

2023/24



Our VMA Journey

Creating a thriving and inclusive
volunteering culture across Australia.





The seven State and Territory volunteering peak bodies acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea, and community. We pay our respect to Elders past and present.

Funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services.



Australian Government
Department of Social Services

Funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services, the VMA program aims to create a thriving, inclusive and diverse volunteering culture across Australia.

The volunteering peak bodies are proud to partner with the Department of Social Services in the delivery of the program, which aims to deliver services and activities that help build the capacity of volunteering involving organisations and break down barriers to volunteering.

* Please note: Some names in this booklet have been changed to maintain confidentiality.

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A message from the state and territory volunteering peak bodies

We are delighted to present this report, which highlights the impacts, partnerships, and successes of the Volunteer Management Activity (VMA) program. It showcases the evolution of the VMA and the development of place-based, volunteer-centred projects that respond to a changing volunteering ecosystem and address barriers to participation within our communities.

We extend our sincere thanks to the Minister for Social Services, Hon Amanda Rishworth MP, and the Department of Social Services for their support, investment, and ongoing collaboration in volunteering.

We also wish to acknowledge the vital local partnerships in each jurisdiction that make the delivery of the VMA program possible. Our gratitude goes to the organisations that provide critical insights and expertise, and to the volunteers and volunteer managers who are at the heart of our work to build the capacity and capability of volunteering across our beautiful country.



VMA reach and impact

The Volunteer Management Activity (VMA), funded by the Australian Government, seeks to create a vibrant, inclusive, and diverse volunteering culture across Australia. Managed by the Department of Social Services (DSS), the program invests \$40.1 million over five years, distributed through state and territory volunteering peak bodies.

The VMA aims to deliver a consistent and effective national approach to volunteer management, with a particular focus on engaging underrepresented groups. These priority groups include people with disability, First Nations people, newly arrived migrants, vulnerable women, young people (aged 12–18), and unemployed individuals. The program's goal is to ensure access and inclusion in volunteering opportunities, especially in rural and remote areas.

Key objectives

- **Building the capacity of volunteer-involving organisations (VIOs):** The VMA helps VIOs improve volunteer management and broaden their reach by offering online support and resources.
- **Improving access and inclusion:** The VMA works to remove barriers and promote inclusive practices, enhancing access to volunteering for priority groups.
- **Leveraging technology to meet best practice:** The VMA supports best practices in volunteer management through online support, mentoring, and access to resources.
- **Expanding regional reach:** The VMA ensures that volunteer services are accessible in regional, rural, and remote areas, fostering collaboration to share best practices.

Regional differences in VMA delivery

- **South Australia and Northern Territory:** Using a mix of face-to-face and online support, the focus is on effective volunteering practices, increasing volunteer diversity by breaking down barriers, and providing support through volunteer resource centres (VRCs).
- **Queensland:** The emphasis is on using online services to build capacity in VIOs and support engagement with priority groups. Queensland features project partners that are place-based and subject matter experts, leveraging their local knowledge and skills.
- **Victoria:** Victoria has adopted a place-based consortia approach, where multiple organisations collaborate on local initiatives. This includes regional and remote outreach combined with online support and efforts to overcome barriers to volunteering.
- **New South Wales:** The Centre for Volunteering provides online resources and support for VIOs, collaborating with local organisations to enhance volunteer management practices and support inclusion of priority groups.
- **Western Australia:** The focus is on building VIO capacity and supporting priority groups through online services, with an emphasis on collaborating with local organisations and regional outreach.
- **Tasmania:** Tasmania prioritises on breaking down barriers for priority groups, providing capacity-building support for VIOs, and promoting effective volunteer management practices through targeted initiatives and consultations.

The VMA's evolution

The VMA has evolved through extensive reviews and consultations, resulting in a comprehensive framework that addresses challenges through targeted support and capacity building. It now employs specific strategies for online and face-to-face support, as well as place-based activities tailored to meet the unique needs of different regions and priority groups.

While the core objectives remain consistent, each state and territory tailors the program to local needs, focusing on building VIO capacity, supporting priority groups, and improving access to underserved regions. Collaborative efforts across jurisdictions ensure that best practices are shared and resources are used efficiently to achieve the VMA's goals.

Significant progress has been made towards building a robust, inclusive volunteering culture across Australia, and we look forward to continuing this important work in partnership with the Australian Government.

VMA timeline



New VMA framework review

An alliance agreement forms the foundational governance documentation. Procurement framework, supplier agreement and templates are developed.

Performance implementation review

VMA council and working group take part in ThinkPlace performance implementation review. Review insights inform the development of the national performance measurement framework.

National Standards refresh begins

Volunteering Australia, in partnership with Volunteering SA&NT begin the National Standards for Volunteer Involvement refresh.

Barriers to volunteering research commissioned

The University of Canberra coordinated research into the barriers to volunteering for First Nations people, newly arrived migrants, and people with disability. Research was completed 30 June 2023, with key findings set for release in late 2024.

Performance Measurement Framework (PMF) data collection begins

Monthly data collection for the PMF begins to establish a baseline.

VPB roadmap development

VPB roadmap highlights the intersections and synergies between VMA and Volunteering Australia projects, spanning from June 2023 to July 2026.

Tools and resources launch to support refreshed standards

New tools and resources launch to support refreshed standards, including evidence criteria guides, a guide to implementation, and VPB training slides.

MAY 2022

DECEMBER 2022

JANUARY 2023

JULY 2023

AUGUST 2023

FEBRUARY 2024

MARCH 2024

JUNE 2024

2023

2024

Priority group research and environmental scan

States and territories complete map and gap analysis, publishing a national report that identifies barriers for priority groups, as well as VIO challenges and knowledge gaps in engaging priority groups.

VMA style guide development

VMA style guide, templates, and combined logos block developed for use in national VMA work. All resources, templates, communications and other documentation produced under the National Alliance now use this guide.

First national VMA communications pack is released

The first communications pack is distributed to all peaks, it includes VMA key messages and example copy for website, email and social media. Each pack also covers usage guidelines, inclusive stock image libraries, distribution plan and content calendar.

Knowledge Base and resources launched

The Knowledge Base launches to provide a national platform for sharing tools, resources and training. 29 new resources are published, collaboratively developed and approved by all peaks to address gaps and meet best practice.

VIO online accessibility research report published

Survey Matters launches survey to garner insights on VIO online accessibility, capacity and capability. Distributed April–May 2023 to roughly 4,000 organisations, the survey attracted 636 respondents nationally. Key findings released in late August 2023

National Standards for Volunteer Involvement refresh launches

Refreshed standards launch in March 2024. All VPBs are consulted with findings collated by Volunteering Australia and Volunteering SA&NT.

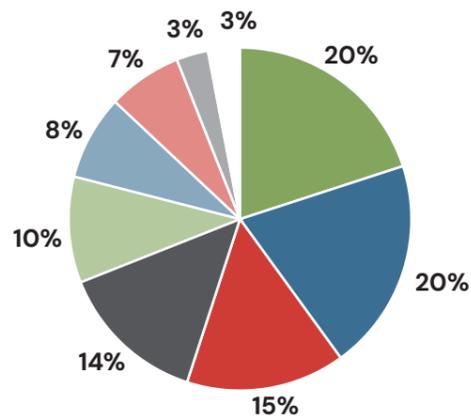


Impact snapshot

The Volunteer Management Activity (VMA) program has led volunteering peak bodies (VPBs) towards a new culture of collaboration. It allows VPBs to share best practices, resources, and address common challenges together, which has already made significant positive impacts across the country. This section illustrates the reach and impact of the VMA program, highlighting its success and engagement across Australia.

VPB collaboration focus areas

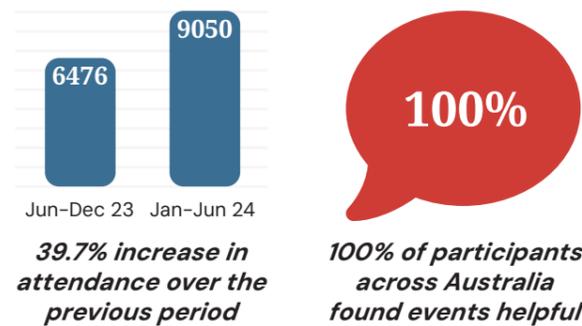
Through the VMA program, volunteering peak bodies work in co-design and collaborative partnerships. Focus areas include best practice, people with disability, newly arrived migrants, First Nations people, youth, unemployed individuals, and vulnerable women.



- Best practice
- Other inclusion
- Disability
- Newly arrived migrants
- Other collaboration
- First Nations peoples
- Youth
- Unemployed
- Vulnerable women

VMA event attendance

We have seen an increase of 39.7% in VMA event attendance over the previous reporting period, with event feedback scores consistently indicating a high satisfaction rate.



Knowledge Base downloads

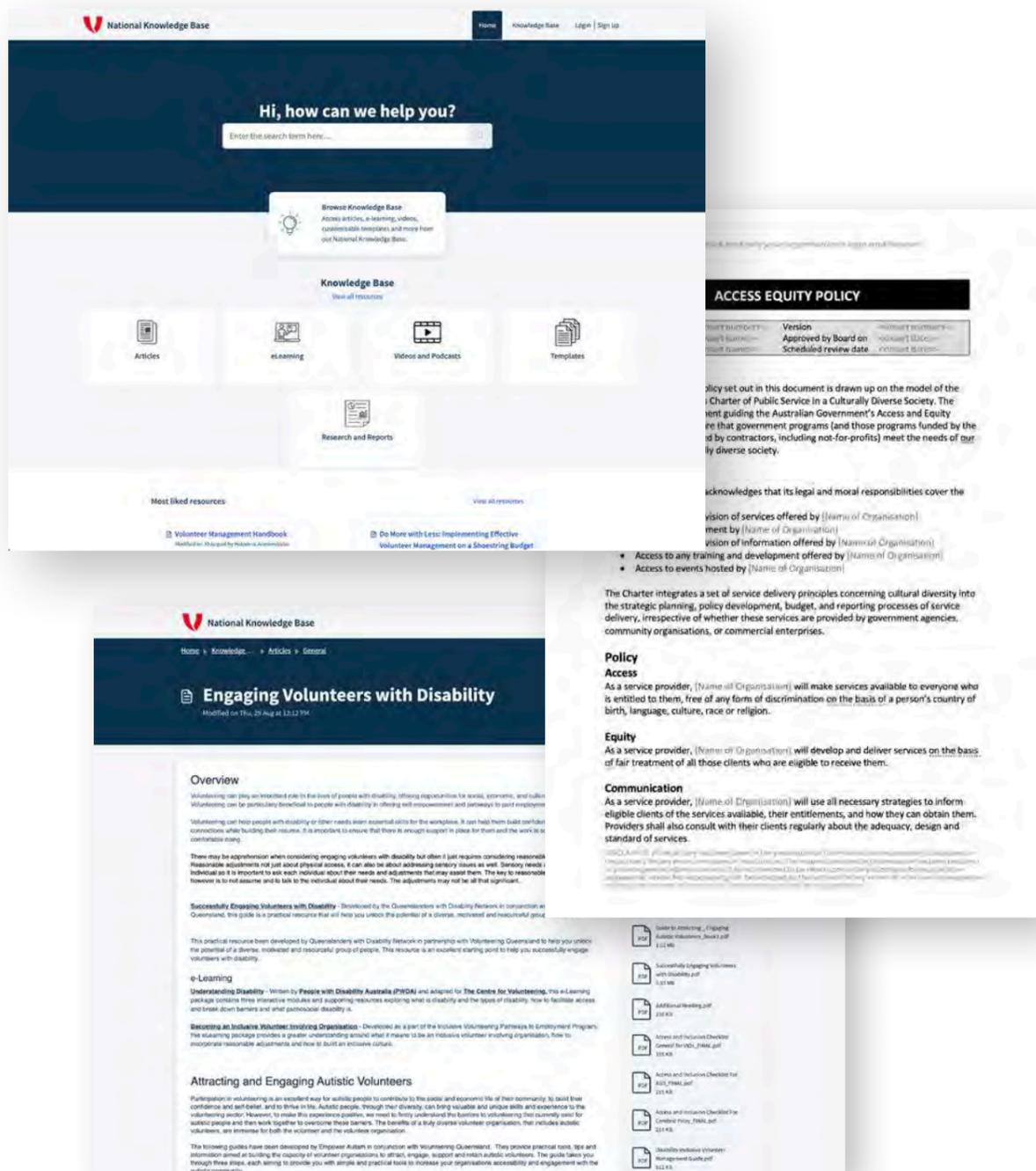
Since the launch of the Knowledge Base in July 2023, there has been a significant uptake of resources, with monthly downloads reaching a peak of 2,974.

Most downloaded Knowledge Base articles: January-June 2024

1. Working with Children Check (WWCC) - NSW
2. Volunteer Management Handbook
3. Do More with Less: Implementing Effective Volunteer Management on a Shoestring Budget
4. Which Country am I on?
5. The National Standards for Volunteer Involvement
6. Volunteer Handbook
7. Engaging Newly Arrived Migrants
8. Types of Volunteering
9. Becoming an Inclusive Volunteer Involving Organisation
10. Recruit and Retain Volunteers



Online information hub increases volunteering excellence



The National Knowledge Base is a VMA collaboration, developed to house the best resources, tools, and training for volunteer leaders and organisations in one central easy-to-access location. Launched as a pilot in New South Wales in October 2022 and adopted nationally in July 2023, the National Knowledge Base is a growing library of informative articles, interactive e-Learning, videos, podcasts, editable templates for policies and procedures, as well as national and state-based research reports.

Approach

The VMA project began with evaluating several platforms, ultimately choosing FreshDesk for its user-friendly interface and customisation features. Making the National Knowledge Base easy to access has always been a top priority. The design is simple, without extra graphics, so it's easy to use, no matter your internet speed. It works well on mobile devices too, so you can use it from any device at any time. Articles are written in plain text and checked to meet international web accessibility standards (WCAG 2.0). The resources are carefully curated and reviewed to align with best practices in volunteer management. This ensures that all users, regardless of their internet speed or device, can easily navigate and benefit from the content.

Outcome

Since its launch, the National Knowledge Base has seen impressive engagement, with a total of 31,035 users. In 2023, 15,996 users accessed the resources. In the first half of 2024, this number already reached 13,203, set to surpass the previous year. Users can "like" or "dislike" articles and provide feedback, helping administrators identify popular topics and areas needing improvement. The top 10 articles are tracked monthly to reveal trends and interests in the sector. These numbers reflect the National Knowledge Base's success in providing valuable, accessible resources to the volunteering community.

With the release of the updated National Standards for Volunteer Involvement, we will soon organise the articles and resources on the National Knowledge Base to reflect the main components. We are also planning to align the resources with the new Volunteer Involvement Lifecycle, making it easier for users to find information based on their needs.

Learnings

Several key learnings emerged from the development and implementation of the Knowledge Base:

- Platform choice:** Selecting a user-friendly and customisable platform like FreshDesk was crucial for providing a seamless experience.
- Accessibility:** Ensuring that the content is accessible to all users, regardless of their technical setup, maximises reach and utility.
- User feedback:** Integrating tools for user feedback has been crucial for ongoing improvement and relevance.
- Data-driven insights:** Tracking user engagement helps in understanding sector trends and refining resource offerings.

The National Knowledge Base has demonstrated the power of a well-designed, accessible, and responsive information hub in supporting volunteer management excellence across Australia.

National standards future proof the volunteering ecosystem



The National Standards for Volunteer Involvement (NSVI) underwent a refresh in 2023-2024 to ensure they stay current and support a contemporary volunteering ecosystem. The NSVI Refresh Project included extensive consultations with the volunteering sector at a jurisdictional level, incorporating detailed feedback gathered during the creation of the new National Strategy for Volunteering.

The project had two main phases:

1. Updating the National Standards.
2. Creating resources to help implement the updated Standards

Approach

Volunteering Australia and state and territory volunteering peak bodies (VPBs) worked collaboratively on this project. In 2023, they conducted a series of consultations across all regions, ensuring the process was focused and did not overburden the sector. Consultation topics and questions were based on insights from the National Strategy for Volunteering.

VPBs used various methods for these consultations, including group sessions (both face-to-face and online) and individual interviews. They engaged participants from diverse sectors and organisations of all sizes. To support these sessions, resources such as a PowerPoint presentation, discussion questions, and an online feedback form were provided. All feedback was collected and stored online.

Volunteering Australia also consulted directly with key national groups to gather more insights. The collected data was analysed to guide the development of the refreshed Standards.

Outcomes

The refreshed NSVI were completed in early 2024. Additional resources were created or updated to support the new Standards.

Learnings

This project successfully updated the language and content of the NSVI while maintaining their core purpose. The NSVI continue to offer a practical framework for volunteer managers to follow, helping them achieve best practices in their volunteer programs and future proof a quality volunteering ecosystem in Australia.

The following documents also form part of the NSVI refresh.

Refreshed documents:

- The National Standards for Volunteer Involvement – master document
- Implementing the National Standards for Volunteer Involvement Guide
- Implementing the National Standards for Volunteer Involvement Workbook
- Implementing the National Standards for Volunteer Involvement Gap Assessment Tool
- Implementing the National Standards for Volunteer Involvement Power Point Presentation (for trainers)

New documents:

- Frequently Asked Questions
- Poster with diagram
- Video
- Easy Read Version
- Evidence Guide
- Checklist
- Gap Analysis Spreadsheet
- Translations in 10 languages

Updated online resources:

- Volunteering Australia webpages – Volunteering Resource Hub
- Volunteering Peak Body webpages
- Knowledge Base

Refreshed branding



New graphic



National volunteering survey tackles online access

A key goal of the VMA program is providing quality online resources to support volunteer involving organisations (VIOs). For this to work, organisations need the ability to access these resources efficiently, no matter where they are located.

Approach

Initial desktop research revealed common issues but also found major gaps in data, particularly around volunteer leaders and organisations. To better understand and improve online accessibility for VIOs, the VMA national coordination group commissioned Survey Matters, a reputable company known for quality survey work. They aimed to identify technological barriers and gaps in data, especially regarding VIOs and volunteer management.

Survey Matters designed a survey to measure digital access in three main areas: digital capacity (technology, internet reliability, IT infrastructure, data policies), digital capability (skills, training, attitudes towards technology), and barriers and needs (access issues, satisfaction, specific needs of priority groups). The survey also included questions to profile VIOs by state, location, focus area, and size.

The survey was widely distributed through various channels and networks, receiving over 600 responses from VIOs across all states and territories. It covered metropolitan, regional, rural and remote areas, as well as a diverse range of organisation sizes and focus areas.

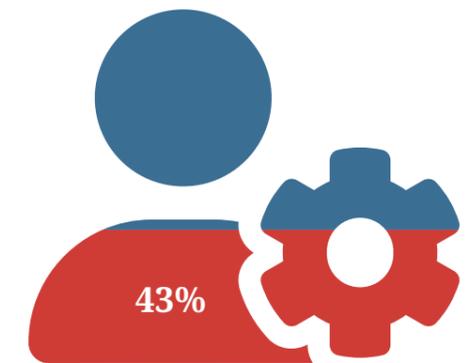
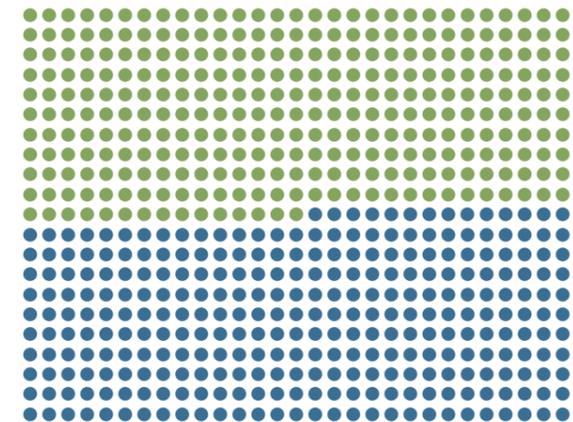
Outcomes

The survey results provided valuable insights into the digital capabilities and challenges facing VIOs. Key challenges included geographical and local technological infrastructure issues, as well as capability building and technology limitations for smaller organisations. However, the survey also highlighted significant opportunities: nearly nine in ten VIOs saw online volunteer management resources as useful, presenting a great chance to equip them with best practices in volunteer recruitment, retention, and management.

The findings have prompted further actions within the VMA national coordination group. These include drafting quick guides to boost VIOs' capacity and capability, developing resources tailored for those with accessibility restrictions, and planning advocacy approaches to enhance support for VIOs in this area.

Learnings

This project underscored the importance of digital accessibility for volunteer leaders and organisations, highlighting both the challenges and opportunities in this space. The survey results are guiding efforts to improve online resource access, ensuring that VIOs across Australia can effectively manage and support their volunteers.

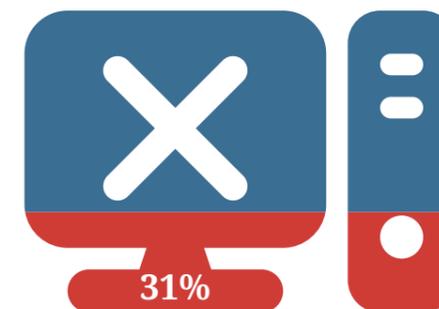


43 percent said a lack of digital skills and knowledge in their organisation as a barrier to accessing online resources

Around 630 organisations responded. Nearly half were based in regional, rural or remote Australia



Close to 90 percent said online resources would be useful and help to recruit, train and lead volunteers



31 percent said lacking technology and internet was a barrier

Our impact: In the regions

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Connection to place



Project summary:

Town Team Movement's South Hedland Youth Changemaking Program aimed to help young people reconnect with their community by reimagining the places they live in. They were empowered to solve problems impacting their community.

By working closely with Elders and local Aboriginal groups, the program co-designed a vibrant public space, including a 40-metre road mural along Wise Terrace. The mural tells local stories and reflects young people's connection to Country.

Reach:

The project connected many groups and organisations, including South Hedland youth, local Elders and Aboriginal people, the Polly Farmer Foundation, Spinifex Hill Studios, the Town of Port Hedland, RAC, Julyardi Aboriginal Corporation, Kariyarra Aboriginal Corporation; Youth Involvement Council and Volunteering WA. It fostered community pride and a sense of belonging for everyone, particularly young people.

Impact:

The project not only beautified and activated a public space but also taught youth leadership, teamwork, and the benefits of volunteering. The program is now a model for engaging First Nations young people in community projects.



Location: South Hedland, WA

The power of voice



Project summary:

This initiative aimed to reshape Tasmania's volunteering landscape, making it more inclusive and accessible for people with disability. Seven volunteers with disability shared their experiences through a co-design framework, raising awareness about the challenges they face. The result was an awareness campaign of videos and written stories, providing a powerful platform for people with disability to voice their experiences and challenges.

Reach:

The project involved volunteers with disability, specialist disability agencies, and volunteer involving organisations (VIOs), benefiting the broader community by promoting inclusivity and accessibility.

Impact:

The campaign increased awareness and understanding within the Tasmanian volunteering sector. Post-intervention surveys indicated a heightened awareness of the needs of volunteers with disability, fostering a more inclusive community.



Location: Tasmania

Connected communities



Project summary:

This initiative engaged volunteers and managers across rural NSW, aiming to address the unique needs of these communities through tailored resources and training.

Reach:

Over 790 stakeholders, including local councils and VIOs, participated in consultations, leading to the development of professional development calendars and on-demand training.

Impact:

The initiative has strengthened volunteer management practices, enhanced cultural awareness, and improved the inclusivity of volunteering pathways, particularly for newly arrived migrants.

"It is fantastic to see a peak body approach the volunteering space with a focus on cultural awareness and inclusion. The development of resources and training to increase volunteering pathways to newly arrived migrants is extremely helpful."

– Volunteer manager, NSW rural health



Location: Rural and regional NSW

Meaningful pathways



Project summary:

Charles Darwin University (CDU) has many international students on campus, many of them from Bangladesh, Nepal, India, Vietnam, the Philippines, Kenya, and Timor Leste. The VALue program by CDU and Volunteering NT connected international students with local volunteering opportunities, helping them adjust to their new environment and gain workplace experience.

Reach:

The program engaged 161 students, contributing over 8,250 volunteer hours across 42 local organisations.

Impact:

The program improved students' employability, health, and wellbeing while enriching local organisations with diverse volunteer teams. Students reported increased confidence and community connection.

"Moving to Australia to study a postgraduate degree was hard. I felt lost, lonely and homesick. Participating in the CDU VALue program was an opportunity to make friends, expand my network and meet like-minded people. Seeing the joy I can bring to sick children at the Royal Darwin Hospital with the hospitality cart provides me with fulfilment."

– Mondira, CDU international student



Location: Darwin and surrounds, NT

Building cultural safety

Inclusion starts at the top



Project summary:

Volunteering Queensland collaborated with 3rd Space Brisbane to enhance cultural safety and attract First Nations volunteers by revising policies, updating induction processes, and providing cultural training.

Reach:

The project involved 3rd Space staff and volunteers, as well as First Nations advisors and professionals. The project was guided by a First Nations adviser with over 30 years' experience. Their expertise and connections were crucial for the project's success, boosting the organisation's confidence and helping navigate ethical issues.

Impact:

Increased cultural awareness and inclusivity led to better engagement and retention of First Nations volunteers. The project greatly improved knowledge of First Nations volunteering in 3rd Space and Volunteering Queensland. 3rd Space shared their learnings with over 80 volunteer leaders at events in October 2023, helping them understand factors affecting First Nations volunteers.



Location: Brisbane, QLD

Project summary:

Volunteering SA & NT (VSA & NT) developed the Inclusive Volunteering Leadership Program to build the capacity of organisations in engaging priority groups across the state through workshops and resource development. The program included six workshops delivered by VSA&NT staff and external topic experts on:

- Inclusion, diversity and intersectionality
- Engaging volunteers with disability
- Cultural safety
- Cultural diversity and inclusion
- Using plain language
- Inclusive volunteer practices

Reach:

The program involved 50 leaders from South Australian organisations spanning regional, rural and metro locations, providing them with tools and training to support inclusive volunteering.

Impact:

Participants reported increased volunteer applications, particularly from migrants and individuals with disability, and developed more accessible resources, fostering a more inclusive volunteering environment.

"This program was fantastic! very informative and provided a lot of resources to back up the training which was a huge help. Thank you to everyone involved. :)"

– Program participant



Location: Adelaide, SA

Growing cultural competency



Project summary:

Volunteering ACT partnered with First Nations woman Dr Karen Demmery and Burbirra to create a guide that would enable organisations to engage with First Nations volunteers in a culturally respectful way. Consultations with First Nations people informed the development of this resource.

Reach:

"A guide to meeting the cultural needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander volunteers" was launched in July 2023 and widely adopted by volunteer involving organisations, enhancing their ability to meet the cultural needs of First Nations volunteers.

Impact:

Dr. Demmery conducted a workshop alongside the guide's launch. The resource has greatly enhanced cultural competency among volunteer managers, significantly boosting attendees' ability to implement inclusive practices.

Quotes from workshop attendees:

"The cultural competency presentation was fabulous!"

"Karen gave useful advice with real changes I can implement in my organisation."

Under Karen's leadership, we strengthened ties with the First Nations Community in the ACT. Last December, we launched our inaugural First Nations Volunteer of the Year award. We look forward to starting a new First Nations co-design project in late 2024.



Location: Australian Capital Territory

Place-based collaboration



Project summary:

This place-based initiative aimed to make volunteering more inclusive through consortiums across Victoria, local partnerships and peer-led initiatives. Over 50 partnerships were formed, showcasing inclusion work and promoting volunteer roles.

Reach:

The initiative engaged diverse organisations across Victoria, including councils, health organisations, and community groups. Eight consortiums have been working with their communities in regions across all of Victoria. One example was the City of Casey Volunteer Expo held on 25 May 2023. In partnership with South East Volunteers, the event brought together about 35 local community groups to share volunteer opportunities with people with disability, newly arrived migrants, and First Nations people. The goal was to support and educate organisations, highlighting diverse opportunities and taking an inclusive approach to volunteering roles.

Impact:

Through VMA, volunteer leaders in some regional and remote areas report receiving access to volunteer capacity building for the first time. There has been increased volunteer participation, particularly among priority groups, and enhanced collaboration between volunteer resource centres and VIOs.



Location: Victoria

Connecting on country



Shark Bay Community Volunteer Engagement – April 2024

Project summary:

The Shire of Shark Bay collaborated with Volunteering WA to address volunteer engagement challenges in a small regional community, leading to the creation of the Shark Bay Volunteer Hub.

Reach:

The project involved 17 community members representing 48 volunteer positions, focusing on local collaboration and creative recruitment strategies.

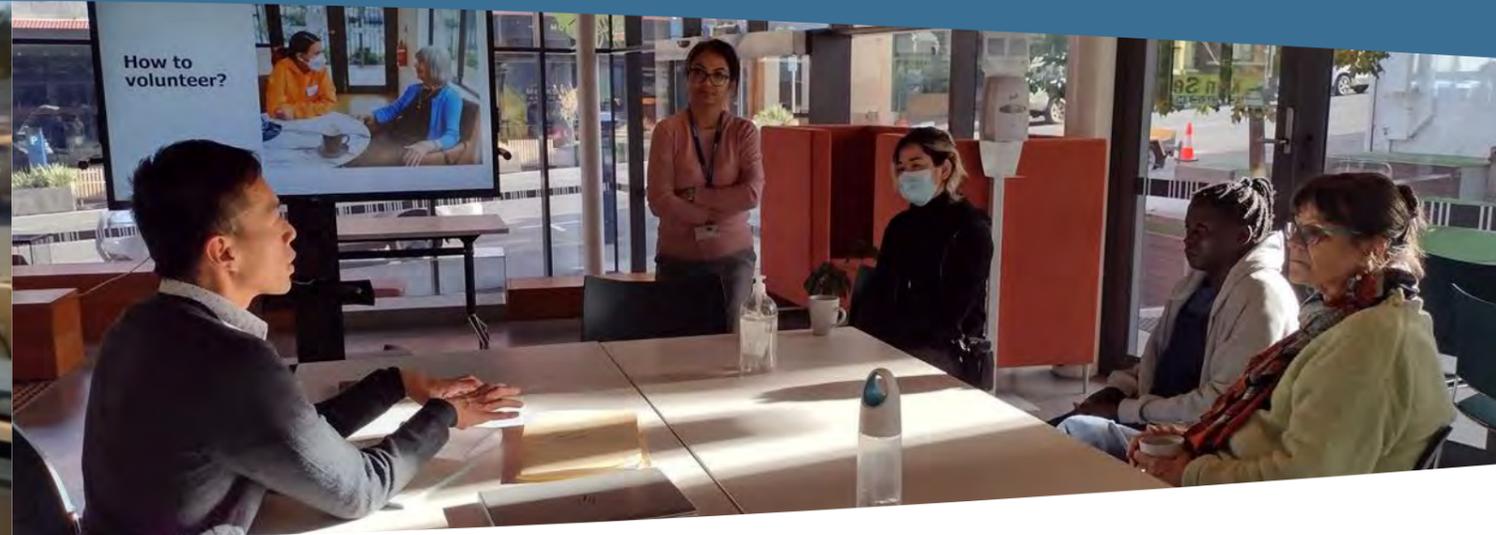
Impact:

The initiative fostered a sense of community, improved volunteer recruitment, and enhanced local engagement through strategies such as targeting 'grey nomads' and hosting volunteer events.



Location: Shark Bay, WA

Embracing diversity



Project summary:

Volunteering Tasmania developed initiatives to enhance volunteering pathways for newly arrived migrants, focusing on co-design and the inclusion of lived experiences.

The aim was to integrate lived experiences with volunteering expertise in a collaborative model. A diverse group from Tasmania's migrant community shared insights, inspiring the creation of two key tools:

- Engaging short videos featuring personal stories of migrant volunteers in Tasmania: These videos highlight volunteering's importance, cultural safety, and diversity, now essential in onboarding for volunteer involving organisations (VIOs).
- A best-practice volunteer information session: Held in accessible venues, these sessions educate newly arrived migrants about volunteering in Tasmania and Australia, offering tailored support and education.

Reach:

The project engaged a diverse group from the migrant community, creating tools to improve volunteering experiences and pathways. Feedback from sessions show they were well-received and highly attended.

Impact:

This story is a shining example of the power of collaboration, the value of lived experience, and the positive impact of embracing diversity. The initiatives have made volunteering more accessible for migrants, fostering a sense of belonging and community connection while enhancing organisational inclusivity.



Location: Tasmania



