

Volunteering Community Reference Group

4 August 2026

Communique #22

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 Tuesday 4 August 2026. In attendance were:

Dept. Premier & Cabinet	Name
Minister for Volunteering	The Hon Hannah Beazley, MLA Minister for Volunteering
Ministerial staff	Jacob Mitchell, Policy Officer
VCRG Members	Name
Research representative and Chairperson	Dr Megan Paull, Murdoch University, Chair
Volunteer Resource Centres	Vicki Pollard, Peel VRC
Corporate Representative	Heidi Madden, Corporate Volunteer Council
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)
Volunteering WA (VWA)	Tina Williams, CEO Dominique Hansen, Manager, Policy & Research Jieun Ha, Intern, Policy & Research
Department of Communities	Priscilla Bignoux, Claire Harding, Department of Communities
Apologies	Craig Spencer, St John's Ambulance; Angelo Barbaro, and Kristen Newman, 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 her respects to elders past and present.

1. Volunteering WA Update

VWA CEO, Tina Williams, provided an update covering:

The report [State of the Nation 2026: Understanding and Rebuilding Social Connection in Australia](#) released in Ending Loneliness Week.

Work being undertaken by the Volunteering Peak Bodies to coordinate a nationally aligned State of Volunteering Report survey and analysis in 2027.

Volunteering WA's contribution to [Volunteering Australia's Employment Services Reform Submission](#).

Volunteering WA commissioned a research report: *Family Influence on Volunteering Participation in Western Australia* - Curtin University, Dr Lili Loan Vu, Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre which was published in July 2026.

The announcement of 2 new Volunteering WA research grants:

From Safety Stories to Safer Practice: Enhancing Health and Safety in Volunteer Services – University of Western Australia, Chief Investigator: Dr Emma Stephenson

From Recruitment to Retention: Evidence-Based Strategies for Strengthening Environmental Volunteering in Western Australia – Curtin University, Chief Investigator: Assoc. Prof Fazlul K Rabbanee

The social media campaign Volunteering WA is undertaking to coincide with the Census.

Volunteering WA are partnering with the WA Museum Exhibition to celebrate the International Year of Sustainable Volunteering 2026 by showcasing the impact and diversity of volunteering in Western Australia. Open from 28th August to 30 September 2026.

Partnering with Perth NRM, City of Fremantle, Notre Dame and University of Western Australia – Volunteering WA helped organise the annual Uni Challenge beach clean-up event in Fremantle for National Youth Volunteering Week, planting over 2000 seedlings.

2. Screening Check Update - Department of Communities

The Department of Communities reported that the new online Working With Children portal is progressing towards a revised launch date in October 2026. The Department will provide a presentation on the portal to the November meeting of the VCRG.

3. National Roundtable Update

Volunteering WA attended the National Care Worker Screening Round Table on volunteering and care screening. The roundtable provided the opportunity to advocate for key measures set out in our October 2025 submission, including:

- Explicitly recognise and consider volunteers who require screening checks across all sectors of the economy, in designing these reforms.
- Make screening checks free for volunteers
- Adopt a risk proportionate approach
- Establish a tiered screening check through one national portal
- Provide digital access through a single “front door” as well as flexible non-digital pathways.

4. Helping Start-up VIOs- Presentation by metro volunteer, Rahul Seth

The presenter spoke of the barriers encountered by founders of start-up volunteer initiatives and his three main proposed solutions to those barriers:

- Development of a web-based information hub to assist new volunteering initiative founders in WA to locate and access existing resources.
- Provision of free local government venue hire that doesn't require an initial investment in public liability insurance.
- A start-up incubator program to assist new cause founders to establish themselves, with funding assistance, capacity building sessions and mentorship.

The group responded by discussing existing resources that could address some of the barriers identified in the presentation. For example, Lions Clubs, the Mandurah Lottery Club and certain local governments, auspice start-up volunteer involving organisations, where a mission alignment exists. The Small Business Development Corporation, Justice Connect and the ACNC also provide some relevant resources and training. The group also discussed the importance of avoiding duplication of existing work being done elsewhere when founding new organisations.

The group agreed to the following actions:

- Volunteering WA to undertake fact-finding work to identify the gaps as well as mapping the existing resources for Western Australian volunteer involving start-ups e.g. SBDC and ACNC and Justice Connect's NFP Hub, Lion's branch club member programs for groups with a minimum of 5 members who are self-governing and are auspiced by branch clubs who provide meeting venues and online training,

- Volunteering WA hub venue (East Perth) may be available to VIO start-ups depending on requirements.
- Minister's advisor to speak to the office of the Minister for Small Business to explore the scope for the provision of resources/supports for founders of start -up Volunteer involving organisations through the SBDC.

5.Update on Volunteering Community Reference Group Membership and new EOI process

The Expression of interest for the VCRG opened on 20 July and closes at 4pm on 24 August. The link to apply can be found in the application pack on the [Volunteering Community Reference Group](#) page on the Department of Communities website. Everyone is encouraged to promote the application process widely.

6. Presentation on Disability Inclusion by Vicki Pollard of Peel Volunteer Resource Centre and Tina Williams of Volunteering WA.

Volunteering WA provided an overview of available data and research specifically for volunteering by People With a Disability. Also addressed were the concerns relating to changes in social supports through the NDIS reforms that adversely impact volunteers with disabilities.

Peel Volunteer Resource Centre and Volunteering WA shared successful examples of inclusive volunteering including a partnership with Mission Australia in 2025 to deliver training, the Peel Sociability Project funded by a Volunteering Management Activity Grant through Volunteering WA, and projects from Good Sammy's and Foodbank. Peel VRC emphasized one-on-one support for the person with the disability was integral to successful matching and placement commencement. Peel VRC's Sociability project has developed a free training resource on how to support a person with a disability to volunteer. The program is person-centred, and resource and time intensive, but the outcomes are significant and worth the investment. Even though the funding has ceased, Peel Volunteer Resource Centre is continuing to apply the principles in their service delivery.

7. National Conference 2026

Rahul Seth, a VCRG metropolitan volunteer representative spoke about his key learnings and the key themes from the of [Volunteering Australia Conference 2026](#). Rahul noted that across every session, the conference delivered one overarching message: Australia must redesign volunteering for a new era- one that is flexible, tech-enabled, human-centred, youth-inclusive, impact-driven, and recognised as essential national infrastructure.

7. Next VCRG Meeting

The next VCRG meeting will be held on Wednesday 4 November 2026 at 10am at Dumas House.

Special events 2026	
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](#).