



# Briefing on the role of Volunteering Victoria and the crucial need to support Victoria's volunteers

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**TO:** The Hon. Colin Brooks  
Minister for Child Protection and Family Services  
Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers

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**FROM:** Volunteering Victoria

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**DATE:** 28 June 2022

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Dear Hon. Colin Brooks,

On behalf of the team and members of Volunteering Victoria, we congratulate you on your appointment to Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers. This portfolio presents opportunities for you to support and advocate for strong, vibrant, and active volunteering communities across Victoria.

Returning volunteers from COVID is critical to your government's success and ours. We need you to continue promoting the value and power of volunteers in our state's recovery.

Volunteers are at the forefront of every initiative that contributes to the improvement of social cohesion. Volunteers make our communities stronger, safer, and more liveable. It is great to see the State Government recognise the importance of their contribution through the Victorian Volunteer Strategy 2022-27.

Volunteering Victoria is fully supportive of the Strategy's ethos, and we look forward to a whole-of-Government approach to ensure its full implementation. As we work towards emerging stronger together, we draw your attention to our [Election Priorities](#), which clearly articulate the case for greater support and resourcing for volunteering.



## 1. ABOUT US

**Volunteering Victoria** is the state peak body for volunteering in Victoria, focusing on advocacy, sector development and the promotion of volunteering. Our role is to lead the development of a collaborative, sustainable, thriving, and respected volunteering community in Victoria.

Volunteering Victoria promotes volunteering that is diverse, inclusive, and accessible, encouraging resilient communities and empowered and active Victorians. We continuously strive to find new and creative ways to engage organisations and individuals in meaningful volunteering.

With an estimated 2.3 million volunteers across Victoria, volunteering is both ubiquitous and impactful. The [State of Volunteering in Victoria Report \(2020\)](#) found that volunteering represented \$58.1 billion in value for the Victorian economy, or a net return of approximately \$3.70 on every dollar invested. In many ways, volunteering is the lifeblood of our communities, as it is essential for the delivery of crucial services, including those provided by state and local governments.

Yet, effective, and meaningful volunteering comes with resourcing needs. Our sector requires expert leadership of volunteers, clear and coherent policy, and regulations and legislation that both protect volunteers while maintaining realistic compliance on volunteer-involving organisations.



## 2. OUR CHALLENGES

The volunteer sector in Victoria has encountered many challenges in recent years and has seen a concerning downward trend over the last decade turn into a waterfall of dis-engagement. This has coincided with an important increase in demand for the services of volunteer-involving organisations and the not-for-profit sector. The COVID-19 public health crisis has further compounded these issues and organisations consistently report challenges in re-engaging volunteers and delivering crucial volunteer-led community services.

Further challenges for the sector include:

- » Precarious funding for volunteer-involving organisations and support services and the absence of a sustainable, long term funding model for the sector;
- » The widening digital divide and the risk of creating barriers to participation for large cohorts, including those in regional and remote areas, older adults, and CALD communities;
- » The need for enhanced legislative improvements to protect volunteers;
- » A lack of affordable and accessible insurance coverage for volunteer organisations;
- » Inefficient and onerous screening processes for volunteers;
- » The lack of acknowledgement and support for volunteer management roles and practices;
- » The economic, cultural, and organisational barriers preventing the participation of First Nations peoples, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, and individuals from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

These challenges present a risk to our strong culture of volunteering and the wide array of benefits for communities and individuals.



### 3. OUR OPPORTUNITIES AND PRIORITIES

The Victorian Volunteer Strategy demonstrates the goodwill of the Government towards the sector and its commitment to promoting a flourishing volunteering culture across the state. However, co-ordinated, deliberate, and innovative support, and investment is required to reinvigorate the volunteer sector and bring communities back together.

While it will undoubtedly be largely oversubscribed, the \$1 million allocated through the [Emerging Strong Grants program](#) is a promising start. However, it does not address the lack of ongoing funding for volunteer support organisations, which is threatening the viability of many of these crucial place-based support services.

A revitalised volunteer sector and community entails:

- » Sustainable, long-term investment to support resilience within Victorian communities and provide the Government with an increased capacity to plan and coordinate the growing trend of spontaneous and emergency volunteering;
- » Strengthening the capacity of local government and place-based volunteering support services to meet local community needs;
- » Equitable protections for volunteers and organisations including legislative provisions, affordable insurance coverage, and accessible screening processes;
- » Greater understanding of the many forms of community giving, and the support required to sustain and grow volunteering across diverse communities;
- » The development of inclusive and accessible volunteering materials, workshops, and training opportunities for all communities.

The desire to emerge stronger together represents a unique opportunity to encourage better ways to create a fairer, more inclusive state, where all Victorians have access to opportunities to engage in their communities and experience the benefits of volunteering.

With adequate funding and support, volunteering can be key to Victoria's community recovery and resilience. At Volunteering Victoria, we are committed to this vision of the future, and we look forward to working with you to making it a reality.

We look forward to discussing this briefing further with you and your team. I can be reached at 04 7770 0806 or [scott@volunteeringvictoria.org.au](mailto:scott@volunteeringvictoria.org.au).

Yours sincerely,



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