



# Volunteering Tasmania

## Measuring What Matters Briefing Paper

March 2023

### Executive Summary

From 2023, the Australian Government will release a stand-alone Measuring What Matters Statement, prompting informed dialogue about the well-being of our economy and society. Recognising that traditional budget measures such as gross domestic product (GDP) provide a partial view of a nation's well-being, countries around the world have commenced the incorporation of policy indicators into their budget mechanisms that measure broader quality of life factors. Overseas, policy indicators of 'civic engagement' and 'social capital', both core elements of volunteering, have been identified as key features of a nation's well-being.

Volunteering is the largest sector in Tasmania in terms of economic, social and community participation, and is a key driver of individual, collective and national well-being. Yet as a sector, it is confronted by a lack of legitimisation, recognition and resourcing, while its stability and presence continues to be overestimated. With volunteering rates in decline, Tasmania stands to benefit from the inclusion of volunteering as a well-being indicator in the Measuring What Matters Statement. By enabling the consistent measurement and evaluation of volunteering, policy makers will be able to form a greater basis for strategic action and investment in Tasmania's economic, social and environmental well-being.

### Background

- In response to the Federal Treasurer, the Hon Dr Jim Chalmers MP's expression of intent to include a series of well-being metrics in the October 2022 Federal Budget, Volunteering Tasmania wrote to a number of key federal and state politicians (addendum 1) advocating for the inclusion of volunteering as a well-being metric in the 2022 Well-being Budget.
- Well-being budgets measure progress on a broader range of measures than traditional fiscal and economic mechanisms. They present governments with the opportunity to measure the intergenerational impacts of public policy on key areas of well-being such as mental health outcomes, environmental sustainability, social inclusion and more. The inclusion of well-being budget measurements have enabled countries such as Aotearoa New Zealand, Finland, Scotland, and Wales to allocate funding to areas of priority and are typically underpinned by well-being frameworks, guiding policy decisions across dimensions of well-being.
- In the Federal Treasurer's 2022 Budget speech, the Australian Government committed to further discussions about 'Measuring What Matters', stressing the importance of the "strength of our economy and the well-being of our people."

- [Budget Paper No 1](#). Statement 4: Measuring What Matters, outlines different well-being approaches utilised by governments across the world. A well-being framework and an accompanying suite of metrics are yet to be proposed for Australia, however the Measuring What Matters Statement (the Statement) will be released in 2023 following stakeholder consultation. While volunteering is not mentioned in Budget Paper No 1. Statement 4, Table 4.1 shows 'civic engagement' is included in all well-being frameworks bar one (Scotland) and 'social capital' is included in all the cited well-being frameworks.
- While the Statement will be based upon the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) [Framework for Measuring Well-being and Progress](#) (the OECD Framework), it will be adapted to the Australian context. This framework is built around three distinct components: current well-being (key dimensions include: knowledge and skills, subjective well-being, social connections, civil engagement), inequalities in well-being outcomes, and resources for future well-being (nature capital, economic capital, human capital, and social capital).
- Extensive research demonstrates that volunteering is a unique and comprehensive indicator of individual and collective well-being and has become a subject of interest to politicians and policy makers across the world. The significance of volunteering to well-being has been recognised by the New Zealand Government and embedded within the [Living Standards Framework](#), enabling access to an evidence base through which to measure the impacts of volunteering as a key indicator of '[Individual and Collective Well-being](#)' and '[Institutions and Governance](#)'. It has become a point of focus in the advocacy efforts of the Australian volunteering peak body, as a case for the inclusion of volunteering as a well-being metric in the Statement.

## Key considerations

- "The subject of volunteering has gained widespread public and political interest in recent years. Policy debates have taken place in many countries on how to preserve and encourage volunteering. However, despite the political momentum and a number of international initiatives, little sustained effort has gone into measuring the scope, scale and impacts of volunteering" in Australia.<sup>1</sup>
- Volunteering is a powerful driver of well-being in Tasmania, for many Tasmanians it is a way of life. More than two-thirds of our population, about 300,000 individuals aged 16 years and over lend a hand across our communities in a myriad of ways.<sup>2</sup> In 2019, Tasmanian's contributed volunteer time in the following ways:
  - 29 million hours a year in not-for-profit organisations (60% of formal volunteering)
  - 13 million hours a year for government (26% of formal volunteering)
  - 7 million hours a year in private, for-profit organisations (14% of formal volunteering)
  - Informal volunteers (not affiliated with any organisation) contributed 19 million hours to Tasmania in 2019 (38% of total volunteering)
  - 5.4% of people participated in workplace volunteering in Tasmania.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> OECD, How's Life? 2015: Measuring Well-being – The value of giving: Volunteering and Well-being, pp. 190, [https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/economics/how-s-life-2015/the-value-of-giving\\_how\\_life-2015-9-en#page2](https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/economics/how-s-life-2015/the-value-of-giving_how_life-2015-9-en#page2).

<sup>2</sup> Volunteering Tasmania Inc, The Great Reset: Volunteering in Tasmania post-COVID-19, 2022, pg 4, [https://volunteeringtas.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/The\\_Great\\_Reset\\_Paper\\_2022\\_FINAL\\_Web.pdf](https://volunteeringtas.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/The_Great_Reset_Paper_2022_FINAL_Web.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> Volunteering Tasmania Inc, The state of volunteering report Tasmania 2019 summary, pp. 4, <https://volunteeringtas.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/State-of-Volunteering-Report-%E2%80%93-Summary.pdf>.

- We rely heavily on volunteers to provide supports, activities, and services across all aspects of Tasmanian life. Voluntary work underpins a wide range of activities that contribute to well-being, including: health; education; sports and recreation; social services; arts and culture; human rights; emergency services; environment and conservation; animal welfare; and community support and development. The examples of the impacts made by volunteers across the state are endless. During COVID-19, volunteers became the new frontline of community services, providing mental health and social supports, and essential items to those in isolation; they have been tireless in efforts to achieve social and environmental justice; have provided safe accommodation to individuals and families experiencing homelessness; support their communities through relief and recovery in the wake of natural disasters; and more.
- The contribution of volunteers and volunteering to Tasmania is estimated at a value of over \$4 billion annually. Three billion being the cost to replace the labour provided to Tasmania by volunteers.<sup>4</sup>
- Despite this seeming prevalence, a downward trend in volunteer participation is evident as the demand for volunteers continues to increase. Should this trend persist uninterrupted, there will be a 42% gap between the demand for and supply of volunteers in Tasmania by 2029. With an estimated 3.5 volunteers for every paid staff member in the community sector,<sup>5</sup> the implications of this prospected shortfall in volunteer supply would have devastating implications for Tasmania’s well-being. Strategic action and investment by governments is required to address the challenges facing volunteering. As the cost of living rises, so too does our dependence on volunteers to fill critical systems gaps.
- While well-being is defined and experienced in countless ways, it forms the foundation of political decision and public policy. As the Tasmanian Government advances the development of Tasmania’s Well-being Framework, it is imperative that we recognise the role of volunteering across all intersections of Tasmania’s well-being, including housing, safety, cost of living, environment and climate, social justice, governance, social inclusion and connection, identity and belonging, access to services, education, health, economy, etc.
- Volunteering is included in the following Tasmanian Government policies related to well-being:
  - [It Takes a Tasmanian Village: Child and Youth Well-being Strategy](#)
  - [Food Relief to Food Resilience: Tasmanian Food Security Strategy 2021-24](#)
  - [Tasmanian Wildlife Rehabilitation Sector: Strategy and Action Plan 2022/24](#)
  - [Premier’s Economic & Social Recovery Advisory Council: Final Report March 2021](#)
  - [Neighbourhood House Program: Strategic Framework 2018-2023 Part 1](#)
  - [Tasmanian Disaster Resilience Strategy 2020-25](#)
  - [Tasmania’s Strategy for Adult Literacy and Numeracy 2016-2025](#)
- When considered against the three components of the OECD Framework: current well-being, inequalities in well-being outcomes, and resources for future well-being, volunteering can be

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<sup>4</sup> Volunteering Tasmania Inc, The state of volunteering report Tasmania 2019 summary, pp. 2, <https://volunteeringtas.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/State-of-Volunteering-Report-%E2%80%93-Summary.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> Volunteering Tasmania Inc, Safeguarding Tasmania: Tasmanian Volunteering Profile 2029, pp. 3, <https://www.volunteeringtas.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Tasmanian-Volunteer-Profile.pdf>.

deemed pertinent to each.<sup>6</sup>

- Currently the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) 'Australia's Welfare Report' (the Report) is the only report that looks at national progress and well-being in a broad sense<sup>7</sup> and is informed by the General Social Survey data. The 2021 Report states, "volunteering... serves as an indicator of well-being and social cohesion. It also has links to the economic and health status of a nation,"<sup>8</sup> with implications at the individual, collective and national scale.
  - **Volunteering and individual well-being:** volunteering not only produces benefits for the recipients of volunteer efforts, but also for the volunteers themselves. Volunteering supports people to acquire, utilise and share skills and knowledge, can act as a pathway to employment and is associated with higher levels of life satisfaction.<sup>9</sup> It promotes individual well-being by "offering a sense of purpose and opportunities for social connection,"<sup>10 11</sup> as well as promoting physical and mental health benefits and connection to place.<sup>12</sup> Volunteering can break down barriers to inclusion, presenting powerful opportunities for connection and belonging by offering mechanisms through which to access and participate in the community as valued and valuable citizens.<sup>13</sup>
  - **Volunteering and community well-being:** volunteering is an expression of a vibrant civil society and supports the development of diverse relationships, while "cultivating norms of altruism, solidarity, civic mindfulness, and respect for diversity."<sup>12,14</sup> It "broadens people's networks and professional skills, and builds social capital, servicing as an indicator of well-being and social cohesion."<sup>15</sup>
  - **Volunteering and the nation's well-being:** volunteering plays a central role in bolstering the relationship between people and the state. "It promotes better governance, helps to build more equal and inclusive societies and fosters civic

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<sup>6</sup> OECD, Measuring Well-being and Progress: Well-being Research, <https://www.oecd.org/wise/measuring-well-being-and-progress.htm>.

<sup>7</sup> Australian Government, Statement 4 Measuring What Matters, pp. 139, [https://budget.gov.au/2022-23-october/content/bp1/download/bp1\\_bs-4.pdf](https://budget.gov.au/2022-23-october/content/bp1/download/bp1_bs-4.pdf).

<sup>8</sup> Australian Government, AIHW, Volunteers, <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/volunteers>.

<sup>9</sup> OECD, How's Life? 2015: Measuring Well-being – The value of giving: Volunteering and well-being, pp. 189, [https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/economics/how-s-life-2015/the-value-of-giving\\_how\\_life-2015-9-en#page1](https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/economics/how-s-life-2015/the-value-of-giving_how_life-2015-9-en#page1).

<sup>10</sup> Volunteering Australia, Volunteering and Wellbeing Budgets, pp. 1, <https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/wp-content/uploads/Volunteering-and-Wellbeing-Briefing-September-2022-FINAL.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> Volunteering Australia, Evidence Insights, Volunteering and Mental Health, pp. 5, <https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/wp-content/uploads/Evidence-Insights-Volunteering-and-mental-health-Final.pdf>.

<sup>12</sup> Volunteering Australia, Volunteering, Wellbeing and Wellbeing Budgets, pp. 1, <https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/wp-content/uploads/Volunteering-and-Wellbeing-Briefing-September-2022-FINAL.pdf>.

<sup>13</sup> OECD, How's Life? 2015: Measuring Well-being – The value of giving: Volunteering and Well-being, pp. 190, [https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/economics/how-s-life-2015/the-value-of-giving\\_how\\_life-2015-9-en#page2](https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/economics/how-s-life-2015/the-value-of-giving_how_life-2015-9-en#page2).

<sup>14</sup> Australian Government Productivity Commission, Mental Health – Productivity Commission Inquiry Report, Volume 2, 2020, pp. 391, <https://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/mental-health/report/mental-health-volume2.pdf>.

<sup>15</sup> Australian Government, AIHW, Volunteers, <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/volunteers>.

participation<sup>16</sup>". As a mechanism of active citizenship, volunteering contributes to the progress of jurisdictional and national priorities. It also has links to the economic and health status of a nation.<sup>13</sup>

- While the connection between volunteering and well-being has been widely researched and documented, the contributions of volunteers are often overlooked and underrepresented in Australian and Tasmanian public policy. Throughout Tasmania, the task of building strong and resilient communities; mitigating social isolation and loneliness; and increasing social cohesion and inclusion has increasingly fallen to volunteers. Public services and programs continue to be outsourced to not-for-profit and community organisations and ever-increasing expectations of the under-resourced volunteer sector have resulted in significant systemic issues.

## **Conclusion**

- The inclusion of volunteering as a well-being indicator in the Measuring What Matters Statement will enable governments, organisations, and communities to form a more comprehensive understanding about quality of life across the country. Including volunteering as a well-being indicator presents an opportunity to prioritise the historically underrepresented and quantifiably difficult assessment of individual and community well-being. It is an opportunity to measure the intergenerational impacts of public policy upon key measures of well-being and provides scope for political investment in the development of an inclusive, resilient, and sustainable civic society.
- Tasmania stands to benefit deeply from a national well-being framework and metrics which highlight volunteering as crucial to individual, collective, and national well-being. Identifying volunteering as a well-being metric would raise the profile of volunteering within the Tasmanian policy context and highlight Tasmanian's demonstration of active citizenship through volunteering.

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<sup>16</sup> UN Volunteers, 2022 State of the World's Volunteerism Report: Building Equal and Inclusive Societies, pp. 10, <https://knowledge.unv.org/evidence-library/2022-state-of-the-worlds-volunteerism-report-building-equal-and-inclusive-societies>.

**Addendum 1:****Letters sent to key politicians in October 2022, advocating for the inclusion of volunteering as a well-being metric in the October 2022 Federal Budget**

Party in Government	Hon Dr Andrew Leigh MP	Australian Labor Party
	Senator Helen Polley	Australian Labor Party
	Senator Catryna Bilyk	Australian Labor Party
	Senator Carol Brown	Australian Labor Party
	Senator Anne Urquhart	Australian Labor Party
	Mr Brian Mitchell MP	Australian Labor Party
	Hon Julie Collins MP	Australian Labor Party
Federal Crossbench	Mr Andrew Wilkie MP	Independent
	Senator Jacqui Lambie	Jacqui Lambie Network
	Senator Tammy Tyrrell	Jacqui Lambie Network
	Senator Nick McKim	Australian Greens
	Senator Peter Whish-Wilson	Australian Greens
State Politicians Advising of federal advocacy	Hon Jeremy Rockliff MP Premier	Liberal Party of Australia
	Hon Michael Ferguson MP Treasurer	Liberal Party of Australia

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