

# Information Links

## June 2021

### News Roundup

#### **Volunteering During the First year of COVID**

Compelling new research from Volunteering Australia and the ANU Centre for Social Research and Methods shows a much greater decrease in the proportion of Australians who undertook volunteering than the decline in the proportion of Australians in paid work.

- The total number of hours of volunteering is estimated to have fallen by around 293 million hours over a 12-month period since COVID 19.
- The loss in economic output due to the pandemic would be 16.1per cent higher if volunteering was included, compared to considering paid work only.
- People who had the greatest decrease in hours in paid work over the COVID -19 recession had the greatest relative increase in the probability of volunteering.

The research also explored the impact on life satisfaction and loneliness. The data showed that volunteers had a higher level of life satisfaction prior to COVID -19 than non-volunteers. The impact of COVID-19 on life satisfaction and loneliness was affected by volunteering behaviour over the period with those who managed to continue volunteering during COVID 19 faring much better than those who didn't

Australians who had stopped volunteering since 2019 had a greater loss of life satisfaction than those who continued to volunteer during COVID-19. Loss in life satisfaction appears to have occurred between April and October 2020.

Those who stopped volunteering were far more likely to say that they felt lonely at least some of the time than those who continued volunteering.

Read the full report at <https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/research/research-briefing-volunteering-during-the-first-year-of-covid-19/#/>

#### **Latest ACNC data shows more than half of Australia's charities are run by volunteers**

The latest official data shows more than half of Australia's charities are run entirely by volunteers. The Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC) has launched the seventh edition of the Australian Charities Report, during National Volunteers Week (17 to 23 May).

The regulator's analysis of approximately 48,000 Australian registered charities showed that for the 2019 reporting year 51 per cent operated without any paid staff. ACNC Commissioner Dr Gary Johns said the charity sector is a significant part of the economy, and

relies heavily on the generosity of volunteers to provide vital services to the Australian community.

“Our comprehensive analysis of the sector shows charities employed 1.38 million people, but the number of volunteers was much higher than that. Charities harnessed the skills of around 3.6 million volunteers in this latest analysis period,’ Dr Johns said.

The total of approximately 3.6 million volunteers that charities reported to the ACNC was a slight decrease of 200,000 on the previous year. Small charities, with annual revenue less than \$250,000, made up 65 per cent of the sector, and were more reliant on volunteers than large charities. Large charities were more reliant on paid staff to achieve their charitable purpose.

## Volunteering and Gender: Key Statistics

This Volunteering Australia document provides key statistics about volunteering in Australia by gender. The main source of data is the General Social Survey (GSS) which includes a series of questions about volunteering. The most recent data available is the 2019 GSSi . This data, therefore, predates the onset of COVID-19. Volunteering was profoundly affected by COVID-19 and is struggling to recover. For further information on the impact of COVID-19 on volunteering, see the following: - Volunteering and the early impact of COVID-19 (May 2020) - Re-engaging Volunteers and COVID-19 (February 2021) The 2020 GSS survey data is due for release at the end of June 2021. Volunteering Australia acknowledges that the GSS data is not inclusive of the diversity of gender identities in our community. This document uses the terms ‘men/male’ and ‘women/female’ to denote those who have selected this gender option during their response to the GSS. Volunteering Australia recognises that only those who identify as male or female are represented in these statistics. The next Census of Population and Housing is due to be held in August 2021 and asks about volunteering. The ABS is introducing some new questions and amending existing questions in the 2021 Census, including providing a non-binary option for the gender question. This data will be available in 2022.

- Nearly 3 million (2.897m) women volunteered for an organisation or group in Australia in 2019, according to the 2019 General Social Survey.
- Nearly 3.5 million (3.446m) women volunteered informally in the community in the 4 weeks prior to the 2019 survey.
- Based on the GSS 2019 data, men and women now volunteer for an organisation or group at similar rates, 30.7% and 28.5 % respectively (aged 15 years and over). However, there are important differences.
- Women are more likely to volunteer than men in ‘parenting, children and youth’ (16.4% and 9.3% respectively) and ‘health and welfare’ organisations (15.6% and 7.1% respectively). Men are more likely than women to volunteer for sport and physical recreation – 47.5% and 30.5 % respectively.
- Women are more likely than men to have volunteered for more than 10 years (43.0% of female volunteers compared to 32.9% of males).
- The rate of formal volunteering is declining for both men and women. However, the decline is most evident for women, whose rate decreased from 38.1% in 2010 to 28.1% in 2019.

- Female volunteers were more likely to have stopped volunteering during the early stages of COVID-19 compared to male volunteers (68.2 % of women stopped volunteering, compared to 62.9% of men).

Full report <https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/wp-content/uploads/VA-Gender-Statistics-Factsheet.pdf>

## **A new community project goes door to door to talk about mental health**

An initiative of Community Mental Health Australia is being rolled out across 24 different communities with the aim of getting people talking about their mental health.

The Assisting Communities through Direct Connection (ACDC) Project is currently underway across NSW, QLD and the ACT with teams of “people connectors” going door-to-door talking to the local community and connecting them with mental health services they might need. The CEO of Community Health Australia, Bill Gye, said that the project was tackling the fact that a lot of people don’t want to talk, or even think about, their mental health.

“People may prefer to tough it out, hide it from others, or avoid the stigma” Gye said.

“ACDC is going directly to households in Australia to engage them in conversation about these important issues.”

Through the project, households will receive information packs and brochures laying out all local and online services available for support.

ACDC project manager James McKechnie said that having someone knock on your door and start a conversation around mental health could make a real difference

“It means that people who may not have received help previously and would now like to will be supported to do so,” McKechnie said.

Providing Government Feedback

The other aim of the project is to gather feedback on any mental health service gaps so that improvements can be made by local, state and federal governments.

“The findings of the ACDC Projects and (its) evaluation report will contribute to important discussions about funding for community-managed mental health services in Australia,” McKechnie said.

“As well as how the mental health support needs of people in communities are delivered moving forward.

## **Volunteering Australia and Justice Connect Strengthen Partnership**

Volunteering Australia and Justice Connect are pleased to strengthen their partnership with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding. The MOU formalises the cooperation between Justice Connect and Volunteering Australia and will enhance their ability to support the volunteering sector.

Volunteering Australia and Justice Connect have worked together campaigning for stronger, nationally consistent protections for volunteers and unpaid workers facing sexual harassment in the workplace.

The Australian Human Rights Commission incorporated the key recommendation from a [Volunteering Australia and Justice Connect submission](#) into its [Respect@work Report](#). The

joint Submission highlighted the inadequacy of the current legal framework to prevent and address sexual harassment against volunteers and other unpaid workers.

Justice Connect and Volunteering Australia will continue their efforts to ensure that volunteers and other unpaid workers across Australia are protected from sexual harassment – and that volunteer involving organisations have a positive duty to prevent, identify and respond to sexual harassment.

Justice Connect has a suite of [resources](#) available focused on volunteering. A key resource is the [National Volunteer Guide](#) created in consultation with Volunteering Australia, for use by volunteer involving organisations across Australia. The Guide provides an overview of the key legal obligations organisations owe volunteers and practical examples, template documents and tips to assist in their understanding. It also steps out the corresponding Standard as stated in the [National Standards for Volunteer Involvement](#). Justice Connect and Volunteering Australia have also worked together on the [Continuous Professional Development \(CPD\) Program for Professional Leaders of Volunteers](#), ensuring that Justice Connect webinars and training can accrue CPD points.

## Student climate movement strike: In a crisis, what are the limits of 'student voice'?

For students who walked out of classes on Friday 21 May, the School Strike 4 Climate protests are about extending their voices beyond the stifling grasp of schools. It is time for school leaders to recognise that young people exercising their democratic rights are citizens, and not citizens-in-waiting, write Dr George Variyan and Fiona Longmuir from Monash University.

2020 was a year when our politicians and the press were preoccupied with the pandemic, and rightly so. However, for most young people the climate crisis has remained a persistent and uncomfortable reality.

Growing up in a time of climate crisis has been [shown to have serious consequences](#) for mental health and well being for many children and young people. These impacts did not reduce in 2020 but rather [COVID-19 added another layer to their anxieties](#). Yet, even so, as we emerge from the restrictions of the pandemic, it seems that [young people are again ready to lead the revolt](#) and demand attention be returned to the climate crisis.

For students who walked out of classes, these protests are about extending their voices beyond the stifling grasp of schools. In effect, young people's activism is a spill-over phenomenon that escapes the bounds of schooling itself, even if it is just for one day. How can school leaders hope to authentically engage with this imperative? After all, educational systems, arguably bastions of the status quo, are one of the many institutions that have helped sleepwalk us into the climate crisis we face.

"... It is time for school leaders to recognise that young people exercising their democratic rights are citizens, and not citizens-in-waiting."

Education policy and the hidden curriculum of individualised hyper-competition and student docility on which typical teaching practice hinges are pathways to [job-ready graduates](#) rather than active and engaged citizenry that are vociferous in their environmental concerns. Yet, [young people are no dupes](#).

So what now for school leaders? Maybe it is time to recognise that we are in a common fight for the survival of our civilisation. It really is that [dire](#).

Yet, beyond this urgency, it is time for school leaders to recognise that young people exercising their democratic rights are citizens, and not citizens-in-waiting. And further still, for young people it is more than an act of political citizenship, it is an act of self-preservation.

Instead of giving in to despair, despondency and resignation, young people are finding their voice and agency. The activism of young people needs to be understood in these broader terms, across broader terrains and beyond timetables.

Supporting young people to speak up, take action and make a difference must be a priority for educators. For school leaders, to do any less, is to fail the moral test of our times.

## Myth or Fact? Young people credit volunteering with improving their job prospects

### FACT!

A recent study reports that out of 1,000 people in the UK, over half credit volunteering in helping them secure employment.

When looking at just 16-19-year-old respondents, that number rose to 73%.

When looking at factors that improve employability of volunteers, the study found that 50% of respondents stated that they received training through their volunteer work. This training helped them gain new skills which made them more employable.

Source: Royal Voluntary Service. Social Mobility: Unleashing the Power of Volunteering. April 2021.

## There's a Name for the Blah You're Feeling: It's Called Languishing

At first, I didn't recognize the symptoms that we all had in common. Friends mentioned that they were having trouble concentrating. Colleagues reported that even with vaccines on the horizon, they weren't excited about 2021. A family member was staying up late to watch "National Treasure" again even though she knows the movie by heart. And instead of bouncing out of bed at 6 a.m., I was lying there until 7, playing Words with Friends.

It wasn't burnout — we still had energy. It wasn't depression — we didn't feel hopeless. We just felt somewhat joyless and aimless. It turns out there's a name for that: languishing. Languishing is a sense of stagnation and emptiness. It feels as if you're muddling through your days, looking at your life through a foggy windshield. And it might be the dominant emotion of 2021.

As scientists and physicians work to treat and cure the physical symptoms of long-haul COVID, many people are struggling with the emotional long-haul of the pandemic. It hit some of us unprepared as the intense fear and grief of last year faded.

In psychology, we think about mental health on a spectrum from depression to flourishing. Flourishing is the peak of well-being: You have a strong sense of meaning, mastery and mattering to others. Depression is the valley of ill-being: You feel despondent, drained and worthless.

Languishing is the neglected middle child of mental health. It's the void between depression and flourishing — the absence of well-being. You don't have symptoms of mental illness, but you're not the picture of mental health either. You're not functioning at full capacity.

Languishing dulls your motivation, disrupts your ability to focus, and triples the odds that you'll cut back on work. It appears to be more common than major depression — and in some ways it may be a bigger risk factor for mental illness.

Part of the danger is that when you're languishing, you might not notice the dulling of delight or the dwindling of drive. You don't catch yourself slipping slowly into solitude; you're indifferent to your indifference. When you can't see your own suffering, you don't seek help or even do much to help yourself.

Even if you're not languishing, you probably know people who are. Understanding it better can help you help them.

We still have a lot to learn about what causes languishing and how to cure it, but naming it might be a first step. It could help to defog our vision, giving us a clearer window into what had been a blurry experience. It could remind us that we aren't alone: languishing is common and shared.

### **Give yourself some uninterrupted time**

That means we need to set boundaries. Years ago, a Fortune 500 software company in India tested a simple policy: no interruptions Tuesday, Thursday and Friday before noon. When the company set quiet time as official policy, 65 percent achieved above-average productivity. The lesson of this simple idea is to treat uninterrupted blocks of time as treasures to guard. It clears out constant distractions and gives us the freedom to focus.

### **Focus on a small goal**

The pandemic was a big loss. To transcend languishing, try starting with small wins, that means carving out daily time to focus on a challenge that matters to you — an interesting project, a worthwhile goal, a meaningful conversation. Sometimes it's a small step toward rediscovering some of the energy and enthusiasm that you've missed during all these months.

Languishing is not merely in our heads — it's in our circumstances. You can't heal a sick culture with personal bandages. We still live in a world that normalizes physical health challenges but stigmatises mental health challenges. As we head into a new post-pandemic reality, it's time to rethink our understanding of mental health and well-being. "Not depressed" doesn't mean you're not struggling. "Not burned out" doesn't mean you're fired up. By acknowledging that so many of us are languishing, we can start giving voice to quiet despair and lighting a path out of the void.

## **Insurance for Virtual Volunteers**

Virtual volunteers may, for example, provide administrative support, create marketing materials for the not-for-profit sector, or make telephone calls on behalf of a charity seeking donations. Around one in five Australians currently provide voluntary services according to ABS Census data, it's not clear what percentage of them are virtual volunteers, but anecdotal evidence suggests it's a rising proportion. The challenge for many charities and not-for-profits, is ensuring this growing army of virtual volunteers is properly protected. As unpaid workers, volunteers are not covered by workers compensation in the event of accidental injury or death. To protect volunteers charities have turned to voluntary workers insurance policies - but these are generally geared to volunteers who physically leave their homes to volunteer in an office or specific location, which does not apply to virtual volunteers who instead offer their services from their own homes. Organisations with voluntary workers insurance need to specifically extend it to include virtual volunteers, or

there could be a worrying gap in cover. In addition, organisations which benefit from the services of virtual volunteers need to remain mindful of the recently harmonised Work, Health and Safety legislation across Australia which requires volunteers to be treated in a similar way to paid employees, particularly in terms of the safety of their work surrounds. Clearly it is not realistic for charities and not-for-profits to organise home visits to inspect their virtual volunteers' homes; but it is advisable that these organisations find a way to demonstrate that they have provided appropriate information to volunteers, and raised their awareness regarding potential hazards in the location from which they volunteer. The legislation calls for an approach to health and safety which is "reasonably practicable". One option might be to use online checklists and assessments to ensure that volunteers properly understand their responsibilities and role, and also the importance of maintaining a safe working environment. Finally, in the event of a claim, volunteers may have to demonstrate that they were injured during the course of volunteering rather than when they were - for example - making a cup of coffee or hanging out the washing. An online volunteering system that requires volunteers to sign on when they start and stop tasks could be helpful in that regard.

## Lawful dismissal of a not-for-profit employee who refused the flu vaccine

The Fair Work Commission has found that an employee who was terminated for refusing the flu vaccine was not unlawfully dismissed. Her employer was a not-for-profit organisation that provided childcare and early learning services. In 2020, the organisation introduced a policy that required all staff to receive the influenza vaccine unless they had a medical exemption.

The employee notified her employer of her objections but did not provide sufficient evidence or medical documentation to support an exemption. After attempting to discuss her objections and giving her opportunities to provide evidence, her employment was terminated.

The Commission was satisfied that had she had failed to comply with a lawful and reasonable direction by her employer. The Commission noted that the child care centre's vaccination policy 'is lawful and reasonable in the context of its operations which principally involve the care of children, including children who are too young to be vaccinated or unable to be vaccinated for a valid health reason.' [Read more about the decision.](#)

If your organisation has volunteers, you may want to start thinking about your approach to the vaccine. [Download the Justice Connect factsheet.](#)

## 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.

## Justice Connect National Volunteer Week resource list

National Volunteer Week is a time for organisations to find better ways to support their volunteer workforce. As a specialist legal service for community organisations and not-for-profits, Justice Connect highlighted the range of resources, webinars and training options to help you do this.

### 1. Free volunteer guide

For practical examples, template documents and tips to assist in your understanding of the key legal obligations organisations owe volunteers, [take a look](#) at our comprehensive guide.

### 2. Youth volunteer factsheet

If you're engaging volunteers who are under 18-years-old, [take a look](#) at this factsheet which provides an overview of the legal issues you need to consider.

### 3. Understand your legal obligations

[Use this tool](#) to help your understanding of the key legal obligations that not-for-profit organisations have towards volunteers.

### 4. Free webinar

[Watch this free webinar](#) to find out the top tips to draft a great volunteer agreement and some key clauses you should be thinking about.

### 5. Get free legal advice

Does your employment agreement template need a refresh? Is your constitution out of date and making governing hard? Do you need a lease renegotiated and don't know where to start? Our expert lawyers can provide [free legal advice](#) on a broad range of issues to eligible not-for-profits, community organisations and social enterprises. We can also refer organisations to one of our 50+ member law firms for free help.

## 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.

## **Training and Conferences**

### **Free CPR Training with St John Ambulance**

Renewing your cardiopulmonary resuscitation training? Or maybe you've never done CPR training before?

St John Ambulance SA has been awarded a grant from Masonic Charities SA & NT to train 6,000 people over three years in lifesaving cardiopulmonary resuscitation.

#### **What you'll receive:**

- 1 x FREE Nationally Accredited CPR course\* delivered by St John Ambulance SA
- 1 x FREE Personal Leisure First Aid Kit
- A Statement of Attainment upon successful completion of HLTAID001 Provide cardiopulmonary resuscitation

To find out more, call 1300 78 5646 or email [courses@stjohnsa.com.au](mailto:courses@stjohnsa.com.au) and quote Masonic2020.

## **Dates for your diary**

### **National Student Volunteer Week**

Dates: TBC 2021

Theme: *TBC*

Social media tag: #NSVW21

A week of events, activities and campaigns that promote student volunteering led by higher education providers and schools across Australia.

### **International Volunteer Managers Day**

Date: 5 November 2021

Theme: *TBC*

Social media tag: #IVMDAY2021

As an official International Volunteer Managers Day (IVMD) supporter, Volunteering Australia is proud to celebrate the profession of volunteer leadership. We encourage you to join us in celebrating the vital role of managers of volunteers for effective volunteering.

### **Giving Tuesday**

Date: 30 November 2021

Social media tag: #GivingTuesday #GivingTuesdayAUS

We're proud to be a part of this global celebration of giving. GivingTuesday is a global generosity movement, unleashing the power of people and organisations to transform their communities and the world.

### **International Volunteer Day**

Date: 5 December 2021

Theme: *TBC*

Social media tag: #IVD2021

Volunteering Australia proudly supports International Volunteer Day (IVD) on 5 December, to raise awareness on the important role volunteers play in responding to challenges facing the world.

### **SAVI Meetings 2021**

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* <https://probonoaustralia.com.au/news/>

*Third Sector News* <https://www.thirdsector.com.au/>

*Justice Connect* <https://justiceconnect.org.au/>

*Volunteering Australia* <https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/#/>

*Volunteering SA & NT* <https://www.volunteeringsa-nt.org.au/>

*Our Community Matters* <https://www.ourcommunity.com.au/ocmatters>

*Services Australia* <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/individuals/news/all>

*Department of Human Services* <https://dhs.sa.gov.au/>