

Volunteers: Our partners in serving the South Australian community.

Introduction by the Minister

South Australia is a welcoming place that values community participation through volunteering. The South Australian Government has a proud record of supporting volunteering, forming the *Advancing the Community Together Partnership* in May 2003, introducing the *Volunteer Protection Act 2001*, and including a special volunteering target in *South Australia's Strategic Plan*.

We all benefit in many ways from the successful working relationship between government and volunteers. We are especially grateful for the tradition of volunteer participation in our government programs. The combined efforts of our volunteers and South Australian Government employees in delivering government programs plays a crucial role in building an inclusive, cohesive and prosperous community for all South Australians.

Volunteers speak to us about the personal satisfaction and rewards volunteering brings. For many it's about staying connected and continuing to contribute. Our agencies support this by creating awareness and opportunities for people of all ages, backgrounds, abilities and cultures to participate as volunteers in a large range of our programs.

Importantly, volunteering also provides people with strong social and community networks that build the capacity and resilience of our community. That's why I'm proud this policy has been developed, to help guide and sustain the valued service that volunteers bring to our government programs and more widely to the South Australian community.

I commend it to you.



Tom Koutsantonis
Minister for Volunteers

Valuing and recognising the contribution of our volunteers

Volunteering is an activity which is of benefit to the community, is done of one's free will and is undertaken without monetary reward.

Volunteers bring to our services their broad and varied expertise, life skills, and knowledge, and we value the positive contribution they make to the way our agencies deliver quality services to South Australians across the State in the arts, education, environment, emergency services, health, justice, heritage, sport and recreation and in services to families and communities.

We will provide opportunities through involvement in government volunteering programs for volunteers to pursue an interest or a passion and to acquire new skills and experience.

We respect and recognise the essential contribution that volunteers make through their participation in our programs and we will ensure that their efforts are formally and appropriately acknowledged and celebrated.

Managing our volunteering programs

We appreciate that volunteers have a right to expect that government programs will be managed and delivered in a way that provides them with a safe and rewarding experience, free from discrimination and unsafe work practices.

We will have in place policies and operational guidelines that give clarity to roles, expectations and conditions for volunteers and guide volunteer activity.

We will provide safe and harmonious work environments for volunteers, free from discrimination and with appropriate safeguards against risks for volunteers and those they serve.

Our volunteers will be provided with the relevant training, coaching, information and the resources they need to do their jobs well. To support their efforts, we are committed to ensuring that our volunteering programs are resourced and supported.

While volunteers are not paid, volunteering is not cost free and our volunteers need to be fairly and promptly reimbursed for their legitimate out-of-pocket expenses.

We will create environments in which volunteers can make a meaningful contribution to agreed shared goals, maintain social and community connections and achieve personal satisfaction.

We will foster a culture of mutual respect, recognition and courtesy between government employees, volunteers and the people we serve and promote ethical conduct in all our dealings.

Providing new volunteering opportunities

The way that people want to participate as volunteers in our programs is changing. We will take an adaptive, innovative approach when designing our programs to ensure that they remain inclusive and accessible to the whole community, regardless of their location or circumstances.

We will promote awareness of the range of agency volunteering programs and encourage volunteers to get involved.

We will work collaboratively across government to share information resources, recruitment strategies, training programs and management practices to continue to improve the development and delivery of our volunteer programs and services.

We recognise the skills that our staff have to share with community organisations and will support them in pursuing their own volunteering endeavours as they undertake volunteering through their agency's corporate volunteering program or in their own capacity as community volunteers.

Our commitment to diversity and inclusiveness

People of all ages, from different cultures and walks of life and with diverse backgrounds contribute to our volunteering programs. The diversity of our volunteers enhances our service responsiveness and enriches our community. Our volunteers themselves reflect the diversity of the communities that we serve.

We will provide opportunities for people of all ages, backgrounds, abilities and cultures to participate as volunteers in our programs and increase access for all to volunteer programs by removing physical, economic, social and cultural barriers to participation.

Aboriginal people make a significant contribution to informal and formal volunteering in their own communities and beyond. We will work with Aboriginal people to encourage and support their participation in our volunteering programs in a way that is respectful to the culturally diverse Aboriginal people within South Australia.

We recognise the essential contribution that communities of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds make to volunteering. We will provide people from these communities opportunities to participate in our agency programs in a way that is culturally appropriate.

Our employees and volunteers will be provided with opportunities to participate in cultural awareness training because we want our programs and services to be delivered in a culturally inclusive and sensitive manner.

The participation of young people in our volunteering programs helps build better connections between young people and their local community and provides opportunities to gain new skills and experiences. We will work with young people to help them find pathways to success through volunteering.

The continued and future prosperity of South Australia

Volunteers bring to our agencies their enthusiasm, commitment, their special skills, knowledge and expertise, and they add value to our services and the way we deliver them.

Every day volunteers are making a real impact on the front lines of all our major community services - education, health, sport and recreation, welfare, disaster relief, fire fighting, heritage and conservation, the list is endless. They make us all ask the question, where would we be without them?

This policy marks our commitment to energising and strengthening volunteering in government programs. It provides a framework for stepping forward, and for ensuring we recruit, retain, recognise and train our volunteers, for the continued and future prosperity of our State.