

Volunteering has changed, and now, so has the official definition.

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Volunteering Australia announced a new definition of volunteering earlier this week:

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

The way volunteering is defined has a critical impact.

The new, wider definition will help improve the understanding of the magnitude of the volunteer community; and aid in appropriate acknowledgement of the total economic contribution of volunteering to society.

“We are delighted to see that the definition now falls much closer to what has constituted volunteering in recent state-based research such as our *State of Volunteering: Tasmania 2014 Report*, and the *Economic, Social and Cultural Value of Volunteering to Western Australia report 2015*,” said Adrienne Picone, CEO of Volunteering Tasmania.

“The previous definition was developed 19 years ago in a time when our assumptions and ideas of volunteering were quite different,” she said.

“The new definition casts the volunteering net wider and broader than ever before. It challenges some long held stereo types and encourages people to recognise the many and varied forms of giving they do as important and valued,” she said.

The change in the definition may also impact on future legislation and policy, and lessening the distinction between profit making and not for profit entities in the growth of social enterprise in Australia.

Volunteering Australia will need to continue to work with some of our major partners such as the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the Department of Social Services to work together to implement the change.

At the State level the State and Territory peak bodies will be working within their jurisdictions to support volunteer involving organisations to adopt the new definition and embed it into the vision and mission of their volunteer program.

Volunteering Tasmania welcomes questions from the sector via phone on 6231 5550, or email admin@volunteeringtas.org.au

The new definition, the supporting explanatory notes and comprehensive FAQs can be found on the VA website. Feedback can be directed to Volunteering Australia admin@volunteeringaustralia.org

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