

Advocacy Special Interest Group: Terms of Reference

Purpose

Advocacy is a key element of the Volunteering Victoria Strategic plan. As described in the Strategic Plan, Volunteering Victoria undertakes advocacy work as part of business as usual:

Advocacy for and by the sector

We build and maintain strong mutually beneficial relationships to ensure engagement and investment for the volunteering sector. We do this by:

- Influencing the State government and members on policy matters that impact volunteering;
- Supporting Volunteering Australia, State Peaks and others to succeed in the changing world of volunteering;
- Enabling members to advocate within their own sector (e.g. local govt, own peak body etc.) to support the rights, well-being and interests of volunteers; and
- Developing and promoting resources that improve the volunteering sector and the volunteering experience.

The Advocacy Special Interest Group (SIG) is established under the auspices of Volunteering Victoria to bring together volunteers, both members of Volunteering Victoria who are volunteers and volunteers within member organisations, and leaders in a range of volunteering sectors and cohorts, through 4 advocacy sessions to be arranged through the year, to:

- explore the concept of advocacy,
- learn about and be inspired by the role, power and value of advocacy; and
- identify different methods, tools and resources to advocate efficiently and effectively in and for the volunteering sector, including discussing and exchanging views and identifying how best to advocate further on various topics and issues.

The SIG will be an opportunity to have an input into the Volunteering Victoria advocacy process, to consider whether Volunteering Victoria:

- is effective in promoting and speaking out on the interests and issues impacting volunteers, the volunteer sector and volunteer involving organisations (VIOs);
- effectively empowers and promotes advocacy for and by the sector; and
- follows best practice for identifying and shaping the advocacy priorities of Volunteering

Victoria.

And where possible the SIG will be a forum for:

- sharing and discussing information regarding policy challenges and sector risks, assessing agreed areas and issues, identifying current and emerging research on advocacy;
- cooperating on advocacy initiatives and opportunities;
- facilitating coordination and collaboration with other organisations and peak bodies whose work intersects with the work of Volunteering Victoria and the SIG;
- identifying priority areas and issues impacting volunteering across Victoria;
- discussing and sharing ideas, developing plans and strategising on options and how best to tackle identified solutions, which may include seeking to change policies, laws or rules that impact volunteering, targeting efforts at a local, state, or national level as required; and
- fostering and providing communication channels to:
 - facilitate networks which will exchange ideas, information, and resources on advocacy in volunteering;
 - strengthen and encourage advocacy within sectors and cohorts;
 - highlight and celebrate the value of Volunteering to the Victorian community; and
 - promote the value of volunteering.
- At all times the work of the SIG will contribute to and be consistent with Volunteering Victoria's purpose and vision.

Meetings and Management

- Membership of the SIG will be free and open to all current members of Volunteering Victoria, including their volunteers.
- Each year Volunteering Victoria will invite members to register to join the SIG for the year, ensuring as far as possible:
 - that all relevant cohorts and sectors are represented; and
 - a spread/mix across sectors and regions within the State of Victoria.
- To ensure a diversity of representation and views, the SIG will, as far as possible, be broadly representative of all major volunteering sectors and interest groups / cohorts, including:
 - Metropolitan/CBD
 - Rural/regional

- Emergency services
- Community sector
- Healthcare
- Sport & Recreation
- Multicultural volunteering
- Youth volunteering
- Environment & animal welfare
- Employee/Corporate volunteering
- Local government (LG Pro network)
- Volunteer Support Organisations (including Volunteer Resource Centres)
- An individual may be a member of the SIG in more than one capacity.
- In addition to the SIG members, occasional new members, who have expertise relevant to specific SIG topics or projects, may be invited to participate by Volunteering Victoria or as identified and agreed by SIG members.
- Volunteering Victoria will provide secretariat support for the SIG.
- All members of the SIG will:
 - Abide by the values articulated in the Volunteering Victoria Strategic Plan;
 - Be well informed and make a positive and constructive contribution to the work of the SIG;
 - Perform any tasks delegated to them in a timely manner and to the best of their ability;
 - Alert the SIG to any potential conflicts of interest;
 - Be an active advocate for the SIG; and
 - Be a communication conduit to and from their constituents.
- The SIG will meet by videoconference and/or in person four times a year on dates to be determined by Volunteering Victoria. Volunteering Victoria will organise presentations for each of the 4 sessions and provide an opportunity for the SIG to discuss aspects of the presentations. Any additional topics will be discussed by exchange of emails or as otherwise determined by Volunteering Victoria and the SIG.

- Information on each meeting will be circulated to SIG members 2 weeks before each meeting.

Sub-Committees

- The SIG may establish sub-committees at its discretion to assist with specific functions and initiatives that are consistent with its terms of reference.
- Membership of sub-committees will include SIG members with expertise and experience appropriate to the purpose of the sub-committee.
- Sub-committee members will abide by the requirements expected of SIG members (outlined above).
- The sub-committee will report back to the SIG as determined by the SIG membership.
- The sub-committee will determine the frequency of sub-committee meetings.