

Rec'd 27/1/2021



Tina Williams
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Dear Ms Williams

Thank you for your letter dated 18 December 2020 enclosing Volunteering WA's 2021 *State Election – Invest in Volunteering in Western Australia*. I was very pleased to see the detail in each of the priority areas and I agree with the importance of ensuring that these issues are addressed.

Volunteers and volunteering are essential to so much of what we value in Western Australia. So many activities that assist with social cohesion rely heavily on volunteer activity – whether that be in community services, or in sport, or in all the other fields in which volunteers provide such valuable service.

We have seen an alarming and steady reduction in the number of volunteers in Western Australia. In some of the groups that have contacted me directly, there has been a strong sense that new regulation and new processes has diminished their role both in perception and in substance and raised significant barriers to new volunteers.

During this current COVID period I am aware of many organisations that either ceased their volunteer programs or were simply unable to find sufficient volunteers to roster during lockdown. Many of these volunteers have not returned for a wide variety of reasons.

This loss of volunteers will not only impact the delivery of community services in some of our essential areas like assisting families experiencing domestic violence, or feeding the homeless – it also diminishes the connections we build across and within our communities. We know we need strong connections to be happy and healthy.

However, another thing we have seen during COVID is the strong desire in the community to help each other, whether that be through the more formal programs coordinated by local government authorities, or the simple acts of providing assistance to neighbours with grocery shopping.

Volunteers are part of the fabric of our society – it is essential that their work be visible and acknowledged. It is and should be part of the government's role to ensure that the events to acknowledge the value and contribution of volunteers are funded appropriately.

Government support for IT and administrative assistance to ensure that volunteers and organisations can find each other should be a given. We are very happy to support and advocate for this resourcing. Part of this resourcing should absolutely be to assist

volunteering organisations to articulate the impact of proposed legislation on their activities – and also to assist organisations to comply with new regulations.

Many peak bodies have seen funding for support, advocacy and sector development lost over the last several years. I and the Greens have advocated for years for the importance of funding to ensure that peak bodies are able to undertake systemic advocacy. This kind of investment reaps huge rewards for the community and enables the sector to provide the best possible advice to Government.

The Greens are a grass roots political party built on volunteering and holding participatory democracy as a core value. Volunteering is a key element of a connected and healthy community. As the Greens spokesperson for volunteering, I have been outspoken in my support for Community Resource Centres and for organisations relying on volunteers throughout our COVID-19 response.

I am more than happy to support Volunteering WA's election requests.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Alison Xamon'.

Hon Alison Xamon MLC
Member for North Metropolitan

18 January 2021