

# Volunteering Tasmania

Submission to the Department of Communities Tasmania

Tasmania's Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy | Discussion Paper

March 2021

## Executive Summary

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Currently there is no reference to volunteering in the Tasmanian Child and Youth Wellbeing Framework or the Tasmania's Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy Discussion Paper.

Volunteering has a vital role to play in the wellbeing of Tasmania's children and young people, and it must not be taken for granted. Volunteering is important for children and young people in three fundamental ways:

1. Large numbers of young people volunteer. In Australia 42 per cent of people aged 15-17 volunteer. This is higher than any other age group.<sup>1</sup> Also, young people aged 15-24 make up 28.8 per cent of Australia's volunteers.<sup>2</sup> In Tasmania, young volunteers are major contributors to the volunteer workforce, seeing it as a path to employment, a way to learn new skills, and the desire to make a difference.
2. Volunteer workforces play key roles across the six domains in supporting children and young people throughout each stage of their life.
3. There are wellbeing benefits to those who volunteer. Research demonstrates that volunteering has significant mental and physical health benefits for those who volunteer. The OECD Better Life Index says volunteers tend to be more satisfied with their lives because they are interacting with other people, setting and achieving goals, and learning new things.

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<sup>1</sup>Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/volunteers>

<sup>2</sup>Australian Bureau of Statistics, <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/people-and-communities/general-social-survey-summary-results-australia/latest-release>

Volunteering Tasmania (VT) recommends that volunteering, its scale and diversity, and the power it has to sustain wellbeing for children and young people, is recognised, celebrated and included in future strategies. These include not just the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy but also policies and programs such as the Children's Commissioner's focus on participation and the Ambassador Program.

In our submission we highlight some of the volunteers and organisations that support children and young people. We address the benefits of volunteering for wellbeing and social capital, and we provide suggestions to benefit Tasmania's children and young people.

## Summary of Suggestions to Address Barriers

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Volunteering has a vital role to play in the wellbeing of Tasmanian children and young people. To ensure the sustainability of volunteering as a supporter and source of wellbeing it needs greater recognition and investment.

VT would welcome the opportunity to work with the Department of Communities Tasmania to address the barriers to the wellbeing of children and young people. Our suggestions include:

### **Being Loved and Safe:**

Increase resources and funding to volunteer organisations so they can implement training and procedures to ensure they comply as Child Safe Organisations.

### **Having Material Basics:**

Volunteer organisations in the community sector need support and resources to actively recruit and engage young people as volunteers, and to ensure young people are empowered in the design of services that impact them.

### **Being Healthy:**

Community sporting organisations need support and resources to implement training and practices as Child Safe Organisations.

### **Learning:**

Introduce a model similar to the New Zealand Student Volunteer Army (SVA).<sup>3</sup> The SVA is an education charity run for students, by students, focused on providing meaningful volunteering opportunities for primary, secondary and tertiary aged young people.

Introduce an accredited Certificate I, II and III in Active Volunteering, similar to the program run by Volunteering Queensland in secondary schools in Queensland.

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<sup>3</sup> New Zealand Student Volunteer Army, <https://sva.org.nz>

### **Participating:**

Support organisations like the Children’s Commissioner and the Youth Network of Tasmania to ensure that the voices of young people are elevated in decision-making, and that there are a range of opportunities for civic participation.

Adopt the measurement of the New Zealand Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy, Involvement in Community so as to determine the percentage of young people who report helping others in the neighbourhood or community.

### **Having a Positive Sense of Culture and Identity:**

The organisations that support young people to have a positive sense of culture and identity need support and resources to manage their volunteer workforce. This includes recruiting a younger generation of volunteers.

### **Knowing We Are Making a Difference:**

VT suggests models of measurement that incorporate volunteering and civic participation, such as capitals frameworks, Sustainable Development Goals and Wellbeing Budgets.

### **Putting Child and Youth Wellbeing at the Heart of Policy:**

VT suggests *Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2015* from Wales as a model of long-term structure to support a whole-of-government child and youth wellbeing strategy.

We also note that the New Zealand Child and Wellbeing Strategy includes volunteering as part of its Learning and Development domain. This could be replicated in Tasmania.

## About Volunteering Tasmania

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Volunteering Tasmania is the peak body for volunteering in Tasmania. Our vision is to ensure the contribution of volunteering is understood, respected, and valued as a powerful driver of community prosperity and inclusion in Tasmania.

We connect and build an inclusive community that makes a difference through the impact of volunteering. We aim to represent the interests of all Tasmanians involved in volunteering through research, consultation, policy development and community relationships. We represent the interests of our volunteer organisations and volunteers, and decision-makers, including government.

Volunteering is ‘time willingly given for the common good and without financial gain’.<sup>4</sup> As such, volunteering is an activity where individuals exercise agency and contribute willingly to maintaining their own health and wellbeing, as well as contribute significantly to the health and well-being of others.

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<sup>4</sup> Volunteering Australia, <https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/resources/definition-of-volunteering>

## Current Situation

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Tasmanians are generous volunteers with around 297,000 Tasmanians volunteering each year, giving on average four hours a week. They do this formally through organisations, and informally through helping their neighbours and taking action in an emergency. Volunteering contributes \$4 billion to the Tasmanian economy each year, and it gives people skills, confidence and social connections that help them into work.

## Volunteer Workforce

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The volunteer workforce plays a vital role in services that support children and young people. Volunteers support vulnerable families in our communities to get basic support like educational assistance, childcare, emotional support, and social connection, contributing to better physical health and mental health. Volunteers and volunteer organisations exist in every stage of a young person's life, supporting them, and their families from birth through to adulthood.

There are around 35,000 volunteers in the health and community services sector in Tasmania<sup>5</sup>. According to the TasCOSS State of Tasmania's Community Service Sector Report 2015, nine in ten organisations (88.9 per cent) involved volunteers<sup>6</sup>. Across the community services sector in Tasmania the ratio of volunteers to paid workers is around 3.5 to 1.

## Young Volunteers

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Young people have long been part of the volunteering community whether through school, university, religious organisations, political parties, sport, arts or environmental organisations. Young people often begin volunteering along with their family being involved in voluntary activities<sup>7</sup>.

The ABS General Social Survey<sup>8</sup> volunteering data by age, shows that across Australia:

- 42 per cent of people aged 15–17 volunteer – which is higher than any other age group.<sup>9</sup>
- 28.8 per cent of 15–24-year-olds participate in formal volunteering; and
- 36.5 per cent of 15–24-year-olds participate in informal volunteering.

In 2020 a national survey of young people aged 15-19 found that more than four in 10 (43.3 per cent) had participated in volunteer work in the past year<sup>10</sup>. In Tasmania 54.3 per cent of respondents had participated in volunteer work.

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<sup>5</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), *General Social Survey*, 2014.

<sup>6</sup> TasCOSS, *The State of Tasmania's Community Service Sector*, 2015, p3.

<sup>7</sup> Paine, Chan, Jochum, Kamerade, McGarvey, and Stuart, *Volunteering: A Family Affair? Summary Report* (2020)

<sup>8</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), *General Social Survey*, 2014.

<sup>9</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/volunteers>

<sup>10</sup> Mission Australia, (2020), *Mission Australia Youth Survey Report*

The benefits of volunteering for young people are both personal and social, and include strengthening social relationships, developing skills, enhancing career prospects, contributing to community and ‘making a difference’.<sup>11</sup>

## The Future of Volunteering

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We need to continue to engage young people in volunteering if we are to mitigate the risk that there may not be enough volunteers in future to perform valuable roles in organisations that support members of the community. Nationally, volunteering rates are declining. Our population is ageing and will be reliant on the support of fewer people in the workforce who are available for volunteering, especially in our regions.

The State of Volunteering Report 2019 (SOVR19) showed an 11 per cent drop in volunteering participation over the past five years, from 80 per cent in 2014 to 69 per cent in 2019<sup>12</sup>. The impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on volunteering and the programs that use volunteers is significant. Research conducted by the Australian National University (ANU) for Volunteering Australia found that volunteering hours between February and April 2020 reduced by the equivalent of 12.2 million hours per week nationally<sup>13</sup>. Given that Tasmania represents 2 per cent of the population this is a reduction of at least 240,000 hours every week in volunteering time in Tasmania. VT is taking action to sustain volunteering in our communities through the Safeguarding Tasmania project. We are working with three local councils to help them implement local volunteering strategies. We have also recently received funding from the Tasmanian Government to support short-term COVID19 recovery efforts in the volunteer workforce.

Engaging young people in volunteering helps to develop a lifelong interest in and willingness to volunteer. Research shows that people who volunteer when they are young are more likely to volunteer when they’re older, and that past volunteering is one of the strongest predictors of future volunteering<sup>14</sup>.

## Volunteering in the Domains

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### Being Loved and Safe

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The role volunteers play in ensuring children and young people are loved and safe is often overlooked. The recent national and state inquiries are bringing these issues sharply into focus. Volunteer organisations will be required to professionalise their supports of children and young people as a result of the Royal Commission into the Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability, the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, as well as the Tasmanian Commission of Inquiry into the responses of Tasmanian institutions in relation to the management of allegations of child sexual abuse.

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<sup>11</sup> Youth volunteering in Australia: An evidence review, Associate Professor Lucas Walsh and Dr Rosalyn Black

<sup>12</sup> Volunteering Tasmania, State of Volunteering Report, 2019, p23

<sup>13</sup> Volunteering Australia (2020)

<sup>14</sup> Getting into the ‘Giving Habit’: The Dynamics of Volunteering in the UK

## Suggestions to Address Barriers

Volunteer organisations require increased resources and funding to implement training and procedures to ensure they comply as Child Safe Organisations.

## Having Material Basics

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Volunteering plays a fundamental role in the support services that ensure children and young people have the material basics. The 35,000 volunteers in Tasmania's health and community services sector<sup>15</sup> support people experiencing homelessness and those in danger of becoming homeless. They also provide access to essential items like food, toiletries and clothing, and services to keep young people engaged with the education system. Volunteers perform a variety of tasks such as assisting with projects, administrative support, fundraising, collecting donations, and food distribution.

Across the community services sector in Tasmania the ratio of volunteers to paid workers is around 3.5 to 1, in very many organisations volunteers outweigh paid workers. For example, Colony 47 is an organisation that seeks to achieve tangible, positive change by working with young people at risk of homelessness from the early intervention stage through to crisis support, and they have 130 volunteers in Tasmania supporting their paid workforce of 120.

## Suggestions to Address Barriers

Volunteer organisations in the community sector need support and resources to actively recruit and engage young people as volunteers, and to ensure young people are empowered in the design of services that impact them.

## Being Healthy

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While volunteering provides substantial benefits to society, it also provides significant benefits to the volunteers themselves. The act of volunteering is a preventative health measure making contributions to positive mental health, as well as social and physical benefits.

International research suggests that volunteers are happier and healthier than those who do not volunteer. One study indicated that 96 per cent of volunteers say that engaging in volunteering "makes people happier", and that just a few hours of volunteer work has an impact on a person's happiness and mood<sup>16</sup>. Another study in 2007 found that people who gave their time or money were 42 per cent more likely than non-givers to say they were "very happy".<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), *General Social Survey*, 2014.

<sup>16</sup> Post, S. G. 'It's good to be good: 2011 5th annual scientific report on health, happiness and helping others', *The International Journal of Person Centred Medicine*, vol. 1, no. 4, P814, 2011

<sup>17</sup> University of Sydney (2017)

Australian National University research in 2020<sup>18</sup> showed that volunteering was an important protective factor against stress with volunteers having a smaller decline in life satisfaction during the COVID-19 outbreak than people who did not volunteer.

Volunteering in sport also provides physical health benefits. The ABS General Social Survey showed that 31 per cent of people who volunteered in Australia did so in sport/physical recreation organisations – the biggest cohort of volunteers across all sectors<sup>19</sup>. Sport helps build strong, connected and socially cohesive communities and improves physical and psychological wellbeing. It can also help steer vulnerable young people away from crime and anti-social behaviour<sup>20</sup>.

## Suggestions to Address Barriers

In community sport volunteers are predominantly supported and managed by other volunteers rather than a paid workforce. Community sporting organisations need support and resources to implement training and practices as Child Safe Organisations.

It is also important to continue to support young people to volunteer in sport and recreation organisations.

## Learning

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Volunteers are present in every stage of a child's life, from playgroups and schools, to extracurricular activities and libraries, as well as in school associations and as mentors at institutions like TasTAFE. There is also a vibrant and important culture of volunteering in our University.

Schools are a major site in which young people are exposed to opportunities to volunteer or engage in service learning. Many school initiatives rely on the parents volunteering their time to activities such as school associations, parent groups and school canteens. Libraries Tasmania which run statewide children's programs have over 800 volunteers.<sup>21</sup>

The Smith Family, an independent children's charity which helps disadvantaged Australians to get the most out of their education, acknowledges that, "Volunteers play a critical role in enabling us to deliver high quality learning and support programs at scale, and contribute to the long-term sustainability of our work with vulnerable children and families."<sup>22</sup>

Volunteering is also recognised as a way to learn new skills and a pathway to employment. In June 2020, unemployment among people aged 15 to 24 reached a 23-year high of 16.4 per cent. While it had dropped marginally by October, it remains disturbingly high at 15.6 per cent. That is 337,224 young Australians unable to find work.<sup>23</sup>

Volunteer experience is valuable in recruiting with research showing that 95 per cent of employers see volunteering as a credible way of gaining real work experience to add to candidates' resumes<sup>24</sup>. 92 per cent of employers said relevant volunteer experience gives candidates an advantage in job interviews,

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<sup>18</sup> Volunteering Australia, *Research Briefing: The experience of volunteers during COVID-19, 2020*

<sup>19</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), *General Social Survey, 2014*.

<sup>20</sup> Clearing House For Sport, <https://www.clearinghouseforsport.gov.au/kb/volunteers-in-sport/statistics>

<sup>21</sup> Libraries Tas, <https://www.libraries.tas.gov.au/how-to/Pages/volunteer.aspx>

<sup>22</sup> Lesley Mackay, General Manager, The Smith Family

<sup>23</sup> Brotherhood of St Laurence, [http://library.bsl.org.au/jspui/bitstream/1/12338/1/BSL\\_COVID\\_the\\_great\\_disruptor\\_youth\\_unemployment\\_Dec2020.pdf](http://library.bsl.org.au/jspui/bitstream/1/12338/1/BSL_COVID_the_great_disruptor_youth_unemployment_Dec2020.pdf)

<sup>24</sup> Seek, <https://www.seek.com.au/career-advice/article/3-reasons-volunteering-can-put-you-ahead-of-the-pack>



while 85 per cent believe that volunteering experience is as credible as paid work and that this is particularly valuable for first-time jobseeker.

Volunteers are essential in supporting children in their first 1000 days.

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“Playgroup Tasmania is the peak body representing playgroups in Tasmania, supporting 29 volunteer-led Community Playgroups and 22 Organisational Playgroups across Tasmania.

Over 60 volunteers currently provide their time and service to supporting children and families across Tasmania. On average, community playgroups have 2-3 volunteer leaders per session. The playgroup volunteers contribute approximately 3-5 hours each per week to collectively support over 50 playgroup sessions, providing over 500 families a year with opportunities to connect and play in their local communities.

Playgroup Tasmania, along with the families who attend and the broader community, values the dedication and commitment of all volunteer playgroup leaders and recognises the important contribution they make to the wellbeing of children and families in Tasmania”.

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Jacinda Armstrong, CEO  
Playgroup Tasmania

## **Suggestions to Address Barriers**

It is important that we continue to create opportunities for children and young people to get involved in volunteering through schools and communities. Programs that encourage voluntary service help young people discover their passions and talents, and help them become confident, engaged learners. In practice, many school volunteer programs are ‘opt-in’ and ad hoc. Programs are most effective if they are structured, integrated into the curriculum and supported within the school timetable.

One great example of children and young people learning through volunteering is the New Zealand Student Volunteer Army (SVA).<sup>25</sup> The SVA is an education charity run for students, by students, focused on providing meaningful volunteering opportunities for primary, secondary and tertiary aged young people in Aotearoa.

- The nationwide ‘SVA Kids’ program engages 32,000 students a year in classrooms to identify a local project, build a team, develop a plan, operate their project, and report on what they have achieved.
- The SVA Service Award recognises the volunteer efforts of secondary school students. Operating in most major public, private and special schools in New Zealand, a five level badge based system records and tracks student volunteering against the Sustainable Development Goals.
- The SVA organises over 50 local projects that engages 3000 students at the University of Canterbury.

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<sup>25</sup> New Zealand Student Volunteer Army, <https://sva.org.nz>



Another impactful initiative delivered to secondary schools through Volunteering Queensland is an accredited Certificate I, II and III in Active Volunteering<sup>26</sup>. There are many benefits for students who take part in Active Volunteering, including:

- 2-5 credits toward their QCE – ATAR pathway and transition to work;
- A solid foundation for any career path including community services, sport and recreation, environment and conservation, arts, emergency services, and human rights and justice; and
- Enhanced employment opportunities through real-world experience, a reference, and expanded professional networks.

## Participating

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The highest proportion of the population that volunteers in Australia is 15–17-year-olds – at 42 per cent<sup>27</sup>. We have an opportunity to celebrate the contribution of young people to volunteering across the community in areas such as music, sport and education. We can also expand the civic participation opportunities for young people through initiatives like the Children’s Commissioner’s ambassador program.

The wellbeing benefits of volunteering are well understood. Volunteering protects the mental health and wellbeing of young people by fostering participation and connection.

Analysis based on the OECD Better Life Index data shows that social connections are the single most important determinant of people’s level of life satisfaction, measured by whether people have someone to count on in a time of need<sup>28</sup>. A strong social network and community can provide access to jobs, services and other material opportunities as well as emotional support during challenging times<sup>29</sup>.

A 2017 Tasmanian study of volunteering found that the younger people are, the more they are likely to benefit from volunteering<sup>30</sup>. People who were not employed, or who were casually employed, believed that volunteering helped them gain the experience and expertise that would help them get work in the future.

Volunteers also gain valuable skills and develop personally and professionally from their involvement in volunteering activities. It is seen as a genuine pathway to employment by encouraging economic participation and building work skills. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) recognises that the intangible benefits to volunteers include, “...skills development, social connections, job contacts, social standing and a feeling of self-worth”<sup>31</sup>.

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<sup>26</sup> Volunteering Queensland, <https://volunteeringqld.org.au/training/active-volunteering>

<sup>27</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/volunteers>

<sup>28</sup> Scrivens, K, *OECD Better Life Index: Valuing Relationships*, 2013 <http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/blog/valuing-relationships.htm>

<sup>29</sup> OECD Better Life Index, <http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/topics/community/>

<sup>30</sup> Shannon, E, Pearson, S, Girkin, F, University of Tasmania 2017, *Volunteering in Tasmania: Community Volunteering - understanding motivation, sustaining participating, capturing benefits*

<sup>31</sup> International Labour Organisation (2011), *Manual on the measurement of volunteer work*

The New Zealand Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy includes volunteering as a measurement of Involvement in Community: Percentage of young people who report helping others in the neighbourhood or community (eg help on the marae or at church, or belong to a volunteer organisation).<sup>32</sup>

### **Suggestions to Address Barriers**

US research showed that one of the biggest barriers for young people to participating in volunteering is not being asked, with 40 per cent of youth volunteers stating they became involved simply because they were approached<sup>33</sup>.

It is important that organisations like the Children's Commissioner and the Youth Network of Tasmania are supported and properly resourced to ensure that the voices of young people are elevated in decision-making, and that there are a range of opportunities for civic participation.

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"We have over 800 volunteers in Tasmania alone; we operate on 1.8 FTE. We could not and would not be able to operate without volunteers. I am the Chief Commissioner of Scouts Tasmania, and even I am a volunteer, doing at least 50 hours a week, it's a seven day a week volunteer role.

All our volunteers go through a lot of training, learning the badge system, learning how to train youth in adventurous activities, learning how to do risky things safely. Most of our leaders, for example, do at least two hours a week face to face with the youth, but that takes at least four-six hours to prepare the program for the youth, and if they have a camp that is a full weekend away from their families.

We have many leaders who use their holidays from their work to help at Jamborees (a ten day camp in another state); they also pay around \$1000 to volunteer at these jamborees so that our youth can have the experience of a lifetime.

I hope that gives you some idea of what our volunteers mean to me; they are gold."

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Michael Hovington, Chief Commissioner  
Scouts Tasmania

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<sup>32</sup> New Zealand Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy 2019, P82

<sup>33</sup> Benefits of Volunteering for Teens , <https://womensconference.byu.edu/sites/womensconference.ce.byu.edu/files/6a.pdf>

## Having a Positive Sense of Culture and Identity

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Volunteering enhances the sense of belonging for young people. It forges connections and relationships, and creates opportunities for developing new skills that lead to a positive sense of self-identity and self-esteem.

Volunteers play key roles in organisations that support migrants and people who are culturally and linguistically diverse. These include working with people and families as they build a new life in Tasmania, assisting young people with their studies and building confidence in education pathways, and helping people to learn about driving in Tasmania<sup>34</sup>.

Volunteers work in the Tasmanian Aboriginal community to ensure that cultural and spiritual practices are valued and respected. Organisations like Circular Head Aboriginal Corporation are supported by a team of volunteers that run programs such as The Early Childhood Program which assists Indigenous Australian People/s that are vulnerable or disadvantaged to increase and maintain family relationships and support through transitions to childcare, pre-school and primary school. The program proactively addresses social, cultural, personal, historical, financial and health factors that can present barriers to effective parenting<sup>35</sup>.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are also an important contributor to the volunteer workforce. In a 2020 survey of 15-19-years-olds found that close to four in ten (37.3 per cent) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents reported they had participated in volunteer work in the past year, and volunteer work was rated in the top two activities they were involved with.<sup>36</sup>

### Suggestions to Address Barriers

The organisations that support young people to have a positive sense of culture and identity need support and resources to manage their volunteer workforce. This includes recruiting a younger generation of volunteers.

## Knowing We Are Making a Difference

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VT suggests the capitals framework, in particular social capital, may be a useful approach to measuring progress for the wellbeing of children and young people. In its State of Volunteering Report 2019 VT measured economic, social and cultural capital through volunteering.

Social capital refers to the networks of relationships among people, and the shared values and norms that allow them to cooperate. It is now recognised that social networks, and the trust they generate, have productive value in our society and economy.

The OECD identifies four main ways that social capital can be conceptualised and measured:<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Migrant Resource Centre, <https://mrctas.org.au/volunteer/>

<sup>35</sup> Circular Head Aboriginal Corporation, <http://www.chac.com.au/communities-for-children/>

<sup>36</sup> Mission Australia Youth Survey Report 2020

<sup>37</sup> OECD Measurement of social capital project and question databank, <https://www.oecd.org/sdd/social-capital-project-and-question-databank.htm>

- Personal relationships - the structure of people's networks and the social behaviours that contribute to establishing and maintaining those networks.
- Social network support - the resources that are available to each individual, such as emotional, material, practical, financial, intellectual or professional resources.
- Civic engagement - the activities and networks through which people contribute to civic and community life, such as volunteering, political participation, group membership and different forms of community action.
- Trust and cooperative norms - social norms and shared values that underpin societal functioning and enable mutually beneficial cooperation.

Volunteering plays a role in each of these areas. It is considered a powerful way of encouraging more people to engage in civic and development activities. It enhances people's capacity, and builds community participation, inclusion and social cohesion.

The Sustainable Development Goals also provide an effective model of measurement. Globally, volunteers are seen as key to delivering the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Volunteers facilitate all 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by raising awareness and engaging in grassroots efforts to advance the transformation that is required for the SDGs to take root in communities.<sup>38</sup>

Wellbeing budgets, such as that implemented in New Zealand, are an ideal way to provide a focus on child and youth wellbeing and progress toward goals. In this context volunteering is both an indicator and a driver of wellbeing.

## Putting Child and Youth Wellbeing at the Heart of Policy

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One suggestion for a long-term structure to support a whole-of-government child and youth wellbeing strategy is Wales' *Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2015*.<sup>39</sup> The Act requires public bodies in Wales to think about the long-term impact of their decisions, to work better with people, communities and each other, and to prevent persistent problems such as poverty, health inequalities and climate change. The Act is overseen by a Future Generations Commissioner and includes seven wellbeing goals.

Tasmania could follow the New Zealand example and include volunteering in its child and youth wellbeing strategy. The New Zealand Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy acknowledges volunteering as one of the transitions children and young people make in their lives, along with leaving home, formal education, employment and entrepreneurship. Volunteering is included in the domain of 'Learning and Development' as: (Children and young people) have the knowledge, skills and encouragement to achieve their potential and enable choices around further education, volunteering, employment, and entrepreneurship.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Volunteering Australia, Sustainable Development Goals, <https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/policy/sustainable-development-goals-sdgs/>

<sup>39</sup> <https://www.futuregenerations.wales/about-us/future-generations-act/>

<sup>40</sup> New Zealand Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy 2019, P17

## Youth Volunteers in Tasmania

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### Give Back Program – 14 & 15 years old



Three teenage refugee boys aged 14-15, started the 'Give Back Program' in 2019. The boys were 'at-risk' participants on a program with organisation 'JCP Empowering Youth'. They wanted to give back to people in need across Tasmania, so they started their own program.

They began mentoring other youth, assisting in running camps for other at-risk young people and programs for youth across the state, and taking young people to aged care homes to talk and connect with the elderly. Travelling school holidays, weekends, and after school, they volunteer and support other youth and adults across Tasmania.

### Jasmine Power – 17 years old



Jasmine is a founding member of TYLE - Tasmanian Youth Led Empowerment, a partner of Parks and Wildlife Discovery Ranger program. Since the age of 15 Jasmine has volunteered every day of her summer holidays to inspire and educate visitors to Mt Field National Park.

*"Giving up time and energy to volunteer is extremely rewarding to all who partake in it, particularly for young people. It allows people to expand their social circles and meet people who are genuinely passionate about helping others and creating positive change in the world they live in. For me, being able to volunteer to help people better engage in the natural environment through education of its importance is extremely rewarding. It also provides the opportunity to meet and learn from people who are equally as passionate as I am, and who want to make change in the world."*

*Volunteering can also help to improve mental health and overall happiness. Volunteers often find that they are making a tangible difference in the world through the work they give. Young people often reach a point where they feel like they are in a loop of going to school and doing classes and can lose motivation in the things they enjoy. Having a sense of purpose through the altruism that volunteering gives can help improve wellbeing and make people happier overall, as well as helping to break up the repetitiveness of day-to-day life. Volunteering has given me a platform to help spread awareness about issues that I care about and be able to see the way in which others learn and use their knowledge to also try and make a difference in the world."*

### Toby Thorpe – 18 years old



Toby organises statewide conferences to engage young people in climate action, equipping them with the skills and empowerment to lead on-ground solutions to address the UN Sustainable Development Goals. He has connecting skilled mentor volunteers to the conferences in Hobart, Launceston and Burnie where they can offer their support and expert advice through mentoring students during their project implementations. Toby's initiative, the Climate Leaders Program, has led to 45 school participants over three years, implementing projects such as banning plastic straws in schools, to waste audits.

## Volunteers Supporting the Domains

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### Annie Kennedy Crisis Accommodation



For over nine years Diane Reynoldson has been an active volunteer support to Catholic Cares' Annie Kennedy Crisis Accommodation service for young women aged 13 to 20 experiencing homelessness. Diane has demonstrated tireless commitment by:

- Providing weekly art classes to the women at the shelter.
- Establishing a fruit and vegetable garden to encourage the young women to actively learn about healthy eating and growing your own produce.
- Arranging welcome packs filled with toiletries, PJs, socks and underwear for young women who are new to the shelter.

### Story Island Project



Xiaoxiao Xu has been a regular volunteer tutor with the Story Island Project, which runs storytelling workshops where children and teenagers, who may experience poverty and disadvantage, are empowered to create their own stories. As a volunteer tutor, Xiaoxiao works one-on-one with young people in weekly storytelling workshop to inspire and encourage young Tasmanians to develop skills and confidence with their own creative writing, and with shaping their own unique voices.

*“As a young humanitarian, volunteering means a great opportunity to give back to the community. Particularly, as an international student in Tasmania, I benefit a lot from volunteering. It assists to me to develop networks with local people and improve my mental health as I have developed a strong sense of community and achievement from it. Last but not the least, I found happiness in volunteering and now it has become part of my life!”*

### Tasmania State Judo Team



Mike Griffiths volunteers for at least 15 hours every week, he is the Head State Coach for the Tasmania State Judo Team, the head coach at Hobart PCYC Judo Club in 2018 and technical director on the Board of Judo Tasmania. Mike trains, coaches and mentors approximately 60 Tasmanian participants from 6-60 years old who benefit from Mike's coaching, skills and time.

## Acknowledgements

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