

REPORT



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# Budget Priority Statement

December 2016

## Volunteering Tasmania

Department of Health and Human Services

## Summary of Recommendations

### **Recommendation 1: Volunteering as a Health Intervention**

Volunteering Tasmania is seeking funding for a partnership project in collaboration with the University of Tasmania and Launceston Volunteers for Communities (LVFC). The “Helping Together – Volunteering as a Health Intervention” project aims to implement a small, high-impact support program to help Home and Community Care (HACC) clients take up volunteering. This pilot scheme would allow project partners to build an evidence base on volunteering as an effective public health intervention strategy for disadvantaged Tasmanians. Examining volunteering’s effectiveness would have broader community applications and benefits

### **Recommendation 2: Commitment to Continued HACC Funding for Volunteering Tasmania**

As the Peak body for volunteering in Tasmania, Volunteering Tasmania has had a significant relationship within the existing HACC program. Our work offers significant support for HACC funded organisations. Demand for support from Volunteering Tasmania is consistently increasing. Volunteering Tasmania is requesting a confirmed commitment to ongoing funding for the services we provide to these providers.

### **Recommendation 3: Investment in Preventative Health**

Making Tasmania the healthiest population by 2025 requires a change in the way we understand health. We need to move from treating illness, and consider how we can drive engagement in our communities. Volunteering Tasmania believes that if we invest in volunteering and community participation as part of preventative health, we will see greater health and wellbeing in Tasmania.

## About Volunteering Tasmania

Volunteering Tasmania is Tasmania's Peak body for volunteering. We:

- Deliver volunteer management services to organisations who involve volunteers;
- Assist the Tasmanian community who wish to volunteer their knowledge, skills and time; and
- Offer advocacy and social policy development services.

Volunteering Tasmania is regarded as the single authoritative volunteering voice in Tasmania. We provide strategic advice and leadership as Tasmania's Peak volunteering body.

**For organisations** seeking volunteers, Volunteering Tasmania provides:

- Practical services to Managers of Volunteers so they can deliver effective and sustainable programs;
- Skills development for Managers of Volunteers to ensure the best outcomes for the organisation as well as the volunteers;
- Assistance to organisations to find the right volunteers through our web portal 'Volunteer Connect';
- Best practice insights on the National Standards for Volunteer Involvement which are supported by research to deliver the best outcomes; and
- Information on changing trends in volunteering worldwide.

**For volunteers** and potential volunteers, Volunteering Tasmania encourages and facilitates their active participation in the Tasmanian community and guide them into roles that are a good fit for them. We work to ensure the volunteer experience is a quality one and that they keep participating as volunteers.

With offices in Hobart and Launceston, Volunteering Tasmania works with a wide cross section of the community.

## Environmental Pressures on Volunteering

Volunteering Tasmania has long been supported by the Tasmanian Government, particularly by the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPAC) and the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). This funding has allowed Volunteering Tasmania to continue to represent the volunteering industry as the Peak body for volunteering.

There are a number of pressures facing the volunteering industry, which Volunteering Tasmania brings to the attention of the DHHS. Despite the Tasmanian Government's support for volunteering, the sector is facing unprecedented change. Reduced funding by the Federal Government has had an enormous impact – Volunteering Tasmania has lost 51 per cent of our funding in the past two years. There is no certainty that any of Volunteering Tasmania's Federal Government funding will continue beyond July 2017. Indeed there has been no commitment by the Federal Government to fund the broader volunteer management infrastructure in an ongoing way.

Changes to Aged Care and Disability services are also having a significant impact for volunteering. There have been large cuts in funding – particularly for community sector organisations - but a growth in demand for services in the community. Volunteering Tasmania's ability to support Volunteer Involving Organisations in this area is in doubt, with no commitment from the DHHS for future funding. There are a number of broad based industry changes which are impacting on Volunteering Tasmania and the Volunteer Involving Organisations we support.

The challenges experienced by Volunteer Involving Organisations are outlined in Volunteering Tasmania's Budget Priority Statement. However, we note that the volunteer sector remains a driver of equitable growth in Tasmania, and makes a significant contribution:

- 4 in 5 Tasmanians volunteer, giving time unpaid to the community
- Volunteers donate 7.1 million hours to the Tasmanian
- 2,000 Volunteer Involving Organisations support volunteers across not for profit, government and private sectors;
- Tasmanian employer's gain productivity benefits valued at \$1.2 billion as a result of their employees' volunteering
- Volunteering provides a total community benefit to the value of \$4.9 billion.<sup>1</sup>

The recommendations made in this submission have been made with consultation in the volunteering industry. All recommendations take a collaborative approach, making sure we work across all sectors of society to grow and sustain volunteering in Tasmania.

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<sup>1</sup> Volunteering Tasmania, *State of Volunteering Report 2014: The Economic, Social and Cultural Value of Volunteering* (Hobart, Volunteering Tasmania 2014)

# Priorities for the Volunteering Industry

## 1. Helping Together: Volunteering as a Health Intervention

The Tasmanian Government has made a commitment to make Tasmania the healthiest population in Australia by 2025. This ambitious target is set to address Tasmanians poor health indicators – particularly chronic disease, obesity, poor nutrition and low physical activity levels.<sup>2</sup> Volunteering Tasmania is committed to assist the State Government to achieve this goal. Volunteering Tasmania wants to explore the growing link between volunteering and improved health and wellbeing. There is some evidence to suggest volunteering brings about a range of benefits - from improved physical and mental health to increased community participation and reduced social isolation.<sup>3</sup> There is an increasing correlation between volunteering and the social determinants of health.

A strong knowledge base, however, is needed to better understand the impact volunteering can have on the health of disadvantaged Tasmanians marked by low household incomes, chronic health conditions and low levels of informal support. To achieve this, Volunteering Tasmania proposes ground-breaking research on the health benefits of volunteering: evaluating the experiences of 20 individuals volunteering for the first time and examining its impact on health. Research shows Home and Community Care (HACC) clients have particular health and wellbeing vulnerabilities: older age, low socio-economic status, limited informal support. The Tasmanian HACC Program Client Group Analysis suggests that improving participation in communities will support HACC clients improve their health, wellbeing and functioning.<sup>4</sup>

Volunteering Tasmania proposes a project to develop the capacity of HACC clients into volunteering and to understand the benefits they may receive in doing so. To understand this

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<sup>2</sup> Department of Health and Human Services, "A Healthy Tasmania" at [http://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/about\\_the\\_department/our\\_plans\\_and\\_strategies/a\\_healthy\\_tasmania](http://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/about_the_department/our_plans_and_strategies/a_healthy_tasmania) Accessed 1 Dec 2016

<sup>3</sup> M. A. Musick, and J. Wilson, "Volunteering and depression: the role of psychological and social resources in different age groups", *Social Science and Medicine*, vol. 56 (2003): 267; S. G. Post, "Altruism, Happiness, and Health: It's Good to Be Good", *International Journal of Behavioural Medicine*, vol. 12, no. 2 (2005): 66; F. Borgovni, "Doing well by doing good. The relationship between formal volunteering and self-reported health and happiness", *Social Science and Medicine*, vol. 66 (2008): 2331

<sup>4</sup> University of Queensland, *Tasmanian HACC Program Client Group Analysis – Final Report*

objective the project, *Helping Together: Volunteering as a Health Intervention*, will:

1. Implement a small but high-impact support program that facilitates 20 HACC clients receiving voluntary services from Launceston Volunteers for Communities (LVFC) to transition from being recipients of volunteer services to being volunteers themselves for 1-2 hours per week within an appropriate organisation.
2. Evaluate the effectiveness of volunteering as a public health intervention for those receiving HACC funded services using before-and-after surveys and in-depth interviews with participants, Launceston Volunteers for Communities (LVFC) and Volunteering Tasmania over a 12 month period.
3. Develop an evidence base to assess whether volunteering is an effective public health intervention strategy for disadvantaged Tasmanians which may have broader community applications and benefits. Project partners LVFC and the University of Tasmania will join with Volunteering Tasmania to support the implementation and evaluation of the 'Helping Together' program.

The 'Helping Together' project, therefore, represents an opportunity to improve health and wellbeing for HACC clients and beyond by encouraging more engaged, involved and active citizens. This project could empower individuals and communities to age positively and build social connections. This accords with recent research evidence showing that increased social capital – a measure of cohesiveness, participation, trust and cooperation – can have significant health and wellbeing benefits, including reducing social isolation, exclusion and loneliness.<sup>5</sup>

The University of Tasmania's evaluation of the program will be invaluable for researchers and government alike, giving evidence for other organisations and communities to adopt a similar model in their local area. Lessons from this project can be then implemented and adopted by

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<sup>5</sup> R.S. Sneed and S. Cohen. "A prospective study of volunteerism and hypertension risk in older adults." *Psychology and aging* 28, no. 2 (2013): 578; C.E. Jenkinson et al, "Is volunteering a public health intervention?"; S. Watson, "Volunteering may be good for the body and mind", *Harvard Health Blog* at <http://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/volunteering-may-be-good-for-body-and-mind-201306266428> (accessed 2 February 2016); H. Young, "Why volunteering is so good for your health", *Huffington Post* at [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/hilary-young/benefits-of-volunteering\\_b\\_4151540.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/hilary-young/benefits-of-volunteering_b_4151540.html) (accessed 2 February 2016); United Health Group, *Doing Good is Good For You. 2013 Health and Volunteering Study* (United Health Group: Minnesota, 2013)

other community groups. Its model is adaptable, scalable and the findings can be used more widely.

**Rationale:**

The proposed project provides an innovative strategy to address poor health and wellbeing in Tasmanians. It aligns with State Government goals to make Tasmania the healthiest population in Australia by 2025. There is some research showing volunteering has the potential to offer significant health benefits. Evaluative research is needed to determine whether volunteering can work as an intervention to improve the health and wellbeing of disadvantaged Tasmanians. This project presents an opportunity for the implementation and evaluation of a small targeted program that supports a group of individuals whose health may benefit most from volunteering – HACC program clients. A partnership approach between Volunteering Tasmania, the University of Tasmania and LVFC offers an opportunity to best achieve project goals.

By taking a proactive approach, volunteering can be used to develop preventative and community-centred approach to health. Volunteering is used to address a clear need for increased social participation and provide opportunities to enhance self-efficacy and capacity within a disadvantaged group. This is valuable in preventing clients from becoming more dependent on HACC (and other health services) into the future.

The University of Tasmania has agreed to evaluate the effectiveness of the program using a combination of before and-after surveys and in-depth interviews. The survey will use custom and standard questions on participants' health and wellbeing drawing upon the SF12 Health Status Questionnaire and Volunteering Functions Inventory. The survey will be administered using commercially available software and will ensure anonymity and confidentiality of responses. To deepen understanding of respondents' experiences and outcomes of the volunteering intervention, participants will be invited to participate in semi-structured in-depth interviews.

**Cost:** \$99,889.00 over 18 months

**In Kind Support:** Over \$30,000 in in kind support has been given by Volunteering Tasmania, University of Tasmania and Launceston Volunteers for Communities

**Direct Benefits:** With volunteering valued at \$4.9 billion per annum to Tasmania's economy, supporting opportunities to increase volunteering presents a sound business case. A 1% increase

in volunteer participation in Tasmania would bring \$70.6 million in value per annum. Knowing that more Tasmanians want to volunteer, this project makes a modest contribution toward achieving that goal.<sup>6</sup>

Volunteering brings a 4:1 return on investment. It is estimated that over \$400,000 in benefits would be returned to the community via this project.<sup>7</sup> Given Tasmania's rapidly ageing population and the rising cost of health care, it is important to explore options for reducing health care expenditure whilst improving or maintaining health. Volunteering is a comparatively low investment, with a high return for the community.

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<sup>6</sup> Volunteering Tasmania, *State of Volunteering Report 2014*

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

## **2. Continuation of Home and Community Care (HACC) Funding**

Volunteering Tasmania has to date received recurrent funding from the Department through the Home and Community Care (HACC) unit. This funding allows Volunteering Tasmania to:

- Build the capacity service providers in the HACC area to recruit, manage and retain their volunteers in accordance with the National Standards for Volunteer Involvement
- Give professional advice and guidance on volunteer management
- Conduct research, policy and planning to develop resources that contribute to increasing the effectiveness and sustainability of Volunteer Involving Organisations in the HACC sector
- Advocate effectively for Volunteer Involving Organisations and volunteers in the HACC sector

As part of our commitment to HACC, Volunteering Tasmania has worked to promote volunteering, volunteer management promote training and best practice across the community. The services offered to Volunteer Involving Organisations and volunteers have significantly increased over the years. Volunteering Tasmania sees it as the utmost importance to make sure we can continue to support volunteering in HACC funded organisations – particularly as they transition through the Commonwealth Home Support Programme and in other Federal Government funded programmes.

### **Rationale:**

Volunteering produces both tangible (skills, workplace experience, economic benefits) and intangible (social inclusion, sense of community, confidence) rewards for individuals and for the Tasmanian community as a whole. Volunteering is vital to the continuing health of our community, and to the services that Tasmanians rely on.

The continuation of the HACC unit in Tasmania is vital to our community. Currently the HACC unit funds a wide range of service areas, including services in domestic assistance, social support, allied health, community nursing and community transport. Volunteers are at the heart of many of these programs, as are the Managers of Volunteers and the Volunteer Involving Organisations they work within. These organisations would not be able to deliver services without the help of volunteers.

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

Continuing support for Volunteering Tasmania by the Department is vital. Without Volunteering Tasmania's support, Volunteer Involving Organisations would have no central organisation to help:

- Plan their service delivery and budget for services
- Support quality staff up to date in best practice in Volunteer Management
- Find advice on volunteer management that they need
- Advocate for the needs of Volunteer Involving Organisations and volunteers
- Offer adequate support for volunteers that help deliver services

An absence of these services would be particularly challenging for Volunteer Involving Organisations in the not for profit sector, who already have limited support and capacity to manage the transitions underway in this sector.

As the Peak body for volunteering in Tasmania, Volunteering Tasmania has proven to be a significant support for HACC funded Volunteer Involving Organisations. Demand for our services and support is only increasing. Now, more than ever, is the time for the Tasmanian volunteer sector to be supported as Volunteer Involving Organisations face a rapidly changing environment in aged and community care.

**Cost: \$186, 230 per annum (plus indexation)**

It is noted that this is not a new cost for the Department. It reflects a commitment to recurrent funding for Volunteering Tasmania to make sure the services we offer to the Aged care sector continue into the future. Our services around volunteer recruitment, volunteer management, research, policy and advocacy represent an essential and free service for HACC providers. These services however are not free for Volunteering Tasmania to run, and we need a commitment to future funding to continue this service delivery into the future.

### 3. Investment into Preventative Health

The Tasmanian Government set a goal of making Tasmania the healthiest population in Australia by 2025.<sup>8</sup> Tasmania faces a number of health challenges, and particularly needs greater support in how we address our health and wellbeing as a community. Volunteering Tasmania supports the goal of transforming Tasmania to the healthiest State in Australia by 2025.

It is important that a discussion about health does not exclude the social determinants of health. The World Health Organisation (WHO) recognises health as a “state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity”.<sup>9</sup> A fair, inclusive and vibrant society must include strategies to support overall community health and wellbeing – rather than treating illness.

#### **Rationale:**

If we are to achieve the goal of becoming the healthiest State by 2025, Volunteering Tasmania recommends that our understanding of health is broadened to include a wider definition of wellbeing and prevention of disease. Volunteering Tasmania supports the research and advice undertaken by organisations like TasCOSS and the Social Determinants of Health Advocacy Network. Indeed, the wider Tasmanian community has signalled its support for investment into the social determinants of health. In 2015 the Social Determinants of Health Advocacy network identified that the Tasmanian public agrees that there are underlying factors contributing to good health - including social connections. This highlights the importance within the community to address how social wellbeing and connectedness lead to improved health outcomes.

Volunteering is vital to the health of communities, and can assist in better social cohesion, social and economic participation in the State. This is important as locations of socio economic disadvantage are more likely to experience higher health risks. This places a number of challenges for Tasmania, which has a higher proportion of its population in the Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) in the lowest quintile. Within these SEIFA areas, multiple factors can contribute to poor health outcomes, including: social exclusion; high unemployment; age; and low educational attainment.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Department of Health and Human Services, “A Healthy Tasmania”

<sup>9</sup> WHO, “WHO Definition of Health”, *World Health Organisation* at <http://www.who.int/about/definition/en/print.html> (accessed 11 September 2015)

<sup>10</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Labour Force: Detailed*. Cat No 6921.0 (Canberra, 2013)

Volunteering Tasmania, therefore, believes that a holistic approach to health is necessary; one that considers the wider social and community services that support health and wellbeing.<sup>11</sup> We would support a coordinated approach to health, health promotion and health equity – particularly in investigating measures that reduce health inequality and positively improve a broader approach to health and wellbeing. We see volunteering and engaged civic communities as an important part of such an approach. If communities become more engaged and barriers to participation are reduced, Volunteering Tasmania believes that we would see a greater improvement in wellbeing in Tasmania.

### **Cost: Uncosted**

Making Tasmania the healthiest population by 2025 requires a change in the way we understand health. We need to move from treating illness, and consider how we can drive engagement in our communities. Volunteering Tasmania believes that if we invest in volunteering and community participation as part of a preventative health focus, we will see greater health and wellbeing in the State. A cursory glance at research on this field, highlights the growing relationship between volunteering and positive physical, mental and wellbeing outcomes.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Tasmanian Medicare Local, "Social Determinants of Health Project- Monitoring and Evaluation Guidelines", <http://www.primaryhealthtas.com.au/> (accessed 10 September 2015)

<sup>12</sup> C.E. Jenkinson et al., "Is volunteering a public health intervention? A systematic review and meta-analysis of the health and survival of volunteers" *BMC public health*, 13 (2013): 773; K. Pillemer et al "Environmental Volunteering and Health Outcomes over a 20-Year Period", *Gerontologist*, 50: 5 (2010): 594- 602; M. Hyde et al, "A systematic review of episodic volunteering in public health and other contexts. *BMC public health*, 14: 1 (2014): 992-992; World Health Organisation (WHO), *Closing The Gap In A Generation: Health Equity Through Action On The Social Determinants Of Health. Final Report Of The Commission On Social Determinants Of Health* (2008) 1, at [whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/2008/9789241563703\\_eng.pdf?ua=](http://whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/2008/9789241563703_eng.pdf?ua=)