

**REPORT**

**NATIONAL VOLUNTEERING STRATEGY  
CONSULTATION**

<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1. INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>2. SCOPE OF CONSULTATION .....</b>	<b>6</b>
2.1 Characteristics of Respondents .....	7
<b>3. MAIN FINDINGS.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>3.1 Engaging volunteers .....</b>	<b>7</b>
Awareness and promotion of volunteering opportunities .....	9
Raising the profile of volunteering .....	10
Costs involved in volunteering .....	10
Barriers specific to emergency services.....	11
Encouraging volunteering among a more diverse population.....	12
Barriers to recruitment by volunteer-involving organisations .....	13
<b>3.2 Addressing protection, risk management and training issues for volunteers .....</b>	<b>14</b>
Regulatory requirements, guidelines and red tape .....	15
Volunteer management policies, procedures and risk.....	17
Insurance and liability.....	18
Police and working with children and vulnerable people checks .....	18
Training .....	19
<b>3.3 Responding to emerging trends and issues .....</b>	<b>21</b>
Flexibility.....	21
Technology .....	22
An Ageing Population .....	22
Corporate Volunteering .....	23
<b>3.4 Recognising, supporting and valuing volunteers.....</b>	<b>23</b>
Supporting volunteers .....	25
Recognition of Volunteer Managers and Coordinators .....	25
<b>4. CONCLUSION.....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>5. GLOSSARY .....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Appendix A - National Volunteering Strategy, Consultation Paper .....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Appendix B - Online Survey Questionnaire.....</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>Appendix C - Characteristics of Respondents .....</b>	<b>46</b>

## **Executive Summary**

This report presents the findings of a consultation process conducted by the Australian Government to inform the development of a National Volunteering Strategy. The National Volunteering Strategy will outline the Australian Government's vision for volunteering over the next 10 years and provide a framework that encourages a responsive and supportive volunteering environment.

The consultation process was from 9 June 2010 to 25 July 2010 and was designed to seek feedback from a broad cross-section of the volunteering community about the proposed direction of the National Volunteering Strategy. Feedback was sought through a consultation paper (Appendix A) seeking written submissions and an online survey (Appendix B).

A total of 854 responses were received. More than half of all respondents indicated that they are from not-for-profit organisations, with the largest number of respondents involved in the community sector. Responses were received from organisations of varying size and number of paid staff and volunteers.

The key findings from the consultation process are outlined below.

### **Engaging volunteers**

A diverse range of issues arose in relation to the engagement and retention of volunteers.

- Governments and community need to better promote volunteering as a positive avenue for community contribution, as well as specific opportunities for volunteer participation. Promotional activities need to target a diverse cross-section of the community, such as culturally and linguistically diverse communities and young people.
- Suggested mechanisms for achieving greater awareness of volunteering include the establishment of a national online database, use of new forms of technology to engage with, and disseminate information to, a range of audiences, and promotion of volunteering opportunities through local media.
- Increased promotional efforts should be matched by the development of appropriate and diverse opportunities for volunteer participation within volunteer-involving organisations.
- The various costs associated with volunteering, both for volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations, can be significant barriers to participation.
- Training and skills development opportunities should be increased in the emergency management sector to help engage new volunteers and grow the pool of potential volunteers.

## **Addressing protection, risk management and training issues for volunteers**

Issues related to volunteer protection, risk management and training emerged as significant from the consultation process.

- National standards for volunteer-involving organisations are useful, but need to be flexible, available online, free of charge and relevant to a range of organisations and different sectors.
- Regulatory and legislative protections for volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations are vital, but also cumbersome due to their quantity and lack of consistency across jurisdictions. Greater collaboration between regulatory bodies and more in-depth consultation with the volunteering community are required in order to reduce red tape, establish streamlined, uniform and relevant regulations, and eliminate duplication.
- Police and working with children checks are essential, but costly and time consuming to undertake. They need to be transferrable between organisations and jurisdictions.
- Liability insurance is essential for volunteer-involving organisations but is overly complex and expensive. Suggestions for alleviating the financial and administrative burden include the introduction of a national insurance system, umbrella insurance coverage for small agencies, and government subsidisation of the cost of insurance.
- Effective volunteer management helps improve the efficiency of organisations and increases their capacity to comply with and implement risk management strategies.
- Ready access to appropriate and inexpensive training for volunteers and volunteer managers is vital and needs to be increased.

## **Responding to emerging trends and issues**

Feedback from consultation highlighted the changing nature of volunteering in Australia and the increasingly diverse range of ways in which people want to volunteer.

- People increasingly want to volunteer with a range of different organisations, participate in episodic and project-base volunteering, combine travel or work with volunteering, and volunteer online.
- Volunteer-involving organisations need to accommodate and encourage these emerging trends through the development of suitably flexible opportunities for involvement, while continuing to cater for traditional forms of participation.
- Information technology, especially the internet, can be better harnessed by volunteer-involving organisations to make participation in volunteering more accessible.

- Some emerging forms of volunteering may pose new challenges in regulation and insurance. Solutions to these new challenges are needed.

### **Recognising, supporting and valuing volunteers**

A range of views were expressed through the consultation process relating to volunteer recognition, including how and by whom it should be undertaken.

- Recognition and celebration of volunteer efforts is important and would encourage more volunteers to get involved.
- There are diverse ways to recognise volunteers, including large-scale celebratory events, smaller community-based activities and the distribution of tangible items to volunteers such as certificates of appreciation.
- Volunteer managers and coordinators are important but often unrecognised and inadequately supported.
- Volunteer recognition should incorporate practical support measures, such as improved resourcing, accreditation of skills gained through volunteer work, increased training opportunities for volunteer managers and, from the corporate sector, time off/paid leave for employees to volunteer.

### **Conclusion**

The feedback to the consultation process is evidence of a committed and engaged volunteering community that cares strongly about its future. The diversity of views expressed will be a valuable source of information in the development of the National Volunteering Strategy.

# 1. Introduction

This report sets out the findings of the consultation undertaken to inform the National Volunteering Strategy.

Volunteers play a critical role in community life in Australia and make a significant social and economic contribution. Volunteering also provides a way for individuals to connect with local, national and international communities and opens pathways for personal growth and skills development.

The Australian Government is committed to supporting volunteers and encouraging Australians from all walks of life to participate in their communities by volunteering.

It is important to ensure that volunteering continues to increase and is able to meet the needs of all Australians, especially in light of changing community norms, an ageing population and emerging technology.

To help achieve this, the Australian Government is developing a National Volunteering Strategy, which will set out its vision for volunteering over the next 10 years. The National Volunteering Strategy will provide a framework that encourages a responsive and supportive volunteering environment.

To ensure the needs and views of the volunteering community are adequately reflected in the National Volunteering Strategy, a consultation process was designed to seek input from a broad cross-section of relevant stakeholders. Those consulted include individual volunteers, volunteer-involving organisations, the business and corporate sectors, and various levels of government.

## 2. Scope of consultation

A consultation paper and online survey were developed to obtain feedback on the direction and content of a National Volunteering Strategy. The consultation period was from 9 June 2010 to 25 July 2010. Input was invited on the five key areas set out below.

- Engaging new volunteers
- Responding to emergencies and building community resilience in the face of challenges
- Addressing protection, risk management and training issues for volunteers
- Responding to emerging trends and issues
- Recognising, supporting and valuing volunteers

The consultation paper (**Appendix A**) and online survey (**Appendix B**) were distributed in June and July 2010 to key organisations and individuals within the Australian volunteering community.

A high level of interest was shown by the volunteering community, with a total of 854 responses received (154 responses to the consultation paper and 700 responses to the online survey).

## **2.1 Characteristics of Respondents**

Just over half of all respondents identified as from not-for-profit organisations (50.1 per cent). The remainder identified as individuals (39.7 per cent) or as representing Commonwealth or State/Territory government (5.1 per cent), local government, (4 per cent) and the private sector (1.1 per cent).

A significant number of respondents identified as from the community/welfare sector (38.1 per cent). The next largest group were from the emergency services sector, (14.5 per cent) followed by the health sector (10.7 per cent). The remaining responses were received from the arts/heritage, business/professional/union, education/training, environment/animal welfare, international aid/development, law/political/justice, parenting/children/youth, religious, and sports/physical recreation sectors, with a small amount of responses also received from ethnic and ethnic Australian groups.

A significant number of respondents reported that they reside in Queensland (26.7 per cent), followed closely by Victoria (23.3 per cent), South Australia (18.8 per cent) and New South Wales (16.4 per cent).

Respondents from organisations were also asked about the characteristics of their organisation.

- More than half of respondents reported that their organisation engages large numbers of volunteers (51.4 per cent engaged more than 60 volunteers in a year). The remainder engaged less than 20 volunteers (27.9 per cent) or between 40 and 59 volunteers in a year (8.3 per cent).
- The number of paid staff employed by organisations varied – almost one third employed 50 or more full-time equivalent staff (30.9 per cent), the remainder employed less than 20 (39.2 per cent) or between 20 and 49 full-time equivalent staff (9 per cent). There were also a considerable number of organisations without paid staff (20.9 per cent).

More detailed information about the characteristics of respondents is included in **Appendix C**.

## **3. Main Findings**

The main findings to emerge from the consultation process are explored below.

The quantitative data presented in graphs and tables is from the online survey. The more detailed feedback from the consultation paper is used to further explore these findings.

### **3.1 Engaging volunteers**

Growing the volunteer base and engaging new volunteers through inclusive and flexible strategies is an issue that has arisen in many volunteer discussion forums.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This issue was raised by the Volunteering Policy Advisory Group and the State and Territory Volunteering Officials' Group, and through other discussion forums such as the Australian Youth Forum.

To explore this issue further, the consultation process sought feedback on why people volunteer, impediments to volunteering, and ways government and community can encourage more people to volunteer, including those from different backgrounds and with diverse needs and abilities.

**Table 1: What do you think are the main reasons people volunteer?**

Answer Options	Response %	Response Count
Wanting to give something back to the community	84.0	577
Having a sense of personal satisfaction	59.7	410
Increased sense of wellbeing	30.0	206
Personal and/or skills development	49.3	339
Social interaction/making friends	51.8	356
Commitment to a cause	53.6	368
Wanting to help out others in my neighbourhood or community	51.5	354
Other (please specify)		77

As shown in Table 1, respondents identified “wanting to give something back to the community” as the most important motivation for volunteers (84 per cent). The next most commonly identified motivations were “gaining a sense of personal satisfaction” (59.7 per cent) and “commitment to a cause” (53.6 per cent). Volunteering was also perceived as “providing an important avenue for social interaction and inclusiveness” with more than half of respondents (52 per cent) identifying this as an important reason for participation.

A limited capacity to engage volunteers was identified as an issue by some respondents, particularly those in regional, rural and outer metropolitan communities. Difficulty engaging new volunteers often was seen to cause “burn out” among existing volunteers.

Respondents were also asked about the reasons people choose not to volunteer (refer to Table 2). Most indicated that it wasn’t that they don’t want to volunteer, but that they don’t have the necessary time and have competing priorities (85 per cent). This issue is addressed in more detail under *Section 3.3 Emerging Trends*.

*“...most people live busy lifestyles, and are likely to volunteer in organisations which take account of this fact...”<sup>2</sup>*

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<sup>2</sup> Individual volunteer

**Table 2: What do you think are the main reasons people don't volunteer?**

Answer Options	Response %	Response Count
Not knowing about volunteering opportunities	51.8	352
Not feeling welcomed by the community or the volunteering organisation	25.6	174
The volunteering opportunities available aren't suitable or appealing	35.7	243
Busy life and competing priorities	86.8	590
Feeling like they don't have the necessary skills or experience to volunteer	35.4	241
Not having the time or capacity to undertake the required training	40.1	273
Costs involved in volunteering (e.g. having to pay for petrol, bus fares, training, courses, etc.)	46.6	317

The next most commonly cited barriers to volunteering were a lack of awareness or knowledge about volunteering opportunities (51.8 per cent) and the costs involved in volunteering (46.6 per cent).

When asked what government and community could do to encourage more people to volunteer, suggestions mainly centred around:

- increasing promotion of volunteering opportunities;
- raising the profile of volunteering;
- appealing to a more diverse population; and
- reducing barriers to volunteering, including costs and misconceptions.

These ideas are discussed in more detail in the following sections.

### **Awareness and promotion of volunteering opportunities**

A lack of community awareness about volunteering was raised as a significant impediment to engaging new volunteers. Respondents felt that both government and community need to better promote volunteering as a beneficial and worthwhile contribution to Australian communities and as an activity with many personal benefits for volunteers. Respondents also indicated that a lack of information about specific opportunities for participation prevents people from volunteering.

Respondents expressed a need for greater promotion and advertisement of volunteering opportunities through mechanisms such as:

- a comprehensive online portal to access available opportunities for volunteer participation;
- new forms of information technology, including social networking, to disseminate information on volunteering, advertise avenues for participation and engage with people from a range of age groups and backgrounds;
- better promotion of volunteering opportunities through Volunteer Resource Centres and volunteering peak bodies; and
- local media to promote opportunities for participation.

Some respondents highlighted the limited capacity of individual organisations to undertake their own marketing and promotion due to availability of funding and the level of expertise within the organisation to undertake these activities.

## **Raising the profile of volunteering**

Respondents also identified a need to raise the profile of volunteering on a national basis and across all sectors of the community. In relation to the engagement and recruitment of volunteers, there was a high degree of consensus that the role of volunteering is not prominent enough in the minds of the Australian public and needs to be widely promoted. There was also a call to promote the diversity of modern volunteering and create an image of volunteering as beneficial for everyone involved.

*“Promote the benefits that volunteering has – not only for the community or cause but also the proven effect on the health and wellbeing of the volunteer.”<sup>3</sup>*

Some respondents felt that promoting volunteering would be best achieved through prominent public activities such as parades, awards ceremonies for volunteers and the creation of national monuments dedicated to volunteering. They mentioned events such as National Volunteer Week as a good example of suitable recognition practices. Others felt that the promotion of volunteering in the community would be more effectively achieved through media channels such as television campaigns, national newspaper advertisements and internet publicity.

Another suggestion was to develop and implement a national volunteering brand, which would be represented by a prominent and recognisable symbol and used to forge a positive image of volunteering and the many different avenues for participation that it entails.

Some respondents also suggested that local forms of volunteer promotion, including through community radio and newspapers, would be effective in engaging volunteers.

## **Costs involved in volunteering**

The costs associated with volunteering were seen as a barrier to the engagement and recruitment of volunteers. Respondent concerns were primarily based around the lack of funding to support the operation of volunteer-involving organisations, for purposes such as volunteer training, and to alleviate the out-of-pocket expenses incurred by volunteers. As indicated in Table 2, almost half of responses (46.6 per cent) identified the costs associated with volunteering as a main reason people don't volunteer.

There was a perception among some respondents that out-of-pocket expenses, such as petrol, training, travel, background checks, equipment and uniforms prevent people from taking up volunteering and continuing to volunteer. These expenses were also considered to be a burden on volunteer-involving organisations supporting their volunteers and delivering services.

There was considerable feedback calling for greater levels of funding to enable volunteer-involving organisations to better support volunteers, in particular to employ more staff (e.g. full-time volunteer coordinators, administrative staff), provide training to volunteers and volunteer managers, and better promote volunteering and organisation activities.

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<sup>3</sup> Volunteer Coordinator

*“...it takes well resourced services to advocate and develop volunteering in the community...”<sup>4</sup>*

There was also considerable feedback about making it easier for people to volunteer through the provision of concessions for travel, petrol vouchers, food vouchers, training and uniform allowances, and tax credits/deductions or other tax incentives for people who volunteer.

### **Barriers specific to emergency services**

The consultation process sought feedback on attracting and supporting emergency service volunteers. Overall, the issues raised were similar to those for volunteering generally, although with some differences in emphasis.

**Table 3: What do you think are the main reasons why people don't volunteer for emergency services?**

<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response %</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Not knowing about volunteering opportunities	34.3	214
Not feeling welcomed by the community or the volunteering organisation	12.7	79
The volunteering opportunities available aren't suitable or appealing	24.2	151
Feeling like they don't have the necessary skills or experience for volunteering in emergency services	<b>75.9</b>	<b>473</b>
Costs involved in volunteering (e.g. having to pay for petrol, bus fares, training, courses, etc.)	32.7	204
Think they may be placed in a dangerous situation	49.1	306
Busy life and competing priorities	63.4	395
Can't afford to leave their job/business for extended periods of time	65.5	408
Other (please specify)		96

*“It is crucial to maintain the skill level of the volunteers participating in this very important volunteering field. The skills, knowledge and experience of long standing volunteers need to be captured and passed on to new volunteers coming into the emergency management sector.”<sup>5</sup>*

As shown in Table 3, approximately three quarters of respondents (75.9 per cent) indicated that a lack of perceived skills or knowledge is the main factor preventing prospective volunteers from getting involved. Other reasons included not being able to leave their business or job for extended periods of time (65.5 per cent) and not having enough time within their daily lives to commit to volunteering (63.4 per cent). These responses suggest a strong perception among volunteers that volunteering for emergency services requires a significant time commitment.

When asked to identify the main issues facing emergency services organisations in attracting and supporting volunteers, more than half of all respondents (59.2 per cent) indicated training related issues and a difficulty attracting volunteers with specific professional skills (refer to Table 4). Feedback to the consultation paper is consistent with this data but emphasises the need for more training for volunteer

<sup>4</sup> Library volunteer

<sup>5</sup> Individual volunteer

managers and supervisors. Suggestions for growing the number of skilled volunteers centred around:

- greater promotion and marketing of the need for, and benefits of, volunteering (e.g. media, community stalls);
- greater community recognition of the efforts of volunteers;
- providing more incentives for volunteers (e.g. through the tax system, paid time off work);
- encouraging more young people to volunteer;
- compensating employers for the loss of staff who volunteer (e.g. payroll tax breaks);
- increasing funding for training;
- more flexible training options for volunteers (e.g. online and/or from home);
- reducing red tape; and
- maintaining a database of pre-assessed skilled volunteers.

**Table 4: What do you think are the main issues facing emergency services organisations in attracting and supporting volunteers?**

Answer Options	Response %	Response Count
Not being able to attract enough volunteers	48.2	281
Not being able to attract enough volunteers with specific professional skills	59.2	345
Costs involved in training and developing volunteers	<b>62.1</b>	<b>362</b>
Ensuring emergency services managers are adequately trained and skilled to effectively lead and manage volunteers	61.2	357
Other (please specify)		93

### Encouraging volunteering among a more diverse population

An increasingly diverse segment of the population engages in volunteering activities. The consultation paper asked respondents to consider how people with a range of needs and from different backgrounds can be better supported to become volunteers.

Respondents felt there was a need to promote volunteering to emerging sectors of the community, most prominently young people and those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, through:

- promotional activities that are tailored towards a culturally diverse target audience and that take into account cultural variation between perceptions of volunteering; and
- new forms of technology (e.g. social networking)

*“A better understanding and specific strategies related to older adults, young people and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds may be required.”<sup>6</sup>*

<sup>6</sup> Commonwealth Government Department

An increased promotional effort among diverse sectors of the community needs to be matched by the development of suitable avenues for participation. As evident in Table 5, over half of respondents (52.9 per cent) felt that a lack of appropriate support infrastructure prevents volunteer-involving organisations from including some volunteers. Respondents felt that volunteer-involving organisations could better engage with and support diverse sectors of the community by:

- appealing to members of culturally and linguistically diverse communities by engaging translation services and offering avenues for participation that accommodate and reflect cultural variation;
- developing partnerships with multicultural communities;
- establishing infrastructure, facilities and support services to better engage with and support people with disabilities;
- developing school-based curriculum vocational volunteering programs to raise the profile of volunteering in schools and encourage young people to participate; and
- collaborating with other volunteer-involving organisations to provide incentives and benefits for volunteers.

*“Perhaps we could look at ways to open up the thinking of established volunteers and educate them in embracing youth and diversity without having them feel that they themselves are becoming ‘obsolete’ or that they need to change their ways.”<sup>7</sup>*

In light of these emerging volunteer groups, respondents noted a need for volunteer-involving organisations to be responsive and open to change in order to attract and retain new volunteers.

Approximately one quarter of respondents (25.6 per cent) indicated that feeling unwelcome prevents people from volunteering. The establishment of more open and inclusive channels for participation within volunteer-involving organisations could ensure that volunteers from a range of backgrounds feel welcomed and encouraged to participate in their communities.

### **Barriers to recruitment by volunteer-involving organisations**

Engagement and recruitment of volunteers is also dependent upon volunteer-involving organisations having the capacity to do so. In addition to addressing the reasons why people are either deterred from, or encouraged to, volunteer, feedback was also sought on barriers to volunteer-involving organisations using more volunteers.

Table 5 shows that the cost of training and developing new volunteers was identified as the main organisational barrier to volunteer engagement (58.4 per cent). This was closely followed by a lack of skilled managers and supervisors of volunteers (53.9 per cent) and of appropriate support and infrastructure to meet the needs of some volunteers (52.9 per cent).

A lack of necessary funding was cited as a reason why volunteer-involving organisations are not able to provide adequate training and development opportunities for volunteers, including training for their managers and supervisors of volunteers.

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<sup>7</sup> Volunteer Coordinator

**Table 5: What are the barriers to volunteering-based organisations using more volunteers?**

Answer Options	Response %	Response Count
Cost involved in training and developing volunteers	<b>58.4</b>	<b>371</b>
Lack of skilled managers and supervisors of volunteers	53.9	342
Reimbursing volunteers for out-of-pocket expenses	40.2	255
Administrative effort and cost involved in undertaking police checks, working with children checks, etc.	44.4	282
Liability issues	41.1	261
Cost of insurance	35.4	225
Lack of appropriate support and infrastructure to meet the needs of some volunteers	52.9	336
Already have enough volunteers	10.2	65

Red tape is another issue frequently raised by respondents as impacting on the effective operation of volunteer-involving organisations and their capacity to meet the needs of volunteers. Issues around red tape included:

- the significant time and effort involved in completing funding agreements and forms;
- onerous reporting requirements; and
- the complexity and time required to deal with insurance issues and operational requirements such as risk management.

These issues are discussed in more detail in the following section, *3.2 Addressing protection, risk management and training issues for volunteers*.

### ***3.2 Addressing protection, risk management and training issues for volunteers***

*“Risk aversion is also a major barrier. We need to enter a conversation of balance between rights and responsibilities, duty of care and dignity of risk, to overcome it.”<sup>8</sup>*

Volunteer protection, risk management and training emerged as significant issues from the consultation process. Inextricably linked to these issues were those of funding and the extent to which the availability of funding enables volunteer-involving organisations to provide adequate management, support and protection for their organisations, staff and volunteers.

Volunteer protection is also an issue for people who volunteer informally and not through a volunteer-involving organisation. These volunteers are often exposed to greater levels of risk because they are not afforded the support and protection of a volunteer-involving organisation.

<sup>8</sup> Employee of volunteer-involving organisation

**Figure 1: What volunteer protection issues do you think are most in need of attention?**

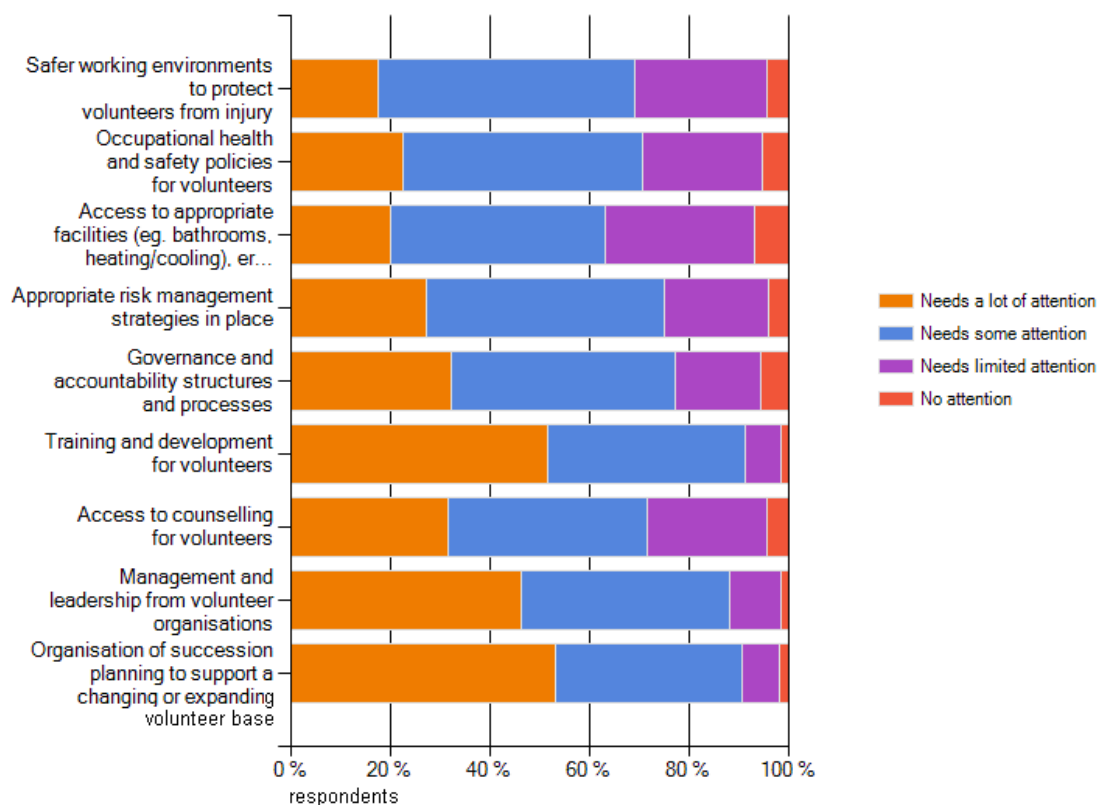


Figure 1 identifies key volunteer protection issues and the extent to which respondents consider they require attention. Issues identified as in need of most attention are discussed in more detail in the following sections.

### Regulatory requirements, guidelines and red tape

Legislative and regulatory requirements are put in place to govern volunteer work practices and to protect volunteers, volunteer-involving organisations and members of the public from risk. Respondents to the consultation process indicated that such requirements often prove cumbersome to volunteer-involving organisations due to their quantity and the lack of consistency between levels of government and between regulatory bodies in their development and application. One respondent mentioned the requirement to obtain a license for ladder climbing as one of over 20 legislative requirements with which his organisation is required to comply.

*“The issue of red tape is simply an issue of supporting volunteer organisations to understand, implement and work within regulatory structure.”<sup>9</sup>*

<sup>9</sup> Volunteering peak body

National standards and accredited training were raised by some respondents as mechanisms for improving the quality of volunteer practices. In relation to national standards, feedback related mostly to the existing National Standards developed by Volunteering Australia. Feedback suggested that:

- the Standards need to be more flexible, so they can be used by a variety of organisations (e.g. large and small), and include supplements relevant to different sectors (e.g. health, environment and emergency management);
- they should be free of charge and available online;
- there should be separate standards for volunteer management/coordinator roles;
- templates for processes and procedures should be included in national standards;
- states and territories should have generic processes that align with the National Standards; and
- they should be written in a simpler and more easily understandable format.

*“Ensure organisations taking volunteers adopt the National Standards of Volunteering, understand them and use them in their interactions with their volunteers.”<sup>10</sup>*

Respondents were asked to identify ways in which government could reduce red tape and better support volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations to comply with regulatory requirements. Suggestions to emerge from consultation included:

- clearly define roles between the Commonwealth and State/Territory Governments to remove duplication and simplify regulation, in particular around funding agreements and reporting requirements;
- review Commonwealth/State/Territory legislation and regulations that impact on volunteering to identify duplication and inconsistencies. This review should include volunteer protection requirements;
- develop more general legislative and regulatory conditions with a greater level of applicability to different organisations;
- increase consultation, advice and training when policies change;
- create more effective national standards, with in-depth exploration of the rights and responsibilities of volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations;
- share resources online for volunteers and community groups to access;
- increase consultation with volunteers at the coal face in order to develop more relevant policies; and
- increase funding to enable volunteer-involving organisations to easily comply with legislative and regulatory requirements.

There was also a perceived need to simplify and streamline grants application processes to make it easier for volunteer-involving organisations to gain access to government funds. Proposed methods included:

- the creation of a national database, cataloguing organisation details for use in funding rounds;
- recurrent funding as opposed to one-off grants; and

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<sup>10</sup> Community Projects Manager

- standardised application procedures.

## **Volunteer management policies, procedures and risk**

Effective volunteer management policies and procedures are essential to manage risk for volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations. They are also areas identified by respondents as in need of significant attention.

- “Management and leadership from volunteer organisations” was identified by nearly half of respondents (46.6 per cent) as in need of a lot of attention and by 42.9 per cent as in need of some attention (refer to Figure 1).
- “Organisation of succession planning to support a changing or expanding volunteer base” was identified by 63.3 per cent of respondents as in need of a lot of attention and by 22.7 per cent as in need of some attention (refer to Figure 1).

*“Recognition that volunteer management is a legitimate professional position that requires suitably skilled/qualified persons in the role rather than volunteer management being an after thought or add on to an existing position...”<sup>11</sup>*

Appropriate volunteer management strategies can help to improve the effectiveness of an organisation and minimise the risk of personal injury to volunteers, negligence and liability. As shown in Figure 1, nearly 70 per cent of respondents indicated that the establishment of safer working environments to protect volunteers from injury is an area in need of attention, and a similar number identified the development of suitable occupational health and safety plans for volunteers.

Respondents felt that an effective way to improve volunteer management policies and increase organisational capacity is by emphasising and investing in the role of a volunteer manager or coordinator. Over half of respondents (54 per cent) indicated that a lack of skilled volunteer managers is an impediment to volunteer-involving organisations using more volunteers (refer to Table 5).

Respondents felt that volunteer managers and coordinators could be better supported by:

- increasing funding for volunteer-involving organisations;
- increasing remuneration of volunteer managers and coordinators;
- more training for volunteer managers;
- accredited qualifications for volunteer managers;
- attributing the same resources to volunteer managers as human resource managers;
- more standard governance training, particularly for volunteer-involving organisation committees and boards; and
- comprehensive national regulatory and occupational standards to ease the burden on volunteer managers.

*“Having a common approach throughout the country would make the management of volunteers easier and the role of volunteers more flexible.”<sup>12</sup>*

<sup>11</sup> Manager of volunteers

<sup>12</sup> Volunteer Coordinator

Respondents also suggested that managers of volunteers need to share information more frequently and collaborate on the development and implementation of organisational standards in order to reduce duplication and related administrative burden.

### **Insurance and liability**

The need to protect volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations from liability emerged as a significant issue during the consultation process. Table 5 shows that over 40 per cent of respondents identified liability issues as a barrier to volunteer-involving organisations using more volunteers.

A strong message to emerge through the consultation process was the need to reduce the cost and complexity of volunteer insurance. Appropriate and up-to-date insurance is important to protect volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations from liability incurred in volunteering activities. Lack of appropriate insurance coverage at volunteer-involving organisations deters volunteers from getting involved and places those that do at undue risk of liability. However, approximately 35 per cent of respondents to the online survey felt that the cost of obtaining appropriate insurance places pressure on volunteer-involving organisations and prevents them from using volunteers (refer to Table 5).

*“...inclusion and coverage of volunteers and volunteer organisations in legislation such as industrial relations, occupational health and safety, workers compensation and standard insurance coverage.”<sup>13</sup>*

Suggestions to alleviate the financial and administrative burden of acquiring insurance included:

- a national insurance system to cover all volunteers;
- umbrella insurance accessibility for small agencies;
- appropriate insurance schemes that take into account the nature, value and diversity of volunteering;
- government subsidisation of the costs of insurance; and
- reduced liability regulations around volunteering.

### **Police and working with children and vulnerable people checks**

Police, background and working with children checks are essential to protecting both volunteers and those they work with. Nonetheless, nearly half of respondents (45 per cent) identified the administrative effort and cost involved in undertaking criminal history and working with children checks as a major barrier to volunteer-involving organisations using more volunteers (refer to Table 5). Many respondents were particularly concerned by the fact that such checks are often not transferrable between different organisations, resulting in duplication and unnecessary expense. This problem was seen as particularly prevalent due to the emerging trend of episodic volunteering and the increasingly short period that volunteers often spend with each organisation.

*“...allow Police Checks to be transferable between agencies...”<sup>14</sup>*

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<sup>13</sup> Individual volunteer

<sup>14</sup> Volunteer Resource Centre

A suggestion raised through consultation to address this issue is to nationalise checks and make them transferrable between different organisations and across jurisdictions. One respondent cited the Blue Card, which is issued by the Queensland Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian, if a person is eligible to undertake work involving children. The Blue Card is valid for three years and enables the holder to move between organisations without the need for repeat checks.

Other suggestions to help ease the burden on volunteer-involving organisations in relation to police, working with children and vulnerable people checks included:

- appropriately fund volunteer-involving organisations so they are able to comply with relevant checks;
- address the inconsistency of child protection legislation between states and territories;
- introduce federal legislation covering working with children checks;
- government subsidisation of police, working with children and vulnerable people checks;
- streamline the documentation requirements that apply when police checks are renewed following three years with one organisation; and
- use the CrimTrac system to reduce the need for multiple police checks of volunteers moving between organisations and jurisdictions.

## Training

Training is an issue that was consistently raised in response to many of the questions asked in the online survey and consultation paper, both in relation to the training of volunteers and of volunteer managers and supervisors. When asked about volunteer protection issues most in need of attention, training and development for volunteers was identified by more than half of respondents (52.4 per cent) as in need of a lot of attention (refer to Figure 1).

The type of work performed by volunteer-involving organisations is diverse, ranging across many sectors and requiring varying levels of skill and experience. Having suitably skilled and experienced volunteers is important to the success of any volunteer-involving organisation. Skilled volunteers enable organisations to deliver effective and targeted services to individuals and families across Australia. Training also assists volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations to comply with the legislative and regulatory requirements of their organisation and of the volunteering sector and to create safe and productive working environments. Providing access to appropriate training was identified as an essential aspect of effective risk management.

*“...increase the availability and accessibility of accredited training in a variety of skill areas.”<sup>15</sup>*

A perceived lack of necessary skills was seen by over one third of respondents (35 per cent) as a reason that people don't volunteer (refer to Table 2). This barrier was even more apparent in relation to the emergency management sector, with over three quarters of respondents (75.9 per cent) identifying a lack of perceived skills and experience as prohibitive to volunteer engagement (refer to Table 3).

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<sup>15</sup> Individual volunteer

On the other hand, the prospect of learning new skills is an important motivation for those considering volunteering. Nearly half of respondents (49.3 per cent) felt that skills development is an important motivation for people wanting to volunteer (refer to Table 1). Training is therefore an important tool through which volunteer-involving organisations can encourage more volunteers to get involved.

Appropriate training for volunteer managers was seen as particularly important. When asked about volunteer protection issues most in need of attention, “management and leadership from volunteer organisations” was identified by 46.6 per cent of respondents as in need of a lot of attention (refer to Figure 1).

Respondents emphasised the need for training directed specifically towards volunteer managers and coordinators as a means of creating more efficient organisations able to better support their volunteers, engage new volunteers and comply with regulations and legislation.

Respondents cited a range of barriers inhibiting access to training for volunteers.

- Access to quality training can be expensive, both for individual volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations. Almost 60 per cent of respondents indicated that costs associated with training are a central barrier to volunteer-involving organisations using more volunteers (Table 5).
- The cost of training is exacerbated by the changing nature of volunteering participation. With a greater amount of volunteers now contributing through short-term projects, the continual requirement to train new volunteers is an increasingly cumbersome expense for volunteer-involving organisations.
- A lack of time or capacity to engage in training may prevent people from volunteering. Capacity may refer to transport, language skills or cultural understanding, and was identified by over 40 per cent of respondents as a reason people don't volunteer (Table 2).
- Volunteers are often required to undertake the same training at different organisations.

*“Provide free cultural diversity training to staff working with volunteers from diverse backgrounds.”<sup>16</sup>*

Suggestions to make training more accessible and affordable for volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations included:

- government funding of training through volunteer-involving organisations;
- government reimbursement or subsidisation for training courses, reducing the financial burden on volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations;
- more online training opportunities to eliminate the need for travel and create interactive avenues for skills enhancement and learning;
- reduction in the unnecessary regulation of volunteer-involving organisations;
- collaboration between organisations on training requirements to avoid duplication;

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<sup>16</sup> Training and Development Coordinator

- generic, affordable training that would be available to all organisations to ensure consistent standards throughout the nation. The provision of online support would be essential to maintaining the integrity of training; and
- accredited volunteer training programs that are more likely to be recognised at multiple organisations.

### 3.3 Responding to emerging trends and issues

The volunteering landscape in Australia is changing. Emerging technology is providing new opportunities to volunteer and a more diverse range of people are looking to donate their time and skills.

Traditional forms of volunteering are still relevant and practiced by many individuals. However, new forms of participation are emerging and need to be accommodated. Changes include a growing preference for online volunteering, more young people and highly skilled early retirees wanting to volunteer, and an increasing interest in short-term or project-based volunteering. These changes pose an additional challenge for organisations in recruiting and retaining volunteers.

Table 6 shows how respondents would like to volunteer in the future, providing some insight into the evolving nature of volunteering and how to capitalise on it.

**Table 6: How would you like to volunteer in the future?**

Answer Options	Response %	Response Count
Being able to volunteer for more than one organisation	42.3	232
I would like my whole family to be able to participate in volunteering	25.1	138
Being able to volunteer from home or online	43.0	236
Participating in a range of different short-term volunteering activities	47.7	262
I would like to do mentoring	39.7	218
Participating in volunteering through my work	33.2	182
Incorporating travel and volunteering	43.9	241
Regularly volunteering for the same organisation/s	<b>49.2</b>	<b>270</b>

#### Flexibility

Developing greater flexibility in the type and nature of volunteering opportunities emerged as a key challenge in responding to a changing volunteering landscape.

*“Flexibility is the key and having an understanding that volunteering today is very different from volunteering 20 years ago.”<sup>17</sup>*

As shown in Table 2, the majority of respondents (86.8 per cent) indicated that “a busy life and competing priorities” are the central reasons people don’t volunteer. Respondents felt that volunteering opportunities need to take into account the pressures and opportunities of the modern world by offering greater flexibility. Patterns of volunteering are evolving, with a shift from traditional long-term and regular volunteering at one organisation towards greater interest in episodic or project-based opportunities.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Individual volunteer

Table 6 shows that nearly half of all respondents (47.7 per cent) would like to participate in a range of different short-term volunteering opportunities in the future. Many respondents pointed out that volunteer-involving organisations need to do more to accommodate this emerging trend by establishing and encouraging avenues for episodic and project-based participation.

Nonetheless, a similar number of respondents (49.2 per cent) indicated that they would like to volunteer on a regular basis for the same organisation, reflecting the need for organisations to continue to accommodate traditional forms of long-term volunteering.

*“Have systems in place and best practise examples that support episodic volunteering.”<sup>19</sup>*

## **Technology**

Technology is becoming more relevant in the volunteering community. The internet now provides increased opportunities for many people to undertake volunteering, particularly those with time, location or physical barriers.

Many respondents felt that new technology could be better harnessed by volunteer-involving organisations to make participation in volunteering more accessible. Almost half of all respondents (43 per cent) indicated their desire to volunteer online in the future. The need for volunteer-involving organisations to accommodate this emerging trend by establishing and maintaining an appropriate technological capacity was perceived as vital. Some suggested that government could either fund or subsidise the necessary upgrades.

The internet also provides greater access to information about volunteering by linking people with volunteering opportunities, providing resources and tools for volunteer management, and facilitating discussion forums and information sharing on volunteering activities and issues.

A number of respondents suggested the need for a comprehensive national database of volunteering opportunities, including details of pre-assessed volunteers to enable opportunities to be matched with skills and experience.

## **An Ageing Population**

Demographic changes such as an ageing population could impact the capacity of volunteer-involving organisations to recruit and retain volunteers. With the expectation of a rise in new retirees in the near future as many “baby boomers” reach retirement age, organisations will need to adapt to the changing needs and expectations of prospective volunteers. Many new retirees will have professional skills to offer and greater expectations of their role in volunteering. Over one third of respondents (39.7 per cent) indicated they would like to mentor other volunteers (refer to Table 6).

Retirees may also like to volunteer using new technology (e.g. online) or while travelling. As shown in Table 6, a significant number of respondents (43.9 per cent) indicated that, in the future, they would like to incorporate travel and volunteering.

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<sup>18</sup> “The changing image of volunteering” Volunteering Australia *Impact*, March 2001, p.8

<sup>19</sup> City Development Officer

## Corporate Volunteering

Corporate volunteering is also having an increasing impact on the volunteering landscape. A growing number of people are choosing to volunteer through work-based volunteer programs, and an increasing number of organisations are adopting such programs. Nearly one third of respondents (33.2 per cent) stated that they would like to combine volunteering and work in the future.

A number of respondents thought that corporate volunteering could be encouraged even further by corporations:

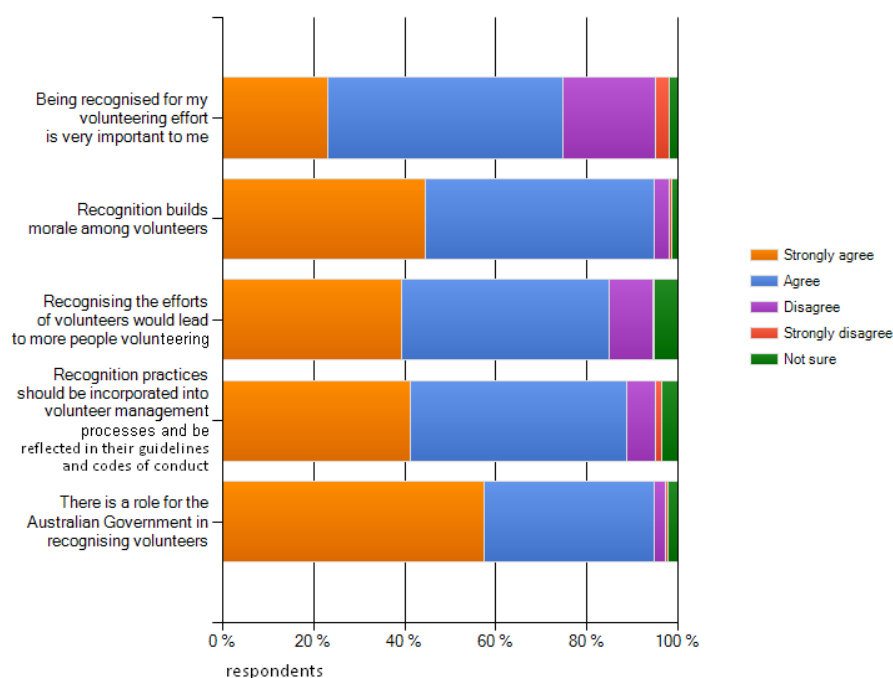
- volunteering core business expertise and mentoring;
- providing donations or tangible assets (e.g. office space, free services) to volunteer-involving organisations; and
- liaising with volunteer-involving organisations at the local level to develop volunteer roles and projects that suit the needs of local employees.

### 3.4 Recognising, supporting and valuing volunteers

*“Let’s find ways to really acknowledge and celebrate the contribution which volunteers make and lets find ways to make that recognition more immediate and meaningful.”<sup>20</sup>*

Volunteers are a substantial asset to Australian society and the economy, contributing over 730 million hours annually. The majority do so without expectation of recognition or reward. Nonetheless acknowledgement of their efforts is important. Through the consultation process, respondents were asked a series of questions on the importance of recognition and the best ways for both government and community to recognise volunteers.

**Figure 2: To what extent do you agree/disagree with the following statements?**



<sup>20</sup> Director and founder of volunteer training organisation

As shown in Figure 2, approximately three quarters of respondents (74.6 per cent) either agreed or strongly agreed that recognition of their volunteer contributions was important. Responses (94.9 per cent) also indicated that recognition is not only sought for personal reasons but is also an important mechanism for building morale among volunteers. This, in turn, creates a more cohesive and purposeful volunteering community and helps to grow the numbers of future volunteers (84.8 per cent).

Other respondents felt that recognition would help to redress the inequality sometimes experienced by volunteers in the workplace by correcting the perception held by some paid staff that the work undertaken by volunteers is of lesser value.

Although there was consensus on the need for volunteer recognition, respondents had diverse opinions on the best way to implement effective and meaningful recognition practices. Some respondents indicated a preference for large public promotional events; others for smaller informal community-based events; and others for recognition through tangible, non-celebratory practices such as accreditation of training, subsidies, etc.

Generally, there was consensus that recognition practices need to value ordinary, everyday volunteers, be available to everyone, and acknowledge that not all volunteers want public recognition.

A variety of suggestions for better recognising volunteers were put forward by respondents, including:

- awards ceremonies (e.g. National or State/Territory Volunteer of the Year), volunteer expos and public parades, especially if these events involved high-profile public figures;
- special appreciation certificates in 2011 for the 10th anniversary of the International Year of Volunteers;
- more consistent recognition of every day volunteer efforts from less visible sectors like amateur sport administration, bush care, library volunteers, school volunteers and hospital volunteers; not just recognition of more exciting or already prominent types of volunteers, e.g. emergency services, or following times of crisis or disaster;
- tangible, but less overt forms of recognition, e.g. certificates of appreciation, volunteer reward cards that provide discounts at local businesses, or a small gift/token of appreciation;
- broad, low key acknowledgement of the contributions of volunteers e.g. documenting volunteer stories on local radio; and
- competitions that are open only to volunteers and with awards that can support their volunteering efforts, such as laptops, petrol vouchers, etc.

The majority of respondents (94.9 per cent) either agreed or strongly agreed that there is a role for the Australian Government in recognising volunteers. However, respondents also expressed a strong view that community has a large and very relevant role to play in recognising the efforts of its volunteers. A considerable number of respondents (88.8 per cent) agreed that recognition practices should be incorporated into volunteer management processes, guidelines and codes of conduct.

There was also a consistent view among respondents that recognition of volunteer efforts is an effective tool for the promotion of volunteering and, in particular, raising the profile of volunteering to increase the number of volunteers. This is discussed under *Section 3.1 Engaging Volunteers*.

### **Supporting volunteers**

Many respondents felt that the best way to recognise volunteers was not through celebratory or promotional measures but through better resourcing and support of volunteers.

Reducing the costs commonly associated with volunteering was seen as a good way to recognise and value volunteers.

Suggestions to better support volunteers included:

- subsidisation of expenses incurred while volunteering, tax breaks etc.;
- certification, accreditation or recognition of skills achieved through volunteering and related training;
- recognition by Centrelink of training obtained through volunteering;
- formal recognition of volunteering as work experience to assist people when looking for paid employment;
- providing volunteers at volunteer-involving organisations with access to the same kinds of company benefits and resources as paid workers; and
- from the corporate sector, time off/paid leave for employees to volunteer.

*“Volunteers should be able to accumulate points for training when on a Centrelink benefit so they can increase their opportunities for paid work.”<sup>21</sup>*

### **Recognition of Volunteer Managers and Coordinators**

The roles of volunteer managers or coordinators were seen as very important and as one which often goes unrecognised and is inadequately supported.

Feedback through the consultation process indicated that volunteer managers and coordinators often operate with insufficient funding and do not always receive the training necessary to fulfil their role.

There was a general view that people in these positions should receive the recognition they deserve through:

- training in volunteer management and volunteer coordination;
- increased funding for their positions; and
- inclusion in volunteer award ceremonies and activities.

*“Recognition that volunteer management is a legitimate, professional position that requires suitably skilled/qualified persons in the role, rather than volunteer management being an after thought or add-on to an existing position.”<sup>22</sup>*

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<sup>21</sup> Volunteer Coordinator

<sup>22</sup> Manager of volunteers

## **4. Conclusion**

The feedback to the consultation process is evidence of a committed and engaged volunteering community that cares highly about its future.

The feedback provided is wide-ranging and will be a valuable source of information for use in the development of the National Volunteering Strategy.

Key findings from the consultation process demonstrate a commitment to fostering a volunteering community that is flexible and innovative, that provides support to its volunteers to ensure they work in safe and supported environments, and that is recognised for the valuable work that it undertakes and the benefits flowing to many thousands of Australians every day.

The findings also indicate that more needs to be done in relation to promoting volunteering in Australia, ensuring adequate recognition is given to Australia's volunteers, better supporting volunteers through training, risk management practices and assisting volunteer-involving organisations to adapt to a changing volunteering landscape by embracing new technology and developing links with the corporate sector and a diverse range of prospective volunteers.

## 5. Glossary

**Blue Card** – A card issued by the Queensland Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian to volunteers who have passed a national check to determine if they are eligible to undertake work involving children. The card is valid for three years.

**Corporate volunteering** – A commitment by an organisation to encourage staff to volunteer, often through time off or paid leave. Corporate volunteering ranges from individual volunteer effort through to team or whole-of-company involvement.

**CrimTrac** – A national information sharing system developed by the Australian Government to support the effective operation of police services and law enforcement agencies across state and territory borders.

**Episodic volunteering** – Temporary volunteering over a short period, interim volunteering for a given time, or occasional volunteering at regular intervals.

**National Standards** – A set of guidelines developed by Volunteering Australia to promote best practice in the management of volunteers.

**National Volunteer Week** – National Volunteer Week is held each year in May and is the largest celebration of volunteers and volunteering in Australia.

**Project-based volunteering** – Volunteering on a specific project or task.

**Red tape** – Excessive or cumbersome regulation, legislation, rules and processes that are considered redundant and bureaucratic.

**Risk Management** – The process of analysing organisational exposure to risk and determining how it can best be minimised or prevented.

**Skilled volunteer** – A volunteer with skills relevant to a particular organisation or project.

**Volunteer-involving organisation** – An organisation that uses volunteers in some aspect of its internal or external operation.

**Volunteering Australia** – The national peak body for volunteering in Australia.

**Volunteering peak bodies** – National and/or state/territory organisations that represent the needs and interests of volunteer-involving organisations and volunteers.

**Volunteer resource centre** – A community-based organisation that matches people with volunteering opportunities and aims to increase volunteering through promotion and practical support.

**Vulnerable People Checks** – Comprehensive criminal record checks for people planning to work with vulnerable people, such as the elderly and people with a disability, to determine whether they pose a threat to those in their care.

**Working with Children Checks** – Comprehensive criminal record check for those planning to work with children, either in a paid or voluntary capacity, to determine whether they pose a threat to children.

## **Appendix A - National Volunteering Strategy, Consultation Paper**

This consultation paper seeks community views on the development of a National Volunteering Strategy.

Volunteers play a critical role in community life in Australia and make a significant social and economic contribution.

The Australian Government is committed to supporting volunteers and encouraging Australians from all walks of life to participate in their communities through volunteering.

A National Volunteering Vision and Strategy will set out the Australian Government's vision for volunteering over the next 10 years. The Strategy will provide a framework for the development and implementation of government policy which encourages a responsive and supportive volunteering environment.

The Strategy will be released to mark the 10 year anniversary of the United Nations International Year of Volunteers celebrated in 2001.

This consultation paper raises a number of key questions about how a Strategy can best support volunteering into the future.

### **Why do we need a National Volunteering Strategy?**

Volunteers are so integral to the way our communities operate - it is hard to imagine life without them. "Australia is a nation of volunteers"<sup>23</sup>. The history of volunteering in Australia shows how they have contributed to shaping this nation.

More than 5.2 million Australians volunteer. This number has grown steadily over the past decades.

For many individuals, volunteering is a way to connect with local, national and international communities. For others, it is a pathway to personal and skills development.

For the communities they serve, volunteers ensure that sport, culture and arts thrive, the environment is protected, communities can recover from the disruption that natural disasters bring and vulnerable members of society are nurtured and supported.

We want to ensure that the number of volunteers continues to grow even in the face of changing community norms, an ageing population and emerging technology.

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<sup>23</sup> 'The Australian way of Volunteering' from Melanie Oppenheimer's *Volunteering, why we can't survive without it*, UNSW Press Sydney 2008

The nature of volunteering in Australia is changing and we need to be able to respond to emerging trends and needs.

A National Volunteering Strategy will:

- articulate a vision for volunteering over the next 10 years that is distinctly Australian, reflecting our unique geography, multicultural make-up and way of life;
- identify where barriers prevent volunteers from participating as much as they would wish to;
- promote opportunities to engage those least likely to volunteer;
- set down a framework to support government decision making and policy development over the next decade; and
- encourage community dialogue about the future of volunteering in Australia.

### What will a National Volunteering Strategy achieve?

A National Volunteering Strategy will aim to contribute to ***an Australian community that is inclusive and supports a vibrant cultural life***

The strategy will seek to achieve this objective by supporting initiatives to:

- **engage** new volunteers;
- **respond to emergencies** and build **community resilience** in the face of challenges;
- address **protection, risk management** and **training** issues for volunteers;
- respond to **emerging trends** and issues; and
- **recognise, support and value** volunteers.

Governments at the national, state and local level provide significant support for volunteering through their current programs. A National Volunteering Strategy will bring together these important activities within a single national framework and highlight the intersection with other government policy agendas such as *Active Ageing*; *Australian Sport: the pathway to success*; *A Healthy and Active Australia*; *Creative Communities*; *Caring for our Country* and *A Stronger and Fairer Australia*.

#### Questions for consideration:

- 1) How can governments, community and corporate organisations best support volunteers?

### Engaging Volunteers

Our many volunteers engage in diverse volunteering activities and increase wellbeing across our society, creating more inclusive communities.

Around one-third of Australian adults volunteer their time, skills and labour through organisations<sup>24</sup>. Many people also take part in a range of volunteering activities in informal settings. Volunteers have a significant influence on the character and culture of our nation.

Volunteers are motivated by a range of factors, often simply wanting to 'give something back' to their communities. But it is a two-way street. Participation in

<sup>24</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006, *Voluntary Work Australia*

volunteering often increases an individual's own level of wellbeing. This in turn contributes to the cohesiveness and vibrancy of the communities in which we all live.

While more people are volunteering across most sectors, average hours of voluntary activities are declining. Volunteering in sport and recreation activities is increasing, but fewer people are volunteering their time in the social welfare sector.

Some people may feel that they are not able to volunteer, for a range of reasons including:

- out-of-pocket expenses sometimes associated with volunteering, such as petrol costs;
- not always feeling welcomed or accepted in existing communities of volunteers;
- young people may feel alienated from traditional models of volunteering; and
- busy lives and competing priorities restrict some people's capacity to commit to regular participation.

Volunteer-based organisations also experience barriers to engaging and supporting volunteers. These include:

- the need for additional support to cater to the particular needs of some volunteers; and
- access to training and professional development to enable them to manage and support more volunteers.

The National Volunteering Strategy presents an opportunity for us to rethink how we can help people to overcome barriers to participation in volunteering activities and grow the number of volunteers across all sectors.

All Australians who want to take a more active role in their communities should have the opportunity to participate and share in the benefits of volunteering. These benefits include an increased sense of achievement and wellbeing, connection with their community and personal and skills development.

A National Volunteering Strategy would aim to encourage and enable participation in volunteering by all people in the community.

Input on the following questions will help us to shape the Strategy.

**Questions for consideration:**

- 2) How can governments and the community work together to encourage more people to volunteer?
- 3) How can people with a range of needs and from different backgrounds be better supported to become volunteers?

**Supporting emergency management volunteers and building resilient communities**

Our 500,000 emergency management volunteers play a vital role in times of crisis and disaster.

The Australian community has shown itself to be incredibly generous with many thousands offering their time when disaster strikes. This generous spirit is greatly valued. In order for this contribution to make a real difference it is important that volunteers are trained appropriately for their own safety and the safety of the communities they are serving. This often means that volunteers need to get involved in their local volunteer emergency services well before the onset of disaster and crisis.

A key challenge for volunteer organisations is ensuring that volunteers are in the right place at the right time with the right skills. There are a broad range of scenarios that could threaten the Australian community such as natural disasters and other crisis situations. In these situations we need a large pool of highly skilled and professional people to call on who can be quickly deployed to respond to the immediate and longer term needs. This requires high levels of planning, preparedness, appropriate training and early engagement.

Technology will also play an increasingly critical role in preparing and mobilising the volunteer community in the future.

***Questions for consideration:***

- 4) How can we best sustain and grow the pool of skilled volunteers in the emergency management sector?

**Training and protecting volunteers from risk**

Volunteering activities should be safe for both volunteers and the communities they serve.

No one likes to deal with unnecessary red tape. However, volunteers need to be well led and properly managed and appropriate management and supervisory structures are critical to protect volunteers. Compliance with necessary insurance, occupational health and safety and appropriate police or working with children checks makes sure that volunteering activities are safe and supported.

Volunteers, as with paid staff, are also increasingly expected to have appropriate skills to fulfill their responsibilities. Volunteers need access to development opportunities to ensure they can effectively contribute in their volunteering capacity as well as build personal and professional skills that will be of value to them in other aspects of their lives.

***Questions for consideration:***

- 5) How can volunteer-based organisations be supported to comply with regulations designed to protect volunteers and the community?
- 6) How can governments work towards better alignment and cooperation to support volunteering efforts and, at the same time, reduce red tape without compromising safety?

## **Emerging trends**

Emerging technology is providing new opportunities for volunteering to overcome time, geographic and physical limitations. Activities including virtual volunteering, online training and social networking have significant implications for the volunteering landscape and will continue to evolve over coming years.

An ageing population and changing patterns of volunteering pose an additional challenge for organisations to recruit and retain volunteers. Individual motivations and approaches to volunteering are also changing with an increase in volunteers who favour short term or project based activities as opposed to a regular ongoing commitment. Volunteers are also more likely to be geographically mobile, for example 'grey nomads' and relief crews from across Australia who volunteer in emergency and disaster situations.

People who volunteer in multiple organisations may find it difficult to consistently capture and document volunteering effort over time. Needing to document and validate skills, qualifications and current police and working with children checks each time they commence in a new volunteering role can be an administrative and cost burden for the volunteers and the organisations they support. New models of volunteering such as family volunteering and virtual volunteering and fundraising, create new challenges in how we manage risk and liability issues.

Ensuring that the volunteering community has capacity to respond to these and other emerging opportunities and challenges is an important component of the National Volunteering Strategy.

### ***Questions for consideration:***

- 7) How can government, community and corporate Australia best respond to this changing volunteering environment?

## **Recognising the contribution**

Volunteers are often the quiet achievers. Many of us take for granted their valuable work.

We need to recognise and celebrate volunteers. Their stories need to be told. Recognition needs to be incorporated in volunteer management practice and be reflected in codes of conduct, standards and guidelines.

### ***Questions for consideration***

- 8) How can governments and communities best recognise and celebrate the contribution of all volunteers?

## Providing Your Feedback

You are encouraged to review and answer the questions within this survey as a guide to provide a written submission. Your valuable input will help to develop a National Volunteering Strategy that is reflective of the ideas and needs of communities, volunteers and volunteer organisations.

All submissions can be forwarded to [AustralianNVS@fahcsia.gov.au](mailto:AustralianNVS@fahcsia.gov.au) or sent to:

Volunteering Policy and Planning Section  
Community Investment Branch  
PO Box 7576  
Canberra Business Centre  
ACT 2610

OR

By fax: 02 6133 8405

The closing date for written submissions is 30 June 2010.

Please note: the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) is processing all of the written submissions received.

### Your contact details (optional)

Name:

Address:

Phone/Fax:

Email:

Website:

### What perspective are you bringing to the survey?

- Individual
- Non-profit organisation
- Local Government
- Government
- Private Sector
- Philanthropic organisation with an interest in the National Volunteering Strategy



**Survey Questions**

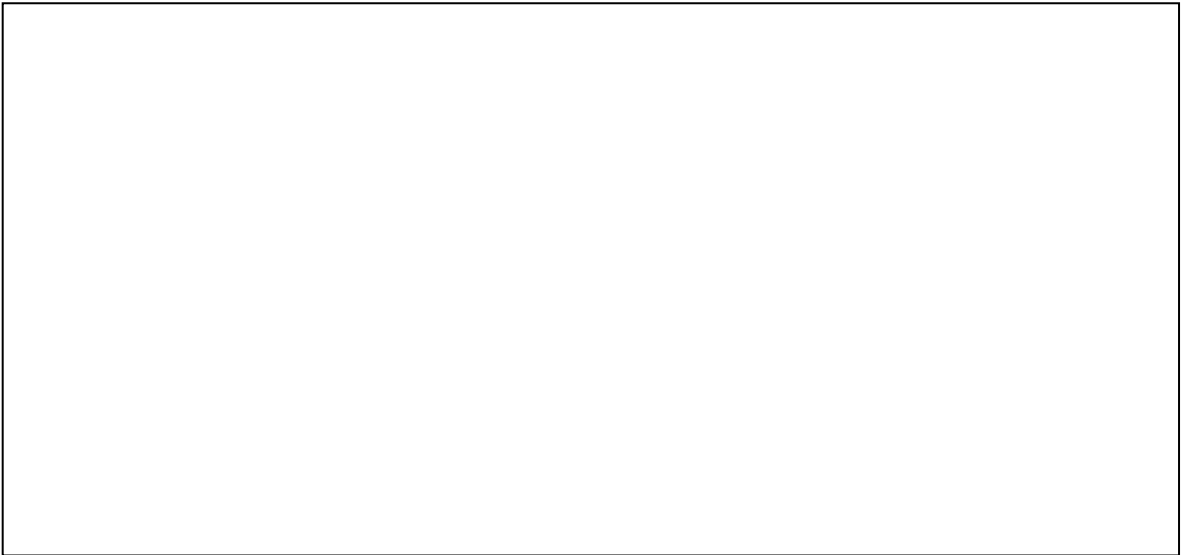
1. How can the following best support volunteers?

Governments:

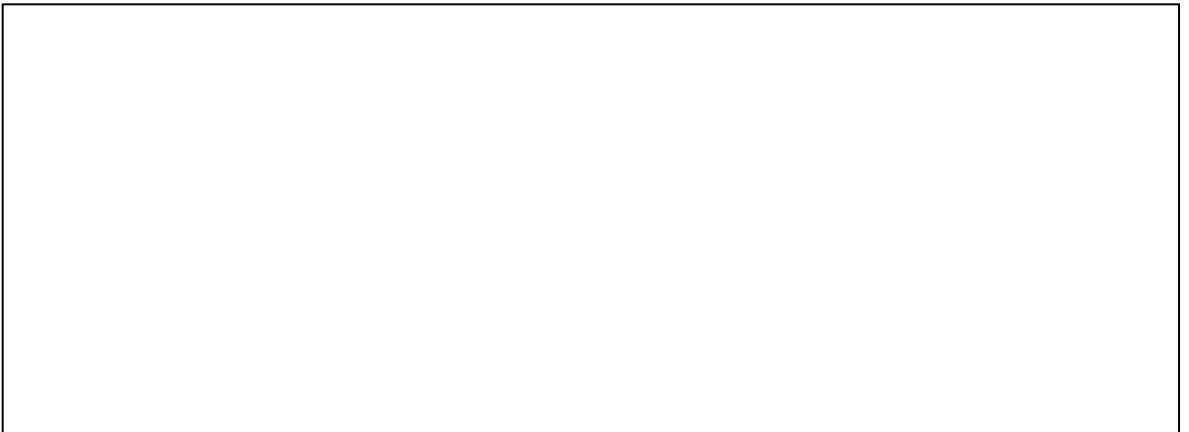
Community:

Corporate organisations:

3. How can governments and the community work together so more people can volunteer?



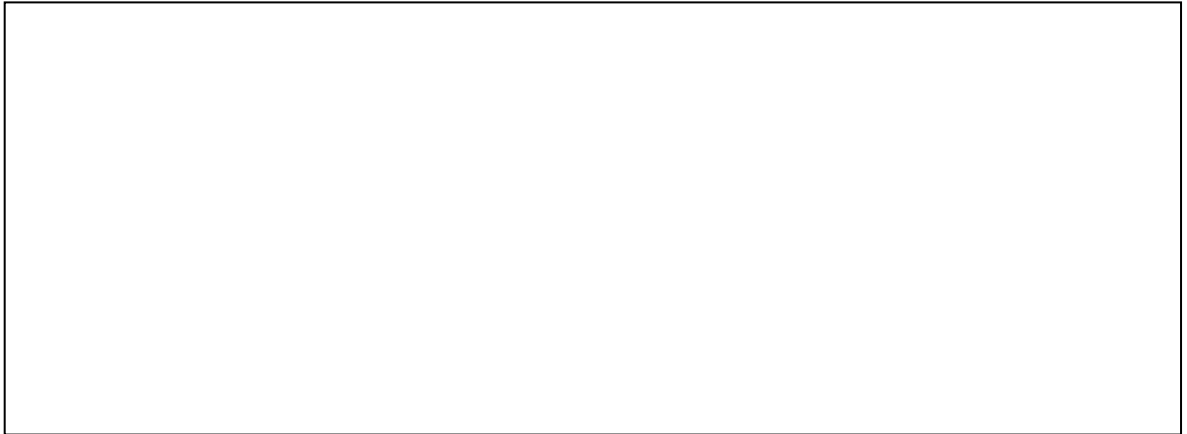
4. How can people with a range of needs and from different backgrounds be better supported to become volunteers?



5. How can we best sustain and grow the pool of skilled volunteers in the emergency services and recovery sector?



6. How can volunteer-based organisations be supported to comply with regulations designed to protect volunteers and the community?



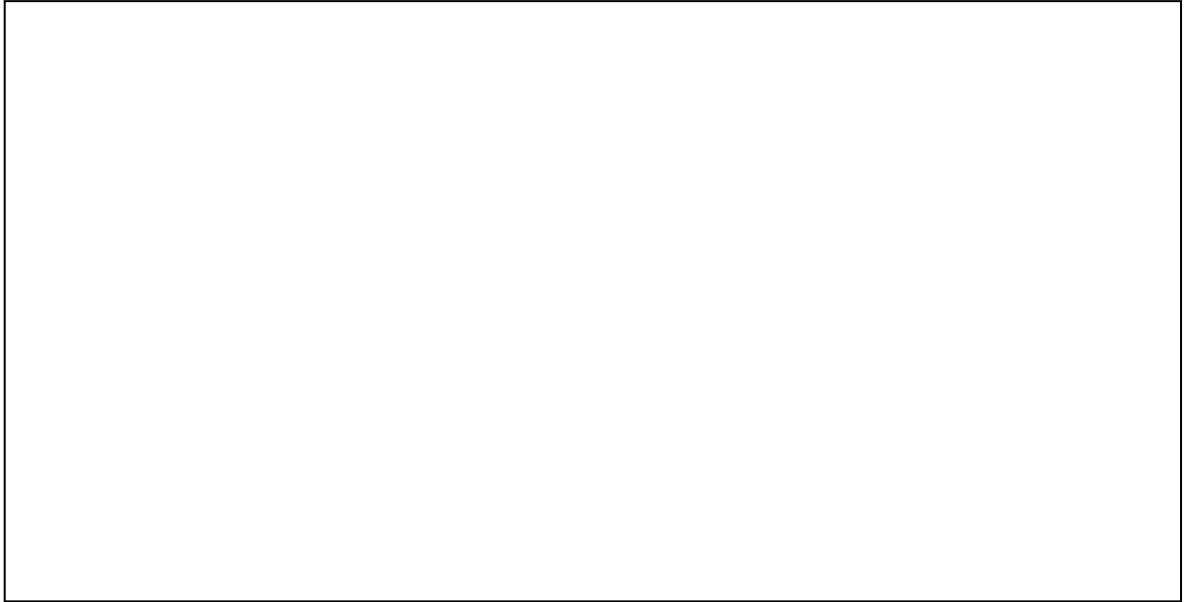
7. How can governments work towards better alignment and cooperation to support volunteering efforts and, at the same time, reduce red tape without compromising safety?



8. How can government, community and corporate Australia best respond to this changing volunteering environment?



9. How can governments and communities best recognise and celebrate the contribution of volunteers?



Once again thank you for participating in this survey.

Please continue to use the Towards a National Volunteering Strategy site for sharing information and contributing to discussions at <http://volunteering2021.ning.com/>

Additional information on the development of a National Volunteering Strategy can be found at <http://www.socialinclusion.gov.au/Initiatives/Pages/Volunteering.aspx>

## **Appendix B - Online Survey Questionnaire**

### **Introduction**

Thank you for taking part in this survey. It should take about 10 minutes to complete. Your answers will help shape the development of a National Volunteering Strategy. Volunteers play a critical role in community life in Australia and make a significant social and economic contribution.

The Australian Government is committed to supporting volunteers and encouraging Australians from all walks of life to participate in their communities through volunteering.

A National Volunteering Strategy will set out the Government's vision for volunteering over the next 10 years. It aims to contribute to an Australian community that is inclusive and supports a vibrant cultural life. The Strategy will achieve this by:

- encouraging the engagement of new volunteers
- building community resilience in the face of challenges
- addressing protection, risk management and training issues for volunteers
- responding to emerging trends and issues
- ensuring all volunteers are recognised, supported and valued by all Australians

We want to find out how you think a National Volunteering Strategy can best support volunteering into the future.

### **Engaging Volunteers**

Our many volunteers engage in diverse volunteering activities.

They are motivated by a range of factors, often simply wanting to give something back. Volunteering can increase an individual's own sense of wellbeing and, at the same time, contribute to the cohesiveness and vibrancy of communities.

While more people are volunteering across most sectors, average hours of voluntary activities are declining.

Many people who would like to volunteer feel they are not able to for a variety of reasons. Volunteering organisations also experience barriers to engaging and supporting volunteers. The National Volunteering Strategy presents an opportunity for us to rethink how we can help people to overcome barriers to volunteering and grow the number of volunteers across all sectors.

#### **1. What do you think are the main reasons people volunteer?**

- Wanting to give something back to the community
- Having a sense of personal satisfaction
- Increased sense of wellbeing
- Personal and/or skills development
- Social interaction/making friends
- Commitment to a cause
- Wanting to help out others in my neighbourhood or community
- Other (please specify)

## 2. What do you think are the main reasons people don't volunteer?

- Not knowing about volunteering opportunities
- Not feeling welcomed by the community or the volunteering organisation
- The volunteering opportunities available aren't suitable or appealing
- Busy life and competing priorities
- Feeling like they don't have the necessary skills or experience to volunteer
- Not having the time or capacity to undertake the required training
- Costs involved in volunteering (eg. having to pay for petrol, bus fares, training, courses, etc.)
- Other (please specify)

## 3. What are the barriers to volunteering-based organisations using more volunteers?

- Cost involved in training and developing volunteers
- Lack of skilled managers and supervisors of volunteers
- Reimbursing volunteers for out-of-pocket expenses
- Administrative effort and cost involved in undertaking police checks, working with children checks, etc.
- Liability issues
- Cost of insurance
- Lack of appropriate support and infrastructure to meet the needs of some volunteers
- Already have enough volunteers
- Other (please specify)

## 4. What can the community do to encourage more people to volunteer?

## 5. What can government do to support more people to volunteer?

## Building Resilient Communities

Australia's 500,000 emergency management volunteers play a vital role in times of crisis and disaster. Many thousands of Australians want to help when disaster strikes. In order for this contribution to make a real difference, it is important that volunteers are appropriately trained for their own safety and the safety of the communities they are serving.

A key challenge for volunteering organisations is ensuring that volunteers are in the right place, at the right time, with the right skills. This requires a high level of planning, preparedness, appropriate training and early engagement.

## 6. What do you think are the main reasons why people don't volunteer for emergency services?

- Not knowing about volunteering opportunities
- Not feeling welcomed by the community or the volunteering organisation
- The volunteering opportunities available aren't suitable or appealing
- Feeling like they don't have the necessary skills or experience for volunteering in emergency services
- Costs involved in volunteering (eg. having to pay for petrol, bus fares, training, courses, etc.)
- Think they may be placed in a dangerous situation
- Busy life and competing priorities
- Can't afford to leave their job/business for extended periods of time
- Other (please specify)

## 7. What do you think are the main issues facing emergency services organisations in attracting and supporting volunteers?

- Not being able to attract enough volunteers
- Not being able to attract enough volunteers with specific professional skills
- Costs involved in training and developing volunteers
- Ensuring emergency services managers are adequately trained and skilled to effectively lead and manage volunteers
- Other (please specify)

## 8. What do you think government can do to sustain and grow the pool of skilled volunteers in the emergency management sector?

## 9. What do you think the community can do to sustain and grow the pool of skilled volunteers in the emergency management sector?

## Training and Protecting Volunteers from Risk

Volunteering activities should be safe for both volunteers and the communities they serve. For this to happen, appropriate management and supervisory structures need to be in place. Compliance with necessary insurance, occupational health and safety, and appropriate police or working with children checks makes sure that volunteering activities are safe for everyone. Volunteers are also increasingly expected to have skills and up-to-date qualifications and may need to access professional development opportunities and training.

## 10. What volunteer protection issues do you think are most in need of attention?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Safer working environments to protect volunteers from injury</li> </ul>	<p>Needs a lot of attention      Needs some attention      Needs limited attention      No attention</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Occupational health and safety policies for volunteers</li> </ul>	<p>Needs a lot of attention      Needs some attention      Needs limited attention      No attention</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Access to appropriate facilities (eg. bathrooms, heating/cooling), ergonomic resources, safety equipment</li> </ul>	<p>Needs a lot of attention      Needs some attention      Needs limited attention      No attention</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Appropriate risk management strategies in place</li> </ul>	<p>Needs a lot of attention      Needs some attention      Needs limited attention      No attention</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Governance and accountability structures and processes</li> </ul>	<p>Needs a lot of attention      Needs some attention      Needs limited attention      No attention</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Training and development for volunteers</li> </ul>	<p>Needs a lot of attention      Needs some attention      Needs limited attention      No attention</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Access to counselling for volunteers</li> </ul>	<p>Needs a lot of attention      Needs some attention      Needs limited attention      No attention</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Management and leadership from volunteer organisations</li> </ul>	<p>Needs a lot of attention      Needs some attention      Needs limited attention      No attention</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Organisation of succession planning to support a changing or expanding volunteer base</li> </ul>	<p>Needs a lot of attention      Needs some attention      Needs limited attention      No attention</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Other (please specify)</li> </ul>	

## **11. How can government reduce red tape and administrative burdens for volunteers and volunteer organisations?**

## **12. What else can government do to help organisations protect volunteers?**

### **Emerging Trends**

New ways of volunteering are continually emerging, such as family volunteering, corporate volunteering, informal caring, mobile disaster relief volunteering, and short term or project-based activities as opposed to a regular ongoing commitment. Capturing, documenting and validating volunteering efforts, skills, qualifications, checks, etc. consistently over time can prove difficult and administratively burdensome for volunteers and organisations.

Emerging technology is providing new opportunities for volunteering to overcome time, geographical and physical limitations. Activities including online volunteering and social networking have significant implications for the volunteering landscape of the future. These trends present both opportunities and challenges for Australian volunteering. It is important to ensure that the volunteering community has the capacity to respond to these and other emerging trends.

## **13. How would you like to volunteer in the future?**

- Being able to volunteer for more than one organisation.
- I would like my whole family to be able to participate in volunteering.
- Being able to volunteer from home or online.
- Participating in a range of different short-term volunteering activities
- I would like to do mentoring
- Participating in volunteering through my work
- Incorporating travel and volunteering
- Regularly volunteering for the same organisation/s
- Other (please specify)

## **14. What barriers might slow down the successful emergence of these new ways of volunteering?**

- Difficulty in creating new types of volunteering opportunities
- Liability and risk management issues
- Administrative effort or red tape
- Insufficient take-up of new technology
- Lack of training and development for volunteers
- Lack of management and leadership skills for new ways of volunteering
- Other (please specify)

## **15. What can government do to best respond to this changing volunteering environment?**

## **16. What can the community do to best respond to this changing volunteering environment?**

## 17. What can corporate Australia do to best respond to this changing volunteering environment?

### Recognising the Contribution

Volunteering helps to shape our nation. So it is important that the invaluable efforts of our volunteers be recognised and celebrated.

## 18. To what extent do you agree/disagree with the following statements?

· Being recognised for my volunteering effort is very important to me	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not sure
· Recognition builds morale among volunteers	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not sure
· Recognising the efforts of volunteers would lead to more people volunteering	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not sure
· Recognition practices should be incorporated into volunteer management processes and be reflected in their guidelines and codes of conduct	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not sure
· There is a role for the Australian Government in recognising volunteers	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not sure

## 19. What is the best way of recognising and celebrating our volunteers?

## 20. What should be the role of government in recognising and celebrating volunteers?

## 21. What should be the role of the community in recognising and celebrating the contributions of volunteers?

### You and your organisation

Thank you for completing the survey and helping to shape the National Volunteering Strategy. Please take the time to tell us a little about yourself and/or the organisation you are from.

## 22. What perspective are you bringing to the survey?

- Individual
- Non profit organisation
- Private sector
- Local government
- Commonwealth or State/Territory Government
- Other (please specify)

**23. If you are from an organisation, how many volunteers does your organisation engage on average each year?**

- None
- Less than 20
- 20 to 39
- 40 to 59
- 60 or more
- No paid staff

**24. How would you describe the size of your organisation?**

- Less than 5 full-time equivalent paid staff
- 5 to 19 full-time equivalent paid staff
- 20 to 49 full-time equivalent paid staff
- 50 or more full-time equivalent paid staff

**25. At which level does your organisation primarily work?**

- National
- State/Territory
- Metropolitan
- Regional
- Rural
- Remote
- International

**26. How would you describe your organisation type?**

- Arts/ Heritage
- Business/professional/union
- Community/welfare
- Education/training
- Emergency Services
- Environment/Animal Welfare
- Health
- International aid/development
- Law/justice political
- Parenting/children/youth
- Religious
- Sport/physical recreation
- Other recreation/interest
- Ethnic and ethnic Australian groups
- Other (please specify)

**27. Which State/Territory do you live in?**

**28. Do you have any other comments?**

**29. If you would like to be notified of the outcomes of this survey, please specify your name, organisation and email address.**

Thank you! If you would like to know more about the National Volunteering Strategy, the link is at:  
[www.socialinclusion.gov.au/Initiatives/Pages/Volunteering](http://www.socialinclusion.gov.au/Initiatives/Pages/Volunteering)

## Appendix C - Characteristics of Respondents

Through the consultation process, respondents were asked a series of questions about the perspective they were bringing to the consultation. Those that identified as being from an organisation were also asked questions about their organisation, such as the size and type of organisation, the number of volunteers and paid staff, and the sector in which it primarily operates. These questions were designed to gain insight into the characteristics of respondents and to determine whether certain issues and needs are more prevalent in different areas of the volunteering community.

The following tables provide a snapshot of the characteristics of respondents.

As shown in Figure 3, participants in the survey primarily identified as either individual volunteers (39.7 per cent) or as representing the views of not-for-profit organisations (50.1 per cent). A much smaller but still notable portion of responses (9.1 per cent) represent the views of a government body, primarily at a local level.

**Figure 3: What perspective are you bringing to the survey?**

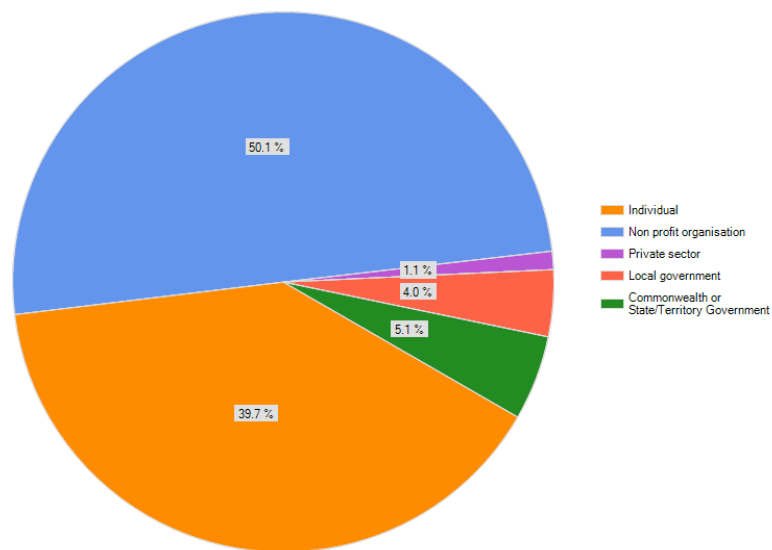
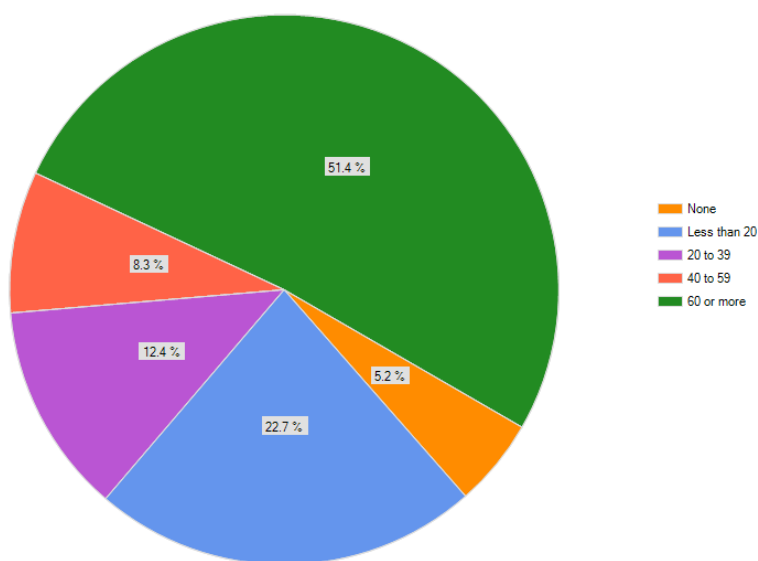


Figure 4 shows that the majority of responses (51.4 per cent) were received from organisations that engage large numbers of volunteers. A significant number of responses (27.9 per cent) also came from small organisations engaging less than twenty volunteers each year.

**Figure 4: If you are from an organisation, how many volunteers does your organisation engage on average each year?**



Respondents were also asked to rate the size of their organisation, based on the number of full-time equivalent paid staff. As evident in Figure 5 below, responses originated from organisations of varying size. The largest portion of responses came from organisations with over 50 full time equivalent staff, however organisations with no paid staff constituted approximately 20 per cent of respondents.

**Figure 5: How would you describe the size of your organisation?**

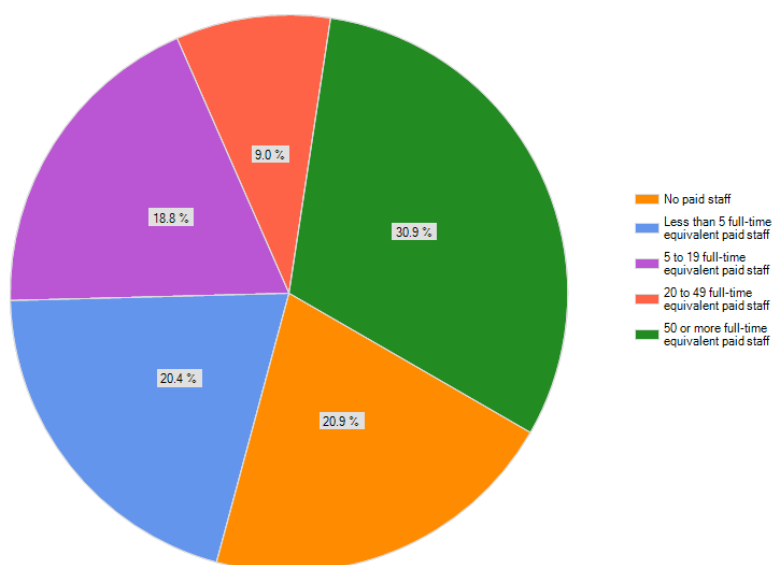
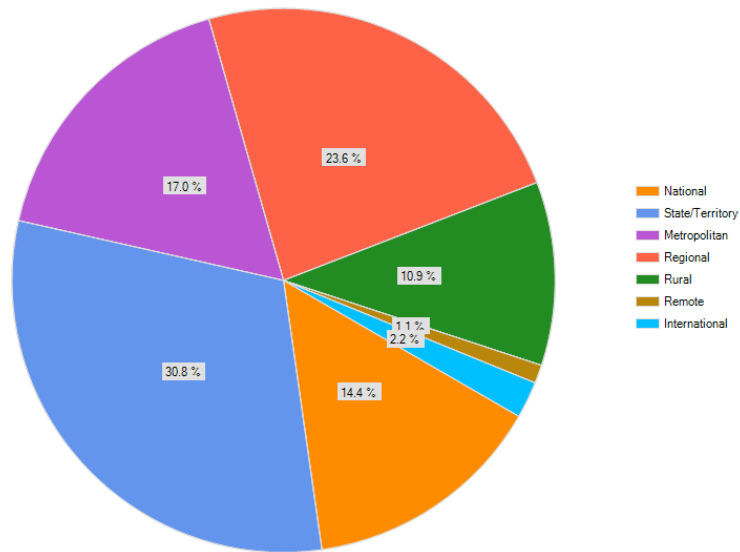


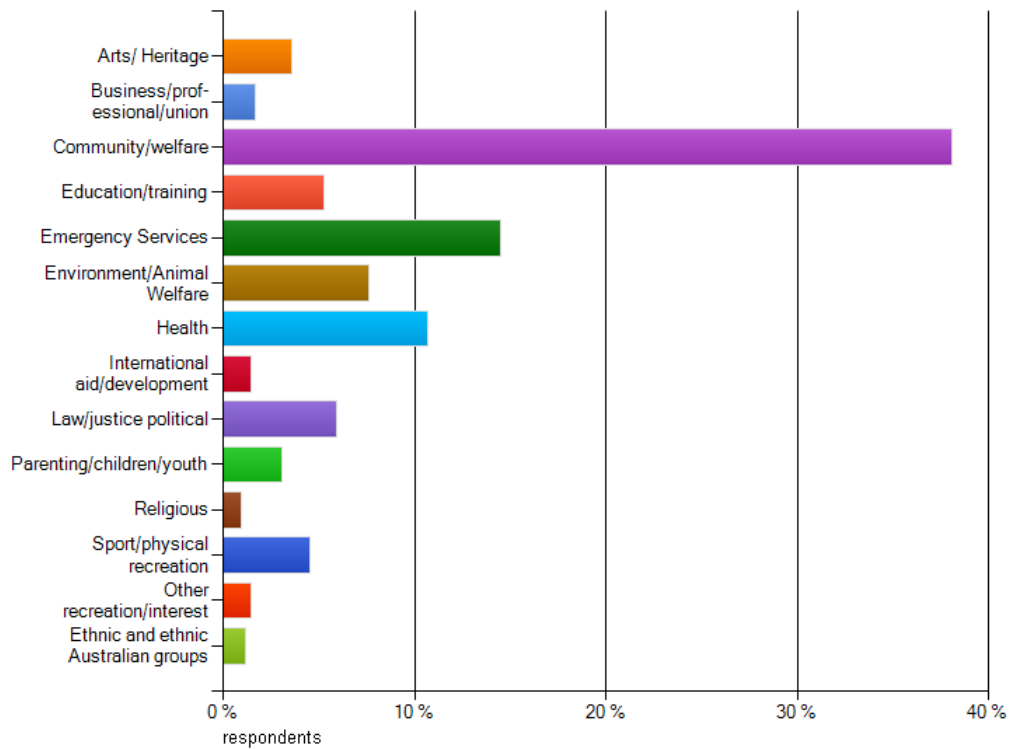
Figure 6 indicates the level at which respondent organisations primarily operate. Over 30 per cent of respondents indicated that their organisation works at a State/Territory level, 23.6 percent at a regional level and approximately 17 per cent in metropolitan areas. National and rural-based organisations were also well represented.

**Figure 6: At which level does your organisation primarily work?**



As evident in Figure 7, a large proportion of respondents (40 per cent) described their organisation as operating in the community/welfare sector. However, of the remaining 60 per cent, there was a high degree of variation. Emergency services made up the next largest group, or almost 15 per cent of respondents.

**Figure 7: How would you describe your organisation type?**



Finally, respondents were asked to indicate the state or territory in which they live. Figure 8 shows that the largest portion of responses were received from Queensland (26.7 per cent), followed by Victoria (23.3 per cent), South Australia (18.8 per cent) and New South Wales (16.4 per cent).

**Figure 8: Which State/Territory do you live in?**

