

# Volunteering



Edited by Justin Healey

**ISSUES**  
**IN SOCIETY**

# Volunteering

Volume | 455

**ISSUES**  
**IN SOCIETY**

Edited by Justin Healey

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<b>CHAPTER 1</b>	<b>STATE OF VOLUNTEERING IN AUSTRALIA</b>	
	Volunteers in Australia	1
	Definitions of volunteering	3
	Volunteering benefits our community and society, but rates are declining	4
	State of the world’s volunteerism report: the thread that binds	6
	Volunteerism: the thread that binds	7
	Who are Australia’s volunteers?	9
	State of volunteering in Australia: key findings and statistics	11
	State of volunteering in Australia	12
	Volunteering rates in Australia	15
	Volunteers contribute 743 million hours to the community	17
	‘Value of volunteering support services’ research report	18
	Volunteering strategies around Australia	20
<b>CHAPTER 2</b>	<b>GETTING INVOLVED IN VOLUNTEERING</b>	
	Why don’t more people volunteer? Misconceptions don’t help	24
	Benefits of volunteering	26
	Ten things you should know about volunteering’s immeasurable value	27
	Is it better to give to a charity or volunteer?	29
	How to find volunteer work	31
	Volunteering rates are declining, but you could be helping out and not know it	32
	Stop calling young people apathetic. For many, volunteering and activism go hand-in-hand	34
	‘Selfie generation’ most likely to volunteer	36
	Volunteering abroad	39
	Interested in volunteering overseas?	42
	How can you ethically volunteer overseas?	43
	Aussie companies urged to get more employees volunteering	45
	Corporate volunteering in Australia: a snapshot	46
	Volunteering: the ultimate act of kindness	49
	<b>Exploring issues – worksheets and activities</b>	<b>51</b>
	<b>Fast facts</b>	<b>57</b>
	<b>Glossary</b>	<b>58</b>
	<b>Web links</b>	<b>59</b>
	<b>Index</b>	<b>60</b>

# INTRODUCTION

**Volunteering** is Volume 455 in the 'Issues in Society' series of educational resource books. The aim of this series is to offer current, diverse information about important issues in our world, from an Australian perspective.

## KEY ISSUES IN THIS TOPIC

It is estimated that around 3 in 10 Australians aged 15 years and over have participated in voluntary work, contributing 750 million hours and at least \$17 billion worth of work each year for not-for-profit organisations.

Volunteers provide substantial benefit to their communities and society more broadly. At the same time, volunteering expands the networks and skills of the volunteers themselves. Volunteering contributes to the economy and health of the nation and also to volunteers personally, by encouraging a sense of satisfaction and wellbeing.

What is the state of volunteering in Australia? Who are Australia's volunteers and what activities are they involved in? And why don't more people volunteer?

This book explores the benefits of volunteerism, and provides advice particularly aimed at young people on how to get involved in volunteering in Australia and abroad. Volunteering goes beyond simple acts of kindness; it is the thread that binds communities and makes them strong.

## SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Titles in the 'Issues in Society' series are individual resource books which provide an overview on a specific subject comprised of facts and opinions.

The information in this resource book is not from any single author, publication or organisation. The unique value of the 'Issues in Society' series lies in its diversity of content and perspectives.

**The content comes from a wide variety of sources and includes:**

- Newspaper reports and opinion pieces
- Website fact sheets
- Magazine and journal articles
- Statistics and surveys
- Government reports
- Literature from special interest groups

## CRITICAL EVALUATION

As the information reproduced in this book is from a number of different sources, readers should always be aware of the origin of the text and whether or not the source is likely to be expressing a particular bias or agenda.

It is hoped that, as you read about the many aspects of the issues explored in this book, you will critically evaluate the information presented. In some cases, it is important that you decide whether you are being presented with facts or opinions. Does the writer give a biased or an unbiased report? If an opinion is being expressed, do you agree with the writer?

## EXPLORING ISSUES

The 'Exploring issues' section at the back of this book features a range of ready-to-use worksheets relating to the articles and issues raised in this book. The activities and exercises in these worksheets are suitable for use by students at middle secondary school level and beyond.

## FURTHER RESEARCH

This title offers a useful starting point for those who need convenient access to information about the issues involved. However, it is only a starting point. The 'Web links' section at the back of this book contains a list of useful websites which you can access for more reading on the topic.

## VOLUNTEERS IN AUSTRALIA

### A SNAPSHOT FROM THE AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF HEALTH AND WELFARE

#### 3 IN 10 PEOPLE ARE VOLUNTEERS

In 2014, 31% of the Australian population aged 15 and over participated in voluntary work. Over a 12-month period, volunteers contributed an estimated 743 million hours to the community.

In 2012-13, the estimated value of voluntary work in not-for-profit organisations was \$17 billion (ABS 2015).

In Australia, volunteers provide substantial benefit to their communities. Organisations report that they bring new insights, enhance the image of the organisation, increase efficiencies and volume of operations, and improve effectiveness. Volunteering also broadens the networks and professional skills of the volunteers.

Volunteering is an indicator of wellbeing. It also has links to the economic and health status of a nation. It

benefits the economy and the health and wellbeing of volunteers by providing a personal sense of satisfaction and making them happier (AIHW 2017).

#### WHO VOLUNTEERS?

In 2014, 5.8 million people participated in voluntary work – more than half (54%) were female. Younger people were more likely to be volunteers, with 42% of people aged 15-17 volunteering, followed by 39% of

Volunteering is an indicator of wellbeing. It also has links to the economic and health status of a nation. It benefits the economy and the health and wellbeing of volunteers by providing a personal sense of satisfaction and making them happier.



people aged 35-44 and 35% of people aged 65-74.

While limited information is collected at national level about younger volunteers, the literature suggests that they volunteer to engage in their community for a combination of reasons, similar to volunteers of other age groups. Reasons include a combination of personal gain, desire to contribute, and social, cultural and family expectations. A 2015 study identified that the key motivators for people aged 12-25 for volunteering were linked to factors such as socioeconomic circumstances, education, gender, location, and cultural identification (ARACY 2015).

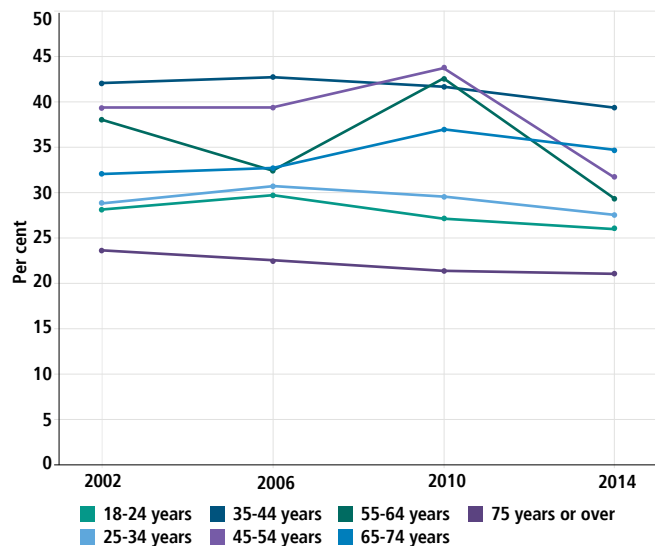
The volunteering rate in 2014 was higher for people who had attained a Bachelor degree or above. A total of 41% of this cohort had participated in voluntary work, compared with 32% whose highest non-school qualification was an advanced diploma or below, and 25% who did not have a non-school qualification.

Patterns of volunteering varied by geographic location, with 30% living in Major cities volunteering in the past 12 months, 33% in Inner regional and 39% in Outer

The key motivators for people aged 12-25 for volunteering were linked to factors such as socioeconomic circumstances, education, gender, location, and cultural identification.



**Figure 1: Proportion of people who undertook unpaid voluntary work in the last 12 months, by age, 2002 to 2014**



Source: ABS 2015.

regional and Remote areas.

Couples with children were more likely to volunteer than individuals without children or couples without children (38% compared with 25% and 29% respectively). People who worked part time were more likely to volunteer (38%) than those who worked full time (30%), were retired (27%) or not in the labour force for a different reason (30%).

Volunteering rates increased with increasing household income – 39% of people living in households with the highest quintile of gross household income volunteered, compared with 23% in the lowest quintile.

### HOW OFTEN AND WHERE DO PEOPLE VOLUNTEER?

Volunteers in Australia are generous with their time. In 2014, 50% of all who had volunteered in the previous 12 months contributed more than 50 hours during that period and almost one-fifth (19%) contributed 200 or more hours. Half (50%) of all volunteers had been volunteering for more than 10 years, and 70% had parents who had been volunteers.

In 2014, almost two-thirds (63%) of people who volunteered did so for 1 organisation, 24% for 2 organisations and 14% for 3 or more. The most common types of organisations were sports and recreation (31%), education and training (24%), welfare/community (21%), and religious groups (19%).

### TRENDS

Overall volunteering rates have fluctuated over time. In 2002 and 2006, 34% of all people aged 18 and over reported volunteering in the previous 12 months. In 2010, this increased to 36% and in 2014 it decreased to 31%.

Across age groups, fluctuations have been more noticeable, including increases in 2010 among those aged 45-54 and 55-64 and the subsequent steep decline in these age ranges in 2014, along with declines in all other age groups (Figure 1).

# DEFINITIONS OF VOLUNTEERING

Definitions of volunteering have changed to reflect the evolving ways volunteers are now able to contribute to society

Until recently, Volunteering Australia defined volunteering as activity that takes place through not-for-profit organisations or projects and is undertaken:

- To be of benefit to the community and the volunteer
- Of the volunteer's own free will and without coercion
- For no financial payment, and
- In designated volunteer positions only.

(*Volunteering Australia, 2009*)



The way Australians choose to volunteer has altered since Volunteering Australia's definition of volunteering was first formed back in 1996. This initial definition was formed with the expectation that volunteers worked in not-for-profit organisations, in a long-term and face-to-face capacity.

Under the previous definition, there were many different ways in which volunteers actively contribute that were not considered to be volunteering, including:

- Micro volunteering
- Corporate volunteering
- Digital/virtual volunteering
- Episodic and spontaneous volunteering.

In July 2015, following broad consultation and review, Volunteering Australia changed its definition of volunteering to be more inclusive, encompassing a wider range of volunteering activities including those considered 'informal'.

Volunteering is currently defined as:

**Time willingly given for the common good and without financial gain.**

(*Volunteering Australia, 2015*)

## SOURCES

*Volunteering Australia's Definition of Volunteering: Frequently Asked Questions* (July 2015).

*Volunteering Australia's Definition of Volunteering: Frequently Asked Questions Supplement* (May 2017).

These decreases reflect the broader changes noted in the *General Social Survey* of a decrease in the levels of involvement in activities that connect people to their broader community. The *ABS Measures of Australia's progress, 2013* also noted a decrease in the time and opportunity that Australians have for recreation and leisure, and social and community interaction (*ABS 2014*). The proportion of people providing help and assistance, such as home maintenance jobs, gardening, running errands and unpaid childcare to others outside their household, also declined (49% in 2010 down to 46% in 2014).

## WHERE DO I GO FOR MORE INFORMATION?

For more information on volunteers in Australia, see *General Social Survey: Summary of Results, Australia 2014*.

## REFERENCES

- ABS (Australian Bureau of Statistics) 2014. *Measures of Australia's progress, 2013*. ABS cat no. 1370.0. Canberra: ABS.
- ABS 2015. *Australian national accounts: Non-profit institutions satellite account, 2012-13*. ABS cat. no. 5256.0. Canberra: ABS.
- ABS 2018. *Information paper: Collection of volunteering data in the ABS*, March 2018. ABS cat. no. 4159.0.55.005. Canberra: ABS.
- AIHW (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare) 2017. *Australia's welfare 2017*. Cat. no. AUS 214. Canberra: AIHW.

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Volunteers in Australia are generous with their time. In 2014, 50% of all who had volunteered in the previous 12 months contributed more than 50 hours during that period and almost one-fifth contributed 200 or more hours.

- Walsh L & Black R 2015. *Youth volunteering in Australia: an evidence review*. Report prepared for the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth. Canberra: ARACY.

Data about people in Australia who volunteer are primarily drawn from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2014 *General Social Survey* (GSS). Volunteering in that survey is defined as the 'provision of unpaid help willingly undertaken in the form of time, service or skills, to an organisation or group, excluding work done overseas' (*ABS 2018*).

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (11 September 2019). *Australia's Welfare Snapshots 2019*, Volunteering pp. 147-150. Retrieved from [www.aihw.gov.au](http://www.aihw.gov.au) on 18 May 2020.



# Volunteering benefits our community and society, but rates are declining

Volunteers contribute billions to the economy, and volunteering is one of the forces keeping our civil society alive, writes Rebecca Huntley for **ABC Life**

**W**hen my eldest daughter was in her first few years of primary school, I used to volunteer at the school canteen. It was a truly memorable insight into school politics and how tense people can get about banana bread, but I found it enormously valuable.

The volunteer labour meant the food was good quality and the prices were low. I got to know the other mums (and a few dads) and the kids in my daughter's class. Teachers came by to have a chat and snaffle the occasional sausage roll.

*Combining volunteer work, paid work and raising kids is a juggle and indeed one that fewer Australians seem to want to attempt.*

I found it well worth darting out of the home office once a week to spend a few hours cutting, toasting and fiddling with change. The more pregnant I

got with my twins, the harder it was to keep up with volunteering and eventually they threw me out of the kitchen (I suspect I was taking up too much room).

Soon afterwards the canteen closed down due to a lack of volunteers and no one was able or willing to put up their hand to run the show. Of course, not all parents have the ability to work from home and negotiate flexible hours or to get someone else to mind their kids. The end was understandable, but nevertheless sad to see.

Combining volunteer work, paid work and raising kids is a juggle and indeed one that fewer Australians seem to want to attempt.

Data by the Australian Bureau of Statistics showed that 31 per cent of Australians volunteered with a not-for-profit organisation in 2014, down from 36 per cent in 2010. That is the first time voluntary work has fallen since recordkeeping began.

## WHY WE'RE VOLUNTEERING LESS

I would be reluctant to say that this is because Australians in 2014 care less about their community than they did in 2010. The shift is more likely to be the result of pressure on people's schedules and bank balances.

Many of us are doing unpaid caring work for family members, younger and older. And some of us are taking on a second job to keep the family afloat.

This drop comes after a sustained period of downward pressure on wages and the perception (if not the reality) that jobs are becoming more insecure.

While all kinds of Australians volunteer in all kinds of organisations, there are discernible patterns reflected in the ABS data.

If you live outside a capital city, you are more likely to volunteer. Women are more likely to volunteer than men. Volunteering increases with household income; time is money and if you already have money perhaps you can afford to give your time and labour away.

Volunteering is high for the young (15-17 years at 42 per cent) and the older (65-75 years at 35 per cent). Those in the 35-44 age group are also likely to volunteer, perhaps drawn into it by kids' activities and interests.

Certainly older and younger people are the ones with more time than the harried middle-aged cohort (that would be me).

It's not always about available time, though. People employed part-time have a higher volunteer rate than people not in the labour force.

All of this points to the fact that you need to have the combination of time and money to be able to volunteer.





## WHAT DECLINING VOLUNTEERING MEANS FOR AUSTRALIA

The decline in volunteering (if in fact the 2014 drop indicates the beginning of a trend) is worrying. Volunteers contribute billions to the economy, and volunteering is one of the forces keeping our civil society alive. Even large charities like Food Bank, St Vincent de Paul and the Red Cross rely on volunteer staff. Smaller community organisations couldn't exist without them.

Political parties run on volunteer labour, making volunteering essential to the functioning of our democracy. If there weren't volunteers, not-for-profit organisations would either collapse or have to spend more donated funds hiring staff.

There is also some evidence that volunteering is an activity closely associated with happiness and well-being. Certainly regular volunteers report the benefits to physical and mental health associated with their unpaid work. Individuals, organisations, the economy and our society as a whole benefits from high rates of volunteering.

*If there weren't volunteers, not-for-profit organisations would either collapse or have to spend more donated funds hiring staff.*

In 2001, South Australia was the first state in Australia to appoint a Minister for Volunteers. There must be more governments at all levels can do to encourage volunteering and ensure the drop from 2010 to 2014 isn't repeated.

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Some business organisations provide their employees with volunteer leave, but don't always actively encourage or provide ideas about how they could use that leave.

*Some business organisations provide their employees with volunteer leave, but don't always actively encourage or provide ideas about how they could use that leave.*

For the sake of our communities, and for the sake of our own wellbeing, we should make volunteering easier for all Australians, not just those with the time and money to do it.

*Overheard in Australia* is a regular ABC Life column where social researcher and author Rebecca Huntley goes a little deeper on the things we're talking and thinking about.

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Huntley, R (8 May 2019). 'Volunteering benefits our community and society, but rates are declining' (Updated 4 September 2019), *ABC Life*. Retrieved from [www.abc.net.au/life](http://www.abc.net.au/life) on 18 May 2020.

# State of the world's volunteerism report: the thread that binds

*Local volunteering is the thread that binds communities and makes them strong, according to a report from the **United Nations***



In a fragile and turbulent world, volunteers are active in every major shock and stress situation experienced by communities – from earthquakes and flooding to climate change and local conflicts. Often working behind the scenes, they are the thread that binds communities together, finds the latest *State of the World's Volunteerism Report*, published by the United Nations Volunteers programme.

The *State of the World's Volunteerism Report 2018: The Thread that Binds* draws on original research across five continents to understand how communities view volunteering. The report aims to help governments and development partners maximise the contribution of volunteerism as a property of resilient communities.

Focus groups and policy discussions for the report were organised in Bolivia, Burundi, China, Egypt, Greece, Guatemala, Madagascar, Malawi, Myanmar, the Netherlands, Philippines, Russia, Sri Lanka, Sudan and Tanzania.

More than one billion people volunteer globally. Considering the hours they contribute, this is equivalent to over 109 million full-time workers. This global volunteer workforce, or 'Volunteeria' as the report calls it, exceeds the number of people employed in six of the 10 most populous countries worldwide. The vast majority of volunteer work happens informally, with 70 per cent of all people who volunteer working directly to help people in their communities, while the remaining 30 per cent volunteer through formal organisations. Women represent 57 per cent of all volunteers.

As volunteers are active in all communities, decision-makers need to better understand the relationship between volunteerism and community resilience so that voluntary action has the best opportunity to contribute to the collective and public good.

By unpacking the distribution of the costs and benefits of local volunteerism under strain, the report examines how governments and other peace and development actors can contribute to making people's actions in volunteering a real part of community preparedness.

The report recommends:

- Providing adequate support and resources, so that volunteer groups and networks can step up from coping with, to preventing, shocks.
- Ensuring access to volunteering opportunities, including for those who prefer to work informally, and moving away from piecemeal volunteering projects.
- Supporting equal distribution of volunteer labour and impact.

The Centre for Volunteering (19 July 2018). *UN's State of the World's Volunteerism Report 2018: The Thread that Binds*. Retrieved from [www.volunteering.com.au](http://www.volunteering.com.au) on 18 May 2020.



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***The characteristics of local volunteerism most valued by communities are the ability to self-organize and to form connections with others***

Community members appreciate the ability to set their own development priorities and to take ownership of local problems. The networks, trust and empathy generated through social action are acknowledged across all contexts.

***These distinctive characteristics of local volunteerism can both boost and diminish community resilience under different conditions***

The duality of volunteering as both a means and an end of development means that each characteristic of volunteerism is potentially positive or negative depending on the context.

***Volunteerism is particularly significant for vulnerable and marginalized groups***

Mutual aid, self-help and reciprocity are important coping strategies for isolated and vulnerable communities. Self-organized actions can help marginalized groups meet their own needs in the absence of wider provisions and services.

***The costs and benefits of volunteerism are not always distributed equitably***

Women are more likely to take on the majority of informal volunteering in their own communities, for example, in an extension of domestic caring roles. Access to formal volunteering opportunities to develop skills, create new connections and access resources are not available for all, particularly those in low-income contexts.

***The manner in which external actors engage with local volunteerism matters***

Collaborations should nurture the positive characteristics of volunteerism valued by communities – its

self-organizing and relationship-strengthening properties. Peace and development actors can undermine volunteerism when they engage with people merely as a cheap and proximal resource. Done badly, partnerships with local volunteers can reinforce inequalities.

***Effective collaboration with volunteers can transform volunteering from a coping mechanism to a strategic resource for community resilience***

Forming complementary partnerships with communities helps to balance risks more equitably, maximizing the potential of volunteering to positively impact those often left furthest behind. Appropriately pooling resources and capacities across actors enables communities to take longer-term preventative approaches to dealing with risk.

***An enabling environment for volunteerism strengthens community resilience***

Governments and other stakeholders can strengthen the contribution of volunteerism to resilience-building in two ways: firstly, by nurturing an ecosystem for effective volunteering and secondly, by forming partnerships based on greater appreciation of the value of communities' own contributions. This will ensure that localization processes under the 2030 Agenda (for Sustainable Development) build on the commitment and innovations of citizens everywhere.

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United Nations Volunteers. *The thread that binds – Volunteerism and community resilience* (Overview, pp. viii-ix). Retrieved from [www.unv.org](http://www.unv.org) on 18 May 2020.

# WHO ARE AUSTRALIA'S VOLUNTEERS?

Nearly one-in-five people volunteered in the 12 months prior to the 2016 Census. In this piece, **Glenn Capuano** shares his 2019 update to the Australian volunteering story, highlighting the age groups that are most likely to volunteer, the difference between metropolitan and regional areas, and the local government areas with the highest rates of volunteering in Australia.

Since the 2006 Census, the ABS has collected information on whether a person volunteers for an organisation or group. This is quite useful to our local government clients, who often are responsible for organising and maintaining an army of volunteers, who assist in the local community with sporting clubs, aged care, maintaining parks and gardens, keeping schools going and looking after the disadvantaged.

The 2016 Census showed that 3.6 million people had volunteered in the community in the previous year, or 19.0% of the population, up from 17.8% in 2011, an extra 530,000 volunteers over 5 years.

The question is quite broad – to answer “Yes” you only have to have volunteered once in the past 12 months. But the power of Census is not the detail of a specific question but the ability to cross-classify against other characteristics and paint a picture of a specific community.

## SO WHO ARE THESE PEOPLE WHO ARE VOLUNTEERING?

Here are a few key facts about Australia's volunteers:

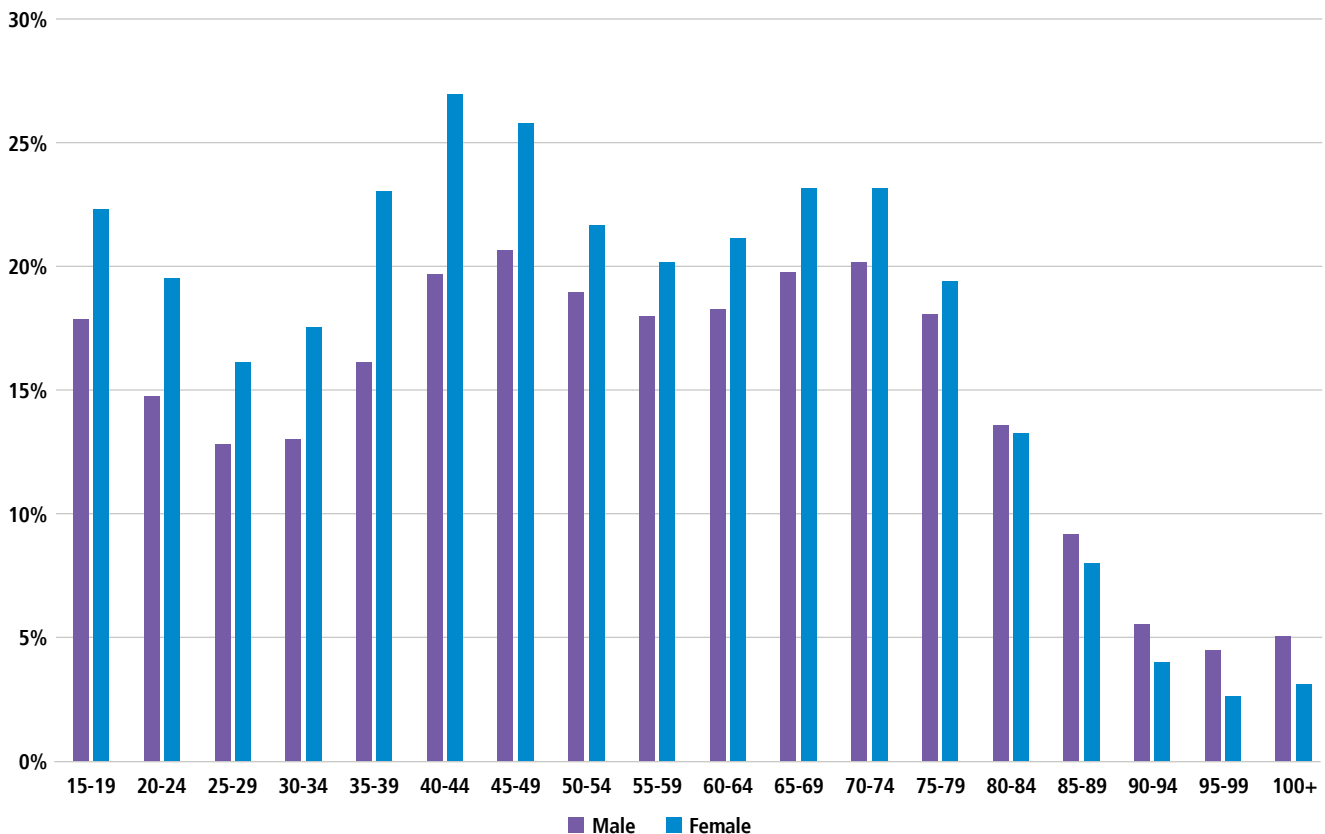
- Females are more likely to volunteer than males

(21% of females to 17% of males).

- The age at which people volunteer has three distinct peaks. Females in their 40s (but much less so for males), and both sexes in their late teens and again in senior years from 60-75 for both sexes (but again more for females).



## VOLUNTEERING RATE BY AGE BY SEX, AUSTRALIA, 2016 CENSUS



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- The peak among people in their 40s is interesting and likely corresponds with volunteering around school and children’s activities, hence the higher peak for females. For older populations, at retirement age, the peak is more close between the sexes, and this makes sense as many people volunteer after leaving the workforce.
- Among the very elderly population the gender balance reverses, and more men over the age of 80 volunteer than women, as a percentage of the population (it’s worth remembering that male life expectancy is lower, so while there are far fewer men in these age groups, a higher percentage of men volunteer, but there are still more female volunteers over 80, even though the rate of female volunteers over 80 is generally quite low).
- At a state/territory level, the highest percentage of volunteering is in the ACT, at 23.3%, followed by SA (21.4%) and Tasmania (21.3%). NT is the lowest at 17.1%.
- People in rural areas are far more likely to volunteer than people in urban areas. Overall, Regional Australia (outside the major capitals) had a volunteering rate of 21.4%, compared to 17.7% for the capital cities. But some rural areas have extremely high rates of volunteering. The highest rates are in these LGAs, which are almost entirely in SA and WA.
- Non-English speaking background populations are generally less likely to volunteer than Australian-born (or at least they are less likely to state volunteering on the Census form). It’s possible that some Culturally and Linguistically Diverse populations may be actively volunteering in the community but not identify with this in an official sense, or there may be a lack of understanding of what the question means.

*Volunteering data is available in all our community profiles, with a breakdown to suburb/district level. You can find the volunteering data under the ‘What do we do?’ menu on the left, with data going back three Census periods.*

.id Consulting Pty Ltd are population experts. Over 300 local councils and regional authorities across Australia and New Zealand commission their detailed local area profiles, which are then made available to the public as a shared resource for the community. **Glenn Capuano** is their resident Census expert.

Capuano, G (26 March 2019). *Who are Australia’s volunteers? (the 2019 update)*. Retrieved from <http://blog.id.com.au> on 18 May 2020.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS (LGA)	VOLUNTEERING RATES %
Kimba (SA)	51.8%
Mount Marshall (SA)	50.7%
Lake Grace (WA)	49.7%
Cleve (SA)	49.2%
Dowerin (WA)	47.8%
Wudinna (SA)	46.6%
Kulin (WA)	46.6%
West Wimmera (Vic)	44.9%
Jerramungup (WA)	43.5%
Orroroo/Carrieton (SA)	43.3%

# State of volunteering in Australia: key findings and statistics

The *State of Volunteering in Australia* report by **Volunteering Australia** details the trends, demographics, challenges and successes in the volunteering sector in Australia

## KEY FINDINGS

1. Responses suggest there is a disconnect between the volunteering roles that people are interested in and the roles that organisations are offering.
2. There is misalignment between the sectors volunteers are interested in and the sectors with the most positions advertised.
3. There is support for the creation of an informal volunteering platform.
4. Volunteers are deterred from volunteering because of lack of flexibility, personal expenses incurred, lack of reimbursement for out-of-pocket expenses, and burdensome administrative requirements.
5. Volunteer-involving organisations generally lack resources, both human and financial, and this can inhibit their ability to engage volunteers with barriers (e.g. people with a disability, people with language barriers). Lack of resources may also reduce an organisation's ability to recognise their existing volunteer base, and engage with corporates through Employee Volunteering Programs.
6. Volunteers are not getting responses from volunteer-involving organisations about opportunities fast enough.
7. Online methods of recruitment and volunteering could complement the needs of future volunteers.

## KEY STATISTICS

- 92% of volunteers feel that the organisations they volunteer for provide them with the right opportunities to match their interests and needs.
- 93% of volunteers saw positive changes as a result of their volunteering.
- 99% of volunteers will continue to volunteer into the future.
- 67% of volunteer-involving organisations say that volunteers bring new insights.
- 60% of people improve their patience skills through volunteering.
- 44% of volunteers have engaged in virtual volunteering in the last 12 months, a trend we expect to see increase.
- In a volunteer-involving organisation 57% of the workforce are volunteers.
- While 86% of volunteer-involving organisations say they need more volunteers, they face the following obstacles:
  - 30% say they were not able to engage the optimal amount because there were not enough suitable candidates or there were no means of locating them
  - Internal barriers such as time constraints (12%)
  - Limitations stemming from an inadequate funding base (12%).
- 51% of organisations do not have the resources to recruit or engage volunteers with barriers.
- The biggest barrier to people volunteering into the future is work commitments and out-of-pocket expenses incurred through volunteering.
- The most important forms of support for volunteer-involving organisations into the future is information and training around volunteer management, networking with other organisations and the ability to connect with volunteer management experts.
- To encourage more informal volunteering opportunities respondents suggest the development of a technological platform to help people connect.

Volunteering Australia (6 April 2016). *State of Volunteering in Australia*. Retrieved from [www.volunteeringaustralia.org](http://www.volunteeringaustralia.org) on 18 May 2020.



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# STATE OF VOLUNTEERING IN AUSTRALIA

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY FROM A PWC REPORT FOR VOLUNTEERING AUSTRALIA

### MATCHING PEOPLE TO VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES

#### Key finding 1

Responses suggest there is a disconnect between the volunteering roles that people are interested in and the roles that organisations are offering.

Comments from volunteer-involving organisations highlight that, generally, many involve volunteers as manpower as opposed to developing volunteer roles to suit individual skills and experience.

*“Lack of utilisation of volunteer skills is a big problem, possibly due to a store manager not being chosen for her expertise in management.”*

Moreover, several respondents to the survey for volunteers felt that volunteers were undervalued and their roles were not designed strategically to accommodate for skills and interests, especially relative to paid staff.

*“Despite rhetoric that the contribution of volunteers is valued equally with contributions of paid staff there are still many organisations who treat volunteers as individuals who will do all the tasks staff do not want to do.”*

*“In my experience, both complacency and ignorance of the enormous value volunteers contribute results in a lack of regard of volunteers as strategic assets.”*

#### Solution

- Promoting changes in human resource management strategies could result in a more efficient and effective use of available volunteer time.
- Utilising the National Standards for Volunteer Involvement resources and tools.

#### Key finding 2

There is misalignment between the sectors that volunteers are interested in and the sectors with the most positions advertised.

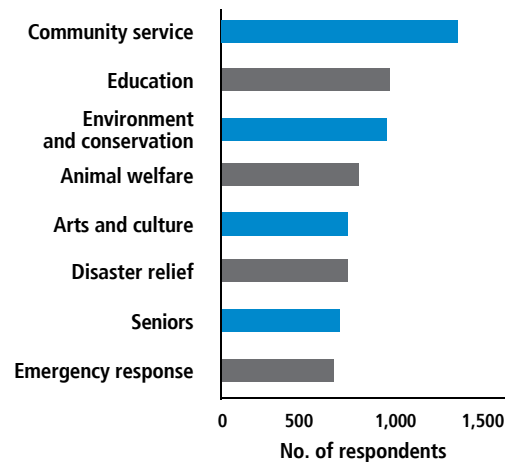
An analysis of the sectors that people would like to volunteer for in the future, compared with the sectors that have the greatest shortages of volunteers, suggested that there is an oversubscription to some sectors of volunteering whilst others are undersubscribed.

As shown in the below graphs, sectors including Animal Welfare and Arts and Culture are oversubscribed, while other areas including Disability Services, Young People and Health have a high number of volunteer vacancies needing to be filled.

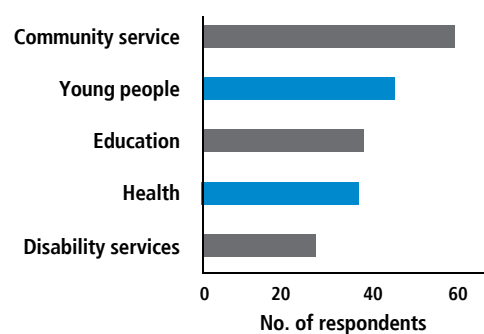
#### Solution

- To improve the balance of subscription of volunteers to different sectors of volunteering, the volunteering peak bodies, in collaboration with volunteer-involving organisations, should support the development and delivery of targeted marketing and recruitment campaigns to promote volunteering in undersubscribed sectors.

### TOP 8 SECTORS VOLUNTEERS WOULD BE MOST INTERESTED IN VOLUNTEERING FOR IN THE FUTURE



### SECTORS THAT NEED 151+ MORE VOLUNTEERS



### SUPPORT FOR INFORMAL VOLUNTEERING

#### Key finding 3

Informal volunteering is time willingly given for the common good and without financial gain, taking place outside the context of a formal organisation. The findings of this report suggest that informal volunteering is prevalent in society. Specifically, 46% of respondents participated in informal volunteering in the last 12 months.

When asked what support volunteers would like for informal volunteering, 33 per cent would like help to find informal volunteering opportunities.

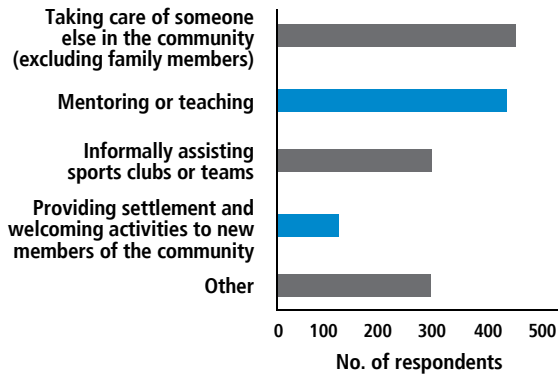
*“Knowing when opportunities to help come up. We don’t always hear when they want help.”*

*77% of informal volunteers were motivated to informally volunteer to support those in their community.*

#### Solution

- Investigate options for a technical platform to connect informal volunteers with those that require assistance. This platform would play a role in making connections and, at the same time, outline the risks of engaging in informal volunteering without the structures of formal volunteering, such as insurance.

## WAYS RESPONDENTS INFORMALLY VOLUNTEER



## NECESSARY FUTURE STEPS

### Key finding 4

Volunteers are deterred from volunteering because of lack of flexibility, personal expenses incurred, lack of reimbursement for out of pocket expenses, and burdensome administrative requirements.

Volunteers were asked whether they would engage in volunteering in the future. 1 per cent (33 respondents) stated that they would not engage in volunteering in the future. The biggest barrier to people volunteering into the future is work commitments (27 per cent), and out-of-pocket expenses being overbearing (27 per cent).

Of the volunteer respondents, 60 per cent incurred out-of-pocket expenses through their volunteering role and of these, only 18 per cent requested reimbursement. Of these respondents, 49 per cent received reimbursement in full, 44 per cent received reimbursement in part, and 7 per cent did not receive any reimbursement.

Several respondents found that administrative requirements for volunteering have been a significant deterrent.

*“The ever-increasing red tape, e.g. police checks every time you volunteer for a different organisation, the restrictions in what volunteers can undertake, the ongoing surveillance, health and safety structures, all of these things do inhibit volunteers.”*

### Solution

- Volunteering peak bodies and volunteer involving organisations should further advocate for red tape reductions to reduce administrative burdens.
- Explore avenues of virtual volunteering (such as online volunteering tasks), to accommodate for flexibility needs, as well as to leverage services already paid for by volunteers (such as internet and phone) (see Key Finding 7 for more information).
- Encourage compliance with the National Standards for Volunteer Involvement, specifically with regards to reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses.

### Key finding 5

Volunteer-involving organisations generally lack resources, both human and financial, and this can inhibit their ability to engage volunteers with barriers (e.g. people with a disability, people with language barriers). Lack of resources may also reduce an organisation’s ability to recognise their existing

volunteer base, and engage with corporates through Employee Volunteering Programs.

*86% of volunteer-involving organisations need more volunteers.*

Respondents suggest that the shortage of volunteers is driven by the following:

- 30 per cent of organisations were unable to engage their optimal amount of volunteers because there were not enough suitable candidates, or the organisation was unable to locate them. More common reasons include internal barriers such as time constraints, and limited funds to manage more volunteers (both 12 per cent)
- 28 per cent of volunteers stated that the organisation they volunteer for could improve their experience through recruiting more volunteers.

Of the volunteer-involving organisation respondents, 46 per cent of respondents were unable to recruit or engage volunteers with barriers, most commonly stemming from organisations not having the requisite resources (51 per cent).

### Solution

- More resources are required to enhance the capacity of volunteer-involving organisations to engage volunteers with barriers and to engage with employee volunteering programs.
- Further advocacy needs to be undertaken with regards to the economic impact of the contribution of volunteering to enhance central funding opportunities. This includes additional funding to further resource and support volunteer-involving organisations and volunteer recognition programs.





- Enhancements to the GoVolunteer platform could provide further tools to assist organisations with responding to prospective volunteers.

### Key finding 7

Online methods of recruitment and volunteering could complement the needs of future volunteers.

To address the misalignment in the types of roles people are looking for and the roles organisations are offering there is a call for volunteer-involving organisations to adapt to technological change. This would be beneficial in two key areas: recruitment and virtual volunteering.

Volunteers under 24 years old used an online source (i.e. GoVolunteer or Seek Volunteer, or the volunteer-involving organisation’s website) to look for volunteering opportunities (28 per cent).

44 per cent of volunteers have engaged in virtual volunteering in the last 12 months, with 19 per cent interested in doing so in the future. This involves undertaking volunteering tasks online, such as managing social media.

To continue to engage a wide range of volunteers, employing online methods of recruitment and facilitating virtual volunteering is essential.

### Solution

- There should be information and training for volunteer-involving organisations on workforce planning, including how to adapt volunteering roles and how to change program policies.
- Provide technological platforms that organisations can use.
- Provide training on technologies that would assist VIOs with recruitment and the ability to provide flexible volunteering roles, such as virtual volunteering.

### Key finding 6

Volunteers are not getting responses from volunteer-involving organisations about opportunities fast enough.

Of the respondents to the volunteer survey, 6 per cent had not volunteered in the last 12 months. Several respondents noted that the reason they had not engaged in volunteering was a lack of response from organisations.

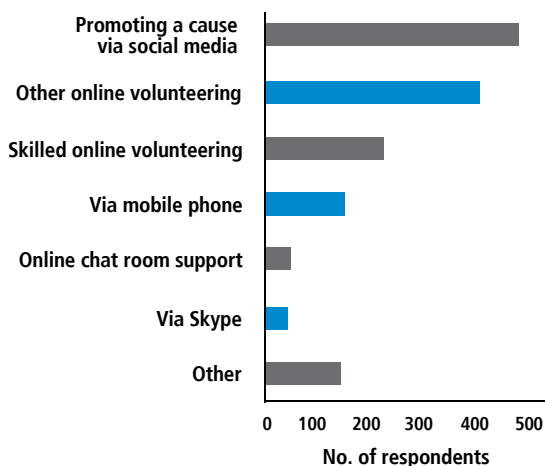
*“I tried to sign up for information about volunteering but wasn’t contacted again.”*

*“I am disappointed in that I have applied for a position and had to firstly send a request twice before I was acknowledged and then after I expressed my interest have not been contacted.”*

### Solution

- Volunteer-involving organisations need to ensure a timely response to volunteer expressions of interest.

## WAYS VOLUNTEERS HAVE PARTICIPATED IN VIRTUAL VOLUNTEERING



Volunteering Australia (April 2016). *State of Volunteering in Australia: Help Create Happiness* pp. vii-x. Retrieved from [www.volunteeringaustralia.org](http://www.volunteeringaustralia.org) on 18 May 2020.

# VOLUNTEERING RATES IN AUSTRALIA

The latest volunteering trends from the **Australian Bureau of Statistics**

Voluntary work is recognised as a valuable part of life in Australia. It contributes to community participation and the building of social connections. In the *General Social Survey (GSS)*, a volunteer was defined as someone who, in the previous 12 months, willingly gave unpaid help, in the form of time, service or skills, through an organisation or group.

In 2014, 5.8 million people or 31% of the Australian population aged 15 years and over, participated in voluntary work. Over a 12-month period, voluntary work contributed 743 million hours to the community.

## GEOGRAPHICAL COMPARISONS

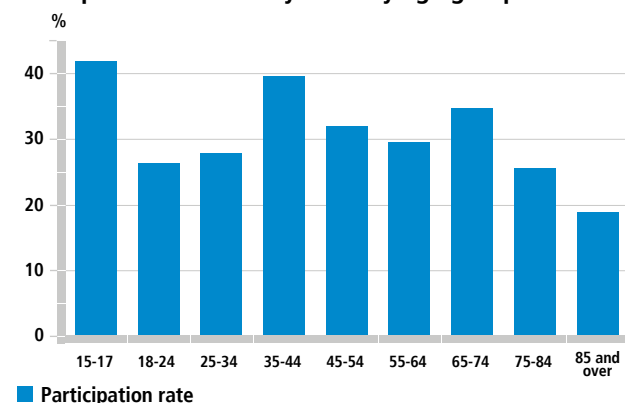
Patterns of volunteering differed by state and territory, and also by part of state. Volunteering was more common among those living in parts of Australia outside the capital cities. The volunteer rate was 30% in the capital cities compared with 34% in areas comprising the rest of state or territory.

## WHO VOLUNTEERS?

Between the sexes, women were more likely to volunteer than men (34% compared with 29%).

Volunteering rates were high for people aged 15-17 years (42%), 35-44 years (39%) and 65-74 years (35%) (*Graph 1*).

**Graph 1: Persons who volunteered in the last 12 months, Participation in voluntary work by age group**

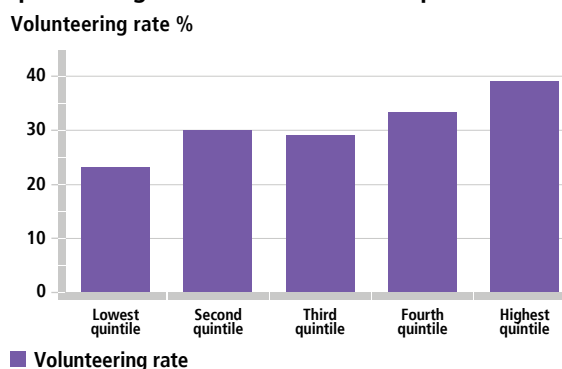


Couples with children (38%) were more likely to be involved in voluntary work than lone persons (25%) or couples with no children (29%). People employed part-time had a higher volunteer rate (38%) than those employed full-time (30%), or not in the labour force (retired 27% and other 30%).

## Relationship with income and education

Volunteering increased with household income. People living in households in the lowest quintile of equivalised gross household income volunteered at a rate of 23% compared with 39% of people living in households with the highest quintile of equivalised gross household income (*Graph 2*).

**Graph 2: Persons who volunteered in the last 12 months, Equivalised gross household income quintiles**



The volunteering rate was lower for people who had not completed a non-school qualification (25%) compared with those who had. Among people who had completed a Bachelor degree or above, 41% had participated in voluntary work, while people whose highest non-school qualification was an Advanced diploma or below had a volunteering rate of 32%.

## Length of volunteering and reasons for volunteering

Once people start volunteering, they tend to keep doing it and their children quite often follow. Nearly half of volunteers had volunteered for more than 10 years. More than two-thirds of volunteers (70%) also reported that at least one of their parents had participated in voluntary work.

The most common reason identified for being a volunteer was to help others or the community (64%), while more than half identified personal satisfaction (57%) or to do something worthwhile (54%). Personal or family involvement (45%), social contact (37%) and to be active (35%) were also reported as reasons for volunteering.

## ORGANISATIONS AND ACTIVITIES

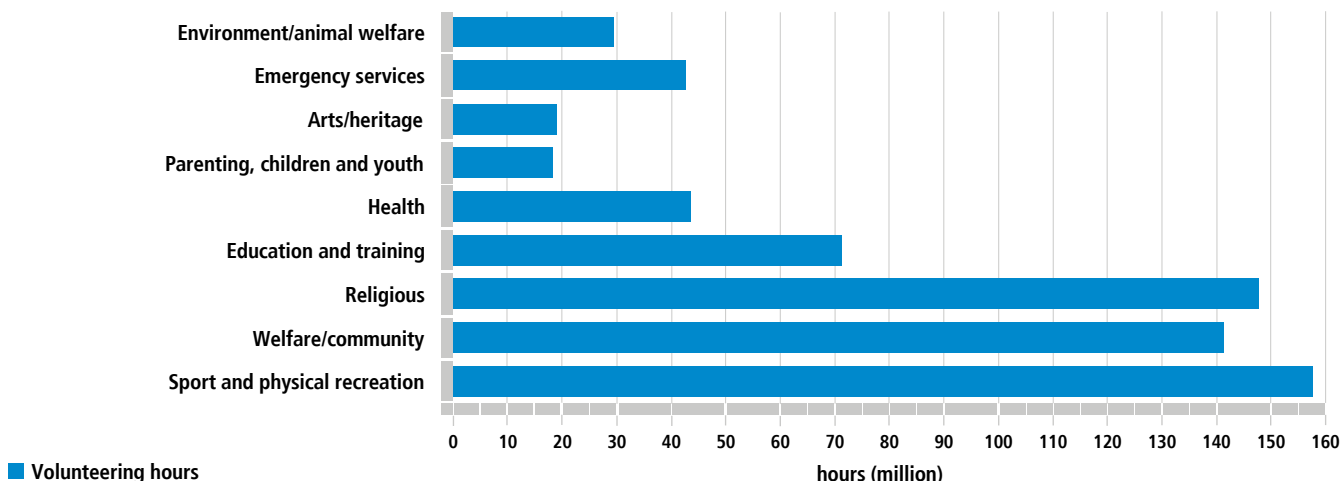
Of those people who volunteered, almost two-thirds (63%) worked for one organisation only. Almost a quarter (24%) did voluntary work for two organisations and 14% volunteered for three or more organisations. The most common types of organisations for which people volunteered were those relating to sport and physical recreation (31% of volunteers), education and training (24%), welfare/community (21%) and religious groups (19%).

## Hours volunteered

In 2014, half of volunteers contributed up to 50 hours of voluntary work. Almost one fifth (19%) reported volunteering 200 or more hours in the previous 12 months.

The work a volunteer does for each particular organisation is referred to as a volunteering involvement.

**Graph 3: Volunteering involvements, Type of organisation by hours of involvement**



In 2014, there were 8.6 million volunteering involvements. On average, volunteers contributed 128 hours of voluntary work in the 12 months or an average of 86 hours per involvement.

The types of organisation with the highest hours of involvement were sport and physical recreation (157.5 million hours), religious (147.6 million hours) and welfare/community (141.1 million hours) (Graph 3).

**Types of voluntary activities**

Volunteers undertake a wide range of activities. In 2014, these activities included fundraising and sales (23% of volunteers spent most of their time on this activity), teaching/providing information (15%), coaching or refereeing (14%) and food preparation/serving (14%).

**Costs and reimbursement**

In 2014, about half of volunteers (53%) incurred expenses related to voluntary work. Most of these volunteers reported that reimbursements were not available (41% of all volunteers). The most common expenses were for travel costs (42%) and phone calls (32%).

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Australian Bureau of Statistics (30 June 2015). *General Social Survey: Summary Results, Australia, 2014*. Retrieved from [www.abs.gov.au](http://www.abs.gov.au) on 18 May 2020.



# VOLUNTEERS CONTRIBUTE 743 MILLION HOURS TO THE COMMUNITY

Almost six million people volunteered in the past recorded year, according to data from the **Australian Bureau of Statistics**

**I**n 2014, there were 5.8 million people in Australia (31 per cent) who had volunteered in the previous 12 months.

Women are more likely to participate in voluntary work than men (34 per cent and 29 per cent, respectively).

Allan McLean from the ABS, said the results from the *General Social Survey* present important information about volunteers in our community.

“The highest rates of volunteering were for young people aged 15-17 years (42 per cent), those aged 35-44 years (39 per cent) and older people aged 65-74 years (35 per cent),” said Mr McLean.

*The most common type of organisations that people volunteer for are sport and physical recreation organisations (31%).*

The most common type of organisations that people volunteer for are sport and physical recreation organisations (31 per cent).

Couples with children are more likely to have volunteered in the last 12 months (38 per cent) than couples without children (29 per cent) or people living alone (25 per cent).

“Volunteers not only make a huge contribution to the lives of the people in our community, they are also essential to connecting people and building social connections through a greater sense of belonging,” said Mr McLean.

Nearly half of the volunteers have volunteered for more than 10 years and more than two-thirds of volunteers report that at least one of their parents had also participated in voluntary work.

The most commonly reported reasons for volunteering are to help others or the community (64 per cent), for personal satisfaction (57 per cent) or to do something worthwhile (54 per cent).

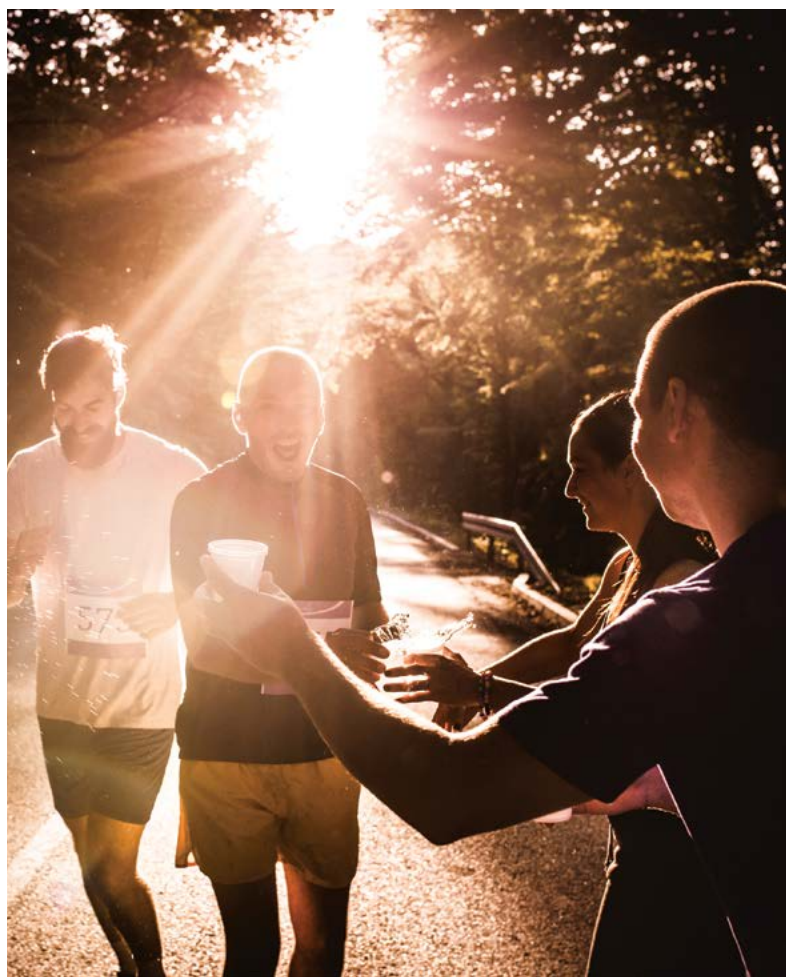
“We have found volunteers contribute 743 million hours to the community across diverse activities,” said Mr McLean.

“This equates to an average of 128 hours per volunteer in the last 12 months.

“Almost 20 per cent of volunteers performed more than 200 hours of volunteering throughout the year.”

*Further information can be found in General Social Survey, 2014 (cat. no 4159.0), available for free download from the Australian Bureau of Statistics website: [www.abs.gov.au](http://www.abs.gov.au)*

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*The most commonly reported reasons for volunteering are to help others or the community (64%), for personal satisfaction (57%) or to do something worthwhile (54%).*

## NOTES

- A volunteer is someone who is over the age of 15 and, in the previous 12 months, willingly gave unpaid help, in the form of time, service or skills, through an organisation or group.
- Voluntary work excludes employment or study commitments, for example, work experience, student placements or Community Work under Mutual Obligation in the last 12 months through an organisation.
- Reported reasons for volunteering are multiple choice, therefore percentages do not add to 100 per cent.

© Commonwealth of Australia.

Australian Bureau of Statistics (30 June 2015). *General Social Survey: Summary Results, Australia, 2014* (Last updated 16 September 2015). Retrieved from [www.abs.gov.au](http://www.abs.gov.au) on 18 May 2020.

# 'VALUE OF VOLUNTEERING SUPPORT SERVICES' RESEARCH REPORT

The Centre for Volunteering has released, in conjunction with Volunteering Australia, the *Value of Volunteering Support Services* research report. This report provides a socio-economic analysis and evaluation of the value of Commonwealth-funded Volunteering Support Services. Below is a summary of the report and its findings.

Place-based services, such as Volunteering Support Services, provide the critical infrastructure required for safe, effective and sustainable volunteering. They are responsible for the promotion, resourcing and support of volunteering in local communities, and assist thousands of organisations across the country to recruit, retain and manage their volunteers.

To capture the value of Volunteering Support Services, two surveys and a Census were distributed to Volunteering Support

## THE VALUE OF VOLUNTEERING SUPPORT SERVICES

Volunteering Support Services (VSS) promote, resource and support volunteering in local communities across Australia. VSS provide the vital infrastructure to recruit and retain volunteers in a variety of sectors, from civil society, human services, the environment, animal welfare and supporting groups.

 **\$477.5 million value**

 **+ 12.3 million volunteer hours**

**1,620 + 32,900 = \$12.6**  
trainings days in 2017      volunteers and stakeholders      million value

**58%**

VSS operations are community funded via donations of time and money

**92%**

of volunteers rate their VSS contact as good or better

**75%**

volunteer contacts result in successful placements

VSS can **save** Volunteer Involving Organisations up to **\$10,000/year**

**91%**

of all Australians value VSS, with

**94%**

of stakeholders willing to recommend them to others

Despite an increasing demand for the services of Volunteering Support Services, government contribution has remained static.



In 2017, all tiers of government invested **\$12.1 million** in VSS.

This represents a **17.3% loss** in Commonwealth subsidy (2009-21).





Services themselves, as well as to Volunteer Involving Organisations and volunteers engaged by Volunteering Support Services.

The results of the data analysed show that in 2017, the Commonwealth funded 52 Volunteering Support Services through the Volunteer Management Program.

The purpose of the program is to support “the delivery of Volunteering Support Services and one-off innovation and collaboration projects to encourage, support and increase participation in volunteering.”

Further, in 2018, 52 Volunteering Support Services will deliver 70 programs across each State and Territory across Australia.

Volunteering Support Services enabled nearly 12.3 million volunteer hours in 2017. This volunteering is worth \$477.5 million, and would not have occurred without the engagement of Volunteering Support Services. It is noteworthy to highlight that Volunteering Support Services would not exist without the \$5.7 million investment from the Commonwealth. This represents a return on investment of \$83 for every dollar invested by the Commonwealth.

The analysis outlined in this report provides evidence that des-

The purpose of the program is to support “the delivery of Volunteering Support Services and one-off innovation and collaboration projects to encourage, support and increase participation in volunteering.”

pite an increasing demand for the services of Volunteering Support Services, government contribution has remained static.

The challenge for Volunteering Support Services will be to demonstrate the collective contribution they make to the wider community.

For example, it is essential to consider the economic and social contributions of Volunteering Support Services, and their role in building social capital, community cohesion, and in the delivery of long-term and agile service provision.

This report outlines the challenges for Volunteering Support Services in respect to short-term funding, increasing costs and overheads, staffing capacity and retention, and increasing demand for services.

This includes recommendations to consider the benefits of appropriately resourcing and investing in these organisations to not only ensure their long-term sustainability, viability and success, but

their value for the broader Australian community.

It also highlights that there should be adequate consideration and allowance of the value of Volunteering Support Services in Government policy and planning to guarantee the best possible outcomes.

You can download a copy of the full report here: [www.volunteeringaustralia.org/wp-content/uploads/The-Value-of-Volunteering-Support-Services.pdf](http://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/wp-content/uploads/The-Value-of-Volunteering-Support-Services.pdf)

Volunteering Australia (26 June 2018). *Value of Volunteering Support Services' research report*. Retrieved from [www.volunteering.com.au](http://www.volunteering.com.au) on 18 May 2020.



# Volunteering strategies around Australia

An overview of volunteering strategies in states and territories around Australia, reproduced courtesy of the **Queensland Government**

## SOUTH AUSTRALIA

The *Volunteering Strategy 2014-2020 for South Australia* contains four focus areas and recommended actions to enable a coordinated approach to address the diverse needs of volunteers and communities.<sup>1</sup>

FOCUS AREA	ACTIONS
<b>Invest in the foundations of volunteering</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Promote volunteers and volunteer management</li><li>➤ Clarify and delineate between volunteers and other forms of paid and unpaid employment</li><li>➤ Facilitate capacity building to train volunteers and manage volunteer recruitment and retention</li><li>➤ Facilitate update to accreditation and uptake of using National Volunteer Standards and best practices</li><li>➤ Facilitate partnership building between organisations, minority groups, young people and communities of interest</li><li>➤ Identify fiscal or resource barriers and researching solutions</li><li>➤ Review the definition of volunteering to identify emergent trends.</li></ul>
<b>Promote and inform on the benefits of volunteering</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Develop a holistic promotion strategy for volunteer recruitment</li><li>➤ Positively promote volunteers and the diversity of roles</li><li>➤ Identify innovative new IT models to recruit, train, engage and fund volunteers</li><li>➤ Research and promote corporate volunteering and encourage employers to provide working arrangements to facilitate this</li><li>➤ Recognise volunteering as a pathway to employment or retirement outcomes for individuals or community connections</li><li>➤ Simplify recruitment processes and consider common templates.</li></ul>
<b>Implement leading practice and high-quality standards</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Identify issues and gaps in volunteer rights for workplace health and safety, governance and recognition</li><li>➤ Review government and private funding criteria to incorporate volunteer costs, training and management</li><li>➤ Investigate the portability and development of guidelines for criminal history record checks across organisations and jurisdictions</li><li>➤ Improve access to information relating to regulations, good governance, risk management and reduce 'red tape'.</li></ul>
<b>Proactively adapt through continuous improvement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Support research and advocacy that values and impacts volunteering</li><li>➤ Address the time barrier to volunteering by developing innovative means to volunteers, such as family volunteering, online roles, 'voluntourism', episodic roles and roles for students, employees and the singles segment</li><li>➤ Adopt a governance structure to implement the strategy with stakeholders and partners</li><li>➤ Review the strategy annually to ensure its relevance and ability to consider current trends, practices and to maintain partner and bipartisan support.</li></ul>





## WESTERN AUSTRALIA

The *WA Volunteering Strategy*, developed by the former Western Australian Department of Local Government Communities, outlines a suite of actions for the whole community to work together to encourage and support volunteering within the state.<sup>2</sup>

FOCUS AREA	OUTCOMES AND STRATEGIES
<b>Respond to emerging trends and issues</b>	<p>The volunteering sector recognises and responds to the changing needs of volunteers by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Supporting and providing flexible opportunities</li> <li>➤ Understanding and responding to volunteer motivations</li> <li>➤ Researching emerging trends and issues promoting corporate volunteering</li> <li>➤ Building capacity of volunteer-involving organisations to respond to emergent trends and issues</li> <li>➤ Retaining volunteers and broadening the scope of their involvement</li> <li>➤ Minimising financial and administrative volunteering barriers.</li> </ul>
<b>Encourage and facilitate participation in community life through volunteering</b>	<p>The volunteering sector harnesses technological innovations to facilitate participation by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Raising awareness and understanding of volunteering and its benefits</li> <li>➤ Targeted promotion of volunteering opportunities</li> <li>➤ Addressing barriers to volunteering</li> <li>➤ Attracting and engaging volunteers from diverse backgrounds</li> <li>➤ Reducing barriers to recruit and participate</li> <li>➤ Supporting volunteering in regional Western Australia</li> <li>➤ Supporting and encouraging use of technology.</li> </ul>
<b>Support volunteer-involving organisations</b>	<p>Communities and organisations can effectively involve volunteers for mutual benefits by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Supporting volunteer-involving organisations to manage risk, legal liability and legislative requirements</li> <li>➤ Training volunteer-involving organisations</li> <li>➤ Providing administrative and governance support for volunteer-involving organisations</li> <li>➤ Reducing financial burden on volunteer-involving organisations.</li> </ul>
<b>Recognise and value volunteers and volunteering</b>	<p>Volunteers are recognised, celebrated and valued for their community contribution by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Supporting volunteer recognition programs</li> <li>➤ Developing innovative ways to recognise and value volunteering</li> <li>➤ Providing training and development opportunities for volunteers.</li> </ul>

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## NEW SOUTH WALES

The New South Wales Government developed its second volunteering strategy, the *NSW Volunteering Strategy: 2016-2020* to make volunteering more accessible, including a focus on how to attract and retain young people.<sup>3</sup>

PRIORITY ACTION AREAS	ACTIONS/STRATEGY
Expand participation in community life through volunteering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Promote short- or long-term volunteering options through different age-appropriate channels</li> <li>➤ Support volunteer organisations to develop and provide a broad range of integrated volunteering opportunities that match the expectations of people from diverse ages, backgrounds and circumstances</li> <li>➤ Research how to engage more local participation.</li> </ul>
Create digital media avenues to support volunteering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Develop a NSW Volunteering Participation Portal and apps that are relevant and accessible to people from different backgrounds, ages and with varying degrees of technology literacy, particularly for people with disability</li> <li>➤ Develop online tools to support volunteers transitioning to new roles across life stages</li> <li>➤ Expand and improve time banking for people across all life stages.</li> </ul>
Develop a mainstream media campaign and local marketing strategies to promote volunteering	<p>Campaigns will be designed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Appeal to people from different backgrounds across the life course (with particular focus on students, young people, those with disability and those soon to retire)</li> <li>➤ Connect interested people with organisations, opportunities, contacts and avenues</li> <li>➤ Highlight the extensive reach of volunteering and the critical role volunteers play</li> <li>➤ Identify and promote local volunteering opportunities</li> <li>➤ Promote health, personal, educational, professional and community benefits of volunteering.</li> </ul>
Design and develop new volunteering options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Design place-based strategies to attract and retain diverse volunteers across the life cycle</li> <li>➤ Develop tools and resources that attract and retain local volunteers and expand volunteer bases</li> <li>➤ Develop resources and case studies that illustrate the difference between volunteering and unpaid work</li> <li>➤ Increase the evidence base on approaches to expanding volunteering</li> <li>➤ Work with communities, other government departments, non-government and business sectors to understand local volunteering needs.</li> </ul>
Build capacity in volunteer organisations to innovate and deliver best-practice volunteer management	<p>Work with volunteer organisations to establish a culture of excellence and innovation through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Expanding the coverage of the Statement of Principles for the Recognition of Volunteers</li> <li>➤ Building digital engagement capacity and developing digital tools to support best-practice volunteer management and promote access and inclusion for volunteers from different age groups and different backgrounds</li> <li>➤ Developing best-practice, large scale, spontaneous volunteer management framework</li> <li>➤ Developing organisational leadership capacity</li> <li>➤ Providing volunteer management training.</li> </ul>
Enhance programs to recognise volunteers' positive contributions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Expand the Premier's Volunteer Recognition Program to include a category for newly retired people</li> <li>➤ Further promote and continue to support the Volunteer of the Year Award.</li> </ul>



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## AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

In 2018, the *ACT Volunteering Statement Action Plan 2018-2021* was released, including activities for ACT Government Directorates, Volunteering and Contact ACT.<sup>4</sup> This plan aimed at realising the intentions of the *ACT Volunteering Statement (2017)*, which outlined principles to ensure that volunteering is recognised, valued, diverse and supported. The action plan was designed to contribute to engaging and managing volunteers, providing a more integrated and person-centred support for volunteers and volunteer organisations, improving wellbeing, social inclusion and community connectedness, and higher quality services and activities for the Canberra community.

KEY THEME AND EXPECTED OUTCOME	ACTION
<b>Recognised</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Volunteers in the ACT are acknowledged and celebrated</li><li>➤ Individuals, community organisations, businesses and government all play a role in promoting the contribution of volunteering in the ACT.</li><li>➤ Volunteers are celebrated and recognised through a wide range of ACT Government and community events.</li></ul>	Promote volunteering to government, businesses, and the wider community to ensure that people are aware of the breadth of opportunities and supports available and the value of volunteering across the community.
<b>Valuable</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Organisations enable volunteers to draw on their passion, skills and experience to build a more inclusive, creative and sustainable city and region.</li><li>➤ Improved coordination and collaboration across sectors, of volunteering opportunities and support.</li></ul>	Encourage collaboration to link people with meaningful volunteering opportunities.
<b>Diverse</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Volunteering is recognised as being for all ages and abilities, and volunteers contribute in all sorts of ways.</li><li>➤ Organisations demonstrate commitment to social inclusion and diversity by encouraging and supporting volunteers from all walks of life.</li></ul>	Tailor promotion of volunteering opportunities for people of all cultural backgrounds, ages, abilities and gender identities.
<b>Supported</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Volunteers are included in the life of organisations and have clear roles.</li><li>➤ Organisations are committed to best practice in volunteer management, providing appropriate training and supporting and taking pride in the role of volunteers.</li></ul>	Support the professional development of volunteers and managers of volunteers and facilitate access to relevant resources.

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## CHAPTER 2

# Getting involved in volunteering

## WHY DON'T MORE PEOPLE VOLUNTEER? MISCONCEPTIONS DON'T HELP

*The kinds of activities volunteers can do have changed, from long-term activities to more short-term, episodic volunteering, according to this article from **The Conversation** by Kirsten Holmes, Debbie Haski-Leventhal, Leonie Lockstone-Binney, Lucas Meijs and Melanie Oppenheimer*

**V**olunteers in Australia are essential to the provision of a range of services. This includes emergency services, hospitals and schools – and volunteers also support the social and cultural life of many communities.

Yet Western countries – including Australia – have recently reported a decline in volunteer rates. Data from Australia collected in 2014 showed that only 31% of the population had volunteered in the past 12 months.

*Volunteers in Australia are essential to the provision of a range of services. This includes emergency services, hospitals and schools – and volunteers also support the social and cultural life of many communities.*

Research has largely focused on identifying why people volunteer. But what are the barriers to volunteer participation? And what can governments and volunteer-involving organisations do to help potential volunteers overcome these problems?

### WHAT ARE THE BARRIERS?

The most regularly cited reasons given for not volunteering are ill health, lack of time, and lack of interest. With an ageing population, ill health is likely to grow as a barrier while at the same time increasing demand for volunteer-provided services such as health or aged care.

However, lack of time and lack of interest may well be interconnected. The highest rates of volunteering are among people aged between 35 and 54, working full-time, with young children. Busy people are able to find the time to volunteer, possibly because it is



important enough for them to be able to overcome their time limitations.

Added to these barriers, the ways people choose to volunteer have changed over the past two decades. People are less willing to commit to the ongoing volunteer roles that characterise traditional volunteer organisations such as Meals on Wheels or the local bush fire brigade. Instead, they are more likely to seek varied and short-term roles. These enable them to do different activities for different organisations, and they are looking for specific benefits from their volunteer activities.

The kinds of activities volunteers can do have also changed. People can now volunteer for short, occasional episodes. They can volunteer in groups, with their families or online. And corporate volunteering through workplaces is popular.

## UNDERSTANDING NON-VOLUNTEERS' PERCEPTIONS

A new study in Australia aimed at better understanding volunteers and non-volunteers has revealed surprising results on why people do not volunteer. Trying to understand the reasons for this decline and what could encourage non-volunteers to participate, we found a person's likelihood to volunteer is related to their willingness, availability and capability to volunteer.

To identify how these three factors affect participation we have carried out a series of focus groups with current volunteers, past volunteers and non-volunteers.

It seems many people who do not volunteer think that volunteering is not "cool". They imagine a volunteer in a stereotypical manner, as an older woman who volunteers every week for Meals on Wheels or similar. When shown photos of one-off volunteering, online volunteering and corporate volunteering, many non-volunteers were surprised and agreed this is something they could actually do.

A nationally representative survey of 1,000 Australians – 70% of whom were non-volunteers – found significant differences between volunteers and non-volunteers. Volunteers rated several values such as benevolence higher than non-volunteers, and reported more favourable perceptions of any giving behaviour – both time and money – compared to non-volunteers. Non-volunteers reported more negative beliefs about the worth of volunteering.

*The most regularly cited reasons given for not volunteering are ill health, lack of time, and lack of interest.*

Combining these findings with those of the focus groups, we have non-volunteers with both limited knowledge of volunteering and its value.

One question asked non-volunteers what would make them volunteer. Many non-volunteers said they might volunteer if:

- They could do roles that appeal to them (which is related to their willingness to volunteer);
- They could stop any time without consequences (related to their availability);
- It was closer to where they live (also about availability); and
- Training was provided (related to their capability).

*The kinds of activities volunteers can do have also changed. People can now volunteer for short, occasional episodes. They can volunteer in groups, with their families or online. And corporate volunteering through workplaces is popular.*

These perceived barriers show again that non-volunteers are often unaware of new trends in volunteering, such as episodic or online volunteering.

## HOW CAN WE INCREASE PARTICIPATION?

First, many people are never going to volunteer. Volunteer-involving organisations have limited funds available for marketing and recruitment; these need to be well targeted. We identified a small group of participants as potential volunteers. People who are more likely to convert to volunteering were the most similar to the volunteers in terms of the study variables tested.

This group was only about 10% of the non-volunteer sample. If we could grow participation nationally by 10% of the nation's non-volunteers, we could increase volunteer numbers in Australia by about 1.6 million people. Imagine how Australia would benefit from that many additional volunteers and the time and skills they contribute.

## DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

Kirsten Holmes receives funding from the Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching, the Australian Research Council and the International Olympic Committee. Kirsten's team is working in partnership with Volunteering SA&NT, Volunteering Victoria, Volunteering WA and the WA Department for Local Government and Communities to find out how to encourage more people to volunteer. Debbie Haski-Leventhal, Leonie Lockstone-Binney, Lucas Meijs and Melanie Oppenheimer receive funding from the Australian Research Council.

Kirsten Holmes is Associate Professor, School of Marketing, Curtin University. Debbie Haski-Leventhal is Associate Professor in Management, Macquarie Graduate School of Management. Leonie Lockstone-Binney is Associate Dean (Research), Faculty of Higher Education, William Angliss Institute. Lucas Meijs is Professor of Volunteering, Civil Society and Businesses and Professor of Strategic Philanthropy, Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University Rotterdam. Melanie Oppenheimer is Chair of History, Flinders University.

## THE CONVERSATION

Holmes, K, Haski-Leventhal, D, Lockstone-Binney, L, Meijs, L and Oppenheimer, M (5 December 2016). *Why don't more people volunteer? Misconceptions don't help.* Retrieved from <http://theconversation.com> on 18 May 2020.

# BENEFITS OF VOLUNTEERING

## HEALTHDIRECT EXPLAINS THE BENEFITS OF BEING A VOLUNTEER



Being a volunteer has lots of benefits. It can bring meaning and purpose to your life, while increasing your self-esteem and wellbeing. Volunteering can also relieve stress, and alleviate symptoms of depression. As well as having a positive impact on your community, volunteering can improve your relationships.

### Volunteering explained

Volunteering is time willingly given to help someone else without being paid. It can be formal or informal. *Informal* volunteering includes helping friends and family with things like babysitting, home repairs or caring. *Formal* volunteering usually takes place through a charity or other not-for-profit or community organisation.

There are many organisations that actively seek volunteers. These include:

- Animal welfare organisations like the RSPCA
- Organisations interested in conservation – see Conservation Volunteers Australia or call 1800 032 501
- Organisations and charities that look after vulnerable people, like the Australian Red Cross, The Smith Family, the Starlight Children’s Foundation, UnitingCare Australia, and Meals on Wheels
- Other community organisations like state emergency services, rural fire services and Surf Life Saving Australia
- Organisations that take volunteers overseas, like Projects Abroad, World Youth International and Australian Volunteers Program.

### What do you hope to get out of volunteering?

Volunteering can be very meaningful and enjoyable, and in turn be good for your mental health and wellbeing. Volunteering can:

- Give you a sense of achievement and purpose
- Help you feel part of a community
- Help you feel better about yourself by improving your self-esteem and confidence
- Help you share your skills, learn new skills and create a better work-life balance
- Help combat stress, loneliness and social isolation, and depression
- Help you meet new people, which can help you feel more connected and valued.

### Social benefits of volunteering

Volunteering is a great way to meet new people and build healthy relationships. It strengthens your ties to the community and exposes you to people with similar interests. Volunteering also gives you the opportunity to practise and develop your social skills.

Because volunteering keeps you in regular contact with others, it can also help you develop a solid support base. As well as helping to protect you against stress and depression, volunteering can help with mental health recovery.

### More information

- Volunteering Australia ([www.volunteeringaustralia.org](http://www.volunteeringaustralia.org)) has fact sheets for volunteers on its website. It also links to Volunteer Resource Centres in each state and territory.
- You can search for volunteer positions in your local area through the Go Volunteer website (<https://govolunteer.com.au>).
- ReachOut has information on ways to look after yourself while volunteering, finding meaning in charity, and the benefits of random acts of kindness (<https://au.reachout.com/articles/ways-to-look-after-yourself-while-volunteering>)
- SANE has information on getting back to work after a mental illness ([www.sane.org/information-stories/facts-and-guides/getting-back-to-work](http://www.sane.org/information-stories/facts-and-guides/getting-back-to-work)).

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- Relationships Australia (*Relationships and community*), [www.relationships.org.au](http://www.relationships.org.au)
- Head to Health (*Volunteering*), <https://headtohealth.gov.au>

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# Ten things you should know about volunteering's immeasurable value

Without the contributions of its army of six million volunteers, Australia would be a profoundly different place, observes **Melanie Oppenheimer**

So, what is the most important event this coming week? No, not the federal budget. Rather, I believe it's National Volunteer Week (11-17 May), which celebrates the contributions of one in four Australians. There are 10 core features of volunteering that should be considered to understand this integral, yet generally overlooked, part of our society.

For over 25 years, I have been writing on volunteering from both a historical and contemporary perspective. Since 2000, the volunteering field has undergone enormous shifts, not only in how volunteering is perceived and practised in Australia but also in the roles played by governments at local, state and federal levels.

This increasingly dynamic and diverse practice contributes around \$14.6 billion per year to our economy and involves over six million Australians over the age of 18. Volunteering is no longer in the "shadowlands" as such, but it remains on the periphery of mainstream policy and decision-making.

I've created a countdown of my top ten issues concerning volunteering. I use the ABS definition of a volunteer as "someone who willingly gives unpaid help, in the form of time, service or skills, through an organisation or group".

## 10. Volunteering has a history

Australia's volunteering tradition is based on our British origins as a penal colony. This provided a unique relationship between the state, the voluntary sector and volunteering. Volunteering has also been influenced over time by our first peoples, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, and their complex concepts of kinship, reciprocity and family obligations. Throw more recent waves of migration into the mix and we have a distinctive "Australian way of volunteering".

## 9. Is there a 'volunteer gene'?

Why do some people volunteer and others do not? Why do some feel the need to donate their time – are they wired for it or is it learnt behaviour? Is there a genetic base for altruism and other pro-social behaviours like empathy and cooperativeness? The concept of a "volunteer gene" focuses our attention on the role, impact and influence of families and friendship groups in growing volunteering – learning by example.

## 8. Volunteering is cyclical

There is a life cycle of volunteering. Those in the 35-44 age group with dependent children undertake the most volunteer hours and volunteering is most common among parents in couple relationships with dependent children aged 5-17 years. With the ageing population,

older volunteers will become increasingly important and valuable – not a burden, rather an asset.

## 7. Volunteering is evolving

As volunteering evolves, there are now two types of volunteer: the "professional" volunteer and the "traditional" volunteer. The traditional volunteer is often to be found in member-based organisations. Professional volunteers are, on the other hand, highly trained and indistinguishable from paid employees.

## 6. Government interest in volunteering is new

In the last 15 years, there have been significant changes in government involvement. Propelled by the Sydney Olympics (2000), where 45,000 volunteered, and the 2001 UN International Year of the Volunteer, there has been an increase in the range of government policies and practices concerning volunteers and volunteering in Australia.

The sector within which volunteering sits – the not-for-profit, voluntary or third sector – is increasingly subject to a raft of government regulation such as







governance, risk management and workplace controls. It remains a contested and fluid space for volunteers and their organisations.

### **5. Volunteers are the bedrock of the not-for-profit sector**

The not-for-profit sector relies on its volunteer workforce. In ABS statistics released in June 2014, not-for-profits contributed almost \$55 billion to the Australian economy and employed more than a million people in 2012-13.

### **4. By any other name, would volunteering be so sweet?**

One of the problems with volunteering today is the language we use to describe the activity. Volunteering is culturally constructed and culturally specific.

Some of the words used to describe volunteering include “honorary” and “amateur”. Lawyers like to do pro bono work and political activists and environmentalists prefer to see themselves not as volunteers at all but rather as lobbyists, agitators or advocates. And where does informal volunteering sit?

### **3. Volunteers should have same rights as paid workers**

Issues are arising concerning the role and responsibility of volunteers, and the adequate protection of volunteers in the workplace. Volunteers are not employees and there is no employment contract – yet in many workplaces today, volunteers and paid workers sit side by side, doing exactly the same job.

In 2015, there are legal jurisdictions where volunteers are treated the same as paid workers. The *Work Health and Safety Act* includes volunteers and has been adopted in all states with the exception of Victoria and Western Australia. As of January 1 2014, in a world first, Australia introduced substantial provisions to address workplace bullying and harassment. The *Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth)* was amended to allow any worker who reasonably believes he or she has been bullied at work to apply to the Fair Work Commission – this covers volunteers.

### **2. Volunteering should be properly measured and counted**

Volunteering is “work” that is not paid (that is no financial remuneration) and thus falls outside the rubric of our current economic policies. This helps explain its invisibility as our social and economic structures focus almost exclusively on paid work.

Unpaid work, domestic work, child rearing or “informal volunteering” is excluded from standard statistical models operating in Australia and elsewhere. This invisibility undermines the importance of volunteering as contributing to the economic productivity and welfare of Australia, and the enormous social and civic contributions of volunteering.

### **1. Volunteers are not ‘free’**

This is a critical point to make in budget week. Volunteers are increasingly being called on to plug the gaps and are often willing to do so, but their rights must be maintained. They must not be used simply as a cheap “human resource”.

There are costs associated with people volunteering their time. Out-of-pocket expenses, for example, include costs of petrol, transport, telephone calls, uniforms, training, working with children checks, police checks and medical checks.

Volunteers must be properly trained and managed. These costs must be factored into budgets and tender processes. We need policy initiatives that properly input volunteer labour as we do paid labour.

### **DISCLOSURE STATEMENT**

Melanie Oppenheimer has received ARC funding for a variety of projects in recent years. She is currently Chair of Working Group Four, Volunteering Strategy for SA, and an Australian Red Cross Ambassador.

Melanie Oppenheimer is Chair of History, Flinders University. The author has written books on volunteering (*Volunteering. Why we can't survive without it*, UNSW Press, 2008); edited volumes (with Jeni Warburton, *Volunteering in Australia*, The Federation Press, 2014); and presented radio programs (Vita Activa, ABC Radio National Life Matters).

## **THE CONVERSATION**

Oppenheimer, M (11 May 2015). *Ten things you should know about volunteering's immeasurable value*. Retrieved from <http://theconversation.com> on 18 May 2020.

# IS IT BETTER TO GIVE TO A CHARITY OR VOLUNTEER?

A BLOG POSTING FOR **GVI AUSTRALIA** BY PETRINA DARRAH

Many things in life come down to whether you have the time or the money. Making a contribution to initiatives is no different, and anyone with an altruistic streak will eventually find themselves questioning whether it is better to give to a charity or volunteer.

The simple answer is, if you have the money and not the time, give to a charity. If you have time and not as much money, choose to volunteer. There are many other factors to consider though, as both have benefits on a personal and global level.

So, let's take a closer look at each option.

## IT'S BETTER TO GIVE TO A CHARITY WHEN

### *You don't have time to travel*

For people who don't have the time or freedom to travel to another country, it might be better to give to a charity. This could include anyone working full-time, parents with young children, or even someone with a cat they just can't leave. Whatever the situation, sometimes your commitments at home are just too important to leave.

However, if the desire to make a contribution is still there, giving to a charity is a wonderful way of making an impact in the world. Many charities rely on monetary donations to keep functioning, so never underestimate the importance of giving what you can.

Giving to a charity is ideal for people short on time, as it's easier and faster than ever. Often it's some-

thing as simple as a donation online, which takes seconds. Plus, you can do a lot of research online to make sure you're giving to a reputable charity, and keep up to date on their various projects and accomplishments.

Watching everything from afar might not be as meaningful as experiencing sustainable development in action, which is why volunteering might be an even better option.

## IT'S BETTER TO VOLUNTEER WHEN

### *You have the time to spare*

You've probably heard people say time is money, and it's true – they both have value.

Contributing your time can be massively beneficial to charitable causes, and by joining a volunteer project you can make a sustainable impact.

Whether it is doing wildlife research in South Africa, contributing to women's empowerment initiatives in India, or championing preventative healthcare in local communities in Thailand, there are important

Contributing your time can be massively beneficial to charitable causes, and by joining a volunteer project you can make a sustainable impact.





# HOW TO FIND VOLUNTEER WORK

## FACT SHEET ADVICE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE FROM YOUTH CENTRAL

**V**olunteer work is when you do unpaid work for a community organisation or charity. It can be a good way to get experience. It's also good to volunteer just for the sake of helping others.

Another benefit of volunteering is that it gives you the chance to meet people. You can build your network, which increases your chances of finding out about jobs.

Here are four steps you can take to find a volunteer position.

### 1. THINK ABOUT THE TYPE OF WORK YOU'D LIKE TO DO

You might be considering volunteering as a way to get experience so you can get a paid job. If this is the case, you should look for a volunteer position that will give you skills that match the paid job you'd like to get.

For example, if you're aiming to get an office job doing administration, you could look for a volunteer position that will give you office experience. Visit our page *Organisations that accept volunteers* to find a position that could offer you this type of experience.

On the other hand, if you spend a lot of time indoors with study and work, you might decide you want a volunteer position that gets you outside, such as Conservation Volunteers Australia.

If you're doing a university or TAFE course, or if you've recently graduated, you might want a volunteer position where you can use your professional skills. For example, if you're studying law, you could volunteer at a community legal centre.

### 2. THINK ABOUT YOUR VALUES

There are all kinds of ways to volunteer. You should choose an organisation that matches your values.

For example, if you're passionate about protecting wildlife, you might consider volunteering for Wildlife Victoria.

Or maybe you or someone in your family has been affected by an illness. You could volunteer for an organisation that supports research into finding a cure.

The main thing is to find an organisation that you're excited about contributing to.

### 3. THINK ABOUT HOW MUCH TIME YOU HAVE TO VOLUNTEER

Before you contact an organisation about volunteering, make sure you have a clear idea of how much time you have to spare.

Be realistic. You don't want to commit to a position for two days a week, and then realise that it's going to be too much for you.

You should also think about the length of time you can volunteer. Some organisations might want you to volunteer for a minimum length of time, for example

for six or 12 months.

Even if you don't have a lot of time to volunteer, there are organisations that need help with short-term campaigns, or even just for a day for events held once a year.

The main thing is to decide how much time you can commit to contributing, and for how long.

### 4. RESEARCH VOLUNTEER ORGANISATIONS

Do some online searches to find out about the types of organisations you can volunteer for.

The Volunteering Victoria website lets you search for volunteer positions by keyword and location.

The Victorian Government runs a volunteering portal that you can use to search for the type of volunteer position you're looking for.

Volunteering Australia is a national group that also lets you search a database of volunteer positions. Volunteering Australia also runs the GoVolunteer website. SEEK Volunteer lists volunteer positions, and also includes information for volunteers.

### VOLUNTEERING IS DIFFERENT TO UNPAID WORK

Even if your motivation is to get experience and eventually find a paid position, remember that when you volunteer, the main benefit should be for your host organisation.

Volunteering is also different to other kinds of unpaid work such as:

- Work experience
- Unpaid internships
- Student work placements.

These types of arrangements are done as part of your school, university or TAFE. They're primarily to benefit you, to further your learning.

When you volunteer, the goal of your work is to help your host organisation.

### ENJOY YOUR VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

Once you've found the right position, make sure you enjoy your volunteer experience. Learn as much as you can about how you can help, and try to meet as many people as you can.

You can also ask the person who supervises you at your host organisation to be a referee when you go for jobs in the future.

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Youth Central. *How to find volunteer work*. Retrieved from [www.youthcentral.vic.gov.au](http://www.youthcentral.vic.gov.au) on 18 May 2020.

# Volunteering rates are declining, but you could be helping out and not know it

*From moderating community groups to doing social media for grassroots organisations – the volunteering done by young people is often overlooked, reports Siobhan Hegarty for ABC Life*

From chatting over a cuppa to running a Facebook page, volunteering can take many forms. “A lot of volunteering takes place invisibly,” says Lucas Walsh, professor in education policy and acting dean of Monash University.

“People might engage in online activities, like contribution to updating Wikipedia, but they wouldn’t classify it as volunteering.”

Though, apparently, it is.

“[Making] Wikipedia pages or constructing news groups on Facebook or trying to disseminate information about a particular cause takes time, and that’s meaningful time,” says Professor Walsh, who co-authored a report on youth volunteering in Australia.

“[It] therefore constitutes volunteering for a wider cause, but we’re not counting it as such.”

Professor Walsh says the methods for tracking participation are stuck in the past. The Australian Bureau of Statistics has been tracking volunteering rates for two decades through the *General Social Survey*, which is distributed every four years.

“A lot of volunteering takes place invisibly. People might engage in online activities, like contribution to updating Wikipedia, but they wouldn’t classify it as volunteering.”

The most recent survey found that volunteering rates dropped for the first time, decreasing from 36 per cent in 2010 to 31 per cent in 2014.

## VOLUNTEERING IN DECLINE

Volunteering levels were highest amongst 15-17-year-olds, at 42 per cent, but Professor Walsh believes the real figure is likely to be larger.

“Young men sometimes don’t report volunteering activities because they see it as just an interest that they’re pursuing,” he says, citing sporting clubs and online groups as examples.

“In culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities, volunteering is just seen as a natural expectation and a part of life.”

Professor Walsh says many young people from CALD backgrounds actively contribute to religious organisations and, through these communities, often build their social connections.

## WHEN VOLUNTEERING IS A PRIVILEGE

For 23-year-old Hemangini Patel, the concept of volunteering is embedded in her belief system.

“In Hinduism, and a lot of other similar cultures, like Sikhism and Jainism, the word for service to community is called ‘seva,’” she explains.

“This is something that you’re not expected to do, but it’s a privilege.”



“Through serving others you can develop your own personal growth and spirituality.”

Hemi has been volunteering for seven years with BAPS, a global organisation that sits within the Swaminarayan branch of Hinduism. She runs youth programs on Sundays and leads a team of volunteer photographers who take snapshots of major religious events.

And the events can be huge. Sydney is home to one of the largest BAPS communities in the Asia-Pacific, and Hemi says up to 2,000 people attend the *mandir* (temple) on Sundays.

Volunteer numbers are equally healthy. Hemi says that 400 people from the community regularly volunteer, but others chip in when needed.

“People will come in and help with special events ... even if it’s just like cleaning bathrooms and collecting rubbish,” she says.

“No matter how menial the task is, everyone is quite gracious to have the opportunity to serve the community.”

### BUILDING CONNECTIONS WITH COMMUNITY

Thirty-year-old research assistant Haydn Klemm also sees volunteering as a way to “give back”. For the past two years, he’s been visiting 76-year-old Clynton Cooper-Alyn through Switchboard Victoria’s Out and About program, a peer support service for older members of the LGBTI community.

“When I was looking to do a volunteer program, I was definitely looking for some sort of fulfilling connection with somebody who was older and part of the queer community,” Haydn says.

“I didn’t expect that we would connect as much as we do, that we would share so much of our lives together.”

Despite their age gap, varied life experiences and opposing perspectives on the word “queer”, Haydn and Clynton have become close friends.

“I can see the effect that not seeing him has versus me actually seeing him,” Haydn says.

“So, I like to try and make it at least once a week, even if it’s just popping in for a tea and touching base.”

While Hemi and Haydn both engage in traditional forms of volunteering, Professor Walsh says there are more opportunities than ever for people to engage in causes they care about, whether that be online or in real life.

If you’d like to start volunteering, but you’re not sure where to start, here are some tips from Volunteering Australia CEO Adrienne Picone:

**1. Think about what you’d like to give – and gain – from your volunteering.**

Are you wanting to help your local community or do something worthwhile? Or are you hoping that volunteering might be a potential pathway to employment?

**2. Work out how much time you can dedicate to volunteering.**

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Will you be available on a weekly, fortnightly or monthly basis or would you prefer to help out on an ad hoc schedule? This will determine whether you sign up for an ongoing commitment, or something more short-term.

**3. If your work or lifestyle requires you to travel frequently, that doesn’t preclude you from ‘giving back’.**

Ms Picone says many organisations are after people who can volunteer remotely and help with online tasks.

**4. Keen to see what positions are available?**

Check out Volunteering Australia’s national database of opportunities at [GoVolunteer.com.au](http://GoVolunteer.com.au) or contact your state or territory body for information about local programs.

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Hegarty, S (11 September 2019). ‘Volunteering rates are declining, but you could be helping out and not know it’ (Updated 3 October 2019), *ABC Life*. Retrieved from [www.abc.net.au/life](http://www.abc.net.au/life) on 18 May 2020.

# STOP CALLING YOUNG PEOPLE APATHETIC. FOR MANY, VOLUNTEERING AND ACTIVISM GO HAND-IN-HAND

Politicians routinely criticise young climate strikers as not making a difference. But the reality is quite different, writes **Lucas Walsh**

Senator Jacqui Lambie has proposed establishing a Senate inquiry to increase the number of volunteers to address challenges such as climate emergencies. One way she suggests doing this is by conscripting young Australians to national emergency service.

The Senator argues that:  
*today's generation don't really want to volunteer themselves and commit to certain things. They want to show up to a rally once a year and apparently that's giving back ... It bothers me that kids today wouldn't know a bloody sandbag, let alone a spade.*

Her proposal comes on the back of criticism of youth climate protesters by several prominent politicians, such as Resources Minister Matt Canavan, who has said:

*The best thing you'll learn about going to a protest is how to join the dole queue.*

## YOUNG PEOPLE ARE ALREADY VOLUNTEERING

Collectively, these statements reflect a view of young people that is wildly inaccurate.

Firstly, Lambie echoes a familiar but negative view of young people as disengaged, indifferent and immature.

Volunteering rates are indeed declining. In 2014, volunteering declined for the first time since 1995, when the ABS started conducting national voluntary work surveys. The proportion of people aged 18 years and over who were volunteering fell from a peak of 36% in 2010 to 31% in 2014. (This is the most recent data available)

Historically, younger people are less likely to engage in civic activities than older Australians. But wider research during the last decade suggests something more nuanced.

For young people, many types of volunteering take place invisibly through online activities like constructing news groups on Facebook that contribute to a wider cause.

A national youth survey in 2018 found volunteering to be one of the top three activities for young people – ahead of arts, culture and music activities. ABS figures from 2014 also showed that while overall rates of volunteering were on the decline, young people aged 15-17 had the highest rate in the nation at 42%.

The measures used to track volunteering also fail to capture the breadth and depth of volunteering that takes place among young people.

The ABS has defined volunteering as:  
*the provision of unpaid help willingly undertaken in the form of time, service or skills, to an organisation or group, excluding work done overseas.*

For young people, many types of volunteering take place invisibly through online activities like constructing news groups on Facebook that contribute to a wider cause. Such online activities may not be for a particular organisation or group and may be conducted internationally.

The boundaries between personal and civic contributions are sometimes blurred. e.g. volunteering in some culturally and linguistically diverse communities is just part of life, and not considered to be volunteering.

In addition, the boundaries between personal and civic contributions are sometimes blurred. For example, volunteering in some culturally and linguistically diverse communities is just part of life, and not considered to be volunteering.

Similarly, research has shown that some young people don't necessarily think of activities such as umpiring a local sporting event as volunteering, because for them it is just an interesting pursuit. As a result, these contributions by young people sometimes go unrecognised.

Acknowledging that its definition does not account for informal volunteering like this and other activities such as activism, the ABS is now seeking to capture:

*a broader range of volunteering activity and characteristics.*

## PROTESTING IS AN EQUALLY VALID WAY OF GIVING BACK

Young people are also increasingly motivated to take part in another form of civic participation: peaceful protest. For many, protesting for important causes is considered an equally valid way to give back to society.

The most prominent example of this are the student climate strikes around the world that have been galvanised by youth activist Greta Thunberg. Thousands of Australians students are expected to walk out of their classes again on Friday.

Jonas Kampus, a 17-year-old protester from Switzerland, described the importance of these efforts to the *Guardian*:

*For people under 18 in most countries, the only democratic right we have is to demonstrate. We don't have representation.*



Canavan has a different view, saying that young people “don’t learn anything” from leaving school to protest.

It’s ... unfair to reduce young people to passive and clueless individuals in need of compulsory volunteer conscription.

But experiential learning through activism can be powerful and connect people to finding common solutions. Education isn’t just about securing future jobs, as Canavan has suggested. It’s also about developing inquisitive, creative and critical thinkers who fully participate in society.

Young people throughout the world are demonstrating these attributes and participating in ways that do not register in conventional measures. Many are actively engaging the challenges facing our society and are acutely aware of the value of education.

There is another important connection between protesting and volunteerism. One international study has found that people involved in voluntary associations are up to five times more likely to make political demands than those without such membership.

University of the South Pacific researcher Jacob Mwathi Mati and his colleagues argue that activist movements can serve as “schools of democracy that teach civic skills and foster civic attitudes.” Taking part in climate change protests, for example, can build

capacity for citizen engagement in the same way as more traditional forms of volunteering.

The great majority of politicians are hardworking and dedicated to making a difference in society, and painting them with broad-brush criticisms that reinforce negative stereotypes does not do them justice.

It’s equally unfair to reduce young people to passive and clueless individuals in need of compulsory volunteer conscription.

#### DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

Lucas Walsh does not work for, consult, own shares in or receive funding from any company or organisation that would benefit from this article, and has disclosed no relevant affiliations beyond this academic appointment.

Lucas Walsh is Professor, Education Policy and Practice, Youth Studies in the Faculty of Education. Latest books with Rosalyn Black include *Imagining Youth Futures: University Students in Post-Truth Times* and *Rethinking Youth Citizenship after the Age of Entitlement*, Monash University.

## THE CONVERSATION

Walsh, L (19 September 2019). *Stop calling young people apathetic. For many, volunteering and activism go hand-in-hand.* Retrieved from <http://theconversation.com> on 18 May 2020.



# 'Selfie generation' most likely to volunteer

*Millennials and Gen Z are the demographic most likely to volunteer with a community organisation, according to the latest research. A Pro Bono News report by Wendy Williams*

A report, released by NRMA Insurance, found that the so-called "selfie-generation" was among the most helpful and community-minded in the country. The research, which surveyed more than 2,000 people, found the majority of Australians were committed to helping others with nearly three quarters giving up their time to help the community and 41 per cent of respondents formally volunteering.

In particular, young people aged between 18 and 34 were found to be the group most likely to give up their time to help others (80 per cent compared to 74 per cent on average) or volunteer in their community (43 per cent compared to 41 per cent on average).

NRMA Insurance executive general manager shared value, Ramana James said while millennials were often perceived as "fickle or entitled", the reality was quite different.

"Young people are well connected, open-minded and have the energy and optimism needed to make a difference," James said.

"Help is who we are as Australians. We give people a hand up when they need it and we roll up our sleeves when things get tough.

"It's reassuring to see that this spirit of 'help' is alive

and well among those who are the future of Australia."

Volunteering Australia CEO Adrienne Picone told *Pro Bono News* she was "pleasantly surprised" with the findings.

"In our experience it isn't backed up by numbers particularly looking at the ABS data and Giving Australia Data," Picone said.

"Certainly in ABS they found that the age group between 45 and 54 were likely to be the highest group that were volunteering, and I think in Giving Australia it was 35 to 44 years olds, but very closely followed by 45 to 54.

*"There is an organisation for everyone. Especially now organisations are taking a different approach to volunteering, and not just sticking with the traditional models, they have project-based and skills-based instead of just the long-term traditional model."*

"However, anecdotally, we do hear that young people are volunteering in vast numbers and they are volunteering in different ways than perhaps their older counterparts.





“It is really promising for the future when we are getting these sorts of numbers of young people telling us that they are actually giving back to the community.”

Picone speculated there could be an issue in how volunteering data was captured and how volunteering was defined that could account for the different findings.

“Often what we call volunteering, people don’t necessarily see as being a volunteer, they may consider themselves helping out or working on a project, they might not use that word. I think that often is the case

with young people,” she said.

According to the survey, young people were more likely to say they gave back because it made them “feel good” (54 per cent compared to 41 per cent on average) and because they wanted to make a difference (36 per cent compared to 34 per cent on average).

The latest study also asked people about how they felt about their community and the challenges faced in helping others. The findings showed those who volunteered were more likely to feel like they belonged in their community (with 78 per cent compared to 65 per cent on average).

**T**he NRMA Insurance HELP Study surveyed more than 2,000 people and found that the vast majority of Australians are committed to helping others, with three quarters giving up their time to help their community (74%) and almost half formally volunteering in their community (41%). However, a surprise finding is that young people (18-34) are the demographic more likely to sacrifice their time to help others (80%) or volunteer with a community organisation (43%).

The research found:

- Young people are more likely to say that they give back because it makes them ‘feel good’ (54% compared to 41% on average) and because they want to make a difference (36% compared to 34% on average).
- Young people are more likely to volunteer through sporting clubs or environmental groups (23% and 15% respectively).

The NRMA Insurance HELP Study also asked people about how they feel about their community and the challenges faced in helping others. The findings showed:

- Those who volunteer (78%) are more likely to feel like they belong in their community (compared to 65% on average).
- 80% of volunteers say their community is ‘close-knit’ or comes together in tough times (compared to 70% on average)
- Work commitments (36%), ‘busyness’ (31%) and the out-of-pocket expenses involved (25%) are the biggest barriers for helping others or volunteering. Health and physical issues (20%) and ‘not knowing where to start’ (17%) are also key challenges.
- Nearly half of those surveyed believe their community is friendlier than it used to be (42%). However, for those who feel their community has become less friendly, the main reasons are ‘people are too busy’ (61%), ‘a lack of trust’ (55%), and ‘technology and social media’ (45%).

**SOURCE**

NRMA (28 March 2018). *The helpful generation: Research reveals community-minded Millennials*. Retrieved from [www.nrma.com.au](http://www.nrma.com.au) on 18 May 2020.



However the biggest barriers to helping others or volunteering were identified as work commitments (36 per cent), “busyness” (31 per cent) and the out-of-pocket expenses involved (25 per cent).

James said while it was not always easy to find the time to volunteer and give back, for those who did, the rewards were great.

“Not only are you helping others, but you are helping make your community stronger and more connected,” he said.

“We think it’s important for people to remember that every little bit of help counts. Taking a few minutes out of your day to help a neighbour maintain their property, or help a local community organisation with a project can make a real difference.”

Michael Andrews, the Queensland Young Volunteer of the Year 2017, told *Pro Bono News* there was an “organisation for everyone”.

“I think now more than ever people, especially young people, are volunteering for causes that are close to their heart and causes that they are passionate about,” Andrews said.

*“I think our generation are passionate about issues. It should come as no surprise that people want to give back in ways that they enjoy.”*

“There is an organisation for everyone. Especially now organisations are taking a different approach to volunteering, and not just sticking with the traditional models, they have project-based and skills-based instead of just the long-term traditional model. It is great that they are providing the opportunity.”

The 19-year-old, who started volunteering with St John when he was five years old and has spent

the last five years volunteering with Surf Life Saving Queensland, said he thought people would be surprised to hear that young people were volunteering more but that it made sense.

“I think our generation are passionate about issues. It should come as no surprise that people want to give back in ways that they enjoy,” Andrews said.

He said it bode well for the future.

“I know in the organisation where I am volunteering at the moment, they always say that young volunteers are the future, which is true to some extent, but they are also part of the present,” he said.

“I think it is great that you can engage young people now, so as they grow up, they can still be involved in not-for-profit organisations, or volunteer organisations and continue throughout their life.”

**Wendy Williams** is a journalist specialising in the not-for-profit sector and broader social economy. She has been the editor of *Pro Bono News* since 2018.

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Williams, W (29 March 2018). ‘Selfie Generation’ most likely to volunteer. Retrieved from <http://probonoaustralia.com.au> on 18 May 2020.

# VOLUNTEERING ABROAD

IT SOUNDS LIKE A GREAT WAY TO HAVE A HOLIDAY AND DO SOME GOOD, BUT WHO REALLY STANDS TO PROFIT? BY **CHOICE** WRITERS JEMMA CASTLE AND JODI BIRD

## VOLUNTEERING OVERSEAS: THE NEW BACKPACKING?

**V**olunteering overseas has become popular as a gap year placement, an alternative travel experience, or as a meaningful retirement activity. But you, the volunteer, will still foot the bill, so if you're planning this kind of trip you'll want to make sure your time and money is well spent.

We'll take you through what you need to know before you volunteer overseas and:

- Give you tips on how to find a worthwhile volunteer program
- Take a look at what your fees will pay for
- Give you an example of volunteering gone wrong.

## WORKING HOLIDAYS

Volunteer programs abroad are advertised as a chance to make a real difference. It sounds like a win-win situation that benefits the community and the volunteer. The catch is, volunteer programs aren't always mutually beneficial. Poorly thought-out projects may not benefit communities, which means well-meaning volunteers can find themselves in places where they're not needed.

Organisations that send volunteers overseas have also become increasingly commercialised due to an influx of for-profit companies and travel agencies jumping on the volunteer tourism bandwagon. Some organisations spend the majority of a volunteer's fee on administration, marketing and organisational costs rather than on in-country living costs and the local project.

Volunteering abroad is the new backpacking, says Stephen Wearing, an associate professor at the University of Technology, Sydney, and specialist in volunteer tourism. But he adds that volunteers will tend to pay a significant amount more than a backpacker. "Once [it's] commodified like it is now, you just get projects that are put there for keen tourists to do."

## USEFUL VOLUNTEERING

Volunteer programs have the potential to do a lot of good. But too often well-meaning volunteers have arrived at projects only to find their good intentions go to waste. A report by UK think tank Demos in 2011 found that a significant number of volunteer tourists felt the work could have been done by locals and were unsure as to whether their voluntary work actually benefited the communities.

One reason for this is that advertising may give volunteers an over-inflated sense of their usefulness. Short trips are increasingly being designed to suit the convenience and motivations of the volunteer rather than the destination community.

But community involvement in planning the project is key to its success. Projects that aren't well thought out and simply outsourced to local partners without close supervision or consideration of local needs and values will often be unhelpful. "A good company will spend a couple of years deciding how that project is going to work," says Wearing.

To find the right overseas volunteer opportunity, it's important to understand the complexities of the development landscape. Trips that offer cultural training programs and inductions prior to departure are a positive start.

## PAYING TO VOLUNTEER OVERSEAS

Many overseas volunteer trips come with hefty price tags and can vary a lot. For two weeks' volunteering in India, excluding flights, we found prices that ranged from about \$300 up to more than \$2,000.

## WHAT DO YOU GET FOR YOUR VOLUNTEER FEE?

Few organisations are truly transparent about how volunteer fees are spent. We asked 18 volunteer abroad providers for an average breakdown of where vol-

Volunteer programs abroad are advertised as a chance to make a real difference. It sounds like a win-win situation that benefits the community and the volunteer. The catch is, volunteer programs aren't always mutually beneficial.



unteers' funds are spent but very few provided this.

From the organisations that did provide us with fee breakdowns, about half the volunteer fee went towards direct in-country living costs and projects. The other half was spent on general administration, organising placements, implementation and monitoring of projects, volunteer recruitment and presumably some profit for the companies.

And each company breaks down their costs differently making it hard to know exactly how your money is spent. Given that many volunteer abroad companies operate in an international environment, and that Australian companies with an annual turnover of less than \$25m generally aren't required to submit financials to the corporate regulator, details on company profits are often simply not available.

CHOICE believes that volunteer travel providers should be transparent about how fees are spent so that consumers can make meaningful comparisons.

## COMMERCIAL ORGANISATIONS ENTER THE VOLUNTEER SPHERE

The objectives and motivations for commercial businesses in the overseas volunteer sector are very different to non-commercial organisations, which is a problem, says Wearing. While good for-profit organisations do exist, he recommends going with an NGO as they tend to have projects that are better organised and of more benefit to the community.

The project's location is helpful in deciphering how commercial it is likely to be. Stay away from tourist destinations. "If it's already a popular destination, really it's just mass tourism," says Wearing.

Various companies also show signs of their commercial bent by offering expensive optional extras such as language classes. Projects Abroad, for example,

charges \$2,495 for two weeks of Spanish classes at its school in Argentina and Mexico, while there are endless numbers of local alternatives providing a much cheaper rate. You can also get less expensive Spanish classes in Australia at a university or community college before you go.

Other companies offer projects with dubious benefit, which are closer to tourism than volunteering. UK-based travel company, Gapforce, offers a volunteer opportunity to "rehabilitate and care for domesticated elephants" in a Thai elephant camp. Volunteers are able to ride the elephants, but animal welfare groups and tour operators such as Intrepid Travel have raised concerns over this practice.

## VOLUNTEERING OVERSEAS FOR FREE

While volunteering abroad agencies can give you some peace of mind about security and take the stress out of organising a placement, they don't do it for free. Their fee can account for more than half of the price you pay.

One option to avoid the high price tag is to plan the trip yourself by cutting out the middleman and going directly to the local organisation. But you take a higher risk. You'll need to do a lot of legwork to make sure the organisation is legitimate and that the project is beneficial. "It's not an easy landscape to navigate. It's easy to get shonky dealers," says Wearing.

There are various websites which can be a good starting point, but the options they provide aren't vetted.

Check out:

- [Grassrootsvolunteering.org](http://Grassrootsvolunteering.org)
- [Globalhelpswap.com](http://Globalhelpswap.com)
- [Idealist.org](http://Idealist.org)

## VOLUNTEERING IN ORPHANAGES ABROAD

Some orphanages in countries such as Nepal and Cambodia have turned to tourism to take advantage of the increased demand from people willing to pay to volunteer overseas. Between 2005 and 2010, the number of orphanages in Cambodia increased 75 per cent and the number of children in them increased 90 per cent. A UNICEF report found that these orphanages have little financial accountability and are run predominantly on overseas donations or volunteer funds, fuelling a market for orphanages that do more harm than good.

There are also serious safety risks for children as many orphanages don't have child protection policies or conduct background checks. Research also shows the detrimental consequences of constant short-term exposure of new caregivers on child development. Wherever possible, family and community-based care is a better alternative.

If you are considering volunteering in an orphanage it is worth considering the guidelines laid out at [thinkchildsafe.org](http://thinkchildsafe.org). Well-run orphanages do exist, but longer-term commitments such as nine to 12 months from volunteers are recommended.



## VOLUNTEERING GONE WRONG

In 2007, Kalia Forde signed up with a for-profit company, Antipodeans Abroad, to teach at a rural school in India for three months. As she was only 18 at the time, she decided to pay \$3,750 for Antipodeans Abroad to set up the placement so that she knew she would be looked after in a foreign country.

But on arrival in India she found her help was not needed. There was no school for her to teach at and no meaningful volunteer work for her to do. The local partner she'd been outsourced to, ISAC (India Study Abroad Centre), was instead searching for projects where she could volunteer.

Forde was sent to a local school to arrange work, but was told the students had exams coming up and that their schedules should not be disrupted. In her search for another opportunity, she was taken to an ashram, but when she arrived even the centre's director was confused as to why she was there and what she could do.

"It was as haphazard as if I was organising it myself," she says. "No one from the company had been to the project [in the local village Pen]."

Colin Carpenter, managing director at Antipodeans Abroad, says he had met with the director of ISAC prior to Forde's trip. While Antipodeans Abroad had been working with ISAC for three years, it had only started sending volunteers to Pen about six months earlier.

"Clearly ISAC hadn't done their work properly on the ground," says Carpenter. "We don't always get it right but most times we do. We also do our best to rectify situations that don't turn out well."

Antipodeans Abroad sent Forde on another trip free of charge and paid half the cost of the airfares, an experience she describes positively. Carpenter maintains that ISAC is a reputable organisation but Antipodeans Abroad doesn't currently offer placements through it for a range of reasons.

## FINDING A GOOD VOLUNTEER PLACEMENT

Do your homework before you volunteer overseas. Don't assume all organisations are good simply because they offer volunteer projects that try to make a difference. It's not hard for unscrupulous and misguided operators to start up.

- Ask to speak with previous volunteers, preferably someone who's been on a recent trip.
- Steer clear of popular tourist destinations.
- Go with a company that's directly engaged with projects rather than a company that outsources its volunteer opportunities to a local partner.
- NGOs and nonprofit volunteer sending agencies are likely to have more useful projects.
- Find out exactly what work you'll be doing before you go to ensure that projects are actually in place.
- Steer clear of skills-based projects (such as teaching English) unless you have those skills. Manual labour projects often provide something the community

would not otherwise have the time to do.

- Avoid volunteering at orphanages unless you have significant time to commit.
- Wait until you arrive to book any optional extras like language classes or side trips as they'll probably be cheaper.
- Vet the volunteer organisation using our checklist.

### **Read guidelines for tour operators**

- *Comhlámh's Code of Good Practice for Volunteer Sending Agencies:* [www.comhlamh.org/code-of-good-practice/](http://www.comhlamh.org/code-of-good-practice/)
- *The International Ecotourism Society's International VolunTourism Guidelines for Commercial Tour Operators:* [www.responsibletourismpartnership.org/icrt/](http://www.responsibletourismpartnership.org/icrt/)

## HOW TO VET A VOLUNTEER ABROAD ORGANISATION

### **What are you paying for?**

- Is the volunteer organisation a non-profit or for-profit?
- What's the specific breakdown of your volunteer fee? Are they transparent about this? How much goes towards your in-country living costs and the project compared with administration, project implementation and monitoring, volunteer recruitment and advertising?
- What's included with your volunteer fee? Insurance, 24-hour emergency contact, ground transport, flights, on-site staff, security?

## ORGANISATIONAL INVOLVEMENT AND COMMUNITY BENEFIT

- What work will you be doing exactly?
- Has someone from the volunteer abroad organisation been to visit the project? How often are they in contact with the project?
- How long have they been running volunteer trips to the project you'll be going to?
- Does the volunteer organisation have an ongoing relationship with the community or are they simply outsourcing you to a local partner?
- Why is the work you'll be doing critical to the project? Is it driven by local interests? Does it fit into a longer-term development plan?
- Does the project promote self-sufficiency? Is it designed with an exit strategy?
- How does the volunteer abroad company advertise the trip? Does it use "poverty marketing" to attract business rather than respect people's dignity? Do they oversell it or are they realistic about your contribution?
- Is pre-trip cultural training provided?
- What monitoring mechanisms has the volunteer agency put in place to ensure the project continues to be useful?

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Castle, J and Bird, J (27 August 2014). *Volunteering abroad*. Retrieved from [www.choice.com.au](http://www.choice.com.au) on 18 May 2020.

# INTERESTED IN VOLUNTEERING OVERSEAS?

Australians are well-known for our generosity when travelling overseas. We give our time, skills and money to help others. Unfortunately, visiting orphanages while on holidays can encourage harmful practices and put vulnerable children at risk of more harm. This advice from the **Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade** is for Australian volunteers to be informed, child safe and prepared.

## BE AN INFORMED VOLUNTEER

**T**he Australian Government discourages any form of short-term, unskilled volunteering in orphanages.

- Constant strangers coming in and out of children's lives can be harmful to a child's development.
- Some orphanages are created to get money from tourists, rather than providing care to children as a last resort.
- This can encourage an over-reliance on orphanage care, separate families and may put vulnerable children at greater risk of harm.

## BE A CHILD SAFE VOLUNTEER

Avoid any activity where children are promoted as tourist attractions.

- Care for vulnerable children should aim to reintegrate children into their family or community settings where it is safe to do so.
- Thoroughly research any overseas organisation

offering opportunities to volunteer with children to check they are acting in the best interests of the children.

- Find out if the organisation has a Child Protection Policy, and how this is put into practice.

## BE A PREPARED VOLUNTEER

Be a smart volunteer when you are overseas.

- Your activities should 'do no harm' and address a need in a local community.
- Do your homework to make sure you are the right person in the right organisation, making a positive contribution to the community.
- Find out any country specific advice, requirements or restrictions on volunteering activities.
- See below for a more detailed checklist of things to consider.

There are many worthwhile Australian and international volunteer organisations and programs which are making a significant difference to people's lives overseas.

Read more and apply for Australian government-funded assignments at [www.australianvolunteers.com](http://www.australianvolunteers.com)

For more general information on smart volunteering visit [www.dfat.gov.au/australianvolunteers](http://www.dfat.gov.au/australianvolunteers) or email [smartvolunteering@australianvolunteers.com](mailto:smartvolunteering@australianvolunteers.com)

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. *Interested in volunteering overseas?* Retrieved from <http://dfat.gov.au> on 29 October 2019.

## SMART VOLUNTEERING CHECKLIST

We know that many Australians and Australian organisations generously give their time and resources to volunteering overseas. We have created a checklist to help you be informed before volunteering.

THIS CHECKLIST IS ONLY A STARTING POINT

To help you choose the right volunteer experience, ask the following:

### 1. Is the organisation trustworthy, transparent and reputable?

- What can you learn about their mission and financial information from their website and other independent materials?
- Does the organisation have a proven track record?
- Does it comply with the laws and regulations of the country where you will volunteer?

### 2. Is volunteering the right fit?

- Have you been given clear information about what activities you will be doing as a volunteer?
- Do you have the right skills and experience to do the proposed activities?
- Will you be sharing your skills with local staff?

### 3. Is the organisation child safe?

- Do they have a Child Protection Policy?
- Are volunteers asked to read and sign a Code of Conduct which includes guidance on their Child Protection Policy and procedures?
- Do they always put the best interests of the children first?
- Are visitors registered on arrival and always supervised?
- Are staff and volunteers required to have general background checks?
- Are staff and volunteers who have regular contact with children required to have child protection screening?



# How can you ethically volunteer overseas?

JESSICA HAYNES EXPLAINS IN THIS **ABC NEWS** ARTICLE HOW YOU CAN LEND A HAND OVERSEAS IN AN ETHICAL WAY

Every year countless young Australians head overseas to give their time to those in need. Now, school-based volunteer travel company World Challenge has announced an end to trips to orphanages in developing countries after research showed the practice was harming vulnerable children.

So what can you do if you want to volunteer overseas? Here's how you can lend a hand in an ethical way.

## If it involves children, consider your impact

Leigh Matthews, a coordinator at ReThink Orphanages, who conducted the research into the impact voluntourism had on children, said it was important to consider your impact on other people's lives.

"I think you have to be careful with any activity that volunteers with children," Ms Matthews said.

"It's very hard as volunteers to properly evaluate the impact and potential harms that might arise from your involvement.

"We advocate steering clear of volunteering with children, in particular, in residential environments."

In short, if you aren't qualified to do the job, don't do it.

## Look beyond orphanage placements

Ms Matthews said there were a whole host of other opportunities for young people.

### VOLUNTEERING TIPS

- Avoid projects involving children.
- Weigh up the cost of voluntourism against giving a donation.
- Do your due diligence on any project and organisation you sign up with.

"We would advise going with organisations that work with from a process of education and the idea is that [if] you understand the issues, you can then become a change agent in your own community back home," she said.

"Volunteers can get involved working on community development projects, environment projects.

"Those are both safer options than working with children."

## Assess the cost of the trip compared to giving a donation

Another option is to donate some of your money, not just your time. Have a think about the total cost of a volunteer stint, including flights, travel insurance and vaccinations. If you want to travel, you can allocate a portion of your funds to go to a charity directly doing work within the community.

"It is also good to support charities that are already



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working in communities, starting with undertaking some research to find out about charities that are involved in the type of work and locations that you might be passionate about supporting,” Red Cross Australia international deployment manager Vanessa Brown said.

“There is some amazing work across the globe being undertaken and mobilised by local communities who are commonly the best placed respond to a certain local need, so our support for their growth can be the best way to have a positive impact.”

### **If you find a project, read the fine print**

Ms Matthews said you should first have a look at the organisation’s reputation. And she said to make sure the project you work on is one that’s been discussed and approved by the local community.

“Is there transparency ... do they tell you where your placement is? How much of your money goes to that organisation, and is there a way you can evaluate your impact while you are there?” she said.

“Basically, do your due diligence.

“There are many wonderful charities doing great work in local communities and those charities are both big and small. Support a charity that is effective ... and is transparent in how it helps, and as long as it aligns

with a cause you care about, then I think go for it.”

Ms Brown said there were a lot of ways in which people can get involved in helping people overseas which can create a positive impact.

“The challenges that have been raised through the international volunteering in orphanages and ‘voluntourism’ unfortunately is looking at a very specific type of volunteering, in a very specific sector of humanitarian work that has had significant implications in its practice and on the local communities it has operated within,” she said.

“There are still highly valuable and meaningful (both to the community and volunteer) programs that are being undertaken every day.”

Red Cross Australia is also trialling a new international volunteering program in the Asia Pacific.

“The program will be targeted at utilising highly-skilled volunteers to undertake short to mid-term pieces of work predominantly online but also within country to support resource gaps that have been identified by our local Red Cross counterparts in those areas,” Ms Brown said.

“The model is based on reciprocal learning, whereby our counterparts will also be supported to come to Australia and other countries within the Asia Pacific region to participate and share their knowledge within the program.”

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Haynes, J (12 September 2017). ‘How can you ethically volunteer overseas?’, *ABC News*. Retrieved from [www.abc.net.au/news](http://www.abc.net.au/news) on 18 May 2020.

“Is there transparency ... do they tell you where your placement is? How much of your money goes to that organisation, and is there a way you can evaluate your impact while you are there?”



# AUSSIE COMPANIES URGED TO GET MORE EMPLOYEES VOLUNTEERING

The time corporates spend volunteering has not seen significant growth over the past decade despite increasing recognition of the value to employees and businesses, a new report says. **Luke Michael** reports for *Pro Bono News*

**A**nalysis from Volunteering Australia and LBG Corporate Citizenship found 15 per cent of employees participated in volunteering in 2018 – up from 3.7 per cent in 2006 – and contributed more than one million hours of service to the community.

Even though 78 per cent of Australian companies now have a volunteering program in place, the report said there was still much work to be done.

“While participation levels in volunteering have risen steadily since 2006, the percentage of a company’s total spend in time ... has not altered significantly in over 10 years of reporting,” it said.

Australian companies reporting to LBG in 2018 reported 263,236 employees in their collective workforce.

The report said assuming each employee has one day a year to volunteer, this equates to more than 1,000 full-time equivalent staff for a year that were available to community organisations. But currently only half of this volunteering capacity is being utilised.

Volunteering Australia’s CEO Adrienne Picone told *Pro Bono News* the sector must continue to push the corporate volunteering message to a wider employee base within businesses.

Picone said companies should offer employees different ways to get involved in volunteering, whether it’s team-based, skills-based or micro-volunteering.

She highlighted a number of issues holding corporate volunteering back in Australia.

“The key barriers that inhibit corporate volunteering growing come down to resources, finding time to volunteer in a busy workload, and managing volunteering opportunities,” Picone said.

*Even though 78% of Australian companies now have a volunteering program in place ... there was still much work to be done.*

“Across the country the state and territory volunteering peak bodies are working with community organisations to find ways that corporate Australia can contribute their time.”

The report said the volunteering benefits for employees – such as providing a sense of purpose, offering learning opportunities, and promoting connection with others – were well recognised.



It said companies also benefited from giving their workers volunteering opportunities, with employees that volunteer found to be more loyal towards the business and more engaged in their work.

*The volunteering benefits for employees – such as providing a sense of purpose, offering learning opportunities, and promoting connection with others – were well recognised.*

Corporate Citizenship’s Australian director, Simon Robinson, said volunteering could be more integrated into a company’s corporate citizenship strategy, so its real value to the business and the community was realised.

Robinson told *Pro Bono News* that average participation rates for corporate volunteering appear to have plateaued at around 15 per cent over the past four years.

He said many companies could do more to promote volunteering in the workplace, with employee awareness cited as one reason participation rates remained where they were.

“Personally, I would like to see more innovation in this space ... such as employees being able to give their volunteer hours to a colleague if they don’t want to use them,” Robinson said.

“You don’t see many companies linking professional training and development with volunteering – that could be a way of raising the level above 15 per cent.”

Robinson added there could be value in presenting volunteering to employees in a different way.

“Volunteering could be presented as a key opportunity for people to develop their personal and professional skills, as opposed as something just to use up their leave day,” he said.

“Perhaps it can even be called something else, [with] the term volunteering immediately placing the concept in a certain box in people’s minds.”

**Luke Michael** is a journalist at *Pro Bono News* covering the social sector.

Michael, L (19 July 2019). *Aussie companies urged to get more employees volunteering*. Retrieved from <http://probonoaustralia.com.au> on 18 May 2020.

# CORPORATE VOLUNTEERING IN AUSTRALIA: A SNAPSHOT

This research snapshot by **London Benchmarking Group** highlights the many benefits of corporate volunteering for the employee, the company, and the community involved

## CORPORATE VOLUNTEERING BENEFITS

### *For the employee*

- Opportunities to meet new people and explore new situations and challenges.
- Unique opportunities to interact with people from other areas of the company.
- New and more positive perceptions of career, workplace, peers and management teams.
- Pathways to making a difference through community involvement.
- Opportunity to gain skills or use existing skills in a new environment.
- Increased ability to set individual performance goals, coach and counsel and evaluate performance.

### *For the company*

- Increased company pride and loyalty from staff.
- Heightened image and positive recognition by external stakeholders.
- Improved staff morale, motivation, team spirit and initiative.
- Enhanced relationships between people from different areas of the organisation.
- Better employee attendance, recruitment and retention.
- Professional and skill development opportunities for staff.
- Improved triple bottom line.
- Transformative relationships between the company and the local community.

### *For the community*

- Access to a different pool of volunteers, skills, knowledge and technical expertise.
- Increasing service delivery for beneficiaries.
- An opportunity to share the organisation's mission to potential ambassadors.
- Influence behaviours for positive social, economic or environmental impact.
- Access to teams of volunteers for major tasks and events.
- Increasing public awareness of community issues.
- Create corporate partnerships and potential income streams for community projects.
- Improve understanding between the business and voluntary sectors.

## THE SNAPSHOT DATA

In Australia, LBG (London Benchmarking Group) is managed by Corporate Citizenship and has tracked the levels of participation and the value of the time committed by corporate volunteers for over 10 years both in Australia and globally. Companies report the value and extent of all their corporate community investment activities annually and LBG provides a third-party verification of reported data.

LBG values the time of company employees' volunteering at the cost to the business and not at the value to the community. This ensures a level 'playing-field' to measure and benchmark contributed time. LBG has drawn on 10 years of this verified data to provide some observations and recommendations around employee volunteering across Australia.

'Australian data' refers to data reported annually by Australian companies since 2006. 'Global data' refers to all data reported to LBG from across the world, including data from Australian companies. Additionally, insights have been drawn from LBG's annual State of Corporate Community Investment (CCI) survey where the views of community investment professionals from around the world are sought. The LBG annual review, including the State of CCI survey results, can be found in full at [www.lbg-online.net](http://www.lbg-online.net).

## TRENDS AND CHALLENGES

Companies appear to acknowledge the value of a corporate volunteering program: 78% of respondents to the annual State of Corporate Community Investment survey indicate they have a program in place, and an additional 10% plan to start one. Furthermore, over half of respondents indicate they aim to either increase participation or increase focus on skilled volunteering.

Community investment professionals report that the key challenges with corporate volunteering include; balancing people's workload with volunteering commitments; managing opportunities for skilled and non-skilled volunteering; and the difficulty in gaining broader uptake, where generally a small number of regular employees take up many opportunities.

Another common challenge reported was the alignment of the volunteering programs with business strategy. Achievement of this continues to present a significant opportunity for companies to grow their positive impact on society whilst accruing meaningful business benefits. Connecting volunteering to employee development remains an under-utilised opportunity.

Despite the increasing numbers of programs and the growing recognition of the value of employee volunteering, we have not seen significant growth. While participation levels in volunteering have risen steadily since 2006, the percentage of a company's total spend in time (cash, in kind and management costs make up the rest) has not altered significantly in over ten years of reporting. Half of the potential employee volunteering time is not utilised each year, equivalent to 500 FTE across reporting LBG members. There are many more companies that make volunteer leave available to their employees.

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENGAGEMENT

Volunteering benefits for individual participants are well recognised, for example providing a sense of purpose,

## THE FINDINGS

- 78% of companies have a volunteering program<sup>1</sup>. Over half of those intend to increase levels of participation.<sup>2</sup>
- 15% of employees participated in volunteering in 2018<sup>2</sup>. This has grown from 3.7% in 2006<sup>2</sup>.
- 1m+ hours contributed by corporate volunteers in 2018. An average of 27.5 hours per volunteer.
- 10% of corporate community budget is time<sup>3</sup>. Australian companies contribute a greater proportion of their total community spend in time: 10% versus 7% globally<sup>3</sup>.
- 500 FTE available but not utilised each year<sup>4</sup>. Amongst Australian LBG members, the theoretically available volunteering time (usually one or more days per employee per year) equates to over 1,000 FTE staff. Only half of this is actually utilised, leaving the equivalent of over 500 full-time staff, for a year, that are available but not being utilised.<sup>4</sup>

### Endnotes

1. A volunteer program is defined as the formal provision by an employer for paid time to enable its employees to work in the community.
2. Participation is the percentage of employees involved in corporate volunteering (working in the community during paid company time) compared to the total workforce of reporting companies.
3. Companies report to LBG total community contributions made in cash, time (corporate volunteering), in-kind and management costs.
4. Australian companies reporting to LBG in 2018 reported 263,236 employees in their collective workforce. Assuming each employee has one day per annum to volunteer, this equates to over 1000 FTE for a year, of which only half is currently used.

promoting connection with others and providing learning opportunities. Conversely, while business benefits are extensive, these are perhaps not as well recognised or understood in circles outside of community investment professionals.

At its most basic, enabling employees to volunteer to causes that matter to them can engender loyalty towards the business and positively influence employee engagement. However, a well-structured volunteering program can have far greater benefits than this. Opportunities exist to grow and develop employee talent, foster relationships (both between employees and business-to-business) and develop brand recognition and trust – all while delivering meaningful benefit to the community.

With these potential benefits up for grabs, the challenges reported (e.g. of balancing workload and managing opportunities) do not seem insurmountable. So, what stands in the way? Is it perhaps that volunteering is something that other people do, who have more time and don't have such busy jobs?

If volunteering opportunities were recognised and promoted as (for example) “training and development opportunities”, would this shift the dial? Until companies can integrate the huge value that experiential learning through volunteering provides, as a route to learning and development, then we are unlikely to see significant changes.

From the not-for-profit perspective, consideration should be given to the opportunities presented to corporate partners and other organisations – where do you need skilled assistance? What would have a significant impact on the organisation? Perhaps in marketing, communications, IT assistance, strategy or leadership? There are over 500 FTE resources available (every year!) from LBG members alone – how do you tap into and make the most of this?

Opportunities to consider to increase participation and realise associated benefits:

- Consider deeper and longer forms of engagement to match with professional development objectives and community needs.
- Work more closely with training and development teams in companies to maximise engagement opportunities.
- Offer volunteer ‘banks’, through which interested employees can access unused volunteering hours.
- Turn unused volunteer leave into donations via work place giving or other employee mechanisms.

### About LBG and Corporate Citizenship

LBG is the global standard in measuring and managing corporate community investment. The LBG Framework is a robust measurement standard that any company can apply to understand the difference their contributions make to business and society. The businesses using LBG are from some of the world's leading organisations and are part of a global LBG Network.

Corporate Citizenship is a global consultancy that starts with a very simple premise – that just as individual citizens have rights, responsibilities and aspirations, so do companies.

For more than 20 years we've helped businesses find their place in the world. As critical friends we ask the sometimes difficult questions that challenge our clients to fulfil their responsibilities and ambitions through practical action.



## CASE STUDY

Skills-based volunteering allows employees to expand their volunteering contribution by utilising their professional skills and knowledge to support community organisations in a more specialised and focused way that requires delivery against a requested scope of work.

City West Lotteries House (CWLH) was looking for a volunteer with the knowledge and expertise to assist their team with some much-needed upskilling in using platforms such as Excel. The small team of three at CWLH was previously using Excel at a basic level to calculate their end of month tenant charges, and were keen to undergo some training in order to work more efficiently and consistently.

CWLH are no strangers to working with Woodside volunteers, and they knew the way to gain expertise, improve their services, develop the organisation's capabilities and to move this project forward was to bring in another skilled Woodsider. Volunteering WA advertised the role with Woodside, and found the perfect skilled volunteer, Lihua Huang.

As Woodside's Finance Business Partner, Lihua Huang was the ideal candidate for this opportunity. First, Volunteering WA brokered a meeting between Lihua and the team at CWLH to get a clear understanding of their current process, and to identify where improvements were needed around re-designing the data entry procedure and standardising tenant names across all documents. She then gathered and reviewed the documentation to identify the key issues and changes that needed to be tackled.

Lihua provided valuable ideas and inputs to amend their internal processes, working with the staff to integrate the end of month data into a more comprehensive format for recording and reporting. Several training sessions were then conducted with the team to demonstrate the new model. Lihua's recommendations were shown to reduce the number of processes and procedures involved, and they set to work implementing her ideas.

On completion of the project, a new spreadsheet capturing all the relevant data had been piloted with tenants over a two-month period, with very positive feedback received. Lihua had successfully streamlined the processes used by the organisation, significantly improving the operational efficiency of the team.

"Lihua listened to what the needs of CWLH were and acted on them to achieve excellent results for us. She provided great ideas and tuition," said Trish Slee, CEO, CWLH.

### **What was the best part of your experience volunteering with CWLH?**

*I received support from the organisation and they appreciated the efficiency gains from the new process.*

### **Did your experience volunteering build on your existing skills and knowledge?**

*Yes. I learned that communication with stakeholders at all levels to ensure alignment before making changes is important.*

### **What was the most significant takeaway from your volunteering experience?**

*It was great to see that I was able to add value to a community organisation with my skills. I would definitely recommend a skills-based volunteer opportunity to others.*

## **About Volunteering Australia**

Volunteering Australia is the national peak body for volunteering, working to advance volunteering in the Australian community. Its vision is a stronger, more connected and resilient Australian community through volunteering, and its mission is to lead, strengthen, promote and celebrate volunteering in Australia. Volunteering Australia works with volunteering peak bodies in every state and territory in Australia. For more information on how to manage corporate volunteering in your state, please see Volunteering Australia's website for Australia-wide contact details.

## **About the Corporate Volunteer Council**

The Corporate Volunteer Council (CVC), convened by Volunteering WA, is a coalition of businesses that recognise the importance of workplace volunteering to better address the needs of our community.

The CVC promotes and strengthens corporate volunteerism by:

- Being an advocate for corporate volunteering;
- Sharing amongst its members knowledge and experience of corporate volunteering;
- And promoting best practice in corporate volunteering.

The Executive Committee of the CVC is made up of representatives from Alcoa, Bankwest, Beyond Bank, BHP, Deloitte, RAC, Shell and Woodside.

**Authored and published by London Benchmarking Group (LBG), managed by Corporate Citizenship and Volunteering Australia.**

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Volunteering Australia. *Corporate Volunteering in Australia: A snapshot* (October 2019). Retrieved from [www.volunteeringaustralia.org](http://www.volunteeringaustralia.org) on 18 May 2020.

# Volunteering: the ultimate act of kindness

**Andrew Cairns**, CEO of Community Sector Banking, considers how we can grow volunteerism in businesses to build a stronger civil society

**T**here is great reward in the act of volunteering. Those on the receiving end benefit from the help, the time, the interaction and the tasks completed by someone not looking to get paid for their work. Those engaged in volunteering benefit from the feel good factor of knowing their time and contributions are helping someone in need. It's a powerful dynamic with valuable rewards.

At its heart, volunteering is a selfless gesture. It's a way of giving time, offering your skills, or lending resources to someone who could use the help. It's a valuable way to build community, encourage collaboration and strengthen social connectivity.

Perhaps it's not surprising to know that one of the hardest tasks for organisations and not-for-profits is finding people willing to give their time as volunteers. Many not-for-profits are struggling under the workload of helping others, giving their own time and resources, but find it difficult to recruit volunteers to support their work.

Organisations working with homeless families or with teenagers in recovery, or with developmentally delayed adults seeking employment could be transformed with the help of volunteers. Those on the fringes of society, those who are struggling to find their way, those who have been isolated, neglected or rejected need our help and support the most. They rely on the kindness of strangers.

Volunteering is the backbone of a strong civil society. The more selfless communities are, the more we all pitch in and participate, lend our time or our skills, the stronger we will become.

Corporate volunteering is growing – more businesses are introducing programs under their corporate social responsibility action plans to give back to the community. But volunteering is not just a box to tick. It provides numerous benefits for employees – building a positive internal workplace culture which is proven to improve productivity and contribute to long-term sustainability.

So how do we harness the act of volunteering in corporations and businesses and go beyond simply volunteering our time? Corporates and businesses have an opportunity to create and embrace a culture of giving. They have so many valuable resources that would benefit organisations. Start with intellect.

A company who specialises in innovation and development may be able to assist with training on systems, software or company processes. A company

Businesses have skill sets, knowledge bases and resources that are invaluable to organisations who may not have the funds to hire professional help.



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If corporates and businesses volunteered to train organisations and offered to share some of their valuable resources like space, the benefits would be immense for not-for-profit organisations.

who specialises in communications can offer training on social media or media outreach.

And think about resources. Building websites and designing marketing material are valuable skills that many not-for-profits wouldn't be able to afford otherwise – so businesses specialising in those areas could volunteer their resources to make a real impact.

Finally, think about space. Larger companies may have wonderful conference rooms, auditoriums, or garden space. The cost to hire space comes at a premium. If businesses volunteered their space for organisations to host an event, put on a talk or facilitate a workshop, it would make a great impact.

Businesses have skill sets, knowledge bases and resources that are invaluable to organisations who may not have the funds to hire professional help. If corporates and businesses volunteered to train organisations and offered to share some of their valuable resources like space, the benefits would be immense for not-for-profit organisations.

So how can we grow volunteerism in businesses to build a stronger civil society?

First, we need to shift from programs to movements. Programs are limited in scope and scale – it's

volunteering for season rather than for reason. By shifting to social movements, there is room for exponential growth which delivers real change and impact in communities.

Second, we need to foster a sense of agency – encouraging employees to volunteer for real change, not to complete corporate participation rates. This is vital to establish long-term, meaningful and beneficial relationships between businesses, employees and not-for-profits.

There needs to be a shift away from output metrics, such as hours or invested dollars, to employees actively seeking opportunities to support communities. This can be managed internally by reaching out to local not-for-profits to identify opportunities for professional assistance, guidance and outside-of-work volunteer support.

Last, we must change the perception of volunteerism. It should no longer be viewed as a transactional model of helping, but rather an act of making a difference and addressing key issues in society. By understanding that volunteerism is a key to inclusiveness and belonging, we can create a stronger civil society, where communities are united, and all are able to maximise their potential.

For their part, not-for-profits can't sit back and wait for these opportunities to appear – they must seek them out, ask, and make them happen. There are numerous opportunities available – from pro bono support to accelerator and think tank opportunities and even donation-matching and grants.

Not-for-profits need to invest in determining what skill sets would benefit their organisation. Once those skill sets are identified, they need to invest time in approaching larger companies to work with them in volunteering their training or services.

Chances are, when asked, many businesses would happily lend a hand or lend their talents to help a struggling organisation or under-resourced not-for-profit.

Once we embrace the idea that we are all connected, that asking for help is OK, and that offering help is even better, our society, our communities and our organisations will thrive. We will be able to embrace the act of volunteering for reason, not for season and we will come to realise that even as strangers we can be connected by a simple act of kindness in the form of volunteering.

**Andrew Cairns** is the CEO of Community Sector Banking.

Cairns, A (16 July 2019). *Volunteering: The ultimate act of kindness*. Retrieved from <http://probonoaustralia.com.au> on 18 May 2020.

# EXPLORING ISSUES

## WORKSHEETS AND ACTIVITIES

The Exploring Issues section comprises a range of ready-to-use worksheets featuring activities which relate to facts and views raised in this book.

The exercises presented in these worksheets are suitable for use by students at middle secondary school level and beyond. Some of the activities may be explored either individually or as a group.

As the information in this book is compiled from a number of different sources, readers are prompted to consider the origin of the text and to critically evaluate the questions presented.

Is the information cited from a primary or secondary source? Are you being presented with facts or opinions?

Is there any evidence of a particular bias or agenda? What are your own views after having explored the issues?

## CONTENTS

BRAINSTORM	52
WRITTEN ACTIVITIES	53
RESEARCH ACTIVITIES	54
DESIGN ACTIVITIES	55
MULTIPLE CHOICE	56





Brainstorm, individually or as a group, to find out what you know about volunteering.

**1. What is volunteering, and why is it important?**

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**2. What is the difference between *formal* and *informal* volunteering?**

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**3. Explain the term 'voluntourism'. Include examples in your answer.**

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**4. What is corporate volunteering? Explain the potential benefits for a company, an employee, and also the community?**

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**5. What is virtual volunteering, and what are some examples?**

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Complete the following activities on a separate sheet of paper if more space is required.

*“There is an organisation for everyone. Especially now organisations are taking a different approach to volunteering, and not just sticking with the traditional models, they have project-based and skills-based instead of just the long-term traditional model.”*

Williams, W, 'Selfie Generation' most likely to volunteer.

Write answers to the following questions to help you identify potential ways in which you could connect with an organisation as a volunteer, and why volunteering would benefit you and the potential organisation. Share your findings with other people in your class or group.

1. Write a few paragraphs on what you think it means to be a volunteer. Include the reasons why people volunteer, what benefits they receive from volunteering, and what benefits the organisation and the community could derive from their services.

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2. Write a few paragraphs outlining your interests, skills and what you could offer an organisation or institution. Include any areas of your life in which you may already be volunteering, e.g. helping out at your sports club, or at an arts, environmental or community group.

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3. Write a few paragraphs discussing the type of organisation you believe would suit your interests and values, the types of tasks you would like to undertake, how much time you feel you could offer, and what you would like to get out of volunteering. List your thoughts with examples.

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Complete the following activities on a separate sheet of paper if more space is required.

*“If there weren’t volunteers, not-for-profit organisations would either collapse or have to spend more donated funds hiring staff. There is also some evidence that volunteering is an activity closely associated with happiness and wellbeing.”*

Huntley, R, ‘Volunteering benefits our community and society, but rates are declining’.

Use online resources to research and identify not-for-profit organisations or charities offering volunteering opportunities at local, national and international levels. Select at least two organisations or charities at each level to research. Include the following basic information: the name, location, type and purpose of the organisation/charity.

Other information should include, but not be limited to, what you would be doing during this volunteering opportunity, the application process if relevant (include any application forms), and details of any clearances required. Determine whether the opportunities are reliable – locate testimonials, ascertain if you would incur any costs and what these could be, and what beneficial impacts your involvement would have on the local community. Include all sources for your research. Present your findings to the class.

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### INTERNATIONAL

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Complete the following activities on a separate sheet of paper if more space is required.

*“Volunteerism enables individuals to work together, shaping collective opportunities for dealing with risk and connecting individuals and communities with wider systems of support. Volunteerism as a universal social behaviour is therefore a critical resource for community resilience.”*

United Nations Volunteers, *The thread that binds: Volunteerism and community resilience.*

In groups of two or more, create a team-based volunteering activity to support a cause by promoting social awareness. First, identify a cause and determine if there are any current calendar events already in place (e.g. Clean Up Australia Day, National Recycling Week, Save the Koala Month, etc).

1. Design a visual event plan for your team-based volunteering activity using a white board or large sheets of paper. Outline all relevant information including, but not limited to, when, where, and how you will be coordinating your activity, the purpose of your activity, your timeline, who your team volunteers will be, how they will be coordinated, and what their roles will be.

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2. Design promotional materials for your activity. Determine the type of promotional material that will be of most benefit to the purpose of your activity (e.g. video – include storyboard ideas; poster/flyer – include design elements and content; or social media – include platforms, design and content).

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3. Design an event run sheet for distribution to all members of your volunteer team. The sheet should include all details of the activity such as a finalised member list with their associated tasks, relevant locations, dates and times of tasks, and events. Ensure emergency plans and contacts are included.

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## MULTIPLE CHOICE

Complete the following multiple choice questionnaire by circling or matching your preferred responses. The answers are at the end of this page.

- 1. Which of the following are considered to be types of volunteering? (Select any that apply)**
  - a. Student work placement
  - b. Peaceful activism
  - c. Unpaid internships
  - d. Pro bono work
  - e. Advocacy work
  - f. Work experience
- 2. Which of the following roles could be examples of a virtual volunteer? (Select any that apply)**
  - a. Wikipedia page administrator
  - b. Environmental field officer
  - c. Facebook group support officer
  - d. Animal attendant
  - e. Social media promotion assistant
  - f. Website administrator
- 3. Which of the following types of organisation do people most commonly volunteer for? (Select one only)**
  - a. Arts and heritage
  - b. Health
  - c. Religious
  - d. Welfare
  - e. Sport and physical recreation activities
  - f. Emergency services
  - g. Animal welfare
  - h. Environmental
- 4. Respond to the following statements by circling either 'True' or 'False':**

a. As a volunteer, you are not covered by workplace bullying legislation.	True / False
b. Volunteers over the age of 80 years are predominantly men.	True / False
c. The Australian Government discourages any form of short-term, unskilled volunteering in overseas orphanages.	True / False
d. Volunteering rates are high for young people aged 15-17 years.	True / False
e. There are no corporate volunteering programs currently in place in Australian companies.	True / False
f. At the 2000 Sydney Olympics there were 45,000 volunteers.	True / False

### MULTIPLE CHOICE ANSWERS

1 = b, d, e; 2 = a, c, e, f; 3 = e; 4 = a = F (The Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth) covers any worker, including volunteers, who believe they have been bullied at work), b = T, c = T, d = T, e = F (78% of Australian companies now have corporate volunteering programs in place), f = T.

- In 2014, 31% of the Australian population aged 15 and over participated in voluntary work. Over a 12-month period, volunteers contributed an estimated 743 million hours to the community. In 2012-13, the estimated value of voluntary work in not-for-profit organisations was \$17 billion (AIHW, *Volunteering*). (p.1)
- In 2014, 50% of all who had volunteered in the previous 12 months contributed more than 50 hours during that period and almost one-fifth (19%) contributed 200 or more hours. Half (50%) of all volunteers had been volunteering for more than 10 years, and 70% had parents who had been volunteers (*ibid*). (p.2)
- Volunteering is high for the young (15-17 years at 42%) and the older (65-75 years at 35%). Those in the 35-44 age group are also likely to volunteer, perhaps drawn into it by kids' activities and interests (Huntley, R, *Volunteering benefits our community and society, but rates are declining*). (p.4)
- In 2001, South Australia was the first state in Australia to appoint a Minister for Volunteers (*ibid*). (p.5)
- More than 1 billion people volunteer globally. Considering the hours they contribute, this is equivalent to over 109 million full-time workers (Centre for Volunteering, *UN's State of the World's Volunteerism Report 2018*). (p.6)
- The global volunteer workforce exceeds the number of people employed in 6 of the 10 most populous countries worldwide (*ibid*). (p.6)
- The 2016 Census showed that 3.6 million people had volunteered in the community in the previous year, or 19.0% of the population, up from 17.8% in 2011, an extra 530,000 volunteers over 5 years (Capuano, G, *Who are Australia's volunteers?*). (p.9)
- The age at which people volunteer has three distinct peaks. Females in their 40s, and both sexes in their late teens and again in senior years from 60-75 for both sexes. Among the very elderly population the gender balance reverses, and more men over the age of 80 volunteer than women, as a percentage of the population (*ibid*). (pp. 9-10)
- The biggest barrier to people volunteering into the future is work commitments and out-of-pocket expenses incurred through volunteering (Volunteering Australia, *State of Volunteering in Australia*). (p.11)
- Volunteers under 24 years old use online sources to look for volunteering opportunities (28%) (PwC Australia, *State of Volunteering in Australia: Help Create Happiness*). (p.14)
- 44% of volunteers have engaged in virtual volunteering in the last 12 months, with 19% interested in doing so in the future. This involves undertaking volunteering tasks online, such as managing social media (*ibid*). (p.14)
- Once people start volunteering, they tend to keep doing it and their children quite often follow. Nearly half of volunteers had volunteered for more than 10 years (ABS, *General Social Survey: Summary Results, Australia, 2014*). (p.15)
- Volunteers undertake a wide range of activities. In 2014, these activities included fundraising and sales (23%), teaching/providing information (15%), coaching or refereeing (14%) and food preparation/serving (14%) (*ibid*). (p.16)
- The most commonly reported reasons for volunteering are to help others or the community (64%), for personal satisfaction (57%) or to do something worthwhile (54%) (ABS, *General Social Survey: Summary Results, Australia, 2014*). (p.17)
- The most regularly cited reasons given for not volunteering are ill health, lack of time, and lack of interest (Holmes, K, et al., *Why don't more people volunteer? Misconceptions don't help*). (p.24)
- The not-for-profit sector relies on its volunteer workforce. In ABS statistics released in June 2014, not-for-profits contributed almost \$55 billion to the Australian economy and employed more than a million people in 2012-13 (Oppenheimer, M, *Ten things you should know about volunteering's immeasurable value*). (p.28)
- In a world first, Australia introduced substantial provisions to address workplace bullying and harassment. The *Fair Work Act 2009* (Cth) was amended to allow any worker who reasonably believes he or she has been bullied at work to apply to the Fair Work Commission – this covers volunteers (*ibid*). (p.28)
- Whether it is doing wildlife research in South Africa, contributing to women's empowerment initiatives in India, or championing preventative healthcare in local communities in Thailand, there are important projects around the world that rely on volunteers to ensure consistency and sustainability (Darrah, P, *Is it better to give to a charity or volunteer?*). (p.29)
- In culturally and linguistically diverse communities, volunteering is just seen as a natural expectation and a part of life (Hegarty, S, *Volunteering rates are declining, but you could be helping out and not know it*). (p.32)
- In Hinduism, and a lot of other similar cultures, like Sikhism and Jainism, the word for service to community is called 'seva' (*ibid*). (p.32)
- Many overseas volunteer trips come with hefty price tags and can vary a lot. For 2 weeks' volunteering in India, excluding flights, prices can range from about \$300 up to more than \$2,000 (Castle, J, *Volunteering abroad*). (p.39)
- The Australian Government discourages any form of short-term, unskilled volunteering in orphanages (DFAT, *Interested in volunteering overseas?*). (p.42)
- 15% of employees participated in volunteering in 2018 – up from 3.7% in 2006 – and contributed more than 1 million hours of service to the community ... 78% of Australian companies now have a volunteering program in place (Michael, L, *Aussie companies urged to get more employees volunteering*). (p.45)
- Companies appear to acknowledge the value of a corporate volunteering program: 78% of respondents to an annual survey indicate they have a program in place, and an additional 10% plan to start one (Volunteering Australia, *Corporate Volunteering in Australia: A snapshot*). (p.46)

## Activism

Activism can be considered volunteering when people participate in peaceful activities with mutually beneficial outcomes. Any activism that incites or involves violence is not considered to be volunteering.

## Altruism

The disinterested and selfless concern for the wellbeing of others. 'Effective altruism' is a philosophy and social movement that advocates using evidence and reasoning to determine the most effective ways to benefit others.

## Charity

A type of not-for-profit organisation that has a charitable purpose for the public benefit.

## Corporate (employee) volunteering

When the employee is supported and paid by the company to volunteer in an activity of the employee's choosing.

## Corporate social responsibility

A type of international private business self-regulation that aims to contribute to societal goals of a philanthropic, activist, or charitable nature by engaging in or supporting volunteering or ethically-oriented practices.

## Corporate volunteering

When a company organises employees to volunteer for an organisation chosen by the company.

## Donation

A gift given to charity or organisation, often in the form of money, to benefit their cause.

## Formal volunteering

Structured volunteering that takes place within an organisation or institution (e.g. through a charity, not-for-profit, or community organisation).

## Fundraising

Process of seeking and gathering voluntary financial contributions by engaging individuals, businesses, charitable foundations, or governmental agencies. Although typically referring to efforts for non-profit organisations, it is sometimes used to refer to the identification and solicitation of investors or other sources of capital for for-profit enterprises. Traditionally, fundraising consists mostly of asking for donations face-to-face on the street or at people's doors, however new forms of fundraising have emerged in recent years, such as online, though these are often based on older methods such as grassroots fundraising.

## Informal volunteering

Volunteering acts that take place outside of an organisation or institution (e.g. assisting family and friends with tasks like caring, babysitting or home maintenance).

## Micro volunteering

A form of virtual volunteering where the volunteer offers their skills and time to complete small tasks with no long-term commitment.

## Not-for-profit

An organisation that does not operate for profit, or the benefit or gain of any individuals.

## Philanthropy

Act of giving to improve the wellbeing of the community. It can include the giving of money, services, information, time, goods, or influence.

## Pro bono

From the Latin, *pro bono publico*, meaning 'for the public good'. In legal terms it generally means offering legal services on a free or significantly reduced fee basis, without an expectation of any commercial returns.

## Professional volunteer

Professional volunteers are highly trained and often indistinguishable from paid employees.

## Skills-based volunteering

When a volunteer uses their professional skills and talents to provide services to an organisation or institution that is unable to afford professional services.

## Team volunteering

Also known as group volunteering. Team volunteering activities can be organised as team building or morale boosting activities to support a cause. Often coordinated as half-day or day-long activities.

## Virtual volunteering

Also known as online volunteering or e-volunteering. When a volunteer undertakes online tasks at a place away from the organisation or institution. Virtual volunteers use the internet and electronic devices such as a computer, tablet or phone to perform tasks.

## Volunteer

A person who freely offers to take part in an enterprise or undertake a task; and/or who works for an organisation without being paid.

## Volunteering

Time willingly given for the common good and without financial gain. The term volunteering covers a diverse range of activities. It includes structured volunteering that takes place within an organisation or institution (*formal* volunteering) and acts that take place outside of an organisation or institution (*informal* volunteering).

## Volunteerism

The principle of donating time and energy for the benefit of other people in the community as a social responsibility rather than for any financial reward.

## Voluntourism

A combination of the words volunteering and tourism. 'Voluntourism' is when overseas travellers participate in volunteer work at their holiday destination. Often services offered are for a charity and performed to assist the communities or the environment at their destination.

## Websites with further information on the topic

Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission [www.acnc.gov.au](http://www.acnc.gov.au)  
 Australian Volunteers International [www.avi.org.au](http://www.avi.org.au)  
 Australian Volunteers Program [www.australianvolunteers.com](http://www.australianvolunteers.com)  
 Conservation Volunteers Australia [www.conservationvolunteers.com.au](http://www.conservationvolunteers.com.au)  
 Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade [www.dfat.gov.au](http://www.dfat.gov.au)  
 GoVolunteer [www.govolunteer.com.au](http://www.govolunteer.com.au)  
 Philanthropy Australia [www.philanthropy.org.au](http://www.philanthropy.org.au)  
 ProBono Australia [www.probonoaustralia.com.au](http://www.probonoaustralia.com.au)  
 The Centre for Volunteering [www.volunteering.com.au](http://www.volunteering.com.au)  
 United Nations Volunteers [www.unv.org](http://www.unv.org)  
 Volunteering Australia [www.volunteeringaustralia.org](http://www.volunteeringaustralia.org)

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# INDEX

- A**  
activism 34-35
- B**  
bullying and harassment, workplace 28
- C**  
charity, giving to 29-30, 43-44  
child protection 40, 42, 43  
commercial organisations 40  
community resilience 6, 7-8  
companies *see* volunteering, corporate  
culturally and linguistically diverse  
(CALD) communities 10, 32-33
- E**  
employees 11, 45, 46-48, 49-50
- N**  
not-for-profit sector 28  
NRMA Insurance HELP Study 36-38
- O**  
orphanages, abroad 40, 42, 43, 44
- P**  
protesting 34-35
- S**  
school canteens 4  
social media 32  
*State of the World's Volunteerism Report  
2018: The Thread that Binds* 6, 7-8  
*State of Volunteering in Australia* report  
11, 12-14
- V**  
values, matching your 31  
'volunteer gene' 27  
volunteer work, finding 31  
volunteering  
  abroad (overseas) 39-41, 42, 43-44  
  ethical 43-44  
  orphanages 40, 42, 43, 44  
  paying to 39-40  
  smart volunteering checklist 42  
  usefulness of 39  
  vetting organisations 41  
  working holidays 39  
activities, types of 15, 16  
  online 32, 34  
benefits of 4-5, 20, 26  
  mental health 26  
  social 26  
  wellbeing 1, 5, 26  
considering 31  
corporate 3, 11, 45, 46-48, 49-50  
definitions of 3, 26, 34  
economic contribution of 27, 28  
episodic and spontaneous 3  
  evolution of 27  
  formal 26  
  future, in the 13  
  government interest in 27-28  
  hours volunteered 1, 2, 15-16, 17, 18  
  informal 3, 12-13, 26, 28  
  length of 15  
  life cycle of 27  
  micro 3  
  misconceptions about 24-25  
  opportunities 11, 12-14  
  participation, barriers to 13,  
    24-25, 38  
  promoting 20-23  
  rates 1-3, 4, 9-10, 11, 15-16, 17, 24,  
    32-33, 34-35, 36-38, 45, 46-48  
  decline in 4-5, 7-8, 24-25, 32-33  
  location of  
    cities 10  
    local government areas (LGAs),  
      by 10  
    regional 10  
    rural 10  
    state/territory level 10  
  reasons for 2, 15, 17  
  reasons for not 24, 25  
  state of, in Australia 11, 12-14  
  statistics *see* volunteering, rates  
  strategies, states/territories 20-23  
    Australian Capital Territory  
      (ACT) 23  
    New South Wales (NSW) 22  
    South Australia (SA) 20  
    Western Australia (WA) 21  
  support services  
    Commonwealth funding of 18-19  
    value of 18-19  
  time for 31  
  tradition 27  
  trends 2-3, *see also* rates  
  value of, financial 1  
  virtual (digital) 3, 14  
volunteerism 6, 7-8  
  costs and benefits of 8  
  local 6, 7  
volunteer  
  management 20-23  
  organisations, volunteer-involving  
    11, 12-14, 15-16, 21, 31  
  actively seeking volunteers 26  
  recruitment, online 14  
  resources, lack of 13  
  response, lack of 14  
  type of 16, 17  
volunteers  
  age of 2, 9  
  older 4, 10  
  young people 1, 2, 4, 17, 32-33,  
    34-35, 36-38  
costs and reimbursement 16  
couples with children 2, 17  
educational attainment of 2, 15  
expenses, out-of-pocket 28  
geographical location of 2, 10, 15  
income, household 2, 15  
sectors requiring 12  
sex of 9  
  females 1, 4, 8, 9, 17  
  males 10, 17  
  who are 1-3, 9-10, 15  
  workplace protection of 28  
'voluntourism' 20, 39-41, 42, 43-44
- W**  
work, unpaid 31 *see also* volunteering