



The Centre for Volunteering



**Promoting and supporting
volunteering for over 50 years.**

Our Generous Supporters

As The Centre for Volunteering marks its 50th anniversary, we offer our heartfelt thanks to our valued patrons and supporters. Your generosity has been instrumental in recognising volunteers and volunteer leaders for the important work that they do in building stronger, more connected communities across New South Wales. This significant milestone would not have been possible without your ongoing commitment and belief in our mission. Thank you for being such an important part of our journey. Particular mentions include:



Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AC KC. Her Excellency is the current Patron of The Centre for Volunteering.

Hon. Jodie Harrison MP. Minister Harrison is the current Patron of the NSW Volunteer of the Year Awards and the Minister Responsible for Volunteering in NSW.



Dr Stella Cornelius OBE, AO and Max Cornelius. The Cornelius family were instrumental in the establishment of the Volunteer Bureau of NSW, donating rent-free premises at 147A King Street from 1976 until the Bureau relocated in 1986. Stella Cornelius was an original, long-serving member of the Governing Committee that oversaw the Bureau, serving from 1976 to 1987, and becoming a Life Member in 1992.

Lady Nancy Fairfax OBE and Sir Vincent Fairfax CMG.

Lady Nancy and Sir Vincent generously supported The Centre, from serving on numerous advisory councils and committees to providing patronage, advertising, and financial support through the Vincent Fairfax Family Foundation. They became Patrons in 1978, with Sir Vincent Fairfax serving until 1989 and Lady Fairfax serving until 1997. Their legacy endures through The Centre's ongoing ability to promote skilled volunteer roles in the Sydney Morning Herald's Help Desk.



Paula Duncan, AM

Paula Duncan became an Ambassador for the NSW Volunteer of the Year Awards in 2012, to attract sponsors and promote volunteering across NSW. As a household name in Australian film, stage, and television, Paula has been a dedicated supporter of volunteering for decades and continues to support The Centre and the NSW Volunteer of the Year Awards.

A Message from the CEO

Celebrating The Centre for Volunteering's 50-year milestone serves as an important reminder of the need for infrastructure to support volunteering and volunteers.

Volunteering is the cornerstone of communities across the state, delivering significant social and economic benefits. Around 4.3 million people volunteer in NSW, giving over 893 million hours to their communities throughout the year, with an estimated economic benefit of \$178 billion to the state's economy.

Volunteering is invaluable, and to truly thrive, it requires robust support from government, business, and the broader community. We're grateful to all the individuals and organisations who have helped bring The Centre's vision to life and who have contributed to its success over the years—from the founding visionaries, to the dedicated staff and volunteers of The Centre, the Board, our members, committee members, researchers, advisors and other contributors who have seen The Centre evolve into the organisation it is today.

Gemma Rygate



A Message from the Chair of the Board

On behalf of the Board, I extend our heartfelt congratulations to everyone who has been part of the journey of The Centre for Volunteering over the past 50 years. This milestone is a testament to the enduring impact of community generosity, and the efforts of thousands of volunteers and volunteer leaders who have given their time and talents in service of others. We are incredibly proud of the legacy we've built together and excited for the future as we continue to grow, advocate for, and support volunteering across NSW.

Ian Bulluss



Lady Nancy Fairfax OBE and Sir Vincent Fairfax CMG, supporters and patrons of The Centre for Volunteering. Photo courtesy of Vincent Fairfax Family Foundation.



Initial Support for Volunteering

"In Sydney 1970, many organisations were having difficulty obtaining volunteers. To establish a new organisation without any particular following in the community — one relied mainly on who you knew."

— Rose Miller, 1986

Fifty years ago, Rose Miller's determination and vision transformed volunteering in Australia. While working with the Australian Red Cross and the Council on the Ageing NSW, Miller recognised a growing challenge: organisations were struggling to attract volunteers.

In 1971, driven to address this issue, she travelled to the United States where she encountered "volunteer clearing houses" in San Francisco and Washington DC—a concept not yet seen in Australia. Inspired by what she saw, Miller launched a trial volunteer referral service during "Old People's Week" in 1972. In just three days, 63 volunteers were connected with 25 organisations.

Encouraged by this success, Miller established Sydney's first Volunteer Bureau in 1974, operating from a modest office under the Council on the Ageing, with little more than a phone and petty cash.

By the end of its first year, the Bureau had placed over 170 volunteers, earned the Jaycee "Better Community Award," and received financial support from the Catholic Archbishop of Sydney.

A \$4,000 Commonwealth Government grant soon followed, funding a pilot study that enabled the Bureau to become an independent entity—now known as The Centre for Volunteering.

"Already the Bureau is fulfilling one of its major functions – to help people." - Women's Weekly, 1975



People who help people

A CHILDREN'S home needs someone to mend little boys' pants . . . a handicapped person needs to be driven to the doctor . . . a wildlife sanctuary needs a temporary ranger . . .

In a big city there are always willing voluntary workers, but seldom do they know where to offer their skills.

"Every person has a special talent but often it's not easily recognisable," says Heather Buck, of Sydney, who describes herself as a "matcher and mixer — of people."

"My role, as executive officer of Sydney's Volunteer Bureau, is to find that particular talent and then send it to the organisation where it will be best used

HEATHER BUCK

NSW, headquarters for Sydney Meals on Wheels.

The council decided to set up a pilot scheme based on the San Francisco Volunteer Bureau.

In Sydney, between February and September, 1974, more than 170 people

Laying the Foundations

As financial support increased, the Volunteer Bureau of Sydney needed to expand. In 1976, it became an independent organisation, The Volunteer Bureau of NSW – Actions Centre, led by Executive Director Heather Buck and governed by its own Board of Directors. With new premises donated by Max and Stella Cornelius and the patronage of Sir Vincent and Lady Nancy Fairfax, the Bureau prepared to scale-up its work.

The first major initiative came with a \$20,000 grant to pilot a youth volunteer program for six months, supported by three staff members. This pilot grew into one of The Centre's longest-running programs, the Student Community Involvement Program (SCIP) and Youth Volunteering Program (YVP), which continued supporting youth volunteering in NSW into the new century.

In 1981, the organisation rebranded as the Volunteer Centre of NSW, with expanded goals to develop resources for volunteers and operate a referral service to match volunteers with organisations based on skills, personalities, and aspirations. During this time, The Centre was officially registered as a Charitable Organisation, allowing it to receive public and government funding.

The Centre continued to grow across Sydney, opening branches in St Ives and Waverley in 1981, followed by Parramatta in 1982. While the Waverley branch was short-lived, the expansion reflected increasing demand for volunteer support and referrals. After overseeing The Centre's growth and the development of its early programs, Heather Buck retired as Executive Director in June 1983 to make way for the next chapter of volunteering in NSW.

Lifestyle Heather goes out in style

Gifts and party say farewell

TYPICALLY, Heather Buck, founder of the Volunteer Centre of NSW, took the modern, bang-up-to-date-way to handle her retirement.

She called in a team of management consultants to see how to absorb her work load with the least pain to the centre.

"I'm going because I move with the times," says Miss Buck. The centre is here to stay and someone younger should build the next storey. I want to go while I'm still dancing."

Ten years ago Miss Buck realised people of goodwill were out there wondering where they could be most useful while, at the same time, charitable organisations were desperate for help.

Heather and a small staff popped round pegs into round holes so successfully that today at centre headquarters there are eight part-time staff and 40 volunteers servicing 500 organisations, with a 300 per cent growth in three years.

Staff visit schools to encourage a spirit of volunteering, they initiate programs whenever a need arises and conduct successful training

By BUNTY TURNER

seminars so that the volunteer is of maximum value from day one.

Although 52 per cent of funding is still raised by themselves through support groups and submissions to business houses, they are recognised and given grants by government departments.

Heather's directors have voted her the first Life Member of the cen-

tre. At a party her staff presented her with a gold and pearl antique brooch, a Gucci scarf, chocolates and champagne.

As a board member of the Association for International Voluntary Effort (AIVE) she attended conferences in England last year, and this year will attend in the South Pacific and in Washington and next year in Bogota, Colombia.



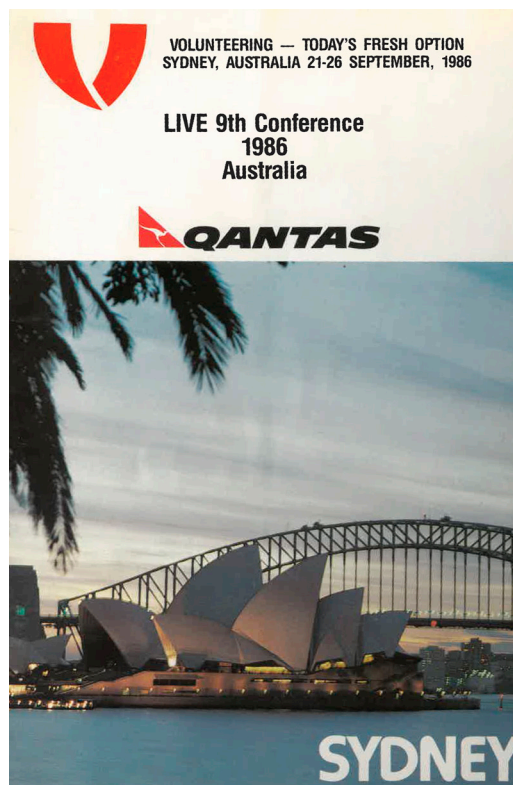
□ Heather Buck... life member

Building the Second Storey

In September 1984, Margaret Bell was appointed Executive Director of The Volunteer Centre of NSW, to “build the second storey” of Australian volunteering. This decision proved transformative for volunteering in Australia and internationally.

Bell wasted no time making an impact. Within two weeks of starting, she attended the International Association for Volunteer Effort (IAVE) conference in Columbia, where she secured the bid for The Centre to host the 1986 IAVE conference in Sydney.

The 1986 conference, under Bell’s leadership, was a landmark event, attracting 250 delegates from 35 countries. With the theme “Volunteering – Today’s Fresh Option,” the conference featured keynote addresses from international leaders and was supported by major sponsors like Qantas, Toyota, and IBM. Hazel Hawke, wife of Prime Minister Bob Hawke, as well as the Governor-General, contributed. Bell’s goal of “putting volunteering indelibly on the map in Australia” was clearly achieved.



Bell’s vision didn’t stop there. She continued to strive for the professionalisation of volunteering, and formal government recognition of the role Volunteer Centres played in supporting communities.

In 1991, The Centre was recognised and funded as the peak body for volunteering in NSW.



In 1998, Bell founded the School of Volunteer Management, now part of The Centre’s ongoing operations as the National School of Volunteer Management (NSVM) [RTO code 90031].

Further solidifying her legacy, Bell founded the Australian Council of Volunteering in 1993 and became the first president of Volunteering Australia in 1997. She continued to lead The Centre until 1998 while serving as IAVE’s President from 1986 to 2001.

Margaret Bell, appointed as Executive Director in 1984.

New Heights

The turn of the century marked a renewed spotlight on the importance of volunteering, both locally and internationally. In 2000, around 60,000 volunteers played a vital role in the success of the Sydney Olympic and Paralympic Games. The Centre proudly supported this extraordinary effort and still displays the Key to the City of Sydney—gifted by the mayor—in our Board Room.

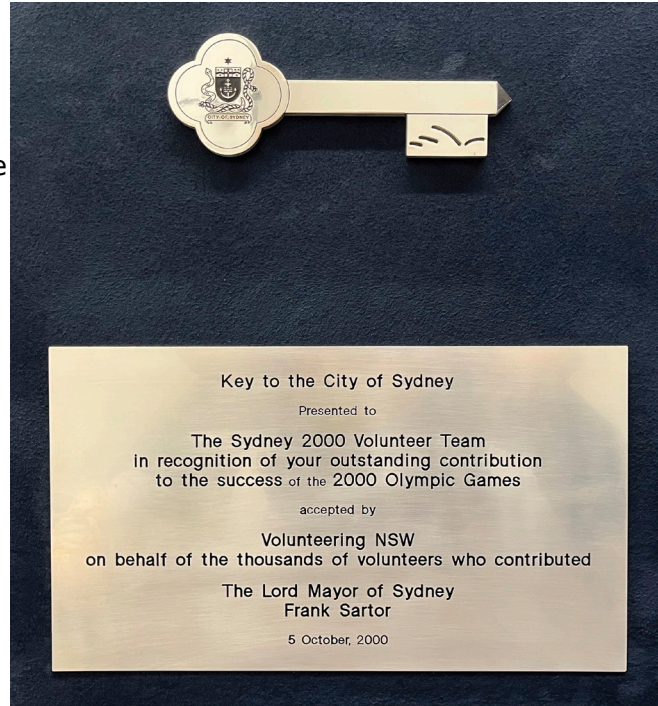
Though no longer Executive Director of The Centre, Margaret Bell's influence continued. She was instrumental in having the United Nations declare 2001 as the *International Year of Volunteers*, a milestone that elevated the profile of volunteering worldwide and inspired recognition initiatives across NSW and beyond.

In line with this growing recognition, The Centre launched the NSW Volunteer of the Year Awards in 2007, in partnership with the NSW Government.

At the time, no state-wide awards existed to honour volunteer contributions. The inaugural event received 170 nominations across four categories: Senior Volunteer, Youth Volunteer, Corporate Volunteer, and the Volunteer of the Year.

Since then, the Awards have flourished, expanding to eight categories, 25 regional ceremonies, and more than 139,000 nominations in 2024 from over 500 organisations.

Today, the Awards are one of The Centre's proudest achievements—and we look forward to seeing the continued growth in nominations into the future.



Sydney Volunteers

The Centre for Volunteering played a supporting role in the success of the Sydney 2000 Olympic and Paralympic Games. In partnership with the Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympic Games (SOCOG), and other stakeholders, The Centre helped to create the volunteer program that became one of the defining features of the Games.

One of The Centre's main contributions was supporting the "Pioneer Volunteer" initiative, which was designed to prepare and engage volunteers early in the process. From an initial group of just 42, the number of dedicated volunteers grew to around 500. The program was coordinated by SOCOG's Volunteer Services Department, in consultation with peak bodies like The Centre for Volunteering and TAFE. Through this program, the Olympic volunteers were ultimately well-prepared, motivated, and able to deliver high-quality support across all aspects of the Games.

The result was the largest peacetime mobilisation of volunteers in Australia's history, with over 62,000 people offering their time and energy. The success of this program not only contributed to the smooth running and positive atmosphere of the Sydney 2000 Games, but also helped to inspire a nationwide culture of volunteering. Many participants continued to volunteer in their communities long after the Olympic Games ended, marking a lasting legacy that is still felt today.



The thank you parade for Volunteers of the Sydney Olympic Games. Photo courtesy of the City of Sydney archives. Photograph by Tanya Koorey.

Future Developments

Over the last 20 years, The Centre for Volunteering has continued to grow and adapt to meet the evolving needs of the volunteering sector in NSW and across Australia.

In response to the surge in volunteering interest in the early 2000s, The Centre focused on capacity building and supporting Volunteer Involving Organisations (VIOs). By 2014, the Volunteer Referral Service was helping connect approximately 400 individuals each month with meaningful volunteering opportunities.

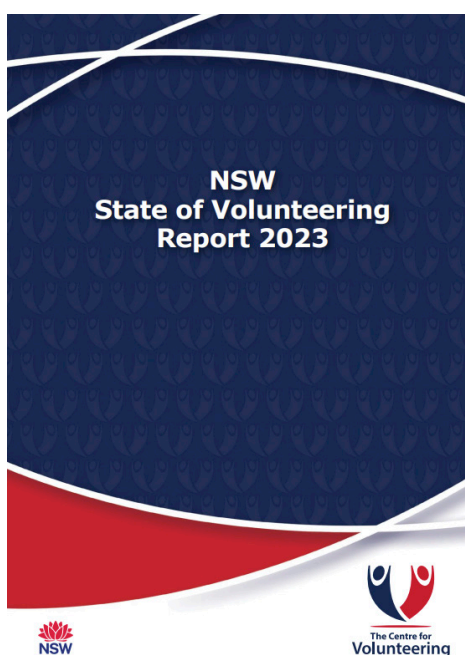
Conferences also expanded—what began as the Ignite Volunteering conferences in the early 2010s, became the annual Volunteering NSW State Conference, which attracts in excess of 300 delegates.

Not without its challenges, the sector saw programs like the Student Community Involvement Program lose funding in 2012, prompting shifts in approach. Young volunteers continued to reach out daily, with The Centre working closely with VIOs to support them. The COVID-19 pandemic further reshaped The Centre's strategy, driving innovation in how support was delivered.

To meet growing demand and accessibility needs, The Centre launched digital resources including the National Knowledge Base, the Volunteer Manager Handbook, and online training and webinars.

The National School of Volunteer Management [RTO code 90031] continues to offer professional development opportunities to volunteer coordinators and leaders through nationally recognised training: the Certificate I, II, III and IV programs.

Informed by ongoing State of Volunteering research in 2021, 2023, and with another report to be completed in 2025, The Centre remains firmly committed to strengthening volunteering.



As we celebrate 50 years, The Centre for Volunteering proudly reflects on its legacy as a champion for volunteers and a leading advocate for volunteering in NSW—and looks forward to the next 50 years of service.

The Red V

Now a global symbol of volunteering, the Red V was originally a personal gift to Margaret Bell in 1985 from Tony Lunn of Lunn Dyer and Associates, the designers behind iconic logos like Qantas and Westpac. Bell later gifted it to the Volunteering Centre of NSW, which made it available to the International Association for Volunteer Effort (IAVE) for use by volunteering organisations worldwide.

In 1997, Australia's state and territory peak bodies and what was then the Australian Council for Volunteering, adopted the "Volunteering [State/Territory]" naming formula—each incorporating the Red V into their branding.

The rebrand was officially launched at the 1997 National Conference on Volunteering in Sydney, marked by fireworks and the Red V floating down Sydney Harbour on a barge!

Though not always featured in local volunteer group logos, the Red V's influence endures. IAVE has used it since 1986.

While The Centre for Volunteering's current logo no longer uses the full red V, the V-shaped iconography and red colouring remain central to our brand identity and serve as a further example of the impact that Margaret Bell had on volunteering locally and around the world.

Brand Evolution

Volunteer Bureau of Sydney
1974-76

Volunteer Bureau of NSW
Actions Centre
1976-1981

Volunteer Centre of NSW
1981-1985



Volunteer Centre of NSW
1985-1997



Volunteering NSW

The Centre for Volunteering
2005-2015



The Centre for Volunteering
2015-present



The Centre Today

The Centre for Volunteering (The Centre) is a registered charity and is the peak body in NSW, promoting and supporting volunteering and community participation through leadership and the delivery of services in NSW and throughout Australia, thus connecting people and organisations to enrich the community.

The Centre for Volunteering includes Volunteering NSW, a state-wide volunteer referral service, and the National School of Volunteer Management (NSVM), our registered training organisation, providing professional development and nationally accredited volunteering qualifications. We have a lead role in advocacy, volunteering support services and sector development.

The Centre works for volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations, to enhance volunteering, to benefit individual volunteers, and to build strong resilient connected communities through volunteering.

The Centre advocates for volunteering organisations and the more than 4.3 million volunteers in NSW and provides services for its members, Volunteer Managers and Volunteer Involving Organisations across the state.

The Centre reaches thousands of individuals and organisations involved in volunteering through our events, our recognition program and our outreach.

Our Charitable Purpose is:

- to operate as a not-for-profit corporation for the development of public interest in the volunteering sector, including raising awareness of issues directly impacting the sector;
- to sustain and grow a strong volunteer base and community service for the relief of distress, illness, poverty, delinquency and helplessness by providing volunteers and advice;
- to assist:
 - ◊ youth;
 - ◊ disadvantaged persons;
 - ◊ health and welfare agencies;
 - ◊ hospitals and public institutions;
 - ◊ educational and recreational agencies;
 - ◊ justice and rehabilitation; and
 - ◊ other areas of volunteer service;

- to encourage voluntary citizen participation in health, welfare, recreation, educational, cultural and civic programs by promoting volunteering opportunities and making volunteers aware of their rights and responsibilities;
- to provide a central resource centre and units for recruitment, registration, training and management, networking, referral and placement of volunteers in such programs;
- to encourage community services to use volunteers; and
- to encourage community services to maintain high standards in the use of volunteers solely for the purpose of carrying out the aforesaid purposes.

Our values

Excellence: We provide thought leadership and model best practice in volunteer management for volunteer-involving organisations in the sector and the wider community.

Collaboration: We value teamwork and seek opportunities to partner with stakeholders and external organisations to achieve positive outcomes in volunteering, which benefits the sector and wider community.

Integrity: We act in the best interest of our valuable stakeholders and honour our commitments. We are accountable for our actions in order to maintain our reputation as a trustworthy and sustainable organisation.

Respect: We acknowledge different ideas and perspectives, and embrace diversity. We recognise and value the contribution of others and treat everybody with dignity.

Inclusivity: We value diversity, equality, equity, cooperativeness, community participation, and sustainability as fundamental for successful and inclusive communities.

Our vision

Building strong, diverse and inclusive communities through volunteering.

Our mission

To promote and support volunteering in the NSW Community. We do this through advocacy, policy development, leadership, engagement, sector training and development, recognition, and promotion.



**The staff of The Centre for Volunteering want
to thank you for all you have contributed to
The Centre over the years.**

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The Centre for Volunteering acknowledges the Gadigal People of the Eora Nation as the traditional owners of the land on which our office stands. We recognise the importance of their connection to place and community on these lands and pay our respects to Elders, past and present.