The NSW Government would like to thank all those who contributed to the development of the NSW Volunteering Strategy 2020-2030, in particular the:

- NSW peak body for volunteering, The Centre for Volunteering
- NSW peak body for sport, Sport NSW
- 1,204 individuals and volunteer involving organisations that participated in the online survey
- 62 volunteer involving organisations and NSW Government agencies that participated in the Strategy development process.

Thank you.

Cover image: Volunteer with Marine Rescue NSW
All images in this Strategy are volunteers in action.
© State of NSW 2020

Disclaimer
While every reasonable effort has been made to ensure that the information contained in this document is correct at time of printing, the state of NSW, its agents and employees, disclaim any and all liability to any person in respect of anything or the consequences of anything done or omitted to be done in reliance or upon the whole or any part of this document.

Copyright notice
In keeping with the NSW Government’s commitment to encourage the availability of information, you are welcome to reproduce the material that appears in this document for personal, in-house or non-commercial use without formal permission or charge. All other rights reserved. If you wish to reproduce, alter, store or transmit material appearing in this document for any other purpose, request for formal permission should be directed to the Department of Communities and Justice, 4 Cavill Ave, Ashfield. You are required to acknowledge that the material is provided by this document or the owner of the copyright.
# Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister’s Message</strong></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Volunteering in NSW</strong></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteering and the Premier’s Priorities</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteering is vital for health and wellbeing outcomes</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteering and young people</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A volunteering vision for NSW</strong></td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our vision for the future</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition of volunteering — a common understanding</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Guiding Principles</strong></td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Our Strategic Approach</strong></td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer-centered</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life course</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognising diversity</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole-of-sector and whole-of-community</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State-wide change and locally-driven responses</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Our Focus Areas</strong></td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus Area 1: Growth and Support</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus Area 2: Knowledge</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus Area 3: Value</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Implementation</strong></td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ongoing Conversation</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action Plans</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reporting</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review, Monitoring and Evaluation</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More Information</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Minister’s Message

Volunteers are pillars of our communities.

When I was born, I was diagnosed with albinism and was classified as legally blind.

In order to get through my schoolwork, I needed an electronic magnifier the cost of which my parents simply could not afford.

To my rescue came my local Lions Club who funded this equipment, which literally changed my life. I know all too well the impactful power of volunteers.

As a local MP whose community has been impacted by fire and flood, I also know how volunteers can literally keep us alive through participation in volunteer emergency services and other essential services. These volunteers are a modern-day example of our citizen soldiers.

Our Government and the people of New South Wales value the importance of volunteering and we are proud to release the third Volunteering Strategy, which encapsulates a vision for the next 10 years.

The next decade will be one of change and this strategy seeks to bring people together.

Looking ahead, the strategy better equips us to engage with volunteers and involve volunteer organisations about decisions and issues that affect them. We want to empower the volunteering sector to develop volunteer-owned solutions to challenges.

It is vitally important that we continue to strengthen and increase participation in volunteering. We also need to understand the essence and flavour of volunteering in order to enhance our knowledge, to help us identify emerging trends and approaches to increasing participation.

We will also invest in initiatives that build the sector’s volunteer management capacity, and enhance volunteer recognition. Together we will shape the sector into one that is even more inclusive and adaptable.
Volunteers are diverse and come from all walks of life. All members of the community should benefit from what volunteers contribute. But there should also be benefits that flow from giving the greatest gift of all – your time.

Over the next decade, we will focus on strengthening the sector to be one that is responsive, well-resourced, respectful and recognises all volunteers. Together we will look specifically at the challenges to recruiting and retaining volunteers of different ages, gender, geographical locations and backgrounds.

Developing this strategy has involved many individuals and organisations across the volunteering sector. I personally thank everyone who took part in a consultation session, completed a survey and shared their thoughts with us.

I look forward to seeing this strategy promoting, strengthening and supporting the spirit of mateship, kindness and generosity that characterises the substance and fibre of the people of our great State.

The Hon Gareth Ward MP
Minister for Family and Community Services
Minister for Disability Services
Volunteers provide an irreplaceable service to the community. Volunteering benefits communities, the economy, and the health and wellbeing of volunteers. Organisations cite that volunteers bring new insights, increase the efficiencies and volume of operations, build networks, improve effectiveness and enhance the image of the organisation. Volunteering broadens the networks and professional skills of the volunteers themselves. Volunteering builds social capital.¹,²
Volunteering and the Premier’s Priorities

The NSW Government is focusing on people-centred policy, widely accepted to achieve better outcomes for citizens. Volunteering plays a key part in a people-centred approach to community development.\(^3\)

The NSW Government has named 14 Premier’s Priorities (the priorities) representing a commitment to make a difference and enhance the quality of life for the people of NSW. These priorities address multifaceted and complex social, environmental and economic issues that in many cases are the result of inequality and generational disadvantage.

The support of a strong volunteering sector is crucial to meeting the priorities in two ways:

- A healthy culture of volunteering is vital in the creation of socially inclusive resilient communities which will impact the success of multiple priorities.
- Numerous programs and initiatives addressing the priorities rely on volunteers. These programs are already underway and making significant contributions to their causes. Supporting and strengthening the volunteering sector will enable these organisations and programs to continue to work towards positive outcomes.

Volunteering is a strategy of empowerment at an individual and community level, which aligns with NSW Premier’s commitment to building strong and resilient communities.

Volunteering is vital for health and wellbeing outcomes

The NSW Human Services Outcomes Framework supports NSW agencies to better focus activities towards achieving outcomes for NSW citizens, across seven domains: safety; home; economic; health; education and skills; social and community; and empowerment. The Framework provides a way to understand and measure the extent to which we are making a long-term positive difference to people’s lives.

Volunteers and a healthy volunteer sector play an important role in the delivery of outcomes aligned to the Human Services Outcomes Framework.

Volunteers are on our sports fields, in our schools, hospitals, museums and cultural institutions, national parks, homeless services and animal shelters. Volunteers support people with disability or recovering from illness. During special events volunteers direct us, give us sunscreen, water or first aid. They search for people lost in the bush or surf, they fight fires and respond in times of emergency, often cleaning up after storms or natural disasters. Our lives are touched by volunteers every day, often in ways that are unseen but felt.

In NSW it is estimated that there are over 2 million people who volunteer\(^4\) their time to help others, contributing at least 240 million hours.\(^5\) Their presence and efforts increase social inclusion, and deliver a range of important or essential services to those living in NSW. Into the future, we want to see these numbers grow. We are better off with a vibrant volunteer sector.

Research reveals that volunteering benefits include reduced symptoms of depression, better self-reported health and lower mortality, particularly for the newly retired and older generations. Volunteering expands people’s social networks, and can lead to employment as a result of new skills, expanded networks and experience.
Volunteering transcends age, ability, gender, culture, religion and language. At its core, volunteers are people who share common values working together to build resilient and inclusive communities. Volunteers are people united by a desire to make a difference.

A key outcome of this Strategy will be increased community participation through volunteering.

Volunteers in Sport – helping to keep us active and healthy

In NSW, volunteer numbers in sport are substantial. Volunteer participation in sport has both health and community benefits. Volunteers are our club administrators, coaches, equipment managers, umpires and referees, they manage the canteens, and get the teams and athletes to the venues. Volunteers organise sporting events and competitions, and help to maintain the sporting venues. Our top athletes often attribute their journey to the volunteers that helped them along the way.

Sport based volunteering is also a major avenue for members of the community to get involved in community life. Volunteering in sport can build local connections, increase physical activity, improve health and wellbeing, and reduce social isolation.
Volunteering is advocated for by the United Nations (UN), Australian, New Zealand, North American and European governments as a way to engage people in their local communities and improve social capital, with the potential for public health benefits such as improving wellbeing and decreasing health inequalities. The United Nations 2018 *Thread that Binds* Report recognises that volunteering builds resilient communities by enhancing trust, expanding support bases, and increasing social and human capital.

Investing in volunteering assists the NSW Government to meet its key priorities, using less financial resources while achieving greater social cohesion. Flinders University research found that every dollar invested in volunteering yielded a return of $4.50 to the community - a 450% return on investment.

**Volunteering and young people**

Younger generations are actively involved and interested in volunteering. The 2014 General Social Survey reported that young people aged 15 to 24 accounted for 300,000 of our volunteers in NSW.

Young people are volunteers now and our volunteers into the future. We rely on them now, and will need to rely on them into the future. To ensure that NSW has a strong volunteer sector we need more people, including young people to be actively involved.

Young people are our volunteer leaders and managers of the future. They are our emergency services volunteers, our lifesavers, our event coordinators, our environmental conservation volunteers, our volunteers in schools, in hospitals, and community organisations, and they are our community sports and recreation volunteers.

Many young people view volunteering as a way to support their communities, families and friends. Others see it as a way to gain skills, experience and build social networks, helping them to gain employment in areas that align with their interests.

Young people have told us that they want to be involved but it needs to be easier to participate in volunteering. They have told us that barriers need to be removed and volunteering needs to be flexible and accessible, and have a better range of opportunities.

This Strategy intends to remove or reduce the barriers to volunteering young people experience, because we need young people to be active in volunteering if we are to maintain a healthy and vibrant sector. We want young people to experience the benefits of volunteering in their daily lives, throughout life.
Volunteers with Surf Life Saving NSW
A volunteering vision for NSW

Volunteers with OzHarvest
Volunteering in NSW grows and is vibrant. Everyone can volunteer, more often, throughout life, and their contributions are celebrated.

Our vision for the future

Volunteers make a difference.

Our vision for the next decade is one where communities continue to be strengthened and supported by volunteers; and volunteering is promoted, supported and valued.

Our vision is purposeful, aspirational and inclusive.

To achieve our vision we need to inspire others, share our stories, work in partnership, improve our knowledge, promote the benefits and impact of volunteering, and invest in it.

This Strategy is a state-wide commitment to the importance and impact of volunteering. The investments made by the NSW Government will be responsive to emerging trends, they will be creative and volunteer-centred. Our investments will assist the sector to build its leadership capacity, to be agile and forward-thinking.
Definition of volunteering – a common understanding

This Strategy uses the definition of ‘volunteering’ established by Volunteering Australia, which is:

Volunteering is time willingly given for the common good and without financial gain.¹¹

The definition, revised by Volunteering Australia in 2015, draws attention to three areas which must be fulfilled for an activity to be considered voluntary:

- Firstly, that it is time willingly given, volunteering must not be exploitative nor be used in place of paid employment.
- Secondly, that volunteering must be for the common good, directly or indirectly benefitting people outside the family or household, or benefit a cause.
- Lastly, there is no financial gain, excluding reimbursement or the good practice of a volunteer being recognised or rewarded.

Volunteering includes formal volunteering for an organisation, and informal volunteering where people help out in their community outside of formal arrangements with an organisation. Informal volunteering can also include helping others in the community, outside of an organisation or family unit.

Informal volunteering can include spontaneous volunteering for example, where members of the public help in times of need during or after disasters.
Guiding Principles

A set of seven guiding principles emerged from the strategy consultation process. These principles will not only guide the future of volunteering in NSW, they will shape it. They will influence our actions and investments over the next decade.

The principles will help to ensure that the sector is able to adapt, and:

- all those wishing to be involved are able to do so
- the sector is responsive and well resourced
- volunteer leaders have the tools and support they need
- the contributions made by the sector are recognised and respected
- the benefits and impact of volunteering is understood and recognised; and that the sector grows.

Our Seven Guiding Principles

- **GROWTH**
  - more volunteers are needed, participation in volunteering benefits everyone.

- **RESPECT**
  - volunteer workplaces should be safe, fair, respectful and productive.

- **LOCAL**
  - local solutions best meet local volunteering and community needs.

- **VIBRANT**
  - people from every background are engaged in volunteering.

- **ACCESSIBLE**
  - pathways to participation in volunteering are clear and accessible.

- **AGILE**
  - the volunteering sector is responsive and flexible able to respond to changing needs.

- **SUPPORT**
  - volunteer managers and leaders have the tools and support they need.
Our Strategic Approach

Volunteer with NSW Rural Fire Service
This Strategy articulates how the NSW Government will invest in, support and recognise volunteers and volunteer involving organisations over the next decade, building on the achievements of earlier strategies.

It is important to note that initiatives implemented under this Strategy will augment investment and action already underway.

The NSW Government’s role is multifaceted. The Government is an investor, active change agent and volunteer involving organisation.

**NSW Government’s roles in the volunteering sector**
Volunteer-centered

The needs of volunteers and volunteer involving organisations are at the centre of each investment and activity under the Strategy.

Over the next decade we will:

- engage volunteers and volunteer involving organisations in decision making about issues that affect them
- work with volunteers and volunteer involving organisations to develop volunteer-owned solutions to challenges and opportunities
- work with communities, government, non-government and business sectors to develop place-based solutions that meet local needs
- develop partnerships that strengthen the sector and communities.

Spheres of volunteering – putting volunteering at the centre
Life course
This Strategy recognises that volunteers are all ages, and that involvement in volunteering occurs throughout life.

This Strategy recognises age-related transition points in people’s lives, and provides a framework to develop volunteering opportunities for people across all life stages.

The health and wellbeing benefits of volunteering experienced by volunteers are experienced throughout life and can have lasting benefits.

Volunteering Benefits across the Life Course

EARLY  Young people and students
People who start volunteering early continue to participate throughout life. Volunteering makes social connections and builds valuable skills, experience and networks as young people enter the workforce. Volunteering provides opportunities for young people to explore their interests and participate in their local community, enhancing post school participation and employment.

MIDLIFE  Working and family
People who volunteer throughout life while working or supporting their family are more socially connected, and live happier and healthier lives. Families and communities are more resilient and active. Volunteers build their skills, knowledge, experience and networks. Volunteering helps people who are looking to re-enter the workforce after raising children.

OLDER  Soon to retire or are in retirement
In later life, people that become involved in their local communities through volunteering are more likely to live longer and healthier lives. Participation through volunteering assists the transition to retirement. Volunteering reduces social isolation, improves mental health and provides useful physical activity. Volunteering enables skilled and experienced individuals to remain active, contributing to organisations or causes they are passionate about.
Recognising diversity

Volunteers are diverse and come from all walks of life. They are crucial to the health, wellbeing and resilience of communities across NSW. This Strategy responds to the diversity of our communities, and the challenge of distance that exists in rural and regional areas.

Creative and innovative solutions over the next decade will need to be developed and invested in if the sector and our communities are to respond to changing demographics, and needs.

These realities when combined with the complexity of the volunteering sector, and the wide variation in volunteer roles means a ‘one size fits all’ approach is not appropriate in all circumstances.

Some of the initiatives implemented under this Strategy will directly target areas where improvements can be made to ensure volunteering is as accessible and inclusive as it can be for everyone. This may mean targeted investment in volunteering programs, removing barriers to participation. The NSW Government will work with strategic partners to ensure that anyone interested in getting involved through volunteering is able to do so.

However, this Strategy also recognises that volunteer involving organisations, volunteer managers and coordinators, and volunteers also have much in common. They share common experiences. This is why under the Strategy, many of the initiatives invested in will be open to volunteer organisations, volunteer managers and volunteers regardless of the type of organisation or volunteering role.

Technology

Technology continues to evolve and so must the NSW volunteering sector. Investment in technological solutions that make volunteering easier will be vital to this Strategy’s success.

The NSW Government will work in partnership with the sector to support the development, implementation and uptake of technological solutions.

An agile volunteer sector that utilises current and emerging technological solutions will help to ensure that communities and volunteer involving organisations are resilient.

Whole-of-sector and whole-of-community

The NSW volunteering sector is intertwined with the communities it supports and where our volunteers live.

Over the next decade we will take a whole-of-sector and whole-of-community approach. This means that initiatives will strive to build on and strengthen the whole sector, as well as the communities it supports.

NSW would not be the State it is today without the contributions of volunteers and volunteer involving organisations. This Strategy recognises the impact volunteers and their organisations have, making our local communities and State great. Our communities would not be as vibrant, or resilient without the contributions of our volunteers.
State-wide change and locally-driven responses

The next decade is one of change, change for the sector, and change for communities and volunteers. Business as usual practices that are no longer appropriate or viable will need to evolve into ones that are responsive to local, regional and state needs.

Some initiatives invested in under this Strategy will be locally focused, taking a place-based approach, while others will support the sector across NSW.

We will invest in initiatives that support volunteer involving organisations and grow volunteer participation in community services, sport, emergency services, the environment, arts and culture, health and education just to name a few. Some investments will help individual types of volunteering, while others will benefit everyone regardless of the volunteering focus.
Our Focus Areas

Volunteer with NSW Wildlife Information, Rescue and Education Service (WIRES)
This Strategy focuses on three key areas:

- growth and support
- knowledge
- value.

These focus areas are key components to success regardless of the location, volunteer involving organisation or government agency.

Investment for positive change along the volunteering journey in these three areas will help:

- to grow participation in volunteering
- to make the volunteer experience happier and easier
- to recognise the value and impact of volunteering
- the sector to be agile, accessible, supportive and respectful.

Our three focus areas are key to the sector continuing to have the remarkable impact we all experience every day. The focus areas are supported by our Guiding Principles and Strategic Approach outlined in this Strategy.
Focus Area 1: Growth and Support

Our Objectives:

• Increase participation in volunteering

• Make volunteer recruitment, retention and management easier by building the capacity of the sector.

Our Outcomes:

• Increased participation in community life through volunteering

• Enhanced capacity of the sector to deliver best-practice volunteer management.

Why growth and support?

The landscape of volunteering is changing. The next decade will be characterised by changes in community demographics, local needs and technology.

During the Strategy consultation process many volunteer involving organisations told us that they are facing a significant challenge in recruiting and managing volunteers.

You told us that you need more volunteers either because you don’t have enough to meet demand, or you wish to keep your workforce vibrant. You also told us that support is needed to deliver best-practice volunteer management, including recruitment and retention. We have listened and understand that you have a need for tools and resources, and that you need help to build your capacity through training.

During the consultation process, volunteers told us that there needs to be a wide variety of volunteering opportunities that interest them and meet their needs, that recruitment pathways must be accessible, and utilise technology.

This is why the NSW Government will invest in initiatives that help to grow participation in volunteering, and make it easier.
Focus Area 2: Knowledge

Our Objective:

• Improve understanding of volunteering in NSW.

Our Outcome:

• Expanded knowledge base on volunteering in NSW, supporting a culture of innovation and excellence.

Why knowledge?

Understanding the nature of volunteering in NSW, its impact, the benefits, the value and cost are key for a healthy future. Improving our knowledge of volunteering will help us to understand emerging trends, identify approaches to expanding participation, and identify local solutions to local issues.

During the Strategy consultation process you told us more research is needed. You told us that we need to know more about the nature of volunteering if informed decisions are to be made, solutions designed, lessons learnt, and a culture of excellence is to characterise the future. You also told us that you want investment in research so that the sector can be as agile and vibrant as possible, and the value of our collective efforts are understood.

This is why the NSW Government will invest in initiatives that help to expand our knowledge base.
Focus Area 3: Value

Our Objective:

- Enhance recognition of the value of volunteering and the contributions made by volunteers in NSW.

Our Outcome:

- Increased recognition of the value of volunteering and the contributions made by volunteers in NSW.

Why value?

Valuing the impact of volunteering, as well as the contributions made by volunteers and organisations is vital. Meaningful recognition is a key way to inspire, motivate, recruit and retain volunteers.

Publicly acknowledging the contributions made by volunteers is a good way to say thank you. It is critical to maintaining and enhancing a culture of volunteering. Recognition directly aligns to the guiding principles of this Strategy – in particular, growth, vibrancy and respect.

During the Strategy consultation process you told us that most volunteers want their efforts to be recognised and respected. You told us that you want your stories to be told, in order to raise awareness about the difference being made. You also told us that you want to be valued for the contributions made at a local level, and as a sector.

This is why the NSW Government will invest in initiatives that help to recognise the contributions made by volunteers, as well as the value and impact of volunteering.
Implementation

Volunteer with a local toy library
Achieving our vision for volunteering in NSW, requires a whole-of-sector and whole-of-community approach. This means all partners must work together.

**Ongoing Conversation**

Over the next decade, the NSW Government will invest in the volunteering sector. We will strive to keep the conversation and collaboration going with volunteers, volunteer involving organisations, relevant peak organisations, and government agencies.

Ongoing engagement is an essential part of the Strategy’s implementation. The NSW Government is committed to the volunteer-centred approach outlined in this Strategy.

**Action Plans**

The Department of Communities and Justice will lead the implementation of this Strategy.

This Strategy will be supported through a series of phased Action Plans. The Action Plans will typically be two years in duration.

Over the next decade our efforts will shift and evolve as needs change, and technological solutions emerge. We will integrate lessons learnt, try new initiatives, and undertake research. New or expanded initiatives will be detailed in the phased Action Plans.

Our Action Plans will include partnership projects that engage the most appropriate partners across Government, volunteer involving organisations, and the broader community.

**Reporting**

Every two years the NSW Government will publish a Report Card. The Report Card will highlight initiatives commenced, completed, achievements to date and case studies.

The Report Card will be publicly available on the NSW Volunteering Website, and other related websites as appropriate.

**Review, Monitoring and Evaluation**

The NSW Government will develop an Evaluation Plan and Outcomes Framework to measure and report on progress against the Strategy’s objectives.

An Interim Evaluation Report will be published in Financial Year 2025/26 and a Final Evaluation Report in 2030.

**More Information**

An electronic version of this Strategy and further information can be found at www.volunteering.nsw.gov.au
Endnotes


2 Price Waterhouse Coopers Australia 2016, State of Volunteering in Australia, Volunteering Australia


4 Refer to the NSW Volunteering Strategy 2020-2030 Statistical Snapshot document.

5 Productivity Commission, 2010, Contribution of the Not-for-Profit Sector, Australian Government


9 Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2014, General Social Survey Data Tables (Table 22.1)

10 Office of the Advocate for Children and Young People, 2018 and 2019, Consultation feedback from young people during two Youth Forums, and the consultation discussions during the development of the Regional Youth Framework

Volunteer with Riding for the Disabled Association NSW