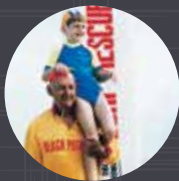
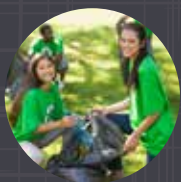




Government of **Western Australia**
Department of **Communities**

WA Volunteering Strategy

Enriching lives, strengthening communities



Minister's message



Many people spend their entire lives volunteering with community organisations or sporting clubs without ever considering themselves to be 'volunteers' – it's just something that they do without consideration or reservation. That is what makes Western Australia's volunteers so important.

The socio-economic and cultural impact of volunteering to WA is widely underestimated. Without their contributions our economy and our communities, Western Australia would grind to a halt.

The economic contributions of volunteering are huge, but research also indicates that volunteering enhances social cohesion, strengthens communities and provides benefits to volunteers themselves – in terms of increased social inclusion, physical and psychological wellbeing and career opportunities.

Many community services and programs supported by volunteers help those who are experiencing hardship. These programs have such a positive impact on the wellbeing of so many Western Australians.

The WA Volunteering Strategy builds on national and international research as well as extensive consultation with, and guidance from, a wide range of stakeholders. It provides a broad framework for action and suggests strategies that can be implemented by all levels of government, non-government organisations, the private sector and the community, to encourage and support volunteering.

Through this and other initiatives, the State Government continues to support volunteering organisations and the 80 per cent of Western Australians who donate their time to volunteer work in their communities.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mick Murray', written in a cursive style.

Hon Mick Murray MLA
Minister for Seniors and Ageing;
Volunteering; Sport and Recreation



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Introduction

Each year, about 80 per cent¹ of Western Australians aged 15 years and over give their time for the good of the community. Volunteers play a vital role in Western Australian communities, making a social, economic and cultural contribution to the State conservatively valued at \$39 billion annually².

Volunteers create, support and sustain organisations delivering services and activities that are essential to our communities. Among other activities, volunteers' work ensures that Western Australia's community sport, recreation, arts and culture thrives.

The WA Volunteering Strategy is a call to action for the whole community to work together to encourage and support volunteering in WA.

What is volunteering?

In 2015, Volunteering Australia developed a definition that reflects the contemporary nature of the sector and volunteering. It defines volunteering as:

"... time willingly given for the common good and without financial gain."

Volunteering Australia also developed guidelines to clarify the range of activities and contributions that constitute contemporary volunteering, which are available at www.volunteeringaustralia.org

This definition is reflected in the WA Volunteering Strategy.

Why is volunteering important?

Research shows that volunteering delivers important intrinsic and measurable benefits to society and the community, individuals and organisations.

Volunteering:

- grows community strength, resilience and inclusiveness through active social and civic participation
- generates innovative responses to community issues and challenges
- harnesses the collective strengths and assets of the community and its members
- enhances and extends organisational capacity through the acquisition of new skills, experiences and perspectives
- provides pathways to participation, inclusion, skills development and employment
- enables and drives economic growth
- can generate a personal sense of purpose, meaning, achievement and wellbeing³.



Volunteering in Western Australia

An estimated 80 per cent of Western Australians aged 15 years and over donate about 15.9 hours per month to the community. Their contribution equates to more than 315 million hours each year. This investment returns a personal wellbeing benefit valued at \$9.9 billion annually.

Volunteering is WA's largest industry based on participation which delivers high returns to the community. The sum social, economic and cultural value of volunteering has been estimated at about \$39 billion annually.

Every dollar invested by the State's 5,000 volunteer-involving organisations returns \$4.50 in benefits to the community. It is estimated that a one per cent annual increase in the rate of volunteering would create an additional \$6.12 billion in benefits over 10 years. Employee volunteering adds around \$9.4 billion to the WA economy annually⁴.

The Western Australian Government has a long history of strengthening WA's volunteer sector by funding, supporting and driving volunteering initiatives, ensuring the sector's sustainability. This includes:

- annual funding of more than \$1.3 million to Volunteering WA and other volunteering support services to build the capacity of the volunteer sector and volunteers
- information, advice and guidelines on volunteering for the government and non-government sectors
- subsidised National Police Certificates through the WA Volunteer National Police Certificate Program, which addresses financial barriers to volunteering
- recognising volunteers through programs such as the WA Volunteer Service Awards, State Emergency Service Awards, Multicultural Recognition Awards and Sport and Recreation Supporting Volunteers Award
- Thank a Volunteer Day Grants for community celebrations across WA
- funding and supporting research on volunteering in WA.



The State and local governments are some of WA's largest volunteer-involving organisations. They engage volunteers to support the delivery of essential community services – such as firefighting and meals on wheels – as well as sporting, cultural, and recreation programs and activities that enhance local life. The Department of Fire and Emergency Services engages 26,000⁵ emergency service volunteers to support its operational, administrative and functional activities. More than 1,200 volunteers enable Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries⁶ funded organisations to deliver activities and events to Western Australian audiences.

Representing volunteers

Volunteering WA is the peak body for volunteering in Western Australia. It aims to build strong communities through volunteering, and provides a range of resources, services and support so that Western Australians are aware of and understand the nature and scope of volunteer activity. Volunteering WA makes a difference by connecting thousands of volunteers to community organisations.

Volunteering WA assists and supports organisations to work towards excellence in volunteer management by providing resources, services, training programs and expertise in the field.

Supporting and protecting volunteers

A number of State and Commonwealth policies, strategies and legislation support and protect volunteers and the volunteering sector.

The *WA Volunteers and Food and other Donors (Protection from Liability) Act 2002* and *Commonwealth Volunteers Protection Act 2003* protect volunteers and community organisations from incurring civil liability when doing community work on a voluntary basis.

The 2011 National Volunteering Strategy articulates the Australian Government's vision for volunteering, which is to ensure that by 2021 volunteering is encouraged, supported and recognised by all Australians. It sets out the following six focus areas for action⁷:

1. Respond to trends in volunteering.
2. Harness technology.
3. Better regulation and risk management.
4. Strengthen management and training.
5. Strengthen relationships and advocacy.
6. Recognise and value volunteering.





The 2015 National Standards for Volunteer Involvement were developed by Volunteering Australia to support the involvement of volunteers, and provide a framework for volunteer-involving organisations. There are eight standards for volunteer involvement:

1. Leadership and management

The governing body and senior employees lead and promote a positive culture towards volunteering and implement effective management systems to support volunteer involvement.

2. Commitment to volunteer involvement

Commitment to volunteer involvement is set out through vision, planning and resourcing, and supports the organisation's strategic direction.

3. Volunteer roles

Volunteers are engaged in meaningful roles which contribute to the organisation's purpose, goals and objectives.

4. Recruitment and selection

Volunteer recruitment and selection strategies are planned, consistent and meet the needs of the organisation and volunteers.

5. Support and development

Volunteers understand their roles and gain the knowledge, skills and feedback needed to safely and effectively carry out their duties.

6. Workplace safety and wellbeing

The health, safety and wellbeing of volunteers is protected in the workplace.

7. Volunteer recognition

Volunteer contribution, value and impact is understood, appreciated and acknowledged.

8. Quality management and continuous improvement

Effective volunteer involvement results from a system of good practice, review and continuous improvement.

A volunteering strategy for Western Australia

The nature of volunteering, and needs and expectations of volunteers, are changing. This is a result of, and in response to, changes to the broader social and economic landscape. This presents challenges to be addressed as well as opportunities to be harnessed: volunteering-involving organisations and the volunteering sector need to be responsive to these changes.

While the State Government can provide general leadership, celebrating volunteers, supporting volunteering, and ensuring the sector's sustainability requires the collective efforts of the whole community. The WA Volunteering Strategy provides a broad framework for action and suggests strategies that can be implemented by all levels of government, non-government organisations, the private sector and the community, to encourage and support volunteering.

The strategy builds on national and international research, as well as extensive consultation with and guidance from a wide range of stakeholders including State Government agencies, Volunteering WA, local governments, resource centres, volunteer-involving organisations and, most importantly, volunteers.





Vision

Volunteering is promoted, supported and valued by the Western Australian community.

Outcomes

1. The volunteering sector can recognise and respond to the changing needs of volunteers.
2. More Western Australians, from all backgrounds, are engaged in volunteering and enriched by the experience.
3. The volunteering sector harnesses technological innovation to facilitate participation.
4. Communities and organisations can involve volunteers effectively for their mutual benefit.
5. Volunteers are recognised and celebrated.
6. Volunteering is recognised and valued for the contribution it makes to our communities.



Focus areas

1. Respond to emerging trends and issues.
2. Encourage and facilitate participation in community life through volunteering.
3. Support volunteer-involving organisations.
4. Recognise and value volunteers and volunteering.

Focus area 1: Responding to emerging trends and issues

Outcome 1: The volunteering sector can recognise and respond to the changing needs of volunteers

Data⁸ shows uneven trends in Australian volunteering. Volunteering rates are declining: more people are volunteering but for significantly less time and frequency than in the past. Most volunteer-involving organisations report they find it difficult to attract and retain volunteers⁹. Community and emergency services organisations are experiencing declines at the same time volunteering rates in sport, religion and education are increasing.

People are motivated to volunteer for different reasons including wanting to make a difference, meet new people, use their skills and experience in a positive way, or simply have a passion for a particular cause.

However, potential volunteers often cite a range of barriers to participation including personal expense, red tape and a lack of flexibility, as well as a lack of time or suitable volunteering options. The State of Volunteering in Australia 2016 report identified a disconnection between the available volunteering opportunities and peoples' interest, as well as a misalignment between the sectors volunteers are interested in and the sectors with the most positions advertised. Volunteers often want roles that are flexible, shorter term or associated with a specific cause or project.



Understanding these trends and issues will enable volunteer-involving organisations to adapt and develop targeted volunteering that suit the needs and preferences of potential volunteers.

Strategies – Focus area 1

- 1.1 Support or provide flexible volunteering opportunities
- 1.2 Understand and respond to what motivates people
- 1.3 Undertake research on emerging trends and issues
- 1.4 Promote corporate volunteering
- 1.5 Build the capacity of volunteer-involving organisations to respond to emerging trends and issues
- 1.6 Retain volunteers and broaden the scope of volunteer involvement
- 1.7 Minimise the financial and administrative barriers to volunteering



Focus area 2: Encourage and facilitate participation in community life through volunteering

Outcome 2: More Western Australians, from all backgrounds, are engaged in volunteering and enriched by the experience

Demographic change presents many opportunities to volunteer involving organisations. Diversity—whether in age, gender, language or culture—brings with it different skills, experiences and perspectives that can benefit the organisations and the community.

However, many diverse population groups are under-represented in volunteering data. This may be because they do not consider their contribution of time and effort to the community as volunteering, or because they face a range of barriers to participating in formal volunteering activities.

People from culturally and linguistically diverse, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds, rarely report the support they provide to family, friends and the community as volunteering. They, along with older people, young people, people with disability and people living in regional and remote areas, may face additional barriers, such as language or physical barriers, lack of transport or being restricted to volunteering at home, that prevent them from volunteering formally.

Volunteering offers many opportunities for personal and social enrichment. It contributes to social inclusion and participation, and provides an avenue for isolated and marginalised people and groups to connect with organisations and the wider community. This interaction generates mutual benefits, including:

- relationships with and trust in each other
- a sense of achievement, purpose and fulfilment
- acquiring new skills and knowledge
- developing confidence, capacity and efficacy
- better physical and mental health
- meeting new people and making new friends.

Understanding what prevents or deters people from volunteering will enable organisations to develop targeted and tailored engagement strategies.

Outcome 3: The volunteering sector harnesses technological innovations to facilitate participation.

Information technology and social media have changed the way people, communities and organisations engage and participate. Volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations alike are increasingly using these platforms to promote, apply for and undertake volunteering. Harnessing this provides opportunities to respond to the above trends and changing needs, and address barriers to participation.

Platforms such as GoVolunteer, an initiative of Volunteering Australia, make volunteering easier. They enable organisations to quickly engage and match volunteers and are highly accessible through multiple devices. Technology also enables new options and opportunities through virtual volunteering, allowing people to volunteer at a convenient time and location.

Strategies – Focus area 2

- 2.1 Raise awareness and understanding of volunteering and its benefits
- 2.2 Targeted promotion of volunteering opportunities
- 2.3 Address barriers to volunteering
- 2.4 Attract and engage volunteers from diverse backgrounds
- 2.5 Reduce barriers to recruitment and participation
- 2.6 Support volunteering in regional Western Australia
- 2.7 Support and encourage the use of technology





Focus area 3: Support volunteer-involving organisations

Outcome 4: Communities and organisations can involve volunteers effectively for their mutual benefit

The capacity of volunteer-involving organisations to attract, engage, manage and retain volunteers is critical to positive volunteering experiences, as well as the sustainability of the sector. While most organisations are passionate and dedicated, they often lack the resources needed to manage more than the basic needs of their volunteers, or to adapt and respond to emerging challenges, opportunities and changes.

Volunteer-involving organisations may have a wide range of support needs, including:

- engaging, retaining and assisting volunteers with complex needs
- training volunteers
- financial management and costs
- information and knowledge sharing
- governance, planning, management and administration
- understanding and implementing legislative and compliance measures
- intra and inter-sector collaboration and communication.

Strategies – Focus area 3

- 3.1** Support volunteer-involving organisations to manage risk, legal liability and legislative requirements
- 3.2** Training for volunteer-involving organisations
- 3.3** Administrative and governance support for volunteer-involving organisations
- 3.4** Reduce the financial burden on volunteer-involving organisations



Focus area 4: Recognise and value volunteers and volunteering

Outcome 5: Volunteers are recognised and celebrated

Outcome 6: Volunteering is recognised and valued for the contribution it makes to our communities

Meaningful recognition is one way to motivate and retain volunteers. Research has found most volunteers want their efforts to be recognised and valued. Community-wide promotion and celebration of the value of volunteering is critical to maintaining and sustaining a culture of volunteering.

There are many ways to do this and understanding the needs and motivations of volunteers can help organisations to develop meaningful recognition programs. Volunteers who are motivated by wanting to give back or make a difference may respond to formal recognition or reward. Those who volunteer to develop skills or as a pathway to employment may find practical recognition, such as training and development, more meaningful.

The State Government provides and supports opportunities to recognise volunteers. This includes formal recognition programs such as the WA Volunteer Service Awards, and promoting and supporting National Volunteer Week in May, and International Volunteer Day on 5 December.



Strategies – Focus area 4

- 4.1 Support volunteer recognition programs
- 4.2 Develop innovative ways to recognise and value volunteering
- 4.3 Provide training and development opportunities for volunteers



Acknowledgements

The Western Australian Government would like to thank all of the people that contributed to developing the WA Volunteering Strategy. More than 160 people participated in community consultations and online survey responses.

A particular thank you is extended to Volunteering WA and members of the WA Volunteering Strategy Steering Group.

Footnotes

- ¹ According to research by the Institute of Public Management. This equates to 1,674,036, calculated as 79.5% of the total ERP WA population as at 30 June 2015 aged 15 years over. Institute of Public Management (IPM) in *The Economic, Social and Cultural Value of Volunteering to Western Australia (2015)*, commissioned by Volunteering WA.
- ² Volunteering WA and the IPM, 2015
- ³ Volunteering Australia (2015) *The National Standards for Volunteer Involvement*; Australian Government (2011) *Australia Volunteers: Inspiring the Volunteer in You-National Volunteering Strategy*, Volunteering WA and IPM, 2015
- ⁴ Volunteering WA and IPM, 2015
- ⁵ www.dfes.wa.gov.au
- ⁶ Department of Culture and the Arts Annual Report 2016
- ⁷ National Volunteering Strategy
- ⁸ National Volunteering Strategy
- ⁹ Volunteering Australia (2016) *State of Volunteering in Australia – Help create happiness*

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