



volunteering

TASMANIA

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ADVOCACY &
POLICY

Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety – Public Submission



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KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Volunteering Tasmania supports an aged care system that values the diversity of older Tasmanians. Older people, their families and carers need to be empowered in the system through an individual approach that gives them greater choice and control over their care. The care must be provided by a skilled, professional and compassionate workforce, both paid and volunteer, and they need to operate in in partnership in a person-centred way.

The changes we recommend are:

- Volunteering is considered within broader workforce planning, and the roles of volunteers and paid workforce are clearly defined. Further research is needed to help determine some criteria for decision-making about the roles of volunteers.
- Funding is available to organisations to support volunteer programs, training, and support to comply with the Aged Care Quality Standards and legislative requirements.
- Barriers to volunteering are not too onerous, and compliance is made simple for volunteers and volunteer involving organisations.
- Volunteering is organised as part of a place-based, whole-of-community approach. It supports older people to volunteer for as long as they are able, and it harnesses local strengths and resources, and cultivates connections.

INTRODUCTION

About Volunteering Tasmania

Volunteering Tasmania (VT) is the peak body for volunteering in Tasmania. Our mission is to create an environment that promotes and sustains effective volunteering. We believe that all members of our community equally deserve the right to be included in volunteering and experience the benefits, regardless of their background or current situation.

Volunteering Tasmania is a not-for-profit organisation that aims to represent the interests of all Tasmanians involved in volunteering through research, consultation, policy development and community relationships. Our membership totals 223 and includes 131 organisations across the state, these organisations utilise the efforts of 50,000 volunteers. We represent the interests of our members and their clients to decision-makers, including government.

VT is funded to support providers who deliver services to eligible individuals in the Home and Community Care (HACC) program. VT provides volunteer management, sector support and development support to 41 HACC-funded organisations. Support includes the provision of information, resources, training, forums, one-on-one support, mentoring and advocating on behalf of the sector in areas of need as identified by the providers.¹

VT also provides support to 63 Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP) funded organisations that engage volunteer services. This includes resources for best practice volunteer management support, education, training, advocacy, policy support and the CHSP/HACC Volunteer Program Community of Practice. Of these organisations, 38 receive funding from both HACC and CHSP. Sixteen organisations are aged care residential, and 40 are aged care community providers.

¹ Department of Health: www.dhhs.tas.gov.au

Our submission

Volunteering Tasmania's submission relates to two of the aged care system principles set out by the Royal Commission:

- Support older peoples' informal care relationships and connections to community; and
- Enable the recruitment and retention of a skilled, professional and caring workforce.

We also agree with the additional principle in the submission by the Council on the Ageing (COTA) Australia² that the aged care system should: Ensure that older Australians are full collaborators in the co-design of the aged care system.

In our submission we address the challenges for the Tasmanian aged care volunteering sector and volunteers and consider the best practice for the future. We focus on three of the questions put by the Royal Commission:

- What are the challenges and how can the provider, or Australia generally, provide high quality, safe and affordable aged care services and what are your primary concerns?
- What do you think are examples of good practice and innovative models in delivering aged care services and why do you think these practices or models have been effective?
- What changes would you like the Royal Commission to recommend?

² Council on the Ageing (COTA) Australia, *Submission to the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety: aged care program redesign, services for the future*, January 2020, p7.

³ Council on the Ageing (COTA), *Embracing the Future: Tasmania's Ageing Profile*, 2018, p10

⁴ Aged and Community Services Tasmania (ACST), *Senate Inquiry into the future of Australia's aged care workforce*, 2016, p4

CURRENT SITUATION

Tasmania has the fastest ageing population and is now the oldest state in Australia, with almost 20% of the population over 65 years of age.³

According to 2016 figures the aged care workforce in Tasmania totals 11,000.⁴ They provide assistance and services to around 20,000 Tasmanians in their home through the Commonwealth Home Support Program.⁵ They also support the 7% of Tasmanians over 65 who are currently in residential aged care.⁶

There are around 35,000 volunteers in the community services sector in Tasmania.⁷ According to the TasCOSS State of Tasmania's Community Service Sector Report 2015, nine in 10 organisations (88.9%) involved volunteers.⁸ In ageing and carer services most of the organisations involved volunteers: Nearly 30% had 11-50 volunteers; 21% had 51-100; 7% had over 100 and 7% had 1-10 volunteers while around 35% of organisations had no volunteers.⁹ Across the community services sector in Tasmania the ratio of paid workers to volunteers is around 3.5 to one.

Tasmanians are generous volunteers with around 300,000 people volunteering each year across the community, in the arts, sport, environment and

⁵ ACST (2016), p3

⁶ ACST (2016), p4

⁷ Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), *General Social Survey*, 2014.

⁸ TasCOSS, *The State of Tasmania's Community Service Sector*, 2015, p3.

⁹ TasCOSS (2015), p19.

tourism. The volunteer workforce contributes \$4 billion each year to Tasmania's economy.

In Tasmania's HACC and CHSP aged care organisations volunteers are playing important roles in supporting the wellbeing of older people. Volunteers help older people combat loneliness and remain connected to their communities and help keep them in their own homes for longer. Volunteers also run boards and management committees and are members of advisory committees and reference groups.

While we do not have specific data for Tasmania, we can assume the services provided by volunteers reflect those that are undertaken nationally. National data shows that a higher proportion of residential facilities than home care outlets use volunteers for social activity support assistance, planning of group activities and to support companionship.¹⁰

A higher proportion of home care outlets than residential use volunteers for transport, shopping and appointments and meal/preparation assistance, while volunteer roles for 'gardening assistance' were less commonly reported by home care and home support outlets.¹¹ Domestic activity assistance and home maintenance assistance activities were rarely undertaken by volunteers.¹²

CHALLENGES

What are the challenges and how can the provider, or Australia generally, provide high quality, safe and affordable aged care services and what are your primary concerns?

Volunteering Tasmania's primary concerns about aged care services are:

- **Role:** Volunteers are being used to undertake tasks and provide services in the aged care system that are more appropriately done by paid staff.
- **Requirements:** Volunteers are being required to comply with the Aged Care Quality Standards without adequate support to do so. Also, the compliance requirements may deter volunteers from signing up.
- **Management:** Organisations do not have the resources to effectively train and manage their volunteers, and unit-based costing does not allow for volunteer management.
- **Rates:** Volunteering rates are declining and volunteers are ageing. The organisations that rely on volunteers are not resourced to change their operations to attract and recruit volunteers, especially those who require flexibility and smaller commitments of time.

Role of volunteers in aged care

The role of volunteers and volunteering must be carefully considered in ensuring that older Tasmanians can receive high quality, safe and affordable aged care services.

There needs to be consideration about whether it is appropriate for volunteers to fill core government service delivery requirements in the aged care system.

¹⁰ National Institute of Labour Studies, *2016 National aged care workforce census and survey—the aged care workforce*, 2017, p165

¹¹ National Institute of Labour Studies (2017), p65

¹² National Institute of Labour Studies (2017) p130

It is important that clear decisions are made about which tasks currently being undertaken by volunteers may need to be performed by a paid workforce.

There is currently no consistent criteria that organisations can use to determine the most appropriate roles for the volunteer workforce. While some consider it appropriate for volunteers to support social outings for older people, others may determine that only the paid workforce can provide meal delivery, community transport and gardening. It may no longer be appropriate for volunteers to undertake tasks without relevant training, for example communicating with older people who are non-verbal. These decisions have funding implications for organisations. It would be beneficial to conduct research with volunteer involving organisations, volunteers and participants to help determine criteria for making decisions about the roles of volunteers.

In general, volunteers support the work and activities of paid staff. Some services only engage volunteers for non-essential services, to provide care and comfort that complements the work of clinical staff. By contrast, other organisations (including many CHSP funded organisations) would face challenges in delivering their core services without their volunteer workforces.

Decisions on the most appropriate role for volunteers may also determine what compliance is necessary for volunteers to adhere requirements including the Aged Care Quality Standards.

Requirements for volunteers

It is vital for the safety and wellbeing of our older people that quality standards are executed across the aged care industry. However, there is an impact of compliance on volunteers and volunteering that needs to be considered. Those organisations with capacity can support their volunteers to comply with the Aged Care Quality Standards and abide by the relevant legislation.

Some organisations have developed specific guides that require volunteers to have certain qualifications and training to support their residents. Baptcare's Training Guide for Volunteers outlines requirements for police checks, referee checks, completion of organisation induction programs, knowledge about best practice and the Aged Care Quality Standards and required training such as how to manage a wheelchair.¹³

In Tasmania organisations ensure that their volunteers have a police check and Working With Vulnerable People card. They may also run a check through the National Personal Insolvency Index and require statutory declarations about criminal records from volunteers who are from another country.

The other challenge faced by Tasmanian volunteers and volunteer involving organisations is that the regulatory requirements and associated processes are considered onerous and a barrier to participation. This is especially true for small organisations with limited resources that cannot ensure compliance and provide training for their volunteers. There is a risk that volunteers will withdraw their labour and the implications are that vulnerable people may miss out on support because there is not enough funding to pay workers to deliver services.

¹³ Baptcare Training Guide for Volunteers,
<https://www.baptcare.org.au/get-involved/volunteer/volunteering-for-baptcare>

“Some of the volunteers do not want to be involved in any compliance matters. They just want to do the job they have been doing all the time ... If we raise issues with them around compliance, we are accused of trying to get rid of them with bureaucratic mumbo-jumbo!” - Volunteer manager, HACC provider, Tasmania

Managing volunteers and funding

The provision of high quality, safe and affordable aged care services requires a strategic approach to volunteering, and it requires adequate funding that supports volunteer practices.

There are different points of view about funding models in the community sector in Tasmania. One view acknowledges the importance of consumer-directed care and the need for unit-based costing to support that model. Another view is that the shift away from block funding towards unit-based costing means that organisations may not have the funding to train and manage their volunteers within the regulated environment. Organisations are funded to deliver a service on a client contribution fee model, and are not funded to maintain volunteer programs or manage the volunteer workforce.

As noted by TasCOSS, many Tasmanian CHSP service providers have significant concerns about a shift away from block funding.¹⁴ Services that rely on a volunteer workforce note that volunteers require predictability, which is harder to achieve without block funding to keep services operating across dips in demand.

¹⁴ TasCOSS, *Submission to the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety: aged care program redesign*, January 2020, p7.

¹⁵ TasCOSS (2020), p8.

Volunteers are often uncomfortable with a cost-recovery approach, as they feel that they are volunteering their time in order to ensure that services can be free or very affordable to people on low incomes. Increases in client contributions may lead volunteers to shift to other organisations in other sectors.¹⁵

As an example, Community Transport Services Tasmania (CTST) delivers services across Tasmania with over 400 volunteers servicing around 8,000 consumers with 180,000 trips annually. CTST reports that the uncertainty of income makes it difficult for transport to maintain quality of service, as it becomes more difficult to recruit, train and retain good staff and volunteers, or maintain continuity of staffing sufficient to keep increasingly-complex management, recording and reporting systems operating efficiently.¹⁶

There is another implication for clients in that the services that volunteers provide through HACC and CHSP are not consumer directed. This means older people have limited choice and control over the supports and services they need. As part of person-centred care it is important that clients have access to choice and quality care and services from volunteers.

Volunteer management often happens ‘off the side of the desk’. Rather than being integrated into a strategic workforce approach, some organisations are managing volunteers in an ad hoc way. Paid staff will manage volunteers as part of their role and where possible organisations will include volunteers in training for staff even though they may not be funded to do so. Recruitment, especially in rural and regional locations, is often by word of mouth, and there can be limited assessment to determine whether volunteers are suitable for the types of work they are expected to perform.

¹⁶ Community Transport Services Tasmania, *Vital Support for Home-Based Aged Care: Key issues for community transport services*, 2020, p6.

We acknowledge the deficiencies of block funding as an inflexible model that does not align with person-centred care models that provide choice and control for clients. However we do note that the lack of certainty in funding limits the ability of organisations to invest in the training and management of their volunteers.

Declining rates of volunteering

There is a risk that there may not be enough volunteers in future to perform valuable roles in organisations that support members of the community, including in aged care. Nationally, volunteering rates are declining. Our population is ageing and will be reliant on the support of fewer people in the workforce who are available for volunteering, especially in our regions.

The State of Volunteering Report 2019 (SOVR) showed an 11% drop in volunteering participation over the past five years, from 80% in 2014 to 69% in 2019.¹⁷ The impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on volunteering and the programs that use volunteers is significant. Research conducted by the Australian National University (ANU) for Volunteering Australia found that volunteering hours between February and April 2020 reduced by the equivalent of 12.2 million hours per week nationally.¹⁸ Given that Tasmania represents 2% of the population this is a reduction of at least 240,000 hours every week in volunteering time in Tasmania.

The State of Volunteering Report also showed that satisfaction in volunteering declined from 48% positive in 2014 to 16% in 2019.¹⁹ Without interventions to improve the experience of volunteers, there is likely to be an impact on the delivery of services in aged care.

The way people volunteer is changing with people being increasingly time-poor, and younger people in particular wanting more flexibility and smaller commitments. Volunteer organisations risk being out

of step without significant changes to the way they manage volunteers. In Tasmania people prefer to volunteer close to home, but we do not currently organise volunteering in a strategic way at a community level.

BEST PRACTICE

What do you think are examples of good practice and innovative models in delivering aged care services and why do you think these practices or models have been effective?

Best practice aged care services need to consider the National Standards for Volunteer Involvement; strategic workforce planning; and a place-based approach.

National Standards for Volunteer Involvement

To ensure the provision of high quality, safe and affordable aged care services it is important that volunteering is undertaken in a way that aligns with the National Standards for Volunteer Involvement.²⁰ Its four principles are:

- Volunteer involvement should be a considered and planned part of an organisation's strategic development, aligning with the organisation's strategic aims and incorporated into its evaluation framework.
- Effective volunteer involvement requires organisational leadership, and a culture and structure that supports and values the role of volunteers.
- Volunteers have rights, which include the right to work in a safe and supportive environment

¹⁷ Volunteering Tasmania, State of Volunteering Report, 2019, p23

¹⁸ Volunteering Australia (2020)

¹⁹ SOVR (2019), p51

²⁰ Volunteering Australia, *National Standards for Volunteer Involvement*, 2015.

with appropriate infrastructure and effective management practices.

- Volunteers have responsibilities, which include acting responsibly, being accountable for their actions to the organisation, and respecting the organisation's values and practices.

We acknowledge the proposal from the Aged Care Workforce Strategy Taskforce to centralise registration for all care staff and volunteers to ensure that all workers have completed mandatory police checks (as already required) and are trained and accredited to work with aged care consumers.²¹ We also acknowledge the need to cultivate relationships built on trust within organisations and in communities.

Strategic workforce planning

In organisations with good practice, volunteers are valued for their skills and knowledge and are supported within a respectful culture to meet the needs of older people. It is important that their contribution is supported as part of teams and that they are not undertaking tasks that are more appropriate for paid staff. Volunteering needs to be valued within the strategic framework of the organisation and resources are allocated to recruiting, training and managing volunteers.

Council on the Ageing (COTA) research shows that older people see the problems and risks related to wellbeing, living circumstances and social participation as particularly important.²² As well as the focus on physical health they would like practical support to improve their self-reliance, like finances and completing forms. They also want to combat loneliness and need opportunities to connect with others. This support could be provided within their communities

outside the formal aged care system and volunteers may be well placed to undertake these tasks.

It is also important that volunteering is conducted in line with the eight Aged Care Quality Standards, without being too onerous. As an example, Baptcare has developed a training guide for its volunteers that sets out the requirements of the Standards. The Training Guide for Volunteers²³ outlines the main changes within the consumer directed care model, including a need to be more flexible depending on the residents' needs and wishes.

Place-based approach

In Tasmania we know that most people prefer to volunteer within 50 kms of their home.

Good practice takes a place-based approach that uses the resources and networks within communities to support older people. Using strengths-based approaches, place-based service delivery taps into the wealth of capabilities, resources and networks that exist in communities. The approach uses those assets to connect people with supports that are more appropriately provided by the voluntary, community and social enterprise sectors. In this way there is an opportunity to value the diversity of communities and promote connections across demographics and generations. Strong connections to the local community are necessary for being able to attract and retain volunteers.

Being able to connect with others is essential for the health and wellbeing of older people, and so it is important that older people can continue to volunteer for as long as they are able. Volunteering provides social networks and contributes to a sense of purpose and identity for older people. Organisations need to be able to allow older people to continue their volunteering in ways that are safe and supported. Best

²¹ Aged Care Workforce Strategy Taskforce Report, 2018, p42

²² COTA 2020, p17-18

²³ Baptcare Training Guide for Volunteers, <https://www.baptcare.org.au/get-involved/volunteer/volunteering-for-baptcare>

practice volunteering supports older people to continue to contribute in whatever ways they can.

CHANGES TO RECOMMEND

What changes would you like the Royal Commission to recommend?

Volunteering Tasmania supports an aged care system that values the diversity of older Tasmanians. Older people, their families and carers need to be empowered in the system through an individual approach that gives them greater choice and control over their care. The care must be provided by a skilled, professional and compassionate workforce, both paid and volunteer, and they need to operate in partnership in a person-centred way.

The changes we recommend are:

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