



# Information Links

## March 2021

### News Roundup

#### **Premier's Certificate of Recognition: Nominations now open**

Let your volunteers know how much they are appreciated by nominating them for outstanding volunteer service.

- Opportunity for SA volunteer involving organisations and community groups
- Recognise and reward excellence and significant achievement

Nominate one or more of your volunteers by 26 March 2021

<https://dhs.sa.gov.au/services/volunteers/recognition/volunteering-certificates>

#### **NDIS Worker Checks**

Registered NDIS providers must ensure that key personnel and other workers in certain types of roles have a worker screening clearance. In SA this is called a NDIS worker check.

A NDIS worker check is an assessment of whether a person who works, or seeks to work, with people with disability poses a risk of harm to them. It will determine whether a person is cleared or excluded from working in certain roles with people with disability.

Providers' recruitment, training and supervision processes—as well as worker screening requirements—will assist in avoiding risk to people with disability from people working in the NDIS who are unsuitable.

A NDIS worker check is valid for five years, portable across roles, organisations and all states and territories and subject to ongoing national monitoring.

In SA, the following checks will be recognised for NDIS work until they expire. Then you need to apply for a NDIS worker check:

- Department of Human Services Disability Services Employment Screening
- Department of Human Services Child-related Employment Screening
- Department of Human Services Working with Children Check issued before 1 February 2021.

More information can be found at [https://screening.sa.gov.au/types-of-check/ndis-worker-checks?SQ\\_VARIATION\\_98482=0](https://screening.sa.gov.au/types-of-check/ndis-worker-checks?SQ_VARIATION_98482=0)

## Volunteering a 'critical gap' in mental health recommendations

Volunteering Australia has highlighted volunteering as a 'critical gap' in a submission to the Australian Department of Health consultation on the Productivity Commission's report on Mental Health. The Productivity Commission's recommendations need to be adapted to include the role of volunteering in securing the nation's mental health.

Volunteering Australia CEO Mark Pearce and Policy Director Sue Regan recently met with Mental Health Australia to discuss how the development of volunteering and the volunteering sector will play an important role in supporting the mental health workforce and mental health prevention and recovery.

Read more: <https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/volunteering-a-critical-gap-in-mental-health-recommendations/#/>

## The Struggle to Re-invigorate Volunteering in a Covid-19 World

Australian organisations are struggling to re-engage their volunteering workforce, with new research revealing that many volunteer programs are still not fully up and running despite COVID-19 restrictions easing.

A Volunteering Australia survey of the sector over December-January found that volunteer programs were only completely operational for 28 per cent of respondents.

And while 56 per cent of organisations reported needing more volunteers, four in 10 (42 per cent) respondents were not confident their organisation will achieve pre-COVID volunteering levels in the next six months.

Volunteering Australia CEO Mark Pearce told Pro Bono News that there hadn't been the same level of structured engagement in re-engaging the volunteer workforce that was evident with the paid workforce.

He said it was important to note that while there were around 1.3 million people employed by charities in Australia, there were also about 3.7 million volunteers that were just as important to the sector.

"Those 1.3 million people working in the sector rely on a significant volunteer cohort being available and if they're not, those jobs can't be done [as effectively]," Pearce said.

"So when you think about issues of productivity and making sure that services are viable, you need to look both at the paid workforce as well as the unpaid workforce."

While previous research has shown around two in three volunteers stopped volunteering between February and April last year, volunteer participation rates were already a concern for the sector pre-COVID.

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data from 2019 shows that 7 per cent less Australians volunteered for an organisation that year compared to 2010.

This data also uncovered a 20 per cent decrease in the number of hours volunteered in the community since 2014.

Volunteering Australia believes this highlights the need for a Reinvigorating Volunteering Action Plan.

This would set out how volunteers can be re-engaged safely, support the adaptation of volunteer programs, and help with the recruitment of new volunteers so services can continue.

The peak body is also calling for a whole of government national volunteering strategy to address the volunteering decline and ensure key government-funded services are sustainable.

Pearce said the fact there wasn't a strategy already showed there was a level of disengagement around the importance of volunteering and how it contributes to society and the community.

He said this strategy would bring together the diverse volunteering ecosystem in Australia.

"It would create a roadmap for how to address this persistent decline in formal volunteering, the change in expectations for younger volunteers, the utilisation of technology and the emergence of virtual volunteering," he said.

"It brings all of that together and says, 'okay, this is the resource we have now. How do we address the problems that we face?'

"Because inevitably volunteering is extraordinarily innovative and adaptable and resilient and it can solve problems, but there needs to be a plan around it."

## Can Your Organisation Make A COVID-19 Vaccine Mandatory for Employees or Volunteers?

As Australia plans a vaccine rollout, some employers are already thinking about whether they can require their workers to be vaccinated as a condition of employment.

Organisations that work with vulnerable groups or have direct contact with the public might have a greater sense of urgency to vaccinate their staff.

The Fair Work Commission has considered two cases of unfair dismissal (non-COVID related) for refusal to be vaccinated. These decisions suggest that vaccination **may** be an inherent requirement of employment, depending on the nature of the role and workplace.

As we still await guidance from state and federal governments on this issue, organisations should be cautious about requiring vaccination as a condition of employment. The safety benefits need to be balanced with other legal issues including:

- Unfair dismissal claims

Employers might have difficulties defending unfair dismissal claims in situations where their workplace can be reasonably regarded as COVID-safe by using other means such as social distancing, masks or even personal protective equipment.

- Discrimination claims

Employers need to consider whether vaccination should be an inherent requirement of the employment and what would be considered a reasonable basis for refusal; watch out for discrimination on the basis of medical or religious grounds.

- Workers compensation claims

Employers may face workers' compensation claims from employees who experience harmful side effects from the COVID vaccine if the vaccine is taken as an employment directive in work environments where vaccination is not mandatory.

### **What about volunteers?**

If your organisation has volunteers you may want to start thinking about your approach to the vaccine – this may depend on factors like who are your service-users, the size of your volunteer workforce, other COVID-19 precautions in place, and how volunteer work is currently being performed. While waiting for further government advice, you may want to start thinking about your messaging to volunteers around vaccines. If you want to put mandatory requirements in place (for example, making vaccination a requirement for volunteering), you may need legal advice.

Note: Each organisation will have to take an approach based on its own circumstances and in line with government advice.

Article written by Justice Connect please keep checking their website for further developments [www.nfplaw.org.au](http://www.nfplaw.org.au)

## **Changes to Mutual Obligation and Face-to-Face Servicing Requirements**

The Australian Government has announced changes to mutual obligation requirements for job seekers in jobactive and Disability Employment Services. Other changes will affect how job seekers in these programs, as well as participants in ParentsNext, will receive services.

Please note these changes do not take immediate effect.

- In early March 2021, face-to-face servicing with providers will recommence subject to local health advice and state and territory COVID-19 requirements. This applies to job seekers and participants in jobactive, Disability Employment Services and ParentsNext.
- In early April 2021, the minimum number of job searches for job seekers will rise to 15, increasing to 20 jobs per month in early July 2021. These changes apply to job seekers and participants in jobactive and Disability Employment Services.

Current mutual obligation requirement arrangements remain in effect until further notice.

From the beginning of April 2021, there will be an increase in the auditing of job seekers job search quality to identify those who are submitting non-genuine or deliberately poor-quality applications in order to meet job search targets. The increase in auditing of job search effort applies to job seekers and participants in jobactive, Online Employment Services, New Employment Services Trial and Disability Employment Services.

Where it is identified that a job seeker is deliberately submitting non genuine or poor-quality applications, they can face consequences under the Targeted Compliance Framework (TCF), including payment penalties.

Further updates and program-specific information on the above changes to mutual obligation and servicing requirements will be made available shortly. The changes may not apply to all programs, for example, job search requirements do not apply to participants in the ParentsNext program.

For further updates please visit: <https://jobsearch.gov.au/covid-19-information>

## Volunteering Australia's Pre-Budget Submission 2021-22

Volunteering Australia has submitted its Pre-Budget Submission to guide the development of the 2021-22 Australian Government Budget. The Pre-Budget Submission outlines key priorities and ways to support and enhance volunteering.

Recommendations:

- 1. A Reinvigorating Volunteering Action Plan.** The plan would enable volunteers to reengage safely, support the adaptation of volunteer programs, and facilitate the recruitment of new volunteers to ensure services and programs can continue.
- 2. A National Strategy on Volunteering.** Investment in developing a strategic and whole of government approach to volunteering will address the decline in volunteering and enable key government-funded services to be sustainable.
- 3. A National Youth Volunteering Initiative.** At a time when paid jobs are scarce, this initiative could mitigate against poor mental health outcomes for young unemployed people and support pathways to paid employment.
- 4. A nationally co-ordinated approach to volunteer engagement in emergencies.** As the frequency and scale of emergencies in Australia increases, a nationally co-ordinated approach will help to mobilise volunteers rapidly, safely, and effectively.
- 5. Investment in the Aged Care volunteer workforce.** Sector Support and Development funding within the Commonwealth Home Support Program should be extended nationally, and investment allocated to fund the Aged Care Royal Commission's volunteering recommendations.

Further information can be found at [https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/wp-content/uploads/Pre-Budget-Submission-2021\\_22-FINAL.pdf](https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/wp-content/uploads/Pre-Budget-Submission-2021_22-FINAL.pdf)

## Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety – The Role of Volunteers in the Recommendations

**Recommendation 44: Volunteers and Aged Care Volunteer Visitors Scheme** From 1 July 2021, the Australian Government should promote volunteers and volunteering in aged care

to support older people to live a meaningful and dignified life and supplement the support and care provided to them through the aged care system, whether in their own home or in a residential care home, by:

- a. increasing the funding to the Volunteer Grants under the Families and Communities Program – Volunteer Grants Activity in 2021–22 to support organisations and community groups to recruit, train and support volunteers who provide assistance to older people
- b. requiring, as a condition of approval and continuing approval of all approved providers, that all aged care services which use volunteers to deliver in-house coordinated and supervised volunteer programs must:
  - i. assign the role of volunteer coordination to a designated staff member
  - ii provide induction training to volunteers and regular ongoing training to volunteers in caring for and supporting older people, complaints management and the reporting of reasonably suspected abuse or neglect
  - iii. retain evidence of provision of such training
- c. providing additional funding, and expanding the Community Visitors Scheme and changing its name to the Aged Care Volunteer Visitors Scheme, to provide extended support for older people receiving aged care who are at risk of social isolation.

## Research on the Impacts of Volunteering on Wellbeing of Volunteers

UK research led by the Institute for Volunteering Research (IVR) and commissioned by the What Works Centre for Wellbeing and Spirit of 2012, examines what is known about the impacts of volunteering on the subjective wellbeing of volunteers. The review aims to support the work of practitioners, policy makers and funders in their design and delivery of volunteering opportunities and programmes.

### Key Findings

- Most of the evidence on the impacts of volunteering on the subjective wellbeing of volunteers points to a positive association between the two, including improved life satisfaction, increased happiness and reduced symptoms of depression.
- We cannot definitively conclude, however, that volunteering categorically enhances subjective wellbeing. A small number of studies claim reverse causality – higher wellbeing makes individuals more likely to volunteer rather than volunteering causing higher wellbeing.
- A number of studies use advanced statistical strategies and control for a range of factors that might affect subjective wellbeing, providing us with more confidence that volunteering leads to enhanced subjective wellbeing for volunteers.
- This does not mean that volunteering always leads to improved wellbeing.
- The evidence tentatively suggests that some volunteering activities can lead to anxiety, stress or burnout.
- There is a significant gap in the evidence on the negative effects of volunteering on the wellbeing of volunteers.

The full report can be found at <https://whatworkswellbeing.org/resources/volunteer-wellbeing-what-works-and-who-benefits/>

## Resources

### New National Resource Hub for Volunteer Managers

Volunteering Australia has launched an online Volunteering Resource Hub to help anyone who helps manage, lead or coordinate Australia's almost six million volunteers. The Volunteering Resource Hub is an initiative of Volunteering Australia, funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services. It brings together useful, evidence-based and current best practice resources to support effective volunteer management across Australia. This Resource Hub is coming at a critical time, as the volunteering sector is still struggling with the impact of COVID-19. Volunteering Australia's 'Re-engaging Volunteers and COVID-19' research shows that nearly three quarters (72%) of volunteer programs are not fully operational. Out of the 600 respondents to this survey, over half (56%) said their organisations needed more volunteers, with four out of ten (41%) finding it difficult to re-engage or recruit volunteers.

Volunteering Australia CEO, Mark Pearce, said it was evident that volunteering needs extra support if it is to be reinvigorated in the wake of COVID-19. "Volunteers are needed more than ever to ensure economic recovery and social stability. Although volunteering is time freely given, enabling volunteering is not free. Volunteers need managers to induct, train, lead, guide, recognise and support them to continue their invaluable contribution to Australian communities. This Resource Hub will help volunteer leaders carry out this vital work." The Resource Hub includes over 350 relevant, useful and accessible resources including policies, procedures, tools, videos, templates, guides, research and factsheets. These resources will help volunteer managers, experienced or new, embrace the National Standards of Volunteer Involvement in their everyday practice. The standards, recognised as best practice in Australia, are designed to help benchmark practice; better attract, manage, recognise and retain volunteers; manage risk and safety; and improve the overall volunteer experience.

A working group of representatives from across the volunteering sector in Australia helped guide the Resource Hub's design, and over 20 volunteer management professionals reviewed, checked and tested its design, functionality and usability. This Resource Hub has been designed for the sector by the sector. The resources cover topics such as volunteer support, development and recognition. Resources on topics relevant to the current environment volunteering is facing are also included – topics such as re-engaging volunteers during COVID-19, managing the mental health and wellbeing of volunteers and recruiting younger volunteers. The 'Reengaging Volunteers and COVID-19' research showed that these are some of the barriers that volunteer involving organisations face in re-invigorating the sector. "It is vital for all of us to work together, share our collective knowledge and re-imagine how we can better support Australia's diverse, dedicated and invaluable volunteers. This Resource Hub will be one step towards helping achieve that," Mr Pearce said. The Volunteering Resource Hub can be accessed at [www.volunteeringhub.org.au](http://www.volunteeringhub.org.au).

What the volunteer managers who tested the Resource Hub say?

"A fantastic initiative. I love how clear and easy it is to use. It will be great for people even with a very limited understanding of volunteer management. I look forward to using it."  
Kerry Burns, Manager Volunteer Services, RSL Victoria

“Being new to the management side of volunteering, I have found a range of resources which have perfectly addressed my concerns or areas I was not confident.” William Edmonds, Support Worker, Casey North Community Information and Support Service  
“It’s brilliant to have this on the way and that it is national.” Mel White, Executive Officer, Southern Volunteering SA Inc

## **volPoll**

This free engagement tool, an initiative of Volunteering Victoria, is designed for volunteers and small to medium groups to better understand their volunteering threats and opportunities.

VolPoll asks questions of volunteers and organisation/club/group leaders to determine how they perform in three key areas of volunteering: safety, sustainability, and satisfaction.

The questions are designed for volunteers and leaders across all sectors, with varying understanding of what responsibilities they have when involving volunteers.

You are then sent a report with suggestions for how they can encourage further action at their organisations/clubs/groups.

For more information visit [www.volpoll.org.au](http://www.volpoll.org.au)

## **Southern Volunteering Annual Report 2019-20 and Highlights**

<https://svsa.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Annual-Report-19-20.pdf>

<https://svsa.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Highlights.pdf>

## **Department of Human Services COVID-19 updates for NGO sector**

<https://dhs.sa.gov.au/ngo/news/newsletter>

## **Volunteer Engagement Professionals – connection & camaraderie**

This Facebook group has been created during the uncertain times of the COVID-19 virus across the world. Many leaders of volunteers are grappling to rework their engagement strategies, care for and inform volunteers, develop new ways of involving the community in supporting organisations and service users... all the while concerned for our own well-being, and that of our families.

This group has been created as a space for Leaders of Volunteers across the world to connect, share experiences and ideas, debrief and brainstorm how we can support our communities to support each other. This is done through the group and also regular zoom get togethers.

Our inboxes are flooded, we are often too busy to connect and look after our own mental health, so this group is intended as a way for us to come together and support each other away from the pressures of work.

We will have to think differently about volunteering. We will be challenged by the way our organisations are, or are not, engaging with us and our teams. We will be overwhelmed by our own fear for our safety, our jobs, our well-being.

## Office for Ageing Well Community Grants

Office for Ageing Well Community Grants will fund initiatives reflecting the South Australian Government's commitment to helping older people reduce social isolation, challenge ageism, and improve their wellbeing so they can age well and contribute positively to our state.

Non-government, non-profit incorporated organisations can apply for Grants for Seniors and Positive Ageing Fellowship Grants.

Local governments can apply for Age Friendly SA Grants.

You can access information about the grants here:

[www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/communitygrants](http://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/communitygrants).

## Training and Conferences

### Southern Volunteering Training Update

Current courses available can be found at

<https://events.humanitix.com.au/organisers/5e1e8fda40315d00113a173a>

### Shaping the Future of NFP Leadership

If you are in a leadership role within the non-profit sector a one-day event held at U City, Adelaide on April 21st, will explore the critical issues faced by the non-profit sector and how leaders need to be equipped to meet the demands of the future.

2021 South Australian of the Year Ms Tanya Hosch will be a keynote speaker, speaking from her experience addressing diversity issues within the AFL. Tanya was the first Indigenous person and second ever woman in the AFL's executive ranks, and manages a broad portfolio tackling sexuality and gender diversity, racism and sexism.

Ms Hosch will be joined by another respected community leader, Reverend Tim Costello, who will speak on ethical leadership.

Early bird registration is now open at [www.nonprofitleadership.com.au](http://www.nonprofitleadership.com.au)

## Dates for your diary

**Monday 17th to Sunday 23rd May 2021** - National Volunteer Week (NVW), Australia's largest annual celebration of volunteers. #NVW2021. The theme this year is: Recognise. Reconnect. Reimagine.

### SAVI Meetings 2021

Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> June 1pm – 3.30pm

Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> September 1pm -3.30pm

Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> December 1pm – 3.30pm

All meetings will take place on Zoom

*Acknowledgement of content from the following sources: Pro Bono News, Third Sector News, Justice Connect, Volunteering Australia, Our Community Matters, Services Australia and Department of Human Services.*