



**volunteering**  
TASMANIA



# Volunteering: Investing in Tasmania's largest workforce now and into the future

Budget Priority Submission 2024-25

[volunteeringtas.org.au](https://volunteeringtas.org.au)

# About us

As the peak body for volunteering in 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 pay respect to elders past and present and recognise their deep history and continuing connections with our shared country, culture, and community.

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 297,000 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.

# Introduction

The volunteering industry in Tasmania is facing unprecedented challenges, intensified by a persistent deficit in the infrastructure essential for its sustainability. Our 2024-25 budget priority submission presents the intersecting solutions to the intricate and compounding issues Tasmania's volunteering industry faces. This submission is grounded in the experiences of our members and the communities and organisations we collaborate with, and is underpinned by consultation and evidence-based research.

Central to our advocacy is a call for strategic investment in critical volunteer-enabling infrastructure, focusing on industry leadership and sustainability. This targeted approach aims to propel workforce growth and development, foster the future of volunteering, and champion community-led, place-based volunteering initiatives.

The initiatives undertaken by Volunteering Tasmania are guided by a comprehensive understanding derived from global, national, and local evidence-based policies and research. This submission is informed by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and the National Strategy for Volunteering 2023-2033.

Marking three decades of dedicated service to the volunteering industry this year, Volunteering Tasmania remains as relevant as ever, with demand for expert support and programs steadily rising. The increased need reflects the compounding impact of inadequate funding, rising costs of living and operations and high interest rates, negatively impacting volunteers and Tasmania's volunteering industry.

We reflect with pride on our role in serving the community, and marvel at the change we have seen in the industry over the past 30 years. We remain steadfast in our commitment to continue serving Tasmania's volunteers and volunteering industry into the future.



Nancy is a volunteer with the Migrant Resource Centre North.

## Glossary<sup>1</sup>

- **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 structure 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.
- **Corporate volunteering:** Where paid staff from a company or business engage in unpaid work for a volunteer involving organisation for a wider societal benefit, and for the benefit of the volunteer and the business.
- **Spontaneous volunteering:** 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.



Hans volunteers his time at the Kingston Library to provide IT support to library patrons.

## What are we asking for?

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

### Peak body funding

#### Ask:

\$4,914,067 in peak body funding over five-years with appropriate indexation, which will include:

- › Tasmanian Volunteering Awards
- › Safeguarding Volunteering Project
- › Sustainable five-year contracts, with Results-Based Accountability Framework

### Program: Tasmanian Volunteering Conference

#### Ask:

\$100,000 allocation over five years to support a biennial state conference for the volunteering industry.

### Program: Professionalisation of volunteer management

#### Ask:

\$207,000, one-year funding to scope and develop a relationship with an established Tasmanian registered training organisation (RTO) to create accredited training and development opportunities for volunteer managers. This would be conducted in partnership with Skills Tasmania.

## **Program: Accessible and innovative volunteering**

### **Ask:**

\$632,977, three-year funding for sustainability and growth of the volunteer referral service.

## **Program: Youth Volunteer Army**

### **Ask:**

\$683,935, three-year funding for the continuation of the Youth Volunteer Army program to support Tasmania's 24,500 secondary school students each year to access and benefit from volunteering.

## **Program: Corporate volunteering**

### **Ask:**

\$572,400, two-year funding to develop and pilot a best practice corporate volunteering program in Tasmania.

## **Commitment: Tasmanian Volunteering Strategy**

### **Ask:**

Development and implementation of a State Volunteering Strategy and Action Plan. The Tasmanian Government will commit to the resourcing and development of a state strategy and action plan, in consultation with Volunteering Tasmania and the volunteering industry.

## **Commitment: Free registration to Working with Vulnerable People for volunteers**

### **Ask:**

Removal of the outward costs for Working with Vulnerable People (WWVP) volunteer registration.



Volunteers at Gould's Lagoon Sanctuary in Granton.

## Background

Volunteering forms Tasmania's largest industry in terms of economic, social and community benefit and is driven by the largest cross-sector workforce in the state.<sup>2</sup> At 297,000<sup>3</sup> people, Tasmania's volunteer workforce is comparable in size to the state's paid workforce of 293,000.<sup>4</sup>

Volunteering is an economic multiplier. For every dollar invested in the volunteering industry, \$3.50 is returned in social, cultural and economic benefit. Volunteering has been estimated to bring \$4 billion of benefit to the state, with \$2.9 billion being the conservative cost equivalent of wage replacement for the contributions made by volunteers.<sup>5</sup>

Tasmania is built and sustained upon the goodwill of people who give their time, where they can, to matters they care about. Volunteers contribute their time across all aspects of community life. They provide food relief, mental health support, care for injured wildlife and help to increase adult literacy outcomes. They transport medical equipment, enable major cultural and sporting events, respond to disasters, and form critical points of connection between business and community. In many cases, the contributions of volunteers are crucial to the survival of the sectors they volunteer in.

Despite Tasmania's strong volunteering culture, formal volunteer participation is in decline.<sup>6</sup> Without immediate and strategic investment in the systems and structures that support the volunteer workforce, it is expected by 2029, that there will be a 42% gap between the demand for and supply of volunteers in Tasmania.<sup>7</sup> Yet the volunteer workforce continues to be viewed as an infinite, ever-available resource. This tension is exacerbated by the minimisation, and at times, invisibilisation of volunteers in public policy and workforce strategies that depend on a sustained volunteer presence.

Ministerial responsibility for volunteering has historically been placed with the Minister with responsibility for community services. Yet given the size, scope, and cross-sector nature of Tasmania's volunteer workforce, all Tasmanian ministerial portfolios hold a dependence on volunteers. Without a Minister for Volunteering, responsibility for the industry is split across government. As a result, the volunteering workforce is not consistently considered in the



Anne (left, alongside Volunteering Tasmania CEO Shirleyann and manager Al) is a volunteer with Gran's Van in Devonport.

development of public policy. This results in policy that either overlooks volunteering entirely or inadequately addresses its unique challenges. Understanding the ways that volunteering supports and is affected by key government and socio-political priorities, requires a comprehensive approach to developing volunteer-enabling infrastructure, to curb the declining trend in formal volunteer participation.

A comparison of 2020 ABS data and the 2022 Volunteering in Australia research indicates that informal volunteer participation has increased as formal volunteer participation has declined.<sup>8</sup> In 2022, approximately one quarter of Australians (26.7 per cent) had participated in formal volunteering and just under half (46.5 per cent) had participated in informal volunteering.<sup>9</sup> During the COVID-19 response, Tasmania experienced a sudden rise in informal volunteering, as formal volunteers were obliged to meet increasing compliance and regulation requirements; were stood down in great number; and who found informal volunteering opportunities within their highly mobilised local communities.<sup>10</sup> While COVID-19 shone a light on a declining volunteer workforce, research demonstrates that formal volunteer participation has been decreasing for years, exacerbated by a chronic systemic lack of understanding, recognition, representation, and resourcing in public policy.<sup>11</sup>

One of legacies of the COVID-19 pandemic has been a reconsideration of personal priorities, and an opportunity to engage with work, both paid and unpaid differently. Unlike the paid workforce, the volunteer workforce is primarily motivated by passion and purpose, rather than by financial incentive. Volunteers, therefore, do not necessarily require formalised structures to find meaning in their voluntary work, particularly where they have access to purposeful, informal volunteering opportunities in their communities. Empowering people to shape the communities they want to live in is a defining feature of informal volunteering. Yet there is a tension for government in determining how to respond to and support community-led initiatives that do not hinder the agency and innovation of informal volunteers, and that also maintain government functions and responsibilities.

Volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations (VIOs) are navigating increasing social, economic, and geographic challenges. As costs of living and operations rise, so too does community need for the services and supports delivered by volunteers. While the reliance on volunteers to fill critical systems gaps and workforce shortages has increased, resourcing of the best practice infrastructure required to engage, manage and retain these formal volunteers has not. Without volunteer-enabling infrastructure, VIOs have been unable to effectively dismantle the barriers to formal volunteer participation as identified by their volunteers. This includes a lack of organisational flexibility; increased regulatory requirements without commensurate funding; an absence of volunteer managers; limited access to the resources



Volunteers weeding at Gould's Lagoon Sanctuary in Granton.

required by volunteers to perform their roles; financial burden being carried by volunteers and VIOs; and inappropriate volunteer positions.

These barriers to formal volunteer participation have been perpetuated by the pervasive lack of understanding, representation and legitimacy surrounding the volunteer workforce and its enabling infrastructure in public policy and funding contracts. While volunteering is associated with the provision of free labour, only the time given is free. Volunteer labour is instead accompanied by significant administrative and management costs, often absorbed by underfunded VIOs. As such, Tasmania's volunteering industry has been hindered by low investment in capacity and capability-building initiatives. For Tasmania's volunteer workforce to thrive, funding must be allocated to account for the true cost of enabling infrastructure.<sup>12</sup>

With 83% of Australian VIOs indicating that they need more volunteers,<sup>13</sup> and a "long-term trend of declining rates of formal volunteering, the future of volunteering relies on a reformed approach to volunteer involvement."<sup>14</sup>

**"Volunteerism strengthens civic engagement, safeguards social inclusion, deepens solidarity and solidifies ownership of development results."<sup>15</sup>**





Volunteers sharing a laugh with a resident at Korongee Dementia Village.

## Industry leadership and sustainability

### Peak body funding

#### Ask:

\$4,914,067 in peak body funding over five-years with appropriate indexation, which will include:

- > Tasmanian Volunteering Awards
- > Safeguarding Volunteering Project
- > Sustainable five-year contracts, with results-based accountability.

### Tasmanian Volunteering Conference

#### Ask:

\$100,000 allocation over five years to support a biennial state conference for the volunteering industry.

#### Impact:

Volunteering Tasmania will strategically foster and advance the volunteering workforce by consistently engaging in advocacy and policy development and ensuring the ongoing quality and relevance of our sector development programs.

#### Rationale:

Volunteering Tasmania has a long history of providing volunteer-enabling infrastructure, industry leadership and development to support and build the capacity of Tasmania's volunteering industry and workforce.



Participants at the 2022 Tasmanian Volunteering Conference.

There is a significant gap between the funding allocated to Volunteering Tasmania by the Tasmanian Government, and the funding required to carry out peak body functions of advocacy, policy analysis and advice, research, membership engagement, and sector development. The funding allocated to Volunteering Tasmania as the peak body of the state's largest workforce reflects the lack of legitimacy, recognition and understanding that confronts this critical industry and its enabling infrastructure.

Each year, Volunteering Tasmania has organised, coordinated and facilitated the Tasmanian Volunteering Conference and the Tasmanian Volunteering Awards. The conference offers diverse industry stakeholders an opportunity to come together to develop and share knowledge and resources, to expand their networks and to build capacity within the industry. The awards celebrate the contributions and impacts made by individual volunteers, as well as volunteer groups and organisations to continue to encourage and inspire a culture of volunteering across the state. Both events are critical to support the sustainability of the industry, to model best-practice, and to resource the industry to respond to the challenges of the future. Yet, these high-profile, impactful, industry events have historically been delivered at a financial cost to Volunteering Tasmania. While the awards are underfunded, the conference does not receive a funding allocation from state government and Volunteering Tasmania relies on sponsorship and reserve funds to deliver these events. Without appropriate funding, Volunteering Tasmania will be unable to provide these important sector development opportunities into the future, limiting both the public profile and professional development opportunities available to the industry.

### **Sector development participant feedback**

"All the topics were fantastic and got me to think about how I can drive and support better organisational outcomes."

– 2022 TASMANIAN VOLUNTEERING CONFERENCE ATTENDEE

Across local and state government, there has been a growing interest to shift “traditional ways of working from ‘doing policy and programs for, or to, people’ towards partnering with, enabling and empowering communities.” The Department of Premier and Cabinet has expressed an interest in exploring opportunities to provide whole of government guidance about the role and value of community-led, place-based work in Tasmania.<sup>16</sup> This work is, however, dependent on the growth of the volunteer workforce and the infrastructure that supports it.

Given the scale of the volunteering industry, Volunteering Tasmania is required to provide policy input to an extensive and growing number of public consultations. In order to best represent the voices of Tasmania's vast volunteer workforce, we rely on our partnerships with community and our service delivery work to understand and advocate for the unique and complex needs of the industry.

For the last five years, Volunteering Tasmania has been working with local governments across the state to develop place-based, community-led 'safeguarding volunteering' strategies that support connected and accessible volunteering within communities. To date, Volunteering Tasmania has worked alongside eight councils and their constituents to co-design local community-led volunteering strategies that respond to Tasmania's structurally declining formal volunteer workforce, creating a stronger and more sustainable local future of volunteering.

To mitigate the decline in the formal volunteer workforce, investment must be made in community-led, place-based initiatives that strengthen local volunteer workforces. In June 2024, the Safeguarding Volunteering Project funding will have come to term. The volunteering strategies developed through this project have been described as vehicles for community empowerment, bringing the voices of community members and councils together to identify shared priorities and to engage in collective problem solving. It is important that funding is provided to continue this critical work. While this project has supported significant and positive impacts across the state, short term funding contracts limit the flexibility of service delivery and impact the ability to foster long term change.

The Honourable Jeremy Rockliff MP, Premier of Tasmania, has publicly committed to transition the community services industry to five-year funding contracts, and to introduce an outcomes framework for commissioning community services and monitoring progress.<sup>18</sup> These measures are welcomed. They will enable more effective service planning and provide a greater level of certainty about the future of the industry. As such, Volunteering Tasmania is seeking sustainable, secure, and continuous peak body funding with adequate indexation provisions. This is aligned with the 70% WPI/30% CPI formula, plus superannuation guarantee recommended by TasCOSS to state-funded community organisations.<sup>19</sup>

Volunteering Tasmania was a recipient of the Tasmanian Government's indexation 'lift', allocated to select community services organisations through the 2023-24 state budget. While welcome, this measure has done little to mitigate against rising costs of operations. The lengthy funding review, without assurances of appropriate indexation proposed alongside the 2024-25 state budget, raises significant concerns about the future of Tasmania's volunteering industry. Cross-sector members and key stakeholders have consistently informed us of the need to access key initiatives delivered by Volunteering Tasmania, to safeguard the future of Tasmania's volunteering industry. Yet this critical leadership can only be delivered through the provision of consistent and sustainable peak body funding. Applying adequate indexation to all Volunteering Tasmania funding contracts will ensure that Volunteering Tasmania is well positioned to respond to community, industry and government need surrounding the future of the volunteering industry.

**“The sustainability of volunteering relies on valuing and supporting volunteering as inherently beneficial for people and communities.”<sup>17</sup>**

**“The development of a community volunteering strategy is a vital part of empowering (all) communities. We extend our gratitude for this service (Volunteering Tasmania Safeguarding program).”**

– SAFEGUARDING VOLUNTEERING COUNCIL PARTICIPANT



Some of the winners at the 2023 Tasmanian Volunteering Awards ceremony.

# Workforce growth and development

## Program: Professionalisation of volunteer management

### Ask:

\$207,000, one-year funding to scope and develop a relationship with an established Tasmanian registered training organisation (RTO) to create accredited training and development opportunities for volunteer managers. This would be conducted in partnership with Skills Tasmania.

This funding will support Volunteering Tasmania to work with the volunteering workforce in Tasmania to:

- › Find and partner with a Tasmanian-based RTO that can deliver accessible and accredited volunteer management training.
- › Work with the RTO to develop and contextualise training which supports the delivery of best practice, accredited volunteer management training that is locally applicable and valuable to the Tasmanian volunteering industry.

### Impact:

Those currently working as or considering a career in volunteer management have clear, pathways to access the training and education required to support sustainable volunteer programs. For greatest impact, Volunteering Tasmania will be looking for subsidisation of this training, once it has been developed.

## Rationale:

Leadership and management play a critical role in the sustainability of the formal volunteer workforce. While evidence attests to the impact that the quality of leadership has upon volunteer motivation, retention, engagement, performance, and satisfaction,<sup>20,21</sup> minimal opportunities exist for volunteer managers to access the skills, training and development opportunities required to perform their roles comfortably and confidently. As such, effective training programs and development pathways are required to equip leaders with the skills and knowledge to better support their volunteers and communities.<sup>22</sup>

Positive work experiences, paid or unpaid, depend largely on the presence of good leadership and management. While the paid workforce invests significantly in the development of management and leadership capability, the same cannot be said for the volunteer workforce.<sup>23</sup> Research suggests that leading volunteers is more challenging than leading a paid workforce.<sup>24</sup> Volunteer managers navigate distinctly different tasks and responsibilities from managers of paid employees that relate to the complex policy and legislative environment surrounding volunteer engagement.<sup>25</sup> Unlike the paid workforce, volunteers are not incentivised by financial motivations, requiring volunteer managers to engage with a complex set of motivations related to purpose, values, and relationship in order to retain their volunteers.<sup>26</sup>

**Volunteer leaders have noted “a general lack of management skills within their organisations and a lack of specialised training opportunities for leaders and managers of volunteers.”<sup>27</sup>**

In the paid work context, there is an expectation that at least one human resources professional is required per 100 employees.<sup>28</sup> This does not, however, appear to translate to Tasmania’s volunteer industry, where volunteer managers often have responsibility for upward of 200 volunteers.<sup>29</sup> We are aware in some settings of single volunteer managers who have responsibility for over 1,000 volunteers. “Each volunteer is an individual with all the requirements of any individual employee, from recruitment to induction, training, delegation, scheduling, communication, relationship building, development, and transition.<sup>30</sup>” The resourcing challenges are compounded by the reality that many volunteer managers carry out these duties in a part-time capacity, and while juggling multiple other responsibilities.<sup>31</sup>

Volunteer management requires significant time, skill, and effort to sustain a volunteer workforce, yet as a profession, it is confronted by a pervasive invisibilisation and a considerable lack of recognition, and legitimacy. It is a role that is often misunderstood and often inaccurately likened to the role of a human resources or administrative professional.<sup>32</sup> With no clear career pathways, minimal training and development opportunities, and no Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Operations code,<sup>33</sup> Tasmanian volunteer managers often fall into volunteer management without the support or opportunities required to perform their roles comfortably.<sup>34</sup> Efforts have been made to professionalise volunteer management nationally through the National Standards for Volunteer Involvement<sup>35</sup> but professionalisation also requires the establishment of identified career pathways through the delivery of accredited training and development opportunities.

The Tasmanian Government relies heavily on the volunteer workforce to deliver essential services and meet critical workforce shortages across industries. Some of these roles expose volunteers to high levels of physical and/or psychosocial stress.<sup>36</sup> A lack of specialised training, resource limitations and the highly discretionary nature of volunteer participation, can see volunteer managers struggle to provide the level of tailored support required to retain volunteers during difficult times.

An effective skills, training and workforce development system has been a key priority for the Tasmanian Government to deliver its vision for systems that are “accessible, job-focused and responsive.”<sup>37</sup> While Skills Tasmania has maintained a strong focus on the development of the paid workforce, little attention has been paid to the skills, training, development, and infrastructure requirements of Tasmania’s critical unpaid workforce. This is represented in the Ministerial Priorities for the Training and Workforce Development System,<sup>38</sup> which neglects the needs of the unpaid workforce and minimises the growth, development and economic benefits enabled by the volunteering industry.

Tasmania’s volunteer workforce has identified significant gaps in the training and development requirements of volunteer managers. Available courses focus on the operational aspects of employee management, rather than those specific to the unique volunteering context. Generic leadership programs are not relevant or suitable and do not reflect the nuances of engaging and supporting volunteers.<sup>39</sup> In recognising this, the Centre for Volunteering New South Wales, has successfully modelled the delivery of a nationally recognised Certificate IV in Coordination of Volunteer Programs,<sup>40</sup> tailored to the needs of the NSW volunteering industry.

The seed funding sought through this submission would enable Volunteering Tasmania to consult with the Tasmanian volunteering industry and Skills Tasmania to scope the need, development, and delivery of certified volunteer management training, in partnership with a Tasmanian RTO. This strategic investment in volunteer leadership training and development is critical to address the gaps, challenges and risks for community, industry and government stakeholders.



Members of the Friends of Lilloo Penguins.



Volunteering Tasmania's southern-based team met with the 2023 Tasmania Australian of the Year award recipients.

## The future of volunteering

### Program: Accessible and innovative volunteering

#### Ask:

\$632,977, three-year funding for sustainability and growth of the volunteer referral service.

This funding would allow Volunteering Tasmania to:

- › Employ a volunteer connect service coordinator to recruit, onboard, train and support volunteer connect service officers within Volunteering Tasmania.
- › Reimburse the volunteer connect service officers for out-of-pocket volunteering expenses.

#### Impact:

Supporting pathways and connections for volunteers to find and access volunteering opportunities that meets their needs, knowledge, skills and capabilities.

#### Rationale:

“As Australian communities evolve, the richness of an increasingly diverse population is reflected in the myriad of ways volunteering takes place. Whether connected by place, time, passion, or interest, volunteers come together to make an individual contribution to a collective effort for the betterment of society.”<sup>41</sup> Despite the motivations, benefits and universal nature of volunteering or community giving, many people are underrepresented in formal volunteering, due to systemic marginalisation and discrimination. “People with English as a second language, young people, and those with lower education, employment and income levels are much less likely to volunteer within an organisation.”<sup>42, 43</sup>

While volunteering can act as a powerful driver of inclusion, it is not immune to the systemic barriers that impede participation across society, where access is often mistaken for ability. Volunteering has a long history of alignment with the charity model and its perpetuation of

exclusionary beliefs, assumptions and practices.<sup>44</sup> In recognising the considerable benefits gained from engaging volunteers with diverse identities, backgrounds, and skill sets, significant work has been undertaken across the volunteering industry to contemporise organisational structures and practices to create safe and accessible volunteering opportunities. Yet with minimal resourcing, VIOs have identified challenges in enacting organisational change that embraces, encourages and celebrates diversity at a systems level.

Everyone should, but not everyone does, have equal access to the benefits of volunteering. In acknowledging systemic inequities, Volunteering Tasmania has responded to requests for support from community members and VIOs by establishing the volunteer connect service (connect service). The connect service was launched in March 2023. Since its inception, support has been provided, connecting 29 individuals with volunteer roles that meet their needs.

## CASE STUDY

Alan\* approached the connect service, unsure about how to get started with volunteering. He knew he would like to volunteer using his photography skills but found online platforms hard to navigate and had been unable to secure a volunteer position by making in-person enquiries.

The connect service was able to support Alan to explore how he would like to volunteer. This involved enquiry about his interests, the time he was able to commit, and the skills and knowledge he would like to offer. The connect service volunteer referred Alan to a hospital to complete a short-term project which required photography skills.

After completing the project with the hospital, Alan returned to the connect service. He is now working with our connect service volunteer to find another fulfilling volunteering opportunity.

Without the connect service, Alan may not have found a volunteer position that suited his interests and needs, and as a result, may have disengaged from volunteering entirely. Instead, Alan may well commit months of his time and energy to organisations before moving on, or not, thanks to a face-to-face and supported service to connect him to volunteer opportunities.

*\*not volunteer's real name*

The connect service is managed by Volunteering Tasmania paid staff, with direct service provision delivered by a volunteer staff member who is available for half a day, once a week. Given capacity limitations in recruiting, inducting, training, supporting, managing, and reimbursing additional volunteers, Volunteering Tasmania has been unable to actively grow or promote the connect service.

Tasmania is one of two jurisdictions<sup>45</sup> 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 connect service could bridge this critical gap. The current service supports community members to navigate varied experiences around digital access and literacy, and social and cultural exclusion 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 connect service.



Tasmanians are motivated to provide support for and respond to the needs of their communities in moments of crisis, compassion, and connection, however, formal volunteering is a daunting concept for people facing financial stress.<sup>46</sup> Up-front costs, and a lack of reimbursement for out-of-pocket expenses are significant barriers for community members who wish to volunteer,<sup>47</sup> with hidden costs of volunteering (screening checks, childcare, transport, parking, uniforms, equipment, training, professional development) identified as the largest barrier (27 per cent) to formal volunteer participation.<sup>48</sup> The 2019 State of Volunteering in Tasmania report highlights that individual volunteers spent an annual average of \$991.98 on their volunteering.<sup>49</sup> Of these expenses, volunteers reported being reimbursed an average of \$70.37 (7.1 per cent), and were therefore, out of pocket by about \$921.61. The preliminary 2023 State of Volunteering data suggests that these costs have risen significantly for Tasmanian volunteers with an average monthly cost of \$267 per individual volunteer likely reflecting the current cost of living crisis.<sup>50</sup>

It is essential that Volunteering Tasmania is provided with the funds for a paid coordinator role and resources to reimburse and effectively support volunteer staff. In addition to guidelines about volunteer reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses, the National Standards for Volunteer Involvement also provide direction for best practice in training and management of volunteers.

## **Standard 5: Support and Development**

*5.2 Volunteers knowledge and skill needs relevant to their roles are identified, and training and development opportunities are provided to meet these needs.<sup>51</sup>*

Volunteers of the connect service are required to undertake training and development opportunities to equip them with the skills required to support those accessing the service. These include Aboriginal cultural competency, trauma informed practice, mental health first aid and accidental counsellor training. The cost to provide this external, required training to each volunteer is approximately \$1,225.

## **Standard 1: Leadership and Management**

*The governing body and senior employees lead and promote a positive culture towards volunteering and implement effective management systems to support volunteer involvement.<sup>52</sup>*

This budget priority submission highlights the importance of recognising and investing in volunteer management as a pre-requisite for volunteer satisfaction, safety, performance and retention. It is a role that typically includes “responsibility for recruitment, induction, training, supervision, ongoing support, and recognition.”<sup>53</sup> As with paid employment, formal volunteering doesn’t happen without deliberate, strategic and ongoing investment in leadership and management.<sup>54</sup> To grow the connect service and respond to community, industry and government need, investment must also be made into the coordination and management of this service. This will support Volunteering Tasmania to deliver a service that is grounded in best practice volunteer involvement.

The sustainable expansion of the 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, but it cannot be achieved without appropriate investment in the reimbursement, training and management of connect service volunteers.



Student volunteers from Bayview Secondary College.

# The future of volunteering

## Program: Youth Volunteer Army

### Ask:

\$683,935, three-year funding for the continuation of the Youth Volunteer Army program to support Tasmania's 24,500 secondary school students each year to access and benefit from volunteering.

This would allow Volunteering Tasmania to:

- › Increase staff hours in line with program growth.
- › Explore increased capacity and application of the Youth Volunteer Army volunteer tracking app.
- › Support local and in-person engagement with VIOs and schools.
- › Build capacity of VIOs to engage young people in volunteering.
- › Work with the employment sector through Regional Jobs Hubs to highlight the validity of volunteering in employment ready skills.

### Impact:

Young people are recognised for their volunteering contributions and the skills and knowledge they acquire through these experiences supports their transition from education to employment. VIOs have reduced barriers to engaging with young people as volunteers to enhance their organisations' programs, thereby supporting young people and their skills development.

### Rationale:

Volunteering is a well-established pathway to employment. Where accessible, it is of increased interest to those experiencing exclusion and increased barriers in accessing the labour market.<sup>55</sup> For many young people, volunteering acts as a bridge between secondary school



Student volunteer, Gemma, from Hellyer College.

and employment, providing opportunities for them to utilise and gain new skills to increase their employability.<sup>56</sup> Volunteering is often the first opportunity young people have to access this kind of formal, experiential learning.

85% of employers see volunteer experience as comparable to paid work experience.<sup>57</sup> As such, access to volunteering directly affects life outcomes and holds the potential to increase the employability of Tasmania's secondary and senior secondary students as they transition from education to employment. While the motivations of volunteers vary, young people often cite increased employability as a motivation to volunteer. They see volunteering as a way to develop skills and build connections in areas of interest to them and in ways that are valuable to future employers and tertiary education institutions.

In 2021, Volunteering Tasmania partnered with the Student Volunteer Army in Aotearoa, New Zealand to pilot a youth-based volunteering program that addresses the declining rates of volunteering in Tasmania and highlights the contributions young people make to their communities.

From 2021 to 2024, Volunteering Tasmania partnered with the Tasmanian Government, Tasmanian secondary schools and Tasmania's Regional Jobs Hubs to cultivate a new generation of volunteers by encouraging engagement with volunteering initiatives. This model recognises and assigns value to the diverse ways young people contribute to their communities through formal and informal volunteering. The program has the potential to increase the employability of and employment pathways for Tasmania's 24,500 secondary and senior secondary students.<sup>58</sup>

Through the Youth Volunteer Army, young people:

- › Use a mobile application or online portal to register and log their volunteer hours.
- › Connect every volunteering contribution recorded to one of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. This highlights to the young person that everything they do to help their community, is connected to a global movement of change.
- › Earn volunteer service badges which are presented at school and based on the number of volunteer hours completed.
- › Build a summary of service (CV of volunteering).
- › Use their summary of service to demonstrate their skills and contributions towards the community and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.
- › Gain increased recognition as active contributors to their communities.
- › Build confidence to speak about the transferability of their volunteering experience to potential employers.

## **YOUTH VOLUNTEERING INCREASES EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES**

In December 2022, a Youth Volunteer Army employee from Volunteering Tasmania, conducted a workshop with students at a remote high school.

When asking “Who here volunteers or has volunteered?” a number of students did not raise their hands. After further discussion, one of these students said that they had been volunteering for the last four years with the Tasmanian Fire Service and had volunteered about 100 hours each year. At first the student shrugged off the significance of this contribution to their community but after some time they were able to realise what an incredible effort this was. This student spoke about their dream to be a career firefighter and highlighted how the skills, knowledge, and relationships they’d gained through volunteering could help them achieve this.

In October 2023, the Youth Volunteer Army has:

- › Enrolled sixteen public secondary schools and four Regional Jobs Hubs in the program.
- › Registered 497 students on the Youth Volunteer Army app.
- › Seen students log 15,624 hours of volunteering.

The impacts of this pilot program for young people have been recognised across jurisdictions, with Volunteering South Australia having recently commenced a pilot of the program, and Volunteering Victoria advocating for program implementation in their state.

In June 2024, the Tasmanian Youth Volunteer Army pilot period will have come to term. In the two years the pilot program has been operating, it has supported young people, their communities, and future employers to recognise the strengths, skills, interests, and experiences that young people have exercised, and/or developed through their volunteering. While young people value volunteering and the benefits it provides, young people also cite barriers in accessing formal volunteering opportunities. Expansion of the Youth Volunteer Army funding would enable Volunteering Tasmania to support VIOs to build capacity to engage young volunteers, to manage and respond to risk, and ensure that young people are safe in the volunteer workplace, with policies and practices in place to enable this. As the Tasmanian Government progresses the implementation of the Child and Youth Safe Organisations Framework and the development of the Youth Jobs Strategy, it is essential to invest in and expand this program to enable increased service delivery and greater outcomes for Tasmania’s young people.



Volunteers weeding at Gould's Lagoon Sanctuary in Granton.

# Community-led, place-based volunteering

## Program: Corporate volunteering

### Ask:

\$572,400, two-year funding to develop and pilot a best practice corporate volunteering program in Tasmania.

This will support Volunteering Tasmania to:

- › Design and pilot the corporate volunteering program.
- › Identify opportunities for corporate organisations to engage in the not-for-profit sector and facilitate team-based volunteer sessions.
- › Employ a corporate volunteer program coordinator to continue to support the development and drive the sustainability of the program.

### Impact:

A best-practice volunteering connection service to connect corporate organisations with the not-for-profit sector, that fill skill shortages, increase employee health and wellbeing, and encourage a culture of volunteering.

### Rationale:

Through corporate volunteering, workplaces support their employees on work time to volunteer their knowledge, skills and time through participation in a planned activity for an external not-for-profit or charitable group or organisation.<sup>59</sup>

Data captured by LBG Corporate Citizenship suggests that among their Australian corporate members, 500 FTE staff are available each year, and interested in engaging in corporate volunteering activities, but are not utilised.<sup>60</sup> With an expected gap of 42% between the demand for and supply of Tasmanian volunteers, collaboration between corporate and not-for-profit Tasmania, through a corporate volunteering program, presents a unique opportunity to strengthen the declining formal volunteer workforce.

Growing stakeholder and public expectation has seen the role and responsibility of business change, placing pressure on businesses to demonstrate accountability for their social and environmental impact. Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is no longer just a respected business model, but a consumer demand.<sup>61</sup> As such, corporate volunteering has become a critical and effective mechanism through which businesses demonstrate CSR.<sup>62</sup>

The diverse benefits of corporate volunteering programs are well evidenced for businesses, employees, the not-for-profit sector and the broader community. Many businesses involve their employees in corporate volunteering through CSR programs, increasing their business' reputation as a good corporate citizen, strengthening

internal and external stakeholder relationships with employees and the community sector, and raising employee retention and satisfaction.<sup>63</sup> Employees often express motivation to engage in corporate volunteering programs to create impact and increase meaning in their work, to connect with their peers, and to engage with causes that are valuable to them.<sup>64</sup> For under resourced not-for-profit groups and organisations, corporate volunteering can offer a critical injection of skills, time and effort that would otherwise be inaccessible, such as specialist skills in finance, risk management, governance and human resources.<sup>65</sup>

If well developed and facilitated, the corporate volunteering activity should not only benefit those with direct involvement but will have positive flow-on effects for the broader community.

In 2018, 78% of companies in Australia had a corporate volunteering program, and 15% of employees participated in them. This translated to a donation of over one million hours of corporate volunteer time, an average of 27.5 hours per volunteer.<sup>66</sup> While there is little data to suggest what the Tasmanian corporate volunteering landscape looks like, Volunteering Tasmania receives a significant number of enquiries from corporate and not-for-profit Tasmania seeking support to develop or access corporate volunteering opportunities that align with their business strategies.<sup>67</sup> Corporate Tasmania recognises the positive impacts associated with corporate volunteering, however many have had trouble establishing a corporate volunteering program without a best practice model or access to an identified body to guide this work.<sup>68</sup> While there are numerous examples of highly impactful corporate volunteering programs across the state, they are being delivered in an ad hoc, and highly individualised way, with implications for the delivery of best practice.

In collaboration with the volunteering industry and corporate Tasmania, Volunteering Tasmania will use this funding to scope a corporate volunteering program that provides VIOs with access to corporate skills and knowledges, enhancing VIO operations and activities, while providing meaningful volunteering opportunities to corporate employees. Program design would incorporate the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, supporting corporate Tasmania to create both local and global impact by partnering with VIOs to enhance their CSR.

In a state that has the second highest levels of job mobility<sup>69</sup> and with policy priorities associated with Tasmania's Population Strategy<sup>70</sup>, corporate Tasmania has a significant role to play in future proofing volunteering by supporting skills diversification, social and cultural cohesion, and bolstering Tasmania's declining formal volunteer workforce. It has the unique and enormous potential to "unleash the power of people toward social impact," in a coordinated and supported way.<sup>71</sup>

"...our people wanted to support 'grassroots' organisations that they come across daily. We ended the year at 22.8% (participation rate) which is 171 people (volunteering as part of the corporate volunteer program). Participation is consistently close to 40% of employees. Our view is that providing the option to volunteer and participate in local communities enriches the lives of individuals, shares the skills and talents of our people and brings the rich diversity of our state back to our organisations."

– HYDRO TASMANIA



Volunteering Tasmania team members at the awards ceremony for the 2023 Tasmanian Volunteering Awards.

## Industry leadership and sustainability

### Commitment: Tasmanian Volunteering Strategy

#### Ask:

Development and implementation of a State Volunteering Strategy and Action Plan.

The Tasmanian Government will commit to the resourcing and development of a State Volunteering Strategy and Action Plan, in consultation with Volunteering Tasmania and the volunteering industry.

#### Impact:

Strategic investment into the resourcing and support for volunteering across all sectors within Tasmania.

#### Rationale:

The tendency to simultaneously position volunteering as a solution to structural issues and to minimise a systemic dependency upon its sustainability, is fraught with risk. It romanticises a limiting narrative on volunteering, without resourcing the infrastructure required to deliver safe, accessible, and inclusive volunteering opportunities.<sup>72</sup>

Recognition, representation, and resourcing of volunteering has been disjointed and piecemeal in Tasmania. Historically, the volunteer workforce has not been considered with consistency across public policy development. This has had significant implications for state budget decisions and is demonstrated in the small and varied pockets of funding allocated to VIOs and volunteer related activities in the 2023-24 state budget.<sup>73</sup>

With a declining formal volunteer workforce, and an increased number of informal volunteers, an extensive cross-sector reliance on volunteers and a recognised need across the state for government action, Tasmania needs a state volunteering strategy and action plan. While the National Strategy for Volunteering 2023-2033<sup>74</sup> was published in February 2023, it is intended to provide high-level national guidance. It does not replace the need for jurisdictional volunteering strategies that respond to the specific social, cultural, economic, political, and environmental context of those communities.

To strengthen the volunteer workforce, Tasmania requires political commitment and investment in volunteer-enabling infrastructure that contextualises and localises the National Strategy for Volunteering, while empowering and supporting the development and implementation of community-led, place-based volunteering strategies. A state strategy and action plan would increase understanding, build capacity, and provide decision makers and policy developers with a comprehensive and informed mechanism through which to consider and include volunteering in public policy. It would be informed by consultation with a broad range of stakeholders across the Tasmanian volunteering industry to produce a meaningful piece of policy that understands and targets the challenges and opportunities identified by stakeholders across the industry.

Unlike other jurisdictions,<sup>75</sup> Tasmania is in a unique position to undertake this work. Our distinct geographic position and isolation has given rise to a unique culture of community participation and civic engagement. It is a culture that has been built on volunteering but requires immediate strategic intervention and investment if the Tasmanian Government intends to maintain a reliance upon the unpaid contributions of Tasmanians to the strategic and political priorities of government. It is critical that all levels of government work together with the community, not-for-profit and business sectors to strengthen volunteering infrastructure and to grow the volunteer workforce in order to position Tasmania well to respond to the demands of the future. With a strategic, systemic and place-based approach, we can promote and deliver a strong and vibrant culture of volunteering in Tasmania.



Ambulance volunteer officer Wayne at Bothwell.





A volunteer chatting with a resident at Korongee Dementia Village.

## The future of volunteering

### Commitment: Free Working with Vulnerable People registration for volunteers

#### Ask:

Removal of the outward costs for Working with Vulnerable People (WWVP) volunteer registration.

#### Impact:

Remove a significant barrier to volunteering to support VIOs to increase the safety of vulnerable people.

#### Rationale:

The volunteer workforce plays a key role in the provision of services to Tasmania's children and young people, with nearly 90% of community organisations having engaged volunteers in their workforce.<sup>76</sup> Tasmania is one of only three Australian jurisdictions to charge volunteers for WWVP equivalent registration, and it's the most expensive.<sup>77</sup> Volunteers and VIOs have consistently reported that the financial cost and administrative burden of the WWVP registration is a significant barrier to volunteer recruitment, limiting child and youth safe volunteering to the individuals and organisations who can afford the cost.<sup>78,79</sup>

Through our submission to the 2023-24 state budget community consultation, we urged the Tasmanian Government to absorb the cost of WWVP registration for volunteers to increase the safety of vulnerable Tasmanians and to ensure that best-practice, formal volunteer participation was not limited by cost. This year, while our ask may be the same, the socio-political context and understanding of risk has changed.

Recommendations to the Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings called for the inclusion of volunteers in the code of conduct, to consider the unique and distinct challenges that VIOs experience in adapting to changing regulation, and to resource VIOs appropriately to safeguard children and young people from harm.<sup>80, 81</sup> Volunteering Tasmania is experiencing a significant increase in demand for support from members and the broader volunteering industry as the Child and Youth Safe Organisations Framework (the Framework) comes into effect. Members are identifying gaps where the volunteer workforce has been under-considered and despite high levels of willingness, are experiencing uncertainty about how to meet their obligations and how to afford the financial cost to do so. Without addressing the costs of increased regulation, some VIOs may compromise risk management practices to maintain operations and fill workforce gaps. The associated risks are distinct and compounding in nature, with implications for children and young people as both recipients and providers of volunteer time.

While supportive of structures which increase the safety of children and young people, Tasmania's WWVP system has inadvertently contributed to the decline of Tasmania's formal volunteer workforce. Volunteers contribute to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people in countless ways, yet as the workforce declines, so too does access to the essential services and resources provided by volunteers. This is a significant concern. The cost of WWVP registration should not prevent children, young people and their families from accessing critical volunteer services such as learning support, emergency food relief and volunteer ambulance services.

Volunteering must be safe for volunteers and for the community members they volunteer with. "Ensuring that screening processes, worker checks, and other safeguards that include volunteers are well-resourced and efficient is crucial to effective volunteer engagement."<sup>82</sup> The provision of free WWVP volunteer registration is a tangible action that the Tasmanian Government could take to support the delivery of safe, best-practice volunteering. It is an action of pertinence and has implications for outcomes associated with the Framework.

We acknowledge that the intersections of the Framework and the WWVP system are complex in nature and that the implications of reform for the safety of children, young people and people with disability are broader than the scope of this submission. Yet it is clear, that a small cost to the state should not continue to compromise the safety of children, young people and people with disability. We urge the Tasmanian Government to absorb the cost of WWVP registration for volunteers to ensure that, whether they engage with the paid or unpaid workforce, there are provisions in place to support the rights of vulnerable people to safety.

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