

Volunteering Community Reference Group

28 September 2022

Communique #8

The Volunteering Community Reference Group (VCRG) is established by under the direction of the Minister for Volunteering, Hon Stephen Dawson MLC with Volunteering WA providing secretariat support. This communique refers to the meeting held on 28 September 2022.

In attendance were:

Representing	Name
Hon Minister for Volunteering	Hon Stephen Dawson MLC Oliver Pincott, DPC
NFP volunteering sector	Craig Spencer, St. John Ambulance, (Chair) Dan Minchin, Chorus
Corporate volunteering sector	Gemma Rapson, Woodside
Volunteer Resource Centres	Elizabeth Aason, Swan VRC Vicki Pollard, Peel VRC
Researchers	Dr Megan Paull, Murdoch University
Individual volunteer (consumer)	Esme Bowen
Volunteering WA	Tina Williams, CEO Meredith Blais, Senior Policy Advisor Alana Cox, Executive Assistant
Department of Communities	Sue Fielding
Local Government	Vikki Barlow, 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. Stephen Dawson MLC, Minister for Volunteering and all members of the Group were welcomed to the meeting.

Minister Dawson noted recent activity including the National Student Volunteering Week event at Leighton Beach which he attended, the imminent announcement of Thank-A-Volunteer-Day grant recipients for 2022 (which were increased to up to \$2,000 per grant) and the completion of funding agreements for Volunteer Development Services funding to 2027.

The Minister noted that other initiatives were also under consideration to promote volunteering to the community and recognise volunteer contributions.

Other topics discussed:

1. Experience of VCRG representative, Research

Dr Megan Paull provided an insight into her journey with volunteering, noting strong family roots in a range of volunteer roles.

Dr Paull studied volunteering at university include Masters (using feedback to manage volunteer performance) and Doctoral (managing the performance of older volunteers) levels. This background and ongoing engagement in the sector led to the creation of the VWA Research Committee and a number of formal governance board roles at Volunteer Taskforce, Volunteering WA and Volunteering Australia.

Research interests include valuing volunteer managers, bullying in volunteering and volunteering in aged care settings with a focus on embedding good practice in VIOs.

Dr Paull noted that her involvement in the sector over 30 years has been a privilege and wishes to continue to foster collaboration within and across the sector.

The VCRG thanked Dr Paull for her extensive and ongoing contribution to the sector. There was considerable support for recent initiatives at a national level which Dr Paull participated in to help make volunteering research more accessible by the recent publication of summary reports as part of the National Volunteering Strategy.

2. Update on National Volunteering Strategy

The Strategy is being developed by Volunteering Australia through a co-design process. The Group noted the release of the Discovery Insights report and the key findings from this phase of the project. Workshops were held in September 2022 as part of the Visioning phase in Broome, Mandurah and Perth to provide strategic direction.

The Group discussed key issues regarding the identity crisis in volunteering and the potential role for State Governments, the need for greater diversity and reducing barriers to participation (particularly for people with a disability and youth). The Strategy is being led by Volunteering Australia and due for completion in December 2022 and release in February 2023.

3. Return to volunteering

The difficulty in returning volunteer programs was noted, with general declines in volunteer participation with COVID-19 as a major contributing factor. There are challenges in WA filling more stable, longer-term volunteer roles and corporate volunteering is just beginning to increase with a return to hybrid working arrangements.

Service delivery in many sectors is being impacted by the current skills shortage (including for paid roles), with the loss of volunteering capacity an additional factor. The erosion of social capital is also of concern.

4. Forthcoming events

International Volunteer Managers' Day 7 November 2022

International Volunteers Day Garden Party 1 December 2022

National Volunteering Conference (Canberra) 13 – 14 February 2022.

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