

Volunteering in Victoria

Fact Sheet

Volunteering has a number of benefits for individuals and communities.

For individuals who volunteer, benefits can include improved health and wellbeing and better employment opportunities. For communities they include improved community wellbeing, more positive social outcomes such as less crime.

It also means people get together to do this which can lead to better solutions for local problems.

In the Government's social policy action plan, *A Fairer Victoria*, a number of strategies for supporting the state's volunteers over the next three years were outlined.

These include expansion of regionally based volunteer resource networks across the state as part of the provision of \$14.7 million from the Community Support Fund for the Volunteering and Community Enterprise Strategy.

A 2005 survey by the Department for Victorian Communities asked 800 Victorian adults about their volunteering experiences and compared these results to other major population surveys on volunteering in Victoria and Australia.

The survey found

- 41% of Victorians volunteered. In addition, Australian Bureau of Statistics figures show volunteering has increased in Victoria over the last 10 years.
- Women, older people and those living in rural or regional areas tend to volunteer more often than other groups.
- Men were more likely to be involved with emergency service, environment and sport and recreation organisations.
- Women were more likely to be involved with healthcare, community/social welfare and school/education/childcare organisations.
- Those living in rural Victoria are more likely to be involved in emergency service organisations.
- Rural Victorians were more likely to have found out about opportunities to volunteer through their local paper.
- Most of Victoria's volunteers donate their time to the community and social welfare organisations (48%), followed by school/educational/childcare organisations (22%) and sport and recreational organisations (18%).
- Most Victorian volunteers said they volunteered to 'give something back' to the community and to 'help others' (72%). Other reasons included to socialise (22%); teach skills to others (7%); and maintain and develop new skills and work habits (7%).

- Research indicates that the main benefits for individuals are improved health and wellbeing and better employment opportunities.
- Volunteers, including in Victoria, have been found to report better physical and mental health. Volunteers have been found to be more likely than non-volunteers to report their health as excellent or very good and less likely to report psychological distress.
- Research has shown that volunteering not only benefits the individuals that volunteer but has considerable benefits for communities as well. For example, they plant trees in local areas for LandCare, provide advice to improve outcomes for students on school boards, or provide emergency services in bushfires in the Country Fire Authority.
- Nearly a quarter of Victorians (22%) said they had thought about volunteering in the last twelve months but had not followed through.

For further information about the Government's support for volunteering, please contact:

Community Strengthening
and Volunteering Division

Department for Victorian Communities
1 Spring St
Melbourne, Vic 3000
Phone (03) 9208 3333
Fax: (03) 9208 3632
Website www.dvc.vic.gov.au

Funded through the Community Support Fund.

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