

Motion against \$7.4 million Federal funding cut to volunteer support services offers hope

February 17, 2017

Volunteering Peak Bodies from around the country met in Canberra this week to lobby parliament against the abolishment of a \$7.4 million funding stream for volunteer support services.

Their combined efforts resulted in a motion proposed by Senator Louise Pratt (Shadow Minister for Social Services) who called on the government to:-

- a) recognise the importance of funding volunteer management services, and
- b) retain funding for volunteer management as part of the Federal Budget.

Senator Jacquie Lambie supported the motion, stating that:

“First they go after our most vulnerable, then they go after those that help the most vulnerable. Volunteers are the foundation of our community and must be supported.”

Currently, through the Federal Government’s Strengthening Communities program, grant funding of \$7.4 million is allocated to a range of organisations that deliver volunteer support systems such as volunteer matching for community organisations, best practice resources for managers of volunteers, research, advocacy and dispute resolution.

The Turnbull Government is currently redesigning the *Strengthening Communities* program to the *Strong and Resilient Communities* program, dropping the \$7.4m stream for volunteer support services.

“This loss of funding will have a wide-reaching impact on volunteering across the nation, including Tasmania” said Alison Lai, CEO of Volunteering Tasmania.

“Volunteers are everywhere and many of the services, opportunities, assistance, activities and events that Tasmanians have access to would not exist without volunteer support.”

But volunteering doesn’t just happen.

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Whilst people will happily provide assistance at no cost, the process of setting up systems that make it easy, safe and effective for people to volunteer takes time and financial investment.

Most volunteering support organisations don't charge for their services, which are critical for many Tasmanian community groups, particularly not-for-profits that rely on them to recruit their volunteers.

The removal of this funding stream will force volunteer support organisations to apply for other grants, often competing with other worthwhile community groups for the same funding.

Volunteering Australia's CEO, Adrienne Picone stated that the removal of these funds will "rip the heart out of local volunteer support services, these are organisations which play an important role in Australian communities by leading, enabling and building capacity to recruit and retain volunteers".

Research conducted for the [2014 State of Volunteering Report](#) identified that Tasmanians donate 7.1 million volunteering hours in a single year. [Flinders University](#) estimates that 31 per cent Australians volunteer, which equates to an annual contribution to Australia of \$290 billion.

"Getting this motion passed was the first stage. Volunteering Tasmania will continue to advocate strongly on behalf of all organisations that rely on volunteers until Federal funds for volunteering support services is guaranteed." said Lai.

LINKS: Federal [motion 231](#) passes (full text and video-link)

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ABOUT VOLUNTEERING TASMANIA:

Volunteering Tasmania is the peak body for volunteering in the State, working closely with Volunteer Involving Organisations to represent the interests of all Tasmanians involved in volunteering through community engagement programs, advocacy, research and policy development.