

Volunteering Community Reference Group

19 November 2024

Communique #15

The Volunteering Community Reference Group (VCRG) is convened by Volunteering WA (VWA) to provide community input to the Minister for Volunteering. This communique refers to the meeting held on 19 November 2024. In attendance were:

Representing	Name
Hon Minister for Volunteering	Hon Don Punch MLA Tina MacDonald DPC
NFP volunteering sector	Craig Spencer, Chair
Volunteer Resource Centres	Elizabeth Acason, Swan VRC Vicki Pollard, Peel VRC
Individual volunteer	Esther Bliss (Regional) Dr Tina Firth (Metro) Sandra Prosser (Regional) Rahul Seth (Metro) Michael Wainwright (Metro)
Volunteering WA (VWA)	Tina Williams Dominique Hansen
WALGA	Hannah Godsave
Department of Communities (Communities)	Michelle Duke, Acting Director of Inclusion (Proxy for Claire Hurst) Claire Harding
Retiring members	Meredith Blais Esme Bowen Dan Minchin Maija Hildebrand
Guest speakers	Antonia Taylor (Volunteering WA) Dianne Buckles (Australian Red Cross)

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 Chair thanked the Minister for approving the travel reimbursements for regional members of the VCRG and thanked the Department of Communities (DoCs) for administering the process.

The Hon. Donald Punch MLA, Minister for Volunteering welcomed existing, new and retiring members to the meeting, thanking the retiring members for their work and inviting all present to introduce themselves.

Minister Punch emphasised the Committee members need to convey their ideas of what is important for volunteering in WA. Minister Punch spoke about current volunteer retention challenges, especially in

regional areas and challenges posed by the changing demographic of volunteers. For example, more volunteers, especially young people are seeking short-term volunteering opportunities, requiring organisations to respond strategically to take advantage of this change.

Minister Punch spoke enthusiastically about Volunteering as an exciting portfolio which gets to the heart of relationships between people, volunteer involving organisations and the community. The Minister noted that volunteering builds collaboration and pride within communities.

The Minister recognised that the work of VWA has been useful in crystallising the nature and extent of this contribution in Western Australia.

Other topics discussed:

1. Volunteering WA State Election Priorities 2025

Tina Williams spoke to and answered questions about the 5 VWA State Election Priorities published by VWA on behalf of the sector:

1. Create a 'WA Volunteer Card' to reduce the cost and streamline processes for volunteer screening
2. Expand Workers Compensation coverage to some categories of volunteers
3. Provide insurance coverage for volunteers in Community Service Organisations
4. Fund VWA's role in emergency services
5. Connect young people to volunteering

More information can be found here: [Create the Conditions for Volunteering to Thrive in WA](#)

2. Youth Volunteering Presentation

Antonia Taylor, Social Impact Manager, VWA presented on youth volunteering, the work of VWA, current barriers to attracting young volunteers and strategies to overcome these barriers. Family volunteering was highlighted as an important conduit for introducing young people to the benefits of volunteering.

3. Update on insurance arrangements for State Government agency volunteers

Michelle Duke from DoCs provided an update on current insurance arrangements for volunteers in the public sector. In preparing the update the Department spoke to the Insurance Council of WA (ICWA); The Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES); The Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries (DLGSC); the Western Australian Local Government Association (WALGA); and the Local Government Insurance Scheme (LGIS).

Michelle explained the various insurers and levels of coverage across local and state government agencies.

4. Report to the group on National Police Check Process

Michelle Duke outlined the new arrangements for National police Clearances for Volunteers which came into operation in May 2024. VWA commended the Department on the process being able to be completed wholly online, unlike the current National Disability Insurance Scheme Check and the Working with Children Check. VWA also explained that maintaining a separate process for those without digital literacy and access was important.

VWA spoke about the need for co-design of new streamlined volunteer clearance processes in the future. This will ensure pain points are picked up and addressed early so volunteering involving organisations are better prepared. Webinars will be developed by DoCs and WA Police on the process and system. A group member also raised the need for guidance on implementing the National Child Safe Principles.

5. Presentation on volunteering experience in disaster recovery and related Advisory Board role at the Red Cross

Dianne Buckles gave a wide-ranging and inspiring presentation covering her 25 years of volunteering experience with the Red Cross. The presentation covered the importance of disaster preparedness and psychological first aid, recovery efforts and resilience in the aftermath of disasters.

6. Ideas and process for topics for future meetings

The Chair asked the group to review the agenda item templates and think about what questions and ideas need to be on the agenda. The Chair said he wanted to hear from Regional Australia. Other suggestions included a presentation from WAPOL on Police Clearances.

7. Forthcoming events

Special events 2024	
International Volunteers Day	Thursday 5 December
IVD Garden Party	Thursday 5 December

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