

## **ADVANCING THE COMMUNITY TOGETHER**

### ***A Partnership between the Volunteer Sector and the South Australian Government May 2003***

Volunteering is an integral part of the South Australian way of life with 38% of South Australians involved in volunteering. We proudly boast the highest volunteer participation rate in the nation.

Volunteers play a major role in all aspects of everyday life and without volunteers, many community initiatives and services would disappear or be greatly reduced. Volunteers provide services, advocacy and strengthen communities.

Advancing the Community Together: A Partnership between the Volunteer Sector and the South Australian Government is a major step in the journey towards a stronger relationship between the Volunteer Sector and the State Government. This Government is committed to the implementation of this framework document and to taking the partnership forward in a timely manner.

Through this partnership the Government seeks to support the enormous energy, dedication and enthusiasm of the entire volunteering community. Advancing the Community Together is about ensuring that all volunteers can be involved in shaping the way we approach volunteering issues now and into the future.

I would like to formally acknowledge those who gave their time to participate in the development of this partnership document. More than 700 volunteers, program managers and key stakeholders participated, and I sincerely thank them for their efforts.

The Hon Mike Rann MP  
Premier of South Australia  
Minister for Volunteers  
May 2003

## **BACKGROUND TO THE PARTNERSHIP**

In 1999, the Volunteer Sector voiced its interest in the development of a strong and proactive relationship between the sector and the South Australian Government. In 2002, the Premier and Minister for Volunteers, Mike Rann MP announced that a “Compact” would be developed between the Volunteer Sector and the State Government. This “Compact” process was steered by the Compact Development Taskforce and the State Volunteer Reference Group, whose membership encompassed key stakeholders within the sector. These working groups were chaired by Ms Jennifer Rankine MP, Parliamentary Secretary to the Premier.

As the process was intended to develop a partnership, a Government Cross Agency Working Party was set up to work with the Compact Development Taskforce in negotiating the commitments, agreed values and principles of the “Compact” by consulting within their Agencies.

A state-wide consultation process was undertaken involving volunteer program managers, volunteers and key stakeholders. Feedback received during the consultation process was extensive and clearly expressed the community’s belief that both the Volunteer Sector and the Government could work together more effectively. The feedback was used to develop this document.

The title of the document Advancing the Community Together: A Partnership between the Volunteer Sector and the South Australian Government was adopted to reflect the uniqueness of the South Australian community, a commitment to action and a commitment to working in a true partnership.

## **DEFINITIONS**

For the purpose of this document, the following definitions have been used.

### **Volunteering**

Volunteering is an activity which is of benefit to the community, is done of one’s free will and is undertaken without monetary reward. Volunteering can occur either within the framework of community organisations or groups (known as ‘formal volunteering’) or as individuals working outside structured organisations, for example helping your neighbour with their grocery shopping (known as ‘informal volunteering’).

### **Volunteer Sector**

Volunteer Sector comprises organisations and community groups which involve volunteers in their activities (for example Country Fire Service, Friends of Parks Inc).

### **Volunteer Community**

Volunteer Community comprises all volunteers whether they volunteer in an informal or formal setting, and encompasses the Volunteer Sector.

## **SCOPE**

Advancing the Community Together represents a public commitment by the South Australian Government and the Volunteer Sector to open, transparent, consistent and collaborative ways of working together. It builds on a vision to energise and strengthen volunteering in South Australia and establishes the shared values and principles that underpin the partnership between the Volunteer Sector and the Government.

Advancing the Community Together provides a mechanism for the two parties to work together in partnership to address the major issues that impact on volunteering in South Australia. It is a launching pad to stimulate both parties to examine their values, policies and practices, to bring about improvements that will advance the interests of all South Australians and to enhance the activities that volunteers and volunteer organisations undertake.

The Volunteer Sector and the Government recognise the valuable input of informal volunteering in our communities. Whilst the intent of this document is inclusive of the entire Volunteer Community, the partnership itself exists between the Government and the Volunteer Sector.

It is acknowledged that both the Government and the Volunteer Sector have relationships with other levels of government, the corporate sector and the trade union movement. While not included in this partnership, the importance of these relationships is recognised and valued.

## **TAKING THE PARTNERSHIP FORWARD**

This document provides an ongoing framework that can inform the Government and the Volunteer Sector in their decision making. The two partners will work together to ensure the effectiveness of Advancing the Community Together.

The Volunteer Sector and the Government of South Australia agree to develop in a timely manner:

- > appropriate structures consisting of representatives from the Government and the Volunteer Community to ensure a process for monitoring Advancing the Community Together, maintaining its relevance and setting specific targets and timeframes
- > opportunities for wide consultation and open dialogue with volunteers and volunteer involving organisations across South Australia in a climate that embraces new ideas
- > standards of good practice to guide interactions between the partners and the wider Volunteer Community
- > processes to ensure volunteers are well represented within any decision-making structures
- > regular meetings between the Minister/Premier and representatives from the Volunteer Sector
- > an annual congress to review progress and ensure relevance is maintained, and to set new targets and timeframes
- > regular reports on accomplishments as well as future goals and directions.

To ensure the relevance of Advancing the Community Together is maintained the document will be revisited on a biennial basis and will incorporate ongoing community consultation.

## **Overall Aim**

The Advancing the Community Together partnership seeks to:

- > acknowledge the value of volunteering in our community
- > develop a vision for the future of volunteering in South Australia
- > establish a framework for an ongoing partnership
- > promote and facilitate volunteering in a manner that benefits the community.

## **DESIRED OUTCOMES/BENEFITS**

It is anticipated that amongst the many benefits delivered from a strong and ongoing partnership between the Volunteer Sector and the Government, the following direct outcomes will result from this commitment:

Advancement of volunteering: ensure the ongoing promotion and recognition of volunteering whilst raising awareness of its value.

Redressing of issues that impede volunteering: actively identify and respond to issues that impede volunteering.

Establishment of communication protocols: develop and improve communication and information processes between the Volunteer Sector and public sector agencies.

Development of appropriate policies and practices: ensure future policy decisions take into account any potential effects on the Volunteer Community.

## **ESSENCE OF THE PARTNERSHIP**

### **SHARED VALUES**

The Volunteer Sector and the Government share a commitment to the following values which are most relevant to the partnership:

Openness and transparency: in their dealings with each other and with the communities they serve.

Respect: mutual recognition and respect of each other's views, roles and contribution to society.

Equality of opportunity: recognise that all people have a right to volunteer and participate in their community regardless of gender, age, religion, race, disability, marital status, pregnancy or sexuality.

Active citizenship: embrace the principle that every person is unique with a meaningful role to play in community and civic life.

Sustainable communities: recognise that long term benefits and future community needs should be taken into account when managing current volunteer issues.

### **SHARED PRINCIPLES**

Advancing the Community Together is based on the following shared principles:

Cooperation, consultation and support: each partner will operate in an open and constructive manner and respect the right of all people to question, challenge and contribute to the development of volunteer related policy. Information exchange,

meaningful consultation and support will form the basis of the relationship with each other and with the wider community.

**Independence:** the Government of South Australia has a responsibility to make decisions in the best interests of all South Australians while the Volunteer Sector is accountable to its stakeholders. Each partner reserves the right to express their views independently.

**Interdependence:** the actions of one partner can directly or indirectly affect the other, since both share the same objective of the common good and operate in the same areas of South Australian community life. The partners are separate entities but rely on each other to achieve their collective aims.

**Strong leadership and action:** apart from responding to issues as they arise the partners will be pro-active in looking ahead and agreeing on longer-term solutions and actions.

**Accountability:** the South Australian Government and the Volunteer Sector will be transparent, use sound management processes, utilise high standards of conduct and act in good faith in their dealings with each other and the communities they serve. Each partner accepts the need for quality monitoring and reporting.

**Recognition of diversity of volunteers, and the Volunteer Community:** the diverse areas of volunteering reflect our love of sport and the arts, and our interest and concern in the areas of environment, justice, health, welfare, education, emergency services, spiritual matters and heritage. People of all ages, of differing abilities and from all cultures participate in and contribute to our community and way of life. While not being paid work, volunteering is not cost free.

## **COMMITMENT TO ACTION**

Both the Volunteer Sector and the Government recognise the need to support and lend substance to the values and principles in Advancing the Community Together by making specific commitments to action. The partners will take action separately and together to promote and facilitate volunteering in South Australia.

## **ACCOUNTABILITY**

### **Shared Commitments**

- > Commit to honour the trust of South Australians
- > Develop responsible and appropriate monitoring and reporting mechanisms
- > Commit to openness and transparency in their dealings with each other and the communities they serve.

## **COMMUNICATION**

### **Shared Commitments**

- > Develop active communication networks, collaboration and trust in all areas where volunteers are involved across the Volunteer Sector and the Government
- > Manage, support and communicate through structures which enable volunteers to participate to their full potential

- > Develop ways to better communicate understanding of priorities and the sharing of ideas and information
- > Respect each party's confidential information
- > Share information and ideas that will enhance our community, promote volunteering and recognise the contribution of volunteers.

### **Volunteer Sector**

- > Participate in information sharing as well as encourage and participate in relevant research into volunteering
- > Communicate regularly with volunteers to ensure their views are being accurately represented and to enable them to provide feedback on relevant issues.

### **South Australian Government**

- > Ensure the Office for Volunteers is kept informed and up to date on all Government grants related to volunteering
- > Facilitate research and develop strategies to enhance volunteering as well as sharing of information and ideas
- > Ensure the Volunteer Sector is kept informed and advised in a timely manner of any relevant issues or developments
- > Ensure documentation, information and applications are accessible, appropriate, clear and available in relevant community languages.

## **EQUITY AND INCLUSIVENESS**

### **Shared Commitments**

- > Ensure that volunteering in all its differing forms is recognised when allocating resources
- > Provide opportunities for people of all ages, backgrounds, abilities and cultures to volunteer in an area which matches their abilities and interests, while contributing to the community
- > Ensure consideration is given to the cultural needs of people from diverse backgrounds when providing services
- > Recognise that people volunteer in many different ways and ensure their contribution is valued and respected
- > Identify the barriers that limit the involvement of
  - Indigenous people
  - people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
  - people with disabilities and
  - economically and socially disadvantaged people from volunteering in the community and adopt an affirmative action approach to strengthen participation
- > Recognise the challenges facing volunteers in remote and rural communities and on traditional lands.

### **Volunteer Sector**

- > Provide opportunities for people with disabilities and from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds to participate in volunteering
- > Liaise and link with culturally and linguistically diverse and Indigenous communities to ensure development of appropriate and culturally sensitive strategies and services.

### **South Australian Government**

- > Acknowledge that the understanding and definition of a volunteer and volunteering may vary between cultural groups and undertake to ensure this diversity is recognised in the allocation of resources
- > Consult with Indigenous and culturally and linguistically diverse groups or organisations before instituting legislation which may affect their volunteer activities.

## **POLICY AND LEGISLATION DEVELOPMENT**

### **Shared Commitments**

- > Identify and respond to issues which impede volunteering in general
- > Develop policies and best practice guidelines relating to volunteering and review these at regular intervals
- > Involve both partners in strategic planning for the Volunteer Sector.

### **Volunteer Sector**

- > Initiate consultation with the Government in developing appropriate policies
- > Actively participate in Government initiated consultation processes to assist in the development of appropriate policies.

### **South Australian Government**

- > Consult with peak volunteering organisations when proposed legislation or policy has significant impact on volunteering
- > Provide information and advice and work together with the Volunteer Sector in relation to the impact of any legislative or policy changes.

## **RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION**

### **Shared Commitments**

- > Promote and acknowledge the contribution of volunteers in providing services, in advocating for necessary change and improved services and in building communities, irrespective of whether they are working within an organisation, group or as individuals
- > Promote and support young peoples' participation in volunteering
- > Recognise the contribution of employers who release staff to deliver volunteer services
- > Ensure that volunteering is not used as a substitute for paid work
- > Recognise and advance the important role of volunteer management within Government and the Volunteer Sector.

### **Volunteer Sector**

- > Provide opportunities for all people to volunteer in an area which matches their abilities and interests while contributing to organisational goals.

### **South Australian Government**

- > Recognise the right of organisations to take appropriate screening measures when recruiting volunteers
- > Foster, encourage and promote volunteering throughout the community
- > Provide opportunities for volunteering within Government agencies where appropriate.

## **RESOURCES**

### **Shared Commitments**

- > Ensure responsible financial management and accountability
- > Promote joint ventures with the community sector, various levels of government, the corporate sector, educational institutions and the media
- > Recognise the particular circumstances of small organisations as well as rural and small communities.

### **Volunteer Sector**

- > Meet Government accountability requirements for funding and comply with administrative and legislative requirements
- > Encourage the Volunteer Sector to work cooperatively to avoid unnecessary duplication of services and resources.

### **South Australian Government**

- > Ensure sufficient financial and staff resources when providing volunteering opportunities within Government agencies
- > Work with the Volunteer Sector to review and modify its application guidelines and processes to ensure consistent and clear guidelines, equitable access to resources and appropriate agreements.

## **RISK MANAGEMENT**

### **Shared Commitments**

- > Monitor legislation as it impacts on volunteers
- > Work together to address insurance issues impacting on the Volunteer Community.

### **Volunteer Sector**

- > Institute appropriate risk management measures and encourage the Volunteer Sector to make individual volunteers aware of their responsibilities
- > Undertake to participate in information sharing about risk management and insurance issues.

### **South Australian Government**

- > Disseminate information on issues of liability, insurance and risk management which impact on the role of volunteers and the management of volunteer organisations
- > Initiate legislative action or release policy guidelines to ensure protection and support to nominated groups of volunteers, where appropriate.

## **TRAINING**

### **Shared Commitments**

- > Recognise the need for volunteers and people who manage volunteer programs to develop and sustain the skills required to provide quality services
- > Accept that some training may be required by legislation, while other training requirements may be necessary for accreditation to meet industry or safety standards.

### **Volunteer Sector**

- > Identify and implement appropriate training strategies, relevant to the needs and purpose of the organisation, group or volunteer activity.

### **South Australian Government**

- > Recognise that volunteers require access to training to undertake their many and varied roles
- > Facilitate training opportunities in areas where State Government policy impacts on the training requirements placed upon the Volunteer Sector.

The Premier of South Australia and the following representative organisations together commit to Advancing the Community Together: A Partnership between the Volunteer Sector and the South Australian Government.

Mike Rann MP  
Premier, Minister for Volunteers

Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Commission  
Association of Community Service Organisations  
Association of Major Community Organisations  
Australasian Association of Volunteer Administrators  
Australian Red Cross (SA Division)  
Business SA  
Community volunteer  
Council on the Ageing SA  
Country community representative  
Fleurieu Volunteer Resource Centre

Friends of Parks  
Local Government Community Services Association  
Meals on Wheels (SA)  
Multicultural Communities Council of SA  
Northern Volunteering  
Recreation SA  
Returned & Services League  
Royal Association of Justices of SA  
South Australian Association of State School Organisations  
South Australian Council of Social Services  
South Australian Museum  
South Australian Volunteer Fire Brigades Association  
Sport SA  
State Heritage Authority  
Surf Life Saving SA  
United Trades and Labor Council  
Volunteering SA  
Youth Affairs Council of SA