



volunteering
TASMANIA

Building a thriving Tasmania through Volunteering

Budget Priority
Submission 2025-26



volunteeringtas.org.au

About us

As the peak body for volunteering in Lutruwita/Tasmania, our vision is to see an inclusive, thriving, and celebrated culture of community participation across the state. We achieve this by strengthening and enhancing volunteering through leadership, education, and connection. We promote the inherent value of community-based volunteering, recognising its pivotal role in sustaining and enhancing community resilience and overall wellbeing. Our mission is anchored in the knowledge that community engagement is not only valued but is integral to the enduring vitality of our communities.

Acknowledgements

Volunteering Tasmania acknowledges the Palawa as traditional custodians of the lands, seas, skies, and waterways throughout Lutruwita/Tasmania. We recognise their deep history and continuing connections with Country, culture, and community and pay respect to Elders past and present.

As the peak body for volunteering in Lutruwita/Tasmania, we are committed to working towards an inclusive and accessible volunteering sector and growing our cultural competency and understanding of the Tasmanian Aboriginal Community.

We express our hope that by working together and deepening our understanding, we can move to a more equitable and just society. We will create connections with Tasmanian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and provide culturally safe information and opportunities that support self-determination.

We value the support of our members, and we work with our membership to strengthen the volunteering industry in Tasmania. We also acknowledge the more than 332,000 volunteers who contribute to the economic and social wellbeing of our communities. Thank you for your unwavering commitment to the safety and wellbeing of our island state.



A volunteer at the Launceston City Mission Op Shop.

Glossary¹

- **Volunteering:** Time willingly given for the common good and without financial gain.
- **Formal volunteering:** Time willingly given for the common good and without financial gain, taking place within organisations (including institutions and agencies) in a structured way.
- **Informal volunteering:** Time willingly given for the common good and without financial gain, taking place outside the context of a formal organisation or group. This includes assisting people in the community, excluding one's own family members. For example, looking after children, property or pets; providing home or personal assistance; or giving someone professional advice.
- **Spontaneous volunteers:** People who are not affiliated with recognised volunteer agencies, and may not have relevant training, skills, or experience, but seek out or are invited to contribute their assistance to various volunteering opportunities.
- **National Standards for Volunteer Involvement (National Standards)²:** Are recognised as the best-practice guide for volunteer involvement in Australia.
- **Volunteer Involving Organisation (VIO)¹⁶:** Are organisations that provide opportunities for volunteering as part of their operation. They take many forms, ranging from local councils and state government departments to grassroots collectives, community groups and local sports clubs. Some larger entities deliver disability, health and aged care services. They may be small, unincorporated groups or large national organisations and charities. For-profit entities also contribute in some parts of the sector. State and federal governments, along with philanthropy and business, play a role in funding and supporting volunteer programs and services. Similarly, many different groups and organisations provide volunteering support and capacity building.
- **Volunteering infrastructure/ volunteer-enabling infrastructure:** The enabling governance, operational and technological structures, bodies and platforms that provide volunteer involving organisations with the capability to involve volunteers ethically and effectively.



Students at the 2024 UTAS National Student Volunteer Week expo.

Tasmania's largest workforce

The Tasmanian community, government and economy benefits immensely from a strong volunteering culture. It is an integral part of the Tasmanian way of life.

This is evidenced by volunteering being Tasmania's largest industry in terms of economic, social and community benefit, driven by the largest cross-sector workforce in the state.³ However *formal volunteering* is declining, presenting a risk to both community wellbeing and the economy.

The *2023 State of Volunteering Report (SOVR)* found 332,100 (69.8%) Tasmanians, aged 15 years and over, willingly and generously gave their time across a wide range of activities, providing an incredible \$12.1 billion in value for the state. To replace this volunteer labour would have cost the state \$3.6 billion.³

Unfortunately, between 2019 and 2023, formal volunteer participation in Tasmania declined by 11%.³ This is a loss of 15,000 volunteer workers during a cost-of-living crisis where there is increasing community demand for services and supports that rely on volunteer involvement.

By 2029, it is forecast there will be a 42% gap between the demand for and supply of volunteers in the state.⁴ Volunteering Tasmania is focused on addressing this decline so that the far-reaching benefit of volunteering continues.

Declining trends in formal volunteer participation adds layers of complexity for policymakers. The importance of formal volunteering can be seen by the breadth of volunteer activity in a range of organisations, delivering essential services in our communities. Volunteers are important to the success of many government and cross-sector policy initiatives, activities, services and events, from the Child and Youth Safe Organisations Framework, to improving adult literacy and numeracy, providing emergency services and caring for our environment.



Volunteers from the Rio Tinto Corporate Volunteering partnership revitalise the garden at a City Mission crisis accommodation facility.

Despite this, the volunteering industry is faced with growing challenges such as increased financial and administrative burdens, and expanded regulatory requirements and responsibilities. Further investment is needed to sustain formal volunteering and curb its decline.

Volunteering Tasmania welcomes the government's commitment to Tasmania's first Volunteering Strategy and 5-year Action Plan, however there are levers available now to help address key challenges while the strategy is under development and actioned over coming years.

Our high priority budget requests include:

Priority 1 Reduce the financial barriers of volunteering

Remove the cost of Working with Vulnerable People registration for volunteers
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Priority 2 Industry Leadership and Sustainability

Preliminary activities to progress the Tasmanian Volunteering Strategy and Action Plan
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Priority 3 Workforce Growth and Development

Child and Youth Safe Volunteering Education Program
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Priority 4 Supporting accessible formal volunteering opportunities

Expansion of the Volunteer Connect Service
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Priority 5 Continue and boost Emergency Volunteering Community Response to Extreme Weather (EV CREW)

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A volunteer running the help desk at Kingston Library.

What are we asking for?

Volunteering Tasmania is seeking investment into a multi-faceted approach to reverse the downward trend in formal volunteering.

	Funding Amount excl GST	Timeframe
Commitment: Remove the cost of Working with Vulnerable People registration for volunteers	<i>Government to determine cost – estimates included in Priority 1.</i>	Ongoing
Program: Preliminary activities to progress the Tasmanian Volunteering Strategy and Action Plan	\$270,143	1 year funding
Program: Child and Youth Safe Volunteering Education Program	\$2,072,437	3 Year funding
Program: Expansion of the Volunteer Connect Service	\$1,513,418	5 Year funding
Program: Emergency Volunteering Community Response to Extreme Weather (EV CREW)	\$1,094,844	5 Year funding
Total BPS ask	\$4,950,842	



A volunteer driver with Mersey Community Care.

Priority ① Reduce the financial barriers of volunteering

Remove the cost of Working with Vulnerable People registration for volunteers

Engage with the volunteering industry on ways to make the application process for Working with Vulnerable People more efficient, user-friendly and accessible.

Commitment: Remove the Registration to Work with Vulnerable People (RWVP) fee for volunteers.

Costing over one year: Matter for government calculation. The data in the Department of Justice's *Annual Report 2023-24* can be used as an indicative guide.⁵ RWVP fees for volunteers were around \$359,000 last financial year.¹⁹

Impact:

Remove a significant financial barrier to volunteering to make volunteering more accessible and support VIOs to increase the safety of people experiencing vulnerability.

Mitigate the costs of increased regulation resulting from the Child Youth Safe Organisations Framework and the RWVP Expansion Project.

Alleviate administrative complexity to encourage more formal volunteers.

Rationale:

Tasmania remains one of only three jurisdictions in Australia to charge volunteers for the Registration to Work with Vulnerable People (RWVP). This is heightened by Tasmania also having the most expensive registration fee.

As in previous Budget Priority Submissions, Volunteering Tasmania urges the government to absorb the RWVP application fee for volunteers to ensure that formal volunteer participation is not limited by cost or complexity. The latest data on volunteering confirms the need to action this urgent request. The 2023 State of Volunteering Report (SOVR)³ identified the cost of volunteering as one of the primary barriers to formal volunteering.

Absorbing these costs would not only reflect the \$12.1 billion social and economic benefit of volunteering³ and bring Tasmania in line with the majority of other states and territories, it would also signal a commitment by the government to reduce financial barriers to volunteering as it moves forward with the development of the state's first volunteering strategy.

The increasing out of pocket costs of volunteering are not sustainable. The 2023 SOVR found that:

- The average hourly cost of volunteering rose from \$4.03 per volunteer in 2019, to \$11.88, an increase of \$7.85 an hour. This has resulted in volunteers shouldering 80% of the total direct expenses associated with volunteering, and VIOs carrying about 20%.³
- Volunteers reported that on average, they were reimbursed for only 17.9% of their volunteering expenses.³
- Volunteer managers also reported that on average they pay for 26.5% of the costs to manage volunteers and are reimbursed by their organisations for 11.7% of these. The resulting 14.8% of the cost of managing volunteers in Tasmania is carried directly by individual volunteer managers. This is much higher for unpaid (informal) volunteer managers than it is for paid (formal) volunteer managers.³

The Department of Justice's RWVP Expansion Project⁶ will roll out over the next two years. The cost burden on volunteers will expand as the government removes the 7-day exemption, broadens the categories of vulnerable people and introduces new regulated activities. Volunteering Tasmania supports the screening of volunteers as an important component of protecting vulnerable people in our communities, however, it is also important to ensure that regulatory reforms, including the proposed scheme expansion, do not serve as a further barrier to volunteering.

While we recognise there is an administration cost of the RWVP scheme on government, this cost should not be borne by Tasmanians who are required to register for unpaid volunteering activities which benefit government and the community. The RWVP Expansion Project also creates a timely opportunity to engage on ways to streamline the application process and make it more accessible for volunteers and VIOs (see case study below).

The Tasmanian Department of Justice's *Annual Report 2023-24*⁵ confirms the declining trend in RWVP new applications or renewals for volunteers. As an indicative guide, the RWVP fees collected from the volunteer workforce last financial year was around \$359,000.¹⁹

VIOs, many being not-for-profit organisations, are often the least able to absorb these costs. There are increasing costs to recruit, induct, orient, train and manage volunteers, as there are for paid workers. There are also significant costs to ensure the right structures are in place to support volunteers and provide them with safe working conditions and environments. We cannot expect to add this additional financial burden without negatively impacting the ability of VIOs to perform their functions in the community.

The success of regulatory reform depends not only on their implementation, but also on the provision of support measures to mitigate any adverse impacts. For example, removing registration fees for volunteers and simplifying the application process can help ensure that Tasmania's vibrant volunteering workforce continues to thrive, while still safeguarding vulnerable people.

CASE STUDY

Ailin* works onboarding volunteers for a VIO that helps thousands of people experiencing vulnerability and financial hardship. The VIO has paid staff, as well as hundreds of volunteers.

During her first year at the organisation, Ailin gained considerable insight to the barriers involved in recruitment of volunteers through hundreds of conversations with new applicants. She's seen that when people first make inquiries about becoming a volunteer, most of them believe the process will be simple and fast. After an initial conversation, they realise there are actually multiple steps before volunteering is possible.

Some people immediately withdraw when they see what's involved. Some have reservations about providing personal documents due to privacy concerns or are daunted by online applications because of a lack of digital literacy. Others are unable to travel to in-person appointments to present ID documents for police checks or a RVWP application at Service Tasmania during office hours. Ailin fears that it could now take around ten weeks to complete all the necessary steps before a new volunteer can even start their onboarding process. Unfortunately, some potential volunteers lose interest or change their mind during this time, deciding instead to take up informal opportunities in their communities.

Ailin's organisation works hard to support potential volunteers through these processes and to reimburse costs for RWVP applications and police checks, as well as for ID documents that may need to be re-issued for these checks to take place. But this takes up resources and puts pressure on their budget as a not-for-profit organisation.

Ailin believes financial barriers and processing times must be reduced so volunteers can be recruited in a timely manner without losing the enthusiasm that brings them to the organisation in the first place. If costs and administrative issues can't be improved, she fears it will be hard felt among many Tasmanian charities.

*not volunteer manager's real name



Finalists for the Lifetime Commitment Award at the 2024 Tasmanian Volunteering Awards, with sponsor representative and VT CEO. Photographer Jillian Mundy

Priority ②: Industry leadership and sustainability

Preliminary activities to progress the Tasmanian Volunteering Strategy and Action Plan

One year funding to promptly begin work flowing from the Tasmanian Volunteering Strategy and Action Plan, due for completion by 30 June 2025. Employ a Project Coordinator to progress actions, engage stakeholders, and develop crucial networks within Tasmania and interstate.

Program	2025-2026	Total excl GST	Timeframe
Tasmanian Volunteering Strategy and Action Plan: funding for preliminary activities	\$270,143	\$270,143	1 year funding

Impact:

Engagement across Tasmania's largest workforce to bring the Tasmanian Volunteering Strategy and Action Plan to life.

Rationale:

We were pleased to welcome the government's 2024 election commitment to develop Tasmania's first Volunteering Strategy and Action Plan, and to see this commitment fulfilled in the 2024-25 State Budget. This initiative offers a critical and strategic opportunity to address the complex challenges facing both the volunteering industry and communities across Tasmania.

Volunteering Tasmania is well-placed as the peak body for volunteering in the state to collaborate with the Tasmanian Government, our members, and the wider industry on the engagement needed to bring this important work to life.

Whilst we welcomed a boost to our peak body funding over the next two years, the overall funding provided through the 2024-25 State Budget still falls below the funding required for Volunteering Tasmania to support the state's largest workforce at this critical time. With a projected formal volunteer shortfall of 42% by 2029⁴, there is an urgent need for strategic investment in volunteer-enabling infrastructure.

The Tasmanian Volunteering Strategy and Action Plan has the potential to localise and contextualise the National Strategy for Volunteering⁷ as well as utilising the community volunteering strategies developed through the Safeguarding Volunteering Project 2021-2024.⁸

Volunteering Tasmania seeks funding to begin progressing actions from the Strategy and Action Plan as soon as it is completed, rather than waiting for the next budget cycle (2026-27). Although the Strategy and Action Plan is set for completion by the end of June 2025, we have not been able to identify strategic actions as part of this budget cycle. We hope to maintain the momentum of this important piece of work towards empowering community-led, place-based volunteering across the state. The co-designed strategies from the Safeguarding Volunteering Project identified common themes from participating councils. We would aim to explore these as a logical starting point for our state volunteering strategy, meeting the needs of Tasmanian communities:

- Embedding inclusiveness and diversity in VIOs, creating a positive culture within organisations (including with young people) / Increasing access to volunteering opportunities for all.
- Recognising and supporting flexible volunteer roles.
- Volunteer recognition, celebrating the work they do and allowing open feedback processes.
- Developing guidelines for policies, procedures, position descriptions etc.
- Identifying and supporting mentoring for new volunteers.
- Succession planning.
- Exploring employee volunteering and corporate volunteering opportunities.
- Exploring ways to share resources, knowledge and training opportunities across volunteering organisations in the community.

As the peak body for volunteering in Tasmania, we are uniquely positioned to engage the wide range of volunteers and VIOs whose insights and buy-in are fundamental to the success of the Volunteering Strategy and Action Plan, however, this work requires dedicated resourcing to coordinate. The additional funding requested here would enable Volunteering Tasmania staff to begin crucial engagement with stakeholders across the state, utilising the wealth of knowledge and expertise that exists within the industry. It would also allow valuable research into the successful implementation and evaluation of strategies and action plans in other jurisdictions, utilising our connections with other volunteering peak bodies throughout Australia.

By working together with all levels of government, the community, not-for-profit, and business sectors, we can implement a Volunteering Strategy and Action Plan that will safeguard a strong and vibrant culture of volunteering in Tasmania into the future.



Volunteers from the Tasmanian Sail Training Association on board the Lady Nelson.

Priority ③: Workforce growth and development

Child and Youth Safe Volunteering Education Program

Three-year funding request for a Child and Youth Safe (CYS) Volunteering Education Program to:

- Employ and resource a CYS Volunteering Education Team, with three Education Officers located around the state, to support Volunteer Involving Organisations (VIOs) implement and embed the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry (CoI) in a volunteering context.
- Community-based training sessions for VIOs across regions.
- Development of volunteer-context-specific child and youth safe volunteering resources.

Program	2025-2026	2026-2027	2027-2028	Total excl GST	Timeframe
Child and Youth Safe Volunteering	\$676,121	\$676,933	\$719,383	\$2,072,437	3 Year funding

Impact:

Targeted support for VIOs adapting to the child and youth safe reforms. Building capacity for the volunteering industry to maintain a robust and sustainable culture of child safety.

Rationale:

The introduction of the Child and Youth Safe Organisations Act (2023) and the implementation of the Commission of Inquiry's (Col) recommendations have brought significant policy and legislative change to Tasmania's volunteering industry. The Commission of Inquiry (Col) made several recommendations applicable to formal volunteers, including adherence to professional conduct policies, mandatory training certification, professional development requirements, and worker screening.⁹

Whilst we fully support the implementation of these measures to enhance the safety and wellbeing of children and young people, such a professionalisation of the volunteer workforce needs to be supported by critical volunteer-enabling infrastructure. VIOs are asking for guidance material and training tailored to the diverse settings in which they operate, and direct support to ensure that they can effectively uphold child safe standards and practices. Failure to build this capacity and capability within the industry risks accelerating the decline in formal volunteering, with a decrease of 11% observed between 2019 to 2023³, and a projected formal volunteer shortfall of 42% by 2029⁴.

Volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations are crucial stakeholders in Tasmania's child and youth safe reforms. As the largest workforce in the state³, Tasmania's volunteer workforce provides critical services to Tasmanian children, young people and families across sectors including education, health, community services, sport, art, conservation, emergency management response and more.

Volunteers play a vital role within government agencies that engage with children and young people. For example, the Department of Health engage nearly 400 volunteer ambulance operatives^{11,12}; the Department for Education, Children and Young People valued volunteer contributions to Libraries Tasmania in 2023 at \$1,573,000¹³; and the Department of Natural Resources and Environment recorded 36,883 volunteer hours with the Parks and Wildlife Service in 2022-23.¹⁴

The Col made specific recommendations regarding the development of professional conduct policies to apply to volunteers involved in health services, youth detention and youth justice facilities, child safety services and out of home care, and education settings. While these measures are essential, their implementation has inadvertently created additional barriers to formal volunteering by failing to provide the necessary volunteer-enabling infrastructure. As a result, some volunteers are stepping back, citing the increased demands—such as worker screening, mandatory training, and reporting requirements—as overly burdensome and stressful. While the Col recommendations focussed primarily on government institutions and agencies, non-government VIOs and groups have also expressed concerns about their capacity to adapt to the reforms.

Of no less importance is the experience of young people as volunteers themselves. Young Tasmanians value volunteering, with the 2023 State of Volunteering Report finding that 72% of Tasmanians between the ages of 15-25 volunteered³. It is crucial that volunteering opportunities remain accessible to young people, as a pathway to employment and a way to develop skills and build connections.

However, many formal VIOs, especially those that are entirely volunteer led, are feeling overwhelmed by the need to adapt their policies and procedures, risk management, and supervisory practices in line with the Col's recommendations. While some VIOs have undertaken significant change, others have responded to the child safe reforms by withdrawing opportunities for children and young people to participate in volunteering or by ceasing the delivery of programs and activities for children and young people. With limited resourcing and support, others have continued to operate without making the necessary changes to safeguard children and young people from harm. This highlights the urgent need to provide Tasmania's volunteering industry with targeted support to ensure that all VIOs can create safe and structured environments that protect children and young people while supporting their participation in and access to the benefits of volunteering.

As a known and trusted peak body, Volunteering Tasmania is ideally placed to provide guidance and support to VIOs regarding these reforms, and indeed many members have already reached out to us. However, Volunteering Tasmania currently lacks the resourcing required to provide the informed,

tailored support needed by the volunteering industry. As these reforms continue to progress, it is critical that we increase our capacity to offer this support to the volunteering industry.

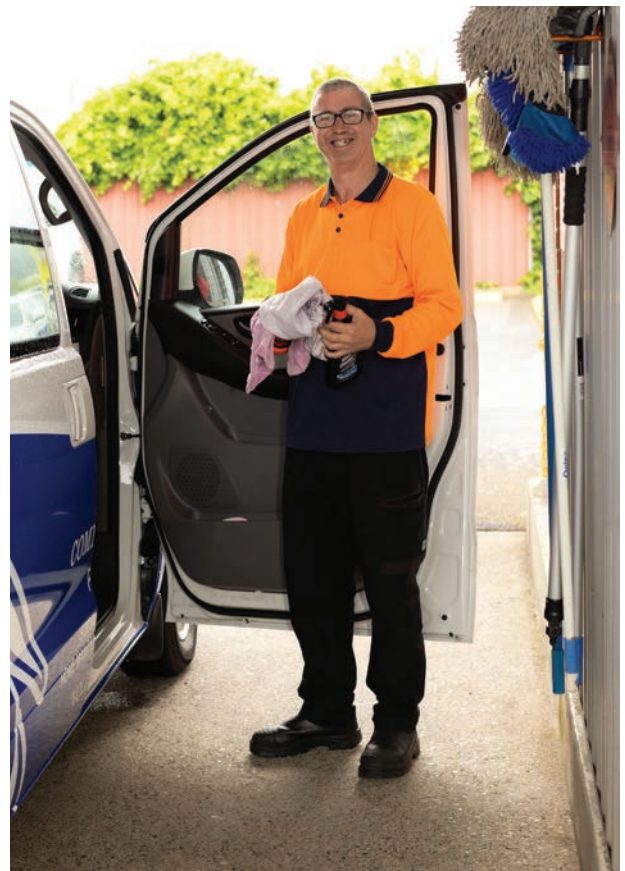
Funding for community-based Education Officers and a Program Manager would enable Volunteering Tasmania to provide dedicated support to VIOs as they adapt to the child and youth safe reforms and build sustainable child-safe cultures, without creating further barriers to formal volunteering. It offers a pragmatic approach to increase the capabilities of VIOs to safely involve children and young people in their activities.

VIOs are currently taking varied approaches to risk assessment and management. While a risk proportionate approach is applicable, it must also be well-informed so that VIOs, volunteers, and the community members they engage with feel confident and capable in assessing, mitigating and managing risk. Beyond their legal obligations, many VIOs and groups have experienced high levels of uncertainty about how to safeguard children and young people, with limited resources, and in a way that supports their volunteers.

Whilst the Office of the Independent Regulator (OIR)¹⁰ is a valuable resource supporting a broad range of organisations to meet their obligations, we are hearing that VIOs are finding it difficult to access the practical support they need from the lens of best-practice volunteer involvement. We would seek to work closely with the OIR to contextualise resources to the unique needs of the volunteering industry. By providing tailored support, we aim to ensure that volunteering remains an accessible and safe way for children and young people to gain skills, build connections, and participate in their communities.

"Current volunteers and new members have literally sighed at another layer to the already administrative process of becoming a volunteer. Some making it clear perhaps this may cause them to review their interest..."

– TASMANIAN VOLUNTEER INVOLVING ORGANISATION



A home maintenance volunteer with Mersey Community Care.



Volunteer Connect Service volunteer with session participants.

Priority **4**: Supporting accessible formal volunteering opportunities

Expansion of the Volunteer Connect Service

Four-year funding for the sustainability and growth of the Volunteer Connect Service. This would allow Volunteering Tasmania to:

- Employ a Volunteer Connect Service Coordinator to recruit, onboard, train and support six statewide Volunteer Connectors engaged by Volunteering Tasmania.
- Reimburse the Volunteer Connectors for out-of-pocket expenses.
- Expand the reach of the Volunteer Connect Service throughout diverse communities across the state.

Longer term five-year funding is preferred to achieve greater outcomes.

Program	2025-2026	2026-2027	2027-2028	2028-2029	2029-2030	Total excl GST	Timeframe
Volunteer Connect Service	\$308,550	\$273,652	\$303,553	\$300,335	\$327,328	\$1,513,418	5 Year funding
						\$1,186,090	4 Year funding

Impact:

Supporting pathways and connections for community members to find and access formal volunteering opportunities that meet their needs and motivations.

Increasing community participation and promoting equitable access to the benefits of volunteering.

Rationale:

Tasmanian volunteer-involving organisations (VIOs) consistently tell us that they are struggling to recruit and retain formal volunteers, while individuals often tell us they have been unable to find a suitable formal volunteer position. This disconnect between the motivation to volunteer and the pathway to a formal volunteer role is starkly highlighted by the decline in formal volunteer rates from 62% in 2019 to 51% in 2023³. The 2023 State of Volunteering Report found that not knowing how to volunteer/not being asked was one of the biggest barriers identified by non-volunteers, second to lack of time³. Everyone should, but not everyone has, equal access to volunteering and the benefits that accompany it.

In response to requests for support from community members and VIOs, the Volunteer Connect Service model supports individuals to access meaningful community-based formal volunteering opportunities. The Volunteer Connect Service provides direct support by making connections across community networks. The service works with individuals and organisations to identify opportunities that are appropriate to their skills, needs, and motivations.

Since its inception in March 2023, the Volunteer Connect Service has supported 111 people to engage with formal volunteering roles that meet their needs and provide meaningful community benefit. Connecting individuals with suitable roles is often only the first step – Volunteer Connectors are able to provide one-to-one support with the legislative and technical difficulties that can stall people on their journey to volunteering. This can take the form of helping with online application and onboarding processes, explaining and supporting RWVP and police check requirements, or printing documents. The current service has supported community members to navigate these and many more barriers that might otherwise have prevented their participation in volunteering, such as digital access and literacy, social and cultural exclusion, lack of confidence and personal connections.

Tasmania is one of two jurisdictions¹⁵ that does not have a network of volunteer resource centres or volunteer support organisations in place. These centres are designed to provide information and resources to support individuals to make informed choices about how, where and when they would like to volunteer. Volunteering Tasmania's Volunteer Connect Service could bridge this critical gap.

The current service supports community members to navigate varied experiences to access meaningful and safe ways to engage with and contribute to their communities through volunteering. Yet greater resourcing is required to extend the reach of the Volunteer Connect Service and provide a community-based support network equivalent to that funded at a federal and/or state-level in other jurisdictions through volunteer resource centres.

The Volunteer Connect Service is currently managed by Volunteering Tasmania paid staff, with direct service provision delivered by one volunteer staff member who is available for half a day, once a week, based from Hobart. Capacity limitations in recruiting, inducting, training, supporting, managing, and reimbursing additional volunteers have prevented Volunteering Tasmania from actively growing or promoting the service.

With expansion to a paid coordinator role and a team of community-hosted volunteers throughout the state, Volunteering Tasmania would be equipped to extend the reach of this important service. Funding would be required for a paid coordinator position and the resources to reimburse and effectively support Volunteer Connectors with continued training and development, in line with the National Standards for Volunteer Involvement². We would be seeking to strengthen our links with local community organisations, providing the resources needed for them to host Volunteer Connectors.

With this increased capacity to work proactively with community partners across the state, the Volunteer Connect Service could more effectively support the sustainable delivery of essential programs and services provided by volunteers, as well as increasing the social and economic participation of individuals through volunteering.

The sustainable expansion of the Volunteer Connect Service is both a practical and feasible intervention to increase community participation and promote equitable access to the benefits of volunteering. It is a measure to increase access and inclusion, and support the sustainable delivery of programs and services provided by volunteers across the state. This expansion can only be achieved with appropriate investment in the reimbursement, training and management of Volunteer Connect Service staff and volunteers.

"It's not as easy as I thought it would be. I thought oh yeah, I'll just ring up and be able to get volunteer work easily but that's just not the case."

– A VOLUNTEER CONNECT SERVICE USER



Participants at a Volunteer Connect group session.



Volunteers from healthcare and emergency response organisations, finalists for the Individual Impact Award at the 2024 Tasmanian Volunteering Awards. *Photographer Jillian Mundy*

Priority **5**: Continue and boost Emergency Volunteering Community Response to Extreme Weather (EV CREW)

Four-year funding to continue the Emergency Volunteering Community Response to Extreme Weather (EV CREW) and boost its capacity to support community recovery efforts and spontaneous volunteer management.

Longer term five-year funding is preferred to achieve greater outcomes.

- Employ a Program Coordinator to boost the outcomes of the program with Spontaneous Volunteer Management Training: consultation, development and delivery.

Program	2025-2026	2026-2027	2027-2028	2028-2029	2029-2030	Total excl GST	Timeframe
EVCREW / Spontaneous Volunteer Management	\$ 211,251	\$207,230	\$219,251	\$224,828	\$232,284	1,094,844	5 Year funding
						\$862,560	4 Year funding

Impact:

Expand the database of willing volunteers to support response and recovery efforts following an extreme weather event. Boost the effectiveness of the EV CREW program through best practice spontaneous volunteer management training, resources and support.

Rationale:

Current funding for EV CREW ends on 30 June 2025. The current short-term, minimal funding arrangement presents substantial challenges to boost the effectiveness of the program. It does not enable evolution of the program, in the context of a changing climate and the increasing frequency and severity of weather events. In this regard, Volunteering Tasmania supports TasCOSS's submission that minimum five-year funding contracts would provide certainty for community organisations to, among other things, invest and innovate.

In times of crisis, Tasmanians have always rallied to support one another through disaster, emergency, and extreme events. Volunteering Tasmania proudly facilitates EV CREW, connecting volunteers and their skills to people, places and organisations who need it most. The program aims to empower Councils to prepare, respond, and recover from extreme weather events.

EV CREW currently has over 100 registered volunteers to support emergency response and recovery in Tasmania. Additional resources will help to build volunteer capacity and keep volunteers connected to the program, ensuring they can be called on quickly following an extreme weather event.

Tasmania has faced some extreme climate weather events over recent years, including bushfires, flooding, heatwaves and drought.¹⁷ EV CREW was activated in 2017 when Hobart flooded, in the 2019 Huon Valley Fires, in 2020 in response to COVID-19 and was on-call for the 2022 Deloraine Floods.

Tasmania's emergency response faces a range of challenges, including a decline in formal volunteering and climate impacts. There are opportunities to contemporise EV CREW and ensure it better serves evolving needs. The effectiveness of the EV CREW program can be enhanced with a boost to funding to support best practice spontaneous volunteer management training, resources and support.

Research indicates that while spontaneous volunteers provide the critical surge capacity that is essential in disaster response and clean-up, without appropriate planning, coordination and management, spontaneous volunteerism can represent significant challenges to emergency management.¹⁸ While best practice coordination and management of spontaneous volunteers is required to mitigate safety risks, burn-out and vicarious trauma, we consider that best practice training and support, having regard to the National Standards for Volunteer Involvement, would greatly enhance the emergency response.

EV CREW funding currently supports Volunteering Tasmania to:

- ✓ Maintain the EVCREW database for disaster preparedness and response
- ✓ Develop and deliver public campaigns to engage more volunteers in the program
- ✓ Facilitate access to the EV CREW volunteer database for registered councils
- ✓ Participate in regional recovery committees to ensure a voice for the volunteering industry is present.

Increased funding, and stability of longer-term funding, would allow Volunteering Tasmania to continue its current activities and boost EV CREW outcomes through a range of new activities.

The new activities, outlined below, would be undertaken by a new Program Coordinator:

- ➔ Develop and deliver best practice spontaneous volunteer management training, resources and tools to partner organisations
- ➔ Lead consultation with the emergency response and recovery volunteering ecosystem to better understand and support best practice emergency volunteering systems:
 - ❑ Consult on training needs, challenges, risks, and opportunities associated with the EV CREW program fostering a co-design approach to spontaneous helping, in keeping with the National Strategy for Volunteering and the Spontaneous Volunteer Strategy^{7,18}
 - ❑ Consult with EV CREW database volunteers about the needs, challenges, supports and opportunities associated with the EV CREW program
 - ❑ Engage with and learn from other State and Territory Volunteering Peak Bodies around Australia to enhance the Tasmanian EV CREW program
 - ❑ Facilitate a network of stakeholders to share information and resources on emergency volunteer management and learn from each other.



A volunteer at a climate action community event.

References

- 1 Volunteering Australia (2022), Common Languages Guide, <https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/wp-content/uploads/Common-Languages-Guide-2022-FINAL.pdf> accessed 12 December 2024.
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