

Volunteering Community Reference Group

21 November 2023

Communique #11

The Volunteering Community Reference Group (VCRG) is convened by Volunteering WA to provide community input to the Minister for Volunteering. This communique refers to the meeting held on 21 November 2023. In attendance were:

Representing	Name
Hon Minister for Volunteering	Hon Don Punch MLA Tina MacDonald DPC
NFP volunteering sector	Craig Spencer, Chair Dan Minchin, Chorus Maija Hildebrand, Vinnies WA
Volunteer Resource Centres	Elizabeth Aason, Swan VRC Vicki Pollard, Peel VRC
Individual volunteer (consumer)	Esme Bowen
Volunteering WA (VWA)	Tina Williams, CEO Meredith Blais
Department of Communities (Communities)	Sue Fielding
Local Government	Susie Moir, WALGA

The Chair acknowledged the traditional owners of the land on which we met, the Wadjuk people of the Noongar nation, and paid his respects to elders past and present.

The Hon. Donald Punch MLA, Minister for Volunteering and all members of the Group were welcomed to the meeting.

Minister Punch commented on the WA State Volunteering Conference held in the previous week and commended the organisers, Volunteering WA, and all who contributed to its success.

The Minister observed a consensus building in Western Australia with regard to the value of volunteering. He noted some parallels with Tourism where volunteering affects many aspects of the Government, community and economy. There is now an opportunity to highlight the significant contribution of the sector as a whole and in its own right.

There was discussion on how to position the contribution of the sector, balancing the financial burden alleviated by the sector through their commitment of time vs not just treating volunteers as an unpaid workforce.

Other topics discussed:

1. WA's State of Volunteering Report 2023 – Early Insights

An overview of the Early Insights document, which was released at the State Conference, was discussed. This provides the most up to date summary of volunteering in WA.

The Minister noted that this report provides the database to reflect on the State Volunteering Strategy and build on it. It provides a platform to position the sector.

Some of the key issues discussed included:

- Significant economic value of the sector
- Contribution of volunteers
- Costs of volunteering and volunteer management are surprising
- Good to consider informal volunteering in considering the future directions for the sector
- Value of community social cohesion
- Some VIOs starting to position volunteers as 'members'
- Significant barriers remain for many volunteers (e.g. navigating paperwork)
- Improvements in digital literacy being hampered by cyber security awareness or caution.

It was noted that the full report would be released in early 2024.

2. Review of VCRG Terms of Reference and Membership

There was further discussion on the review of the Terms of Reference and the Department of Communities (Communities) tabled an updated version. Most issues raised have now been addressed.

Communities is seeking final comments with an intent to have the new Terms of Reference in place for the February meeting. There will be no immediate change to the composition of the Group, with EOIs expected to be called by the Department in mid 2024 (timing to be advised).

Maija Hildebrand from Vinnies had previously advised that this would be her final meeting. Maija's service to the Group since 2018 has been substantial and the Chair thanked her for her contribution and wished her well in the future.

3. Forthcoming events

Thank-A-Volunteer Day	5 December 2023
International Volunteer Day Garden Party	7 December 2023

More information on the Volunteering Community Reference Group, including Terms of Reference and membership, is available [here](#).