

Volunteering Tasmania — Submission

The Tasmanian Women's Strategy

April 2022

Whether deliberate or unconscious, bias makes it difficult for women to move ahead. Support for women in their working and family lives is needed. Knowing that bias exists isn't enough, action is needed to level the playing field.

Volunteering Australia, 8 March 2022

About Volunteering Tasmania

Volunteering Tasmania is the peak body for volunteering in Tasmania. Our vision is to ensure the contribution of volunteering is understood, respected, and valued as a powerful driver of community prosperity and inclusion in Tasmania.

We connect and build an inclusive community that makes a difference through the impact of volunteering. We aim to represent the interests of all Tasmanians involved in volunteering through research, consultation, policy development and community relationships. Our membership totals over 200 and includes more than 130 organisations across the state, representing more than 50,000 volunteers. We represent the interests of our volunteer organisations and volunteers, and decision-makers, including the government.

Nearly 300,000 Tasmanians step up each year to undertake essential tasks that need to get done. Volunteers bring visible, direct benefits through the varied activities they engage in, whether on the sporting field, in the box office or on the bush track. Approximately 50% of Tasmania's volunteers are women. (SoVR, VT 2019)

Volunteers can be found in almost every sector and most definitely in every community in our state. Volunteers in Tasmania contribute on average 229 hours a year or 4.4 hours every week to their fellow Tasmanians, and it would cost the community \$4 billion to replace their collective effort. Although the economic value volunteers contribute is enormous, it is the human connection, compassion and care that volunteers bring to their tasks that sets them apart. It is this that helps build resilience in our communities. (SoVR, VT 2019)

Our Submission | Introduction

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the draft Tasmanian Women's Strategy 2022-2027.

Volunteering Tasmania is broadly supportive of the Draft Strategy and in our submission, we will focus on the opportunity to include the perspective of the volunteering model for social impact and as such our submission covers:

- A brief response to the discussion paper,
- Commentary on volunteering and social impact, and
- Details of a practical example, *Helping men to move over*.

Response to the Discussion Paper

Question 1: Do you have any comments about the proposed goals?

While we agree with the need to address drivers of inequality, we also promote the need for each goal to be considered within the structural and economic conditions in which it exists. In doing so, we would like to draw attention to the opportunity for all genders to be engaged in the cultural change that is necessary for greater social and economic equity.

1. **Culture change** needs to include provisions for men to be working in traditional female roles, taking on caring duties, having access to paid parental leave and other flexible work conditions.

Understanding ongoing barriers that women face in volunteering is important. Studies that assess how participatory governance processes reinforce or challenge gender norms, as well as other gender inequalities in volunteerism across regions, can address the gap in participation. The adoption by policy makers of gender-sensitive measures that can optimise women, girls, non-binary and gender diverse people's participation in volunteering.

Volunteering Tasmania endorse Our Watch's *Change the Story* Framework as a viable pathway to addressing gender inequality in Australia.

2. The process of **women's empowerment** may partly include programs and initiatives whereby women are able to negotiate better conditions at home and at work but the structures that have resulted in women being *less-empowered* also must be critiqued and

re-evaluated. Women, girls, non-binary and gender diverse people experience abuse and oppression across their lifespan which cumulates to create mental health impacts, poor health outcomes and reduced opportunities. Public policy that reinforces inequality contributes to this burden.

3. In order **to increase visibility and awareness of women's achievements, successes and needs** we must acknowledge the conditions that women girls, non-binary and gender diverse people grow-up in and function in as adults. This requires recognising the value of paid and unpaid carer roles with incentives in place to support unpaid care which at once, will raise the worth of unpaid caring, elevating its status and being perceived as a valid option for all genders to pursue. It also calls for the acknowledgment of the ongoing impacts of harassment, abuse and violence.

Question 2: Do you have any comments about the proposed Outcome Areas, including opportunities for strengthening the relationship between each area?

1. Economic security

Economic security enables women, girls, non-binary and gender diverse people to make their own choices, be resilient, in control and live an independent life with dignity.

The economic conditions for many Tasmanians is worsening with increased costs of living while wages and income supports remain stagnant. The increased demand and complexity of issues for social services is reported by many Volunteering Tasmania members.

A report by World Health Organisation's 2014, *Social Determinants of Mental Health*, described the prevalence of common mental disorders such as anxiety and depression along an economic gradient. The report described that people with lower socioeconomic status are more likely to be exposed to adverse childhood experiences increasing the likelihood of mental illness (Allen et al., 2014). We are also aware that women are at greater risk of depression and anxiety compared to men (Ussher, 2010).

Gender and socioeconomic status is a powerful intersection in Tasmania and requires particular focus in the Women's Strategy to demonstrate a genuine commitment to economic security.

2. Leadership and participation

When women, girls, non-binary and gender diverse people perform complex and expert leadership roles in the community, these roles are often valued as less important than the roles that men typically perform. The low pay-rates in Community Services, Aged-care and Child-care sectors are relevant examples of this phenomenon where women make up the vast majority of the workforce.

Men need to be encouraged and supported into typically female roles with the same fervour as women are supported into typically male professional spaces. See *Helping Men Move Over* below.

3. Safety

Volunteering Tasmania envisages a two-part approach to safety. Firstly, primary prevention work to facilitate culture change will improve the safety of women, girls, non-binary and gender diverse people in public, workplaces, across sporting clubs and in many other settings. Secondly, when safety has been compromised, interventions must be tailored and accessible.

This involves:

- Adequate resourcing of specialised family violence and women's organisations to prevent and respond to family and sexual violence through direct support.
- Co-design and representation opportunities for people with lived experience of violence and abuse as well as the service system (usually on a voluntary basis).
- Resourcing partnerships between services that can address intersecting experiences ie collaborations between services.
- Addressing issues with the current service model that includes long wait times due to under-resourcing, increased awareness of family and sexual violence in the criminal justice response, exploration of expanded community-based response to people who have experienced violence and abuse.

4. Health and wellbeing

Health and wellbeing correlates directly to economic autonomy. In general women, girls, non-binary and gender diverse people have lower incomes, reduced earning potential and less opportunity to accumulate assets than men. When considering social determinants of health we must include a gender analysis in discussions on the health crisis in Tasmania.

Question 3: What are your views about the proposed principles for guiding the implementation of activities for achieving gender equality?

Volunteering Tasmania recommend that following:

- That gender equality be defined by intersectionality to ensure all women, girls, non-binary gender diverse people regardless of their identities and life experiences benefit from the strategy.
- Point two, edit:
Assess the impact of gender by understanding the different experiences of *women, girls, non-binary gender diverse people and men.*
- Point five:
Include targets and clearly defined measures.

Accountability mechanisms need to be implemented that ensure women, girls, non-binary gender diverse people have access to decision-making processes.

With the above amendment and the addition of targets with clearly defined measures Volunteering Tasmania is supportive of the principles.

Question 4: Do you have any feedback on the proposed actions?

Volunteering Tasmania would like to see the addition of an accountability framework that draws on the expertise of lived experience and intersectionality in the actions. An accountability framework can also be used to bring the critical (and currently omitted factor) of intersectionality, into the proposed actions. Embedding intersectionality into the actions will work towards addressing the inequality that is experienced between women, girls, non-binary gender diverse people and will help to platform particular discriminations for example, those experienced by people with disabilities.

Question 5: Any other feedback?

COVID-19 Impacts

For Volunteering Tasmania, the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the risks of not supporting gender equity initiatives into all government policies and procedures.

The pandemic took its toll on everyone, this cannot be denied. Women, however, felt the effects with more women taking on greater responsibility for the care of children in home schooling environments, home duties and continuing with paid work and volunteering responsibilities.

Australian Bureau of Statistics data also shows that women were twice as likely as men to report that they did most of the unpaid domestic work (80 per cent compared to 39 per cent) and more than three times as likely to report that they did most of the unpaid caring responsibilities (38 per cent compared to 11 per cent). Women were also more likely than men to have lost jobs and paid work hours during lockdowns.

In a report for International Women's Day 2022, Volunteering Australia expressed that, whether deliberate or unconscious, bias makes it difficult for women to move ahead. Support for women in their working and family lives is needed. Knowing that bias exists isn't enough, action is needed to level the playing field.

We need to better understand how the pandemic has affected women and to consider this as part of the COVID-19 recovery, so that society can break the bias towards women.

Volunteering and equality

Volunteering supports a more inclusive and equal society. The Tasmanian Women's Strategy focuses very strongly on paid work as participation and we urge the government to broaden its perspective on the need for and value of women's participation.

The following data are available in Data Cube 10, Table 10.10.

For people aged 18 years and over, the total rate of volunteering through an organisation has declined since 2010. For persons aged 18 years and over, the volunteering rate has declined from 36.2% in 2010, to 30.9% in 2014 and to 28.8% in 2019. The decline has been most evident for females, whose rate decreased from 38.1% in 2010 to 28.1% in 2019.

The *2022 State of the World's Volunteerism Report (SWVR): Building equal and inclusive societies* explores the ways in which volunteer–state partnerships can help address our most pressing challenges.

Volunteerism plays a central role in strengthening people–state relationships. It promotes better governance, helps build more equal and inclusive societies, and fosters stability. Increasingly, volunteers across the globe are forging closer partnerships with state authorities to address urgent development challenges.

As the report illustrates, volunteerism offers new pathways for rights-based participation.

New partnerships between governments and volunteers from marginalised groups—women, persons with disabilities, people from remote and rural areas—are reconfiguring long-standing power relations. While volunteers have more opportunities to engage in activities that are meaningful to them, volunteers from marginalized groups remain disadvantaged. For instance, caregiving and domestic responsibilities limit the ability of women and girls to engage in volunteering in many countries. Addressing such gaps in volunteering practices and aspirations is vital to tackling exclusion and gender inequality.

While men's high participation in volunteering during the pandemic should be sustained, the effect of women's caregiving and domestic responsibilities on their ability to volunteer, and the barriers to women's participation in volunteering more broadly, require further investigation.

With women intending to volunteer less in future, there is a need to better understand and address emerging gender related barriers. This is especially vital since volunteering remains an important pathway for amplifying women's voices, representation and ownership of development processes.

Helping men move over

The Women's Strategy has a strong lens on what we have to do for women and what women still need to do to achieve equality, for example joining boards and participating in the construction sector.

Gender inequality fundamentally stems from men not yielding enough space for other genders to move into. Volunteering Tasmania calls for research and analysis that emphasises gender inclusive impacts in policy and detail actions men can take to improve equality for other genders. We would like to see the emphasis shifted from looking at women as the ones that need to change to a more cultural and ecological lens.

Paid parental leave is an example of a practical and tangible outcome and initiatives that women's strategy could include to support men in the culture shift that is necessary to move towards gender equity. If we want women to participate more in paid work, and other forms of community participation eg Boards, (which are usually voluntary in

Tasmania) we need men not only to move over and give them room we need them to take on more domestic and parental duties to free women up to participate more broadly. Why then do we only give men 2 weeks paid parental leave? We are biasing the ability for men to participate in their children's lives right from the start. Many Scandinavian countries have robust and much more comprehensive paid-parental leave schemes than Australia. Schemes that encourage/require much greater parenting from men. Australia/Tasmania – can and much do much better.

The data ABS discussed in this section refers to non-public organisations with 100 or more employees. Under the Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012, non-public sector employers with 100 or more employees must report annually to the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) on the gender composition of their workforce.

WGEA defines primary parental leave as leave taken by a member of a couple or a single carer, regardless of gender, identified as having greater responsibility for the day-to-day care of a child. Secondary parental leave is defined as leave taken by a member of a couple or a single carer, regardless of gender, who is not the primary carer. Primary parental leave is the type of leave most likely to affect people's career trajectories.

In 2018–19, for non-public sector employees:

93.5% of primary parental leave (paid or unpaid) was taken by women

96.1% of secondary parental leave (paid or unpaid) was taken by men.

Proportionally, managers in the non-public sector were more likely than non-managers to use primary parental leave in 2018-19:

Around one in 15 women who were managers in the non-public sector accessed primary parental leave (a rate of 6.8 per 100)

Around one in 24 women in non-managerial positions in the non-public sector accessed primary parental leave (a rate of 4.1 per 100)

Around one in 167 men who were managers in the non-public sector accessed primary parental leave (a rate of 0.6 per 100)

Around one in 333 men in non-managerial positions in the non-public sector accessed primary parental leave (a rate of 0.3 per 100).

Overall, more than 96,100 women employed in the non-public sector used some form of parental leave in 2018-19 compared with just over 38,300 men.

Volunteering Tasmania has adapted the current paid parental leave scheme on offer by the Australian Government and made it fairer for both our male, female and non-binary staff. A copy is available on request. These types of schemes should not only be promoted but adopted by the Tasmanian Public Service as a leading example of true gender equity policies and action

VT's parental leave policy

2.1 Where the parents are both employees of VT then both employees will be paid the parental leave payment.

2.2 If the employee is eligible for the Federal Government's paid parental leave scheme, then VT will top up this scheme to the employee's substantive salary for a period of 12 weeks.

2.3 The substantive salary is the FTE and salary level prior to going on leave and not related to any variation which occurs during parental leave. The salary will include superannuation and any Award-based increases that may occur while the parent is on leave.

2.4 If the employee is not eligible for the Federal Government's paid parental leave scheme, then VT will pay the employee their substantive salary for 12 weeks.

2.5 Salary can be paid out in a suitable and agreed manner between VT and the employee throughout the anticipated leave period as long as any request is lawful.

The VT policy works hard to ensure both parents experience the bond and the burden of looking after their child in the first months of their life. This allows more room for women to step back into the workforce as they have a partner who will assist with the needs of looking after children. It also ensures that neither partner are disadvantaged financially by their decision to take parental leave. Their salary remains at the rate they have been paid including superannuation and any CPI increases.

Conclusion

Volunteering Tasmania views volunteering as both a measure of gender equity and as a tool to increase gender equality. As a powerful strategy for increased social impact, volunteering can increase community skills, resources and opportunities while simultaneously increase policy maker's access to meaningful engagement and community problem solving.

Considering practical and tangible strategies that can be adopted by policy makers, Volunteering Tasmania endorses gender-sensitive measures that can optimise women, girls, non-binary and gender diverse people's participation in volunteering.

We promote paid parental leave as an example of a culture change initiative that involves men sharing caring roles and participating in traditional female roles with potential social and economic benefits for all genders.

The solution to gender inequality should not lie at the feet of women, girls, non-binary and gender diverse people without looking to the structures that have historically excluded them.

References

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