



**Response to Focus on the Future:
Opportunities for Sustainability in Western Australia
26 April 2002**

**VOLUNTEERING IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA
Sustainability of the integrity of volunteer effort**

Volunteering Western Australia, incorporated as the Volunteer Centre of Western Australia, is the state peak body on volunteering. It represents more than 360 member organisations, volunteering professionals, individuals, and regional Volunteer Resource Centres employing 6.6 FTE paid staff supported by more than 70 volunteers.

Volunteering WA services include the Volunteer Referral Service, Retired and Senior Volunteer Program, Student Community Involvement Program, Library Resource Centre, Community Education and Training for volunteers, committees and managers, and coordinators of volunteers, research and development, consultancy services and the Voluntary Work Initiative for customers of Centrelink. The Volunteer Centre opens 5 days per week plus Thursday evenings by appointment.

Volunteering Western Australia, through the IYV Secretariat, provided a focus for activities in WA during the International Year of Volunteers, 2001. The final report on this celebration will be presented to Government during National Volunteer Week in May 2002.

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VOLUNTEERING IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Sustainability of the integrity of volunteer effort

Is sustainability a worthwhile pursuit?

Community support for an effective and vibrant sustainability policy will depend upon limitations and/or restrictions placed on individuals, business, government and community undertakings. Controls and restrictions may be imposed by legislation but unless the full cooperation of all parties is obtained the policy will be doomed to failure. Resources and broad consultation are paramount.

A successful sustainability policy must encourage all parties to participate without undue burdens or hardships. Proactive partnerships involving the business community, the general public and Governments will be essential.

An important aspect of public participation will be the active involvement of volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations, at state, regional, and local levels in WA and integrating with national and global initiatives.

Clear policies in support of volunteer effort are vital. An independent, strong and vibrant infrastructure will support volunteer effort and engage volunteers involved in community projects, government and non-government. Such an infrastructure is dependent on availability of funding and strong commitment to the core business of volunteering.

Volunteers are vital to the well being of the community and will therefore be an important, if not, essential element of any successful sustainability policy. Volunteers offer time and effort at three levels of service.

Y **Governance** – as board and committee members leadership and accountability for the policies, funding and resources of community based organisations;

Y **Management** – taking leadership responsibility for research, administration and delivery of services in not-for-profit organisations;

Y **Service delivery** – servicing identified needs in the community.

Sustainability of the integrity of volunteer effort must be of prime consideration if civil society is to be a partner in national, state and regional development.

Best practice by volunteers, for volunteers and in managing volunteer based initiatives will be a major imperative for sustainability in the future.

Benefits and opportunities from the pursuit of sustainability

Community participation

Volunteers are involved in projects pertaining to the quality of life in our community through professional associations, community groups, schools, business and industry groups, indigenous groups, social welfare groups, artists and creative associations, universities, research and development organisations, and local government. Their work embraces social, economic, environmental and technological concerns.

Active community participation in volunteer projects is dependent upon numerous factors including availability of resources and the level of safety and protection offered. Rising costs for necessary and advanced administrative support such as insurance and technological systems are creating an environment in which organised volunteer effort (formal volunteering) is struggling to survive.

Insurance

With mounting insurance premiums many smaller organisations are unable to offer the necessary level of safety and protection for their volunteers and are either withdrawing services or endeavouring to operate without cover or without an adequate level of protection for their members/volunteers.

The level of insurance cover that can be obtained by small organisations is dependent upon the capacity to raise funds. There is a clear reluctance to use funds raised for charitable purposes to meet insurance premiums. A further question to be raised is the adequacy of cover.

The inadequacy of the current situation is clearly demonstrated by: -

Y The fact that management and service delivery volunteers (where they are undertaking tasks on behalf of the organisation) **are not** covered by Public Liability Insurance for injury incurred during the course of those duties. The need for separate Personal Accident Insurance is often not readily recognised.

Y Similarly whilst paid staff who injure themselves at work have medical expenses paid under the Workers Compensation Act, volunteers who are injured have to pay (or their organisation) for any 'gap' further highlighting the inequities that currently exist.

Information technology

Even the smallest volunteer-involving organisation finds itself dependent on the computer to maintain its records to meet increasing legislative requirements and the demands of all stakeholders.

Increasing costs, change of policies by governing and funding bodies, the ever-increasingly necessary upgrades of equipment and software necessitates the development of custom designed IT requirements with ongoing specialist support to meet specific program needs.

Until these and other concerns are addressed active community participation in volunteer organisations and the services offered by volunteer-involving organisations can be expected to decline.

Capacity building, training and support

Government support for volunteer-involving organisations is increasing and will continue be an essential element of any successful sustainability policy. Further assistance will be required if the current level of activity by volunteer-involving organisations is to be maintained or increased.

Capacity building is an essential element in sustainability of volunteer effort.

In particular active Government support/assistance should include: -

- financial support to obtain appropriate insurance cover or the creation of government sponsored insurance pool for volunteer-involving organisations, addressing any gaps in provision of cover for volunteers within a community based definition;
- facilitation of governance training and support;
- support for risk management training for volunteer-involving organisations;
- research and development to support the concept of inclusiveness of all ages, all cultures and all abilities, provided the volunteer has the capacity to carry out the volunteer function within acceptable community standards;
- acknowledging the value of the contributions made by volunteers; and
- promoting and encouraging public participation in volunteering.

National Agenda on Volunteering

These and other issues are encapsulated in the accompanying document *A National Agenda for Volunteering* (Attachment 1) as developed through national community consultation during the International Year of Volunteers.

A further document (Attachment 2) the *Vision Conference Communique* addressed principal needs in Western Australia and a third document (Attachment 3) the *Universal Declaration on Volunteering* was the outcome of a global consultation in January 2001. The outcomes of subsequent discussion around the world were presented to the United Nations General Assembly in the first ever session dedicated to volunteer effort on December 5th, 2001.

Conclusion

The support of volunteers by all legislative jurisdictions will be crucial if the challenges of sustainability in Western Australia are to be addressed. Volunteer-involving organisations will not act alone on this matter, except where the immediate impact is on the specific activities of the organisation. Their response, however, will influence sustainable outcomes.

The need for a generic infrastructure to support volunteer effort has been identified and is in relative infancy in WA. Strong government support is needed for this visible and independent self-governing network to build its capacity to sustain the integrity of volunteering and the generic needs of volunteer effort in Western Australia.

In its current policy, the Gallop Labor Government acknowledges Volunteering Western Australia as the peak body for volunteering. It has demonstrated its commitment to the development of regional Volunteer Resource Centres and other support needs through the commitment of limited funds. The legitimacy of the volunteer movement has thus been recognised.

The changing nature of volunteering demands that this recognition be translated into support for a strong, independent and vibrant infrastructure for sustainability of volunteer effort.

Consultation now taking place is being enhanced by the years of painstaking record-keeping and research which has been undertaken by the growing network of volunteering professionals in WA and elsewhere.

Inclusiveness, acceptance, trust, and above all confidence in the leadership of organised volunteer effort (formal volunteering) can embrace and engage the enthusiasm of informal volunteering (help your neighbour) in such a way as to sustain the integrity of volunteering to meet the ever-increasing needs of civil society.

In so doing, volunteer effort will enhance community, government and business enterprises in building the capacity for sustainable community development.

A National Agenda on Volunteering: Beyond the International Year of Volunteers

An **IYV** legacy

Definition and Principles

Definition of formal volunteering

Formal volunteering in Australia is defined as an activity which takes place through not for profit organisations or projects and is undertaken:

- to be of benefit to the community;
- of the volunteer's own free will and without coercion;
- for no financial payment; and
- in designated volunteer positions only.

Principles of volunteering

- Volunteering benefits the community and the volunteer.
- Volunteer work is unpaid.
- Volunteering is always a matter of choice.
- Volunteering is not compulsorily undertaken to receive pensions or government allowances.
- Volunteering is a legitimate way in which citizens can participate in the activities of their community.
- Volunteering is a vehicle for individuals or groups to address human, environmental and social needs.
- Volunteering is an activity performed in the not for profit sector only.
- Volunteering is not a substitute for paid work.
- Volunteers do not replace paid workers nor constitute a threat to the job security of paid workers.
- Volunteering respects the rights, dignity and culture of others.
- Volunteering promotes human rights and equality.

* The definition and principles were developed in 1997 by Volunteering Australia Inc through consultation with the volunteer sector, the unions and government.

Introduction

The International Year of Volunteers was declared by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1997. Australia and in particular the 4,500 member organisations of the Volunteering Australia network, played a significant role in petitioning for the year.

In June 2000 the two Australian lead community agencies for the International Year of Volunteers established a National Community Council of Advice to ensure that the community voice in the International Year of Volunteers was strong and influential. Over 300 national organisations were invited to join the Council. One of the Council's most important decisions was to conduct a national consultation to identify the major issues facing volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations in Australia and the outcomes they would like to see as a legacy of this most important year. Face to face consultations were conducted in every state and territory and over 15,000 questionnaires were distributed. A National Agenda on Volunteering: Beyond the International Year of Volunteers is the result of those consultations.

Australian volunteers – key facts

- In Australia nearly 4.4 million people over the age of 18 years are volunteers, representing an impressive 32% of the civilian population of the same age.
- There is an almost equal representation of women and men.
- The majority of people who volunteer are under the age of forty-four.
- In 1995 an estimated 3,189,900 people volunteered representing 24% of the Australian population over the age of 18.
- In 2000 volunteers contributed 704.1 million hours of volunteer work to the Australian community.
- A growth in volunteer rates has occurred for both sexes and all age groups.
- Particular growth has occurred in the 18-24 age group from 17% in 1995 to 27% in 2000.
- The 55-64 age group showed growth from 24% in 1995 to 32% in 2000¹
- Volunteering in Australia has an estimated dollar value of \$42 billion per annum².

Scope of Australian volunteering

Volunteers work in all spheres of community and across many sectors including health and welfare, emergency services, arts and culture, heritage, environment and conservation, sport and recreation, education, overseas aid, religious, animal welfare, human rights and youth development.

Volunteers work in all types of environments and under different conditions. Sometimes their issues are unique to the sector within which they work, more often than not the issue is shared across all sectors.

- 1 Key facts are taken from the ABS national survey Voluntary Work Australia ABS Catalogue 4441.0 2000
- 2 Duncan Ironmonger's estimates of the dollar value of volunteering are based on ABS Time Use data.

The Agenda

The community, volunteer-involving organisations, business and government is called upon to work together to:

1. Publicly respect and value, in enduring, formal, and tangible ways, the essential contribution that volunteers make to building and sustaining the Australian community.

From its beginnings as a settled colony and before, Australians have assisted each other in times of need and hardship. Throughout our documented history we have examples of volunteer effort and its result. What we do not have as a nation is a commitment to accurately measure and value this activity. The ABS estimates that nearly 4.4 million Australians provided 704.1 million hours of voluntary service to the community in 2000. The monetary value of all volunteer work, both formal and informal is estimated to be a massive \$42 billion per annum. We hope that after this International Year of Volunteers, Australia publicly acknowledges this contribution in, at least, the following ways:

Outcomes Sought

- A permanent inclusion of a volunteer question in the Census of the Australian Population.
- A regular collection of volunteer data by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS).
- The economic value of volunteering quantified and included in the national accounts published quarterly by the ABS.
- Volunteer-involving organisations acknowledge the work of volunteers and quantify its economic value in their Annual Reports.
- Funding for research into issues that affect volunteers and volunteering.
- A specific Volunteer Medal in the Order of Australia awards.
- Recognition by corporate sponsors that volunteer projects of all sizes and the infrastructure to support volunteers, merits funding.
- Excellence Awards for volunteer projects, programs or services that involve, manage and deploy volunteers according to excellence criteria.

2. Ensure that volunteers have legal status and are afforded protection through every piece of legislation and public policy that affects them and their work.

Australian volunteers work in many settings and under a variety of conditions. Some work alongside paid employees and under identical circumstances, others work alone or as a group in situations that are less than safe. Unlike paid staff, volunteers are not always covered by legislation that protects or compensates within the work place. Many volunteers are exposed to risk, injury, discrimination or prejudice in the absence of explicit mention in relevant legislation. Others carry huge financial responsibility or are exposed to legal liability. It is in the interests of all Australians that volunteers are protected under law.

Outcomes Sought

- State governments specifically include volunteer protection in the relevant Occupational Health and Safety Act(s).
- The Equal Opportunity Acts around Australia overtly protect the rights of all volunteers, as with paid workers, to be 'employed' in accordance with non-discriminatory practices.
- The various workers compensation legislation around Australia is consistent in the level of compensation offered to volunteers injured in the course of their voluntary work.
- Anti-discrimination Acts explicitly mention volunteers.
- An intergovernmental working group that identifies all of the relevant existing legislation across all jurisdictions and a methodology to address the process of legislative change and amendments.

3. Ensure that all new legislation, bi-laws and public policies, developed at any level of government, which may effect volunteers and their work, works only to facilitate and sustain volunteering.

Volunteering has, over a number of years, developed into a significant and important social movement that is recognised worldwide. It is generally accepted that volunteering is underpinned by a set of principles and guidelines that are designed to protect not only the individual volunteer but also volunteering. Implicit in the principles from around the world, and particularly in Australia, is the notion that volunteering gains strength only if it remains a non-exploitative expression of citizenship based on free will. In Australia the *Principles of Volunteering* were developed through consultation with the sector, government and the unions. And whilst individuals may at times work outside the principles, it is the principles which provide the framework that has assured the long-term viability of the volunteer movement. As Australian volunteers are more and more relied upon to provide needed services it is more important than ever to ensure that any legislation or policy affecting volunteers is firmly based on the Principles.

Outcomes Sought

- Governments and policy makers both commit and subscribe to the *Principles of Volunteering*.
- A guarantee from governments in all jurisdictions to the volunteers and volunteering-involving organisations of Australia that legislation or policy will not be implemented that has the potential to weaken the community activity of volunteering. And this guarantee is ensured by consulting with the sector.
- Volunteer peak bodies provide a 'Volunteer Impact Statement' on any legislation or public policy likely to effect volunteers or volunteering.
- Volunteer- involving organisations work with the peak bodies to ensure that responses to government policy or proposed legislation is informed and captures diverse viewpoints.

4. Acknowledge that the activity of volunteering is not without cost and develop means by which Australian volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations are supported and funded to provide valuable services.

One of the greatest fallacies about volunteering is that as volunteers are unpaid their involvement has no negative resource implication for either the volunteer-involving organisation or volunteers themselves. Many organisations have, to their dismay, felt the effect of underestimating the cost of involving and supporting volunteers. And whilst it is proper to account for the considerable dollar value of volunteer contribution it is equally as important to calculate the financial overheads needed to support volunteers in their work. Many volunteers cover their own costs in addition to providing valuable services for which they are not paid; others simply are unable to afford the outlay required of them. The work of volunteers cannot be taken for granted by not-for-profit organisations, the community, business or governments and the cost of supporting them in their work should be considered as an investment in the future of Australia.

Outcomes Sought

- Access to affordable and adequate volunteer and public liability insurance for volunteer-involving organisations.
- Volunteer out of pocket expenses dealt with under the taxation system, any anomalies identified and resolved and some equitable means of providing relief for those outside the tax system is found.
- Travel concessions for volunteers travelling to and from their volunteer workplace.
- Volunteer-involving organisations have adequate allocations for volunteer management in their annual budget.
- Government when funding service providers that rely on volunteers, explicitly require, and provide for, an adequate budget allocation for volunteer involvement, management, recognition and reimbursement.
- Volunteer-involving organisations and funding providers, for example, governments, business and trusts, recognise volunteer management as a genuine and necessary expense item in funding submissions and funding allocations.

5. Ensure excellence in all levels of volunteer involvement and volunteer management to encourage, protect and enhance the work of volunteers.

Australia is a beautiful and vast country that has large expanses of uninhabited and dangerous terrain surrounded by ocean. Australia is prone to natural disasters, such as bush fires, landslide, storms and flood. The sheer size of our country alone, taken together with the numerous opportunities for recreational pursuit in isolated places, places a heavy responsibility on search and rescue volunteer crews both on land and sea. Our successful response to emergencies is heavily dependent on the professionalism of volunteers. Much of our natural heritage is protected and conserved through the dedicated work of volunteers. Volunteers also work in sport and recreation, arts and culture, health, welfare, education, religious, animal welfare, youth development and human rights arenas to build a strong cohesive society.

Australia has a small culturally diverse population, a large percentage of which is nearing retirement age. This in itself will pose numerous challenges in the future delivery of volunteer services. Changing technology and the diversification of the volunteer role also has an influence on how volunteers are involved and managed. With almost 4.4 million Australians actively engaged as volunteers it is timely to ensure that standards for their involvement, management, and conditions of employment are met.

Outcomes Sought

- Volunteer-involving organisations comply with the National Standards for Involving Volunteers and other industry standards that impact on volunteers and their work.
- Volunteer-involving organisations recognise that volunteers both require and deserve training.
- Standardised volunteer training by industry type.
- Portable training to reduce unnecessary repetition and duplication for volunteers.
- A national skills register to ensure recognition of previous training and skills.
- Government funding for volunteer training.
- A uniform, affordable and effective national system for pre-employment reference checking (police checks).
- A positive image of volunteering portrayed through the media.
- National youth strategies to ensure that young people are provided with the types of volunteer activities they seek.
- Volunteer-involving organisations respect the rights of volunteers.
- Shared resources for recruitment e.g. on-line recruitment sites.
- Standards of excellence in volunteer referral services.
- Trained managers of volunteers.
- Training packages for managers of volunteers.
- Tertiary courses, for example, social work, sport, recreation and youth work include 'working with volunteers' as an elective subject.
- Competency standards for volunteer management training to ensure a level of competence and a career path for managers of volunteers.

6. Ensure that volunteering is a potent, dynamic and unifying social force for community benefit by acknowledging and accepting that it is a diverse and evolving activity.

Volunteering was until recent years regarded as the province of the middle class, middle aged woman. So entrenched was this stereotype that it remains one of our greatest challenges to refashion the image, and build an awareness of the true scope and scale of volunteering. Of all the tasks that lie ahead of us, if we are to maintain the relevance of volunteering, the most important is to recognise and celebrate it as a changing, dynamic and inclusive movement for the common good.

Outcomes Sought

- Volunteer-involving organisations have strategies in place to involve young people including redesigned job roles, short-term projects and group volunteering. And the needs, aspirations and motivations of young volunteers are accepted as valid.
- The concept of corporate volunteering is widely accepted and encouraged as a legitimate way in which skills are transferred from the business sector to the voluntary sector for the benefit of the community.
- Volunteer-involving organisations have strategies in place to remove barriers to the involvement of people from culturally diverse backgrounds
- Organisations have strategies in place to address gender imbalance.
- The community work and support networks of indigenous Australians are recognised as valuable variations to the more formal activities typically accepted as volunteering.
- Innovative forms of on-line volunteering opportunities are available to volunteers isolated through disability or locality or restricted by paid employment to volunteering outside business hours.
- Innovative forms of volunteering opportunities to address complex social problems.

Acknowledgements

A National Agenda on Volunteering: Beyond the International Year of Volunteers is the result of a national consultation that Volunteering Australia and Australian Volunteers International conducted on behalf of the IYV National Community Council of Advice to identify the major issues affecting volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations.

The IYV National Community Council of Advice would like to thank all those individuals and organisations who have contributed to the development of *A National Agenda on Volunteering* or assisted with organising forums or distributing questionnaires.

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Additional copies of this document can be downloaded from the Community IYV Web Site at www.iyv2001.net

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Challenge, Choice and Change VISION CONFERENCE COMMUNIQUE

Western Australian International Year of Volunteers ADVISORY GROUP

On 8 – 10 August 2001 Volunteering Western Australia convened a vision conference titled ‘Challenge, Choice and Change. At that Conference, a number of recommendations were put forward by working groups of as a result of presentations.

In addition, there were some common threads to views advanced by participants in ‘Vision Diaries’ completed during the Conference.

This communique has been prepared by Volunteering WA to bring together those recommendations and views, and the WA IYV Advisory Group considers this an important component in maintaining the momentum created by the Conference.

The conference was commended for its capacity to raise questions and to provoke thought. The ideas (and arguments) put forward require further investigation, dissemination and action, not only by organisations, but also by the individual participants. Provision has been made for post-conference follow up on the internet discussion forum at www.volunteeringwa.com.au. and for such a conference to happen again in the future.

The Western Australian IYV 2001 Advisory Group is therefore pleased to endorse this communique, and to endorse the Conference recommendation that, in view of the Government’s commitment to volunteers, this document be forwarded to the Hon Sheila McHale, MLA, the Minister with Responsibility for Volunteer Services.

GOVERNMENT

The WA IYV 2001 Advisory Group endorses the following conference recommendations and views to State Government:

- That as an integral part of the volunteer community, the State Government sector continues to encourage and nurture its growing volunteer partnerships, and provide leadership, share expertise, and contribute to the overall development of volunteers and volunteering in Western Australia and the strengthening of communities throughout Western Australia.
- That political leaders in the regions more effectively engage with their constituency to build capacity through regional infrastructure to support volunteering across WA so that there is shared understanding and consistency of process in referral, recruitment and placement of volunteers;
- That in developing potential partnership processes it is recognised that there is a need to break down barriers between Departments so that there is shared understanding and consistency of process in areas of contracting and funding, access and equity;
- That the contribution of non-paid staff in strategic planning of volunteer based programs be recognised and valued;
- That Volunteering Resource Centres (VRCs) be supported with adequate funding in regional centres and pathways be developed between stakeholders including Local Government to assist the community in accessing volunteer opportunities through the utilisation of new technologies to develop Volunteer Resource Centre infrastructure.

COMPACT WORKING PARTY

The WA IYV 2001 Advisory Group congratulates the WA Government on the appointment of the Compact Working Party, which presents a positive potential for future relationship between Government and not-for-profit sectors including a whole of government approach and endorses the following conference recommendations and views:

- that the WA Compact Working Party looks at and learns from similar activities around the world and within Australia and undertakes broad consultation with the volunteer sector in Western Australia;
- That a base definition of volunteering be agreed and that this be developed to ensure compatibility or comparability with ABS Surveys for research, funding and management purposes;
- That involvement in volunteering and the need to define what a volunteer is in the culture of youth, multicultural and indigenous groups be recognised and developed;
- That the capacity be developed to make better use of current technology for recruitment, community education and training, for volunteers;
- That safety of volunteers needs to be constantly promoted and supported by appropriate recruitment and training practices and adequate insurance cover;
- That a culture of research into volunteering be developed with organisations encouraged to collect useful data, collate, promote, and disseminate research and provide input to database and library resources which reflect relevant research activity;
- That the Research Protocols developed by Volunteering Western Australia be recognised as important tools for ensuring professional standards in volunteering research;
- That consistency across volunteer based organisations be recognised through registration with Volunteering Western Australia and Regional Volunteer Resource Centres affiliated with Volunteering Australia to support generic training, and standardised record keeping;
- That the contribution of non-paid staff in strategic planning in all volunteer based programs be recognised;
- That the Compact Working Party provide input to the National Agenda.

NATIONAL AGENDA

The WA IYV 2001 Advisory Group endorses the following conference recommendations for inclusion in the National Agenda:

- That the Universal Declaration is a framework that has had worldwide input and should influence the National Agenda;
- That recognition by government of volunteer service work be demonstrated through future Census and Tax Status requirements, with an agreed definition, and recognition by paid employees and community for professional service delivery.
- That this conference advocates that formal qualifications such as first aid that are required for volunteer activities be recognised as valuable and afforded tax deduction status.
- That involvement in volunteering and the need to define what a volunteer is in the culture of youth, multicultural and indigenous groups be recognised and developed, particularly in relation to the Voluntary Work Initiative, be included in the National Agenda.
- That the capacity be developed to make better use of current technology for recruitment, community education and training, for volunteers;
- That safety of volunteers needs to be constantly promoted and supported by appropriate recruitment and training practices and adequate insurance cover;
- That there is a need for more connection with government, and between governments at all levels, not for profit and for profit, rationalisation of services and commitment to those services to allow planning and consolidation, networking, fair and equitable access;
- That in developing potential partnership processes it is recognised that there is a need to break down barriers between governments and departments so that there is consistency of process in areas of contracting and funding, referral, recruitment and placement, access and equity;
- That there is a need to recognise the contribution of non-paid staff in strategic planning;
- That a culture of research into volunteering be developed with organisations encouraged to collect useful data, collate, promote, and disseminate research and provide input to database and library resources which reflect relevant research activity;
- That the Research Protocols developed by Volunteering Western Australia be recognised as important tools for ensuring professional standards in volunteering research;
- That a base definition of volunteering be determined for research purposes, and compatibility with definitions as determined for ABS Surveys is ensured.

VOLUNTEERING WESTERN AUSTRALIA

The WA IYV 2001 Advisory Group endorses the following conference recommendations for Volunteering Western Australia

- That VWA, through its various networks, facilitate follow up sessions to address issues raised at the conference and to celebrate that we have got to this stage;
- That outcomes from consultation and research in the areas of young people, seniors' involvement and multicultural aspects be recognised as making an important contribution to the inclusiveness of volunteering
- That educative sessions on governance issues be available through Volunteering Western Australia.
- That the importance of good governance be recognised by volunteers in all organisations and assistance be provided for the audit of non-profit organisations with the purpose of promoting best practices.
- That a shared vision is required by everyone working with volunteers if they are to work collaboratively and cooperatively with each other in order to share resources, etc.
- That it is necessary to promote an environment that is seamless and user friendly for volunteering, through traditional means and cyberspace, identify and focus on target audiences.
- That service learning programs provide pathways for learning and encourage youth volunteers by taking them on in our organisations, provide positive experiences by showing them how we do it then listen to them and their ideas as how it would be a better way to do the job.
- That generic training be supported by government with linkage to leadership training at Challenger TAFE. Standardisation of training to increase profile, professionalism, attract younger volunteers looking to further their qualifications
- That ways be explored to work more effectively with organisations and communities in the regions – between VWA, VRCs and other organisations and between organisations themselves.
- That a full WA state symposium be held to determine a common vision for volunteering (unity of purpose) amongst all currently operating and prospectively operating VRCs through a joint planning and strategic goal setting exercise which would form the basis of subsequent planning in all VRCs.

APPENDIX

DEFINITION AND PRINCIPLES OF VOLUNTEERING Volunteering Australia

Definition of Formal Volunteering

Formal volunteering is an activity which takes place in not for profit organisations or projects and is undertaken:

- w to be of benefit to the community and the volunteer;
- w of the volunteer's own free will and without coercion;
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- w in designated volunteer positions only.

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- w Volunteers do not replace paid workers nor constitute a threat to the job security of paid workers.
- w Volunteering respects the rights, dignity and culture of others.
- w Volunteering promotes human rights and equality.

WA IYV 2001 ADVISORY GROUP comprises representatives from

- w Australian Volunteers International (AVI)
- w CCI (WA)
- w Commonwealth Dept of Family and Community Services
- w Ministry of Premier and Cabinet
- w National Trust (WA)
- w Volunteering Western Australia (Convenor)
- w WACOSS
- w WACSSO
- w WA Independent Schools Association
- w WA Municipal Association (WAMA)
- w WA Sports Federation

The Universal Declaration on Volunteering

Volunteering is a fundamental building block of civil society. It brings to life the noblest aspirations of humankind – the pursuit of peace, freedom, opportunity, safety, and justice for all people.

In this era of globalization and continuous change, the world is becoming smaller, more interdependent, and more complex. Volunteering – either through individual or group action – is a way in which:

- human values of community, caring, and serving can be sustained and strengthened;
- individuals can exercise their rights and responsibilities as members of communities, while learning and growing throughout their lives, realizing their full human potential; and,
- connections can be made across differences that push us apart so that we can live together in healthy, sustainable communities, working together to provide innovative solutions to our shared challenges and to shape our collective destinies.

At the dawn of the new millennium, volunteering is an essential element of all societies. It turns into practical, effective action the declaration of the United Nations that “We, the Peoples” have the power to change the world.

This Declaration supports the right of every woman, man and child to associate freely and to volunteer regardless of their cultural and ethnic origin, religion, age, gender, and physical, social or economic condition. All people in the world should have the right to freely offer their time, talent, and energy to others and to their communities through individual and collective action, without expectation of financial reward.

We seek the development of volunteering that:

- elicits the involvement of the entire community in identifying and addressing its problems;
- encourages and enables youth to make leadership through service a continuing part of their lives;
- provides a voice for those who cannot speak for themselves;
- enables others to participate as volunteers;
- complements but does not substitute for responsible action by other sectors and the efforts of paid workers;
- enables people to acquire new knowledge and skills and to fully develop their personal potential, self-reliance and creativity;
- promotes family, community, national and global solidarity.

We believe that volunteers and the organizations and communities that they serve have a shared responsibility to:

- create environments in which volunteers have meaningful work that helps to achieve agreed upon results;
- define the criteria for volunteer participation, including the conditions under which the organization and the volunteer may end their commitment, and develop policies to guide volunteer activity;
- provide appropriate protections against risks for volunteers and those they serve;
- provide volunteers with appropriate training, regular evaluation, and recognition;
- ensure access for all by removing physical, economic, social, and cultural barriers to their participation.

Taking into account basic human rights as expressed in the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights, the principles of volunteering and the responsibilities of volunteers and the organizations in which they are involved, we call on:

All volunteers to proclaim their belief in volunteer action as a creative and mediating force that:

- builds healthy, sustainable communities that respect the dignity of all people;

- empowers people to exercise their rights as human beings and, thus, to improve their lives;
- helps solve social, cultural, economic and environmental problems; and,
- builds a more humane and just society through worldwide cooperation.

The leaders of:

- **all** sectors to join together to create strong, visible, and effective local and national “volunteer centers” as the primary leadership organizations for volunteering;
- **government** to ensure the rights of all people to volunteer, to remove any legal barriers to participation, to engage volunteers in its work, and to provide resources to NGOs to promote and support the effective mobilization and management of volunteers;
- **business** to encourage and facilitate the involvement of its workers in the community as volunteers and to commit human and financial resources to develop the infrastructure needed to support volunteering;
- **the media** to tell the stories of volunteers and to provide information that encourages and assists people to volunteer;
- **education** to encourage and assist people of all ages to volunteer, creating opportunities for them to reflect on and learn from their service;
- **religion** to affirm volunteering as an appropriate response to the spiritual call to all people to serve;
- **NGOs** to create organizational environments that are friendly to volunteers and to commit the human and financial resources that are required to effectively engage volunteers.

The United Nations to:

- declare this to be the “Decade of Volunteers and Civil Society” in recognition of the need to strengthen the institutions of free societies; and,
- recognize the “red V” as the universal symbol for volunteering.

IAVE challenges volunteers and leaders of all sectors throughout the world to unite as partners to promote and support effective volunteering, accessible to all, as a symbol of solidarity among all peoples and nations. IAVE invites the global volunteer community to study, discuss, endorse and bring into being this Universal Declaration on Volunteering. Adopted by the international board of directors of IAVE – The International Association for Volunteer Effort at its 16th World Volunteer Conference, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, January 2001, the International Year of Volunteers.