



Volunteer Management Activity Tasmanian Stakeholder Consultation Summary - Young People April 2025



Background

Volunteering Tasmania is funded by the Department of Social Services (DSS) to deliver the Australian Government's Volunteer Management Activity (VMA) from 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2026.

The Volunteer Management Activity aims to increase opportunities for people to participate in the social and economic life of their broader community through volunteering, by:

- building effective volunteering practices and opportunities within organisations and communities
- increasing the diversity of volunteers
- providing access to training, resources and support for volunteers and volunteering organisations

To do this, Volunteering Tasmania will:

- build the capacity of Volunteer Involving Organisations (VIOs) to provide inclusive and accessible volunteering opportunities
- identify and break down barriers to volunteering for specified priority groups

We use a co-design approach to understand the needs across identified priority groups and work together with key stakeholders to implement strategies to support volunteering for these groups.

The focus of this report is to summarise our learnings for the priority group of young people.

Tasmania's State of Volunteering

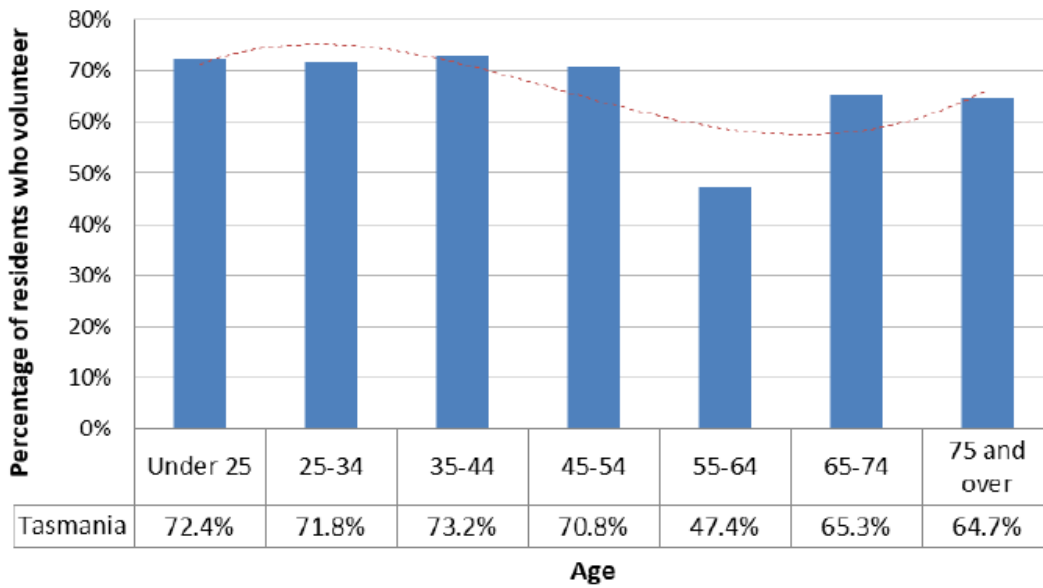
The State of Volunteering in Tasmania Report (Paul Muller, 2023) is an independent report commissioned by Volunteering Tasmania from the Institute of Project Management and supported by the Tasmanian Government. Its analysis is motivated by one of the largest-ever population-representative surveys conducted exclusively on volunteering within Tasmania.

The report reveals that 69.8% of the Tasmanian population aged 15 and over, volunteered in 2023. This is greater than the 66.2% volunteering rate Nationally. Noting a correlation between age and volunteering status, age-related insights about Tasmanian volunteers were observed as depicted in the following Figure 2. The red trendline overlaid on this figure shows that the relationship between age and volunteering in Tasmania is not linear and that different stages of life correlate with different rates of volunteering.

It is interesting to note that the overall second highest rate of volunteering was seen in people aged 15 – 24, as shown in Figure 2. This evidence seems to counter a widely held notion that volunteering is for older, retired people and that young people are not interested in volunteering. The report also made a statistically significant observation that the younger the volunteer, the more likely they are to identify time and costs as a barrier to volunteering and to report being 'unsure how' or 'never been asked' to volunteer.



Figure 2: Volunteering participation in Tasmania by age cohort



Youth consultations

Between December 2023 and September 2024, Volunteering Tasmania attended 6 careers expos in Hobart and Launceston, all of which had a particular focus on young people. We engaged with 405 young people from 18 schools, and collected survey responses from 179 young people, as outlined in the table below.

Questions asked through the surveys conducted at these Expos included some or all of the following:

- What do you love about volunteering? Or “I love to volunteer because.....”
- What makes it hard for you to volunteer? Or “I’d like to volunteer but can’t because....”
- What would you like to get out of volunteering?

Name of event	Location	Date of event	Expo attended by:	Stall engaged with:	Survey completed by:
Kingston Jobs Expo	South	December 2023	200 people/ 2 schools	60 young people/teachers	20 young people
Sorell Library Jobs Expo	South	March 2024	700 people/ 2 schools	55 young people /teachers	12 young people
Rosny Library Jobs Expo	South	March 2024	250 people/ 1 school	10 young people /teachers	2 young people
UTAS National Student Volunteer Week Expo	South	August 2024	200 people/ 1 school	30 young people /teachers	20 young people
Newstead College Careers Expo	North	August 2024	250 people/ 5 schools	150 young people/teachers	71 young people
Northern Employment and Business Hub Careers Expo	North	September 2024	400 people/ 7 schools	100 young people/teachers	54 young people
Total engagement at Expos			2000 people/ 18 schools	405 young people/teachers	179 young people



Key themes from surveys

Why young people volunteer/ What they love about volunteering

- For enjoyment - for the buzz, the warm glow, it's fun, it feels good, it's good for the soul, it's good karma, it's rewarding.
- Caring about a cause - especially caring for animals, climate and environment.
- To help – helping people, the community, the planet.
- To gain experience, learn new skills, enhance CV.
- For social reasons - to meet new people, to feel connected.
- To spread happiness, to see people smiling.
- To make a difference – to be the change they want to see in the world, for a sense of purpose.
- To do something they're interested in, a reason to get out of the house.

"Volunteering is the most selfish way to be selfless!" – young volunteer.





What young people would like to get out of volunteering

- Opportunities.
 - Life skills – dealing with people, learning to cooperate with others.
 - Developing empathy and compassion.
 - Good feelings, feeling good about what they're doing.
 - Making others happy, putting a smile on someone's face.
 - A sense of purpose.
 - Helping the community.
 - Gaining experience, trying new and different experiences.
 - Connections, networks, new friends with similar interests.
 - Learning something, gaining knowledge.
 - Work experience, something for the resume.
 - Improvement in mental health and to build resilience.
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Stakeholder consultations

In addition to the youth consultations, between February 2023 and March 2025, a total of 63 stakeholder consultations were undertaken both at an individual and organisational level, as follows:

Consultations with:	Location:	Engaged with:
Youth Network of Tasmania	Statewide	1 peak body employee
Youth Action Network	South	20 participants from youth-focused organisations
Unemployment agency	South	15 youth coaches
Secondary Schools	South	5 grade coordinators/teachers from 3 secondary schools
Youth Advisory Group	Northwest	9 students from 4 secondary schools
Volunteer involving organisations	Statewide	9 volunteer managers from 7 organisations
Young individuals	South	4 young volunteers / aspiring volunteers

Key learnings

- ❖ Participation anxiety can prevent young people getting involved due to a lack confidence and resilience, and there are extremely high mental health and anxiety concerns prevalent today. Job coaches expressed frustration that they try to encourage young clients to volunteer as a means to gain experience, however they're rejected by organisations for having no experience. *"Young people being rejected from volunteering roles due to lack of experience really damages their self-esteem and motivation."* – Youth employment coach
- ❖ Many high schools have programs to engage students in the community through volunteering but struggle to find suitable opportunities for groups of young people. *'I was surprised how difficult it was to find volunteering opportunities for students'* – Secondary School teacher.
- ❖ Some organisations have minimum age requirements of 16 or 18, for a variety of reasons but often due to risk management and/or organisational policy requirements e.g. that volunteers must have a Registration to Work with Vulnerable People check.
- ❖ New rules and requirements due to the Child and Youth Safe Organisations Framework has resulted in many organisations being unsure how to safely engage young people.
- ❖ Young people are less likely to undertake regular consistent volunteering but value the flexibility of sporadic or irregular volunteering, which could still be in a formal volunteering role.
- ❖ The term volunteering can be off-putting to younger people who consider it too formal, and that it suggests a big commitment is needed. Prefer terms like 'helping out' or 'contributing'.
- ❖ In regional towns, volunteers are the centre of community. Young people growing up in these communities where parents are actively involved, are more likely to have that mindset.
- ❖ The average UTAS student now works 27 hours/week in jobs while studying, to support themselves. This compares to 14 hours in 2000 and just 5 hours in 1984. Therefore, young people are busier and it's usually because of financial pressures and needing to work more hours.



Advice to organisations to better include young people in volunteering

1. Be flexible

- Offer flexibility around role tasks, timing, frequency and level of commitment etc.
- Offer volunteering outside of usual hours of 9am-5pm.
- Provide ways for young people to engage online, or volunteer remotely.
- Reduce formality of the role description, onboarding process etc
- Consider using a term other than volunteering such as 'helping out'.
- Try a bridging option to engage young people in formal volunteering organisations - more casual, less regular commitment, give people a chance to 'try before they buy'.
- Consider partnering with local schools and offering group volunteering opportunities.
- If you have a minimum age limit, reflect on why you have this limit and if it is necessary.
- Accept volunteers with no experience, identify roles which are suitable for those without experience and skills.

2. Be welcoming

- A good first experience is essential, ensure they enjoy themselves, use something to hook them in and they will be much more likely to return.
- If young people don't feel welcome, they won't hesitate to move on to something else.
- Show a new volunteer what to expect on the first day so they're not walking into unknown – send photos of who they will be meeting, what the building/front desk looks like, which bus stop to disembark at etc.
- Be friendly and kind, look people in the eye and say hello and goodbye, see you next time etc.
- Facilitate a sense of belonging.
- Don't be too polished or professional, this can put people off. Show that you're human, and treat them as human also.
- Provide a buddy system for new volunteers and incorporate support procedures and networks.
- Accessibility is important, make sure there are inclusive and welcoming spaces for everyone.

3. Be supportive

- Provide clear and easy to access information about your organisation and the volunteering role.
- Young people tend to be less familiar/confident with phone calls - text first to give them a heads up when you will be calling them.
- Everyone is an individual – ask them what they'd like to do, when, how often etc.
- Manage your own expectations of the workload that you're asking young people to take on, the roles and the time commitment.
- Avoid making assumptions about the young person's abilities, interests or availability.
- Be clear on what training and support is provided.
- Remove financial barriers where possible - ensure volunteers don't have out of pocket expenses.
- Recognise their contribution somehow (eg. a certificate, training/skill development, meal, gift voucher, transport ticket, support to attend a conference or event)
- Young people may need support to set boundaries if they're not comfortable to say no. Be aware of this and respect it if they do say no.



4. Demonstrate value

- Value alignment is important so try and demonstrate you as a potential organisation having similar values to what the young person/potential volunteer has.
- Climate and environmental issues, and social progress issues are a huge driver for volunteering for younger people, so try and connect your volunteering roles to these motivators.
- Don't give young people mundane, boring tasks – they don't see any value in that. However, these tasks might be ok short term if you can show how it links to a bigger picture with value.
- People are much more likely to join a group if they see others like them - representation and diversity is important, especially in leadership roles.
- Focus on the social elements of the volunteering role, not just the tasks.
- Close the loop; ensure they understand the value and impact of their involvement.

Align volunteer roles with UN Sustainable Development Goals

Volunteering Tasmania and the University of Tasmania Sustainability Placement Experience Program, worked collaboratively on a project to explore how the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) can be utilised by VOIs to improve engagement with young people. This led to the development of a series of fact sheets, with examples of volunteering roles aligned with each of the 17 SDGs. By aligning volunteer roles with SDGs, organisations can demonstrate how small local actions are contributing to the global big picture and may also improve relevance for younger volunteers whose values may resonate with these global goals and a desire to make impactful change in the world.

To access these resources, visit volunteeringtas.org.au/youth-volunteering/

Next steps:

- ❖ Ongoing partnerships with schools to support improved understanding of and access to volunteering opportunities.
 - ❖ Resources, workshops and networks to help support improved capacity of organisations to engage young people in volunteering opportunities.
 - ❖ Volunteer organisations supported to develop cultures and systems that welcome and promote volunteering for young people.
 - ❖ Explore an easy way for young people to connect with organisations accepting young volunteers (under 18) and groups of volunteers (e.g. school groups).
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What we heard from young people...

Young people are keen to volunteer but face structural barriers and financial challenges which significantly affect their ability to volunteer. Young people are less likely to engage in regular consistent volunteering but are more interested in occasional or events-based volunteering, and volunteering which aligns with their values and interests.

'a lot of young people want to volunteer for environmental issues because they want to help address the thing that will help their anxiety, to help them sleep better at night'

'I know lots of students, they know volunteering is cool, they really want to do it, they want to give back, but they have bills to pay. Can't blame them for needing to prioritise a roof over their head. That's 100% the biggest barrier'

What we heard from organisations...

Most organisations recognise the need to diversify their volunteer workforce and think including young people makes sense for a lot of reasons, however they are still working out how to balance this with the concerns and complexities of regulations such as Tasmania's Child and Youth Safe Organisations Framework.

'if they have a good time, if they really enjoy it, you've got good food, it's a really welcoming environment... then they're more likely to come back'

"If we're looking at the sustainability and longevity of volunteering, we need to be looking at young people"



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.

Funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services.
Visit www.dss.gov.au for more information.