

## 2025 VOLUNTEERING NSW STATE CONFERENCE

**Protect, Preserve, Progress Volunteering in NSW.**

### **Call for Abstracts**

The **2025 Volunteering NSW State Conference** will be held on Thursday 5 June 2025, at Doltone House, Darling Island, Pyrmont and live streamed to three regional centres.

The conference is expected to attract around 350 delegates. These are professional leaders in volunteer-involving organisations in the not-for-profit and community sectors from across NSW who will gather to learn, exchange ideas and network amongst their peers to help shape a more resilient, supported, and inclusive sector.

In line with The Centre for Volunteering vision to build strong, diverse, and inclusive communities through volunteering, the theme of this year's conference is **Protect, Preserve and Progress Volunteering in NSW.**

The Conference program will explore current issues in volunteering with a focus on:

- **Valuing Volunteering:** This includes strategies for recruiting, retaining, and engaging volunteers, ensuring they feel appreciated and motivated.
- **Leadership Innovation:** Exploring new leadership models and the transition of leadership roles to adapt to changing times.
- **Mental Health and Resilience:** Addressing the mental health needs of volunteers and building resilience to cope with challenges.
- **Online Engagement:** Utilising social media and Artificial Intelligence to enhance volunteer engagement and outreach.

The Conference program will encompass a variety of presentation formats that involve and engage conference delegates.

The Centre for Volunteering is seeking Conference presenters who wish to share their knowledge and experience, and to explore practical solutions in these areas. As a Conference presenter, you will join a network of influential thought leaders to highlight current innovation and future potential within the sector.

### Interested in Presenting?

All abstract proposals should be sent on the **2025 Volunteering NSW State Conference- Submission Template** no later than **5.00pm, Friday 28 March 2025**.

- Please read the following information on the conference themes and presentation formats.
- All presentation abstracts should be limited to 500 words and follow the guidelines outlined for each presentation format.
- Please ensure all requested information is provided, including the presentation title, the presenter/s name, contact details and a short biography of the presenter/s, together with any organisation affiliations.
- The Volunteering NSW Conference Organising Committee will review all abstracts.
- All enquiries and submissions should be sent to the Conference Team at [conference@volunteering.com.au](mailto:conference@volunteering.com.au).
- Successful presenters will be notified by Thursday 17th April 2025
- Successful presenters will be provided with one complimentary Conference registration.

### Conference Themes

**Theme:** Protect, Preserve, Progress Volunteering in NSW.

**Sub themes:**

- Valuing Volunteering
- Leadership Innovation
- Mental Health and Resilience
- Online Engagement

### **Valuing Volunteering: Recruitment, Retention, and Engagement**

Effective volunteer recruitment and retention strategies are crucial for Volunteer Involving Organisations to help build strong, diverse, and inclusive communities.

These presentations will explore:

1. **Recruitment, Retention & Recognition:**
  - Detailed volunteer role descriptions - responsibilities, expectations, and time commitments
  - Open lines of communication to ensure volunteers feel informed and involved.
  - Making volunteers feel valued and their contributions validated.
  - Provide regular feedback and foster a sense of belonging and community.
2. **Challenges:**
  - Volunteers' efforts are often undervalued.
  - Many organisations do not invest in volunteer management as they do with paid staff.
  - Outdated beliefs of volunteering can affect how volunteers view their contributions.
  - Repositioning of Volunteering to acknowledge its true value and contribution to the NSW community.

## Leadership Innovation

Leadership in volunteering plays a crucial role in building strong, diverse, and inclusive communities. Leadership innovations in volunteer Involving Organisations are essential for fostering growth, embracing diversity, and ensuring long-term sustainability.

These presentations will explore key areas in Leadership such as:

- Succession Planning - Balancing Tradition and Innovation
- Embracing Diversity and Inclusion
- Volunteer Training & Development
- Flexibility of volunteer roles

## Online Engagement

Online engagement through social media, virtual volunteering, and the integration of Artificial Intelligence, offer the volunteering sector great opportunities for expanding engagement and enhancing impact in their respective communities.

These presentations will explore how:

1. **Leveraging social media**
  - Grow an organisation's profile & audience.
  - Enhance volunteer recruitment & experience.
2. **Creating Virtual Volunteer Roles** – broader volunteer base and grow organisation's capacity.
3. **Integrating Artificial Intelligences into volunteer management to:**
  - Streamline Operations
  - Analyse Recruitment Data
  - Tailor Volunteer Engagement
  - Provide Analytics from Volunteer Feedback

## Mental Health and Resilience

Addressing mental health is vitally important in Best Practice Volunteer Management, especially given the challenges volunteers may face.

These presentations will focus on how to mitigate the risks associated with taking on volunteers within their workforce both at the organisation's offices, events, as well as working from home, focusing on the following:

1. **Health and Wellbeing of Volunteers:**
  - Health and safety procedures
  - Managing Risks & Duty of Care
  - Resilience training where applicable
  - Providing a supportive environment
  - Complaints and grievance procedures
2. **Remote Work Considerations:** mental health & safety monitoring
3. **Volunteer – Employee Relations:** Building strong relationships between employees & volunteers through effective communication and collaboration.

## **Formats**

### **Plenary**

Duration: 30 minutes

- A 30-minute plenary session which focuses on either the main theme or one of the four sub-themes of the Conference.
- These sessions are intended to grab the attention and engage the audience, conveying key information on the theme and offer relevant learnings / insights.
- Your abstract should detail the focus of your talk, the ways it contributes to thinking or understanding and the presentation format. In selecting plenary presentations, priority will be given to proposals that allow the audience to connect, engage and learn in new or diverse ways.

### **Workshop**

Duration: 45-60 minutes, including Q&A

- A 45–60-minute workshop session which begins like a traditional presentation, with a speaker (or multiple speakers) presenting on one of the four sub-themes of the Conference. After 20 to 30 minutes, the shift focuses from the speaker/s to the audience with the aim of creating a facilitated, open forum enabling the attendees to generate discussion and knowledge sharing.
- For the remainder of the session, the speaker becomes a facilitator, inviting responses to comments and questions from those around the room and letting the audience dictate the ultimate direction of the conversation.
- Your abstract should detail the focus of your talk and the way it contributes to thinking about or understanding of issues affecting volunteering.

### **Panel**

Duration: 45 minutes

- A 45-minute panel discussion with a moderator briefly introducing the topic or theme of the session and involves a live discussion on the topic amongst a selected group of panellists who share differing perspectives with the delegates.
- Your abstract should detail the focus of the panel session and the way it contributes to the theme of the Conference. You may wish to collaborate with one or more other speakers to highlight different perspectives on your Conference theme.

## **Exhibition Spaces**

A limited number of Exhibition Spaces will be available at the Conference. Posters, relevant visual materials, and information will be displayed in a specific area of the Conference venue where all Conference delegates can view them. There will be appointed times when representatives should be available on-site to discuss their exhibition with delegates.

The Exhibition Spaces should provide a succinct visual representation of an idea, program, service, and research findings.

Your application should detail the focus of your space and the way the information presented contributes to the theme and sub-themes of the Conference.

Additional costs will be associated with Exhibition Space at the Conference. For all enquiries and to register your interest including size of floor area required, contact the Conference Team, at [conference@volunteering.com.au](mailto:conference@volunteering.com.au).