. Volunteers are an essential workforce, spanning major sectors, including aged care and disability care; community welfare; sports and the arts; crisis preparedness, response, and recovery; and environmental sustainability and protection.

Investing in the activities, resources and frameworks that sustain volunteering, while seeking to remove barriers to participation, will continue to build on our strong history of volunteering in Australia.

Volunteering is more than giving, it's also reciprocal, with many health and wellbeing benefits for the volunteer.

According to the recent Snapshot of Volunteering in Australia, approximately 14.1 million Australians volunteer – either formally or informally – contributing around 3.2 billion hours of effort nationally.

“Volunteering is one of the most powerful antidotes to loneliness. When we give our time to others, we build connections and strengthen our communities. I want to see more people find that sense of purpose and belonging through volunteering”.

**Assistant Minister for Social Services,
Hon Ged Kearney MP.**

Implementing the National Strategy for Volunteering



The National Strategy for Volunteering (2023–2033) is Australia's ten-year roadmap to make volunteering the heart of Australian communities. Ownership and responsibility for the National Strategy is shared across the entire ecosystem engaged in volunteering, including government and non-government organisations such as charities and the private sector. With continued support and coordination, the National Strategy will deliver a bright future for volunteering in Australia.

The National Strategy for Volunteering is currently in its first three-year Action Plan phase, running to mid-2027. This phase will see the delivery of 22 actions (seven led by the Australian Government) that were co-designed to address priorities identified by the volunteering ecosystem. The Action Plan also provides opportunities for other stakeholders, including smaller groups and individual volunteers, to contribute to the implementation of the National Strategy.



This includes establishing new processes to improve recruitment and retention, forming new partnerships, and enhancing the role of volunteer managers.

Volunteering does not just happen; it requires investment.

By embracing, resourcing and fully implementing the National Strategy for Volunteering over its ten-year lifespan, there is an opportunity to sustain and build towards achieving the ecosystem's vision of volunteering being the heart of Australian communities.

See the recommended Next Phases for the Volunteer Management Activity at the end of this Booklet.



Government's Volunteering Policy and Programs

Federal responsibility for national volunteering policy and programs sits within the Australian Government's Social Services portfolio.

Volunteering Australia's Incoming Government Brief (June 2025) sets the agenda and has been provided to all relevant Ministers and agencies.

The Brief highlights some of Volunteering Australia's current engagement across Australian Government portfolios.

Additionally, many local, state and territory governments have developed (or are developing) volunteering strategies in alignment with the National Strategy and in collaboration with the volunteering peak bodies. This provides an unprecedented opportunity for positive outcomes for the volunteering ecosystem.

FURTHER READING

[Volunteering in Australia](#)

[Snapshot of Volunteering in Australia](#)

[The State of Volunteering Reports](#)

[Volunteering Australia's Incoming Government Brief](#)

[Federal Election Platform](#)

[National Strategy for Volunteering 2023–2033](#)

[Action Plan 2024–2027](#)

[Department of Health, Disability and Ageing: New Aged Care Act and Volunteering in Aged Care](#)



The importance of volunteering to Australia is known, sitting within sector strategies and Australian Government portfolios and priorities.

“The vision for the Blueprint is a thriving Australian NFP sector supporting healthy civil society. The goal to see volunteering thrive, and volunteers contribute according to their interests is supported by Initiative 12 in the Blueprint.”

Not-for-profit Sector Development Blueprint

“The charitable sector also engages 3.2 million volunteers. Volunteers contribute upwards of 320 million unpaid hours valued at an additional \$13.8 billion.

Added benefits for people, places, the environment, and the economy can't be measured in just monetary terms. Attempts to give a value to these broader benefits suggest at least \$12.7 billion, however the true value is potentially much higher.”

Department of Social Services

“The Productivity Commission Future Foundations for Giving report notes that organisations engaging volunteers can achieve “better and more valued outcomes at lower cost compared with government provision”.

Productivity Commission Future Foundations for Giving Report

“Without volunteers, Australian sport wouldn’t exist. Volunteers are the backbone of local sporting clubs, freely contributing their time and knowledge for the benefit of their sport as well as the participants, their families and the local community.”

Australian Sports Commission

“Australia’s not-for-profit (NFP) sector is at the core of our civil society. More than 300,000 NFP organisations positively impact Australian life. Half of all registered charities are small community-level organisations. More than half of these are run by volunteers. These organisations have social and community benefit at their core.”

Department of Social Services

“Volunteering is beneficial to mental health: Social participation and inclusion, mental health and volunteering are interconnected. Across Australia, community organisations rely on the active involvement of volunteers to provide services to people in the community with, or at risk of, mental illness.”

Productivity Commission Inquiry into Mental Health 2020

“Volunteers are an essential part of the aged care system. Volunteering in aged care contributes to positive outcomes such as increased mental health and wellbeing, social connectedness, reduced isolation and ageing in place.”

Department of Health, Disability and Ageing



The Volunteer Management Activity

The Australian Government Department of Social Services' Volunteer Management Activity is administered through State and Territory volunteering peak bodies in partnership with local community organisations. It supports volunteer involving organisations to effectively recruit, train, support, and retain volunteers, and breaks down barriers to volunteering; and increase opportunities for people to volunteer in their local community.

The 2021–2026 Volunteer Management Activity aims to increase opportunities for people to participate in the social and economic life of their broader community through volunteering, by:

- Building effective volunteering practices and opportunities within organisations and communities
- Increasing the diversity of volunteers
- Improving access to information on volunteering
- Providing access to the training and resources that support volunteers and volunteer involving organisations need

The specific services delivered through the Volunteer Management Activity are designed to build the capacity of volunteer involving organisations, through:

- Best practice volunteering management including
 - Recruitment and training of volunteers
 - Supporting volunteer management and retention of volunteers

- Provision of information, tools, training and resources for volunteer involving organisations, including
 - Regulatory obligations and risk management
 - Governance
 - Work health and safety
 - Insurance
 - Background/police checks
- Building capacity of organisations to break down barriers to volunteering and provide face-to-face services to support people to participate in volunteering, with a focus on identified priority groups
 - People with disability
 - First Nations peoples
 - Newly arrived migrants
 - Women at risk
 - Young people aged 12–18
 - People who are unemployed

The Volunteer Management Activity Pillars of Success:

- 1 Increased opportunities to participate and the reduction of barriers that prevent the inclusion of volunteers from identified priority groups
- 2 High quality and accessible volunteering based on the National Standards for Volunteer Involvement
- 3 Improved accessibility and range of quality volunteer management products and services across each jurisdiction

The Volunteering Peak Bodies' National Strategic Approach

Delivery of the Volunteer Management Activity by the State and Territory Volunteering Peak Bodies

Peak body support for the volunteering sector

We are immensely proud to present this impact report highlighting a selection of the people and stories behind the activities and statistics, delivered since 2021 through the Volunteer Management Activity.

The volunteering peak bodies work locally in their own states and territories and form a strong national network. Working collaboratively we are responsible for delivering programs and services that sustain volunteering, increase participation, and support volunteer involving organisations across the country. The power of this national network and collaboration leads to incredible changes in the community. We work together to produce nationally consistent best practice volunteering resources, tools and training that are aligned to the National Standards for Volunteer Involvement and rolled out in each state and territory, ensuring a place-based approach.

We support and champion the volunteering community so volunteers and volunteer involving organisations can focus on making a difference.

Working together, we help support volunteer involving organisations recruit, retain and grow a thriving volunteer community; and foster inclusive and accessible cultures and practices where volunteers thrive.

Volunteer Management Activity: Year One 2021–2022

The first year delivery of the new Volunteer Management Activity focused on **awareness, engagement, exploration and review** of the new model, and building partnerships with existing and new stakeholders.

Volunteer Management Activity: Years Two to Five 2022–2026

Our delivery during this period focused on **innovation and adoption of the Volunteer Management Activity** aligned with the National Strategy for Volunteering (2023). We experienced and led a huge cultural shift and change management piece across the national volunteering sector, building relationships, developing processes and educational tools, and breaking down barriers.

Our work covered key areas such as Project Partnerships (including grant delivery), community outreach, building sector capacity through training and online resources, and facilitating co-design projects and special interest groups.

The work has just started through this successful funding model. Our recommended next steps for the Volunteer Management Activity are at the end of this booklet.

Project Partnerships (Grants)

Volunteering peak bodies further our impact by working in collaboration with others. This has been the foundation of the grants program in relevant states and territories. Through partnerships with community organisations, government agencies and regional experts, we deliver initiatives that respond to local needs and amplify outcomes. These collaborations allow us to share expertise, leverage resources and co-design solutions that strengthen volunteering at every level.

Supported through the Volunteer Management Activity and funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services, the focus of the volunteer grants program is to help eligible not-for-profit organisations support and increase participation in volunteering.

The project grants are designed to engage a greater range of organisations in the sector. This enables increased collaboration, inclusion of those with knowledge and experience working with priority groups, and a recognition of regional, rural and remote circumstances.

Over the five-year period volunteering peak bodies have distributed 584 Volunteer Management Activity grants extended to community organisations totalling \$13,942,783.

Community Outreach

To grow and diversify volunteering, peak bodies actively engage with communities and the public. Campaigns, events and storytelling initiatives help people see themselves represented in volunteering, showcase the benefits of getting involved, and break down barriers to participation. These outreach efforts create new pathways for individuals and groups to connect with causes that matter to them.

Building Sector Capacity

A core role of volunteering peak bodies is equipping the sector with tools, training and information. By developing resources, delivering professional development opportunities and sharing best practice aligned with the National Standards for Volunteer Involvement, we help volunteer involving organisations recruit, manage and retain volunteers effectively. This capacity-building ensures volunteer programs remain strong, safe and sustainable and equipped to deliver on the VMA outcomes.

Special Interest Groups

Volunteering peak bodies also provide opportunities for tailored conversations through forums, advisory groups and networks. These platforms bring together volunteer managers, regional leaders, and different cultural groups, to exchange insights and collaborate on solutions; ensuring diverse voices shape the future of volunteering.

Key outcomes achieved include:

- Broader inclusion of priority groups
- Strengthened local partnerships and community engagement
- Expansion of training, resources, and capability building for organisations
- Greater community awareness and participation in volunteering
- Improved data and feedback processes to guide improvement
- Increased program reach





STORIES

The People and Impact Behind Our Activity

The 2021–2026 activity period has been one of huge opportunity, collaboration, momentum and change.

We are proud to feature just some of the people and communities who have felt the impact of our programs.



SUCCESS PILLAR 1

Supporting increased participation in volunteering

Improving the culture of volunteer involving organisations to better include a broader cross-section of society.

- Volunteering has a powerful impact when it is accessible to all and reflects our diverse communities
- A diverse volunteer team is a great strength. Everyone benefits from new perspectives and lived experiences that can better support community
- People of all backgrounds, abilities and locations are motivated to volunteer when they feel a sense of identity, purpose and belonging

Removing barriers and increasing engagement.

- Peak body activities aim to reduce barriers and increase participation across volunteering
- We approach this through both targeted activities exclusive to improving outcomes for the identified priority groups, as well as broad-reaching campaigns that help reach partners, friends, families, and communities of priority groups
- Our resources and training for volunteer involving organisations help share skills and knowledge needed to recruit, engage, and retain a diverse team of volunteers

ACT

Empowering the next generation of volunteers

Collaborators: ACT Youth Volunteering Working Group, VolunteeringACT

This year VolunteeringACT established a Youth Volunteering Working Group to support and inform the development of three Youth Volunteering Toolkits to inspire, support and manage youth volunteering. The Toolkits provide general information and best practice advice, additional templates and resources including posters, FAQs, checklists and case studies.

Through the design process, VolunteeringACT engaged with hundreds of young people, support people and volunteer managers through consultation, co-design, development, feedback and testing.

This engagement with young people, support organisations and volunteer involving organisations to provide support, advice, training and resources, has in turn significantly

increased the number of applications for volunteer roles from young people.

Through these partnerships, curated resources, and real-world application by organisations such as The Smith Family we are equipping volunteer leaders with the knowledge, tools, and confidence to deliver inclusive, high-quality volunteering experiences nationwide.

 **READ MORE**

[Youth Volunteering Toolkits](#)



NEW SOUTH WALES

Learn, laugh and lift your spirits with the Voices of Volunteering podcast

Collaborators: St John Ambulance, Foodbank, Youth Action, Graham Toomey (Wurrumunga Clan of the Wiradjuri Nation/Wongaibon Nation), Australian Sports Commission, Bermagui SLSC, The Centre for Volunteering

“Let’s talk volunteering! Are you a volunteer leader looking to learn more about best practice? With the Voices of Volunteering podcast you can listen to expert advice, industry examples and real insights from people who have been in your shoes.”

To provide another avenue for volunteer leaders to gain insights and knowledge around best practice, The Centre launched The Voices of Volunteering Podcast in 2023. Through an interview-based format, listeners hear about real world challenges and successes, and gain a greater understanding of other organisations from the leaders of volunteer programs and groups.

Interview questions are constructed with the National Standards for Volunteer Involvement in mind and encourage the interviewees to share their experience managing volunteers and volunteer programs, as well as provide examples of best practice volunteer management.

Since the show’s launch, 23 episodes have been released with over 1.3K in plays recorded on Spotify, Apple Podcasts and YouTube.

 **READ MORE**

<https://www.volunteering.com.au/resources-tools/voices-of-volunteering-podcast-channel/>

QUEENSLAND

Accessible Zeds: Engaging people living with disability at 4ZZZ

Collaborators: 4ZZZ community radio, Volunteering Queensland

Brisbane's 4ZZZ community radio gives a platform to people often unheard, with every program run by volunteers. The Accessible Zeds project created meaningful opportunities for people with disability to participate in broadcasting while removing barriers to inclusion.

With a small team and over 250 volunteers, 4ZZZ adapted induction and training to be flexible, inclusive, and tailored to individual needs. Over the year, 68 people with disability joined the program, 23 received broadcast training, and 15 recorded at least one digital show. Participants launched four new radio programs and contributed to existing ones, with options to pre-record or join from home to meet access needs.

Beyond skills, the project built confidence, belonging, and self-expression, while disability awareness videos and open days deepened understanding across the station. By reducing physical, social, and emotional barriers, Accessible Zeds amplified underrepresented voices and showed how inclusive design strengthens both individuals and community.

This project didn't just create radio shows, it created belonging. For many participants, Accessible Zeds was their first time feeling they had a platform and community who valued them.

 **READ MORE**

<https://volunteeringqld.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Project-summary-Accessible-Zeds.pdf>

"The value of hearing new voices is unprecedented – it makes Zed Digital more and more relevant. ...This is valued so much, and it allows people whose time pressures, accessibility concerns or issues, and general make up of how their lives work, somewhere to have their voices heard, their ideas expanded, ... and develop as people"

**Blair Martin 4ZZZ Zed Digital Coordinator
Queer Radio Brisbane Coordinator (4ZZZ
102.1FM)**

Queensland 4ZZZ's Disability
Engagement Project



TASMANIA

Inclusive Volunteering for People with Disability

Collaborators: Volunteering Tasmania, volunteer involving organisations, specialist disability agencies and volunteers with disability

"I enjoyed it. I might be able to help others," shared Caroline, a volunteer with disability, reflecting the start of a transformative journey to make volunteering in Tasmania more inclusive and accessible. This project was a collaboration between volunteers with disability, specialist agencies, and volunteer involving organisations, with the goal of reshaping volunteering so that everyone could participate meaningfully.

Central to the project was a co-design approach, placing the lived experiences of volunteers with disability at the heart of solutions. This led to the creation of the Volunteers with Disability Awareness Campaign, which highlighted seven volunteers' stories through videos and written narratives. By sharing their experiences, challenges, and perspectives, the campaign provided a powerful platform for people with disability to be heard and recognised for their contributions.

Caroline described the resources as "really needed," emphasising their value for organisations seeking to improve inclusivity.

The campaign's materials (including tip sheets, discussion guides, flipbooks, and videos) were designed to support organisations in creating welcoming and flexible volunteer opportunities.

The impact was clear: surveys showed increased understanding among organisations of the needs and potential of volunteers with disability. Stakeholders highlighted that "there is significant risk in a one size fits all approach," underscoring the importance of consulting volunteers about what they can offer.

Through this initiative, volunteers like Caroline are not only contributing their time and skills, but also helping to shape a sector that values difference and fosters belonging. As Caroline reflected, "I've been volunteering for a long time...I hope volunteering can be available to everyone."

 **READ MORE**

<https://volunteeringtas.org.au/for-organisations/resources/>

Tasmania Inclusive Volunteering
for People with Disability



VICTORIA

Project Pitch: Inspiring the next generation of volunteers

Collaborators: Ballarat Foundation, Highlands Local Learning and Employment Network, Volunteering Victoria

Project Pitch shows how volunteering builds job-ready skills, confidence, and community resilience, while shifting organisational perceptions of youth volunteers. Its expansion highlights its value as a model for youth engagement.

The program invites Year 10–11 students to learn about community organisations, meet real-life volunteers, and “pitch” an organisation of their choice to peers. In doing so, they practise research, teamwork, and public speaking, while discovering ways to make a difference locally.

What makes Project Pitch powerful is how it bridges a gap. Many students think volunteering has little relevance, while some organisations struggle to see how young people fit in. Through personal stories and pitching, students see the value of giving back in gaining confidence, employability, and belonging, while organisations witness the energy and fresh perspectives youth bring.

The ripple effects are already evident in Victoria. Students walk away with self-esteem and networks, while community organisations gain new recruits. One teacher noted even the most hesitant students found their voice when pitching, proving volunteering can unlock unexpected potential.

Now evolving into the broader Real Talks program, this school-based model opens doors for more young people to get involved, showing that when invited in, they can become volunteering’s most passionate champions.

“When you’re in Year 10, it’s hard to think about your future careers... [and] to decide which paths to choose and how to get there. Listening to the volunteer organisations talk about what skills employers are looking for makes me realise that I can get some experience and skills through volunteering before going into the workforce. That makes it less scary”.

Lilly, Year 10 student

READ MORE

<https://www.volunteeringvictoria.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/Case-study-Grampians-Project-Pitch-Final.pdf>



Year 12 students at Leongatha Secondary College (VIC), co-designing a therapeutic garden for a local hospital.

NEW SOUTH WALES

Providing the Foundations of Volunteer Management

Collaborators: The Centre for Volunteering, GEdNeT

To address the needs of time-constrained volunteer leaders whilst providing an offering that would upskill new, aspiring and even tenured volunteer leaders in best practices, the Foundations of Volunteer Management eLearning project was designed and delivered.

The Foundations of Volunteer Management eLearning draws on the content of the Certificate IV in Volunteer Coordination, giving volunteer leaders access to the same best-practice knowledge without the need for formal assessment or certification. Recognising that not everyone has the time, funding, or interest to complete a full qualification, The Centre

created this program as a flexible alternative. Learners can build their skills at their own pace, revisit the modules whenever they need, and do so without sitting compulsory quizzes or meeting formal assessment requirements. Since publication on the National Knowledge Base, the seven units (comprising of 7–9 modules each) have had more than 2,200 engagements and a 100% satisfaction rating.

 **READ MORE**

<https://volunteering.freshdesk.com/support/solutions/folders/51000439094>

QUEENSLAND

Deadly Volunteers: Building cultural safety

Collaborators: 3rd Space Brisbane, First Nations advisors

Volunteering Queensland collaborated with 3rd Space Brisbane to enhance cultural safety and attract First Nations volunteers by revising policies, updating induction processes, and providing cultural training.

The project involved 3rd Space staff and volunteers, as well as First Nations advisors and professionals. The project was guided by a First Nations advisor with over 30 years' experience. Their expertise and connections were crucial for the project's success, boosting the organisation's confidence and helping navigate ethical issues.

Increased cultural awareness and inclusivity led to better engagement and retention of First Nations volunteers. The project greatly improved knowledge of First Nations volunteering in 3rd Space and Volunteering Queensland. 3rd Space shared their learnings

with over 80 volunteer leaders at events during the year, helping them understand factors affecting First Nations volunteers.

Social Media post



NORTHERN TERRITORY

Volunteering as a pathway to community, connection and meaningful employment

Collaborators: Charles Darwin University, Volunteering NT

Starting life in a new country can be overwhelming. For many international students at Charles Darwin University (CDU), arriving in Darwin meant navigating unfamiliar surroundings, cultures, and workplaces – often without existing networks or support systems.

That's why CDU and Volunteering NT launched the VALue (Value And Learn) program in 2023, giving students a welcoming pathway into volunteering and the local community. Before stepping into their roles, students are supported with induction workshops, Ochre Card and police checks, and guidance on how volunteering can build their CVs and confidence. From there, they're connected to a wide range of community organisations, matched with opportunities that not only help others but also help them feel at home.

The impact has been remarkable. Students describe finding “a lifeline” in volunteering – gaining friendships, purpose, and belonging in what was once an unfamiliar place. Others share how volunteering boosted their

employability, with supervisors even becoming referees for paid roles. For organisations, the program brings a new wave of passionate, skilled volunteers, strengthening their capacity to deliver services across Darwin.

Beyond skills and resumes, though, the program is about connection. One student reflected, “As a newcomer to a foreign land, I sought connection and a sense of belonging. I discovered that in reaching out to help others, I found the support I needed for myself.”

The VALue program is a powerful reminder that volunteering is never one-way. It's a shared exchange that builds stronger, more inclusive communities for everyone.

READ MORE

<https://vsant.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/NT-VMA-Inclusive-Snapshots.pdf>

NT Nightcliff Seabreeze Festival 2025



VICTORIA

Karen Community Working Bee: Growing connections through gardening

Collaborators: Long Gully Community Garden, Regional Victorians of Colour, Volunteering Loddon Mallee, Victorian Government, Volunteering Victoria

On a sunny day Bendigo, members of the local Karen community joined neighbours at the Long Gully Community Garden to build new raised garden beds. What began as a simple working bee quickly became something much more – a chance to connect, contribute, and feel at home.

The event, run in partnership with Regional Victorians of Colour and Volunteering Loddon Mallee, brought together 13 Karen volunteers, from newly arrived to long-term residents, supported by community workers and translators. Language was no barrier, with teamwork, shared meals, and family ties ensuring everyone could take part.

With local soil contamination making raised beds essential, the group built two large

garden beds, practical spaces for safe food production and powerful symbols of belonging. Families worked side by side, reflecting how volunteering in many migrant communities is a shared, family-centred activity.

The working bee showed the value of culturally aware, welcoming spaces and the role of dedicated organisers in ensuring inclusivity. For the Karen community, the raised beds grew more than food – they grew confidence, friendships, and a sense of ownership in their new home.

 **READ MORE**

<https://www.volunteeringvictoria.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Case-study-Loddon-Mallee-Karen-Community-Working-Bee.pdf>

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Rise & Shine: Supporting First Nations Women and Girls through Community Leadership

Collaborators: Kimberley Aboriginal Women's Council, Volunteering WA

For over thirty years, the Kimberley Aboriginal Women's Council (KAWC) has been a driving force for First Nations women's leadership and empowerment across the Kimberley region. In 2023, this vision took a new shape through the Rise & Shine program, designed to support First Nations girls to "grow and glow" with guidance, mentorship, and cultural connection from women in their communities.

Volunteering WA recognised that significant barriers exist for First Nations people to participate in structured volunteering, and that we had not yet developed strong partnerships within Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander

communities. In particular, the traditional understanding of volunteering did not always reflect the forms of community giving and reciprocity expressed within First Nations communities.

KAWC highlighted the importance of acknowledging cultural and Kinship obligations and responsibilities, and of understanding how communities contribute and engage as 'volunteers'. This prompted Volunteering WA to reframe our perspective, broadening our understanding and definition of volunteering in a First Nations context.

Emphasising the need for a community-led approach, Volunteering WA contributed to the development and growth of the Rise & Shine mentoring program through our Volunteer Management Activity Project Grants in 2023 and 2024. To ensure the program remained community-led and culturally grounded, KAWC travelled throughout the Kimberley to conduct consultations and co-design workshops with First Nations women and girls, laying the foundations for program delivery in 2025.

By creating spaces for mentorship, storytelling, and skill-sharing, Rise & Shine strengthens confidence, connection, and cultural identity for young women, while recognising and celebrating the leadership of the women who guide them. More than creating volunteers, it nurtures future leaders and places community-led support at the heart of First Nations empowerment.

 **VIEW MORE**

https://youtu.be/TpGwCiBYC-U?si=WPI_yq66H7DcPMuW

“This unique collaboration with the Kimberley Aboriginal Women’s Council has enriched our knowledge of volunteering in First Nations communities, understanding it is about showing up with respect, humility, and heart to nurture and strengthen community. We’re proud to walk this path together, supporting the creation of meaningful, culturally rich, and trauma-informed volunteering across WA.”

Tina Williams, CEO, Volunteering WA.

WA – Kimberley Aboriginal Women’s Council Rise & Shine Project



TASMANIA

Inclusive Volunteering for Young People

Collaborators: University of Tasmania, Volunteering Tasmania

Between July and October 2024, Volunteering Tasmania partnered with a University of Tasmania (UTAS) Sustainability Placement student to explore how young people can be better engaged in volunteering. The project examined both the motivations and barriers for youth participation, while investigating how aligning volunteer roles with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) can make volunteering more meaningful.

Over an eleven-week placement, the student worked alongside Volunteering Tasmania's VMA Projects Coordinator, engaging with stakeholders and conducting research. This collaboration resulted in a series of practical resources: a tip sheet for volunteer involving organisations on engaging youth volunteers, information sheets connecting local volunteering opportunities to each of the 17 SDGs, and insights into youth volunteer motivations and barriers.

The project culminated in a "Let's Talk Youth Volunteering" event, held both in person and online. The session featured the newly developed resources and a panel of youth volunteers sharing their personal experiences

and perspectives. Their stories highlighted how volunteering can connect local action to global impact, making opportunities more relevant and inspiring for young people.

The project's impact was immediate: inspired by the event, a Tasmanian Volunteer Coordinator from a major national organisation began aligning their youth program with the SDGs at both state and national levels. Participants reflected on the value of meaningful volunteering, while organisations recognised the benefit of engaging young volunteers to refresh programs, bring new ideas, and support long-term succession planning.

This initiative demonstrates how youth-focused volunteering, guided by values and global awareness, can foster connection, skill-building, and sustainability. By providing accessible pathways and aligning opportunities with the SDGs, Volunteering Tasmania is empowering the next generation of volunteers to contribute locally while making a difference globally.

MORE RESOURCES

<https://volunteeringtas.org.au/for-organisations/youth-volunteering/>



TASMANIA

Inclusive Volunteering for People Who Are Unemployed

Collaborators: Volunteering Tasmania, National Joblink, Glenorchy Jobs Hub

Through the Volunteer Management Activity, Volunteering Tasmania is helping people who are unemployed discover the value of volunteering as a pathway to skills, confidence, and employment. By partnering with local employment providers, the initiative explores the motivations and challenges that influence attitudes toward volunteering, reshaping perceptions in meaningful ways.

Information sessions were delivered in accessible community spaces, including public libraries and Regional Jobs Hubs in Kingston and Glenorchy. For many participants, these sessions were eye-opening: volunteering had not previously been considered a viable pathway. Through practical examples and open discussion, attendees began to see how volunteering could enhance job prospects – providing relevant experience, building professional networks, and securing referees.

“The session had a strong and immediate impact. Several participants have since pursued volunteering opportunities, and the feedback has been overwhelmingly positive,” shared a Jobs Hub acting coordinator.

Participants shared stories of tangible outcomes: one explored a new career path, using volunteering to gain experience and confidence; another began volunteering as a community transport driver to strengthen future employment prospects; and a third applied to volunteer as an adult literacy taking advantage of tailored training opportunities to build skills for education and community roles.

Through this initiative, Volunteering Tasmania demonstrates that volunteering is more than giving time – it is a bridge to opportunity, community connection, and personal growth. Participants gain hands-on experience, new networks, and the confidence to pursue their ambitions, while organisations benefit from motivated, skilled volunteers contributing to local community programs.

By reframing volunteering as a stepping stone to employment and engagement, this program empowers individuals while strengthening Tasmania’s volunteer community.

Introduction to Volunteering information session



WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Perth African Nations Sporting Association (PANSA) – Well Meaning to Well Equipped (WM2WE)

Collaborators: Perth African Nations Sporting Association (PANSA), Volunteering WA

Decades of civil conflict have led to a large Burundian refugee and migrant community in Australia. Early engagement through PANSA showed limited familiarity with the Western concept of “volunteering,” reliance on a small core group, and resulting burnout.

The WM2WE program was introduced to strengthen participation and build resilience in community sport. The approach mapped volunteer engagement, identified barriers, and implemented practical measures: administrative support for the coordinator, tailored messages on the benefits of volunteering, access to training equipment via Fair Game, and inclusion in ‘Community Volunteers and Leaders Information Sessions’. Additional support included securing venues for annual commemorations, providing public liability insurance, and leveraging networks to reduce costs.

As a result, volunteer roles became easier and less financially burdensome, participation increased by 30%, volunteer hours rose by more than 25%, and contributions were better recognised with clearer pathways for ongoing engagement.

 **READ MORE**

<https://www.volunteeringwa.org.au/assets/vma-2025/pansa-vma-project-showcase-2025.pdf>

“Thank you very much for your support, your service really removed a burden off my shoulders... This saves me a lot of money as I spend a lot buying sports equipment for our community.”

Community Coordinator

“Thank you very much for educating us about how volunteering can be a career pathway. This information has encouraged a few of us to give more to our community...”

Community Member



PANSA – Community Support Visits



PANSA – Well-meaning to well-equipped, community volunteering project





SUCCESS PILLAR 2

High quality and accessible volunteering based on the National Standards

Volunteering thrives when it's built on strong foundations. By embedding the National Standards for Volunteer Involvement into programs and resources, we help volunteer leaders and organisations create safe, inclusive, and meaningful experiences for all. This ensures volunteers feel supported, valued, and able to make a genuine impact.

- Grounded in the National Standards for Volunteer Involvement, we support leaders to create environments where everyone – no matter their background – can belong and contribute
- Resources developed in line with the National Standards for Volunteer Involvement provide a shared framework for quality and safety across the sector and give confidence to leaders managing volunteers
- Accessible programs mean more people from diverse priority groups can contribute and feel included, ensuring volunteering reflects the diversity of our communities

High quality and accessible volunteering doesn't happen by chance, it takes tools, knowledge, and support. We're lifting sector capability so volunteers and organisations can thrive together.

- Strong volunteer management leads to stronger communities, greater impact, and volunteers who have better experiences
- High quality volunteer programs built on consistent frameworks help organisations reduce risk, and attract, retain, and empower volunteers
- Building capability ensures volunteer programs are sustainable and ready for the future

ACT

Volunteering Conference and Symposiums

Collaborators: VolunteeringACT, subject matter experts

Each year, VolunteeringACT brings together volunteer managers and sector leaders for two flagship events – the ACT Volunteering Conference during National Volunteer Week, and the Volunteer Leaders Seminar in November. These events are more than professional development; they're spaces where people connect, share challenges, and reignite their passion for leading volunteers.

Over the past four years, 600 attendees have explored 40+ topics from co-design and inclusive volunteering to mental health, recruitment, and risk management. Sessions are shaped by what volunteer managers say they need most – ensuring the learning is practical and directly relevant.

The impact goes beyond the events themselves, with participants leaving with new ideas, a stronger network of peers, and confidence to tackle the complex challenges of leading volunteers.

By equipping leaders with knowledge and connections, these events strengthen the entire volunteering ecosystem, and help organisations create safer, more inclusive, and more inspiring places for volunteers to give their time.

“The conference reignited a motivation and passion for volunteer management, sparking ideas, and connecting with other volunteer managers.”

- 2025 Volunteering Conference.

“It was engaging, well-presented, and relevant. I came away with tips to implement immediately in our organisation.”

- 2023 Volunteering Symposium.



NEW SOUTH WALES

Volunteer Manager Helpdesk: The One Stop Support Shop

Collaborators: The Centre for Volunteering, volunteer managers

Launching in the first quarter of 2023, The Centre established the Volunteer Manager Help Desk. Through email and phone, volunteer leaders are provided with one-on-one advice and support from an experienced volunteer manager. The Help Desk complements the National Knowledge Base and provides an opportunity for volunteer leaders to discuss their issues and concerns and be provided with the tools and resources to address them.

The service draws on The Centre's unique position as a peak body, spanning a wealth of knowledge and experience gained over 50 years in operation.

Since its launch, the Volunteer Manager Help Desk has had consistent engagement with over 400 enquiries handled. This support has included assistance with creating policies and procedures, handling volunteer grievances, exploring volunteer recruitment and retention strategies, understanding compliance checks

and implementation of the National Standards for Volunteer Involvement.

RESOURCES

Volunteer Manager Help Desk – The Centre for Volunteering

“Thanks again, I really appreciate your time and expertise. Thank you for sending through the templates, I really appreciate your support.”

“Thank you so much for the response...I met with the potential volunteer week before last and followed your very helpful suggestions on assessing their capabilities. So many thanks again for your assistance with this.”

“Thank you for contacting us back this afternoon and listening to our concerns. Your supportive approach is greatly appreciated.”

TASMANIA

Inclusive Volunteering for Newly Arrived Migrants

Collaborators: Volunteering Tasmania, volunteer involving organisations, specialist multicultural agencies and migrant volunteers

Volunteering Tasmania set out to make volunteering more accessible and meaningful for newly arrived migrants. Central to this initiative was a co-design approach, placing the voices and lived experiences of migrant volunteers alongside volunteering expertise to create solutions that truly reflected community needs.

A diverse group of participants from Tasmania's migrant community shared their insights, inspiring the development of two practical and engaging tools. The first is a series of short

videos featuring personal stories from migrant volunteers, highlighting the importance of volunteering, cultural safety, and diversity. These videos have been widely shared and are now used by volunteer involving organisations as part of their onboarding process.

The second tool is a best practice Volunteer Information Session, designed to introduce newly arrived migrants to volunteering opportunities in Tasmania. Held in accessible locations, these sessions offered tailored guidance and educational information, helping

participants understand both the practical and social benefits of volunteering. Feedback shows the sessions are highly valued.

Participants reflected on the impact: Tevas shared, “I felt honoured and excited to share my volunteering story... The experience was both empowering and deeply fulfilling.” Organisations have also benefited, gaining practical guidance to support migrant volunteers. Kate from Migrant Resource Centre Tasmania explained, “We have used the information developed in this project to inform potential volunteers about the benefits of volunteering... helping to build an informed and active volunteer community.”

NEW SOUTH WALES

Stronger Together: Empowering NSW volunteer managers with tools that work

Collaborators: The Centre for Volunteering, volunteer managers

The Centre for Volunteering (NSW) has built a statewide reputation for helping volunteer managers access the tools, training, and support they need no matter their location. Through consultations, focus groups, presentations, and one-on-one conversations, The Centre identifies emerging challenges and delivers practical solutions.

Since 2021, over 2,000 participants have attended 48 tailored training sessions on topics such as volunteer leadership, program management, and engaging diverse communities.

The impact is clear: Bec, who oversees 600 social service volunteers, shares resources widely across her networks; Kelso, coordinating 500 event volunteers, values governance training to strengthen systems; and Paul, managing 1,000 Bushcare volunteers, relies on The Centre for up-to-date advice to replace outdated practices.

This initiative demonstrates the power of collaboration and lived experience in shaping inclusive volunteering. By combining statewide guidance with localised insight, Volunteering Tasmania is fostering a vibrant, welcoming, and culturally aware volunteer community that enables newly arrived migrants to engage, contribute, and belong.

 **READ MORE**

<https://volunteeringtas.org.au/for-organisations/resources/>



Participants consistently praise the practical templates, role descriptions, and ideas provided, with one noting, “Think outside both the box and the square... we’re stronger together.” By combining proactive outreach with accessible training, The Centre equips volunteer managers to lead more inclusive, effective programs across NSW.

QUEENSLAND

HBNC Volunteer Strategy Roll out 2023–2024

Collaborators: Hervey Bay Neighbourhood Centre, Volunteering Queensland

The Hervey Bay Neighbourhood Centre (HBNC) Volunteer Strategy has strengthened volunteering across the Fraser Coast by improving accessibility, recognition and alignment with the National Standards for Volunteer Involvement. Highlights included the Fraser Coast Volunteer Heroes Storybook, showcasing 96 stories of local volunteers. Its launch, alongside a Volunteer Expo, brought together more than 200 community members and 42 organisations, sparking new connections and inspiring participation.

To reduce barriers and improve the volunteer experience, HBNC introduced enhanced induction processes and cultural diversity training, reaching over 18,000 people online and directly engaging dozens of volunteers and staff. A Volunteer Managers Conference offered free professional development in coordination, while upgrades to the Fraser Coast Heroes database streamlined access to opportunities.

Together, these initiatives generated 181 new volunteer registrations and strengthened collaboration across the region, ensuring volunteering remains welcoming, inclusive, and impactful.

READ MORE

<https://volunteeringqld.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Project-summary-HBNC-Volunteer-Strategy-roll-out.pdf>

“The storybook features inspiring stories of local community members who tirelessly volunteer within our community while celebrating and honouring their commitment. We have so many incredible volunteers in our region whose unwavering dedication and selfless contributions profoundly impact our community. Their efforts, often undertaken without expectation of recognition or reward, embody the true spirit of generosity and compassion. Whether helping at events, providing essential support services, or simply offering a smile and kind words, volunteers bring light and hope to countless lives. We thank every single one of you!”

Kim Parnell – Editor, What’s on Fraser Coast Magazine (May 31, What’s on Coast Magazine Facebook page)



VICTORIA

Using Co-Design to Support Inclusive Volunteering

Collaborators: Volunteer West, Brotherhood of St Laurence, Volunteering Victoria

When it comes to breaking down barriers to volunteering, the most powerful voices are those with lived experience. In 2023, Volunteer West and the Brotherhood of St Laurence joined forces to co-design a project that would put those voices at the centre.

The initiative brought together people with disability, volunteer managers, and support services in a series of workshops that were as much about listening as they were about planning. Participants shared their personal stories, the challenges they faced, the opportunities they longed for, and the changes that would make volunteering more welcoming and inclusive.

For Phuong, a volunteer manager, the workshops offered new insight into how small changes in recruitment and workplace culture could open doors for people who are often excluded. For Maureen, a long-time carer and advocate, it was a chance to ensure the experiences of her community were not only

heard but acted on.

What emerged was more than a set of recommendations, it was a collective commitment. Organisations left with practical actions to make their programs more inclusive, while participants with lived experience felt empowered knowing their contributions were shaping real change.

The project proved that co-design isn't just a process, but rather a mindset. By creating space for honest conversations and shared problem-solving, Volunteer West and the Brotherhood of St Laurence demonstrated how inclusive practices can grow stronger, more connected communities where everyone has the chance to contribute.

 **READ MORE**

<https://www.volunteeringvictoria.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Case-study-North-West-Metro-CoDesign-to-Support-Inclusive-Volunteering.pdf>

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Empowering Inclusive Volunteering through Tailored Support

Collaborators: Northern Volunteering (SA) Inc and Southern Volunteering (SA) Inc

Across South Australia, the Volunteer Management Activity (VMA) is helping create volunteering pathways that recognise the diverse strengths and needs of individuals. By tailoring support, Volunteer Resource Centres are ensuring that everyone – regardless of disability, cultural background, or personal challenges – can find a purposeful way to contribute.

For Lora and Tommy, volunteering became a way to stay connected as a couple while living with complex health needs. With guidance from

a Northern Volunteering referral officer, they found roles as volunteer visitors, supporting older people in their new community of Victor Harbor. The opportunity gave them purpose, while ensuring they could volunteer side by side.

Carol, an international student from China, was unsure how to begin volunteering due to language barriers. With encouragement and referrals from Southern Volunteering, she joined Youth Opportunities, where she found not only experience relevant to her social work

studies, but also confidence and a “warm, welcoming family” that helped her feel at home.

Robyn, living with a learning disability, discovered her skills were truly valued when she was connected to an administrative role. Her enthusiasm quickly made her an integral part of the team, even representing her organisation at a community expo. “Best thing I ever did,” she says. “It makes me so confident in myself and what I can do if given the chance.”

Another volunteer, living with anxiety, thrived thanks to a flexible, hybrid role designed with their needs in mind. Supported gradually and

respectfully, they are now a valued contributor: “I wanted to use my skills in a place where it didn’t matter if I had a bad day... this role fits me well.”

Together, these stories show how inclusive, person-centred approaches break down barriers and build stronger communities.

 [READ MORE](#)

<https://vsant.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Inclusive-Volunteering-Snapshots.pdf>

VICTORIA

Pathway to Purpose: Inverloch Winter Soup Café

Collaborators: Inverloch Community House, Volunteering Victoria

Inverloch Community House is known for creating spaces where people come together to learn, connect, and share skills. One of its most loved initiatives is the Winter Soup Café, a simple idea with a big impact: bring people together over a warm bowl of soup and meaningful conversation.

Each café event sees a rotation of local groups take the lead, from school students and the Men’s Shed, to disability organisations like Interchange and Yooralla, and even local walking groups. Volunteers step into roles as hosts, waitstaff, cooks, and storytellers, turning the café into a truly inclusive space where everyone has something to contribute.

For participants with disability, the experience has been especially empowering. Taking on front-of-house roles or working in the kitchen gave them opportunities to showcase skills, connect with the community, and be recognised as valued contributors. For others, it was a chance to develop leadership, teamwork, and event management skills that stretched far beyond the café walls.

There were challenges, of course, coordinating so many groups, balancing abilities, and managing logistics. But those challenges became opportunities for growth. Groups reported improved dynamics, stronger communication, and new confidence as they worked together to serve their community.

Most importantly, the café created a space for connection. Between bowls of soup and shared stories, people built relationships, learned from each other, and celebrated what’s possible when the whole community comes together.

What started as a winter project is now a pathway to purpose, proving that sometimes the simplest ingredients of food, conversation, and kindness are the most powerful tools for inclusion.

 [READ MORE](#)

<https://www.volunteeringvictoria.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Case-study-Gippsland-Inverloch-Soup-Cafe-1.pdf>

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Annual Volunteer Management Activity Grant Showcase

Collaborators: Volunteering WA and partner organisations below.

Volunteering WA values the knowledge, passion, and lived experience our community partners bring. We don't just build connections – we nurture meaningful relationships that help organisations meet best practice and align with the National Standards for Volunteer Involvement.

Our Project Grants are more than funding – they're a call to create bold, inclusive, and innovative volunteering opportunities for everyone. Each year, recipients share insights at the VMA Showcase, tackling barriers from cultural inclusion to youth engagement and inspiring practical change across the State.

“Having the opportunity to be present at the VMA Showcase and have conversations with volunteer managers about how to be inclusive has been terrific. To be at the coalface and talk to people and be able to say, ‘it's not impossible, it's actually easy to be more inclusive with just small changes’ has been a highlight. We don't expect people to be able to change everything straight away, but you can see that they are seeing the potential for change.”

By empowering organisations to listen, act with compassion, and lead with confidence,

Volunteering WA helps build a volunteering culture where everyone feels welcome, creating more diverse and resilient communities across Western Australia.

Recently funded projects included:

- Kimberley Aboriginal Women's Council – *The Ripple Effect and Rise & Shine*
- Volunteer South West – *Empower and Connect*
- Umbrella Multicultural Care Services – *Bridge to Belonging*
- Mettle Inc – *Mettle Together*
- Befriend – *Community Campfires*
- Bunbury Fringe – *Fringe Family*
- Peel Volunteer Resource Centre – *Bring the Change*
- EdConnect Australia – *CanteenConnect*
- St Patrick's Community Support Centre – *Client and Resident Pathway Program*
- Riding for the Disabled Association, Carine – *Leadership Mentoring Program*

 **READ MORE**

<https://www.volunteeringwa.org.au/volunteer-management/programs-and-projects/volunteer-management-activity-vma>



The Annual VMA-funded Project Showcase attracts over 100 volunteer managers

VICTORIA

First Nations Cultural Awareness Workshop and Yarning Sessions

As the peak body for volunteering in Ballarat, the Ballarat Foundation is committed to helping volunteer involving organisations create more inclusive environments. In 2024, it hosted a First Nations Cultural Awareness and Yarning Session in partnership with the Ballarat and District Aboriginal Co-operative (BADAC). Similar workshops have been delivered in other parts of Australia, reflecting a growing movement to strengthen cultural understanding in volunteering.

The session opened with a traditional Smoking Ceremony led by Wadawurrung Education Officer, Ash Skinner, a practice that welcomed participants and invited them to reflect with openness. Guided by Ash (Wadawurrung) and Sash (BADAC), participants heard personal stories of cultural values, local history, and connections to Country. Their reflections encouraged deep listening, challenged assumptions, and highlighted the importance of respect in building stronger communities.

The impact was clear. Post-event evaluation showed that more than 90% of participants felt their knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture had grown, over half felt more confident sharing this knowledge with others, and almost all (97%) recognised how personal bias can shape perceptions.

By creating space for dialogue and understanding, the Ballarat Foundation demonstrated how cultural awareness can foster inclusive volunteering. The session not only strengthened individual knowledge but also equipped organisations with the tools to support more respectful engagement across the community.

READ MORE

<https://www.volunteeringvictoria.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Case-study-Grampians-Cultural-Awareness-and-Yarning-Session.pdf>

“Thanks so much Ash for your incredible Cultural Yarning session. Your generosity and humour in telling us “white fellas” the stories of Wadawurrung history and the impact of invasion and displacement and the pain of our history. You have taught me a great deal.”

“Thank you for walking us through your story and sharing your culture – so very appreciated.”

Wadawurrung Education Officer, Ash, spoke about his childhood, stereotypes, and embracing cultural identity





SUCCESS PILLAR 3

Delivery of improved accessibility and range of volunteer management products and services

Develop and deliver services and tools that build organisational capacity, including:

- Best practice recruitment and training of volunteers
- Provision of information, tools, training and resources for volunteer-organisations including regulatory obligations and risk management (governance, work health and safety, insurance, background/police checks)
- Build capacity of organisations to break down barriers to volunteering and provide face-to-face services to support people to participate in volunteering

Monitor trends and address evolving needs in the volunteer sector:

- Provide tools and resources for volunteer involving organisations that want to establish or improve their online accessibility and update as technology changes

National volunteering peak body support for the sector

Across the country, state and territory volunteering peak bodies have collaborated to enhance the accessibility and quality of volunteer management resources and products. Through innovative training opportunities, leadership networks, and tailored tools, these initiatives strengthen volunteer involving organisations and ensure they are better equipped to recruit, support, and retain volunteers. This collective effort expands reach, reduces barriers, and builds sector-wide capability.

National Standards for Volunteer Involvement

Volunteering Australia and state and territory volunteering peak bodies worked together to consult, review and refresh the National Standards for Volunteer Involvement, to ensure they remained current and supportive of a contemporary volunteering ecosystem.

In line with this refresh, the state and territory peaks rolled out updated resources, training and self-assessment tools for volunteer involving organisations to assist organisations in achieving best practice.

Professional Development Calendar

The national professional development calendar brings together a wide range of training and workshops designed to strengthen volunteer management practice. Topics span governance, cultural awareness, inclusive recruitment, and emerging sector challenges, and leadership skills. By offering flexible delivery formats, including digital tools, online webinars, and in-person events, organisations of all sizes can upskill their staff and volunteers. Delivered by state and territory peaks, it ensures access to high-quality learning opportunities regardless of location. The result is a stronger and more connected volunteer sector where managers feel confident and supported.

Digital learning modules, articles, videos, fact sheets, guides and case studies

A coordinated approach reduces duplication, shares expertise nationally, whilst addressing local needs, and ensures consistent messaging around best practice aligned with the National Standards for Volunteer Involvement.

Resources are available through the state and territory websites, providing easy access for local organisations that come to their peak body for expert advice, and are also accessible on central national platforms ensuring volunteer managers and organisations outside our typical networks can find and access resources to help advance volunteering. The National Knowledge Base, a volunteer management resource library, organises the best volunteer management resources in one place. The resources, designed and supported by all volunteering peak bodies, provide clear guidance and practical tools for leading volunteers in your organisation. The Volunteering Gateway is a centralised and curated platform designed to support people who manage volunteers by providing access to a comprehensive range of resources, relevant technology solutions, and nation-wide training opportunities.

volunteeringact.org.au

volunteering.com.au

volunteeringqld.org.au

vsant.org.au

volunteeringtas.org.au

volunteeringvictoria.org.au

volunteeringwa.org.au

National Knowledge Base: <https://volunteering.freshdesk.com/support/home>

National Volunteering Gateway: <https://volunteeringgateway.org.au/>

Volunteer leader networks and special interest groups

Volunteer leadership networks create spaces for peer learning, collaboration, and innovation across the sector. These networks, led by state and territory volunteering peak bodies, connect volunteer managers and coordinators through regular forums, meet-ups and communities of practice. Special interest groups focus on priority areas such as diversity and inclusion, regional engagement, and youth volunteering, providing targeted opportunities to address specific challenges. By sharing resources, strategies, and lived experiences, these networks build capability and confidence while fostering a culture of collaboration within our volunteering ecosystem. They also create a direct feedback loop between volunteer involving organisations and peak bodies, helping ensure that future programs and policies reflect real sector needs. This connectedness strengthens the volunteer ecosystem nationally, leading to improved volunteer experiences and sustainable participation.

The networks facilitate peer support, resource sharing, and collaboration, helping volunteer leaders feel connected and supported.

“The network has been extremely valuable, connecting with other volunteer managers as we implement our volunteer program.”

“We’ve seen a noticeable shift toward collaboration [and] coming together in more purposeful ways to support inclusive volunteering. These relationships are laying the foundation for systems-level change and a stronger, more connected volunteer sector.”

Interviewing university volunteers for VWA Volunteer Bingo!



Award recognition for organisations with inclusion and diversity programs

Volunteering has a powerful impact when it is accessible to all; this Award celebrates volunteering programs that have created inclusive cultures that reflect the diverse communities they serve and have improved participation from a greater range of community members.

Volunteering peak bodies across the country have introduced Award recognition for organisations and community groups that have made significant strides in promoting inclusivity, honouring their efforts to create welcoming environments and broaden participation within their volunteer cohorts.

Nominees will have demonstrated inclusive and accessible volunteering practices that increased volunteer diversity or improved participation for a greater range of community members.

Some recent Inclusive Volunteering Award recipients include Deepavali Tasmania Inc., Special Olympics Melbourne Inner East, and All Abilities Football Association in WA.



Read about peak body awards programs:

- **ACT Volunteering Awards** <https://volunteeringact.org.au/2025-volunteering-awards/>
- **New South Wales Volunteer Awards** <https://www.volunteering.com.au/awards/>
- **Northern Territory Volunteer Awards** <https://vsant.org.au/nt-volunteer-of-the-year-awards/>
- **Queensland Volunteer Awards** <https://vq.volunteeringqld.org.au/qva/>
- **South Australian Volunteer Awards** <https://vsant.org.au/savolunteerawards/>
- **Tasmanian Volunteering Awards** <https://volunteeringtas.org.au/tasmanian-volunteering-awards/>
- **Victorian Volunteering Awards** <https://www.volunteeringvictoria.org.au/events/awards/>
- **WA Volunteer of the Year Awards** <https://awards.volunteeringwa.org.au/recipients/>

You can see examples of the resources produced throughout this impact booklet, with a few additional stories highlighted below.

ACT

Best Practice Partnership – Synergy Law

Since 2022, VolunteeringACT has partnered with Synergy Law to provide pro bono legal assistance to organisations, enhancing the range of high-quality volunteer management products and services available.

This partnership has provided local volunteer involving organisations with critical legal support in an environment where most would otherwise not be able to afford it. Synergy's team provide an annual average of 35 hours each, totalling 280 hours of pro bono legal work delivered in one calendar year.

In addition to pro bono legal assistance, Synergy has also supported the development

of identified resources and facilitated training workshops. In March 2024, VolunteeringACT launched the 'Navigating Background Checks' resource, developed in partnership with Synergy Law to support organisations to understand complex inter-jurisdictional background check requirements. Since its release, this resource has been widely used by organisations.

 **READ MORE**

<https://volunteering.freshdesk.com/support/solutions/articles/51000390379-navigating-background-checks>

NEW SOUTH WALES

Professional Development That Transforms Volunteering Practice

Since 2021, The Centre for Volunteering has delivered over 140 free online professional development sessions to over 47,000 registrants across Australia. These programs strengthen the capacity of volunteer involving organisations and support the professional development of volunteer managers, fostering a culture of continuous learning, inclusivity, and professionalism. The Professional Development Calendar alternates between sessions on implementing the National Standards for Volunteer Involvement and addressing sector-wide issues identified through community engagement, complementing a broader suite of resources, outreach, and training to provide a holistic framework supporting volunteer involving organisations and volunteer managers across NSW and nationally.

The program is highly valued by long-term attendees, who emphasise its practical impact on professional and organisational growth.

 **READ MORE**

<https://www.volunteering.com.au/workshops-events/volunteer-management/>

"There are a couple of things I attend for; keeping up to date with legislation changes in the volunteering space... working with children checks, training, updates from legal services..."

Melissa Green, Volunteer Manager at Legacy Club Services

NSW 2025 State Conference



A Strong Volunteering Ecosystem

Volunteering does not just happen; it requires investment. Volunteering is not free. There are costs associated with recruiting, training, managing and supporting volunteers. A sustainable volunteering ecosystem therefore requires a funding environment that provides consistent, ongoing support to address these costs. A stable funding environment, including for volunteering, is a key recommendation of the Not-for-profit Sector Development Blueprint launched in November 2024.

Please refer to Volunteering Australia's Incoming Government Brief for recommendations for a stable funding environment for volunteering and a strengthened charities and non-profit sector, including:

- Cost-of-living relief to volunteers
- Increase funding for the Volunteer Management Activity
- Fund the full cost of quality service delivery
- Reform Volunteer Insurance



THE VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT ACTIVITY:

The Next Phase in Building an Inclusive and Resilient Volunteering Future

The Case for Continued and Expanded Investment in the VMA

The Volunteer Management Activity (VMA) is the national infrastructure that has enabled much of volunteering to thrive across the country. Since its redesign in 2021, it has delivered the systems, tools, and partnerships that help volunteer-involving organisations recruit, retain, and support volunteers, especially those from priority cohorts.

As the current grant agreements near expiry in 2026, the evidence across states and territories is clear: demand, complexity, and community expectation have outgrown the existing funding envelope.

Why increased, long-term investment is essential:

- **Volunteering is changing, it is a watershed moment** – People continue to give their time generously, but increasingly through flexible, digital, and informal pathways. Systems must adapt or risk losing this civic energy
- **Priority groups are central to growth** – Young people, CALD communities, and people with disability or mental health conditions are contributing more hours on average but face higher barriers and costs. Inclusion cannot be an add-on; it must be built into role design and leadership
- **Infrastructure is underfunded** – Volunteer programs rely on the unseen work of leaders of volunteers. Many are stretched, unpaid, and at risk of leaving the sector. Without sustained investment in leadership, digital tools, and insurance reform, programs cannot be maintained

- **Financial barriers are actively deterring volunteers** – Out-of-pocket costs are rising while reimbursement remains patchy. Expecting individuals to carry the costs of civic contribution risks excluding those with the least capacity to absorb them

Priorities for the next phase of the VMA

- 1. Grow access and opportunity** – Expand inclusive pathways for underrepresented cohorts and strengthen reach into regional and remote communities. Grow capacity for new ways of engaging volunteers to better reach changing demographics and people’s time and resource constraints
- 2. Invest in infrastructure and leadership** – Resource the people, systems, and tools that underpin high-quality volunteer management. The higher cost of supporting regional and remote locations should also be considered
- 3. Embed cultural safety and inclusion** – Support co-design with communities, cultural responsiveness, and trauma-informed practice across volunteer-involving organisations

- 4. Future-proof through digital and flexible models** – Simplify engagement and enable sharing of tools, training, and innovation
- 5. Consolidate and embed impact** – Invest in deeply embedding the wealth of work and resources created through the previous VMA tranches by consolidating awareness and uptake with hard to reach and lesser resourced cohorts through greater direct engagement and communication strategies

The return on investment

Volunteering contributes billions of dollars in unpaid labour, strengthens community resilience, and delivers benefits to wellbeing, inclusion, and workforce participation. Yet this is sustained on a fraction of its true value. Strategic investment in the VMA is a multiplier, unlocking greater participation, reducing barriers, and building national resilience. It is critical to maintain the momentum of the initial VMA activity to help organisations navigate ongoing structural changes effectively and build on the progress already achieved.



