

Climate Change: Reducing Victoria's Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Volunteering Victoria welcomes this opportunity to contribute to the Victorian Government's consultation on Climate Change: Reducing Victoria's Greenhouse Gas Emissions.

Volunteering Victoria is the state peak body for volunteering, focusing on advocacy, sector development and the promotion of volunteering.

Volunteering Victoria has a singular and specialised focus on volunteering. We see our role as leading the development of a collaborative, sustainable, thriving volunteering community and movement in Victoria.

This submission focuses on the importance of involving the community in positive volunteer action.

1. Dealing with climate change requires a whole-of-community approach

Climate change is a problem for the whole community. While certain regions, smaller or lower socio-economic sectors of our communities may experience impacts earlier or more deeply, climate breakdown ultimately has the potential to impact *everyone*, regardless of personal circumstances.

Volunteering offers a myriad of ways to engage the community in positive actions. It can also help to expand community understanding of the issues and challenges facing us all.

Volunteering means that everyone can be part of the broader strategy to address climate change at some level.

Benefits of volunteering can include:

- Improved community knowledge about climate change
- Better understanding of, and engagement with, government-led approaches to climate change
- More active citizenship
- Improvements to community mental health / resilience
- Improved physical health
- Improved natural environment
- Better community safety
- Understanding and engagement with new technologies and industries, including future job opportunities in a rapidly changing employment landscape

2. Driving community engagement

A new global study by Ipsos, carried out online among adults across 28 countries between February 22 and March 8, 2019, found that while people worldwide have a myriad of concerns when it comes to environmental issues, climate change has climbed in importance since last year. According to Ipsos, Australians are more concerned than the global average when it comes to global warming/climate change (44%).



The 2019 Lowy Institute Poll on Australian Attitudes to Climate Change found that Australians rank climate change at the top of a list of ten possible threats to Australia's vital interests in the next ten years. A majority of Australian adults (64%) see climate change as 'a critical threat', an increase of six points from 2018 and 18 points since 2014. This is the first time climate change has led the list of threats since the Lowy Institute first asked this question in the 2006 Lowy Institute Poll.

Despite this, climate change can still feel like a complex and abstract notion. The political and scientific contexts are not always easy to follow.

Without scientific or technical knowledge, the community can feel disempowered and disengaged.

Volunteering offers practical ways to engage the community by showing people where and how they can help.

3. Volunteering, the Climate Change Act and the Sustainable Development Goals

Policy and legislation related to climate change point to the importance of involving the community. For example:

- The **United Nations Volunteers (UNV) program** is the UN organisation that promotes volunteerism to support peace and development worldwide. UNV In Action: Environment and Climate Change states, *UNV works to protect the environment and mitigate the negative effects of climate change. Volunteerism plays an important role in catalysing and promoting environmental action and disaster risk reduction. Partnering with governments, development actors and civil society, UNV manages a talented cadre of committed volunteers working around the globe. These volunteers are in a unique position to mobilize communities from the national to grassroots levels.*
- The **Sustainable Development Goals** refer to the importance of community engagement in Goal 13, Climate Change. Target 13.3: *Improve education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning.* Target 13.B: *Promote mechanisms for raising capacity for effective climate change-related planning and management in least developed countries and small island developing States, including focusing on women, youth and local and marginalized communities.*
- The **Climate Change Act 2017** provides Victoria with a world-leading legislative foundation to manage climate change risks, maximise the opportunities that arise from decisive action, and drive our transition to a climate resilient community and economy with net zero emissions by 2050. In the Guiding Principles, the Principle of Equity (26) speaks of the need for the present generation to help the capacity of vulnerable communities to adapt to climate change, and to minimise negative impacts on future generations. The Principle of Community Engagement (27) confirms the need to inform, consult and involve the community in decisions, policies, programs or processes relating to climate change. Volunteering offers a way to achieve this.



4. Volunteer Opportunities to Engage the Community in Positive Climate Actions

The ways in which community members can volunteer for positive climate actions can be broadly classified into direct and indirect action (there are of course some crossovers between these classifications):

Direct	Indirect
<p><i>Opportunities exist for people with specific skills such as professional or technical knowledge, governance, advocacy, and campaigning experience to volunteer:</i></p>	<p><i>Indirect actions contribute to positive outcomes. These may not require specific skills, expertise or experience, yet still enable the community to make a difference:</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community energy schemes • Community group management / governance • Technical solutions • Indigenous climate justice • Addressing climate-related health challenges • Transport solutions • Legal assistance • Financial / accounting experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for CALD, older, disabled communities • Recycling / waste reduction, clothing rescue • Repair / reuse (for example, repair cafes) • Food rescue • Public transport use, bicycle networks etc • Education – schools and broader community • Revegetation, waterways, soil health, landcare • Urban environment improvements

5. Conclusion

Volunteering Victoria is the vanguard of volunteering in Victoria. Our vision for resilient communities and empowered and active citizens through volunteering supports the Victorian Government’s commitment to delivering strong and lasting action on climate change for the community.

We hope to support the Victorian Government's goal of reducing Greenhouse gas emissions by promoting opportunities for volunteers to take positive actions towards this common goal.

Volunteers can help change people's behaviours within communities by raising awareness. They can also help deliver practical and community-focused solutions by bringing in new ideas, conducting localised environmental risk assessments, and designing and implementing sustainable adaptation activities.





By engaging volunteers, we can bring together individuals with different skill sets under a shared purpose. This enables collective strategies and allows Victorians to take ownership of greenhouse gas emissions and the solutions.

We, at Volunteering Victoria, appreciate the opportunity to contribute to the government's consultation on Climate Change and look forward to a continued working relationship.



volunteeringvictoria.org.au

info@volunteeringvictoria.org.au | (03) 8327 8500

2/491 King Street, West Melbourne, Victoria 3003