

Volunteering Policy Advisory Group First Meeting, 23 October 2009, Communiqué

The first meeting of the Volunteering Policy Advisory Group was held in Canberra on Friday 23 October 2009.

The Advisory Group is providing expert advice on Australia's volunteering vision to 2021 and helping develop Australia's National Volunteering Strategy.

The strategy will articulate a shared vision for volunteering in Australia.

Members of the group, chaired by the Parliamentary Secretary for Social Inclusion and the Voluntary Sector, Senator Ursula Stephens, are:

- Mr Gregory Andrews, Chief Executive Officer, Indigenous Community Volunteers
- Ms Margaret Bell, President, Chain Reaction Foundation
- Mr Jelenko Dragisic, Chief Executive Officer, Volunteering Queensland
- Major General Hori Howard, Chair, Australian Emergency Management Volunteer Forum
- Ms Catherine Hunter, Director of Corporate Citizenship, KPMG
- Associate Professor Melanie Oppenheimer, School of Humanities, University of New England
- Mr Cary Pedicini, Chief Executive Officer, Volunteering Australia
- Mr Doug Taylor, Chief Executive Officer, United Way

At the first meeting, members drew on their diverse backgrounds and shared their experienced and informed perspectives on the volunteering movement.

Members agreed that the National Volunteering Strategy should focus on affirming, celebrating and encouraging volunteers into the future.

The National Volunteering Strategy will be a visionary statement and a framework for action.

The framework for action should be flexible and open to input and engagement from a wide cross section of the community.

The group agreed that the National Volunteering Strategy needs to reflect a transformational agenda for the next decade, promoting new ways to deepen and strengthen Australia's volunteer movement. It is important to ensure that people from varied backgrounds and with a range of skills and abilities can access and participate in volunteering activities.

Members discussed a number of issues and ideas centring around the themes of:

- the critical role that volunteering plays in encouraging an inclusive and engaged community;
- ensuring the structures and regulatory environment that support volunteering are appropriate;
- the importance of taking a whole-of-person approach to volunteering that recognises the diversity of skills and experiences people have to offer;
- strategies to attract younger generations to the benefits of volunteering in response to the ageing of the population;
- the need to change perceptions of the 'traditional volunteer' and to challenge existing stereotypes of who volunteers and what is meant by volunteering;

- the need for more research into volunteering and to better understand Australia's past volunteering history; and
- the need to recognise and celebrate the contribution of volunteers.

Members agreed that the ten year anniversary of the International Year of the Volunteer in 2011 is an ideal time to draw the spotlight to the benefits of volunteering and the contribution volunteers make.

The Advisory Group agreed that this first meeting set the scene for a positive and productive collaboration.

Next steps for the group will be to further develop ideas that can be part of a new National Volunteering Strategy.

The group is looking forward to working closely together over the coming months leading up to the release of the National Volunteering Strategy, to coincide with the tenth anniversary of the United Nations Year of Volunteer in 2011.

A background paper on the development of the National Volunteering Strategy will soon be available on the Social Inclusion website at www.socialinclusion.gov.au.

Signed

Volunteering Policy Advisory Group