

Volunteering Victoria's State Election Priorities:

Five steps to a thriving, inclusive and sustainable volunteer sector

2.3 million
volunteers



Mental health benefits

\$58.1 billion
economic value

Enhanced social capital

Victoria's community sector is sustained by the contribution of volunteers from every walk of life. Volunteers are essential to our collective social capital, community cohesion and way of life.

We want you to help us develop more engaged, active people who can thrive within their communities.

Volunteer time is given willingly and without financial gain. However, volunteers require acknowledgement, support and resourcing to sustain and grow their contribution. This has been demonstrated during the COVID-19 pandemic which has severely impacted volunteering rates, threatened the delivery of essential community services, and had a pronounced impact on social connections and mental health.



Now is the time to acknowledge and support Victoria’s volunteers and our volunteer sector.

Volunteering Victoria calls for our political leaders to commit to our vision of a vibrant, thriving volunteering community that is inclusive, respected, and sustainable. We ask all political parties to acknowledge the invaluable contribution of Victoria’s volunteers by committing to the following five priorities for supporting and investing in the volunteering sector.

ELECTION PRIORITIES

- Priority 1: Create a dedicated Ministerial Portfolio for Volunteering** to appropriately reflect the invaluable contribution of Victoria’s 2.3 million volunteers and the volunteer sector, and enable government to better address volunteer planning, priorities, and issues.
- Priority 2: Ensure the volunteering workforce is accounted for and recognised in all Victorian Government Workforce Strategies**, enabling better planning, protections and resourcing to harness the invaluable contribution of volunteers in essential sectors.
- Priority 3: Allocate appropriate and sustainable investment for the Victorian Volunteer Strategy to implement priority actions**, providing the funding required to effectively deliver a ‘future volunteering system that supports and benefits people and organisations across the broadest possible range of opportunities’.
- Priority 4: Develop a well-resourced and coordinated spontaneous volunteer engagement strategy**, as recommended by the Inspector General for Emergency Management (IGEM) and the State Government’s response to the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements. This should include ongoing funding for the weVolunteer program and platform, evidence-based volunteer management, and community engagement strategies.
- Priority 5: Secure the future of Victoria’s place-based volunteering infrastructure**, through a commitment to long-term investment in the Volunteer Support Services and Volunteering Victoria, who provide direct support to thousands of volunteer organisations across the state.

THE FIVE VOLUNTEERING ELECTION PRIORITIES

Priority 1:

Create a dedicated Ministerial Portfolio for Volunteering to appropriately reflect the invaluable contribution of Victoria's 2.3 million volunteers and the volunteer sector, and enable government to better address volunteer planning, priorities, and issues.

Victoria's 2.3 million volunteers contribute an average 223.9 hours each per year, representing one of the state's largest workforces and contributing \$58.1 billion in value to the Victorian economy. The volunteer sector delivers essential community services from health and education to legal and employment services. The value of volunteering has been highlighted in the COVID-19 pandemic which has seen volunteering rates plummet and essential services and community groups unable to be delivered. A Ministerial Portfolio for Volunteering would acknowledge the enormous contribution of Victoria's volunteers and enable government to strategically highlight and address the complexity of issues that impact the sector such as resourcing and sustainability, legal protections, inclusion and diversity, digital inclusion, and COVID-19 recovery.

Priority 2:

Ensure the volunteering workforce is accounted for and recognised in all Victorian Government Workforce Strategies, enabling better planning, protections and resourcing to harness the invaluable contribution of volunteers in essential sectors.

Victorian Government workforce strategies highlight key issues and challenges facing particular sectors, and appropriately plan and resource the delivery of services and programs. Volunteers make an enormous contribution to every sector, with many essential services reliant on volunteers. However, current workforce strategy frameworks often omit volunteers and only account for their paid workforce. Including volunteers in workforce strategies and planning will enable volunteering programs to be appropriately supported and resourced. Acknowledging volunteers in workforce planning will also enable community services and programs to make better use of this valuable component of their workforce. This issue was exemplified in the recent State Government Mental Health Workforce Strategy which failed to acknowledge or plan for the role of volunteers, despite volunteers being an important part of the mental health workforce and the sector identifying opportunities to expand the scope of volunteers with appropriate resourcing. See Volunteering Victoria's submission to the [Early Childhood Workforce Strategy](#) to further understand how volunteers can be accounted for in workforce planning.

Priority 3:

Allocate appropriate and sustainable investment for the Victorian Volunteer Strategy to implement priority actions, providing the funding required to effectively deliver a 'future volunteering system that supports and benefits people and organisations across the broadest possible range of opportunities'.

The State Government has made a promising step in demonstrating its commitment to Victoria's volunteers and the volunteer sector through the Victorian Volunteer Strategy. The strategy is centred on five goals aimed at providing greater opportunities for volunteers and strengthening the volunteer sector. However, for the strategy to be effective and fulfil its objectives, it must be accompanied by secure, appropriate, and ongoing investment. A funding model is required to invest in new initiatives and programs, and the established volunteer support services which will play a crucial role in delivering the aims of the strategy and securing the long-term future of the sector.

Priority 4:

Develop a well-resourced and coordinated spontaneous volunteer engagement strategy, *as recommended by the Inspector General for Emergency Management (IGEM) and the State Government's response to the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements. This should include ongoing funding for the weVolunteer program and platform, evidence-based volunteer management, and community engagement strategies.*

The IGEM and the State Government's response to the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements, have acknowledged the essential nature of volunteers in responding to emergencies and community recovery. We ask the State Government to act on this response by developing a dedicated strategy that includes preparedness through community engagement initiatives and strengthening volunteer management. The strategy should also include ongoing funding for the weVolunteer program and platform which is growing in popularity in Victoria with a broad range of volunteers and organisations registered. The State Emergency Management Plan (SEMP) Roles and Responsibilities document indicates that the Recovery Lead Agencies are BRV and EMV. Volunteering Victoria is listed as a Recovery Support Agency. Additionally, Local Government Areas (LGAs) across Victoria have indicated their conditional support for weVolunteer to assist with the coordination of spontaneous volunteers, provided funding certainty can be obtained. By retaining the current weVolunteer program model we will be able to continue to support the most urgent volunteering needs across Victoria.

Priority 5:

Secure the future of Victoria's place-based volunteering infrastructure, *through a commitment to long term investment in the Volunteer Support Services and Volunteering Victoria who provide direct support to volunteer organisations and their volunteers.*

Victoria's established and trusted state-based Volunteer Support Services (VSSs) and peak body provide direct support to volunteer organisations and their volunteers. Organisations in the community service and not-for-profit sectors rely on these services for recruitment, training, advocacy, and advice. Volunteers look to Volunteer Support Services for help in accessing roles, connecting to community, and for support in their volunteering roles. However, current funding models place these essential services at risk. The re-establishment of volunteer programs, acknowledging and supporting volunteers, and the future of the sector can only be achieved with long term, innovative funding models that enable Volunteer Support Services and Volunteering Victoria to develop sustainable service delivery models and workforces.