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**23 February 2016**

Committee Secretary  
Senate Standing Committees on Community Affairs  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

### **The Future of Australia's Aged Care Sector Workforce**

Volunteering Tasmania (VT) is the Peak body for volunteerism in Tasmania. We make a positive impact on volunteering, and as a result, we help to improve and sustain our wonderful community and the people within it. We believe that all members of our community equally deserve the right to experience the benefits of volunteering, regardless of their background. Our organisational focus and mission is to create an environment that promotes and sustains effective volunteerism. We would like to take this opportunity to submit a perspective on the future of Australia's aged care sector workforce from the volunteering sector.

Volunteering plays a significant role in the aged care sector. It is, therefore, concerning to VT that the Terms of Reference within the Senate Inquiry make no reference to the future of the unpaid workforce. As we seek to understand the challenges the aged care sector will face in the coming years, it is crucial that volunteering be at the forefront of these discussions. Organisations will need to give as much consideration to how they plan and manage their volunteer workforce into the future as they will their paid workforce. For VT, it is important that the challenges facing the volunteer workforce in this sector are not overlooked.

### **Volunteering in Tasmania's aged care sector**

It is expected that the impact of Australia's ageing population will be most keenly felt in Tasmania. In the past twenty years, the Australian population's median age has increased by 4 years to 37.3 years. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) has predicted that this trend is only going to increase more rapidly in the next decade, as members of

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the 'Baby Boomer' generation begin to turn 65.<sup>1</sup> However, Tasmania has experienced the largest increase in the median age in this period. The median age in Tasmania is 41.6 years.<sup>2</sup> This is the highest median age of all other States and Territories.<sup>3</sup>

Given the composition and demographics of Tasmania, the impact of the aged care workforce is of significance to this State. As we consider these critical population changes on the paid workforce, so too we need to understand its implications in the unpaid workforce – our volunteers.

Volunteers are crucial to the current status and future of the aged care sector. Volunteers have always been a critical component for the organisations and facilities who support people in the community to age with dignity. Volunteers can support care given to the individuals who choose to live as independently as possible in their own accommodation and remain part of their local community. Volunteers also provide vital engagement, interaction and companionship in many of our aged care facilities and hospitals. A significant proportion of our community care draws on the support given by volunteers.

Evidence from the most recent ABS General Social Survey 2014, highlights how important volunteers are to the aged and community care sector. In Tasmania, the ABS estimates that formal volunteer activities (*volunteering that occurs in a designated role, in a not for profit organisation*) are predominant in this sector. In 2014:

- 27.7 per cent of volunteers gave time in the Health sector;
- 22 per cent of volunteers gave time to Community sector groups.<sup>4</sup>

Research by the Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CHSP) also found that 22,000 volunteers nationwide give time solely in Residential and Aged care facilities. These volunteers give approximately 2.5 million hours of care each year.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Australian Demographic Statistics, June 2014*. Cat. 3101.0 (ABS: Canberra, 2014)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

<sup>4</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, *General Social Survey 2014*. Cat. 41590.0 (ABS: Canberra, 2014)

<sup>5</sup> Australian Government, "2012 National Aged Care Workforce Census and Survey – The Aged Care Workforce, 2012 – Final Report" at <https://www.dss.gov.au/ageing-and-aged-care-publications-and-articles/ageing-and-aged-care-reports> (accessed 2 February 2016)

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Additionally, the role of informal volunteering (*donations of time, unpaid that operate outside an organisational setting*) is critical to caring in the aged care space. Individuals requiring care and assistance are reliant on the kind donations of time from individuals to continue their quality of life. ABS data again highlights the prevalence of this. In 2014, 39.7 per cent of Tasmanians gave unpaid assistance outside their family by:

- Providing domestic work, home maintenance or gardening (13.2 per cent)
- Providing transport or errands (14.4 per cent)
- Helping with child care (9.3 per cent)
- Giving emotional support (20.4 per cent)<sup>6</sup>

There are high levels of other informal caring roles in Tasmania that complement the formal volunteering that occurs in this sector. The evidence clearly highlights how volunteering contributions are vital to the Aged Care sector.

### **Attracting and retaining staff in the aged care sector workforce**

VT is concerned about changes in the aged care sector and how it will impact on Volunteer Involving Organisations that operate in this sector. As we transition to the Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CHSP) and into Consumer Directed Care (CDC), Volunteer Involving Organisations will struggle to ensure a sustainable volunteer workforce: a workforce that is essential to the future of the aged care sector. The new system replaces current system of planning and allocating home care places to providers at the regional level. VT is concerned that this system will make it harder for Volunteer Involving Organisations to:

- plan their service delivery and budget for services;
- enable retention of quality paid and unpaid staff; and
- provide support for volunteers that help deliver services.

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<sup>6</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, *General Social Survey 2014*

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This will be particularly challenging for Volunteer Involving Organisations in the not for profit sector, who already have limited support and capacity to transition to a new system.

Volunteer Involving Organisations already are under financial pressure to deliver services, and compete against other providers in the sector. Volunteering Involving Organisations that operate in the aged care sector face challenges around availability of trained support workers and volunteers. They will increasingly need to compete for skilled staff, and may need to rely on volunteers to deliver these services. We need to ensure Volunteer Involving Organisations are well supported to transition to this new system so they have capacity to recruit, train and retain staff and volunteers in this space.

### **Services in the community to support people as they age.**

The Ageing population presents several challenges for the State. VT anticipates that there will be a growing demand for different care arrangements, for more accessible aged care and for opportunities for older Tasmanians to continue to participate in their communities. Importantly, we emphasise that older Tasmanians can be both receivers and givers of services in our community. However, planning and preparation needs to occur in order to prepare for the changes that the community services sector currently faces (and will face into the future).

VT's own research highlights that Volunteer Involving Organisations anticipate an increased demand for services and volunteers in the future. Tasmanian organisations will therefore be significantly affected by the rapidly ageing population. Changes to our population will affect the supply of volunteers and the demand for volunteer led programs and services.<sup>7</sup>

Volunteers are vital to the support required in this sector. Older Tasmanians want to be connected to their communities and want to be cared for by people that want to support them. Currently, Volunteer Involving Organisations have limited support and capacity to transition and plan for future aged care workforce requirements. VT would like to see priority given to support these organisations by:

- Enabling better consumer access to aged care services. As we transition to changes in the CHSP and Home and Community Care (HACC) space, we need to

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<sup>7</sup> Volunteering Tasmania, *State of Volunteering Report 2012: What Does Our Ageing Population Mean for Volunteerism in Tasmania?* (Hobart, 2012)



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ensure that all Tasmanians can access the services they require and that Volunteer Involving Organisations are equipped to assist them. Recent research shows that over 40 per cent of Tasmanians have never used the Internet to access government services.<sup>8</sup> To ensure inclusivity in the aged care sector we need to assist and support individuals to be able to access the services they need. We anticipate this will be a challenge particularly for regional and rural Tasmania

- Increased funding to support Volunteer Involving Organisations to meet the changing demographics and challenges of the aged care sector. Whilst volunteers donate their time, to ensure ongoing participation and a sustainable volunteer workforce organisations need specific funding to coordinate, manage, train, recruit and retain volunteers.
- Reduce barriers for individuals to access volunteering. We need to see Tasmanians as equally able to give and receive services. However, we need to be able to adapt to our ageing population and anticipate new and innovative ways that individuals can continue to participate in society regardless of age or background.

## Conclusion

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the future of Australia's aged care sector workforce and to provide a perspective on the challenges the unpaid workforce will face in this sector. VT recommends that any long term plan for this sector prioritises and gives reference to volunteering. Our research shows that volunteering delivers wide ranging social, cultural and economic benefit.<sup>9</sup>

Volunteering is not simply a way for citizens to 'give back' in their community. It is a vital industry for the economy. In Tasmania, we have proven that volunteering offers a significant return on investment. VT sees numerous opportunities for the volunteering sector to work collaboratively with government, to develop new ways to support strategic and innovative volunteering actions in the aged care sector. These actions will benefit the

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<sup>8</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, General Social Survey 2014

<sup>9</sup> Volunteering Tasmania, *State of Volunteering Report 2014: The Economic, Social and Cultural Value of Volunteering* (Hobart, 2014)

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paid workforce, Volunteer Involving Organisations and consumers of services in this sector.

If you have any questions or wish to discuss the recommendations further please do not hesitate to contact me on 6231 5550 or at [adriennep@volunteeringtas.org.au](mailto:adriennep@volunteeringtas.org.au)

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Adrienne Picone'.

Adrienne Picone  
CEO, Volunteering Tasmania

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