

# NSW VOLUNTEERING

Friday 30 October 2015

## CREATING A SECOND NSW VOLUNTEERING STRATEGY ENGAGEMENT FINDINGS

### Introduction

On 22 August 2015, the Minister for Multiculturalism announced the development of the second NSW Volunteering Strategy and invited people to share their views on the future of volunteering in NSW.

The consultation process comprised:

- 13 pop up consultations in public spaces and shopping centres across NSW
- 13 facilitated consultations with key volunteer sectors, including: ageing; disability, carers and community support; arts/culture/heritage; culturally diverse communities; education; emergency services; environment; health; parenting; children and young people; religious communities; and sport and recreation
- several digital media entry points, including the NSW Government's Have Your Say website, NSW Volunteering website and volunteer organisations' websites
- an online survey with more than 1,200 respondents
- take home discussion guides for community groups and interagency networks
- separate conversations with young people at Multicultural NSW's Ideation event and the University of Wollongong.

Participants included volunteers, citizens who do not volunteer, volunteer organisations, the community sector, and government and non-government sectors.

This paper outlines the key themes that emerged through the community consultation.

### Background

The first NSW Volunteering Strategy will conclude on 30 June 2016. The positive impact of the resources and tools developed through the first Strategy have made it easier to volunteer in NSW and improved support for the State's 2.1 million volunteers.

The second Strategy will build on the results of the first, and it will be a four year plan to increase the number of people volunteering in NSW.

### Community Consultation

The recent state-wide consultation for the second Strategy has helped the NSW Government to better understand people's experiences and aspirations, and the sorts of changes required to make it easier for more people to participate through volunteering.

A key focus of the engagement process was to include those people who do not yet volunteer. In the consultation pop-ups in shopping centres and malls, 46% of participants were not volunteers. Of this group, 81% would consider it in the future.

For those who do not volunteer, the top 3 barriers provided were:

- no time
- can't find the right opportunity
- caring responsibilities prevent volunteering.

Of those who do not volunteer, reasons to get involved were:

- to receive a feeling of satisfaction
- be respected and valued by everyone in the community
- make a positive difference to others
- have worthwhile work that makes a valuable contribution.

### **Consultation Themes**

The themes set out below incorporate many of the aspirations and opportunities raised through the community consultation.

#### ***Theme 1: Strengthening communities***

Volunteers tell us that their participation improves their sense of wellbeing, makes them more trusting and enables them to foster personal and professional connections. These connections contribute to more inclusive, capable and dynamic communities where people feel that they are respected, valued and that they belong.

Volunteers are also motivated to do something they consider worthwhile. They contribute because they want to give back to the people, organisations and broader communities where they live. At the individual level, volunteers provide hope, support, service and comfort to other community members. At the societal level, they model active, engaged citizenship and contribute to building healthier, more connected communities.

#### **Needs identified:**

- build new connections between local needs and those willing to lend a hand
- develop new volunteering options for time poor people at different stages of their lives
- create volunteering opportunities that meet the expectations of local people and communities.

#### ***Theme 2: Making it easier to volunteer***

Many people want to start, or increase their volunteering contribution but don't know where to look for opportunities. Others tell us they have tried a number of different roles, but that flexible options that accommodate other commitments are difficult to find. This is especially the case for people with families, work responsibilities or other competing interests.

Time constraints make it difficult for people to participate even though they may be motivated. People with physical limitations have also expressed the need for options that allow them to contribute differently, from home or via technology. Young people, who

increasingly interact via social media platforms, apps and the internet, are also more likely to connect and contribute online.

**Needs identified:**

- promoting local volunteering opportunities
- connecting interested people with local organisations, opportunities and contacts
- a volunteering participation portal relevant to people from different backgrounds, ages and with varying degrees of technology literacy
- retaining volunteers at different life stages and expanding volunteer bases.

***Theme 3: Improving volunteer management***

All volunteers deserve dignity, respect and an acknowledgement of their contribution. Alongside recognition, volunteers seek a clear understanding of the roles they are given and what is expected of them. Skilled volunteer managers, who understand the expectations and interests of volunteers at different life stages, will tailor their approach and have greater success supporting and retaining their recruits. Sound management practices, such as induction and established role descriptions, are also required to deliver successful, positive volunteering experiences for people across all age groups.

Volunteer managers and organisations reported the need for more support and resources to effectively manage their volunteers. Industry or pre-accredited training and human resources tools were identified as examples of resources that would improve volunteer management.

**Needs identified:**

- volunteer management training
- best-practice volunteer management
- improved organisational leadership capacity
- improved digital engagement capacity
- improved volunteer dispute resolution.

***Theme 4: Valuing, recognising and celebrating volunteers***

All volunteers deserve to be recognised and celebrated for their contribution to strengthening and sustaining the broader community. Employers who understand and promote the value of volunteering should also be acknowledged for their support.

A mainstream media campaign highlighting the critical role volunteers play, that builds on local and state-based celebrations already in place would help to promote participation across the broader NSW population.

**Needs identified:**

- media campaign to promote the benefits of volunteering
- increased recognition of the positive contribution of volunteers.

***Theme 5: Pathways to participation and employment through volunteering***

Many young people and other people seeking work undertake volunteering as a pathway to employment. The skills, experience, self-confidence and knowledge of workplace cultures

they gain are often highly valued by potential employers, and are some of the benefits volunteering can deliver across the life course.

Often, these skills are not documented, making it difficult for volunteers to produce evidence of their experience. The formal recognition of a volunteer's personal and professional development provides an important record of their experience and competence, and can support a range of formal applications such as entry to further education courses, career changes and job promotions.

**Needs identified:**

- support volunteers transitioning to new roles, including young people gaining employment and older people preparing for new careers or retirement
- recognising volunteers' experience and competence.

## **SECOND NSW VOLUNTEERING STRATEGY – COMMUNITY CONSULTATION SURVEY RESULTS**

A key engagement tool used during the community consultation for the second NSW Volunteering Strategy was an online survey. The survey was accessible through the Department of Premier and Cabinet's 'Have Your Say' website and also available on the NSW Volunteering website from Monday 28 August until Monday 19 October.

This paper highlights the responses provided by the 1209 survey participants, of whom 643 (68.7%) were female and 293 (31.3%) were male. The results for each question have been listed by highest to lowest rate of agreement.

**Q. As a volunteer I want to:**

- contribute to a cause/organisation I believe in
- make a positive difference to others
- get involved in my community
- receive a feeling of satisfaction
- have a personal feel good experience
- have worthwhile work that makes a valuable contribution
- develop skills
- be respected and valued by everyone in my community
- enhance my employment prospects
- bank time to maybe get support from someone else later.

**Q. If you haven't been able to volunteer in the past year, please tell us more.**

- no time
- I can't find the right opportunity
- I don't know where to start
- my caring responsibility takes up all my time
- I don't know how
- caring for children keeps me fully occupied
- I don't know what I would get out of volunteering

- transport is a problem
- my health doesn't allow it.

**Q. Volunteers in the community should:**

- have worthwhile work that makes a valuable contribution
- receive a feeling of satisfaction
- make a positive difference to others
- have a personal feel good experience
- be respected and valued by everyone in my community
- get involved in my community
- bank time to maybe get support from someone else later
- be able to meet a Centerlink participation requirement
- undertake community service ordered by the court
- pay down a state debt through volunteering.

**Q. What are the most important things volunteers need?**

- a clear understanding of the expectations of volunteer roles
- training to improve their skills
- proper volunteer management
- clear terms and conditions for volunteer work
- clearer information about volunteering options near them
- more say in the way decisions are made about their work
- support with transport to volunteer work
- help finding employment.

**Q. We can make sure that volunteers have fulfilling and worthwhile roles by:**

- treating volunteers with dignity and respect
- using volunteers to learn new skills
- supporting volunteers to learn new skills
- managing volunteers fairly
- making sure volunteers have a say in decisions that impact on them
- developing communication between volunteers and their organisations
- just being involved in the community as a volunteer is its own reward
- helping volunteers get jobs.

**NSW Volunteering** | Department of Family & Community Services

Postal address: Locked Bag 4001, Ashfield NSW 1800

**W** [www.volunteering.nsw.gov.au](http://www.volunteering.nsw.gov.au) | **E** [volunteering@facs.nsw.gov.au](mailto:volunteering@facs.nsw.gov.au)

**T** (02) 8753 8543