

Understanding the landscape, shaping the future

POLICY AND
ADVOCACY

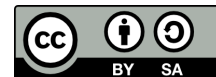
STATE OF VOLUNTEERING
REPORT 2023: KEY FINDINGS



This is an independent report commissioned by Volunteering Tasmania, supported by the Tasmanian Government, from the Institute of Project Management (IPM). It is authored by Paul Muller, Managing Director of IPM with statistical assistance from Muhammad Ijaz and Dionne Morris.

The author would also like to thank the many individuals and organisations who gave their time directly, via the surveys, or during the consultation process.

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Volunteering Tasmania acknowledges the palawa people as traditional custodians of the lands, seas, skies, and waterways throughout lutruwita/Tasmania. We pay respect to elders past and present and recognise their deep history and continuing connections with our shared country, culture, and community.

SUPPORTED BY



Tasmanian
Government

“What gets measured, gets managed” – Peter Drucker, 1954, *The Practice of Management*.

We are now presenting the third State of Volunteering Report in Tasmania, nearly a decade after the first Report in 2014. Over time, our consistent efforts have deepened our understanding of volunteering's complex, nuanced, and vital nature.

It's crucial that we don't lose sight of this significance as we continue to learn and progress, ensuring that past contributions are not forgotten. The ongoing financial support from the Tasmanian Government for the largest single study on Volunteering in Tasmania allows us to shape our longitudinal understanding of Tasmania's volunteer workforce.

We acknowledge the 993 individuals and the 245 volunteer managers in Tasmania who participated in the surveys for this report. We thank you for continually sharing your experiences and knowledge to enhance the volunteering experience for all.



We encourage you to read this report with an open and curious mind. Let the data either confirm or challenge your everyday experiences. Discuss it with colleagues, friends, and family. Reach out to the Volunteering Tasmania team to share your thoughts and extend this vital conversation into your networks and connections.

Volunteering is an integral part of life in Tasmania. We aim to use this work to ensure that your experiences as volunteers, your roles as volunteer managers, and your missions as organisations are supported and sustainable for the future.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

“ ... Despite our best efforts to bolster our committee numbers, we currently lack the people-power needed for a safe and successful event.”

– Statement from Koonya Garlic Festival Organisers

“The Tasmanian volunteer sector is feeling the pinch, with a snowball of economic barriers resulting in volunteer shortages, increased demand and higher costs ...”

– The Mercury, February 19, 2024

Tasmanian communities, events and services are feeling the impact of changes to the way volunteers are donating their time, resulting in cancellations, closures and shrinking services and supports. These ‘on the ground’ impacts are the manifestation of the trends highlighted in the 2023 State of Volunteering Report (SOVR).

While we’ve known since the 2019 State of Volunteering Report that the way in which Tasmanians volunteer was changing, this is the first Tasmanian report to reflect the shifts that we are now experiencing as the cancellation and contraction of events and services delivered in our communities.

But Tasmanians still love to volunteer.



The 2023 SOVR found that:

- 332,100 Tasmanians (69.8%) generously gave their time to volunteer activities during 2023
- the average hours volunteered per volunteer was 22.4 hours per month and
- Tasmanians volunteered an impressive 89.4 million hours of their time in 2023.

Australians who volunteer reported a 4.4 point increase in individual well-being attributable to volunteering, confirming the importance of the sense of purpose, social recognition, personal fulfilment and sense of connection that the act of volunteering adds to our sense of self and community. Similarly, 54% of non-volunteers (such as volunteer managers) who contributed to the 2023 SOVR, attributed community wellbeing to the impact of volunteering.

So why are organisations finding it difficult to attract volunteers?

If more than two-thirds of Tasmanians are generous with their time and taking up opportunities to volunteer, why are events and organisations experiencing shortfalls that result in cancellations and closures?

The answer which can be seen through the results of the 2023 SOVR is clear:

While the nature of volunteering has changed, organisations that rely on them to fully deliver programs and services – the majority of which are not for profits dependent on short-term, non-indexed funding agreements – are not resourced to adapt the ways they recruit, manage and retain volunteers.

While no one takes volunteer contributions for granted, we know that funders frequently expect volunteers to be built into strategic plans and service delivery models, but the money provided does not cover investment in volunteer infrastructure. While this approach has been the reality for many decades, the nature of volunteering has evolved to a point where this is no longer a model for success.

What is needed is a paradigm shift: A change from an ‘if we build it, they (volunteers) will come’ approach to a planning process that asks, ‘how do we build this to support volunteers’ preferred ways of working?’.

The changing nature of volunteering

Since 2019, changes to the nature of people’s volunteering have continued with the current generation struggling to balance their motivation to volunteer with the realities of increasing costs of living which impacts the time they have available and magnifies the impact of costs associated with volunteering such as transport and Registration to Work With Vulnerable People and concerns about burnout.

Increasing numbers of people are choosing to volunteer in casual ways that support their desire to contribute their time and skills while working around the other aspects of their lives. This kind of volunteering is seen in everything from bringing in an elderly neighbour’s bins each week to clearing equipment after a child’s soccer match. Meanwhile Tasmania is experiencing this shift as a loss of volunteers participating in more formalised, organisation based activities which rely on volunteer involvement to deliver their services and events. This then leads to the contraction of services/activities in areas where the community need is highest (for example, provision of meals to the elderly or phone support to those experiencing mental health crises).



At time of writing this, there are 15 strategies sitting across various state agencies and departments that include volunteers as key contributors to their successful implementation and another seven strategies relevant to volunteering that are being refreshed. Conscious, planned investment in volunteer infrastructure will be key to the success of each and every one of these strategies.

Since 2020, VT has worked with nine local councils to support them and their communities to develop volunteering strategies that place volunteers and their management at the centre of programs, events and service delivery planning.

For many involved in development of these strategies, this meant flipping the way they have always thought about volunteer involvement by considering management of volunteers alongside the events and activities to which they wished them to donate their time and skills.

By placing volunteer roles at the centre of discussions about the opportunities available, these councils have entered the new paradigm necessary to sustain volunteer contributions in their municipalities.

What next?

While it will always require a careful balance to plan in ways that work for both volunteers and organisers, it is possible and often not as complex as may first be assumed.

Anecdotal evidence from interstate has shown that small changes, supported by appropriate investment in volunteer management training and resources such as online rostering platforms, can make a huge difference to both recruitment and retention.

Technology provides some effective solutions that can be simple and effective in recruiting, managing and retaining volunteers.

The key to taking advantage of these types of solutions is planning and investment in frameworks, tools and training of volunteer managers who can then identify opportunities, apply the solutions and support their organisations to achieve the desired outcomes in our communities.

In these ways, the 2023 SOVR confirms the need for consistent, reliable investment not only for programs and strategies reliant on volunteers, but also to support the ongoing recruitment and management of the volunteers who are key to their success.



ECONOMIC VALUE OF VOLUNTEERING

Benefits:

2019

2023

\$4 Billion

\$12.1 Billion

Volunteering enhances workplace productivity by:



14.7%



9900

Jobs created through volunteer related activities in 2023

Cost to volunteer for an individual

per hour

2019

2023

\$4.03



\$11.88

Cost to include a volunteer for an organisation

2023

\$190.85

per month per volunteer



Dollar return

\$3.50

2019

\$4.80

2023

\$1



For every \$1 invested in volunteering, \$4.80 is returned in benefits to the community.

The cost of volunteering in 2023 was

\$2.5 Billion



\$3.6 Billion

replacement cost of volunteers



Wellbeing benefit

4.4 point increase in life satisfaction

\$5.4 billion in wellbeing benefit

54.2%



of community members attribute the wellbeing of their **community** to volunteers

VOLUNTEERS

Tasmanian volunteers over the age of 15 years

2023

332,100 (69.8%)



Total number of hours contributed by volunteers a year



2019

68.2

million hours

2023

89.4

million hours

Total number of hours contributed a month per volunteer



2019

19

hours

2023

22.4

hours

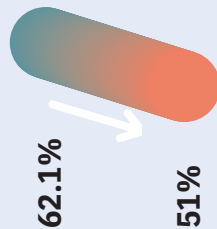
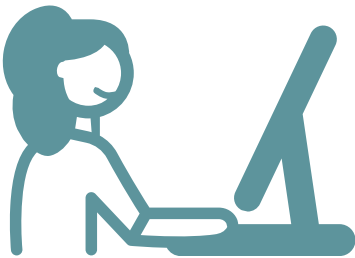
Volunteer online or at home

2019

16.3%

2023

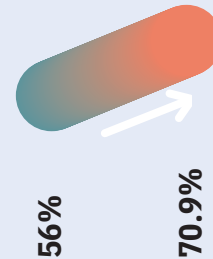
26.4%



2019

2023

Formal volunteer rates



2019

2023

Informal volunteer rates

How people like to volunteer



31.7%

alone



28.5%

in a group

39.8%

both

Volunteer motivation



1 To help others

2 For enjoyment

3 For social and community connections

Barriers to volunteering



1 Limited time

2 Costs

3 Burnout

VOLUNTEER MANAGERS

Top 3 retention strategies



- 1 Volunteer training and development
- 2 Personal relationship building
- 3 Role flexibility and accessibility support

Top 3 recruitment strategies



1. Word of mouth



2. Social media



3. Online services

Top 3 changes



1. Need for volunteer training has **increased**

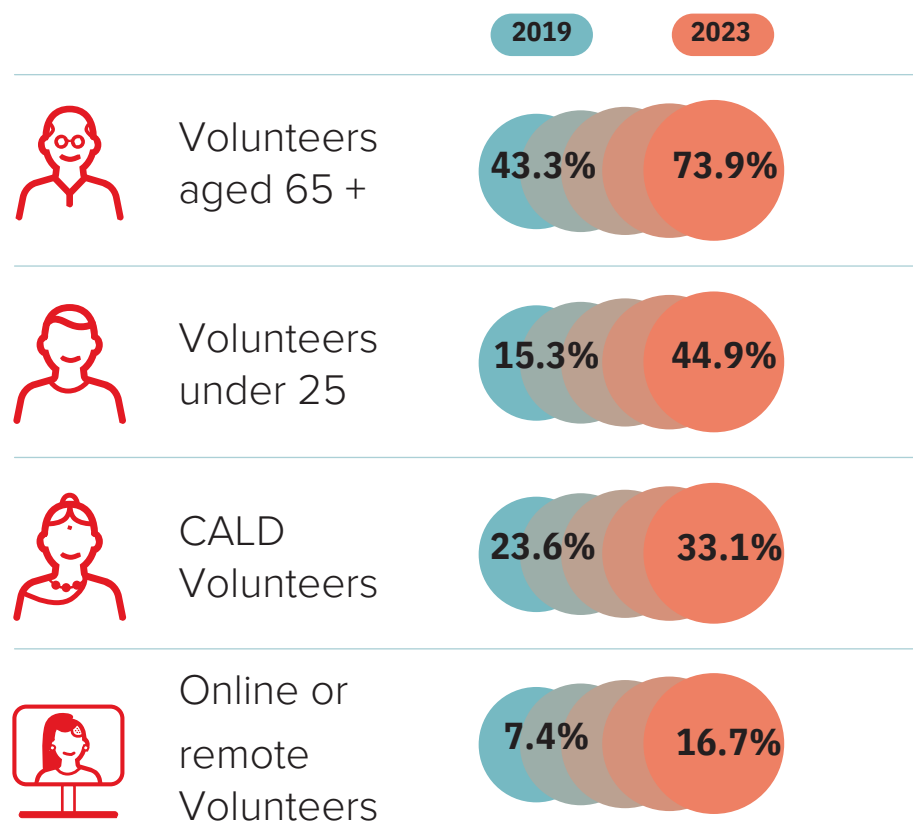


2. Cost of volunteering has **increased**



3. More volunteers want **flexible** hours

Volunteer manager reported Inclusion metrics



Additional Changes



Hours people want to volunteer formally has **decreased**



Number of people who want to volunteer formally has **decreased**

Volunteering Tasmania

Vision

An Inclusive, thriving, and celebrated culture of community participation

Purpose

To strengthen and enhance volunteering through leadership, education, and connection

For a copy of the full State of Volunteering Report 2023,
contact team@volunteeringtas.org.au



volunteering
TASMANIA