

Report on the Review of the Volunteer Management Activity

Report prepared for the Department of Social Services
August 2018

mpconsulting ™

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Executive Summary

Volunteering is a cornerstone of Australian society, contributing significant value to the economy, community cohesion and individual well-being. Volunteers play a key role in service delivery across a wide range of sectors including aged care, disability, family and community services, disaster resilience, environmental management, sports, arts and culture. The act of volunteering creates a sense of participation and belonging, builds skills, connections and wellbeing, creates pathways to employment and forges stronger communities.

The volunteering landscape in Australia is undergoing change:

- The population is ageing, the workforce is contracting, and people are more discerning about how they want to volunteer their time.
- There is growing demand for services that traditionally rely heavily on volunteers to supplement government funding (such as community, aged and disability services).
- Government programs are encouraging volunteering as a way to engage people experiencing disadvantage, for example to meet mutual obligation requirements or to help build skills and relationships for people living with a disability.
- Information technology is providing new opportunities for people to find a volunteering opportunity that suits their interests and circumstances, and to volunteer in different ways.

These changes present new prospects for organisations that utilise volunteers to adapt the way they connect with and support volunteers, and in the volunteering opportunities they provide.

While there is a broad acknowledgement of the value of volunteering in Australia, less publicised is the effort and resources required to enable volunteering. Volunteer management is becoming increasingly critical within organisations that utilise volunteers to support their work. Effective volunteer management assists organisations to expand their volunteer pool, optimise utilisation and retention of volunteers, minimise risk (to the organisation, volunteers and the ultimate beneficiaries of volunteering), and supports a healthy and robust volunteering environment.

For the past 26 years, the Australian Government has invested in volunteer management, currently through the Volunteer Management Activity (VMA) within the Department of Social Services (the Department). The VMA funds 52 Volunteer Support Services (VSS) to deliver place-based volunteer management services in 72 locations across Australia. VSS variously:

- match and refer potential volunteers to volunteer involving organisations (VIOs)
- provide support, advice and information to volunteers and VIOs, and
- promote volunteering.

This Review examined the appropriateness, effectiveness and efficiency of the VMA.

Throughout consultations, stakeholders highlighted the value of the VMA and the services funded through the VMA. Departmental data also provided an indication of the reach of VSS with over 130,000 people assisted to volunteer and training provided to over 35,000 volunteers and volunteer managers annually.

As described in this Report, a small Australian Government investment (averaging \$70,000 per Activity per annum) provides significant value for money because it enables VSS to leverage partnerships with other

organisations, secure in-kind support from a wide range of individuals and organisations and utilise volunteers to assist in delivering their services (with many engaging only one paid position for every 6-10 volunteer positions). This in turn enables VSS to deliver a wide range of services, consistent with the objectives of the VMA, which would not otherwise be possible with \$70,000 of annual funding.

There are, however, a number of limitations inherent in the program design, funding, implementation and administration that impact the ability of funded organisations to achieve the desired outcomes and adapt to changes in the volunteering environment. These issues were acknowledged by stakeholders throughout this Review.

Summary of findings

- Focus of the VMA**
- The current focus of the VMA (on matching individuals experiencing disadvantage to volunteer opportunities) is not well aligned to best practice volunteer management, nor well aligned to the way that most people (including those experiencing disadvantage) access volunteer opportunities.
 - Focusing on individual volunteer placement is resource intensive (and benefits relatively few people) whereas a greater focus on building the capacity of VIOs to effectively recruit and manage volunteers would have greater potential reach and impact

- Targeting and use of funding**
- VMA funding for each VSS equates to the salary of one staff member and a small contribution to on-costs. This level of funding is not adequate to deliver, to a professional standard, the full set of services described in the grant agreements. All VSS seek funding or in-kind support from other individuals and organisations such that it is difficult to determine the outcomes and outputs achieved through VMA funding alone.
 - The VMA is intended to support place-based services, but national coverage is not possible through 52 VSS. Place-based services are not an efficient way to assist large numbers of volunteers, or to build the capacity of Australia's vast and diverse network of VIOs.
 - Across VSS there is duplication of effort, inconsistent utilisation of resources and IT infrastructure and in some cases inefficient use of volunteers.

- Measuring performance**
- The performance framework provides limited capacity to measure the effectiveness of the VMA, presenting challenges in terms of demonstrating the value of the program, performance assessment, or driving continuous improvement.

With changes to the volunteering landscape, it is critical that any Government investment is well targeted, aligned with best practice and designed to address emerging need. Recognising the limited funding available and the finite volunteering resources, it is also critical that the way volunteer management strategies are delivered is efficient, fit for purpose and minimises duplication.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Australian Government:

- continue to invest in volunteer management, but clarify its interest in volunteer management including the focus and objective of its investment, and
- work with stakeholders over the coming 12 months to co-design a new program (including the performance framework) that focuses the Australian Government's investment on building the capacity of VIOs to effectively recruit and manage volunteers.

Subject to further consultation on details, it is proposed that any new or re-focused program:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>1. Invest in enhancements to the existing, national, web-based volunteering database.</p> | <p>VIKTOR is the most widely adopted web-based volunteer management software in Australia. It is managed by Volunteering Western Australia and supports a range of volunteering platforms (including SEEK Volunteer and Go Volunteer), is used by 98 VSS (including some funded under the VMA and some not), 8,291 VIOs and 517,911 volunteers. For a relatively small funding contribution, the system could be improved to: include better support for volunteers to find appropriate opportunities (and report on mutual obligation requirements); drive improved VIO practice (by linking VIOs to volunteer management resources and identify poorer performing VIOs requiring individualised support); and enable better performance measurement.</p> |
| <p>2. Fund the development, promotion and regular updating of national best practice resources.</p> | <p>Currently there is no freely-available, comprehensive and up-to-date set of volunteer management resources to assist VIOs to: identify volunteer opportunities that align with the new ways people are seeking to give their time; develop volunteer advertisements; recruit suitable volunteers; induct volunteers; manage volunteers; and recognise volunteers.</p> <p>Local and international literature (and the lived experience of volunteers and VIOs contributing to this Review) consistently reinforce the importance of each of these elements in terms of expanding the pool of volunteers, optimising volunteer utilisation and volunteer retention.</p> |
| <p>3. Provide sustainable funding to a limited number of professional organisations to provide support and training for VIOs.</p> | <p>Rather than funding 52 organisations (VSS) small amounts to deliver a wide range of poorly defined services (with significant potential for duplication of effort and limited capacity to discern stronger and weaker performers) it is proposed that up to 20 VSS be funded to work directly with VIOs to strengthen their volunteer management. This would dovetail with the investment described above such that these VSS would use the national, web-based platform to target their support for VIOs, contribute to and promote national resources, and provide advice and troubleshooting to VIOs (using the database and resources to support this).</p> |

This approach focuses the Australian Government's investment on initiatives of national relevance, minimising the risk of duplication of funding between levels of government. It also:

- offers greater potential for impact by focusing on building the capacity of VIOs to effectively recruit and manage their own volunteers (rather than relying on place-based VSS for direct assistance with recruiting relatively small numbers of volunteers)
- leverages existing systems, resources and infrastructure (enabling further return on investment already made)
- better positions the system to respond to emerging trends, drawing on the experience of other countries, and
- could be implemented with the Government's current level of investment in volunteer management, while also providing for scalability should Government increase its investment.

Acknowledgment

During the course of this Review we sought information and advice from hundreds of people including volunteers, peak bodies, VSS, VIOs, government officials and other stakeholders. All were motivated by a desire to foster and strengthen the culture of volunteering in communities across Australia. We thank you for sharing your time, thoughts and extensive experience with us.

Chapter 1 – Context and purpose of the Review

Objectives of the Review

The volunteer management program (now known as the Volunteer Management Activity (VMA)) was established in 1992 to provide dedicated funding for volunteer management. Through the VMA, the Department funds 52 Volunteer Support Services (VSS), to deliver volunteer management support across Australia. Funding for the VMA is \$5.7 million per annum, with most organisations receiving between \$40,000 (GST exclusive) and \$100,000 (GST exclusive) per annum to deliver volunteer management activities. VSS are expected to:

- maximise and promote volunteer participation (in particular to increase opportunities for people experiencing disadvantage to participate in the social and economic life of their broader community through volunteering)
- match potential volunteers with volunteer opportunities
- provide training, resources and support for volunteer involving organisations (VIOs), and
- promote volunteering within organisations and communities.

The Department has engaged mpconsulting to examine the appropriateness, effectiveness and efficiency of the VMA. In examining these matters, the Department has requested that the Review consider:

- the extent to which the VMA is achieving its objectives
- the consistency of the VMA with current and emerging priorities relevant to the Department's objectives
- the contribution of the VMA to positive outcomes for disadvantaged individuals in areas of greatest need, as well as relevance of the VMA to the wider volunteering community
- the appropriateness and effectiveness of the current Commonwealth funding model and value for money for the Commonwealth, and
- options for improving the appropriateness, effectiveness and efficiency of the VMA going forward.

To address these issues, this Report:

- provides relevant contextual information
 - Chapter 2 describes the volunteering environment and the role of volunteer management
- examines funding of volunteer management in Australia (Chapter 3)
- examines the strengths and limitations of the VMA program design, funding, implementation, and performance measurement (Chapter 4), and
- summarises our key findings and recommendations (Chapter 5).

Conduct of the Review

The Review of the VMA was informed by a range of resources, including local and international literature (as detailed in the bibliography of this Report) and consultations with stakeholders including organisations providing volunteer support services, volunteers, volunteer involving organisations, peak bodies and representatives from the Department. Further information on the stakeholder engagement that informed this Review is at Appendix 1.

Chapter 2 – Volunteering and volunteer management in Australia

Volunteering in Australia

Volunteering is time willingly given for the common good and without financial gain.¹

In Australia, the official number of volunteers is collected through the General Social Survey (GSS) of the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). The last GSS was conducted in 2014 and the results of the survey revealed that:

- 5.8 million people (31 percent of the population) participated in voluntary work². This figure represents a decline in participation in volunteering for the first time since the ABS began national voluntary work surveys in 1995 (noting a peak volunteering rate of 36 percent in 2010), and
- the sectors with the highest hours of volunteer involvement are:
 - sport and physical recreation
 - religious
 - welfare/community
 - education and training
 - health
 - emergency services, and
 - environment/animal welfare.³

Most organisations engaging volunteers (VIOs) are not-for-profit (NFP) organisations. The NFP sector is large and diverse, with around 600,000 organisations in Australia (as at 2010).⁴

Nearly all NFP organisations benefit from the use of volunteers, with 83 percent engaging at least one volunteer⁵. A 2017 Senate Inquiry heard that there are approximately five volunteers for every paid worker in the NFP sector, at a value of about \$290 billion per annum.^{6 7}

While most organisations engaging volunteers are NFPs, a number of government and for-profit organisations also engage volunteers. For example, schools, universities, hospitals (public and private), Local Councils, events organisations (such as organisers of sports events and music festivals) and national sporting organisations.

It is recognised that in addition to formal volunteering, many people are also engaged in informal volunteering or social action where community members come together around a common interest. For example, volunteering for a specific hobby group, at school events or for a political party. The above statistics do not take into account such volunteering. Nor does this Review focus on informal volunteering.

¹ Volunteering Australia 2015, viewed 21 May 2018, <<https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/definition-of-volunteering/>>

² Australian Bureau of Statistics 2014, *General Social Survey: Summary Results, Australia, 2014*, viewed 27 April 2018

³ Ibid

⁴ Australian Government Productivity Commission 2010, *Research Report: Contribution of the Not-for-Profit sector*, January, p.260

⁵ Cortis, N, Lee, I, Powell, A, Simnett, R and Reeve, R 2015, *Australian Charities Report 2014*, Centre for Social Impact and Social Policy Research Centre, UNSW Australia, p.46

⁶ The Senate Community Affairs Reference Committee 2017, *Future of Australia's aged care workforce*, Commonwealth of Australia, 20 June, p.36

⁷ O'Dwyer, L May 2017, *Beyond the Value of Time: Towards a Method for Quantifying the Other Impacts of Volunteering*, School of Social and Policy Studies Flinders University

What motivates people to volunteer?

A range of motivations influence a person to engage in formal volunteering. Some of the key reasons cited are:

- to support a cause or organisation that aligns with the person's values
- change of lifestyle (e.g. to keep busy when retired)
- a sense of satisfaction from using knowledge, experience and skills to contribute to the community
- reciprocity and a way of 'giving back'
- personal/practical benefits (e.g. mental health benefits, gaining new skills, employment opportunities), and
- peer and family networks encouraging and opening the way to volunteer.⁸

One of the challenges for organisations seeking to attract volunteers is understanding their motivations and being able to accommodate (and respond to) individual needs.

The *Giving Australia 2016* report identified factors cited by volunteers as likely to increase their volunteering contribution including⁹:

- greater government acknowledgment of their contribution to society, recognition and reimbursement of out of pocket expenses incurred by volunteering
- flexibility as to how and when they can volunteer, including removal of unnecessary regulation and utilisation of technology to introduce a higher level of mobility or transferability to the volunteering experience (for example, a volunteering passport allowing them to move between organisations), and
- well structured, persuasive requests to volunteer ('a powerful ask').

Volunteers consulted as part of the Review reinforced some of these points and also highlighted the importance of a VIO that is well organised and offers a clearly defined volunteering position, such that they feel like their contribution is valued and that they make a difference.

As described in Chapter 6, the Review recommendations are intended to build the capacity of VIOs to better understand their volunteers and meet their expectations.

How do people find volunteering opportunities?

Some of the ways that people find volunteering opportunities are:

- by word of mouth
- through a personal approach/self-referral to a VIO
- from an organisation they already volunteer with
- through a VIO website
- through local media
- through other community organisations
- through volunteer search engines such as GoVolunteer or SEEK Volunteer, and
- via local VSS/volunteer resources centres.¹⁰

⁸ McGregor-Lowndes, M, Crittall, M, Conroy, D and Keast, R with Baker, C, Barraket, J & Scaife, W 2017, *Individual giving and volunteering. Giving Australia 2016*, report series commissioned by the Australian Government Department of Social Services, Brisbane: The Australian Centre for Philanthropy and Nonprofit Studies, Queensland University of Technology, Centre for Social Impact Swinburne, Swinburne University of Technology and the Centre for Corporate Public Affairs, p.86

⁹ McGregor-Lowndes, M et al, op.cit, p.95

¹⁰ PricewaterhouseCoopers 2016, *State of Volunteering in Australia*, prepared for Volunteering Australia, April, p.5

The State of Volunteering in Australia Report found that, although word of mouth was the most common form of engagement, 26 percent of those under 24 years of age were more likely to use GoVolunteer or SEEK Volunteer or VIOs' websites to find opportunities¹¹.

What are the changes and trends in volunteering?

The volunteering landscape has changed considerably in the last two decades. Some of the key points emerging from local and international research, and through discussions with volunteers and VIOs as part of this Review are detailed below.

- **Increasing demand for volunteers** - While volunteer expectations are changing and the rate of volunteering is falling, there is also increased demand for volunteers including because:
 - changes to funding arrangements (and in some cases, reduced funding) has meant organisations are increasingly seeking volunteers to supplement the paid workforce¹²
 - as the population ages, there is increasing demand for health and aged care services. These are both sectors in which volunteers are used, and
 - changes to the way Local Councils are funded (including the impact of rates capping) is increasing the reliance of some Local Councils on volunteers to assist in the delivery of services provided to the community.
- **Disconnect between roles and volunteer interests** - There is an increasing misalignment between the volunteering roles that people are interested in and the roles that organisations are offering.¹³ For example, sectors such as animal welfare and arts and culture tend to be oversubscribed, while other areas including disability services, community services, aged care and education have a high number of volunteer vacancies.¹⁴
- **Changing expectations of volunteers** - People have less time to dedicate to volunteering and, as such, demand for flexible or short term (and micro) volunteering opportunities is increasing. People also consistently report that they would like to do skills based and meaningful volunteer work.¹⁵ As noted above, volunteers are also seeking a more professional approach from VIOs.
- **New opportunities for volunteering** - Internet-based communication and electronic commerce are changing the volunteer experience and the way organisations recruit and manage volunteers. For example, some organisations are using social media to draw on the skills of people through virtual volunteering (blogging, tweeting, document review, policy work, graphic design and website testing).

To achieve optimal volunteer engagement moving forward, it is critical that VIOs are able to respond to these changes in volunteer expectations (and changes to the volunteering environment more broadly). The Review focuses on the best way to support VIOs to do this, and to effectively manage volunteers.

Volunteer management in Australia

What is volunteer management?

In the current context, the term 'volunteer management' is used to describe two distinct concepts.

¹¹ PricewaterhouseCoopers 2016, op.cit, p.5

¹² Australian Government Productivity Commission 2010, op.cit, p.36

¹³ PricewaterhouseCoopers 2016, op.cit, p.5

¹⁴ Ibid, p.5

¹⁵ McLeod, J 2018, *The Support Report: the changing shape of giving and the significant implications for recipients*, JB Were Philanthropic Services, April, p.8

First, it refers to all of the activities undertaken by VIOs to support their volunteer workforce. For example, recruiting, coordinating, leading, supporting, administering and organising volunteers, as well as strategic oversight and management of volunteer programs.¹⁶ Some VIOs appoint dedicated volunteer managers or coordinators to guide this work, whereas some include volunteer management as one part of another role. Some larger/national VIOs use a decentralised model of volunteer management, with a central hub that provides support and resources to local volunteer managers.

Second, it refers to the work undertaken by third parties to:

- provide support, advice and information to volunteers and VIOs
- match and refer potential volunteers to volunteering opportunities within VIOs, and
- promote volunteering and recognise volunteers in the community.

Such organisations exist across the world, under different guises and names such as volunteer resource centres, volunteer centres, volunteer development agencies, volunteer bureaus, volunteer network centres, volunteer support centres.

In Australia:

- the VMA funds 52 VSS to provide this latter style of volunteer management (noting that some VSS refer to themselves as such while others refer to themselves as volunteer resource centres)
- there are also a range of other third party organisations providing volunteer management or support. For example, there are:
 - VSS not funded through the VMA, that also offer volunteer support/management services. It is estimated that there are over 150 VSS in Australia that are not funded through the VMA
 - peak volunteer bodies that support volunteers and VIOs (noting that each of the State/Territory peaks is funded under the VMA as a VSS), and
 - social enterprises such as [becollective](#) that utilise digital platforms to support community action including volunteering.

The nature of the volunteer support services offered by these third party organisations (and their funding) varies enormously. For example, some:

- manage online recruitment platforms or websites
- develop and publish volunteer management resources for VIOs, including toolkits, templates and guides
- assist VIOs to develop their own volunteer management policies and procedures
- interview volunteers on behalf of VIOs
- host volunteer recognition events, and
- target their services exclusively to not-for-profit VIOs, while others also service government and for-profit organisations utilising volunteers.

This Report focuses on the VSS funded under the VMA. While other VSS were consulted, this was in relation to the VMA rather than to ascertain the activities and funding of all other VSS (noting that size, focus, activities and funding are varied).

The following diagram summarises the concept of volunteer management and depicts the different organisations engaged in volunteer management - specifically VIOs, VSS (both DSS-funded and non-DSS funded) and others (Figure 3.1).

¹⁶ Knepper, H & D'Agostino M J, Levine H 2015, 'Volunteer Management Practices during Challenging Economic Times', *Journal of Public Management & Social Policy*, Vol 20, Number 2, Article 7, January, p.213

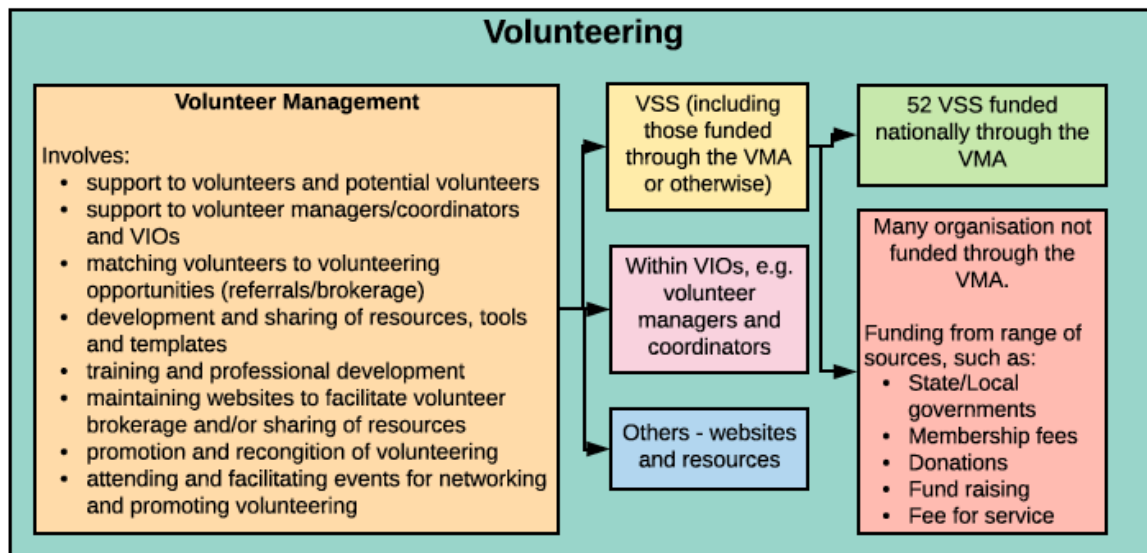


Figure 3.1: Volunteer management, VSS and the VMA.

Note For the purposes of the following chapters, we have used the term VSS to refer to VSS funded under the VMA. Where we are referring to all VSS (both VMA-funded VSS and those not funded) we have expressly drawn out this distinction.

What is best practice volunteer management?

Based on the literature examined and the consultations undertaken for this Review, effective volunteer management requires VIOs to:

- have strong organisational leadership and culture (clarity around mandate and purpose). This includes recognising the role of volunteers in the organisation’s strategy, including how they fit within the organisation and contribute to its mission
- invest in activities that help volunteers understand their role (induction, training), and in skilled and well-resourced managers to oversee volunteer activities
- understand volunteer motivations and circumstances, including flexibility and adaptability of volunteer roles in relation to volunteer needs and preferences
- acknowledge (and celebrate) the importance of volunteer contributions and the difference they make
- provide opportunities for skill development for volunteers (including expansion of opportunities for their engagement and participation)
- have adequate infrastructure to support volunteer activities, including relevant policies, procedures and standards for volunteering (to ensure a safe working environment and appropriate insurances), and
- provide feedback and performance assessment to volunteers.

Effective volunteer management provides a foundation for volunteering by:

- providing clarity regarding roles, responsibilities and expectations
- helping VIOs to recruit and manage volunteers safely and appropriately
- ensuring the rights of volunteers are protected
- maximising the benefits of volunteer involvement, and
- improving the volunteer experience.

Over the course of the Review, volunteer managers and VIOs consistently noted:

- the importance of strong volunteer management
- the lack of recognition of the work involved in recruiting and managing volunteers
- the low value often attached to volunteer management positions within VIOs, and
- the value of guidance on best practice volunteer management, checklists and templates to assist them to recruit and manage volunteers, and trouble-shooting advice when specific issues arise with volunteers.

What do the changes and trends in volunteering mean for volunteer management?

The changing environment presents a number of challenges and opportunities for volunteer management. As described previously, people's patterns of involvement in volunteering have changed, as have their expectations of volunteering. VIOs need to do things differently in order to recruit and sustain volunteer involvement. Volunteer management also needs to be both efficient and effective so that paid staff and volunteers can focus on delivering the services that the organisation was established to provide.

In the context of volunteer management, this means VIOs need the following.

- ***Innovative approaches to volunteer promotion, position identification and recruitment.*** VIOs need to promote volunteering to a broader pool of potential volunteers, particularly in underrepresented sectors, and create opportunities to suit the changing ways people are seeking to volunteer. This involves:
 - creating more flexible volunteering opportunities
 - providing more meaningful and skills-based work
 - providing for micro-volunteering or other short-term sporadic or virtual volunteer involvement, and
 - providing appropriate activities for the different types of people seeking to volunteer including those meeting mutual obligations and other government requirements.
- ***Optimal use of online tools*** for volunteer recruitment and management, as an increasing number of potential volunteers are likely to connect with volunteering opportunities in this way. IT solutions can also support some volunteer management functions such as regular acknowledgement of volunteers and by enabling the tracking of volunteer activity. While online platforms are useful in recruiting and engaging volunteers, they also present challenges and risks that require management.
- ***Reliable and current best practice resources*** to assist them to develop comprehensive policies and procedures to effectively manage volunteers and meet their regulatory responsibilities (without deterring volunteers).
- ***To share volunteers and their experience*** in order to maximise volunteer utilisation and continuously improve.
- ***Access to external, reliable advice*** including to assist them to:
 - approach volunteer recruitment and management differently, and
 - troubleshoot where they encounter problems with managing volunteers or understanding compliance obligations.

The following chapters discuss the role of the VMA in delivering or assisting VIOs to deliver some of these outcomes, along with how refocusing Government funding of volunteer management might better enable VIOs to respond to changes in the volunteering environment.

Chapter 3 – Government funding of volunteer management in Australia

Funding of volunteer management in Australia

While many of the Australian Government's policies, programs and services reference the value of volunteering, reinforce the need to grow volunteering and rely on volunteering for delivery of services and programs, few programs directly fund volunteer management.

The VMA is currently the only Australian Government program directly funding volunteer management. The history of the VMA is included in Appendix 2.

Other Australian Government programs fund volunteering initiatives but do not specifically focus on volunteer management. For example, the Attorney General's Department provides funding for emergency management volunteers and, through the Volunteer Grants program, the Department provides small grants to VIOs as a contribution to equipment or volunteer-related expenses.

In terms of State, Territory and Local Council investment, it is difficult to determine the precise level of investment in volunteer management. This is because State/Territory Government investment occurs through a range of different programs that are not always readily identifiable as volunteer management. Likewise, with 537 Local Councils in Australia it is not possible to compile a complete inventory of activity directly and indirectly supporting volunteer management.

Based on our discussions with States and Territory Governments and a number of Local Councils (as well as a review of online resources):

- the recognition of, and investment in, volunteer management varies across the States and Territories. For example:
 - most States and Territories fund the State/Territory peak body (noting that the South Australian Government funds Volunteering SA/NT and the Northern Territory Government does not provide funding)
 - some States and Territories have volunteering strategies and others do not. For example:
 - the South Australian, Western Australian and New South Wales Governments all have volunteering strategies
 - the ACT Government has a *Volunteering Statement* with Volunteering and Contact ACT (and an Action Plan is currently being developed)
 - some States and Territories fund cross-sectoral volunteer management initiatives. For example:
 - the Victorian Government hosts Victoria's volunteering portal, which provides an online community and resources for volunteers and VIOs
 - the South Australian Government has established an Office for Volunteers, which delivers programs to build the capacity of community organisations in managing volunteers
 - both the Queensland and Western Australian Governments provide funding for their State peaks to provide education, training sessions and sector support (with each having a slightly different focus)
 - some States and Territories fund sector-specific volunteer initiatives. For example:
 - both the Victorian and Queensland Governments fund training for volunteers in emergency services

- the Tasmanian Government has provided funding to Volunteering Tasmania to undertake research into volunteering in sport and provides resources regarding volunteer management in sporting organisations.
- the NSW Government established 'Timebanking' to support informal volunteering in the community, and
- investment by Local Councils is also varied, with some having volunteer management strategies, policies or plans that specifically detail their approach to volunteer management. Some Local Councils also provide support services to volunteers and VIOs – some are funded under the VMA, while the majority are not.

Should the Australian Government continue to invest in volunteer management?

Effective volunteer management directly supports a number of Australian Government objectives and priorities. It can reduce duplication of effort across government funded service providers, maximise utilisation of finite resources and support government efforts in building community and individual resilience.

Government investment in effective volunteer management supports:

- ***the delivery of government funded programs***
 - Many government policies, programs and services rely on volunteers to deliver outcomes and reduce service delivery costs.
 - For example, disability services (managed by the National Disability Insurance Agency), aged care services (funded via the Department of Health) and settlement services (funded by the Department) all utilise volunteers to deliver services.
 - The rollout of the National Disability Insurance Scheme and the ageing population are exacerbating the already high demand for volunteers in these sectors, highlighting the need for efficient recruitment and optimal utilisation of volunteers.
 - Effective volunteer management can also support the development of meaningful and appropriate volunteer opportunities including for people that are the focus of a number of Government programs. For example:
 - Government programs acknowledge volunteering as a means for building skills and connections for new migrants from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
 - Voluntary work is also an approved activity that people can choose to undertake in order to meet obligations associated with the receipt of welfare payments. Over the course of the Review, stakeholders highlighted the increasing role that VSS are playing in finding volunteering opportunities for people seeking to meet their mutual obligation requirements, as well as supporting VIOs to manage volunteers who are not necessarily 'volunteer ready'.
- ***the broader community sector and its contribution to the Australian economy***
 - The NFP sector relies heavily on Australians volunteering their time. Most NFP organisations do not have dedicated volunteer managers or customised volunteer recruitment and management processes. To fund dedicated volunteer managers in all NFPs would have significant cost implications for Government and other funders. However, if resources and professional support was readily available, along with reliable online volunteer recruitment platforms, this would support NFPs to

develop and advertise appropriate volunteering opportunities and improve their volunteer management.

- **capacity to respond to emergencies**

- There are three key ways that VSS currently support disaster resilience and emergency responsiveness:
 - emergency volunteers are often coordinated with the support of VSS, ensuring that people with the required skills, availability and locality are referred into the relevant areas of the community (or to the relevant emergency services)
 - emergency response organisations (VIOs) engage VSS to provide them with volunteer training and support to develop policies, practices and procedures, and
 - some VSS manage databases of emergency volunteers.

- **the Government's international commitments**

- At the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Summit in September 2015, world leaders adopted a set of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to end poverty, fight inequality and injustice and tackle climate change by 2030. Volunteering is considered essential to achieving and supporting all 17 SDGs¹⁷. UN Volunteers expressly recognises the role of effective volunteer management in supporting an environment where volunteerism can flourish by allowing mass mobilisation of volunteers and linking potential volunteers with various types of VIOs.¹⁸ This underscores the national interest in effective volunteer management.

Is the VMA an appropriate vehicle for Government investment in volunteer management?

As discussed in subsequent chapters, there are significant program design limitations and challenges in measuring the performance of the VMA. This means there is not reliable data on either the quantity or quality of services delivered by VSS through the VMA.

To provide an indication of the scope of activities funded through the VMA, the Department's data suggests that over the period 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017, VSS:

- assisted a total of 130,247 people to volunteer, and
- provided training or education to 24,690 volunteers and 10,775 volunteer managers.

In terms of the quality of VSS services, approximately 97 percent of clients surveyed (i.e. 15,842 of 16,399 people surveyed) were satisfied with the services provided by the VSS.¹⁹

Given the data and program design limitations there are challenges in definitively stating whether or not the VMA has been an appropriate vehicle for supporting volunteer management. However, it is clear that the VMA is not well adapted to respond to the changing volunteer environment, nor to achieve optimal efficiency and effectiveness. The reasons for this (and possible means for improving the focus of the Australian Government's investment in volunteer management) are discussed in the following chapters.

¹⁷ UN Volunteers 2018, *Volunteerism and the Global Goals*, viewed on 2 June 2018,

<<https://www.unv.org/volunteerism/volunteerism-and-global-goals>>

¹⁸ UN Volunteers 2004, *Developing a Volunteering Infrastructure: A Guidance Note*, viewed on 2 June 2018,

<<http://www.unvolunteers.org>>

¹⁹ Data provided by the Department, VMP Review: historic data – Full year counts from 2012-13

Chapter 4 – Strengths and limitations of the VMA

VMA design and focus

VMA objectives

The VMA Grant Opportunity Guidelines describe the aim of the activity as follows:

The VMA aims to increase opportunities for people experiencing disadvantage and/or social exclusion to participate in the social and economic life of their broader community through volunteering, by:

- maximising and promoting volunteer participation
- increasing the diversity of volunteers and the ways in which people volunteer
- maximising opportunities for volunteering to provide a pathway to other forms of social and economic participation
- matching potential volunteers with a volunteering role, especially humanitarian entrants or people experiencing disadvantage
- improving access to information on volunteering
- promoting innovation in volunteering
- providing access to the training, resources and support volunteers and volunteer involving organisations need, and
- building effective volunteering practices and opportunities within organisations and communities.

The broad objectives of the VMA allow VSS to undertake a wide range of activities. Examples of the range of activities and some case studies demonstrating the diversity of service models are included in Appendix 3.

While this means VSS can tailor their services to their local community and pursue different service models and offerings (based on their own history, funding sources, Board expectations and staff interests) the program design does not target best practice volunteer management, nor articulate a core set of services that all stakeholders can expect from a Government-funded VSS.

There is little consistency in the services offered by VSS or the organisations that can access such services.

In our consultations with VSS, numerous examples were provided whereby core services (that should be available to any VIO) are either not provided or are not provided effectively or consistent with best practice volunteer management. For example, some VSS:

- do not apply the *National Standards for Volunteer Involvement*²⁰
- have limited capacity to use IT to support efficient volunteer placement and effective volunteer management
- adopt rigid interview requirements prior to placement, which is a disincentive for some volunteers.
 - For example, some VSS will only place volunteers if they have first interviewed them face-to-face, others do not have such a requirement.
- acknowledge they do not have the skills or training to provide advice to VIOs on matters such as governance, insurances or human resource management or to engage with volunteers that may be difficult to place
- only provide services and resources to certain VIOs. For example:
 - some VSS only provide certain services to member VIOs, while others provide services to any VIO that requests assistance
 - some VSS only provide services to NFPs, whereas others provide assistance to any VIO including for-profit organisations that engage volunteers, and

²⁰ Volunteering Australia 2015, The National Standards for Volunteer Involvement

- publish basic ‘good news’ stories about volunteering rather than more sophisticated tailored resources for effective volunteer management.

Other VSS implement systems and practice more consistent with best practice and more focused on emerging trends in volunteering. For example, by:

- utilising social media to promote volunteering and recruit volunteers
- drawing on expert marketing advice to promote volunteering
- providing targeted training and advice to VIOs around developing volunteer opportunities to appeal to potential volunteers
- developing and publishing resources around emerging issues in volunteer management
- providing specialised support for VIOs in sectors such as aged care and disability where retention of volunteers is a greater challenge
- proactively approaching existing volunteers to encourage them to expand or diversify their volunteering into another organisation or sector
- supporting VIOs to:
 - re-examine volunteering opportunities to align with emerging trends
 - develop and publish appropriate advertisements for volunteering opportunities
 - develop volunteer management policies and procedures
 - apply the *National Standards for Volunteer Involvement*, and
- facilitating partnerships between VIOs to resolve common challenges.

To perform this role effectively, VSS must be appropriately experienced, trained and supported. While some VSS have such skills and support, some do not. Some provide only basic support to VIOs, including hosting network events or circulating newsletters with general information about volunteering, rather than with more nuanced information that is responsive to current trends and challenges in the sector.

Of critical importance is for the Australian Government to clearly define the core services it requires and to fund organisations that are appropriately resourced and skilled to deliver the core services in a way that is responsive to trends and challenges in volunteering.

Focus on volunteer matching

Due to the way the VMA has developed over time (discussed in more detail in Appendix 2), there is a strong focus on VSS matching individuals with suitable volunteering opportunities. This is reinforced in the performance reporting which requires VSS to report number of clients/volunteers assisted.

However, this is not necessarily the best use of limited VSS resources because relatively few people utilise VSS in order to identify a volunteering opportunity.

Based on Departmental data (indicating that VSS assisted 130,247 individuals to volunteer between 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017) and ABS data regarding the number of people that volunteer in Australia, it is likely that VSS support only a small percentage (less than 5 percent of volunteers) into volunteer opportunities. This is consistent with international statistics, with surveys in England indicating this proportion is as low as 2 percent²¹.

Rather than focusing much of their energy on matching a small number of volunteers to opportunities, greater impact would be achieved through training and supporting VIOs to build best practice volunteer management systems to recruit and retain volunteers.

²¹ Cees van den Bos 2014, *Using volunteering infrastructure to build civil society*, Erasmus University Rotterdam, p.49

Focus on individuals experiencing disadvantage

An express aim of the VMA is to:

increase opportunities for people experiencing disadvantage and/or social exclusion to participate in the social and economic life of their broader community through volunteering²²

There are four main issues associated with the program focusing on people experiencing disadvantage:

1. The focus on individuals experiencing disadvantage is not well understood by VSS, grant managers or other stakeholders. A number of stakeholders were uncertain whether the reference to supporting people experiencing disadvantage meant that VSS should: target their services to people experiencing disadvantage; focus on providing support for VIOs that deliver services to people experiencing disadvantage; and/or deliver services in geographical areas of disadvantage.
2. The program design focuses on the benefits to the person experiencing disadvantage rather than on the contribution the person is making to the community through volunteering. While the benefits of volunteering to individuals are widely reported, the literature consistently reinforces the importance of recognising the contribution of volunteers to the community (rather than assuming the key benefit is derived from the act of volunteering alone).
3. In order to support the Government's current priorities and the delivery of Government funded programs, a diversity of volunteers is needed across a range of sectors.
4. If VSS focus predominantly on finding volunteer opportunities for people experiencing disadvantage, this may adversely impact their relationship with VIOs and the willingness of VIOs to approach VSS to recruit volunteers, noting that many people experiencing disadvantage may require greater support in their volunteer role. VIOs sometimes assume that VSS are dealing mainly with 'difficult' volunteers and so are reluctant to engage with them²³. Stakeholders have also advised that the requirement to focus on people experiencing disadvantage conflicts with the constitution of some VSS, which are established to support any and all volunteers.

Rather than focusing expressly on VSS identifying volunteer opportunities for people experiencing disadvantage, the focus should be placed on upskilling VIOs such that they are better able to recruit and manage volunteers (including those experiencing disadvantage) and to deliver programs that support people experiencing disadvantage.

Constitutional risk

Due, in part, to the broad objectives of the VMA, concerns have been raised about the constitutional basis for the program. In July 2017, the Hon. Christian Porter MP (then Minister for Social Services), wrote to funded organisations noting that:

The Government has a responsibility to ensure that activities undertaken by organisations funded under the VMP are aligned to a head of power in the Commonwealth of Australia's constitution. Without that connection the Government may be unable to continue funding the VMP in its current form.²⁴

²² Australian Government Department of Social Services 2017, *VMA Grant Opportunity Guidelines*, October

²³ Jackson, R & Ellis, S 2013, 'The Uncertain Future of Local Volunteer Centres', *e-volunteerism: A Journal to Inform and Challenge Leaders of Volunteers*, Volume XIV, Issue 1, October

²⁴ The Hon Christian Porter MP 2017, Letter to VMP funded organisations regarding funding, July

The Minister's comments relate to a series of High Court cases (known as the Williams cases)²⁵ where the High Court ruled that in the absence of legislative authority (even where there is a legal appropriation of funds), the Commonwealth does not have general executive power to spend public money on programs.

The Williams cases had significant implications for the Commonwealth in relation to spending that is not authorised by the Constitution or within the ordinary and well-recognised functions of government, and for programs and agreements that are not specifically authorised by legislation.

As spending in relation to volunteer management is not supported by a specific constitutional head of power and the VMA is not specifically authorised by legislation, there is a level of constitutional risk to the program.

If the Government is to continue to fund volunteer management (possibly through a new or refocused program as recommended), it is expected that it will seek to minimise any constitutional risk.

It is the remit of the Australian Government Solicitor to provide advice to the Department regarding constitutional issues and it is not appropriate for this Review to comment on the constitutional validity of the current (or any future) program.

However, we are mindful that in the absence of a specific constitutional head of power, there are other potential means for authorising the Commonwealth to expend money that has been legally appropriated (as discussed in numerous publications including those available through the [Parliamentary Library](#)).

For example, the Department of Finance has advised in its publication *Grants, Procurements and other financial arrangements – Resource Management Guide No. 411* (at page 5) that:

Expenditure that does not relate to the ordinary and well-recognised functions of government requires legislative authority in addition to an appropriation act. The legislative authority can be established in a portfolio's primary legislation, the Federal Financial Relations Act 2009, or by delegated legislation such as regulations or other legislative instruments. Many grants are authorised under section 32B of the Financial Framework (Supplementary Powers) Act 1997 (FF(SP) Act) and are listed in Schedule 1AA or Schedule 1AB to the Financial Framework (Supplementary Powers) Regulations 1997 (the FF(SP) Regulations).

It is also noted that the *Financial Framework (Supplementary Powers) Regulations 1997* already provide some legislative authority for programs relating to civil society. Specifically programs that: "support charities and non-government and not-for-profit organisations through education, training and fostering innovation to continue to focus on their work in the community", "foster a culture of...volunteering" and "help build a strong civil society" (noting that such authority is limited to programs that are peculiarly adapted to the government of a nation) (item 44 of Part 4 of Schedule 1AB).

If the program was refocused to support VIOs (most of whom are charities, non-government and not-for-profit organisations), national resources and IT, this may better align with this legislative authority.

However, as noted by the Department of Finance, there are a range of potential options which the Department may wish to explore should Government agree to fund a new or refocused program.

²⁵ *Williams v Commonwealth* [2012] HCA 23 and *Williams v Commonwealth of Australia* [2014] HCA 23 had regard to the constitutional validity of the Commonwealth's expenditure in relation to the National School Chaplaincy Program.

VMA funding model

The VMA funds 52 organisations to deliver services in one or more service area (or Activity). In total, 72 Activities are funded through the VMA, with funding amounts ranging from \$40,000 (GST exclusive) to \$100,000 (GST exclusive) per Activity per year (except for one Activity funded for \$170,000 per year). Average funding for each Activity is \$73,569 (GST exclusive) per year, with more than half the Activities funded for less than \$70,000 per year.

There are two main issues with the funding model:

- the funding does not support best practice volunteer management because it provides small amounts of funding to a large number (and wide range) of organisations, many of which are too small to develop, implement and continuously improve a best practice approach to volunteer management, and
- it purports to support a national service offering (with place-based services available throughout Australia) but this is not the reality.

Further, the performance framework that underpins the funding model encourages low value volunteer management activity (such as individual matching and referrals) rather than higher value support of VIOs, noting that if a VSS can upskill a VIO to effectively recruit and manage volunteers then this will provide a greater return on investment of effort.

Amount of funding per Activity

Funding for each VSS typically supports one part or full-time staff member plus a small contribution to overhead or administration costs. This level of funding (an average \$73,569 (GST exclusive) per year) does not enable VSS to deliver the full range of expected services.

For example, one staff member cannot reasonably be expected to:

- deliver the broad suite of services required in the grant agreement, including meeting the target outputs and outcomes (relating to matching, training, publication of resources etc)
- support and develop volunteers working for the VSS to ensure they provide a professional service
- ensure the VSS meets relevant national standards and that services are consistent with best practice
- manage reporting, IT, finances, facilities and administration, and
- evaluate services and continuously improve.

All VSS supplement the VMA funding by:

- relying on volunteers to support delivery of the outputs and outcomes required
- seeking in-kind support from other organisations in the community
- charging membership fees or charging fees for some services
- partnering with other organisations, and/or
- delivering complementary or additional government funded services.

Further detail regarding the different types of funding and support received by VSS is detailed in Appendix 3.

Reducing reliance on Government funding has been expressly encouraged by Government. In July 2017 the then Minister for Social Services wrote to funded organisations noting the Department would be 'encouraging organisations to use this next funding term as an opportunity to transition to more sustainable business models'²⁶.

²⁶ The Hon Christian Porter MP 2017, Letter to VMP funded organisations regarding funding, July

Most VSS have interpreted this as an indication they must reduce their reliance on Government funding and pursue other avenues of funding. This presents challenges to the sector because:

- the clients of VSS (volunteers and not-for-profit VIOs) are generally not in a position to pay for the services, and
- pursuing other forms of income often requires VSS to adapt their business model and/or service offering, shifting their focus away from a systematic approach to best practice volunteer management. In order to cross-subsidise their volunteer management activity, VSS presented the Review with examples of a wide range of grant agreements they have entered to supplement their VMA funding. Some VSS also offer other government funded services in conjunction with volunteer management such as transport services, aged care services or services to hospitals (especially where such services rely heavily on volunteers).

This problem has been exacerbated because, since 2013, VMA funding has been provided on a short-term basis. In the 2016 Budget the Government announced the redesign of its Strengthening Communities Activity, which included VMA funding. From 1 July 2016, VMA grants underwent three successive six-month extensions given the uncertainty around the future of the program. This has:

- posed challenges for VSS in forward planning, staff recruitment and making long-term service commitments to their clients
- created some organisational stagnation, with little funding available for VSS to invest in updating systems, professional development and continuous improvement
- meant VSS have not invested substantially in evaluation of their programs and services, and
- in some areas, diminished innovation and collaborative working relationships within the sector, leading to duplication, overlap and inefficiencies.

As suggested in Chapter 5, many of these limitations could be overcome if the program objectives were clearer, a smaller number of organisations were funded larger amounts to deliver a more limited set of core services to a high standard and funding terms were for five years. This would provide certainty and enable better service planning and evaluation.

Distribution of funding

VSS are funded to deliver services within a certain region. Of the 72 Activities currently funded, there are 19 Activities funded within NSW, 17 in Victoria, 11 in Western Australia, nine in Queensland, eight in South Australia, four in the Northern Territory, three in Tasmania, and one in the Australian Capital Territory.

The organisations funded through the VMA and the geographical distribution of funding is largely historical. Figure 8.2 illustrates the spread of VSS Activities against the ABS Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) 2011 Index of Relative Socioeconomic Advantage and Disadvantage (ISRAD).

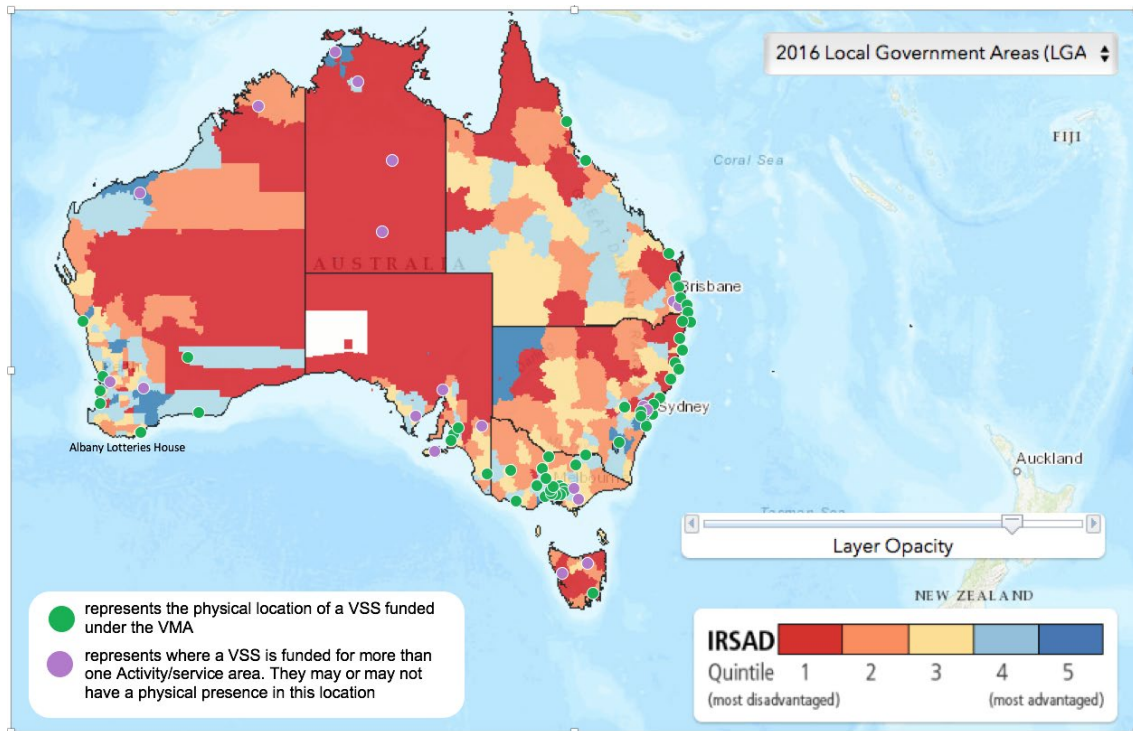


Figure 8.2: Map of Australia illustrating the spread of VSS Activities against the ABS Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) 2011 Index of Relative Socioeconomic Advantage and Disadvantage (ISRAD).²⁷

While there are VSS in each State and Territory and there is theoretically national coverage (with a focus on areas of disadvantage), this is not the reality for the following reasons.

1. While VSS are generally funded to provide services across a number of geographical areas, limited funding means their capacity to provide services to individuals and VIOs outside their immediate geographical area is limited. For example:
 - funding for one part or full-time person (as enabled by the average levels of VMA funding) is not adequate to enable that person to visit other geographical areas or to implement sophisticated hub and spoke service delivery models, and
 - the few VSS effectively delivering hub and spoke service delivery models (providing services to a range of areas or to remote areas) are part of a larger organisation with significant funding from other sources.
2. A place-based approach for the program (where VSS undertake face-to-face interviews with volunteers and have a personal understanding of local VIOs) is not realistic for most communities. Based on Australia’s Local Government Association data, there are currently 537 local government bodies in Australia of which 60 to 70 percent are regional/rural. If a VSS was to be located in each local government area (such that VSS could genuinely provide place-based service delivery and ensure national coverage), this would require significant additional funding and many VSS would unlikely be able to attract partnership arrangements or adequately skilled staff to enable them to effectively deliver the full suite of services.
3. In some areas there are high concentrations of VSS with no obvious policy rationale for funding the relatively large number of organisations in a small geographical area. For example, there are nine VSS

²⁷ Developed utilising the ABS Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) 2011 Index of Relative Socioeconomic Advantage and Disadvantage (ISRAD) Interactive Map

funded through the VMA within an 80 km radius of Melbourne CBD and three VSS funded through the VMA within a 40 km radius of Adelaide CBD.

4. VSS are not necessarily matched to current need, nor are levels of funding matched to areas of disadvantage. For example:
 - Volunteer West, covering the areas of Hobsons Bay, Melton, Brimbank, Wyndham and Maribyrnong (total 2015 population 718,307) received total funding of \$209,844 over a three year period (2014/15-2017/18). This equates to \$0.29 per head of population. These cities have low SEIFA Index²⁸ scores demonstrating low levels of advantage.
 - By contrast Boroondara Volunteer Resource Centre, which covers primarily the Municipal City of Boroondara and immediate surrounds (total 2015 population 174,787) received \$170,000 over the same period, which equates to \$0.97 per head of population. The City of Boroondara has a SEIFA Index score of 1097.6, the second-highest level of advantage in the State of Victoria.²⁹

Our view is that it is not feasible for VSS to have a physical presence across Australia (such that the VSS can forge a face-to-face relationship with volunteers and VIOs). Nor is this the most efficient or effective way to support best practice volunteer management.

As outlined in the following chapter, any new or refocused program should instead fund fewer organisations to deliver a core set of services nationally without attempting to locate services in areas of disadvantage or achieve a physical presence in all 537 local government areas. In order to maximise reach, VSS should also utilise technology and innovation to provide resources and support to as many VIOs as possible.

VMA implementation

Collaboration and sharing of best practice

As many of the organisations engaging volunteers are NFPs with limited budgets, it is critical that resources and best practice are shared, and that duplication of effort is avoided. Throughout consultations, stakeholders expressed concern that:

- an increased focus on financial sustainability has meant VSS are looking for opportunities to charge for resources, services and membership (with access to training or resources increasingly linked to membership), rather than opportunities to share resources
- performance reporting can unintentionally act as a disincentive to collaboration and sharing. For example, most VSS report the number of new or updated resources they publish as part of their reporting against their Activity Work Plan, and
- a competitive funding environment has undermined collaboration.

We also observed significant duplication of effort and resources, along with gaps in core resources.

For example, while Volunteering Australia publishes the *National Standards for Volunteer Involvement*, they do not publish a comprehensive set of detailed volunteer management resources, instead redirecting users to the relevant State/Territory peak. They also publish an online assessment tool for VSS and VIOs to assess

²⁸ The SEIFA Index measures relative level of socio-economic disadvantage based on attributes that reflect disadvantage such as low income, low educational attainment, high unemployment, and jobs in relatively unskilled occupations, with high scores indicating low disadvantage and low scores indicating a higher level of disadvantage.

²⁹ Volunteering Australia Submission in response to *Strong and Resilient Communities (SARC): A paper on the redesign of the Strengthening Communities grants program*, p.8 quoting Australian Government (December 2015) 'Australian Government Response to the Senate Community Affairs References Committee Report: Impact on service quality, efficiency and sustainability of recent Commonwealth community services tendering processes by the Department of Social Services'

themselves against the *National Standards for Volunteer Involvement*, but these must be purchased for \$300 (GST exclusive) for a one-year subscription.

The resources published on the websites of the State peaks are also variable with some offering a range of facts sheets and some with dated resources. While Volunteering SA&NT is developing a National Standards Toolkit (including policies, procedures, templates, checklists and forms), a decision has not yet been made regarding whether this will be available free of charge, or for a fee.

Other toolkits are available but for a fee (such as the Way2Go Volunteering Toolkit published by the Albury Wodonga Volunteer Resource Bureau available for \$199) or are available only to members of the relevant peak or VSS.

While we recognise that different organisations will always publish different resources with different foci, it is important that VIOs have ready access to reliable, up-to-date, freely available volunteer management resources.

This was reinforced by volunteer managers who emphasised the importance of such resources and also frustration regarding the challenges in accessing such information, and determining which resources represent best practice and are endorsed by the broader sector.

In other countries such as Canada, New Zealand and England, the national volunteering peak body publishes nationally relevant, reliable and current resources on their website. These are freely available to all other peak bodies, VSS and VIOs, who draw from these resources and adapt them where necessary.

National web-based volunteering database

Potential volunteers are increasingly connecting with volunteering opportunities via the internet. VIOs are also using web-based applications to assist them to advertise positions, recruit volunteers, track volunteer hours and acknowledge volunteers (e.g. through automated alerts).

VIKTOR, managed by Volunteering Western Australia, is the most widely adopted web-based volunteer management software in Australia. It supports 35 websites and apps that facilitate volunteering, including SEEK Volunteer, Volunteer Profile and the GoVolunteer App³⁰. As at 2 May 2018, VIKTOR had 32,498 volunteering roles listed, comprising 288,892 vacancies (noting that each role can require multiple volunteers).

Two complementary databases are linked to VIKTOR:

- **VIRA** is a volunteer management database that allows VIOs to collect information about their volunteers, such as personal details, volunteer contribution in hours and services provided, recognition, reimbursement and training undertaken. VIRA integrates with VIKTOR, allowing VIOs to attach volunteers to scheduled opportunities and activities, run advanced reporting, track permissions given (such as image releases) and current certificates (i.e. police clearances), and provides notifications when they expire. VIRA is free to VSS, but costs from \$100 per year for VIOs to use, depending on the number of volunteers they manage.
- **Volunteer Profile** is an online portal that volunteers can use to create their own profile. Once volunteers have entered their interests, skills and availability, a smart matching system recommends them volunteering opportunities. Volunteers can express their interest in a volunteering opportunity directly through the Volunteer Profile. The Volunteer Profile has 56,441 volunteer profiles currently registered.

³⁰ All data relating to VIKTOR, VIRA and the Volunteer Profile provided by Volunteering WA, 2 May 2018

VIKTOR is used by:

- peak bodies to manage their member organisations and volunteering opportunities, as well as to gather statistical information, and identify trends in volunteering
- 98 VSS that are registered to use VIKTOR to manage their member organisations and volunteering roles
- 8,291 VIOs across Australia to keep their organisation details up to date, advertise volunteering roles, recruit volunteers, generate reports and manage their volunteers using VIRA, and
- 517,911 volunteers to find volunteering opportunities.

The databases are funded through a range of sources including contributions from the volunteering state peaks, grants through Lotterywest WA, SEEK Limited and in-kind support from Eduka. However, there is no ongoing or Australian Government funding for the databases, despite the databases providing critical national infrastructure for volunteering. This has meant:

- there has been limited promotion of VIKTOR, VIRA and Volunteer Profile, such that many VSS and VIOs are unaware of their capabilities. This was reinforced in our discussions with VIOs and VSS, many of whom requested certain IT functionality not knowing such functionality already existed
- opportunities to improve IT functionality to better align with emerging trends in volunteering have not been optimised, and
- there has been inconsistent use of these systems by VSS to support volunteer management by VIOs.

A small investment in enhancements to the existing volunteering databases could:

- improve the IT interface for volunteers, including so they can more readily access opportunities that suit them. This could also:
 - assist in converting their interest in volunteering to applications for volunteering opportunities, and
 - enable them to report on mutual obligation requirements (by automatically generating information about their volunteering and volunteer hours)
- improve VIO practice including by:
 - incorporating more interactive help and support for VIOs to advertise roles (while at the same time educating them about what people are looking for)
 - linking VIOs to resources relevant to volunteer management
 - enable the identification of poorer performing or non-responsive VIOs such that VSS can target interventions that aim to improve practice
- include a user feedback/rating system so volunteers can provide feedback on VIOs and VSS can follow up to encourage good volunteer management, and
- better enable performance measurement and the generation of meaningful data including to support VSS to meet Departmental reporting requirements.

By enhancing the existing IT infrastructure (and linking it to national best practice resources) there is significant potential to engage a larger number of volunteers and to prompt continuous improvement by VIOs. Further, the system could enable reporting to third party volunteer managers (such as VSS) such that they could better target support for VIOs most in need.

VMA performance measurement and reporting

The Department currently measures the effectiveness of VMA using reporting by VSS against the following Activity Performance Indicators:

	Performance Indicator Description	Measure
1	Number of clients assisted	Measured using benchmarking, comparing VSS achievement against similar service providers delivering a comparable service. Similar services are considered against scale of funding, locality of service location and other relevant characteristics.
2	Number of events / service instances delivered	
3	Percentage of participants from priority target groups	
4	Percentage of clients achieving individual goals related to independence, participation and well-being	
5	Percentage of clients achieving improved independence, participation and well-being	
6	Activities are completed according to scope, quality, timeframes and budget defined in the Activity Work Plan.	The Department and the VSS agree that the Activity Work Plan has been completed as specified or, in case of divergence, to a satisfactory standard.

The Department collects data to measure VSS performance against these indicators via two avenues: the Activity Work Plan (AWP); and the Data Exchange.

Performance Indicators 4 and 5 are part of the partnership approach, an optional arrangement where organisations can choose to report outcomes data in exchange for access to additional, self-generated reporting. To date, only a small number of organisations funded through the VMA participate in the partnership approach.

Measurement of outputs against Activity Work Plans

Under the current funding agreements, each VSS is required to submit an AWP specifying the deliverables, timeframes and measures of success against each objective outlined in their VMA grant agreement. VSS report on progress against AWP's annually, through Service Stocktake reports.

While the deliverables, timeframes and measures of success against each objective nominated by each VSS differ, most VSS include measures of success such as the number of:

- individuals referred to volunteering opportunities and provided information
- training sessions provided to VIOs and volunteers
- VIOs assisted
- newsletters published, social media updates and new or updated resources published
- meetings or events held, and
- website visits.

These measures do not provide an accurate or meaningful reflection of the outputs or outcomes achieved, nor do they enable comparison across VSS for the following reasons.

- **Each VSS sets its own deliverables, timeframes and measures of success, so these will naturally differ between each VSS.** While some AWP's are 21 pages in length, giving in-depth descriptions about the VSS's proposed activities and service offerings, others are three pages providing only high level information. The 'measures of success' against each objective in the AWP vary significantly between each VSS.
- **Smaller numbers are not necessarily correlated to poorer outcomes or impacts.** Comparison of AWP's unlikely to give insight into which VSS are performing better, or having a greater impact on volunteering. This is because an organisation that reports support for a small number of volunteers or VIOs may have a greater impact than one that supports a larger number.
 - For example, in measuring the number of individuals referred to volunteering opportunities VSS 1 reports it has referred a much higher number of individuals to volunteering opportunities than VSS

2. However, VSS 2 provides a more complete service, and may have a more sustained and significant impact for both the individual and the VIO.

- **Performance targets are often based on historical data** rather than the funding amount the organisation receives, the density or characteristics of the local population, number of VIOs in the region, or other influencing factors. For example:
 - VSS 1 receives VMA funding of \$100,000 per year in a highly populated CBD with a target of 3,500 individuals receiving assistance to undertake volunteering.
 - VSS 2 receives VMA funding of \$100,000 per year in a different highly populated CBD with a target of 300 individuals receiving assistance to undertake volunteering.
- **Measures do not reflect the quality of the service provided.** As the measures of success are based on outputs, there is little qualitative information about the quality of services provided by each VSS.
- **Measures are not based on best practice volunteer management.** Because reporting is based on activity, it can encourage activity that is not necessarily best practice or may encourage duplication of effort or resources. For example:
 - Many VSS put significant time into matching potential volunteers to opportunities. Given the resource intensive nature of this service, the impact is quite limited when compared with the effect of training a volunteer manager within a VIO to run their own volunteer program.
 - Each VSS generates many of its own resources, including so the number of resources can be demonstrated to the Department. As noted previously, this leads to duplication of effort and generates confusion for VIOs faced with multiple, divergent resources on the same topics.
- **Measures do not capture the complete range of services provided by VSS.** For example, output measures do not capture the:
 - strategic, connecting role that VSS play in the local communities
 - value of broad promotion of volunteering
 - extent of leveraging and partnerships that impact return on investment
 - impact of work undertaken by individual VSS with a national reach, such as the development and maintenance of VIKTOR or the National Standards.

Measurement of program performance via the Data Exchange

Since 1 January 2018, the Department has required VSS to report on the VMA through the Data Exchange. The Data Exchange is the Department's standard approach to reporting for client-facing programs and is intended to shift the focus of performance measurement from outputs to service delivery outcomes.

The following mandatory data items must be reported through the Data Exchange:

- client data, such as: name; gender; date of birth; residential address; Indigenous status; country of birth; main language spoken at home; disability, impairment or condition (options include intellectual/learning, psychiatric, sensory/speech, physical/diverse, none or not stated), and
- service data, such as: type of services delivered; date of delivery; the outlet services were delivered from and clients that received those services.

In addition, organisations are encouraged to demonstrate outcomes for each client or group achieved by a particular service, by reporting against the following optional extended data fields:

- client needs and circumstances data, such as: reason for seeking assistance; referral source; household composition; approximate gross income and source of income; ethnicity/ancestry; date of first arrival in Australia; and migration visa category, and

- outcomes data, attributing pre- and post- session scores to indicate changes to a person's or group's:
 - circumstances (for example, changed circumstances in relation to employment, education and training, or community participation)
 - goals (for example, changed knowledge and access to information, changed skills, behaviours or confidence), and/or
 - satisfaction (for example, the service listened to me and understood my issues).

There are three main issues with the requirement for VSS to report against Data Exchange data fields:

- ***Data Exchange reporting requires VSS to ask questions of volunteers that are not appropriate in the context of volunteering***
 - To report against the mandatory client data fields, VSS are required to ask volunteers questions that would not otherwise be asked of a volunteer and can be inappropriate in this context.
 - Clients captured in the Data Exchange typically comprise people experiencing disadvantage or otherwise seeking support or assistance from Government or a Government-funded service provider. By contrast, potential volunteers are not seeking support but are offering to provide their support to others. Asking volunteers about their disabilities or impairments:
 - is not something that would normally be asked of volunteers (unless the volunteer provides the information voluntarily because it is relevant to their volunteering), and
 - does not improve the effectiveness of the service delivered by VSS.
 - Furthermore, VSS are not well-equipped to ask these questions. The interviewers are often volunteers themselves and little guidance is available regarding an appropriate way to approach these questions and to manage the volunteer's response.
- ***Assumption of a case management role***
 - To report against the optional extended outcomes data fields in the Data Exchange, VSS are required to maintain contact with volunteers and VIOs over a period of time, essentially adopting a case management role.
 - Requiring the VSS to maintain contact with the volunteer (purely for reporting purposes) is unnecessary, disrupts the relationship between the VIO and volunteer and is not consistent with best practice volunteer management. It also diverts limited VSS resources away from their primary objectives and role. Importantly, it also risks the VSS engaging in conversations with the volunteer (for example, about the volunteer's life goals and circumstances) that the VSS is not well-equipped to manage.
- ***Capturing services delivered to VIOs and community impact***
 - While the Data Exchange enables capture of aggregated group data, organisations 'are strongly encouraged to create individual client records for as many of their clients as possible'³¹.
 - Much of the work of VSS is in delivering training or services to groups, where capturing each individual's mandatory data would be impractical. Many of the Data Exchange outcomes data fields are inapplicable to the work of VSS and do not capture:
 - their impact on VIOs – including through supporting VIOs to better recruit, utilise and manage volunteers, and
 - the broader community outcomes that volunteer management supports, such as improving social cohesion and community capacity building.

³¹ Department of Social Services, The Data Exchange Protocols, Version 4 March 2017, p.22

Departmental management of the VMA

Policy responsibility for the VMA sits within the Settlement Services Group of the Families and Communities Stream within the Department’s National Office. The policy area is responsible for developing policy, providing Activity-level guidance to Funding Arrangement Managers (FAMs) and overseeing Activity-level risks and issues.

Day-to-day management of funded organisations rests with individual FAMs in the Department’s Delivery Network in 16 offices across Australia. As a part of recent reforms, the Department has transitioned to a regional FAM model (with 35 regions across Australia). A single FAM is responsible for a number of programs or activities within a region. The functions of FAMs include:

- liaising with funded organisations regarding day-to-day or region-specific VMA matters
- responding to queries from funded organisations
- reviewing reports and providing feedback, and
- reporting on insights and issues to the Network Office leading delivery of the VMA and/or policy area.

An overview of the Department’s organisational structure as it relates to the VMA is at Figure 5.1.

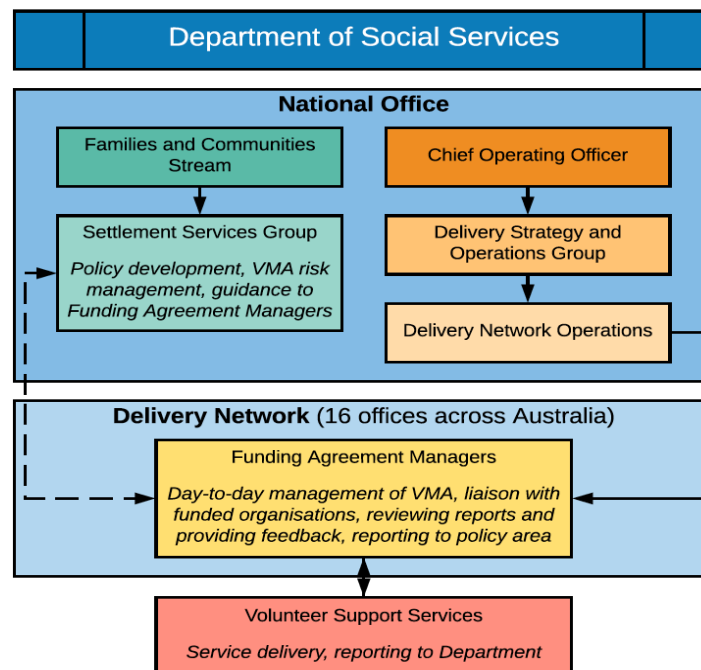


Figure 5.1: The Department’s organisational structure for delivery of the VMA.

As part of the Review, the Department has asked mpconsulting to comment on their management of the VMA and areas for improvement.

At the time we were undertaking the Review:

- changes to the VMA were notified to funded organisations on 22 December 2017, with effect from 1 January 2018. This included changes to Activity Performance Indicators and new reporting via the Data Exchange. This generated considerable confusion given the short timeframes within which VSS were expected to respond when most had closed for the Christmas period

- major changes were made to the Department's delivery structure and operations in order to standardise management of grant programs and contracts, streamline and automate certain grant functions and align duties by function and/or region rather than by program
 - The day-to-day management of the VMA moved from a single team based in Brisbane to 35 FAMs spread across 16 offices throughout Australia, many of whom had not previously worked on the VMA. Many of the Departmental staff liaising with VSS regarding the changes to the VMA funding agreement had a limited understanding of the changes, their impact on VSS or how VSS were expected to implement changes within their organisations to respond.
- VSS (and FAMs) had been provided little information or support in managing this change. While VSS appreciated the efforts made by a number of Departmental officers, they also noted inconsistent advice provided by different Departmental officers and different areas within the Department, and
- there were multiple changes to FAMs, even after the structural changes took effect. When we spoke with FAMs in each State and Territory, most were uncertain about the outcomes sought to be achieved through the VMA and how to assess each organisation's performance.

During consultations, both Departmental staff and VSS acknowledged that the transition to the new arrangements was sub-optimal, with parties focusing on lessons to be learned. For the purpose of this Review, key lessons include ensuring:

- any new program is designed in close consultation with stakeholders
- adequate time is allowed between the provision of grant agreements to successful grant applicants and the commencement of the program (with the 2015 Senate Inquiry recommending a period of three months)³², and
- there is clarity regarding policy and program objectives and these are well understood by those administering the program, so they are equipped to advise grant recipients on the Department's expectations.

³² Commonwealth of Australia Senate Standing Committees on Community Affairs 2015, *Impact on service quality, efficiency and sustainability of recent Commonwealth community service tendering processes by the Department of Social Services*

Chapter 5 – Summary of findings and recommendations

Findings

The VMA has provided funding to a diverse range of organisations (VSS) enabling them to promote volunteering, match potential volunteers with volunteering roles, and provide advice and training to VIOs.

Relatively small amounts of Australian Government funding have provided a foundation for many VSS to leverage support from others (both in-kind and financial). The performance reported by VSS therefore reflects not just the Australian Government's investment (VMA funding) but also the investment of many others including volunteers who have contributed their time and effort to the running of VSS.

While many stakeholders support ongoing funding for VSS, most also acknowledged the program design limitations and the need to re-focus the program including to address areas of inefficiency, support best practice and respond to emerging trends.

In summary, the limitations of the VMA include the following:

1. The focus on matching people experiencing disadvantage to volunteer opportunities is resource-intensive, does not build the capacity of VIOs to directly engage volunteers, is not consistent with how most people access volunteer opportunities (including those experiencing disadvantage), shifts the focus from the volunteer's contribution (by focusing on the benefits to the volunteer) and is not consistent with best practice volunteer management. Rather than focusing on one specific client group (such as people experiencing disadvantage) any volunteer management program should focus more broadly on building the capacity of VIOs to recruit a diversity of volunteers and to effectively manage volunteers to ensure their retention and optimal utilisation.
2. The level of funding provided to each organisation is inadequate to enable delivery of a core set of volunteer management services to a professional standard. Some VSS have supplemented VMA funding with funding from other government programs, some have partnered with the private sector, some rely on the support of a parent organisation, and some charge fees for services. Most rely heavily on volunteers to deliver their services. This has resulted in very different service offerings across VSS and a loss of focus on best practice volunteer management in some cases. Some small organisations unable to attract significant additional funding or in-kind support, are able to offer only the most basic services with limited capacity to engage with volunteers in innovative ways or provide VIOs with advice on best practice volunteer management.
3. While the VMA focuses on place-based services and attempts to provide national coverage, it is not possible for VSS to have a physical presence across Australia (such that the VSS can forge a face-to-face relationship with volunteers and VIOs). This is also not the most efficient and effective way to support best practice volunteer management, nor to maximise the reach of the program.
4. The VMA does not incentivise collaboration and sharing of resources, with numerous examples of duplication of effort.
5. Volunteers are a scarce resource and poor management will discourage volunteering. Likewise, VIOs experiencing barriers to engagement with expert volunteer managers will be discouraged from seeking the support they need. Supporting as many VIOs as possible to improve their practices supports the volunteering sector as a whole. It is critical VIOs have ready access to authoritative resources, tools to support them and expert advice when needed.

6. The existing performance framework provides limited capacity to qualitatively or quantitatively measure the effectiveness of each VSS and of the VMA more generally. This presents challenges for Government in terms of: assessing the performance of individual VSS and comparing outputs and outcomes; quantifying return on investment and demonstrating the value of the VMA to the Government in the context of competing priorities for funding. This also presents challenges for VSS in terms of quality assurance and continuous improvement, demonstrating their value and targeting resources to achieve greater efficiencies.

Key considerations informing recommendations

To inform our recommendations, we looked to other countries for models of best practice volunteer support.

Different countries have very different cultures of volunteering and different ways that volunteer management is supported. While many have VSS (under different names and guises), the focus of funding differs. For example:

- in the United States, different programs operate in different states. One notable national program is the Volunteer Generation Fund, which has been established via legislation and assists VIOs by expanding and improving their capacity to utilise volunteers and aims to spur innovation in volunteer recruitment and management practices³³
- in England, the Office for Civil Society is responsible for policy relating to ‘young people, volunteers, charities, social enterprises and public service mutuals’³⁴. Through its ‘Modernising Volunteering’ program, the Government co-funded Do-it.org³⁵, the UK’s first and largest digital volunteer matching service connecting potential volunteers to charities and community causes. A national standard ‘*Investing in Volunteers*’ provides a quality standard for good practice in volunteer management, to assist organisations in assess the quality of their volunteer management. A network of volunteer centres (rationalised from over 300 to approximately 150 over the last decade) are accredited against the national standard, ensuring a level of professionalism and consistency in their advice to VIOs and volunteers. These are variously funded by District and County Councils, Government and the National Lottery.³⁶ More recently the Government launched the Voluntary Sector Investment Programme, which provides funds and support to VIOs and social enterprises to strengthen volunteering, specifically in the health and social services sectors³⁷
- in New Zealand, there is a network of 22 regional volunteer centres that provide advice and support to VIOs and volunteers. The national peak body, Volunteering New Zealand (VNZ) provides information regarding each of the regional volunteer centres as well as a comprehensive suite of volunteer management resources. The website includes links to five volunteer recruitment platforms, a Volunteering Best Practice Toolkit³⁸ and an online tool called ‘InvolveMe’. InvolveMe allows VIOs to quickly and easily evaluate their organisation’s existing strengths and opportunities in volunteer involvement. Upon the completion of the assessment, the tool generates a customised report that guides the users towards development of an action plan in accordance with VNZ’s Best Practice

³³ Volunteers Generation Fund, viewed on 11 July 2018, <https://www.statecommissions.org/volunteer-generation-fund>

³⁴ Office for Civil Society, viewed on 11 July 2018, <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/office-for-civil-society/about>

³⁵ Do-it.org, viewed on 11 July 2018, <http://doittrust.org/about-us/>

³⁶ Hilger, Volunteering Centres and Volunteering Infrastructure

³⁷ Voluntary Sector Grants Hub, Department of Health, *Voluntary Sector Investment Programme Innovation, Excellence and Strategic Development Fund 2015–16 Information Pack for Applicants*, United Kingdom, January 2015

³⁸ Volunteering New Zealand, February 2015, Best Practice Guidelines for Volunteer-Involving Organisations version 2.0

Toolkit.³⁹ Funding for these initiatives is from a range of sources including Government (with the Government recently investing an additional \$5 million NZD into social capital initiatives).

The New Zealand Government also manages a Support for Volunteering Fund, with funding increased from \$500,000 to just over \$1 million in 2017. Recipients of the funding include Volunteering New Zealand (\$175,000 to promote and support volunteering in New Zealand), and \$747,000 shared between seventeen of the regional volunteer centres to recruit and train volunteers, promote good practice in volunteer management, and provide training and networking for community organisations, and \$80,000 shared across eleven community groups to run projects supporting volunteering.⁴⁰

- The Government of Canada, through the Department of Canadian Heritage, funded the development of the Canadian Code for Volunteer Involvement⁴¹. This document provides a road map for VIOs, including strategies to effectively involve volunteers. Volunteer Canada is the national peak body for volunteering, collaborate closely with volunteer centres, local organisations and national corporations to promote and broaden volunteering. Volunteer Canada works with a network of over 200 volunteer centres.⁴² In 2017, Volunteer Canada worked with volunteer centres to integrate and enhance their volunteer matching technology to build collective capacity, monitor trends and measure their impact.⁴³

While there are obvious cultural, funding, and historical differences between the countries which impact the approach to volunteer management (and it is not possible to catalogue all activity in this space) there are a number of common elements underlying the approaches to volunteer management including:

- national legislation, strategies, statements or similar commitments from government regarding its role and interest in volunteering and volunteer management
- easily accessible volunteer management resources that are up to date and are identifiable as sector-endorsed best practice
- innovative utilisation of web-based platforms to maximise volunteer engagement and contribution, support record keeping and reporting by volunteers and VIOs 'nudge' VIOs to examine their practices, continuously improve and acknowledge volunteers, and
- expert advice and support for VIOs to manage volunteers, provided by third parties (i.e. VSS).

Taking into account the Australian context, we have sought to describe a new or re-focused program that:

- is consistent with the strategic, national focus of the Australian Government
- addresses some of the key limitations of the existing VMA
- minimises the risk of duplication of funding between tiers of government
- leverages existing systems, resources and infrastructure and further supports return on investment already made
- better positions the system to respond to emerging trends, drawing on the experience of other countries, and
- could be implemented within the Government's current level of investment in volunteer management (but also provides for scalability should Government increase investment).

³⁹ Volunteering New Zealand, 2018, InvolveMe, [available at <https://www.involveme.nz/about/>]

⁴⁰ NZ National Party *Media release: Volunteer sector supported by record investment*, 2 August 2017, <https://www.communitymatters.govt.nz/support-for-volunteering/>, https://www.national.org.nz/volunteer_sector_supported_by_record_investment

⁴¹ Volunteer Canada, 2006, Canadian Code for Volunteer Involvement, Department of Canadian Heritage

⁴² Volunteer Canada, viewed on 11 July 2018, <https://volunteer.ca/index.php?MenuitemID=332>

⁴³ Volunteer Canada, 2016/17, *Volunteer Canada Annual Report*, p. 6

Recommendations

Recommendation 1

The Australian Government:

- continue to invest in volunteer management (maintaining its current investment as a minimum)
- clarify its interest in volunteer management, and
- clarify the focus and objective of its investment.

Many stakeholders have recommended the Australian Government clarify its commitment to volunteering through a national strategy for volunteering and volunteer management.

Though a National Strategy was developed by PM&C in 2011, it is no longer widely referenced or utilised and has not been adopted by the current Government. National strategies are often time consuming and resource intensive to develop and may only have relevance to the government of the day.

Another option is to develop a short, bi-partisan National Statement on volunteering and volunteer management. A similar statement has been developed by the ACT Government⁴⁴. A simple statement could acknowledge the benefits of volunteering and summarise the focus of the Australian Government's investment in volunteer management. In the longer-term, consideration could also be given to volunteer recognition legislation consistent with the *Carers Recognition Act 2010*.

Clarity regarding the focus of Australian Government investment will enable other levels of government (and other funders) to better target their funding toward complementary initiatives.

Recommendation 2

Work with stakeholders over the coming 12 months to co-design a new or re-focused program (including a performance framework) that focuses the Australian Government's investment on building the capacity of VIOs to effectively recruit and manage volunteers.

Subject to further consultation on the details, it is proposed that the new or re-focused program:

- invest in enhancements to the existing national, web-based volunteer management databases
- fund the development, promotion and regular updating of national best practice resources, and
- provide sustainable funding to a limited number of professional organisations (up to 20) to provide support and training for VIOs.

Enhancements to the existing national, web-based volunteer management databases

As noted on the body of this Report, Australia has existing widely used national IT infrastructure. With some enhancements, the databases could be improved to:

- provide a better interface for volunteers, including so they can more readily access opportunities that suit them (matched to their interest and skills), easily apply for opportunities and receive consolidated reports on their volunteering (including to enable them to report on mutual obligation requirements)

⁴⁴ ACT Government Community Services 2018, *ACT Volunteering Statement*, viewed on 23 March 2018, <http://www.communityservices.act.gov.au/home/strategic__policy/act-volunteering_statement>

- better support VIOs by offering:
 - more interactive help and support for VIOs to advertise roles (while at the same time educating them about what people are looking for)
 - linking VIOs to resources relevant to volunteer management (discussed below)
 - enable the identification of poorer performing or non-responsive VIOs such that VSS can target interventions that aim to improve their practice, and
 - a user feedback/rating system so volunteers can provide feedback on VIOs, enabling VSS to follow up to encourage good volunteer management, and
- better enable performance measurement and the generation of reports to meet government reporting requirements.

This would build on existing infrastructure, leverage the investment already made by others and provide a foundation for other volunteer management activity.

Funding could be provided for an initial period (for example for two years) with any ongoing or further funding dependent on the outcomes of performance measurement which could be linked to IT functionality and use.

The development, promotion and regular updating of national best practice resources

This would support effective volunteer management by delivering national resources that:

- include, but are not limited to:
 - tools and templates to support the recruitment and management of volunteers
 - online training resources for volunteers and volunteer managers
 - tools enabling VIOs to assess their volunteer management practices, and
 - resources to support VSS and VIOs to manage emerging trends, challenges and priorities in volunteering
- are readily identifiable as national best practice, easy to locate and simple to use, and
- are regularly reviewed and updated.

Further consultation with stakeholders may identify the most appropriate organisation/s to achieve these objectives, taking into account recognisable national presence and intellectual property rights over existing resources. The successful applicant for funding would need to demonstrate:

- ability to develop best practice resources drawing on a range of existing sources, including the *National Standards for Volunteer Involvement*, international models and other existing materials
- ability to tailor materials such that they are responsive to emerging trends, challenges and priorities
- a process for identifying and responding to the need for new resources and for reviewing and updating existing resources, and
- ability to integrate resources with the national, web-based volunteer management databases discussed above.

Performance management could be linked to specific deliverables including that the required resources are delivered to the satisfaction of the users (volunteers, VIOs, peak bodies, VSS and governments).

Sustainable funding to a limited number of professional organisations to provide support and training for VIOs

Compared with the existing program, larger funding amounts would be awarded for longer periods to fewer organisations that can demonstrate their capacity to deliver services strategically and enhance the professionalisation and capacity of VIOs.

This would support effective volunteer management by delivering:

- training to VIOs based on national resources, emerging priorities and trends
- advice and support to VIOs regarding their obligations, best practice volunteer management and the development of volunteering opportunities to meet emerging trends and priorities, and
- strategic networking of VIOs to maximise use of resources and volunteer contribution and share experiences and best practice.

As discussed in this Report, VSS currently undertake activity that is much broader than the above (such as matching volunteers to opportunities). While it is acknowledged that many VSS (both those funded by Government and others) may continue to undertake such complementary activity, the focus of Australian Government funding on capacity building of VIOs is expected to support more strategic, far-reaching change within the sector.

In order to minimise the duplication and inefficiencies described throughout this Report, grants within this funding stream could be awarded to no more than 20 organisations nationally. This, combined with the proposed selection criteria, should support the selection of organisations with the appropriate governance and service delivery model to enhance the professionalisation and capacity of the sector.

It is proposed that applicants would be required to demonstrate:

- appropriate governance, including a skills-based Board and strategies for ensuring staff have the skills and experience to deliver the specified outputs
- how they will meet relevant standards in the delivery of their services
- a model of service delivery that describes:
 - a program of capacity building for VIOs, including how they will draw on national resources and keep abreast of emerging trends and priorities
 - how they will work with VIOs to improve the quality and diversity of volunteering opportunities and identify and engage poorer performing VIOs in a process of quality improvement, and
- collaboration, including how they will:
 - work with peak bodies and other VSS to develop a community of best practice
 - work with VIOs to maximise use of resources and volunteer contribution and share experiences and best practice, and
 - partner with other organisations to enable them to deliver any complementary services.

Consistent with the proposed new objectives of Australian Government investment, the selection of organisations should not focus on geographical reach, location of particular client groups or history of funding but instead on organisations that are able to demonstrate capacity and capability to deliver the services sought (noting the desirability of at least one service in each State and Territory, given the differences in legal requirements for volunteers across Australia).

It is also recommended that grants be for a five-year term. This provides certainty, enables better service planning and evaluation, and is consistent with:

- the Commonwealth Grant Rules and Guidelines, which recommend the use of longer term grant agreements as they ‘may better achieve value with relevant money and government policy outcomes, than conducting multiple grant opportunities with grant agreements of shorter term duration’⁴⁵
- the recommendations of the 2015 Senate Inquiry into the Impact on service quality, efficiency and sustainability of recent Commonwealth community service tendering processes by the Departments⁴⁶, and
- the approach adopted by other government programs such as the Humanitarian Settlement Program and jobactive (both with five-year contract terms).

Co-design

Co-design of new or redesigned programs is consistent with best practice grant management and the Department’s approach to policy design, delivery and funding.

Well-defined outcomes will better inform the design, delivery and funding of more efficient and effective services. Working with the sector can also provide more integrated and innovative solutions to complex problems and build the capability to deliver these solutions.

As noted in the Department of Finance, Resource Management Guide⁴⁷:

Those involved in activities that deliver on a common purpose need to have the same understanding of what that purpose is, what will be different when it has been achieved and how it will be achieved in an efficient and effective manner. If a common understanding of how activities contribute to a purpose is not established at the outset (and sustained), those involved in delivering on that purpose are likely to work towards different things.

Co-design will also enable the identification of a fit-for-purpose approach to performance measurement. In relation to the performance framework the following is suggested:

- The Department reconsider the use of the Data Exchange in the context of the VMA (both currently and for the proposed new program). A number of programs within the Department are currently exempt from using the Data Exchange, as it does not capture appropriate information relative to the purpose of the program (for example, the Disability Employment Services program). As noted by the Department of Finance, performance measures should be informed by the nature of the activities they are trying to assess and the key stakeholders. ‘A one-size-fits-all approach to the design and use of performance information leads to poorly defined and poorly focused performance reporting’.⁴⁸

Performance Reporting

- A set of principles could guide the development of the new performance framework which should:
 - be informed by impact mapping and be based on clear articulation of the new program’s purpose
 - incorporate performance reporting that is not overly burdensome, noting that:

⁴⁵ Australian Government Department of Finance 2017, *Commonwealth Grant Rules and Guidelines*, p.31

⁴⁶ Commonwealth of Australia Senate Standing Committees on Community Affairs 2015, *Impact on service quality, efficiency and sustainability of recent Commonwealth community service tendering processes by the Department of Social Services*

⁴⁷ Department of Finance 2015, *Resource Management Guide No. 131: Developing good performance information*, p.15

⁴⁸ Department of Finance 2015, *Resource Management Guide No. 131: Developing good performance information*, p.4

- elaborate performance measures are not good measures if the process of collecting and analysing data takes too much time away from service delivery
- focus should be given to a small number of simple, well-targeted and defined performance measures⁴⁹
- enable a range of methodologies and measures to be used to assess performance
 - A mixture of self-assessment and external evaluation/measurement of performance may provide an efficient, flexible and reliable basis for measuring performance.⁵⁰
 - For example, Volunteering England provides specially developed tools to support VSS to assess their outcomes, including a detailed handbook, guide for research and supporting workshops. VSS are expected to collect evidence and prove they are achieving the prescribed outcomes, allowing flexibility in the approach and performance indicators used.
- include performance measures that are supported by both qualitative and quantitative information
 - Data alone will not give a full performance picture – particularly when the effectiveness of activities is hard to measure quantitatively, when outcomes are best observed over the medium to long term, and when activities require collaboration across diverse entities, including other jurisdictions – as is the case for the VMA.
 - Qualitative data can complement and give meaning and richness to quantitative data.

Conclusion

Throughout this Review stakeholders highlighted the value of investment in volunteer management. This is also supported by the literature and reflected in international experience. However, as identified through this Review (and acknowledged by stakeholders including both the Department and VSS) the existing VMA has some significant limitations. This Report discussed those limitations and provided recommendations for how Government could best target funding to provide support and resources for organisations recruiting and managing volunteers, with the overarching goal of increasing and improving volunteer contribution.

It is expected the Department will work with stakeholders over the next 12 months to further develop options, noting the expiration of current funding agreements on 30 June 2021. Again, we would like to thank all those who contributed to the development of this Report and to acknowledge and celebrate Australia's many volunteers.

⁴⁹ United Kingdom Department of Health 2015, *How to understand and measure impact: The better care fund*, Issue 4, May
⁵⁰ Hilger, P 2010, Volunteer Centre Quality Accreditation in England – Report for Kansalaisareena r.y. Citizen Forum – Service development and information centre for voluntary actors in Finland, Helsinki, February

Appendix 1: Details of stakeholder engagement

Meetings and teleconferences

Throughout the Review, mpconsulting met with a range of stakeholders involved in volunteering, volunteer management and delivery of the VMA. This included face-to-face meetings and teleconferences with VSS, VIOs, peak organisations, representatives from the Department and other government agencies.

Public workshops

Public workshops were held throughout Australia from February to May 2018. Approximately 200 people attended the workshops, comprising a mix of volunteers, VIOs, VSS, (those funded by the Department through the VMA and those not) and peak bodies.

Survey

As part of the consultation process for the Review, mpconsulting published an online survey. The survey was designed to reach people who were not able to attend workshops and different questions were asked of different groups of stakeholders.

The survey was open from 31 January to 9 April 2018, with 205 surveys completed. People responded in their capacity as: volunteers (60); VSS (39); VIOs (95); and other (11).

Site visits

mpconsulting undertook site visits to VSS to meet with people involved in delivering the VMA (i.e. staff of VSS) and observe the VSS 'in action'. We selected a range of VSS, ensuring we visited services:

- receiving varying funding amounts
- operating as part of a broader organisation and also stand-alone services
- based in rural, regional and metropolitan areas
- providing services to different target groups, and
- operating different service delivery models.

Staff at each VSS provided a site tour and discussed the operation of their organisation in depth. The organisations visited are outlined in Table 1.

Table 1: Summary of stakeholder engagement

Date	Format	Organisation	Relevance to the Review
Ongoing meetings	Teleconference and face-to-face	Department of Social Services, Social Integration, Settlement and Community Grants	Policy responsibility for the VMA
16 November 2017	Teleconference	Volunteering Australia	National peak
21 November 2017	Teleconference	Volunteer West	VMA funded VSS
21 November 2017	Teleconference	Volunteering Queensland	VMA funded VSS and state peak
22 November 2017	Teleconference	Department of Social Services, Commissioning Unit	Leading the Department's Commissioning for Better Outcomes approach to grant management
22 November 2017	Teleconference	Department of Social Services, Business Partnerships	Involved in the Prime Minister's Business Partnership
22 November 2017	Teleconference	Volunteering Gold Coast	VMA funded VSS
23 November 2017	Teleconference	Department of Social Services VMA Team, Brisbane Office	Former lead for VMA grant management
23 November 2017	Teleconference	Australian Red Cross	VIO involved with VSS
6 December 2017	Teleconference	Australian Red Cross	VIO involved with VSS
18 December 2017	Teleconference	Department of Social Services VMA Team, Brisbane Office	Former lead for VMA grant management
30 January 2018	Teleconference	Department of Social Services, Community Programs and Policy Section	Policy responsibility for the VMA
13 February 2018	Workshop	Melbourne public workshop	Public consultation
19 February 2018	Teleconference	Bendigo TAFE	Provides some similar services to VSS (not funded by VMA)
19 February 2018	Teleconference	becollective	Provides some similar services to VSS (not funded by VMA)
20 February 2018	Teleconference	Laverton Community Service	VIO
27 February 2018	Teleconference	Not for Profit Law	Provides some similar services to VSS (not funded by VMA)
1 March 2018	Workshop	Brisbane public workshop	Public consultation
2 March 2018	Workshop	Brisbane public workshop	Public consultation
2 March 2018	Face-to-face	Volunteering North Queensland	VMA funded VSS
2 March 2018	Face-to-face	Volunteering Far North Queensland	VMA funded VSS
2 March 2018	Face-to-face	Department of Social Services VMA Team, Brisbane Office	Former lead for VMA grant management
5 March 2018	Teleconference	Volunteering Tasmania	VMA funded VSS and state peak
13 March 2018	Workshop	Adelaide public workshop	Public consultation
13 March 2018	Face-to-face	Volunteering SA&NT	VMA funded VSS and state peak
13 March 2018	Face-to-face	Department of Social Services VMA FAM, Adelaide Office	VMA grant manager
15 March 2018	Workshop	Sydney public workshop	Public consultation
15 March 2018	Site Visit	The Centre for Participation	VMA funded VSS and state peak
16 March 2018	Site Visit	Leep NGO	VMA funded VSS
16 March 2018	Site Visit	Liverpool Volunteer Resource Centre	VMA funded VSS
21 March 2018	Workshop	Perth public workshop	Public consultation
21 March 2018	Site Visit	Volunteering WA	VMA funded VSS and state peak
21 March 2018	Face-to-face	Department of Social Services VMA FAM, Perth Office	VMA grant manager
22 March 2018	Site Visit	Volunteer South West Inc.	VMA funded VSS
28 March 2018	Teleconference	Department of Social Services VMA FAM, Bendigo Office	VMA grant manager

Date	Format	Organisation	Relevance to the Review
4 April 2018	Teleconference	FSG Australia	Provides some similar services to VSS (not funded by VMA)
5 April 2018	Teleconference	Centre for Continuing Education Victoria	VMA funded VSS
5 April 2018	Videoconference	Rob Jackson	Former Volunteering England CEO, volunteer management consultant in the UK
10 April 2018	Workshop	Canberra public workshop	Public consultation
11 April 2018	Site Visit	Volunteering and Contact ACT	VMA funded VSS and state peak
11 April 2018	Face-to-face	Volunteering Australia	National peak
20 April 2018	Site Visit	Volunteering Gold Coast	VMA funded VSS
20 April 2018	Site Visit	NORTEC	VMA funded VSS
23 April 2018	Face-to-face	Volunteering Australia CEO Networking meeting	National and state peaks
30 April 2018	Site Visit	Centre for Participation Horsham	VMA funded VSS
2 May 2018	Workshop	Darwin public workshop	Public consultation
2 May 2018	Teleconference	Salvation Army	VIO
3 May 2018	Site Visit	Carers NT	VIO
24 May 2018	Teleconference	RSPCA Darwin	VIO

Appendix 2: History of the VMA

In 1992, the former Department of Health and Family Services established the Volunteer Management Strategy to provide referral and placement services for volunteers and VIOs through 24 VSS across Australia. Funding of \$2.5 million over 2.25 years was provided for seven 'State Volunteer Centres' and nine regional 'Referral Agencies' throughout Australia.

Responsibility for the program was transferred to the former Department of Family and Community Services (now the Department of Social Services) in 1998. By 2002/03 funding had expanded to \$1.611 million per year supporting eight State and Territory centres and 18 regional centres.

In 2007, the VMP was amalgamated with the separate, but related, Voluntary Work Initiative (VWI). The VWI (funded by the former Department of Workplace Relations) provided referral and placement services to help people on income support to volunteer. Under the VWI, there was three levels of funding (State peak, metropolitan and regional) for 44 VSS across Australia. This amalgamation increased VMP funding from approximately \$1.5 million (in 2007-08) to over \$5 million per year.

Between 2008 and 2014, the VMP remained largely the same, though responsibility for the administration of the VMP moved briefly from the former Department of Family and Community Services to the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet from 2010 to 2013. In 2014, administration of the VMP, returned to the Department of Social Services in a Machinery of Government change and in 2018 it was renamed the VMA.

In 2014 the Department of Social Services conducted a competitive grant process for the VMP for the period March 2015 to June 2016. This was the first time since the VMP's establishment that organisations had to apply for funding through an open, competitive selection process. Through this process, 52 organisations were selected to deliver VSS from March 2015 to June 2016.

In early 2017, the Department consulted on a proposal to create a new Strong and Resilient Communities (SARC) grants program to replace the VMP, Community Capacity Building, Diversity and Social Cohesion and Multicultural Arts and festivals grants programs. In response to the consultation process, stakeholders expressed strong concerns about the removal of a dedicated funding stream for VSS.

In June 2017, Government agreed that the VMP would not be integrated with SARC and funded organisations were given a six month extension until 31 December 2017.

The former Minister for Social Services, the Hon Christian Porter MP, wrote to funded organisations in July 2017 advising that discrete funding of \$5.7 million per annum for the VMP would be reinstated from 1 January 2018 to 30 June 2021. Minister Porter also advised that due to the constitutional risks associated with VMA funding organisations are encouraged to transition to 'more sustainable business models' over the grant term.

In October 2017, organisations that were receiving VMA funding at that time were invited to apply through a restricted, non-competitive process for funding for the period 1 January 2018 to 30 June 2017.

Appendix 3: Detail regarding differing VSS services, resourcing and models

Services

Matching and referral of potential volunteers to appropriate volunteering opportunities

Different VSS adopt different approaches for matching and referring potential volunteers to appropriate volunteering opportunities. For example:

- some VSS operate a website, phone line and/or a physical shopfront in the community. Potential volunteers will approach the VSS through these means to express interest in a particular opportunity or a general interest in volunteering
- some VSS undertake an interview with the potential volunteer to determine an opportunity that matches their skills, availability and circumstances. This might occur by phone, face-to-face or through completion of a web form depending on the service offering of the VSS and the capacity of the volunteer
- some VSS support the volunteer to apply for the position or simply provide their details to the selected VIO. Again, this depends on the VSS's service offering and whether the individual is capable of applying without support, and
- some VSS follow up with the VIO and/or the volunteer to determine if the match was successful. Only some VSS undertake this activity (due, in part, to limitations in resources).

Providing support, advice and information to volunteers

In providing support, advice and information to volunteers, some VSS:

- hold information sessions for potential volunteers to get a sense of volunteering, understand their rights and responsibilities, know what to look for in determining a suitable opportunity and how to find one, and the types of opportunities available in their region. Many VSS run a 'Bridge to Volunteering' community education session
- hold training targeted at capacity building for volunteers and potential volunteers
- provide one-on-one advice addressing challenges experienced by volunteers in their VIO or in volunteering more broadly, and
- provide accredited training for volunteers.

Providing support, advice and information to VIOs

In providing support, advice and information to VIOs, VSS variously:

- develop and provide resources, information and training, tools and templates for recruiting and managing volunteers, covering legal requirements, best practice, and trends in volunteering and volunteer management
- provide one-on-one advice regarding challenges experienced by VIOs in recruiting or managing volunteers
- assist VIOs in designing appropriate volunteering opportunities and developing advertisements for these and publishing these online (e.g. through the VIKTOR volunteer database)
- host peer networking meetings and events where volunteer managers can share experiences and lessons learned
- deliver accredited training (for example on implementing the National Standards for Volunteer Involvement, how to recruit volunteers through social media, how to work with culturally and linguistically diverse volunteers), and

- combine their volunteer management role with other roles including as community advice centres, peak bodies, community development bodies, or service providers (delivering services such as community transport, aged care services or community visitors services).

Resourcing

Utilisation of volunteer workforce

Most, if not all, of the VSS funded under the VMA utilise volunteers in the delivery of services. Many have a ratio of paid staff to volunteers of 1:6-10.

A Volunteering Australia survey of a sample of VSS estimated that VSS were benefitting from approximately 53 hours per week of volunteer involvement to support their operations. Extrapolated to the population, this equates to an annual contribution of just over 37,000 hours (valued at around \$14 million per annum)⁵¹. Volunteering Australia concluded that for every \$50,000 that the Government spends in funding for a paid VSS staff member, it returns (conservatively) up to \$300,000-\$500,000 in labour value alone.

In addition to utilising volunteers to undertake a wide range of tasks (including administration, interviewing volunteers, promotions, education and events) each VSS is also supported by a Board or Committee of Management, with most (if not all) members volunteering their time.

Extensive partnering and significant in-kind support

Many VSS partner with other organisations and effectively generate in-kind support from local businesses, clubs and associations, councils and members of the community. By providing in-kind support, small to medium sized organisations can be involved in furthering the mission of the VSS in a practical and useful way, without having to provide direct financial support.

Numerous examples of the in-kind support utilised by VSS were provided, including:

- free or subsidised rent
- free advertising including on radio
- gifts from businesses to recognise volunteers
- use of function and events spaces
- access to printing or other consumables
- IT support
- low or no cost accounting and legal advice, and
- use of cars.

Membership fees, fees for service and donations

Different VSS adopt different approaches to charging membership fees or otherwise charging for services. For example, some VSS:

- charge a membership fee to VIOs. This provides members with volunteer referrals, networking events, access to training, resources, etc. Membership programs are often structured around 'levels' or categories designed to meet the needs of the different types of organisations or individuals. Many VSS scale the membership payable by VIOs, based on annual turnover, whether the organisation is an NFP or other organisation and whether the organisation has a national reach (such that the organisation is a member of more than one VSS). Membership fees generally range from \$30 to \$550

⁵¹ Volunteering Australia 2018, The value of Volunteering Support Services, Canberra

- charge corporations to place their staff in suitable volunteering opportunities. Corporate volunteering is often project based, where the corporation will target a particular cause or undertake certain activities that align with their brand and parameters
- offer training or other consultancy services to VIOs and others, and/or
- receive donations or undertake fundraising activities.

Utilisation of assets

While many VSS are so small they do not hold assets, some of the larger VSS have acquired assets over time. Numerous examples were provided of these assets being utilised to generate income to support the delivery of the VSS services. For example, some VSS own their premises, rent spare office spaces to permanent tenants and make training rooms available to community organisations and RTOs to deliver workshops, for a fee. Others have acquired or been donated equipment (such as events equipment) that they rent to corporates and others.

Service delivery

Some VSS deliver other services funded by government. For example, some VSS are peaks and are funded by the relevant State government. Some deliver other community services such as aged care or community transport. Other VSS receive grants to undertake particular activities such as research or to develop online systems.

Case studies

Some VSS supplement their funding and increase their reach with broader service delivery and other government funding to provide services that complement the VSS role.

Volunteering Queensland – Registered training organisation with strong focus on emergency management

Volunteering Queensland describes its core business areas as sector services and development, emergency and disaster volunteering, IT offerings and events.

As a Registered Training Organisation, Volunteering Queensland delivers accredited training in Active Volunteering and Coordination of Volunteer Programs to volunteers and managers of volunteers state-wide. With a total annual revenue of around \$1.3 million, Volunteering Queensland receives \$868,586 in grants (including from the State government to build local capacity to manage spontaneous disaster volunteers) and income from training fees and memberships (\$354,474).

Volunteering Queensland is also the Queensland peak body for volunteering and manages Emergency Volunteering CREW, which links people with the required skills, availability and locality to areas of the community that need help the most. Since commencing in 2008, over 32,000 volunteer referrals have been made to 200 disaster preparation or recovery campaigns. Volunteering Queensland also supports VIOs to enhance their preparedness and capacity to manage spontaneous volunteers through providing training and development, support developing operating procedures, and providing information and advice.

Some VSS rely heavily on VMA funding and provide mostly matching, networking and training services to a relatively small number of local VIOs.

Volunteer South West – Small regional organisation with a focus on matching

The focus of Volunteer South West is undertaking face-to-face interviews with potential volunteers and holding regular networking events. Events include quarterly morning teas to connect volunteer coordinators. Volunteer South West post advertisements for volunteer opportunities online and in local newspapers and newsletters.

Volunteer South West is a small organisation with two part-time paid staff members, a Board consisting of nine volunteers and nine additional volunteers who assist with administration and interview potential volunteers.

Some VSS funded for multiple Activities operate a hub and spoke model where administration costs are centralised, improving their efficiency.

Volunteering WA – Hub and spoke model of service delivery

Volunteering WA operate a hub and spoke model for the operation of five VSS around Perth, Kimberly and Pilbara in Western Australia. While each VSS operates independently and retains its identity (with each submitting a separate AWP for the VMA), Volunteering WA has oversight of their expenditure and provides centralised administration and infrastructure (including IT support, marketing, accounting and reporting). This generates efficiencies and improves the viability of the smaller, regionally-based VSS.

Volunteering WA is also the peak body for volunteering in WA, with funding provided by the State Government for various activities, membership fees from VIOs and corporates, and some fees for service (e.g. for facilitating training and events). Volunteering WA also manage VIKTOR, VIRA and the Volunteer Profile (national IT infrastructure).

Some VSS make effective use of partnerships to improve the quality of services they offer, increase efficiency and provide complementary services.

Volunteering Gold Coast – Integration of service delivery, volunteer management and partnerships

Volunteering Gold Coast operates a community transport service, for which government funding provides their primary source of income. This service utilises volunteers and also provides support for the VSS.

Volunteering Gold Coast forms partnerships with local businesses, including the Gold Coast Airport, hospitals, resorts and local radio stations, to further their transport services and fund their volunteer management (including through in-kind support). Volunteering Gold Coast has around 70 paid staff, supported by 200 volunteers.

Volunteering Gold Coast has also established the Volunteering Services Australia initiative, through which it intends to establish a national network of community outreaches delivering volunteer support services. To date, offices of Volunteering Services Australia have been established in six locations, with three of these funded under the VMA (the Gold Coast, Ipswich and Northern Tasmania).

Some VSS provide like services that complement their VSS role, making them a natural hub within the community and improving their efficiency and community reach.

Volunteering and Contact ACT – Wrap around services

Volunteering and Contact ACT are funded \$100,000 per year to operate the only VSS in the Australian Capital Territory and immediate surrounds. Volunteering and Contact ACT are also the ACT peak body for volunteering and are funded by the ACT Government to provide community information services.

Volunteering and Contact ACT utilise their shopfront for interviewing potential volunteers to find opportunities, as well as to provide information to individuals regarding services, events and where to get assistance. Efficiencies are realised through the operation of a single shopfront with a dual purpose.

Some VSS form part of a larger organisation which also has an interest in placing individuals in volunteer opportunities.

NORTEC Volunteering – Volunteer referral service based in a job recruitment organisation

NORTEC Volunteering is a VSS based within the NORTEC, a community-owned organisation which delivers recruitment services, commercial and funded, as well as a host of supporting programs, services and initiatives. NORTEC has over 40 office locations through the Mid and Upper New South Wales region (Forster to Tweed Heads) and through South-East Queensland (from Palm Beach to Brisbane).

NORTEC Volunteering is based in Murwillumbah and works with 700-800 volunteers per year, many of whom are job seekers looking to become more involved in their community as a means to gain work experience, networks and improve their confidence. NORTEC Volunteering draws heavily on the resources and infrastructure provided by the parent company, including for office space, IT support, managing social media presence and advertising. NORTEC have also employed an Indigenous officer, who is working with Indigenous job seekers in the region and making referrals to NORTEC Volunteering where appropriate.

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Volunteer management resources

As part of the Review, we examined a vast array of volunteer management resources freely available on the websites of national, state and territory volunteering peak bodies, not for profits and other organisations. This included policies and procedures, templates, guidelines, tools, checklists, training materials and other advice related to volunteer management. Below provides a sample of the resources we examined.

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