

Volunteering Community Reference Group

26 May 2026

Communique #21

The Volunteering Community Reference Group (VCRG) is convened by Volunteering WA (VWA) to provide community input to the Minister for Volunteering. This communique refers to the meeting held on Wednesday 4 March 2026. In attendance were:

Dept. Premier & Cabinet	Name
Ministerial staff	Morena Evans, Senior Policy Adviser, Disability Services, representing the Minister for Volunteering
VCRG Members	Name
NFP volunteering sector	Craig Spencer, St John's Ambulance, Chair
Volunteer Resource Centres	Vicki Pollard, Peel VRC
Corporate Representative	Heidi Madden, Chair, Corporate Volunteer Council
Research representative	Dr Megan Paull, Murdoch University
Emergency Services Volunteer	Phil Scanlan (Metro)
Individual volunteer	Esther Bliss (Regional) Dr Tina Firth (Metro) Sandra Prosser (Regional) Rahul Seth CA (Metro) Michael Wainwright (Metro) Phil Scanlan (Metro)
Volunteering WA (VWA)	Tina Williams, CEO Dominique Hansen, Manager, Policy & Research
Department of Communities	Kristen Newman, A/Executive Director – Strategy
Guests	Chris Twomey, Senior Industry Fellow, Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre (BCEC); Angelo Barbaro, Executive Director, Regulation and Quality, Department of Communities; Priscilla Bignoux, Manager Strategic Policy (Youth & Volunteering), Department of Communities.
Apologies	The Hon Hannah Beazley, MLA Minister for Volunteering; Jacob Mitchell, Ministerial Policy Adviser; Hannah Godsave, Western Australian Local Government Association; Claire Harding, Department of Communities.

The Chair welcomed attendees and 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.

1. Opening Comments on behalf of Minister Beazley

The Minister's Senior Policy Adviser conveyed the Minister's sincere apologies for the meeting as well as the Minister's congratulations on an excellent National Volunteer Week.

2. Family Influence on Volunteering Participation in Western Australia.

Chris Twomey, Senior Industry Fellow, Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre (BCEC) presented about his team's VWA-funded research project ***Family Influence on Volunteering Participation in Western Australia***. The project analysed 23 waves of HILDA data from 2002 to 2024 for the Household Income and Labour Dynamics Survey Australia (HILDA), to investigate the effect of parental volunteering on volunteering participation.

The research findings demonstrate significant positive impact of parental volunteering in childhood and in early adolescence on volunteering participation and intensity across all generations. The impact on volunteering propensity and intensity is highest where exposure to parental volunteering takes place in early adolescence (10-14 years).

The researchers also identified the constraints and enablers for volunteering. The presentation was well received and prompted numerous questions from VCRG members who also spoke about potential implications for volunteering practice.

3. Volunteering WA Update

VWA CEO, Tina Williams, provided an update including:

The National Volunteer awards and the grants made to volunteer involving organisations who celebrated their volunteers during National Volunteer Week.

Key Policy and Advocacy work since the last meeting:

- A VWA member survey and ensuing advocacy on Fuel Supply Disruptions.
- Our federal Submission to the [Inquiry into small-business and not-for-profit insurance](#)
- Progress made by VWA's Expert Reference Group on Volunteer Screening in advocating for streamlined volunteer screening checks.

Data and Research:

Thanks to Lottery West funding and an extensive codesign process with VWA Members, VWA have released new free Measuring Change toolkits which can be downloaded at <https://www.measuringchangevwa.com/> by organisations wishing to document the impact of their volunteers.

On 22 April, the VWA Research Network showcased 4 volunteering related research projects which are currently underway. VWA has also commissioned research on Social Prescribing.

VWA is working with Volunteering Australia and other Australian Volunteering Peak Bodies towards new nationally aligned surveys and methodology for the State of Volunteering Report with a survey to be in the field from February 2027.

The VWA office will move to East Perth in June 2026.

4. Screening Check Update - Angelo Barbaro, Executive Director, Regulation and Quality, Department of Communities

Angelo explained that the new online portal for the Working With Children Check is on track for release at the end of August and will shortly go to user acceptance testing.

The screening unit will receive a further 18 staff to help address the applications backlog.

Angelo will provide VWA with a breakdown of total number of Volunteers versus Employee Working With Children Checks issued this financial year as well as similar data for NDIS screening checks.

5. Presentation by regional volunteer, Esther Bliss

Esther Bliss spoke about her volunteer journey which started with her move to Northam, a regional town with 12,500 people and approximately 70 Volunteer Involving Organisations (VIOs) with approximately 1000 volunteer positions, meaning that many people volunteer for multiple organisations. Esther explained her focus on assisting VIOs with recruitment and retention strategies. She also spoke about the Town Teams "Eldership Model" where the rules of their organisation don't require four defined positions which are hard to fill, (President, Treasurer, Vice President, and Secretary) but rather provide for joint

responsibility and shared responsibility across the committee. Esther also mentioned the Town Teams’ Mothership Model’ which allows auspicing of smaller organisations who are not incorporated, enabling these smaller groups to obtain insurance and grants.

Reference Group members discussed the issues raised and agreed to provide case studies and information about systemic governance issues for VIOs as raised in Esther’s presentation, to VWA to inform advocacy by the peak body.

VWA and Esther agreed to engage with the Department of Local Government, Industry Regulation and Safety and the Minister for Consumer Protection to highlight:

- systemic issues and proposed reforms to current Associations Online processes; and
- proposals to enable streamlined Incorporated association governance arrangements such as the eldership model, for Volunteer Involving Organisations.

6. Update on VCRG Membership

Kristen Newman, the, A/Director – Inclusion; Department of Communities, confirmed that VCRG Member terms had been extended and would now expire in November 2026. The Minister has approved an EOI process to be advertised in July each year with existing members invited to apply for the EOI if they wish to renominate.

7. Next VCRG Meeting

The next VCRG meeting will be held on Tuesday 4 August 2026 at 10am.

Special events 2026	
National Youth Volunteer Week	Monday 10 – Sunday 16 August
IVD Garden Party	Thursday 3 December
International Volunteers’ Day	Saturday 5 December

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