



election priorities statement 2021

Hundreds of Thousands of Volunteers Driving the Future of Tasmania

Volunteers are a valuable part of our community, with nearly **300,000 Tasmanians** stepping up each year to do the tasks that need to be done. During the COVID-19 crisis Tasmanians reached out to help their neighbours, friends and families, and our volunteer organisations adapted their practices to meet the needs of community members.

We cannot take this contribution for granted. Volunteering rates are declining in Tasmania, and by 2029 there will be a 40% gap between the demand for volunteer services and supply of volunteers unless we act now.

Volunteering contributes \$4 billion dollars per year to the Tasmanian economy, \$3 billion of which is the cost to replace the labour that volunteers contribute to our state. A 40% gap represents \$1.2 billion worth of services that need to be paid for by government or lost from our community.

Volunteering Tasmania (VT) proposes a strategic approach to planning and delivering volunteering to ensure we have enough volunteers into the future, and that volunteering continues to play a meaningful role in building the resilience of individuals and communities.

Volunteering not only gets things done in our communities, it makes a significant contribution to the wellbeing of people who volunteer and those who benefit from volunteering. By taking a sustainable, strategic approach to volunteering we can ensure that our communities are healthy, safe, connected and economically vibrant into the future.

Our Election Platform is underpinned by the need for certainty, to enable volunteers and volunteer organisations to be supported through our peak body service delivery. It will also mean we can elevate the voices of volunteers in the community-led recovery and government decision-making. The peak body funding is addressed in more detail in the VT Budget Priorities Statement 2021-22.

Volunteers need the next Tasmanian government to prioritise their investment in the future through student volunteering, providing Free Working with Vulnerable People registration and Police Checks for volunteers and supporting the work of volunteer coordinators through a training fund.

1. Creating a Pipeline of Future Volunteers

Investment in youth volunteering is needed to:

1. Address the declining volunteer rates in Tasmania by creating a culture of volunteering in the next generation.
2. Combat high youth unemployment rates by building youth employability through volunteering.
3. Improve the health and well-being of young people by providing social connection, community and purpose.

4. Support Tasmanian action on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals based on the decisions and actions of young people.

"Volunteering is the ultimate exercise in democracy. When you volunteer, you vote everyday about the kind of community you want to live in."
- Dr Syed Muhammad Zeesham Hussain Almashhadi

Volunteering Tasmania propose a trial program in partnership with Student Volunteer Army NZ and local Tasmanian schools over the next three years, using a tailored model that has already been successful in the New Zealand school system. Through this program we will create a new generation of volunteers through school-based community-led volunteering initiatives and recognition of youth volunteering, based on action toward the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (more detail available upon request).

It is our aim to embed student volunteering across the state and within the Tasmanian education system. This program includes students, teachers, parents, and the local community.

The roll-out of this program supports the Final PESRAC report recommendations for Community Engagement and a Sustainable Tasmania, the Tasmanian Child and Youth Wellbeing domains and a range of Department of Education values and curriculum focus, including work-based learning.

Creating an Army of Students to drive a sustainable future for Tasmania.

Investment: \$500,000 per annum for 3 years to support up to 10,000 Tasmanian students to volunteer.

2. Free Working with Vulnerable People Registration and Police Checks for Volunteers

Volunteering isn't free, and costs can be a barrier for volunteers. In the State of Volunteering Report 2019, individuals reported spending an annual average of nearly \$1,000 on their volunteering. Of these expenses volunteers were reimbursed an average of \$70 (around 7%), leaving them out of pocket by over \$900. The cost to volunteer is around \$4 per hour with expenditure going on items and activities such as fuel and motor vehicle expenses, food and drink, transport and accommodation, tools, equipment, phone, internet, postage, memberships, and subscriptions.

The cost of registering for a Working with Vulnerable People (WWVP) card is \$19.44 for volunteers. The cost of the National Police Check (completed through Tasmania Police) is \$5 for volunteers. These costs are a barrier for volunteers, and it is often prohibitive for volunteer organisations to cover this cost. Providing free registrations would enable more Tasmanians to volunteer and acknowledge the importance of volunteering.

There are approximately 170,000 formal volunteers in Tasmania, based on ABS data of categories of volunteering about 75% of volunteers may require a WWVP card and/or Police Check, every 2-3 years (depending on organisational requirements).

Investment: Based on the figures above the investment would be up to \$1M per annum (the actual costs could be verified from Department of Justice Records).

3. Volunteer Training Fund for Organisations

As a result of systems reforms and inquiries such as the *Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety*, *Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse*, the ongoing *Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability* as well as the recently announced *Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings*, there is an increasing requirement for organisations to professionalise support for volunteers.

However, the management of volunteers in organisations is often done 'off the side of the desk' with limited or no funding to support training that will help them manage their volunteers. A Volunteer Training Fund would enable organisations to purchase appropriate training from existing providers. This training may include Mental Health First Aid to help volunteers experiencing mental ill-health, Conflict Resolution/Accidental Counsellor training, Psychological First Aid to support people affected by disaster, Disability Awareness within workplaces and training on the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations.

Investment: \$125,000 per annum for 3 years (\$100,000 for training and \$25,000 for administration of the fund).