



Valuing Volunteering - A Shared Vision

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# Valuing Volunteering – A Shared Vision

## Joint Message from the Premier and the Minister



The Valuing Volunteering – A Shared Vision has been developed by the Western Australian Volunteering Reference Group in consultation with the community. The Shared Vision will commence a process to support the value of volunteers and encourage volunteering in Western Australia now and into the future.

Volunteering provides many benefits to both the volunteer and the recipients of voluntary work. It is an activity that we must continue to support and encourage beyond the International Year of Volunteers 2001 in recognition of the invaluable role volunteers play in our community's development.

The Shared Vision sets out principles and goals that community and public sector organisations can strive to achieve to help enhance better

relationships within the volunteering community.

All State Government departments that involve volunteers will be committed to the Shared Vision. Community based organisations and local government authorities are encouraged to indicate their support by signing up to the Shared Vision and to work towards achieving the goals.

This is just the start of an ongoing process. The Shared Vision will be revisited in two years to identify and address new issues that may emerge that may have an impact on volunteering in Western Australia. In this way, we can all work together to ensure that volunteers' effort is acknowledged and supported in practical ways.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Geoff Gallop".

Dr Geoff Gallop MLA  
Premier

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sheila M McHale".

Hon Sheila M McHale MLA  
Minister with responsibility  
for Volunteering

## Foreword by Chairperson

The Western Australian Volunteering Reference Group was established to negotiate the development of a "compact" in consultation with the Western Australian community. In March 2002, the Reference Group released a discussion paper and consulted with representatives of key organisations, peak bodies and public sector agencies as the first stage of a two stage consultation process. The consultation included consideration of the key elements that should be included in the "compact". A copy of the discussion paper and information about the membership of the Reference Group can be found at [www.volunteering.communitydevelopment.wa.gov.au](http://www.volunteering.communitydevelopment.wa.gov.au).

As a result of the first stage consultation, the Reference Group developed a draft "compact" for

consideration by the wider community. The draft included a definition of volunteering, a vision and a set of principles. The draft also outlined the major issues key stakeholders suggested were having an impact on volunteering in Western Australian and suggestions about what action the volunteering community or the Government could take to address the issues.

The feedback from consultations confirmed the general direction of the document, but rejected the term "compact". The feedback also suggested a more visionary document would be suitable for the Western Australian community – something to work towards. Accordingly, Valuing Volunteering – A Shared Vision has been developed that outlines goals rather than actions or commitments.

The feedback also indicated that the document should enhance "relationships" within the volunteering community rather than a "partnership" between the community and the State Government.

The Reference Group members and I have been privileged to be part of the development of this inaugural document. I thank all those who took the time to help us by attending meetings or by providing written comments. We have listened to your views and have tried to accommodate them as much as possible in our deliberations and in the final document.

The consultations indicated that the Shared Vision should evolve over time and be supported by a wide

cross section of the volunteering community and by governments in the future. In this way, new and emerging issues can be addressed and governments can continue to be informed by the volunteering community. I urge all those involved in volunteering to support this ongoing process to ensure the strong volunteering ethos in Western Australia continues into the future.



David Templeman MLA  
Chairperson  
Western Australian Volunteering  
Reference Group  
December 2002



## 1. Western Australian Volunteers

Volunteers are essential to a safe and successful community and Western Australia is fortunate to have a very active volunteering community.

Volunteers are often the pathfinders - the ones who identify what needs to be done in a community. Increasingly today, the community relies on volunteers to enhance services, run recreational activities, support emergency services and

community events or help maintain our natural environment.

Volunteering commitment is almost impossible to quantify. The Australian Bureau of Statistics estimates that more than 400,000 adults were involved in formal volunteering for an organisation in Western Australia in 2000. This represents about one third of the state's adult population. Almost 45 percent of the adult population outside of Perth are involved in

volunteering. There will be many more people who undertake voluntary work outside the structure of an organisation, some of whom will not necessarily identify themselves as being "a volunteer".

## 2. The Shared Vision

The following vision for the volunteering community in Western Australia was developed in consultation with the community:

*Volunteering is encouraged, supported and valued to strengthen and sustain communities in Western Australia.*

The aim of the Shared Vision is to improve support for volunteers, recognise their value, and strengthen and extend their participation and contribution to the social, economic, environmental and cultural capital of the Western Australian community. The Shared Vision will strengthen existing relationships, including the relationship between the

volunteering community and the Western Australian Government.

The Shared Vision sets out a framework for the volunteering community to support volunteers in their role. It works towards achieving a number of goals that aim to address issues that have an impact on the active participation of volunteers.

The Shared Vision is not a prescriptive document. Non Government organisations that involve volunteers are encouraged to adopt the vision, principles and goals as appropriate to their circumstances to suit their needs. However, there is no compulsion to do so.

## 3. What is Volunteering?

Volunteering takes many forms and occurs in a wide range of community activities and locations. Non-government organisations, the public sector and the private sector are involved in volunteering.

Volunteers are also involved in informal situations and may not be connected to an organisation.

Volunteering often involves the whole family and is increasingly becoming part of the curriculum in Western Australian schools. Indigenous people's concept of "volunteering" is that it is just something they have always done for their people.

The private sector is increasingly becoming involved in volunteering through sponsorship and community activities and by enabling employees to take time

off from work to participate in voluntary activity.

While recognising that defining volunteering runs the risk of excluding some people or some activity, for the purposes of the Shared Vision, volunteering has been defined as follows:

*Volunteering is an activity where people donate their time and effort, of their own free will and without financial gain, sharing their knowledge, expertise and skills for the benefit and wellbeing of others or the community.*

## 4. Shared Principles for Volunteering

Volunteers help to build healthy, sustainable communities. Volunteering in Western Australia may benefit from the following shared principles that represent values held by people in the volunteering community in Western Australia. They are not intended to take the place of an organisation's existing principles but may guide the development of new or revised principles.

- **Choice:** Volunteering is undertaken freely and out of choice and not as the result of coercion or compulsion.
- **Diversity:** Volunteering is an inclusive activity open to all who are able and suitable to do the task, regardless of age, cultural

background, sexual orientation, values or beliefs. Volunteering respects the rights, dignity and culture of others.

- **Mutuality:** Volunteers contribute their time, effort, knowledge, experience and skills without expectation of financial gain. Benefits volunteers may gain include a sense of self-worth, new skills, experience, networks, enjoyment and social inclusion in the wider community.
- **Recognition:** Volunteers have their contribution to the social, cultural, environmental and economic well-being of the community recognised in the development of policies and

practices. Volunteers are appropriately matched with their voluntary activity of choice with due regard of their skills, ability and suitability for the task. Training, as required, matches the needs of the activity and the volunteer with due regard to health and safety issues.

- **Independence:** Community based groups and organisations that involve volunteers maintain autonomy to identify needs and ways to address those needs and freedom to express their views.



## 5. Goals for the Community and the State Government to Work Toward

The goals for the Shared Vision have been developed to address the major issues that are having an impact on volunteering in Western Australia.

Both the volunteering community and State Government departments are encouraged to work towards the goals to help strengthen volunteering. The goals will ensure volunteers' contributions are recognised and supported in practical ways.

### 5.1 Diversity in Volunteering

Western Australia is renowned for its diversity and it is appropriate that diversity should be encouraged and valued in our volunteering community. Volunteering provides valuable skills, experiences and social networks that help to increase self-confidence. Young people, migrants and other new arrivals, people with disabilities, seniors and Indigenous people can obtain these benefits through volunteering.

Volunteering provides opportunities to bring people from diverse backgrounds together to address a common cause or to participate in a shared interest. Volunteering helps to develop new relationships and strong vibrant communities. Recent research in Western Australia has indicated that baby boomers, those born between 1946 and 1964, are a huge untapped potential that should be encouraged to participate in volunteering.

### Goals

**5.1.1** That specific recruitment strategies are developed to attract young people, "baby boomers", seniors, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and Indigenous people into volunteering.

**5.1.2** That short-term volunteering opportunities are developed that have clearly defined outcomes to attract people who have limited time to volunteer.

**5.1.3** That young people, people with disabilities and people from diverse cultural backgrounds are

encouraged and supported to participate on management committees and in developing events, programs and services on a voluntary basis.

**5.1.4** That people with disabilities are welcomed and accommodated as volunteers where appropriate to the activity.

**5.1.5** That volunteering opportunities are promoted within the education system, including tertiary institutions, to encourage young people to participate in volunteering.

**5.1.6** That volunteering opportunities are created that foster mutual understanding and improved communication across generations.

**5.1.7** That the State Government, in consultation with community members, will identify and address specific issues that have an impact on volunteering among Indigenous and ethnic communities.

**5.1.8** That the State Government provides funds to pilot recruitment

programs to encourage diversity in volunteering.

## **5.2 Pre-entry Requirements to Volunteering**

In Western Australia, volunteers have the capacity and potential to work with vulnerable people and communities. Organisations have a duty of care to recruit, select, orient, supervise and match, to the best of their ability, suitable volunteers to undertake the task at hand without compromising the safety and security of those people or organisations they are assisting.

Selection of volunteers may include interviews, reference checks and induction sessions to ensure that the person is suitable for the task. In some instances it may be appropriate for organisations to obtain a Police clearance for volunteers. There is a cost involved with obtaining a Police clearance

that may be borne by the organisation or the volunteer. A Police clearance can be a deterrent for volunteers or a privacy issue, particularly for people who have been in the criminal justice system and who may now want to participate in a voluntary activity. It also must be acknowledged that having a clearance of some kind, does not ensure that a person wanting to volunteer will be appropriate and that appropriate supervision of volunteers has the potential to reduce the risks involved.

Although Western Australia does not currently have specific legislation that deals with privacy issues, some organisations are affected by Commonwealth privacy legislation. There is a need to ensure that volunteers who have access to private information about clients or the agency respect the confidentiality of the information. This is particularly important for

volunteers working within health services, the criminal justice system or with various telephone help lines.

### **Goals**

**5.2.1** That organisations develop effective selection processes to identify unsuitable volunteers. This may include Police clearances, visa checks, the signing of statutory declarations to state there is no criminal record held and reference checks, as appropriate.

**5.2.2** That by matching people with suitable volunteer activities, the rights of potential volunteers with a criminal record are balanced with the need to protect vulnerable people in the community.

**5.2.3** That organisations budget for the cost of Police clearances where necessary.

**5.2.4** That organisations develop effective supervision processes where volunteers are working with vulnerable people to minimise risk.

**5.2.5** That volunteer managers and volunteers are aware of confidentiality issues in relation to clients and the organisation.

**5.2.6** That volunteer confidentiality agreements are developed, promoted and signed as appropriate.

### **5.3 Training**

Training provides volunteers with the necessary skills and knowledge to undertake voluntary work. Training is essential for some volunteers, such as those involved in emergency services.

Volunteers may benefit from induction sessions or training to ensure that they are aware of their role and responsibilities as a volunteer. Organisations that involve volunteers should ensure that volunteers are aware of health and safety issues that may affect them in line with any paid staff of the organisation. This could be

part of the organisation's risk management strategy. Care needs to be taken by the organisation to select and match volunteers appropriately.

#### **Goals**

**5.3.1** That induction training is offered to ensure volunteers understand their duty of care and the extent and limitations of their role.

**5.3.2** That volunteers are consulted in the determination of their training needs and interests, which may include accredited training.

**5.3.3** That it is recognised that volunteers' time is valuable and training should be relevant to their needs and interests.

**5.3.4** That local training opportunities for volunteers are identified and partnerships developed with other agencies.

**5.3.5** That volunteer managers/coordinators are provided with appropriate training in the management of volunteers.

**5.3.6** That funding submissions and budgets include the cost of relevant training for volunteers and volunteer managers/coordinators.

**5.3.7** That the State Government examine current training opportunities for volunteers and volunteer organisations and identify ways to provide cost effective training opportunities relevant to the diverse needs of volunteers particularly in rural and remote areas.

### **5.4 Risk Management**

Sound risk management strategies are essential for organisations that involve volunteers and should be a component of policies and guidelines that relate to volunteers within agencies.

All organisations that involve volunteers have a responsibility to ensure that volunteers are aware of their duty of care and the extent and limitations of their role.

#### **Goals**

**5.4.1** That the State Government continues to identify and develop ways of reducing the high cost of public liability insurance premiums for the volunteering community.

**5.4.2** That the State Government monitors the impact of legislation developed to protect volunteers and reduce the cost of public liability insurance on the volunteering community.

**5.4.3** That organisations ensure volunteers understand their roles and responsibilities and are aware of any particular safety issues that may affect them or others during the course of their voluntary activity.

**5.4.4** That sound risk management strategies are promoted and adopted in the volunteering community to protect the health and safety of volunteers and clients.

**5.4.5** That appropriate insurance policies are held by organisations that involve volunteers to protect the volunteer and clients.



## 5.5 Financial Issues

Involving volunteers in the work of an organisation may be salary free, but is not cost free. Costs may relate to recruitment, induction and training, ongoing management, support and supervision, to name a few.

Volunteers often contribute money and other resources towards their voluntary activity. Many volunteers reject the notion of reimbursement of costs for out-of-pocket expenses such as travel, telephone calls etc. However, organisations may wish to consider any obstacles to the commencement of volunteering or maintaining a volunteer role, especially where people are on fixed or limited incomes.

There might also be some costs associated with the recognition of the contribution of volunteers such as certificates, thank you letters and morning teas.

### Goals

**5.5.1** That organisations discuss reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses with potential volunteers as part of the selection process and accommodate as appropriate.

**5.5.2** That costs associated with involving volunteers are included in budgets and funding submissions. This may include recruitment, management and support, training, insurance, reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses and recognition events.

**5.5.3** That the costs of involving volunteers in services funded by the State Government is acknowledged by the funding agency in funding programs.

**5.5.4** That the State Government monitors the impact of new funding arrangements on the volunteering community.

## 5.6 Volunteering and the Public and Private Sector

Many public sector agencies now involve volunteers in the delivery of services. The volunteers do not take the place of paid staff. They perform additional tasks and provide a link with the community, particularly when the volunteers are able to work or communicate with officers involved with the development of policy and programs. They are often able to provide a service that would not otherwise be able to be provided. They also ensure that valuable skills and knowledge, gained in earlier years or in other situations, are shared and used to contribute towards the social, economic, environmental and cultural capital of Western Australia.

The private sector is becoming increasingly involved in volunteering. Some private sector

employers allow staff time off to volunteer, or sponsor a volunteering activity.

Many public and private sector employees are often volunteers in their communities where they share their knowledge and skills with the wider community.

### Goals

**5.6.1** That public sector agencies develop high standards of management of volunteers.

**5.6.2** That public sector agencies monitor policies and guidelines for the involvement of volunteers in public sector agencies and encourage best practice.

**5.6.3** That public sector agencies report on the extent of participation and achievements of volunteers in annual reports.

**5.6.4** That State Government identifies strategies to encourage public sector workers to participate in volunteering during working hours.

**5.6.5** That the State Government develops strategies to encourage the private sector to become more involved in volunteering.

## **5.7 Promoting Volunteering**

The International Year of Volunteers 2001 saw an increase in activities that showed appreciation for the contribution volunteers make to the Western Australian community. Although the majority of volunteers do not expect to be recognised for their contribution, they do like to be thanked and appreciated, so that they know they have made a difference.

By showing appreciation for the contribution of volunteers, individuals will be encouraged to continue to participate and others will be encouraged to take up some form of voluntary activity.

### **Goals**

**5.7.1** That volunteering opportunities that exist in both the Government and non-government sector are promoted through volunteer resource centres.

**5.7.2** That relationships are developed to promote volunteering to encourage greater participation.

**5.7.3** That relationships with local business and the media are developed to promote volunteering and highlight achievements of individuals and organisations.

**5.7.4** That organisations develop practices that recognise the work of individual volunteers in the eyes of their clients, fellow volunteers, paid workers and the local community.

**5.7.5** That the achievements of volunteers are highlighted and volunteers are thanked for their contribution during National Volunteer Week (second week in May, following Mothers Day) and United Nations International Volunteer Day, known as Thank a

Volunteer Day in Western Australia (5 December).

**5.7.6** That International Volunteer Day/Thank a Volunteer Day (5 December) is promoted throughout the community to acknowledge and thank volunteers and promote and celebrate volunteering.

**5.7.7** That the contribution of volunteers to public sector agencies is acknowledged in departments' budgets and reporting mechanisms.

**5.7.8** That the State Government continues to have a Minister with responsibility for Volunteering and a Volunteering Secretariat with a specific resource allocation to implement and develop Government policy on volunteering, monitor issues and coordinate research and evaluation of volunteering initiatives.

## 6. Further Development - Taking the Shared Vision Forward

The Shared Vision provides the volunteering community and the State Government with a starting point to demonstrate how volunteers are supported and valued for their contribution to the social, economic, environmental and cultural capital of the Western Australian community. It is an exciting and dynamic process that provides a mechanism for ongoing review and action.

Communities change, people move on, and organisations come and go. Therefore the Shared Vision developed in 2002 may not necessarily be relevant to the volunteering community in the future.

To ensure that the Shared Vision maintains relevance, it will be revisited through community consultation at least every two years. The process will include a review two years after endorsement to determine the level of commitment to it and to determine new and emerging issues that may be having an impact on volunteering.

The Minister with responsibility for Volunteering will then report to the Western Australian Parliament on the progress of Shared Vision. A further document will be developed, as appropriate, that will address the issues identified by the volunteering community.

## 7. Signing the Shared Vision

The Premier and the Minister with responsibility for Volunteering have indicated the Western Australian Government's commitment to the Shared Vision. All State Government agencies that involve volunteers will be committed to the vision and principles and to many of the goals.

Community based organisations are invited to sign up to the Shared Vision, to demonstrate their commitment. Organisations may not be able to work towards achieving all the goals. They can select the ones that they believe are achievable for their organisation.

Organisations can sign up to the Shared Vision as and when they wish and withdraw at any time.

There is no compulsion to sign and organisations that choose not to will not be penalised by the State Government in any way.

The Government will consider ways to recognise organisations that embrace the philosophy of the Shared Vision.

Organisations can register commitment to the Shared Vision by completing the attached form, accessing the Volunteering Secretariat website or by contacting the Secretariat.

## Volunteering Secretariat

The role of the Volunteering Secretariat, established within the Department for Community Development, is to implement the Western Australian Government's Valuing Volunteers policy initiatives and to ensure the across government and across community coordination for the volunteering community.

The Secretariat's objectives are to:

- implement Government policy for volunteering and provide Ministerial support;
- monitor issues and coordinate ongoing research and evaluation of volunteering initiatives to inform policy and program development;
- develop program initiatives that supports and extends volunteering now and into the future; and
- establish mechanisms of communication within the public sector and the wider community to develop partnerships through consultation.

If you have any queries, please contact Ms Jane White, Policy Officer through one of the following:

Tel: (08) 9220 1160  
Toll Free: 1800 617 233 (Country callers only)  
Fax: (08) 9221 2247

Email: [volunteering@dcd.wa.gov.au](mailto:volunteering@dcd.wa.gov.au)  
Website: [www.volunteering.communitydevelopment.wa.gov.au](http://www.volunteering.communitydevelopment.wa.gov.au)

## Registration Form

Name of organisation: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact person: \_\_\_\_\_

Position held: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Facsimile: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Approximate number of volunteers currently with your organisation: \_\_\_\_\_

What type of volunteering activities are performed? (Please attach additional information)

On behalf of the above organisation, I elect to register a commitment to the *Valuing Volunteering – A Shared Vision*.

Please print your name: \_\_\_\_\_

Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you agree to have your organisation listed on the Volunteering Secretariat website as a signatory to the Shared Vision?

Yes

No

Please photocopy and return the signed registration form to:  
The Volunteering Secretariat  
4th Floor, May Holman Centre  
32 St George's Terrace  
PERTH WA 6000

