

Volunteer Strategy 2021–2025



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Acknowledgement of Country

The Mayor, Councillors and staff of the City of Cockburn acknowledge the Whadjuk Nyungar people of Beeliar boodja as the traditional custodians of this land. We pay our respect to the Elders, past, present and emerging.

Executive Summary

The Volunteer Strategy 2021 – 2025 sets out the strategic direction for volunteering for the City of Cockburn for the next four years. Volunteering was incorporated in the Community Development Strategy 2016 – 2020, which served the City and the community well, with some remarkable achievements reached over this period.

Following a Council decision in 2019, this new strategy will provide a 'stand-alone' framework for volunteering across the City.

The City's Volunteer Resource Centre (VRC) will continue to play a key coordination role by optimising the work of Volunteer involving departments of the City, as well as external "Volunteer Involving Organisations" (VIOs) and volunteers.

The Volunteer Resource Centre staff educates people in key aspects of volunteering and volunteer engagement. Potential volunteers are connected with VIOs to assist with filling volunteer roles. Support is offered to VIO's to enable capacity building and best practice volunteer management. Along with this, staff oversee the coordination and management of volunteers within City departments and screen all volunteers involved in City programs. The VRC hub offers a space for administration related tasks, printing and one-on-one consultations. Volunteer events and appreciation programs are run by staff to promote volunteerism and show appreciation for the dedication and effort volunteers contribute to the City.

Community consultation (both face-to-face workshops and online survey), as well as staff and Elected Member consultations took place to ascertain the goals and aspirations of the community, and to explore how the City might support and contribute to achieving these. Observations, research and analysis of City operations, emerging issues and best practice have also contributed to developing this strategy.

This strategy is guided by a clear vision and purpose, created in consultation with the community and staff.

Vision

Cockburn's communities are enriched by a thriving network of diverse and active volunteers and volunteer organisations

Purpose

We strengthen volunteering in Cockburn by connecting, educating, supporting and valuing volunteers and Volunteer organisations

Focus areas

This strategy identifies three areas of focus, each with their own outcomes and strategies, which will contribute to this vision and enable us to enact our purpose:

Focus Area 1

Striving to ensure that volunteers are connected, actively engaged and valued.

Focus Area 2

Fostering a strong network of Volunteer Involving Organisations creating excellent opportunities for volunteers.

Focus Area 3

Ensuring that the City has a consistent, effective approach in its support for volunteers involved in City programs and services.

Introduction

Since 2011 the City of Cockburn's support for Volunteering has been undertaken as part of its Community Development Strategy. In 2019, Council decided to create a separate Volunteer Strategy, to ensure that Volunteering across the City is given appropriate attention and resources.

Volunteering in WA has been valued at \$39 billion¹. Our communities and societies thrive with the volunteering commitment and would be significantly impacted without volunteers.

WA Volunteering Strategy; 2018 states: "Research shows that Volunteering delivers important intrinsic and measurable benefits to society and the community, individuals and organisations.

Volunteering:

- grows community strength, resilience and inclusiveness through active social and civic participation
- generates innovative responses to community issues and challenges
- harnesses the collective strengths and assets of the community and its members
- enhances and extends organisational capacity through the acquisition of new skills, experiences and perspectives

¹ *The Economic, Social, and Cultural Value of Volunteering to Western Australia* (Volunteering WA and Institute of Project Management)

- provides pathways to participation, inclusion, skills development and employment
- enables and drives economic growth
- can generate a personal sense of purpose, meaning, achievement and wellbeing".

The City is committed to recognising the significant value of Volunteering and to maximising the benefits of Volunteering. This strategic framework summarises how that will be done.

Terminology

The City of Cockburn has accepted and adopted Volunteering Australia's simple definition: "Volunteering is time willingly given for the common good and without financial gain".

This document contains a number of important terms. 'Informal' Volunteering means helping without any organisational brokerage. 'Micro'_Volunteering means ad hoc volunteering for a short period of time (eg, in activities such as one-off tree-planting, clean up days, etc). 'Formal' Volunteering means helping that is coordinated through an organisation.

Much of the City's support of volunteers will be indirect, via 'Volunteer Involving Organisations' (VIOs); any organisations, including un-funded organisations that engage volunteers. The City of Cockburn is, itself, a significant VIO, directly engaging about 260 volunteers and hundreds of one-off micro volunteers. The term used to describe the City's staff that directly support volunteers is Volunteer Involving Staff (VI staff)

Background

The City of Cockburn has shown long term commitment to the importance of Community Development, and the related work of Volunteer support and activation, with strategies dating back to 2003.

The Community Development Strategy 2003-2008 produced 15 suburb-based Actions Plans, including optimising the work of local volunteers.

Since then, the City's Volunteer-related strategies have been incorporated into its Community Development Strategies. The Strategy of 2010-2014 worked towards the development and promotion of community and business partnerships and broader Community Engagement, which strengthened ties with VIOs.

More recently, the Community Development Strategy 2016-2020 set a continuation of the 'communities of place' approach for the Community Development team with an additional focus on building the capacity of community groups and not-for-profit organisations (including VIOs) which has led to an increased focus on empowerment and leadership of volunteers and others.

The Volunteer Resource Centre sits within the Community Development Team and until now, the City's support for Volunteering has been incorporated as part of its commitment to Community Development, and therefore included into the Community Development strategies shown above. At the request of Council volunteering will for the first time have a stand-alone Strategy. However, it's essential to maintain the current close partnership with Community Development which will continue through an aligned approach and a commitment to Asset Based Community Development (ABCD).

The City proactively supports volunteering through the following departments:

- Volunteer Resource Centre - The VRC is a Hub co-located at the City's Administration Building that strengthens volunteering in Cockburn by connecting, educating, supporting and valuing volunteers and volunteer organisations.
- Community Development - Community Development aims to build capacity by working closely with its residents, volunteers and community groups, through provision of training, small grants, information and other support.
- Recreation Services - The City's Recreation Services team supports, guides and assists over 120 sporting clubs enabling thousands of volunteers to be involved in sports and recreation activities.
- Grants and Research - The City's Community Grants Program financially supports local not-for-profit, incorporated community groups and organisations to provide projects, programs or activities that benefit residents of Cockburn.
- Sustainability and Environment – Help support 'Friends of' groups and volunteer opportunities in natural environment.
- Fire and Emergency Management – City of Cockburn partners with the Department of Fire and Emergency to coordinate and manage local emergency service volunteers and services. The City assists with supporting South Coogee Volunteer Bushfire Brigade, Jandakot Volunteer Bush Fire Brigade, Cockburn State Emergency Service or Cockburn Sea Search & Rescue. The City's involvement in emergency service volunteering to date spans 54 years, first establishing the Jandakot Volunteer Bush Fire Brigade in 1967.

The City of Cockburn is a significant VIO and involves volunteers in many of their programs. Volunteers are involved with Youth Services, Seniors Centre, Cockburn Libraries, Cockburn Care, Environmental Services and the Events & Cultural Services. Additionally volunteers are participating in City reference groups including Fire and Emergency management.

Volunteering Approach

In keeping with the City's Community Development Strategy, the Volunteering Strategy pursues an Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) approach. It focuses on key community 'assets', and strives to optimise their connection, benefit and support for others in their community. Although the Volunteer Strategy has been separated from the Community Development Strategy, the two will continue to work closely with each other.

The City's Volunteer Strategy provides a framework by which the City will connect, engage and value Volunteers (Focus Area 1), foster a strong network of VIOs (Focus Area 2) and City of Cockburn staff that involve and support volunteers and VIOs in their programs, (Focus Area 3).

The entire strategy is predicated on the National Standards for Volunteer Involvement.

In keeping with those standards the City asserts that Volunteering should:

- benefit the community and the Volunteer
- always be a matter of choice, and not seen as a substitute for paid work
- be valued as a legitimate way in which citizens can participate in the activities of their community
- be a vehicle for individuals or groups to address human, environmental and social needs
- never replace, or threaten the job security of, paid workers
- respect the rights, dignity and culture of all people
- promote human rights and equality.²

Review of Achievements

The Volunteer Resource Centre has been a key part of the City's Community Development Strategies since 2011. Throughout the 2016 – 2020 Community Development Strategy the achievements of the Volunteer Resource Centre have been impressive. Key volunteering achievements from across the City are summarised below.

Key Achievements

- For 2020 the VRC has had increased participation from VIOs, with 38 new registrations. A total of 233 organisations are currently supported by the VRC.

² Modified from 'Definitions and Principles of Volunteering' – Volunteering Australia.

- Referrals connecting community members to vol seeking support to find volunteer opportunities has increased from 1646 in 2018/19 to 1796 in 2019/20
- VRC staff have developed and implemented a communications plan, utilising a variety of platforms to promote volunteering and volunteer appreciation throughout the City
- Six Volunteer Appreciation Events are held by the City including: Inspirational Volunteer Awards, Clubs and Volunteer Sundowner, Volunteer Thank You Breakfast, Emergency Service Volunteer Gala Dinner and Senior Centre Volunteer Lunch
- VRC Staff supported and assisted VIOs with volunteer recruitment and management strategies during the COVID-19 pandemic. Potential volunteers were guided to organisations who continued to operate during lockdown periods
- City of Cockburn are leaders in best practice volunteer management with a current workforce of 260 regular volunteers and hundreds of one-off micro volunteers contributing to City of Cockburn run programs.

Vision and Purpose

This strategy is guided by a clear vision and purpose, created in consultation with community and staff.

Vision

Cockburn's communities are enriched by a thriving network of diverse, active, volunteers and Volunteer organisations

Purpose

We strengthen volunteering in Cockburn by connecting, educating, supporting and valuing volunteers and Volunteer organisations

Links to the Strategic Community Plan 2020 – 2030

The Strategic Community Plan 2020 – 2030 is the overarching strategic document that guides the City in achieving community outcomes. This Volunteering Strategy supports these outcomes specifically through the elements of Key Objectives:

Community, Lifestyle and Security

Objective 3.1 Accessible and inclusive community, recreation and cultural services and facilities that enrich our community

Objective 3.2 A safe and healthy community that is socially connected

Listening and Leading

Objective 5.2 High quality and effective community engagement and customer service experiences

Other Informing Strategies

The City of Cockburn has a range of other Strategies that have informed this plan including:

- Age Friendly Strategy 2016 – 2021
- Children and Families Strategy 2016 – 2021
- Community Engagement Framework 2014
- Cultural Diversity Strategy 2018 – 2021
- Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2017- 2022
- Reconciliation Action Plan 2018 – 2021
- Community, Sport and Recreation Facilities Plan 2018 - 2033
- Long Term Financial Plan 2020/21 – 2029/30
- Workforce Plan 2016/17 – 2021/22
- Community Development Strategy 2016 – 2020

Focus Areas and Outcomes

Focus Area 1

Striving to ensure that volunteers are connected, actively engaged and valued.

Outcome 1: Volunteers will be informed and connected to *appropriate* volunteering role(s).

Outcome 2: Volunteers in the City of Cockburn will know that their work is genuinely valued by their community and the City.

Focus Area 2

Fostering a strong network of Volunteer Involving Organisations creating excellent opportunities for volunteers.

Outcome 3: Volunteer Involving Organisations will be supported in recruiting, managing and retaining volunteers.

Focus Area 3

Ensuring that the City has a consistent, effective approach in its support for volunteers involved in City programs and services.

Outcome 4: All City of Cockburn staff engaging volunteers will have a consistent and 'best practice' approach that optimises the benefits of Volunteering

Outcome 5: The Volunteer Resource Centre hub will be a thriving, well-used resource for volunteers and Volunteer Involving Organisations

Outcome 6: The City will have effective relationships with key stakeholders

Summary of Community Consultation

Summary of Methodology

Community consultation was held between 13 November 2020 and 4 January 2021. The community could participate via:

- A survey on Comment on Cockburn
- Hardcopy surveys available at Cockburn libraries, City of Cockburn Administration and Seniors and Volunteer Resource Centre
- Phone and email correspondence with interested volunteers and community members
- A workshop with representatives from resident groups, held on 30 November
- Two community workshops held on 24 November and 2 December 2020
- A community Sundowner on 15 December 2020.

Promotion of the consultation included:

- Emails to a random sample of 3,000 ratepayers
- E-newsletter to 6,781 Comment on Cockburn subscribers
- Various City e-newsletters
- On the homepage of the Comment on Cockburn website

- On the homepage of the City of Cockburn website
- Social media posts
- Emails and phone calls to local resident's groups, community groups, volunteering databases, and not-for-profit organisations
- Posters at Cockburn libraries, Seniors Centre, and Volunteer Resource Centre.

Summary of Results

A total of 238 survey responses were received and over 150 people attended the four community workshops. Members of the Disability Access and Inclusion Reference group were directly consulted and approximately 25 staff and 4 Elected Members participated in additional workshops and telephone consultations.

The detailed summary of the online consultation is attached as Appendix 3.

This community input has influenced all elements of this strategy as well as the Implementation Plan.

Key Consultation Themes and Analysis

Community Priorities

Input from all consultations showed that community members place high value on:

- VRC staff being accessible and actively participating in the community
- Personalised service
- Quick responses to requests and inquiries
- A creative, supportive and approachable manner
- The array of good quality workshops, training and knowledge-sharing
- A single point of contact for volunteer-related information at the City, via the VRC enabling easy access to advice on a wide range of issues, including recruitment and grants
- Maximum ease of access (including opening hours and 'drop-in' capacity at the VRC).

This strategy will aim to maximise these priorities.

In addition, the consultation revealed some more specific findings:

Recognition: a range of preferences

People expressed a range of preferences for how volunteers should be recognised. There is not a 'standout' means. While 'Volunteer Awards' was the most popular – less than 1 in 5 respondents (19%) included that in their top 3.

In other words, different approaches are preferred by different people.

In the community workshops respondents suggested that recognition and visibility could be enhanced by acknowledgement at events, signage, stories in local media, notification included with rates or rubbish information and items such as t-shirts, badges/ pins and stickers.

Reasons for Volunteering

When asked about their primary reasons for volunteering 80% gave altruistic reasons (e.g., 'to give back', 'to improve my community', 'to help others', 'the cause is important to me') with only around 20% nominating other reasons (e.g., to meet people and make friends, or to improve skills). Promotion of Volunteering will be most successful if it opens doors for people to offer their generosity.

Public recognition of the generosity and contribution of existing volunteers not only energises the volunteers themselves, but also helps in recruiting new volunteers.

VRC visibility and access

Only 45% of the online survey respondents had heard of the City's Volunteer Resource Centre, and only 13% of respondents had (knowingly) used it (noting that 57% of respondents were volunteers, or connected with VIOs).

The VRC is actively promoting volunteering services on a variety of platforms, however with only one FTE, staff are currently working at capacity and wouldn't be able to manage an increase in demand.

At the workshops, respondents emphasised a preference for being able to 'drop in' to the VRC, rather than only being able to visit by appointment. With current staffing this service cannot be offered due to other VRC commitments. This is something that could be considered with additional staff.

Preferred information sources

In terms of reward for effort, online (including social media) appears to be the most effective way of providing broad, generic information about Volunteering. However, face to face is still vital to support those with barriers and people who need more support. Those who seek face to face support are often more successful in connect with a VIO and continuing their volunteer journey.

Enriching the Volunteering Experience

Respondents value the services and recognition currently provided, but would appreciate

more of what is already being done. VRC staff are highly effective, and much appreciated. If the VRC services were to be increased additional resources would need to be required.

Community workshops also revealed that training, mentorships (high performing groups assisting lower performing groups), provision of equipment, reaching out to diverse groups and offering alternative volunteering experiences (such as 'micro-volunteering') would further enhance the volunteering experience. Piloting and possibly implementing these ideas would require additional staff resources.

Diversity

It was apparent, from the workshops, that a number minority groups (e.g. youth) were under-represented in the consultations, and those who attended expressed this as an area that should be addressed. The VRC will explore opportunities to engage with young people as outlined in the Implementation Plan.

A small number of people also highlighted the possibility of engaging more actively with the corporate sector, encouraging them as active promoters in Volunteering. Schools were another area where Volunteering could be promoted, to encourage younger people and develop inter-generational learning and sharing.

The detailed summary of the consultation demographics is attached as Appendix 3.

Resourcing the Plan

The Volunteer Resource Centre

The VRC plays a key role in coordinating this strategy. Its task is significant. The City of Cockburn engages about 260 volunteers directly, and the Volunteer Resource Centre supports their work and strives to coordinate consistent approaches across the City. In addition, many community members engage in micro volunteering programs and there are many hundreds of volunteers working in the Cockburn area who registered or actively engaged with the Volunteer Resource Centre, along with thousands of potential volunteers that *could* be recruited or connected. Finally, the VRC directly supports 233 VIOs who, in turn, engage and support hundreds of volunteers. It is an essential hub.

Changes to the Work Health and Safety Act may also bring additional Staff and resource requirements in order for the organisation to comply with the model work health and safety laws that will now include Volunteers.

There will also be impacts and resourcing requirements in the implementation of the Royal Commission recommendation and the implementation of the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations across the whole organisation and will include actions and input from the Volunteer Resource Centre.

Current funding model

The Volunteer Resource Centre is currently co-funded through a partnership with the Department of Communities (DoC). The funding was due to cease in 2017, however the DoC is undergoing a review of services and funding has been extended until June 2022. In conjunction with the VRC network, City staff are actively participating in community consultation and are attending workshops offered by DoC to demonstrate the need for future funding. Additional advocacy may be required moving forward.

Without the DoC contribution, VRC services would need to be reviewed as additional funds would be required to deliver the outcomes outlined in this strategy.

Staffing requirements

Despite the extensive scope of work, the VRC has just one full-time equivalent staff member; a Coordinator (0.8) and an Officer (0.2). As outlined, their achievements have been, and continue to be, impressive. The unpaid community work that is enabled and supported by the work of the VRC makes a massive contribution to Cockburn's residents. Feedback received from community discussions demonstrates the value of this support in our communities. Discussions at the meetings also showed the high demand on the VRC's time, leading to stretched and sometimes conflicting priorities.

If this inaugural Volunteer Strategy aims to achieve more than 'business-as-usual', then additional staff resourcing will be required.

Additional staff resourcing could enable the Volunteer Resource Centre to:

- Expand its highly valued 'business-as-usual' activities, with the consequent multiplier effect of increased and enhanced local Volunteering. There is scope to increase individual consultations from 1796 to over 2500 per year. There are 233 VOI's are currently registered with the VRC with additional support, it could grow to more than 370 registrations.
- Strengthen relationships with minority community's (including Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities; Culturally and Linguistically Diverse groups, people with disabilities, students and youth, LGBNTQI+)
- Increase involvement in state and national volunteer-focused bodies
- Work with VOI's to maximise Corporate volunteering opportunities
- Open the Volunteer Resource Centre additional hours and allow the community to access face-to-face support and advice without appointments
- Implement changes to the Work Health and Safety Act to comply with the model work health and safety laws for Volunteers.

- Customised one on one support is provided to VIO's to address volunteer issues including volunteer burnout and fatigue and trends such as micro and informal Volunteering.

Measuring Achievement / Performance Measures

Current best practice for strategic planning in Volunteering recommends 'outcomes-based measurement'. This approach ensures that 'collective impact' is evaluated and reported on through both quantitative *and* qualitative data rather than a reductive focus of measuring and reporting on quantitative data alone (number of people attending events etc.) and completion of individual tasks (KPIs). Therefore, it is recommended that the team adopt this method, as it is presented in the Local Government Community Development Evaluation Framework, attached as Appendix 6.

Where the Evaluation Framework is not appropriate additional performance measures are noted in the attached Implementation Plan.

Reporting format

Reporting on the strategy will be in accordance with standard City of Cockburn practices, as well as six monthly reporting to the Department of Communities.

References

- The Economic, Social, and Cultural Value of Volunteering to Western Australia (Volunteering WA and Institute of Project Management)
- WA Volunteering Strategy Volunteering WA.
- National Standards for Volunteer Involvement; Volunteering Australia.
- City of Cockburn Guidelines for Staff Involving Volunteers
- <https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/recommendations>

Appendices

Appendix 1 – City of Cockburn Guidelines for Staff Involving Volunteers

Appendix 2 - Implementation Plan

Appendix 3 - Community Development and Volunteering Strategy Community Engagement Summary January 2021

Appendix 4 - WA Volunteering Strategy; Volunteering WA.

Appendix 5 - National Standards for Volunteer Involvement; Volunteering Australia.

Appendix 6 - Local Government Community Development Evaluation Framework

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 This information is available in alternative formats upon request.

 Paper from responsible sources.