

## Response to 2023-24 Victorian State Budget

On behalf of our membership and Victoria's volunteers, Volunteering Victoria reacts with disappointment to the 2023-24 State Budget and the lack of specific funding allocated to developing and sustaining the volunteering ecosystem across the state. Funding is desperately needed to reinvigorate volunteering and assist Victorian organisations to deliver vital services to support the community.

Despite releasing a long-awaited [Victorian Government Volunteering Strategy](#) in May 2022, limited funds have been allocated in this budget to implement the strategy holistically. Volunteering Victoria is supportive of the Strategy's vision to harness the power of volunteering to "build strong, resilient and inclusive communities and better lives for all Victorians". Volunteering Victoria, our 500+ members, and the communities we support are ready to work with the Victorian Government to ensure this vision is realised. Our recent [State Budget submission](#) outlines a shared vision for meaningful ways the government can invest in volunteering to unlock its full potential to deliver economic and social outcomes for Victoria that far exceed the \$58.1 billion per year in value calculated to date.

We acknowledge and support the pockets of funding for much-needed areas that involve volunteers (e.g. lifeguards, emergency services volunteers, food relief); but much more needs to be done to stem the crisis in volunteering that we've heard loud and clear from the sector for decades. Despite the [Strategy](#), volunteering numbers across the state are still drastically below pre-pandemic levels. The impact is clear: relentless and increased demands for community services that rely on volunteers and burnt-out volunteers and managers of volunteers.

Notably, many community sport clubs are closing when we need strong regional sports volunteer support for the Commonwealth Games. Volunteers will play a key role in the Games, both in the lead up to and during the event. More infrastructure – both hard and soft – is needed now at a state level to ensure that communities can capitalise the opportunity of hosting the Commonwealth Games, to sustain the volunteering spirit as a legacy for ongoing community building.

Thu-Trang Tran, CEO of Volunteering Victoria, calls out the need for State Government to build a trampoline of supporting infrastructure at local, regional and state levels that allows communities to bounce back from the COVID years and recent economic downturn:

*"Any army of volunteers needs good scaffolding and well-crafted placements to be at their most impactful to build community, to forge a pathway to employment, and to foster social connections".*

