

# Volunteering Community Reference Group

6 March 2024

## Communique #12

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 6 March 2024. 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
Volunteer Resource Centres	Elizabeth Acason, 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

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 extended his congratulations to VWA on the launch of the State of Volunteering Report on 5 March 2024, noting that it had been well received. He acknowledged the \$63.9 billion contribution of volunteering, highlighting the importance of volunteering to WA communities.

This Minister noted that the statistics regarding the participation of young people in volunteering are excellent, highlighting the importance of schools and universities as feeder channels to volunteering later in life.

Our shared challenge is now how to make best use of the report. Identifying and repeating key messages is key to greater understanding of the sector.

Minister Punch noted that WA State Government has heard the concerns related to volunteer screening in WA, including how to streamline government processes and costs. He indicated that work was progressing on this issue and noted that the Group would be updated on progress.

The Minister mentioned that issues pertaining to insurance for volunteers and voluntary organisations has been raised with him on numerous occasions. He invited further information on any case studies or gaps from the Group.

There is also the need to consider how to develop capacity in risk management in the not-for-profit sector, including understanding of risk appetite. There could be an opportunity to bring stakeholders together to discuss risk.

Other topics discussed:

## **1. Review of VCRG Terms of Reference and Membership**

The revised Terms of Reference have been approved by the Minister. Communities will circulate these to the Group.

There was advice that, due to WA State Government funding constraints, regional members would need to participate online for now or travel at their personal expense. The VCRG expressed their preference, consistent with the National Standards for Volunteer Involvement, for all regional volunteers to be provided the option to travel, with costs reimbursed by the government.

Department of Communities will run an Expression of Interest process for nominated positions on the VCRG in mid-2024. Existing members of the VCRG may apply for re-appointment.

## **2. WA's State of Volunteering Report 2023**

The launch of the [WA State of Volunteering Report 2023](#) was discussed including its value to the sector for advocacy and capacity building.

There was general discussion about specific aspects including:

- Corporate volunteering
- Barriers to volunteering for people with disability
- Informal volunteering
- NDIS checks in WA creating barriers to volunteering
- Economic cost / benefit analysis.

## **3. Refresh of National Standards for Volunteer Involvement**

VWA advised that the National Standards for Volunteer Involvement have been refreshed nationally. There is a series of communications and education sessions available to help voluntary organisations to utilise them and encourage self-assessment.

There was discussion on the issue raised by the Minister regarding insurances and extent to which volunteers are covered by volunteer personal accident policies. Volunteers are consistently reporting that organisations have insurance coverage, but it is not covering their out-of-pocket costs.

## **4. Volunteer Service Awards**

Communities provided an update on the awards including eligibility changes:

- now includes from 5 years of service
- can reflect multiple organisations
- simplified online process.

The changes have been well-received and there has been a significant increase in applications (from around 150 to well over 1,000) this year. Awards will be made in-person to the most significant lengths of service recipients in National Volunteering Week.

## 5. Additional funding for regional Volunteering Resource Centres

The Group noted and welcomed the [announcement](#) by the Minister for Volunteering in December 2022 to increase funding to boost regional volunteer participation by \$2.1 million a year. The Minister was thanked for his role in securing this significant increase in funding.

## 6. Corporate and State Government volunteering programs

It was noted that Horizon Power has now joined the Corporate Volunteering Council as a member and the Council is keen to further expand participation.

Department of Communities noted that they are establishing a Seniors Officers Group for State Government departments with volunteering programs.

## 7. Forthcoming events

Special events 2024	
National Volunteering Week	Monday 20 – Sunday 26 May
Volunteering WA Awards 2024	Thursday 23 May
National Student Volunteering Week	Monday 5 August – Sunday 11 August
International Volunteer Managers' Day	Tuesday 5 November
Thank-A-Volunteer Day	Thursday 5 December
IVD Garden Party	Thursday 5 December (TBC)

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