

MEDIA RELEASE

Wednesday 3 April 2019



Budget presents mixed results for Volunteering

The federal budget has produced mixed results for the volunteering sector, with some positive measures in mental health, sport and education more broadly. However, Volunteering Australia underscores the need for comprehensive measures aimed at building the capacity of the entire volunteering sector.

Volunteering Australia welcomes the inclusion of funding indexation for the Volunteer Management Activity (VMA) from 2019-20 in this budget, and a commitment to the program's continuation. This is hugely positive for the volunteering sector, with the VMA never receiving indexation in its history (including previous iterations).

With the review of the Volunteer Management Activity still pending, it is also encouraging to see a commitment from the Government to continue to fund Volunteering Support Services post-June 2021, with forward estimates projecting 6.4 million for 2021-22 and 6.5 million for 2022-23. We note that after seeking clarification from the Department of Social Services in relation to this activity, they have advised that any commitment to the Volunteer Management Activity from July 2021 is a matter for Government.

Volunteering Support Services (funded under the VMA) are place-based services responsible for safe, effective and sustainable volunteering, assisting thousands of organisations and individuals and contributing \$477.5 million value to the Australian economy.

Volunteering Australia CEO Adrienne Picone said, "Volunteering Australia has been strongly campaigning for indexation to be applied to the Volunteer Management Activity and for the program to be ongoing. We are very pleased that the Government has heard us on this issue."

However, this budget shows that there needs to be a focused investment in grants and funding that clearly identify, acknowledge and value the voluntary workforce and its place as part of the wider Australian workforce. This includes volunteers, managers of volunteers and the organisations who involve and support them.

"When there are 6 million Australians engaged in formal volunteer activities and programs across the community sector, emergency service and through other vital government programs, it is critical that this work is being factored into the budget."

"With no dedicated resource allocation for volunteering in areas such as the NDIS, services are forced to absorb costs and use existing funding to support their volunteer workforce", said Ms Picone.

As we move into the election period, we hope there will be considered thought on the massive contributions to GDP volunteering provides and the need to strategically invest in this workforce to ensure government programs are safely and appropriately supported.

Some other highlights include:

- \$10 million p.a. for Volunteer Grants in 2019-20, which has also been projected in the forward estimates to 2023-24.
- \$527 million for the Royal Commission into violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation of Australians with disability.

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- \$30.2 million in 2019-20 for the Local School Community Fund which will provide \$200,000 to each federal electorate to support priority projects in local schools that benefit students and their communities.
- \$22.6 million to extend and expand the National Community Hubs Program and establish a National Youth Hubs Program.
- \$23.6 million over four years from 2019-20 to enable established National Sporting Organisations, local community organisations, and community groups to deliver diversity and inclusion programs to regional areas using sport and physical activity, as well as extending the Big Issue Street Soccer Community Sport Street Soccer Program.
- Funding certainty for frontline legal services which will total \$370 million (indexed) from 1 July 2020. This funding certainty is important for a sector who form a vital part of our volunteering community.
- A Climate Solutions Package of \$3.5 billion which will see \$137.4 million allocated to fund environmental protection projects, threatened species, the restoration of coastal and waterways and waste recycling.

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