



2021 WA State Election

Volunteering WA calls on all political parties to commit to the following actions to **Invest in Volunteering in Western Australia**

- 01** Increase funding for volunteer recognition and celebration
- 02** Provide adequate and secure funding for volunteer resource centres
- 03** Consider and consult on the impacts of statutory changes on volunteering
- 04** Adequately fund sector support, recognising the breadth of volunteering
- 05** Harness technological innovation to facilitate volunteering

Volunteering WA - let's partner

The Western Australian Government has long aligned with the community and the volunteering sector in genuinely valuing the contribution that volunteers make to our community.

We commend the WA State Government for having a Minister for Volunteering. The establishment of the Volunteer Community Reference Group in 2017 provides a vehicle for the sector to engage directly with the Minister on volunteering. Volunteering WA strongly supports the continuation of this forum.

The WA Volunteering Strategy, released in 2018, highlights the State Government's commitment to volunteering and priorities to continue to build the sector, particularly during these times of significant social and economic upheaval.

Volunteering WA's mission is to lead, advance and celebrate volunteering in WA, and our vision is for every Western Australian to enjoy volunteering experiences that enrich our state.

As the peak body for volunteering in Western Australia, with over 30 years of expertise, we seek to partner with the State Government to realise this vision.

- We represent volunteering across the State, including all volunteer involving organisations, and the 545,800 volunteers who support them.
- Crucially, volunteers represent three quarters of WA's not-for-profit workforce.
- We support over 720 member organisations to attract and manage volunteers and increase their capability and capacity through training and leadership for the sector.
- We host the national technology platforms for volunteer recruitment and management, and several events that celebrate and recognise the essential role our volunteers play including the annual WA Volunteer of the Year Awards.

Volunteering WA has a proven track record of working collaboratively with partners to enhance the volunteering sector in WA, for the benefit of all Western Australians.





Volunteering at a glance

Our volunteers

 **545,800**

Western Australians volunteer for organisations, groups or clubs

representing **27.1%** of the population

Pathway to employment

92% of employers believe volunteering gives an advantage at job interviews

85% of recruiters believe relevant volunteering roles are as credible as paid work


Economic benefits


\$39 BILLION Economic benefit of volunteering in WA

\$1 → \$4⁵⁰
\$4.50 returned to the community for every dollar invested

Mental wellbeing

 Volunteers report higher levels of life satisfaction

 Volunteers are more likely to believe that Australians can be trusted, are fair and helpful

 People continuing to volunteer during COVID-19 reported significantly lower levels of stress

Impact of COVID-19

64% of all volunteering ceased

Increase in informal volunteering

Some natural attrition, particularly of older volunteers, expected

Increased interest in youth and virtual volunteering

Significant concerns about sustainability of some organisations in NFP sector



The issues

There are concerning signs that volunteers are voting with their feet and leaving service:

- ABS figures indicate a loss of some 130,000 volunteers in WA – a concerning 19% reduction between 2014 and 2019 (pre-COVID).
- People are more time poor.
- Household budgets are tight, yet only 10% of volunteer organisations in WA reimburse out of pocket expenses.
- COVID-19 has accelerated the attrition of some older volunteers, through personal choice or safety concerns from organisations.

The prolonged and intense nature of emergencies (such as bushfires and COVID-19), coupled with increasingly significant commitments of time for training, is seeing a significant loss of volunteer capacity. Over 50% of emergency services' volunteers in WA contemplate leaving on a regular basis with over 15% expecting to leave in the next two years.

Volunteering is increasingly seen as a highly regulated sector which increases the time spent by volunteering organisations and volunteers on administration, making volunteering less fun and rewarding, and creating a barrier to entry.

The reduction in the number of volunteers has significant impacts on individuals.

In particular, it reduces opportunities for people with a disability, youth, migrants and older people to connect with and contribute to their communities. This adversely impacts social cohesion and contributes to increased levels of psychological distress. The loss of volunteering experience can result in the loss of future employment and may impact the delivery of essential community services.

But above all, falling rates of volunteer participation risks the social fabric that makes WA a great place to live and invest. It's about the spirit of community, reciprocity, social connection and citizenship. Volunteering helps to create safe, healthy and happy communities and environments in which current and future generations can thrive.

Working together to deliver solutions

Volunteering WA values the relationship with the WA State Government which is central to the ongoing growth and development of the sector.

We need to continue our long engagement as a trusted partner and expert advisor to the State Government to develop the sector.

By committing to these priorities, you will be benefitting:

- Volunteers
- Volunteer involving organisations
- Technology partners and users
- Volunteer Resource Centres

NEXT STEP: We extend an invitation to meet to discuss these priorities and look forward to continuing to work closely with the State Government.



Increase funding for volunteer recognition and celebration

01

Why it is needed:

While volunteers give their time willingly, everyone enjoys being recognised for service and it is appropriate that volunteers are acknowledged for their support. Volunteer recognition events build social cohesion, a sense of belonging to communities and volunteer organisations and provide an avenue for media publicity to promote the benefits of volunteering to the community.

The State Government no longer explicitly funds the premier recognition events in WA – the WA Volunteer of the Year Awards and the International Volunteer Day Garden Party (traditionally hosted by the Governor as patron of Volunteering WA). The financial viability of these events is under strain.

Currently, the major platforms for the State Government to recognise volunteers are through Thank A Volunteer Day grants and certificates of long-term service.

In 2020, funding for Thank-A-Volunteer Day grants was at an all-time low of \$29,781. This supported only 33 events which represents an investment of about **5 cents** for every volunteer in WA.

This year, there was inadequate funding to host events in over 75% of local government areas in WA. At times, the reach to volunteers may be improved if volunteer involving organisations were able to host events directly.

A review of current criteria is recommended.

Actions required to invest in volunteering in Western Australia:

- Provide annual funding of \$30,000 to support the WA Volunteer of the Year Awards and the International Volunteer Day Garden Party.
- Increase annual funding pool for Department of Communities' Thank A Volunteer Day to \$100,000 and review criteria.



02

Provide adequate and secure funding for Volunteer Resource Centres

Why it is needed:

There are 15 Volunteer Resource Centres which are generally partially funded by the State Government in WA.

They provide locally-based services that are particularly helpful in matching youth, seniors, migrants and other vulnerable groups to volunteer opportunities in their local areas, as well as supporting local community groups and community organisations.

Volunteering WA supports Volunteer Resource Centres with access to volunteer recruitment technology, networking, helpdesk support, resources, professional development and training.

The current funding model has been under review for a number of years, with repeated short-term extensions. In 2019 the State Government announced – and then reversed – a decision to only fund services in regional areas.

There is no standardised geographical criteria, outputs or outcomes for funded service providers which inhibits the opportunities for improved efficiency, efficacy and collaboration.

There is an urgent need to finalise and announce the Volunteer Resource Centre funding model by May 2021 and complete contract development with a view to commence new five-year contracts by 1 July 2022.

Actions required to invest in volunteering in Western Australia:

- Increase funding for Volunteer Resource Centres in WA to allow for adequate coverage across the State.
- Finalise and announce the Volunteer Resource Centre funding model, to allow for five year contracts from 1 July 2022.



Consider and consult on the impacts of statutory changes on volunteering

03

Why it is needed:

Australian workplaces are increasingly regulated to protect the health and safety of workers, public, children, those with disabilities and those in aged care. Relevant legislation tends to be complex.

Many workplaces with paid staff are struggling to become aware of and understand the impacts, retrain and manage staff, report on compliance and investigate and take action on non-compliance.

The same workplaces rely heavily on volunteers. It is not unusual for volunteer to staff ratios to exceed 35:1. In fact, the smaller the volunteer organisation, the higher the average volunteer to staff ratio.

Examples of new or pending legislative provisions which impact volunteer organisations and volunteers in WA include worker health and safety, NDIS screening requirements, national codes of conduct for health care, disability and aged care workers, the need for some volunteer drivers to be licensed and the proposed Reportable Conduct Scheme for people working with children.

Almost all small to medium volunteer organisations in WA lack legal, human and financial capacity to understand and manage these compliance and governance requirements without support.

Half of all of Australian charities have no paid staff and rely on volunteers to manage other volunteers.

During COVID-19 there was limited mention of volunteers in the introduction of phased changes to restrictions. Volunteering WA invested considerably in the development of new resources and communications to bridge this gap, actively promoting State Government messaging and requirements to help keep volunteers and the community safe.

Actions required to invest in volunteering in Western Australia:

- Consider the volunteer sector and consult with Volunteering WA, volunteer involving organisations and volunteers on proposed legislative and regulatory changes.
- Expressly outline (and cost where possible) the potential impact of proposed changes from current arrangements to inform consultation and debate.
- Support implementation with awareness, education and compliance programs for volunteers and volunteer involving organisations.



04

Adequately fund sector support, recognising the breadth of volunteering

Why it is needed:

Volunteering WA currently receives recurrent sector support funding from the Department of Communities solely for volunteering services provided to the community sector for two of their five outcome areas. These priorities represent 15 million hours a year or just 19% of all WA formal volunteer time.

There is no recurrent funding from other key government portfolios which benefit from the contribution and leadership of Volunteering WA such as:

- Sport and recreation (18.1 million hours or 23% of WA volunteer time).
- Education and training (9.4 million hours or 12% WA volunteer time).
- Health (2.0 million hours or 3% WA volunteer time).
- Other (23.9 million hours or 11% of WA volunteer time).

The current five-year funding agreement sees a fall of 32% in annual support from 2019 levels.

This frame of reference ignores the considerable work undertaken in support of volunteering in emergency relief, seniors, youth, disability, education, sport and recreation, emergency management, conservation, tourism and community legal among other areas of State responsibility.

Actions required to invest in volunteering in Western Australia:

- Reinstatement of sector support, development and advocacy funding to 2019 levels, from 2024.



Harness technological innovation to facilitate volunteering

05

Why it is needed:

When COVID-19 restrictions impacted Western Australia, over 65% of volunteer-involving organisations paused their volunteer programs virtually overnight. The demand for emergency relief services was high, and the public wanted to help in any way they could, particularly those from lower-risk demographics.

Volunteering WA had to act swiftly to harness the desire to help, whilst ensuring organisations met the government's social distancing and hygiene restrictions. We provided online resources to assist organisations and established a system whereby people could express their interest in volunteering in COVID-related support roles that we then passed on to organisations in need.

Volunteering WA hosts the premier volunteer recruitment and management software in Australia, VIKTOR / VIRA. This platform has over 10,000 organisations advertising positions on multiple websites, attracting over two million visits each year.

A major challenge for Volunteering WA and the sector during the initial COVID-19 emergency was to respond quickly. Due to the limitations of Volunteering WA's current platform, we were forced to develop a new platform for the pandemic.

The new community recovery volunteering database and website

<https://emergency.volunteer.org.au/> provided the WA community with a portal to register themselves as volunteers during the COVID-19 emergency. Over 4,000 people registered, offering a helping hand to vulnerable people during the crisis.

However, technological innovation does not stand still.

Volunteering WA would like to undertake a business case process to scope, cost and examine the cost / benefit of future upgrades to community recovery volunteering IT platforms.

The development of a rigorous business case would assist in the sourcing of funding from investor, donor, philanthropic organisations or grant programs.

Actions required to invest in volunteering in Western Australia:

- Provide investment of \$100,000 in 2021 and annual support of \$25,000 pa, for a state-wide platform for community recovery technology.
- Provide investment of \$30,000 in 2022/23 to fund a business case to scope, cost and explore the net cost / benefit of improvements to volunteer databases operated by Volunteering WA.



Invest in volunteering

Sector support:

- Increase funding for Volunteer Resource Centres in WA to allow for adequate coverage across the State.
- Finalise and announce the Volunteer Resource Centre funding model, to allow for five year contracts from 1 July 2022.
- Consider the volunteer sector and consult with Volunteering WA, volunteer involving organisations and volunteers on proposed legislative and regulatory changes.
- Expressly outline (and cost where possible) the potential impact of proposed changes from current arrangements to inform consultation and debate.
- Support implementation with awareness, education and compliance programs for volunteers and volunteer involving organisations.
- Provide annual funding of \$30,000 to support the WA Volunteer of the Year Awards and the International Volunteer Day Garden Party.
- Increase annual funding for Thank A Volunteer Day to \$100,000 and review criteria.

Peak body support:

- Reinstate sector support, development and advocacy funding to 2019 levels, from 2024.
- Provide investment of \$100,000 in 2021 and annual support of \$25,000 pa, for a state-wide platform for community recovery volunteering technology.
- Provide investment of \$30,000 in 2022/23 to fund a business case to scope, cost and explore the net cost / benefit of improvements to volunteer databases operated by Volunteering WA.