

Hon. Ingrid Stitt, MP
Minister for Early Childhood and Pre-Prep
Minister for Environment
Parliament of Victoria
Spring Street
East Melbourne VIC 3002

26 April 2023

Dear The Hon. Ingrid Stitt,

The recent announcement of a \$159 million training and development package for [Victoria's Kindergarten Workforce](#) is a welcome investment in attracting a high-quality early education workforce and building the capacity of early childhood services.

Volunteering is a key pathway to employment in early childhood education; yet we note that the funding package does not identify and support the significant role of volunteering activity in the sector. Given the immense [contribution of volunteering to Victorian communities and the economy](#) it is our recommendation that an investment to uplift supports for volunteering activity in the sector will lift the capacity and capability of early childhood services and workforce development.

Volunteering Victoria has previously provided a [submission to the Victorian Early Childhood Workforce Strategy](#) consultation in 2021 (attached for your ease of reference), that highlighted the critical role of volunteers in early childhood education, the lack of data on the scope of their participation and how the inclusion of volunteers supports the sector's strategic focus of developing partnerships and collaborations within the communities they serve.

We highlight two specific recommendations that continue to be salient; and funded will contribute to growing a high-quality early education workforce:

- 1. Establish formal opportunities to volunteer in early child education and career pathways.*
- 2. Build the capacity of the sector to include and support volunteers including resources and training for volunteer programs and managers to support volunteers for employment outcomes, prioritising those in communities experiencing disadvantage, high unemployment, and skills shortages.*

Volunteering is a proven employment pathway, providing people with practical experience, skill development and professional networking, leading to opportunities to pursue training and paid employment. Greater inclusion of volunteers, such as parents of disadvantaged cohorts, in early childhood education services would enable prospective trainees to gain work experience, feel confident in their career choice, and develop mentoring relationships and professional networks prior to embarking on a career. We highlight an illustrative case study below.



Case Study: Meadows Early Learning Centre and Community Hub

Meadows Early Learning Centre and Community Hub in the Hume Council area engages families to enrol their children in early learning programs and kindergarten while also offering volunteer roles for parents. They provide their volunteers with opportunities including training and employment in a variety of sectors including early childhood education. The focus on career pathways has enabled volunteers to find meaningful paid roles, while supporting the sector to recruit trainees and educators with an interest, understanding and experience in early childhood development and education.

“My volunteer coordinator helped me to commit to myself and have confidence in my abilities to connect with families within the community. I was passionate about finding and starting work. I then studied brain development, special needs child services, leadership training, community services and a Diploma and Bachelor in children services and care. I’m very passionate about working with children and families. Having previously been a primary school teacher in my home country I found a successful career in Early Childhood education”.

– Former Community Hub Volunteer

Volunteering holds enormous potential in providing experience, training and career pathways in early childhood education, while also providing services with opportunities to partner with their community and remain responsive to place-based context.

We welcome the opportunity to meet with you or your team to discuss these recommendations in more detail.

Kind Regards,



Thu-Trang Tran
Chief Executive Officer
Volunteering Victoria