



Government
of South Australia

2007 STATE VOLUNTEER CONGRESS

Banquet Room, Adelaide Festival Centre

Wednesday, 5 December 2007

Hon Jennifer Rankine MP

Minister for Volunteers

(Check against delivery)

[ACKNOWLEDGMENTS]

- Ms Gay Thompson MP, Member for Reynell
- Ms Lorraine Kerr, Manager Social Development, City of Salisbury
- Mr David Pisoni MP, Member for Unley and Shadow Minister for Volunteers
- Volunteers
- Ladies and Gentlemen

[INTRO]

Thanks Gay ... and thank you all for your warm welcome.

I would like to personally thank Karl for that superb performance earlier ... and I too would like to acknowledge this land that we meet on today is the traditional land of the Kaurna people ... and that we respect their spiritual relationship with their country

...

... We also acknowledge that the Kurna people are the custodians of the Adelaide region and that their cultural and heritage beliefs are still as important to the living Kurna people today.

I'm very pleased to be here on this ... International Volunteer Day ... which celebrates, worldwide, the valuable contribution volunteers make to their communities.

This year's Congress is themed *Cultural Diversity, Making the Difference* ... The aim of today is to highlight the experiences of new South Australians from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds ... and focus on how volunteering can have a positive effect on their experiences as newcomers to South Australia and how volunteer organisations can benefit from their involvement.

[VOLUNTEERISM & MIGRANT INTEGRATION]

We have a wonderful tradition of volunteerism here in South Australia ...

... and we can be really proud that we have one of the highest participation rates in the nation, with more than 600,000 of us being active volunteers.

We also have a tradition of welcoming new arrivals...

A diverse range of people migrate to South Australia from overseas every year ...

More than 20,000 temporary International students live and study in Adelaide each year ...

And in 2006-2007, more than 10,000 permanent residents arrived to settle in our state.

Most of these ... some 7,000 newcomers ... were Skilled Migrants, while 1,500 were considered Family Migrants, and another 1,500 were Humanitarian Migrants.

And of course they are hailing from ever more diverse backgrounds ... with nearly 150 migrants coming from Sudan ... over 1,000 migrants from China ... and almost 1,500 arriving from India and during that period.

Historically, volunteering has helped these new arrivals settle in to South Australia ... ethnic community groups and ethnic radio stations and the like, do fantastic work...

And community involvement through volunteering can help migrants like these ... together with their families ... feel part of the South Australian community.

So combining these two proud traditions can produce a synergy that will be of incredible benefit both in terms of making SA a

great place to come and live, and a place where the volunteering sector goes from strength to strength.

[NEW ARRIVALS VOLUNTEERING PROJECT]

The State Government's Volunteer Ministerial Advisory Group ... VMAG ... has recognised the significance of this ... and is developing a *New Arrivals Volunteering Project* ... which is looking at how we can support new arrivals not only settle but become an integral part of their new community through volunteering.

It is this project that inspired the theme for this year's Congress.

While South Australia enjoys a high level of volunteer participation, people newly arrived from overseas may need even more support to take on volunteering opportunities.

Studies have shown that people who volunteer live longer, happier and healthier lives.

And volunteering has long been recognised as a pathway to employment and opportunity.

There are opportunities not only to gain new skills and experiences ... but also to meet people, make contacts and develop networks.

A recent survey¹ revealed that only 26 per cent of Volunteer Involving Organisations actively recruit volunteers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds ...

... This suggests there is scope for more organisations to recruit culturally diverse volunteers ... and increase cross-cultural awareness more proactively.

The *New Arrivals Volunteering Project* will not only guide organisations to successfully attract people into a range of volunteering programs and opportunities ... but it will also provide migrants with support and opportunities to volunteer within the wider South Australian community ... as well as in their own culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

[VOLUNTEERING FOR NEW MIGRANTS – BENEFITS & CHALLENGES]

It takes time to both settle into, and feel part of, a community ... especially for those arriving as refugees who ... in addition to the difficulties faced by all groups of migrants ... often have to deal with trauma of being wrenched from their homelands ... and may have greater linguistic and cultural barriers to overcome.

Getting to know other people through community based volunteering activities can be a vital part of their long term

¹ Volunteering Australia's 2005 "National Survey of Australian Volunteers from Diverse Cultural and Linguistic Backgrounds."

settling in process, and can help to break down these and other barriers to integration. We also shouldn't under-estimate the great opportunity we have to learn from them and understand a different outlook.

Research indicates about 25 per cent of people in South Australia who were born overseas participate in volunteering activities ... this compares with an overall rate of volunteer participation in South Australia of 51 per cent.

... This doesn't reflect, I believe their willingness to be a part of our community, but may indicate that we need to rethink how welcoming and involving our organisations are to new comers.

What we can do to improve and how we can better assist people born overseas ... and people newly arrived to South Australia ... into volunteering activities.

As well as helping these new arrivals to integrate into our community ... this would have the added benefit of increasing the overall level of volunteer participation in our state even more.

The volunteer sector continues to make an immense contribution to the communities of South Australia ... and the State Government remains committed to supporting and developing the volunteering sector.

The strength of our communities ... supporting each other and pitching in ... is part of our culture and tradition ... a way of life that makes South Australia great.

The diversity of areas in which volunteers can contribute ... education ... health ... sport and recreation ... welfare ... heritage and conservation ... is as broad as the diversity of those who participate.

But ... there's still more work to do, and still scope to make the volunteer and community sector even stronger, more vibrant and more diverse than it is today.

[SA GOVT'S COMMITMENT]

The volunteer sector's contribution to South Australia is enormous ... and the State Government's commitment to its support and development is based on a genuine appreciation and understanding of that fact.

This commitment is reflected in:

- our partnership ... signed by the Premier and representatives of the volunteer sector back in 2003;
- And in the prominence which volunteering has in South Australia's Strategic Plan.

Of course the Strategic Plan sets many economic targets, but also many that are aimed at improving individual and family wellbeing ... including building strong, supportive and inclusive communities.

It is this social wealth that generates a sense of community ... in our neighbourhoods and our towns.

[VOLUNTEER INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM]

The South Australian Government recognises the incredible contribution that volunteers make to our community ... and continues to support Volunteer Resource Centres across the state.

Recently, the State Government worked with the Town of Gawler ... to establish a Volunteer Charter and a great new Volunteer Resource Centre.

This worked so well we have now established a *Volunteer Infrastructure Program* ... to assist Local and District Councils in providing support to their local volunteer organisations.

Over the next two years, a total of \$200,000 in State Government funding ... is being made available to councils to help them establish sustainable Volunteer Resource Centres ... or VRCs ... in their own communities.

The VRCs will be supported by the Councils ... and will provide a central hub for volunteering information, resources and support.

Many Councils have submitted applications to the *Volunteer Infrastructure Program* and I will be announcing the first round of successful Councils to receive funding shortly.

[VOLUNTEER GRANTS]

Our Government is also committed to making any procedures around volunteering less complex ... and to reducing red tape where possible.

That's why it gives me great pleasure to announce here today ... that we will be streamlining the grants process.

Under these new arrangements ... volunteer organisations will be able to access grants of up to \$10,000 with simplified accountability requirements.

Up until now, grants over \$5,000 have attracted more complex processes than those up to this amount ... but now the same process for \$5,000 will apply to volunteer organisations who are seeking amounts right up to \$10,000.

This will mean a reduction in paperwork and red tape ... which we hope will mean grant applications for higher sums are not deferred ... simply for fear of the need to jump bureaucratic hurdles.

[INCLUSIVITY]

This Government is also committed to social inclusion ... but to be a truly inclusive community we must provide opportunities for everyone to be involved in volunteering.

Our challenge is to ensure everyone ... people from a wide variety of backgrounds, Aboriginal Australians, young people, older Australians, people with disabilities and new comers to our State... are all included and valued.

We all have something to offer ... skills, experience, energy ... a good heart.

And as a community we can do great things ... and by tapping our abilities we can make a positive change for the benefit of all South Australians.

[BENEFITS OF VOLUNTEERING]

Volunteers, in turn ... do get a lot back.

The sense of well-being from knowing they are a valued member of their community ...

The friendships that come from working with others who have shared values and aims.

Meeting and being with inspirational people ... and simply doing something for someone else and bringing light into the lives of others – making a difference.

These expressions of our humanity enhance our quality of life ... and anyway, feeling good about yourself is good for your health and good for your soul.

It's a good story to tell and a strong message we must continue to send.

[VMAG]

The Volunteer Ministerial Advisory Group ... has continued to provide real and practical outcomes to support volunteers in the work they do.

I am extremely grateful for Gay agreeing to take the reins ... and I can't think of anyone I would be more comfortable ... entrusting with the responsibility for taking the Group's work forward ... than Gay.

I would also like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank each and every one of them ... for their valuable contribution to the

advancement of volunteering in South Australia ... and their enthusiasm and commitment to the Group.

We are approaching the end of the process to appoint new members to the Volunteer Ministerial Advisory Group ... and I am looking forward to meeting them in the near future.

[TAFE VOLUNTEERING GRADUATES]

I'm thrilled that our partnership with Onkaparinga Institute of TAFE has assisted many people to gain formal volunteer management qualifications.

Five people have graduated this year ... and it is my pleasure to present their parchments here today ... would **Janet, Kaye** and **Helen** please come to the stage.

A couple of graduates couldn't be here today ...

Tammy-Jo Sutton has completed **Certificate Four in Community Services Volunteer Management**, and is Community Actions Campaigner for Wilderness Society SA, and Community Campaigns Forum Convener for Wilderness Society Australia. She is unable to be here today because she's in Bali attending the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Also not able to attend today ... **Dianne Doll** ... who has also completed **Certificate Four in Community Services Volunteer Management**, and is the Service Administrator for Lifeline South East at Mount Gambier, which involves 55 volunteer counselors delivering a 24 hour telephone counseling service.

Congratulations to both Dianne and Tammy-Jo.

Janet Bitter has completed an **Advanced Diploma in Community Services Volunteer Management**. Jan was appointed Manager of the Limestone Coast Volunteer Resource Centre in 2003 when the centre became operational. Currently Jan is the Community Services and Volunteer Coordinator for the Naracoorte Lucindale Council. Managing the volunteer services provided by the Volunteer Centre is still her major role, but she also provides much needed community assistance with grant applications and support for senior and youth events. Congratulations Jan.

Helen English has completed a **Diploma in Community Services Volunteer Management**. She is the Coordinator of the Community Visitors Scheme at UnitingCare Wesley at Bowden. There are 26 volunteers involved in the Scheme, and Helen is responsible for the matching of volunteers with residents of aged care facilities, and ongoing recruitment of volunteers. Congratulations Helen.

Kaye Mahomet has completed **Certificate Four in Community Services Volunteer Management**, and is Volunteer Manager for Volunteering SA. Kaye's role involves coordinating the volunteers who work in a diverse range of areas. She also does some public speaking and provides peer support for not-for-profit organisations and external volunteers. Kaye was the winner of the inaugural 2007 Australasian Volunteer Administrators Award for Excellence. Well done Kaye, congratulations.

[MENTION KEYNOTE SPEAKERS]

We are very lucky to have two fantastic **keynote speakers** here today, who'll be speaking later.

I'm sure that you will all enjoy listening to the experiences of Dr Lorraine Kerr shortly, and Mr Hieu Van Le after lunch.

[HANDOVER TO GAY THOMPSON FOR VOLUNTEER SHOWCASE]

But before we meet Lorraine, I have great pleasure in handing you back over to Gay Thompson for our Volunteer Showcase ... Gay