







2023-24 ANNUAL REPORT







ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

VolunteeringACT wishes to acknowledge and pay respect to the Ngunnawal people as the Traditional Custodians of the Canberra Region and recognises any other peoples or families with connection to this Country. VolunteeringACT is committed to reconciliation and will continue to walk alongside First Nations Peoples and embrace the traditions, stories and wisdoms of the oldest continuing cultures in the world.

This document was created on Ngunnawal Country.

VolunteeringACT acknowledges volunteers of all ages, genders and sexualities, with all abilities and from all cultures. Their skills, expertise, and time are critical to delivering services and programs, and making Canberra a better place to live. We also acknowledge the contribution of the volunteer involving organisations that contribute to the health and happiness of our community.

We extend our sincere gratitude to our Board of Directors, committee members, members, volunteers, volunteer managers, partners, advisory group members, consultants, staff and everyone who has engaged with us over the past year. Your contributions have played a pivotal role in driving our organisation's success.



CONTENT

About	
Chair & CEO message	
Board of Directors	
Strategic priorities	
Our values	
Our co-design work	
Volunteers are our backbone	9
Our members	
We are improving inclusion in	n the Canberra Region
	cts
Influence change through pol	licy and advocacy
	ACT Report 2024
_	egy
_	024-2034
Chronother the contexts and	ala a magua wasiliant Canhawa aanuunita
Strengthen the sector to enac	ple a more resilient Canberra community
Volunteer Management Activ	/ity
Education and training	
Membership	
Events	
General Updates	
Engagement: website and so	ocial media
D (
Financial review	
Contact details	

CHAIR AND CEO MESSAGE

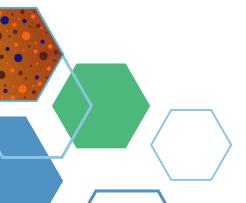
Robyn Hendry and Jean Giese





We are pleased to present the VolunteeringACT Annual Report for 2023-2024, a testament to our unwavering commitment to the Canberra community amidst a year filled with challenges and transformative growth. As we navigated the complexities of cost-of-living pressures, our organisation remained a vital resource, connecting Canberrans with essential services, volunteering opportunities, and coordinating the Food Relief Network.

This year marked the conclusion of our 2021-2024 Strategic Plan, during which we steadfastly focused on inclusion, policy advocacy, and strengthening our sector. The insights gathered from our stakeholders have shaped our new 2024-2027 Strategic Plan, which emphasises four key pillars: Advocacy, Capacity Building, Inclusive Services, and Organisational Effectiveness. We encourage you to explore this roadmap on our website.



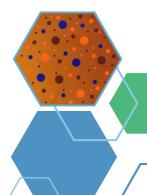
We take immense pride in embedding co-design principles throughout our operations, ensuring the voices of those most affected by our services are heard.

The remarkable dedication of our staff, volunteers, and Board has been pivotal in adapting our services—like the Community Information Services, Canberra Food Security Projects and our Inclusive Volunteering Program—to meet the increasing demand for support. This year, we continued to embed evaluation frameworks to enhance our reporting and drive continuous improvement.

Our advocacy efforts have been significant, highlighted by the first-ever State of Volunteering research project in our region. This initiative, alongside our partnership with the ACT Government to develop a Volunteering Strategy 2024-2034, underscores our commitment to representing and elevating the volunteering sector.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to our funding partners, members, employees, volunteers, Board of Directors and stakeholders, as well as the organisations and individuals who contribute to our mission.

Together, we foster inclusion, participation, and connection across the Canberra Region and beyond. We look forward to our continued collaboration as we work toward a stronger, more resilient community.





ABOUT US

VolunteeringACT is the peak body for volunteering. We also provide community information in the Canberra Region, and we are a service provider of programs for people experiencing disadvantage and isolation, people with disability, and people needing support for mental wellness.

We are a people-driven, service-focused organisation that represents the interests of more than 200 members, advocates for and supports volunteers and volunteer involving organisations, and engages with the broader Canberra community.

Our purpose is to foster quality of life and an inclusive Canberra by enabling participation and connection. Through our activities, we're not just connecting people with causes; we're transforming lives.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Robyn Hendry – Chair

Helen McKenna - Deputy Chair and Treasurer

Jayne Curnow

Lee Maiden

Bobbi Campbell

Sajid Hassan

David Maywald

Kim Kachel

Michael Brady

Rachel Thomas

Cherie Hughes

Appointed - Resigned

25 September 2018

29 July 2020

29 May 2018

30 July 2019 – 30 October 2023

16 June 2023

27 September 2022

22 November 2022 – 10 October 2023

22 September 2020 – 28 July 2023

11 September 2023

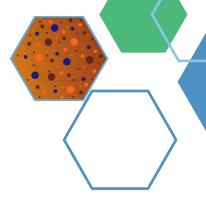
10 October 2023

21 November 2023

Company Secretary

Jean Giese (until August 2023) and Melanie Cantwell (from August 2023).

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES 2021–2024



VolunteeringACT proudly continues working to help grow thriving volunteer communities by enabling participation, inclusion and connection, while we also advocate for a more resilient Canberra community. The strategic priorities outlined below were implemented in alignment with our 2021-2024 business strategy, marking the final year of delivering these objectives.



1. Improve inclusion in the Canberra Region

We foster inclusion by reducing barriers to participation in volunteering and access to community information.



2. Influence change through policy and advocacy

We drive the development of evidence-based policy as the lead advocate for volunteering in the Canberra Region.



3. Strengthen the sector to enable a more resilient Canberra community

We are the trusted experts in volunteering and community information in the Canberra Region and we strategically invest in capability and capacity building to strengthen the sector and enhance outcomes for our stakeholders and the community.

OUR VALUES



Collaboration



Diversity



Integrity



Participation



Innovation



Equity

OUR CO-DESIGN WORK

We deeply value the voices of people with lived experience, as their insights provide unique perspectives that enrich and shape our programs and policy and advocacy work. We also welcome and encourage people with lived experience applying for volunteer and paid roles in our organisation, recognising their views and experiences as powerful catalysts for change.

Our values and strategic priorities are embedded in co-design, particularly our focus on collaboration, inclusion and diversity. We are committed to implementing co-design processes across our programs, policy and work areas.



We define co-design as a process that brings people together around a theme they all have an interest/stake in, where knowledge is shared, and the experiences of all participants are respected and valued. Wherever possible within co-design processes and conversations, all parties have equal power, decisions are discussed openly, and are made collectively.

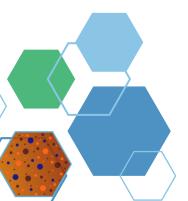


It provides a consistent approach to implementing co-design principles in our day-to-day work.

It also outlines the process that we follow when working on co-designed and co-created projects with our advisory groups.

VolunteeringACT undertakes co-design in a range of ways, and with a variety of participants, stakeholders and partners depending on the work being developed. Our activities may occur with individuals and groups who have important insights to share from their personal life experiences, or from their professional experiences such as their jobs, volunteering roles, or their studies, etc.

We have deep respect for the many different voices we hear regularly and the experiences and insights that are shared with us. We value how these contributions enhance all areas of our work.





Advisory Groups

One of our regular, but not only, mechanisms for undertaking co-design is through our core advisory groups.

At present, these are:

- Disability Advisory Group
- Multicultural Advisory Group
- Volunteering Strategic Advisory Group

These groups have been crucial to the design and development of many programs and our peak body remit, including capability, strategy, policy and advocacy. Our advisory groups are chaired or co-chaired by people with lived experience, ensuring a balance of power and participation in co-design projects.

In the next twelve months we will be formally establishing a First Nations Advisory Group and a short-term Youth Advisory Group.

We would like to thank all the members of our advisory groups for sharing their lived experience and providing valued advice and insights. Our co-design work would not be possible without their input.



KEY HIGHLIGHTS OF THE ADVISORY GROUPS

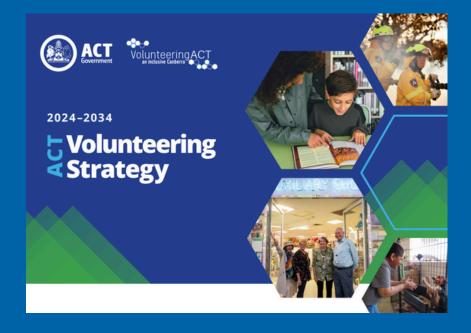


Co-design and consultation work with multicultural communities to create the new plain language volunteering flyer.



*Scan the QR code to access the resource.

The most significant co-design achievement of this reporting period is the collaboration between VolunteeringACT, the ACT Government Community Services Directorate (CSD) and the ACT volunteering ecosystem to develop a long-term ACT Volunteering Strategy.





*Scan the QR code to access the document.

VOLUNTEERS ARE OUR BACKBONE

Volunteers are the reason we exist. VolunteeringACT expresses deep gratitude to every volunteer who generously gives their time, knowledge and experience to support us through our work and programs.

These incude

- Board of Directors and subcommittees
- Community engagement volunteers
- Office volunteers
- Advisory group volunteers
- Volunteer mentors
- Be Connected digital mentors
- Tax Help volunteers



Throughout this year, we have had 91 volunteers supporting our work.

Our volunteers play a vital role in the success of numerous projects and programs. A great example is the Community Info Hub, which thrives because of the dedication of our community engagement volunteers. These individuals give their time to welcome and assist visitors, provide valuable information and referrals, offer crucial office support, and foster a friendly and inclusive environment.

This year, 46 community engagement volunteers helped support the Community Info Hub. The estimated value of their work is an in-kind contribution of more than \$85,000 during this reporting period.

VolunteeringACT is fortunate to be supported by so many enthusiastic and talented volunteers who have helped shape our programs and services into what they are today. We want to express our thanks once again for all the hard work these volunteers have done to help VolunteeringACT and the community. Without their tireless efforts, many of our initiatives would not be possible.







At the same time, I can help people who are in need.

 Volunteer at the Community Info Hub

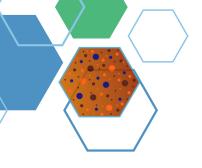


OUR MEMBERS

As of 30 June 2024

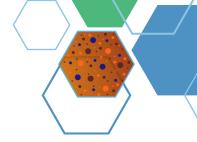
- 2XXfm
- Abbeyfield Australia
- · Abbeyfield Garran Inc
- · Abilities Unlimited Australia
- · Abundant Water Inc
- ACT Disability, Aged and Carers Advocacy Service
- · ACT Emergency Services Agency
- · ACT Fencing Association
- ACT Mental Health Consumer Network Inc
- ACT Museums + Galleries CMAG and ACTHP
- · ACT Parks and Conservation Service
- · ACT Rescue & Foster
- ACT Volunteers in Policing
- ACT Wildlife
- ACTCOSS
- · Active Canberra
- Adria Village
- · Alcohol, Tobacco & Other Drug Association ACT
- Australian National Capital Artists Gallery
- · Anglicare NSW South, NSW West and ACT
- · Annecto Canberra
- · School of Medicine and Psychology ANU
- ANU Student Life
- Arthur Wilks OAM
- ArtSound Incorporated
- · Association of Parents & Friends of ACT Schools
- Australian Institute of Company Directors
- · Australian Institute of International Affairs
- · Australian Kookaburra Kids Foundation
- · Australian National Botanic Gardens
- ANU Student Experience and Career Development
- Australian Red Cross ACT
- · Australian War Memorial
- BaptistCare NSW/ACT
- · Barnardos Canberra Australia
- Basketball ACT
- · Belconnen Arts Centre
- Belconnen Dog Obedience Club
- · Beryl Women Inc.
- Billabong Aboriginal Development Corporation
- · Blue Gum Community School
- Bobbi Campbell
- Bob Pillifeant
- Bosom Buddies ACT
- Bush Heritage Australia
- · Calvary Regional

- · Canberra and Region Visitors Centre
- · Canberra Blind Society
- · Canberra Environment Centre
- · Canberra Hospital and Health Services
- · Canberra Hospital Foundation
- Canberra International Music Festival
- Canberra Organic Growers Society
- Canberra Railway Museum
- · Canberra Region Rugby League
- · Canberra Repertory Society
- Cancer Council ACT
- · Canteen ACT and SNSW Division
- Capital Nordic Walking
- · Capital Region Community Services
- · Charles Sturt University Canberra
- Communities at Work
- Community Connections Inc
- · Community First Development
- Community Services #1
- · Conservation Council ACT Region
- · Council on the Ageing
- Covenant Care
- Cystic Fibrosis ACT
- · David Maywald
- Dementia Australia ACT
- Diversity ACT Community Services
- Doris Womens Refuge
- Duntroon Community Centre
- · Eastlake Football Club
- Epilepsy ACT
- Ethnic Broadcasters Council Of The ACT (CMS Radio)
- · Events ACT
- · Families and Friends for Drug Law Reform
- · Family Drug Support
- · Fearless Women
- Fortem
- Friends of the National Arboretum Canberra Inc.
- Geoscience Australia
- Ginninderra Catchment Group
- · Girl Guides NSW, ACT and NT
- Goodwin Aged Care Services
- Greening Australia Capital Region
- · Greyhound Connections
- · Grind to Ground
- HammondCare ACT



- · Hands Across Canberra
- Hartley Lifecare
- · Havelock Housing Association
- Heart Foundation ACT
- Helen McKenna
- Hospital Research Foundation Group Parkinson's
- Indigenous Reading Project
- IRT Group
- Jayne Curnow
- John XXIII College ANU
- Karinya House
- Karralika Programs Inc
- Kidsafe ACT
- Kim Kachel
- Koomarri
- Lake Ginninderra College
- Landcare ACT
- Lee Maiden
- Libraries ACT
- Lids4Kids
- Lifestream Christian Fellowship
- Lucky Stars Sanctuary
- Lynette Grayson
- Margaret Reid AO
- Marymead CatholicCare Canberra & Goulburn
- Mathew Franklin
- Matthew Watts
- Maureen Cane
- Menslink
- Mental Health Community Coalition ACT
- Mental Health Foundation ACT
- Mental Illness Education ACT
- Meridian ACT
- · Michael Brady
- Migrant and Refugee Settlement Services of the ACT
- Mosaic Life Care Canberra
- Multicultural Communities Council Of Illawarra
- Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House
- · Narrabundah Early Childhood School
- National Arboretum Canberra
- National Capital Authority
- National Folk Festival
- · National Gallery of Australia
- National Library of Australia
- · National Multicultural Festival
- · National Museum Of Australia

- · National Opera
- NationsHeart Christian Community
- Navitas ACT
- Neighbourhood Watch ACT
- North Canberra Hospital
- Northside Community Service
- Orange Sky Australia ACT
- Palliative Care ACT
- · Parentline ACT
- Pedal Power
- Pegasus Riding for the Disabled
- · Perinatal Wellbeing Centre
- Radio 1RPH
- · Prisoners Aid ACT
- Project Independence
- Queanbeyan Multilingual Centre Inc
- Queanbeyan Palerang Regional Council
- Questacon
- Rachel Thomas
- Raise Foundation ACT
- · Rise Above Capital Region Cancer Relief
- Robyn Hendry
- Ronald McDonald House Charities ACT & South East NSW
- Roundabout Canberra
- Rsi and Overuse Injury Association
- RSL LifeCare ACT
- RSPCA ACT
- Sabine Godfrey
- · Safe Shelter ACT
- Sanctuary Aus
- Sajid Hassan
- Scout Association of Australia ACT
- SEE-Change
- Sexual Health and Family Planning ACT
- Sharing Places
- · SHINE for Kids
- Soldier On
- St Andrew's Village
- St John Ambulance ACT
- St John's Care
- St Vincent de Paul Society Canberra/Goulburn
- Strathnairn Arts Association
- Stroke Foundation ACT
- TADACT
- Ted Noffs Foundation
- Tender Funerals Canberra Region
- Tennis ACT



- The Food Co-op Canberra
- The Mill House Ventures Limited
- The Salvation Army ACT
- The Smith Family ACT
- Tony Hobbs
- Toora Women Inc
- Transplant Australia
- Tuggeranong Arts Centre
- Tuggeranong Community Council
- UN Women Australia
- UnitingCare Kippax
- Unity College Australia
- University of Canberra Student Support Services
- Urban Parks and Places Volunteering TCCS
- Victim Support ACT
- Victims of Crime Assistance League ACT

- Warehouse Circus Inc
- Warrigal
- Wellways Australia Ltd
- Weston Creek Community Council
- Woden Community Service
- Women With Disabilities ACT
- Women's Legal Centre ACT
- Woodlands And Wetlands Trust
- Worldview Foundation
- YFU Student Exchange
- Young Neighbourhood Centre Inc. trading as Hilltops Community Hub
- Youth Coalition of the ACT
- Youth for Human Rights Church of Scientology Canberra
- YWCA Canberra
- · ZamZam Foundation Australia





99

I can't thank enough the IVPTEP team for the efforts they have put in so far. There is such a big gap for people finishing off school and then moving into the big wide world. Their volunteering roles are fulfilling and add value to their lives. They are gaining valuable experience, feeling good about themselves for contributing and are seen by others in the community as contributing in a valuable way. Having 'valued roles' is enormously important to a person with disability. The more valued roles a person has, the more value people place upon a person. We have had some challenges finding further study and structured work experience, but volunteering has proved very successful.

Mother of two participants of the Inclusive Volunteering Pathway to Employment Program



WE IMPROVED INCLUSION IN THE CANBERRA REGION

The 2023-2024 period marked a pivotal time for VolunteeringACT, with our programs making a significant impact on the volunteering sector and the Canberra community.

Many people in the Canberra Region were strongly affected by the cost-of-living crisis, which is making it increasingly difficult for them to participate fully in our community.

VolunteeringACT focused on understanding these issues and supporting individuals to participate in their community through our many programs that promote inclusion. We connected individuals facing disadvantage with essential local services, provided vital support to volunteer involving organisations in their efforts to foster greater inclusivity, and deepened our partnerships with First Nations communities.

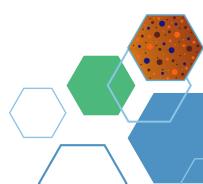
Additionally, we empowered people with diverse abilities to engage in volunteering, helping them build skills that can lead to meaningful paid employment.

Inclusive Volunteering Pathway to Employment Program

The Inclusive Volunteering Pathway to Employment Program (IVPTEP) provides people with disability or mental health conditions the opportunity to engage in volunteering in a supported and collaborative way.

The Program delivers two key outcomes:

- Helping people with disability or mental health conditions learn new skills, build selfconfidence and develop new connections as they work towards finding meaningful paid employment.
- Supporting organisations by providing them with the right tools, resources and advice to become more inclusive.



KEY HIGHLIGHTS



42 active participants



new volunteer involving organisations actively engaged through:

- Online and in person workshops
- Organisation selfassessment tools
- Identification of barriers and solution design
- On site volunteer and staff training for inclusive best practices



Winner of the 2023 ACT Chief Minister's Award for Inclusion in Business.

This award recognises those who enhance the experiences of people with disability in the workplace, business, and community. This recognition underscores the program's significant impact on the community, as it plays a crucial role in raising awareness about inclusion and fostering a more inclusive environment for all.





Canberra Food Security Projects

We have been facilitating conversations in the local food relief sector for many years. VolunteeringACT's CEO was the Canberra Relief Advisory Committee chair, formed during the initial COVID period, to provide collaborative and consolidated food security support to the Canberra Region.

At the end of the lockdown period its members reshaped the group's functions into the ACT Food and Emergency Relief Committee, which is still chaired by VolunteeringACT and provides advocacy in relation to addressing food insecurity in the ACT and region.

The Food Security Program, which aims to ensure that all Canberrans have access to food, including fresh produce and groceries, was developed and funded through a joint budget submission from the Canberra Relief Advisory Committee. VolunteeringACT was selected as the program's project lead. This financial year, we have continued working on three key activities: facilitating the Canberra Food Relief Network, implementing the food security data project, and the food relief donation communication strategy.



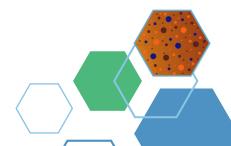
Canberra Food Relief Network

The Canberra Food Relief Network continues to meet monthly, facilitating the sharing of resources and best practice approaches among food pantries and food relief service providers from across the Canberra Region. The group also works collaboratively to meet the objectives of the program such as the creation of a database and data warehouse to capture data and facilitate evidence-informed decision-making regarding food security in the region, and the development and delivery of a communications strategy to promote food relief service provision.



Food security data project

During the year, we have continued to work with Community Data Solutions and food relief service providers to develop bespoke database solutions for each service. We are also working on developing a data warehouse to facilitate efficient sharing of information. This will help ensure that relief is available for the people who need it where they need it. As part of this project, we are preparing a report on food security in the ACT. This report will assess the demographics of the ACT with respect to the main indicators of susceptibility to food insecurity, the cost-of-living in the ACT, and challenges that existing food relief services are facing.





Food relief donation communication strategy

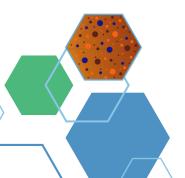
During this year, the first phase of the communication strategy was launched with the theme: "We all need a little help sometimes", calling on the community to donate time, goods and money to help providers to help those in need. The communication strategy had a strong storytelling component, showcasing the vital work service providers are undertaking to support the community. The campaign was successful with more than 57,000 social media impressions and over 1,300 click throughs. We also developed and launched an interactive online map to connect people with their closest food relief service provider within the ACT and surrounding areas.

First Nations Work

As we continue our journey towards reconciliation, we are delighted to learn from and walk alongside Dr Karen Demmery, a proud Wiradjuri woman and our First Nations consultant. Dr Karen, CEO of Burbirra Group, provides understanding and guidance in our reconciliation work and will Chair our upcoming First Nations Advisory Group. We are incredibly grateful for Dr Karen's input, her work with VolunteeringACT is highly valued and continues to positively impact our reconciliation work.







KEY HIGHLIGHTS



In July 2023, we launched the guide to meeting the cultural needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander volunteers, created in partnership with Burbirra Group.



At the 2023 Volunteering
Conference, Dr Karen Demmery
delivered an inclusion in
volunteering and cultural
competency session sharing her
own experiences and offering
insights on breaking down cultural
barriers in volunteering.



During the 2023 Volunteering Awards, Canberra Region we introduced the First Nations Volunteer of the Year Award category. This award recognised an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander volunteer or a volunteer team whose volunteering contributions have led the way for positive change or have improved the volunteer programs for their community.

The judging panel for the award was comprised of First Nations Peoples. The 2023 panel included:

- Dr Karen Demmery
- Aunty Violet Sheridan
- Ms Rachelle Kelly-Church

Our 2023 Award winners were Cyndy Newman Piromalli and Wendy Brookman from Valley Dragons Junior Rugby League Football Club.

Cyndy and Wendy are proud Aboriginal women who have played a crucial role in enhancing the club's cultural awareness and safety practices, ensuring it remains a welcoming space for Indigenous players, their families, and the broader community.

Volunteering Awards attendees also enjoyed the powerful voice of Tahalianna Soward-Mahanga, a proud Wiradjuri and Tongan woman.





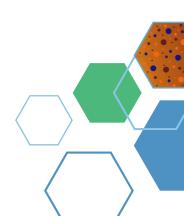
Community Info Hub

The Community Info Hub provides information on services and supports, clubs and groups, events and activities in the Canberra Region. It connects people with services, events and training opportunities that encourage community participation.

The Community Info Hub team are friendly, supportive and non-judgmental. They are dedicated to assisting visitors and callers, many of whom experience challenging circumstances. Other visitors come in just to have a chat and be listened to as the Community Info Hub also provides a vital social anchor.

The information available onsite is supplemented by the ACT Community Directory website, which contains information on over 3,000 services delivered in the ACT. Visitors to the Community Info Hub also have access to water and hot drinks, free computer use and free phone calls.





KEY HIGHLIGHTS



1,355

people visited the Community Info Hub



46

Volunteers supported the work of the Community Info Hub



261

people phoned the Community Info Line



88

people emailed their questions

EVENTS

Engaged with 880 people through attending 17 expos and events in the ACT

the are a community of 22 living in an ages complex of 22 ant heavy people and boyn From time to time we need a source information relevant to our unique circumstances we can alway get this help from the people in the them in cine The staff there are alway friendly and obliging and rolve many of aux problems | queries the nely an "The Herb" for work imolving computers Please don't ever change the thub. It would be devistating for our commenty

We are a community of 22 living in a complex of 22 units housing people over 60 years. From time to time, we need a source of information relevant to our unique circumstances. We can always get this help from the people in the Hub in Civic.

The staff there are always friendly and obliging and solve many of our problems/queries. We rely on the Hub for work involving computers. Please don't ever change the Hub. It would be devastating for our community.

Letter from a visitor



As we recognise that some visitors may not want to comment face-to-face, we have recently installed a Smiley Touch Console in the Hub. In June 2024, 93% of visitors who completed the survey left satisfied with their experience.

Positive feedback given by visitors to the Community Info Hub reinforces the importance of the work undertaken by volunteers and paid staff in ensuring the Hub is a safe, inclusive and welcoming point of contact for the Canberra community.

We have provided information that matters

During the reporting period, VolunteeringACT provided the community with up-to-date and essential information by publishing nine Community Info Guides:

- Emergency and Crisis Support Services Guide
- · Food Relief Services Guide
- · Free Meal, Laundry and Showers Guide
- Homelessness Services Guide
- Short Stay Accommodation Guide
- Op Shop Guide
- · Complaints Resolution Guide
- · ACT Legal Services Guide
- Getting Around Canberra Guide



*Scan the QR code to access the Guides

VolunteeringACT also publishes the annual Holiday Season Services Guide, detailing where people can find a free meal during the holiday season, the closing dates and opening times over the holiday season for community services and emergency relief providers within the Canberra Region.

The Info Guides are reviewed frequently and are available online through the VolunteeringACT website and in hard copy at the Community Info Hub. The Info Guides are also distributed through public libraries, community services and some Centrelink offices.

The ACT Community Directory supports VolunteeringACT's efforts in providing high quality information, as it offers a curated list of community services located in the Canberra Region. Crisis, health and community services and interest, sporting and play groups can use the platform to promote their work. This includes community-based programs, events and activities, community sector meetings, training, and networking forums.

The ACT Community Diary works in combination with the ACT Community Directory providing a calendar of events in the Canberra Region that allows directory-listed organisations to share details of their upcoming exhibitions, festivals, training and meetings.

The ACT Community Directory and Diary are integrated systems. This means that events listed in the Diary will also be visible on their organisation page in the ACT Community Directory, making the twin sites excellent platforms for promotion.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS - INFO GUIDES



2,164

people accessed the Info Guides online



1,018

hard copies of the Info Guides were taken from the Community Info Hub

KEY HIGHLIGHTS - ACT COMMUNITY DIRECTORY

During this reporting period, there were



2,029

community organisations and groups listed

Delivering



3,336 services from



2,702

locations across the Canberra Region

There was an average of



searches per day on the ACT **Community Directory**



3,156

events were listed in the ACT Community Diary, with an average of 263 events per month





WE ARE INFLUENCING CHANGE THROUGH POLICY AND ADVOCACY

This year we have seen many changes in the volunteering policy and advocacy landscape, with increased opportunities for strategic engagement and advocacy to influence key decision makers at both a national and territory level.

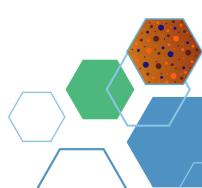
We made a number of national and ACT submissions during 2023-2024, including:

- ACT Disability Health Strategy July 2023
- ACTHD Mental Health NGO Commissioning July 2023
- ACT Preventive Health Second Action Plan July 2023
- NDIS Review August 2023
- Future of Supported Employment Discussion Paper September 2023
- Canberra Region Local Food Strategy October 2023
- Disability Employment Centre of Excellence November 2023
- Not-for-Profit Sector Development Blueprint December 2023
- Inquiry into the ACT Environment's Bushfire Preparedness February 2024
- Response to Draft Future Foundations for Giving Report Productivity Commission February 2024
- ACT Inquiry into Social Isolation and Loneliness February 2024
- Inquiry into Literacy and Numeracy in ACT Public Schools March 2024
- ACT Disaster Resilience Strategy Consultation March 2024
- ACT Inquiry into the Disability Inclusion Bill 2024 March 2024
- ACT Inquiry into Unpaid Work May 2024
- ACT Age-Friendly City Plan 2025 to 2035 June 2024

We also contributed to several further collective submissions via our role on the Volunteering National Policy Group.

As we value collaborative work, we have provided regular opportunities for members, sector organisations and people with lived experience to share their volunteering experiences, insights, and stories via a range of mechanisms including:

- · networking meetings
- · one to one conversations
- focus groups
- surveys
- events





During 2024, the ACT Legislative Assembly conducted numerous inquiries relevant to the ACT volunteering sector and our core business on inclusion and community services. VolunteeringACT made submissions on several inquiry topics important for volunteering, including unpaid work, bushfire preparedness, social isolation and loneliness, disaster resilience, and the Disability Inclusion Bill. VolunteeringACT CEO Jean Giese appeared at several of the inquiry public hearings, which provided great opportunities for further advocacy and to highlight the important work of VolunteeringACT's members and other volunteer involving organisations within our networks.

This year VolunteeringACT continued to promote the importance of the National Strategy for Volunteering (2023-2033) through our advice, information and communications and by ensuring our peak body activities remained well aligned with the Strategy's core objectives. The establishment phase commenced part way through the year, and we had an active role on the Action Planning Co-Design Group. VolunteeringACT provided input on the action planning and prioritisation process, informed by the needs and priorities of the ACT volunteering sector, to help shape the first (2024-2027) of three action plans, that will drive implementation over the life of the Strategy.

VolunteeringACT would like to thank everyone who has contributed feedback, ideas and stories to our policy and advocacy work in 2023-2024.

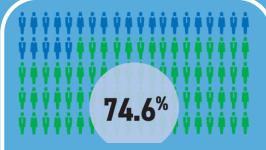
State of Volunteering Report 2024

VolunteeringACT took an important step this year to address the lack of up to date and accurate data available on the scale, scope and cross-cutting impact of volunteering in the ACT. The State of Volunteering surveys have been carried out in some of the other states for several years, but 2023 was the first time all states and territories were surveyed or submitted data and findings interpreted using the same methodology.

In July and August 2023, VolunteeringACT coordinated our first State of Volunteering in the ACT survey with volunteers and volunteer managers – the biggest ever undertaken in this jurisdiction, resulting in 534 volunteer responses and 46 volunteer manager responses. The research was carried out independently and the final report primarily authored by researcher Paul Muller.

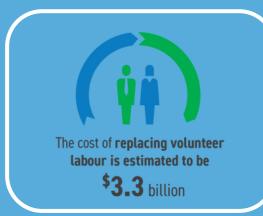
The State of Volunteering in the ACT Report was published in May 2024 during National Volunteer Week. The findings are hugely beneficial to our work to ensure the needs of volunteers and volunteer involving organisations and the enormous impact they make in the ACT are better understood, communicated and recognised.

KEY FINDINGS



of the ACT population aged over 15 years (279,000 people) volunteered 63.7 million hours of their time

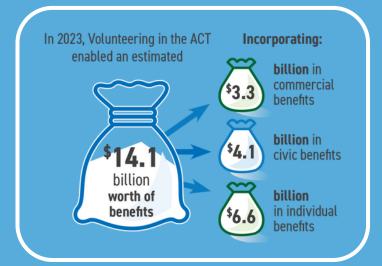


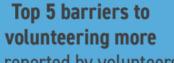


Volunteer involving organisations spend



per volunteer hour





(as reported by volunteers)



No time



Costs



Burnout (over volunteering)



Health reasons



Not interested in volunteering anymore

The Report identified some key challenges we need to address in our future advocacy. For example, ACT volunteers spend on average \$12.76 per hour they volunteer, which is a significant cost and barrier to participation. Volunteering should not leave people out of pocket or come with costs that may prevent some people from getting involved at all.

Since publication, the Report has been well-received by a wide range of stakeholders, and used to evidence multiple policy/advocacy activities, including our representation work via national policy group, and a range of submissions to ACT Government inquiries and Australian Government consultations. Over the next year, VolunteeringACT will further engage with the ACT volunteering sector, undertaking a deeper dive into the ACT findings to identify the themes of most interest to volunteers and volunteer involving organisations and draw recommendations from this for future action and/or policy and advocacy.

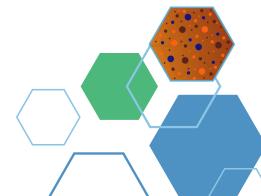
The Report will also be used to influence Ministers, key decision makers and funders to understand the strategic and operational challenges being faced by our sector, and to make the case for more investment in our region's volunteers and volunteer involving organisations.

VolunteeringACT Data Strategy

During the 2023-2024 period, we made a significant investment to support one of our core Strategic Plan objectives - to improve how we leverage volunteering data and insights to inform our policy and advocacy work. In November 2023 we finalised and began implementing a new Data Strategy, to be delivered over the next two and a half years. Although the Data Strategy is primarily focused on the policy and advocacy context, there will be flow on effects across all business areas, which will strengthen our internal data governance and management processes and build the capability of our staff team around best practice.



Our vision for the Data Strategy is to be a leading data-driven organisation in the volunteering sector, leveraging evidence-informed insights to champion, enable, and celebrate volunteering throughout the ACT.





ACT Volunteering Strategy 2024-2034

The most significant piece of policy work and systemic advocacy undertaken this year has been our continued advocacy and partnership work with the ACT Government Community Services Directorate (CSD) and ACT volunteering ecosystem to co-design a longer-term ACT Volunteering Strategy.

The co-design process to develop Strategy content, core objectives and key overarching outcomes has been meaningful and effective. We utilised sector feedback gathered over the past three years, listened to the current experiences of volunteers and volunteer managers, and expanded consultation with staff delivering ACT Government volunteering programs. Throughout the process, we were guided by our Volunteering Strategic Advisory Group (VSAG), comprised of volunteering sector representatives from different volunteering sub-sectors.

This collaborative approach has resulted in a joint ten-year ACT Volunteering Strategy (2024-2034) co-owned and branded by VolunteeringACT and ACT Government, that identifies the right supports, investment and solutions required to strengthen volunteering in our region over the next decade. The ACT Strategy is aligned with National Strategy for Volunteering objectives, whilst delivering on ACT priorities.

ACT Volunteering Strategy implementation will be supported by three action plans, the first of which sets out priority actions for the period 2024-2027, assigned either to VolunteeringACT or specific ACT Government Directorates, where needed. The Strategy was government-endorsed and published in September 2024.



*Scan the QR code to access the ACT Volunteering Strategy (2024-2034)



Representation

VolunteeringACT is represented on the following committees, forums, groups, and taskforces, and uses these opportunities to influence jurisdictional and national decision-making processes, policies, strategies, program design, and implementation/action plans that are of interest to and/or impact on our sector.

These include:

- Food and Emergency Relief Network Advisory Committee (Chair)
- · Canberra Food Relief Network (Chair)
- ACTCOSS CEO Forum
- · ACTCOSS Community Leaders Forum
- ACTCOSS Justice Reform Group
- National CEO Volunteering Network (Chair)
- · National Policy Group and associated working groups
- National Marketing and Communications Group
- National Strategy for Volunteering associated working groups
- ACT Social Recovery Sub-Committee
- Northern Region Networking Meetings
- RecNet Reconciliation Network Meetings
- ACT Community Sector NAIDOC Committee
- Mental Health Community Coalition Leadership Group
- ACT Alcohol, Tobacco and other Drugs and Mental Health Alliance Meeting

This year, we have broadened our representation work and significantly increased our formal policy and advocacy submission responses to key consultations/inquiries, highlighting the value of volunteers and volunteer involving organisations and their vast contribution to the life of our city and region.

Outside of appointed representative duties, we also engaged extensively in sessions and forums relating to key sector issues including commissioning, sector sustainability and the Social Recovery Framework.

We have also engaged with First Nations Peoples in delivering the outcomes in our RAP and to work out how best to work with these communities in the most meaningful way.

All the training sessions are exceptionally valuable! The National Standards session really helped us pinpoint areas where we need to improve, but we are confident knowing VolunteeringACT and the team are always here to support us. It's great to have your guidance along the way.

VolunteeringACT's advice holds a lot of weight within our leadership team. Having the frameworks and support to align with best practice has opened numerous opportunities for us.

Canberra Health Services







WE ARE STRENGTHENING THE SECTOR TO ENABLE A MORE RESILIENT CANBERRA COMMUNITY

This year we continued to deliver our work to build sector capability and improve best practice through the Volunteer Management Activity (VMA), funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services. The VMA is a national collaboration between the volunteering peak bodies across Australia aiming to create a thriving, inclusive and diverse volunteering culture across the country.

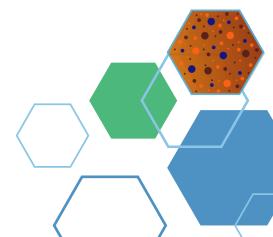
VolunteeringACT has led and supported several national and jurisdictional projects under the VMA throughout the year. These projects included identifying barriers to volunteering for marginalised people, and co-designing solutions to these barriers.

Key highlights of this work include:

- Launch of a new resource for volunteer involving organisations on navigating background checks
- Delivering key capability-building events such as the Volunteering Conference and Volunteer Leaders Seminar, which engaged 180 volunteers and volunteer managers.

In the national VMA space, this year saw the launch of the refreshed National Standards for Volunteer Involvement, which are an essential resource for all organisations and groups that engage volunteers. The National Standards are a useful benchmark to strategically position organisations to attract, recruit and retain volunteers.

VolunteeringACT is dedicated to building capacity through empowering volunteers, managers, leaders, and volunteer involving organisations by offering valuable insights and guidance through our engaging training sessions.



KEY HIGHLIGHTS - TRAINING

41



facilitated training sessions with average rating of 4/5 for usefulness 480



trained participants:

- 218 volunteers
- 262 volunteer managers
- 120 organisations

KEY HIGHLIGHTS - VOLUNTEERING REFERRALS

4,142



volunteering referrals made (this is a 41% increase from last financial year) 33



is the average age of people applying for volunteer roles

Demographics of these referrals

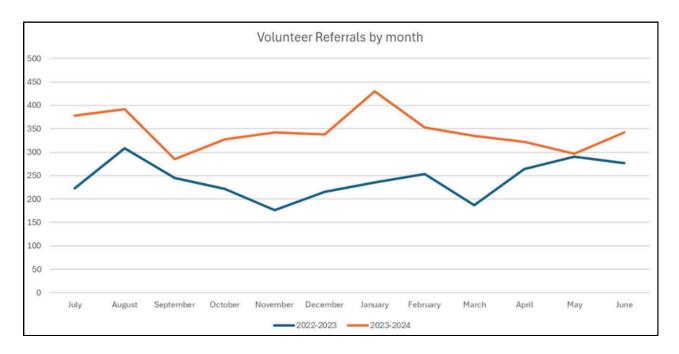
- 73% identified as female
- 24% identified as male
- 3% identified as other
- 25% identified as being a job seeker or low income
- 12% identified from a Culturally and Linguistically Diverse background
- 5% identified as having disability or underlying health condition
- 1% identified from Aboriginal and/or Torres
 Strait Islander background



95

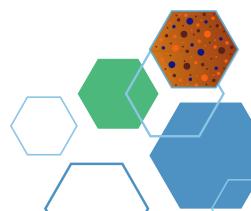
volunteer referrals were facilitated through the Community Info Hub

VolunteeringACT connects individuals with volunteer opportunities that match their interests and needs, contributing to building a stronger volunteering sector and fostering a resilient community. During the reporting period, we have seen a large increase in the number of volunteering referrals facilitated through our online volunteering portal.



This significant increase in applications for volunteer roles demonstrates strong outcomes for the work undertaken this year to build the capability of volunteering involving organisations. For example, VolunteeringACT ran several free webinars aimed at supporting organisations to navigate the online volunteer recruitment portal, and to design roles that are inclusive, accessible and engaging for a wide range of applicants.

VolunteeringACT plays an important role in the ACT Community Recovery Plan as we help mobilise spontaneous volunteers in the event of an emergency. We administer a database of more than 900 emergency volunteers who bring a wide range of skills and experience that can be accessed under this plan.



Membership

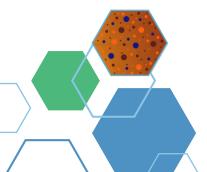
VolunteeringACT is a member-based organisation that provides best practice support, advice, tools and resources on inclusive, ethical and sustainable volunteering in the Canberra Region. VolunteeringACT supports small, medium and large organisations across various sectors.

In 2023-2024, we welcomed 26 new members, bringing our total membership to 213.

Through membership this year, VolunteeringACT provided 87 cases of individualised support to volunteer managers on topics such as:

- Volunteer recruitment
- Working With Vulnerable People cards
- · National police checks
- · Inclusive best practice
- · Engaging young people to volunteer
- Designing volunteer programs
- Program evaluation
- · Volunteer satisfaction surveys
- Volunteer training
- National Standards for Volunteer Involvement

We provided free consulting to our members throughout the year, supporting the review and redesign of volunteer policies, recruitment strategies, volunteer position descriptions, role guidelines, volunteer induction frameworks and training.



Being able to have them available with a quick phone call and get an answer, and a team that's willing to help is amazing. VolunteeringACT is a reliable connection point. We always want to check in with them to see what they think of overarching guidance to make sure we're heading in the right direction. There have been a number of times where we are brainstorming our volunteering processes and changes to the program, there are almost always workshops or online sessions we can attend on the topic. The variety and content of the training content is invaluable. The regularity and consistency of training is amazing. The sector networking is great to be able to have that sounding board of people who are in the same role as you. VolunteeringACT is the central connecting point and hub for all of us in the sector, it's so useful.

Meridian



Events



2023 Volunteer Manager of the Year Awards

Volunteer managers are critical enablers of positive volunteer experiences. The Volunteer Manager of the Year Awards are held annually and aim to celebrate their impact on our community while elevating the profile of volunteer management as a profession.

The 2023 Awards were held on 2 November 2023, during the 2023 Volunteer Leaders Seminar, and celebrated two winners:

- Beth Garwood, 2023 Volunteer Manager of the Year Excellence in Best Practice
- Sahana Sehgal, 2023 Volunteer Manager of the Year Excellence in Inclusion

Since winning the award, Sahana has taken on a new role as a member of VolunteeringACT's Multicultural Advisory Group while Beth featured at the 2024 Volunteering Conference, running a session on implementing the refreshed National Standards for Volunteer Involvement.

2023 Volunteer Leaders Seminar

The 2023 Volunteer Leaders Seminar was held on 2 November 2023 in celebration of International Volunteer Managers Day. This event welcomed 88 attendees and provided a platform for volunteer managers to share best practices, explore emerging trends and create networking connections.

Understanding data collection, celebrating diversity and inclusion, and how to collaborate with other services to enhance the volunteering experience were covered in the sessions presented.

One attendee said that "Data shows impact, which provides motivation. This session helped me see the evaluation process and outcomes as two separate but important things. This topic is so often neglected in organisations but is so important to show people the impact we are having as well as learning how to improve."





The award has enhanced my credibility and opened new opportunities for collaboration and growth. It has provided a platform to share best practices and innovative strategies with peers, fostering professional development and networking. Additionally, it has inspired me to set even higher standards for myself and MIEACT, driving continuous improvement and excellence in our volunteer program.

Beth Garwood, 2023
 Volunteer Manager of the
 Year – Excellence in Best
 Practice

I never thought I would be felicitated so it meant the world to me, it really did. But it also reminded me of all the work that I still have left to do. The 2023 Volunteer Manager of the Year Award will always be close to my heart.

Sahana Sehgal, 2023
 Volunteer Manager of the
 Year – Excellence in
 Inclusion





2023 Volunteering Awards, Canberra Region

Annually, around International Volunteer Day, VolunteeringACT shines a light on the incredible Canberra Region volunteers whose stories of kindness, inclusion and resilience inspire us all.

Heartfelt congratulations to all the award winners:

- Community Support Award: Early Morning Centre Breakfast Volunteer Team
- Young Volunteer of the Year: Georgia Elliot (Ronald McDonald House, Scouts)
- Senior Volunteer of the Year: Marion Williams (Questacon)
- First Nations Volunteer of the Year: Cyndy Newman Piromalli and Wendy Brookman (Valley Dragons Junior Rugby League Football Club)
- Inclusion Award: John Eggleton (MIEACT)
- Volunteer Leadership: Brigite Tehei O'Keeffe (food relief)
- Volunteer Team of the Year: Victim Support ACT Victims Justice Volunteer Program
- Canberra's Choice Award: Rachel Eslick-Angus (Feel the Magic camp mentor)
- Volunteer of the Year: Richard Allen (Meridian)

The Volunteering Awards, Canberra Region are the premier recognition event for volunteers in the region. This event makes stories of spirit, kindness, innovation, inclusion, and resilience visible to our whole community.

The 2023 Volunteering Awards were held on 5 December 2023 at the National Portrait Gallery and hosted many amazing local volunteers, volunteer managers, volunteer involving organisation leaders, members of the federal and local government and change-makers and representatives of the Canberra community.















2024 National Volunteer Week

During Australia's largest annual celebration of volunteering, we acknowledged the invaluable contributions of volunteers in our community through three remarkable events:

- Volunteering Expo
- Volunteering Conference
- Appreciation lunch for our Community Info Hub volunteers.

These events brought together individuals from diverse backgrounds, promoting volunteering and upskilling professionals in the volunteer landscape.

2024 Volunteering Expo

The Volunteering Expo annually matches people with the right volunteer role, allowing the community to connect with the diverse range of volunteering opportunities and organisations that exist in Canberra. It also helps volunteer involving organisations to connect and collaborate with each other.

The 2024 Expo was held on 18 May 2024, at the University of Canberra Refectory in Bruce and had many new introductions to its program: the Welcome to Country by Ngunnawal Elder Aunty Violet Sheridan included a smoking ceremony conducted by her two grandsons; digital feedback console; live musicians; and a QR code for people to share event photos in real time.

2024 Volunteering Conference

The Volunteering Conference was held during 2024 National Volunteer Week on 21 May 2024, at the University of Canberra's Ann Harding Conference Centre. The sessions provided at the Conference aimed to build the capability of volunteer involving organisations and volunteers to implement inclusive best practice.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

2023 VOLUNTEERING AWARDS, CANBERRA REGION

70+



nominations received from individuals and teams in nine award categories

6,000+



votes received for the Canberra's Choice Award



new award categories introduced:

- First Nations Volunteer of the Year Award
- Community Support Award

500+



people attended the Award ceremony

- 300 in person
- 224 online

2023 VOLUNTEERING EXPO

40+

exhibitors



+008



87%



positive feedback

2023 VOLUNTEERING CONFERENCE

100



attendees from 58 different organisations



volunteers received free scholarship to attend

88%



of attendees stated their capability to comply with legal requirements increased



GENERAL UPDATES

Engagement

In the past year, we have made significant changes to our communications and marketing approaches. We focused on storytelling using plain language to engage our audience. We also included personal stories from our volunteers about their experiences and what they have learned as well as taught us. This approach was used in our social media, newsletters, print and digital media, and our website. As a result, we have seen a significant increase in engagement across these channels.

Website

To enhance the user experience of our website, we have implemented an accessibility tool with various features such as:

- · Highlight links throughout the page
- · Increase text size and letter spacing
- Change to dyslexia-friendly font
- · Change to text alignment
- Other accessibility features

The global menu of the website was restructured, webpages were rewritten in plain language, and outdated pages were removed.

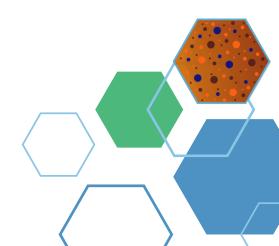
The total website views for this year were 200,000, and the total event count (the number of times a user interacted with website content, such as clicking, reading, browsing, and downloading) was 544,000. The total number of users was 45,385, of which 44,474 were unique users.

The top five pages by views were:

- Find a volunteering opportunity
- 2023 Canberra's Choice Award
- Info Guides
- Food Relief
- 2023 Volunteering Awards, Canberra Region

Newsletter

This year, we sent 32 newsletters to over 3,000 subscribers. Our subscribers include individuals and organisations across sectors such as members, hospitals, universities, community radio stations, sports, social clubs, galleries and theatres, and cultural groups.



Through our newsletters, we communicate about our upcoming events, policy submissions, and Volunteer Management Activity-related content such as key trends and statistics on volunteering in the ACT; guide to meeting cultural needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander volunteers; programs to increase digital literacy among seniors, migrants and refugees (Be Connected); National Standards for Volunteer Involvement updates, and training opportunities for volunteers, volunteer managers and volunteer involving organisations.

We also acknowledge various days of inclusion and diversity such as Safer Internet Day, Harmony Day and International Women's Day.

Our number of newsletter subscribers increased by 74%, and the average opening rate rose by 57% this year. This increase in readership is due to active promotion of our newsletter during our interactions with members, writing content in plain language, and the increased focus on storytelling about ACT volunteers.

Social media

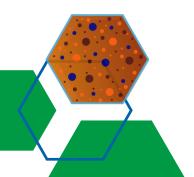
The communications strategy was updated to ensure it aligned with plain language accessibility and increased focus on highlighting profiles of volunteers and volunteer coordinators/managers in the ACT. Engagement with our audiences and members has steadily increased through all communications channels, demonstrating our expanded reach.

As Twitter's following and reach have decreased globally, we ceased using Twitter and instead focused on increasing engagement on our other platforms: Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn.

Media

We revised our media engagement strategy to ensure we remain in the news with meaningful stories and topics more regularly throughout the year as well as a higher concentration of activities around the timing of our flagship events. This had the added benefit of attracting higher engagement during special occasions like the release of the State of Volunteering in the ACT Report.

This approach has allowed to us to keep journalists interested and engaged in VolunteeringACT's peak body activities and the volunteer involving organisations we represent receive better and more meaningful coverage.



KEY HIGHLIGHTS

This year, our combined social media engagement (including follows, likes, comments, impressions and reshares) was over

40,000



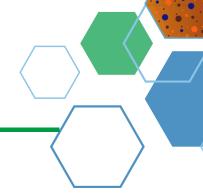
We saw an increase in the number of followers:

- **f** Facebook 4871 (from 4721)
- O Instagram 1465 (from 1376)
- in LinkedIn 638 (from 500)







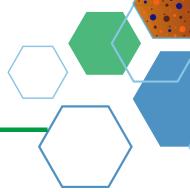


The support of our sponsors, supporters, funders and partners is greatly appreciated.

- ACT Government
- Australian Government Department of Social Services
- · Canberra Labor Club Group
- MF & Associates, a Fujitsu company
- · Blue Arc IT solutions
- · Fujitsu Australia
- Synergy Law
- · Hall and Wilcox
- Hands Across Canberra
- Dr Karen Demmery, Burbirra Group
- · Canberra Weekly
- · Roundbox Consulting
- · Paul Muller, researcher
- · Community Information Support Services
- Volunteering Australia
- State and Territory Volunteering Peak Bodies



FINANCIAL REVIEW 2023-2024



VolunteeringACT's 2023-2024 financial result was a deficit of (\$82,497). This deficit result is due to investments in the delivery of the VolunteeringACT Data Strategy which will enable and strengthen the future of our policy and advocacy agenda.

The organisation has again finished the year with substantial reserves with an investment strategy to be delivered in 2024-2025. Our leased office premises were provided as a donation in kind on a month-to month basis. Core grant funding meant that the organisation was able to deliver all programs and projects.

The purpose of Volunteering and Contact ACT Limited is to foster quality of life and an inclusive Canberra by enabling participation and connection. Through our activities we improved inclusivity, enabled sustainable volunteering, and created a more resilient Canberra community.

VolunteeringACT remains committed to delivering high-quality outcomes and fostering a sustainable future for our organisation and the volunteering ecosystem. The 2023-2024 audited financial statements are available in their entirety on our website www.volunteeringact.org.au.

Category	FY24 (\$)	FY23 (\$)
Revenue	2,550,415	2,238,922
Expenses	2,633,362	2,123,150
Operating Surplus/(Deficit)	-82,947	115,772
Unearned grant funds held	171,659	1,132,754
Cash and cash equivalents	1,628,213	2,800,864



GET INVOLVED WITH US!

VOLUNTEERINGACT OFFICE

- Level 2, 202 City Walk, Civic 2601GPO Box 443, Canberra, ACT 2601
- 02 6251 4060
- info@volunteeringact.org.au
- www.volunteeringact.org.au
 ABN 30 433 789 697

COMMUNITY INFO HUB

- O Griffin Centre, 20 Genge Street, Canberra 2601
- **Q** 02 6248 7988

Thanks to everyone who permitted us to use their images and the photographers including but not limited to Ben Calvert, Annie Boldra, and Daniel Whittaker.

