

# Submission on Employment White Paper

November 2022

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## Overview

Given the focus of the Employment White Paper is the nation's workforce, it therefore needs to consider volunteers and their significant role in the workforce.

- Volunteers contribute extensively to the workforce in key sectors, including emergency management and the care and support sector.
- Volunteers are crucial to Australia's charities, which employ 11 per cent of people in Australia and engage 3.4 million volunteers.
- Volunteering creates opportunities to develop skills and facilitates pathways to employment.

Volunteering contributes significantly to Australian life, including to the social and economic functions which support Australia's productivity performance and the wellbeing of Australians<sup>1</sup>.

## Introduction

### About the consultation

The Employment White Paper (the White Paper) builds on the outcomes of the Jobs and Skills Summit<sup>2</sup> that was held in September 2022. The outcomes of a Charities Roundtable<sup>3</sup>, made up of over 70 leaders from across the charities sector, fed into the Jobs and Skills Summit.

The aim of the White Paper<sup>4</sup> is to 'provide a roadmap for Australia to build a bigger, better-trained and more productive workforce.'

### About the submission

This submission responds to the Australian Government's consultation on the Terms of Reference<sup>5</sup> for the White Paper.

This submission was drafted by Volunteering Australia in collaboration with the State and Territory peak volunteering bodies.

## Volunteers are part of the nation's workforce

Given the focus of the White Paper is the nation's workforce, it therefore needs to consider volunteers and their role in the workforce. In many sectors and services, volunteers are a significant element of the workforce. For example:

- Volunteers are vital to the work of **charities**.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/wp-admin/admin-ajax.php?juwpfisadmin=false&action=wpfd&task=file.download&wpfd\\_category\\_id=153&wpfd\\_file\\_id=31450&token=&preview=1](https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/wp-admin/admin-ajax.php?juwpfisadmin=false&action=wpfd&task=file.download&wpfd_category_id=153&wpfd_file_id=31450&token=&preview=1)

<sup>2</sup> <https://treasury.gov.au/employment-whitepaper/jobs-summit>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.communitycouncil.com.au/content/charities-roundtable-jobs-and-skills-summit>

<sup>4</sup> <https://treasury.gov.au/review/employment-whitepaper/tor>

<sup>5</sup> <https://treasury.gov.au/review/employment-whitepaper/tor>

- Australia's 55,000 charities employ over 11 per cent of all employees and engage 3.4 million volunteers.<sup>6</sup>
- Volunteers are crucial to the Australian **emergency services** sector.
  - Over 200,000 volunteers work in fire services organisations and around 25,000 volunteers work in State and Territory Emergency Service.<sup>7</sup>
  - A further 200,000 volunteers are engaged in over 1,000 registered emergency and relief charities.
- Volunteers contribute extensively to the **care economy**.
  - Almost 65,000 people volunteer in mental health and crisis intervention charities and not-for-profits.
  - Almost 60,000 volunteer in charities and not-for-profits which identified people with disability as their main beneficiaries.
  - Over 43,000 volunteer in charities and not-for-profits which identified veterans and/or their families as their main beneficiaries.
  - 30,883 volunteers are engaged across Commonwealth aged care services.<sup>8</sup>
  - Lifeline engages 10,000 volunteers across Australia. In 2018, these volunteers answered 739,481 calls and initiated 5,840 emergency interventions for Australians in need of crisis support.
  - 30,883 people volunteered across Commonwealth aged care services according to the 2020 Aged Care Workforce Census.

Volunteers should be considered in any national workforce strategy as an essential, but distinct, component of the overall workforce.

## Volunteering develops skills and supports pathways to paid employment

Given a key focus of the White Paper is enhancing employment skills and productivity, volunteering needs to be included given its role in skills development. The capacity of volunteering to build skills and facilitate pathways into paid employment is well established.

- Undertaking voluntary work can equip applicants with **work-relevant skills and experience**.
  - Research undertaken by employment company SEEK found that 95 per cent of employers identify that volunteering is just as credible as paid work.<sup>9</sup>
  - 92 per cent of employers identified that relevant volunteering experience gave a candidate an advantage in job interviews.<sup>10</sup>
  - A quantitative study from the US found that people who volunteered were 27 per cent more likely to find employment than those who did not volunteer.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.acnc.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2022-06/Australian%20Charities%20Report%20-%208th%20edition.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.pc.gov.au/research/ongoing/report-on-government-services/2022/emergency-management>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2021/10/2020-aged-care-workforce-census.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.seek.com.au/career-advice/article/3-reasons-volunteering-can-put-you-ahead-of-the-pack>

<sup>10</sup> *ibid*

<sup>11</sup> [https://americorps.gov/sites/default/files/evidenceexchange/FR\\_2013\\_VolunteeringasaPathwaytoEmployment\\_1.pdf](https://americorps.gov/sites/default/files/evidenceexchange/FR_2013_VolunteeringasaPathwaytoEmployment_1.pdf)

- Volunteering is important from an inclusion perspective as it can help **reduce barriers** for people seeking employment, including people with disability.
  - In qualitative research, people with disability have indicated that their volunteering helped them to build personal skills, access networking opportunities, and find paid roles.<sup>12</sup>
  - Volunteering among people with disability can reduce feelings of alienation and loneliness and allow an individual with disability to shift from being a recipient of welfare services into an empowered provider of services to others.<sup>13</sup>
- Volunteers play a significant role in Australia’s **education and training sector**. According to the General Social Survey<sup>14</sup>, 946,200 people volunteered for education and training organisations in 2020.

## Recommendations

Given the focus of the Employment White Paper is the nation’s workforce, it therefore needs to consider volunteers and their significant role in the workforce.

The White Paper should consider the outcomes of the Charities Roundtable<sup>15</sup>, which includes the following recommendations relating to volunteering:

- Recognise the true costs of delivery of services, including managing volunteers, and paying what it takes. This includes appropriate provision for on-costs, digital skills, training and development. There are big risks to service quality, consistency and sustaining the workforces of charities if this is not undertaken<sup>16</sup>.
- Value and incorporate volunteer engagement and management into workforce planning and policy for the charities sector.
- Recognise and invest in volunteering as a pathway to skills and personal development, workforce engagement and improved wellbeing.

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<sup>12</sup> Galit Yanay-Ventura, ““Nothing About Us Without Us” in Volunteerism Too: Volunteering Among People with Disabilities,” *Voluntas* 30, no. 1 (2018): 147,163, doi:10.1007/s11266-018-0026-7

<sup>13</sup> *ibid*

<sup>14</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (June 2021) ‘Table 10.1 Persons aged 15 years and over who have undertaken unpaid voluntary work through an organisation in last 12 months, Characteristics of voluntary work—By Sex, estimate’ [data set], General Social Survey 2020, <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/people-andcommunities/general-social-survey-summary-results-australia/latest-release>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.communitycouncil.com.au/content/charities-roundtable-jobs-and-skills-summit>

<sup>16</sup> See: <https://www.socialventures.com.au/work/paying-what-it-takes-report/>

## Authorisation

This submission has been authorised by the Chief Executive Officer of Volunteering Australia.



Mr Mark Pearce  
Chief Executive Officer

## Endorsements

This position statement has been endorsed by the seven State and Territory volunteering peak bodies.



## About Volunteering Australia

Volunteering Australia is the national peak body for volunteering, working to advance volunteering in the Australian community. The seven State and Territory volunteering peak bodies work to advance and promote volunteering in their respective jurisdictions and are Foundation Members of Volunteering Australia.

Volunteering Australia's vision is to promote a strong, connected, and resilient Australian community through volunteering. Our mission is to lead, strengthen, and celebrate volunteering in Australia.

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