

MEDIA RELEASE



Wednesday 15 May 2024

Federal Budget lacks strategic consideration of volunteers

Volunteers are central to key government priorities identified in the Budget, including the environment, aged care, disability, domestic and gender-based violence, and cost of living. While volunteering is mentioned throughout the Budget, it lacks a strategic, whole-of-government approach to resourcing and supporting volunteering in Australia. More strategic support for a thriving volunteering ecosystem is essential to progressing these priorities.

We welcome the continuation of the Volunteering and Community Connectedness funding stream and measures to address cost-of-living pressures for everyone in Australia. However, volunteers and volunteer involving organisations remain under immense pressure. Cost-of-living pressures increase operating costs and demand for services, and at the same time reduce people's capacity to volunteer. Half of all registered charities in Australia engage no paid staff and are run entirely by volunteers. Increased resourcing for Australia's not-for-profit sector is needed to support volunteers and address the ongoing cost-of-living crisis.

The Budget includes funding for the Australian Bureau of Statistics to deliver an enhanced annual General Social Survey, which has previously collected key national data on volunteering. More comprehensive and frequent data on volunteering is vital to support the implementation of the National Strategy for Volunteering (2023-2033). Chief Executive Officer of Volunteering Australia, Mark Pearce said, "Securing funding for the enhanced annual General Social Survey underscores the critical importance of comprehensive data on volunteering. This investment is essential for driving forward the National Strategy for Volunteering, ensuring we have the insights necessary to empower and strengthen our volunteering ecosystem in the years ahead."

Volunteering Australia's [Pre-Budget Submission](#) called for targeted, strategic investment in volunteering to enable the Australian Government to meet key priorities and progress the co-designed National Strategy for Volunteering. We recommended the following initiatives:

1. Provide volunteering cost-of-living relief through an expanded Volunteer Grants program.
2. Fund volunteering infrastructure and the continuation of the Volunteer Management Activity.
3. Resource National Strategy for Volunteering implementation.
4. Develop a National Volunteer Passport.
5. Establish an Environmental and Climate Change Volunteering Capacity Building Program.
6. Implement a national initiative to address loneliness through volunteering.
7. Develop a National Disability Services Volunteering Framework.

"The Federal Budget demonstrates the need to think strategically about how volunteering contributes to societal and economic outcomes. We continue to call upon the government to invest in the implementation of the National Strategy for Volunteering.

"The role and value of volunteer workers needs to be explicitly recognised and better understood in these reform agendas, and further measures taken to promote sustainable volunteering into the future. The work that

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volunteers do is not a 'nice to have'; it is essential work that supports our schools and hospitals, our aged care and disability services, and our ability to support the community in times of crisis. As the National Strategy for Volunteering shows, volunteering requires deliberate and ongoing strategic investment underpinned by adequate resourcing. We cannot afford to ignore the impact that the cost-of-living crisis is having on volunteering," said Mr Pearce.

Next week is [National Volunteer Week](#). This year's theme highlights the diversity of volunteering and volunteers across Australian communities. By promoting and celebrating volunteering as 'Something for Everyone', we can continue to work collectively towards a shared vision where volunteering is at the heart of Australian communities. As we lead into National Volunteer Week, we look forward to hearing more about how the government is supporting volunteering into the future.

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