



## VolunteeringACT 2026-27 ACT Budget Submission

### Summary

The ACT Government and VolunteeringACT are now in the second year of implementing the [ACT Volunteering Strategy Action Plan 2024-2027](#) (Action Plan). As co-owners and delivery partners of the Action Plan, VolunteeringACT and the ACT Government share responsibility for turning its vision into reality. To deliver on the ACT Government's 2024 election commitment to support the implementation of the Volunteering Strategy and Action Plan ([2024 ACT Labor Policy Position Statement](#)<sup>1</sup> and letter to VolunteeringACT dated 30<sup>th</sup> September 2024, see [Attachment A](#)), it is essential this commitment is now funded. Investment this budget cycle is critical to complete key priority actions to achieve the Strategy's goals of strengthening, supporting and growing volunteering across the Canberra Region.

This submission highlights **three priority areas for investment** for a **total of \$370,000 over two financial years**. It has been informed by VolunteeringACT's members and our Advisory Groups. It is in line with Action Plan Item 23: *Develop proposals to seek funding for implementation of Strategy actions and associated projects*. Priorities 1 and 3 are directed to the Health and Community Services Directorate (HCSD) who has responsibility for the Volunteering Strategy and Action Plan. Priority 2 is directed to Access Canberra, City and Environment Directorate. We welcome contact from HCSD and City and Environment Directorates to expand on our priorities and explain budget costings below.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.actlabor.org.au/media/342plfst/act-labor-policy-positon-statement-2024-7-october-2024.pdf>

## Total Budget Investment

Priority	FY 2026 - 27	FY 2027 – 28	Total
<b>1:</b> Action 11: Investigate what volunteers and VIOs might need from a future ACT Volunteer 'Passport' scheme	\$90,000	\$50,000	<b>\$140,000</b>
<b>2:</b> Action 12: Improve information sharing and development of resources regarding the WWVP Scheme in partnership with Access Canberra.	\$90,000	\$0	<b>\$90,000</b>
<b>3:</b> Action 15: Coordinate the State of Volunteering Survey in the ACT every three years and share findings with the ACT volunteering ecosystem.	\$90,000	\$50,000	<b>\$140,000</b>
<b>Total for all initiatives</b>	<b>\$270,000</b>	<b>\$100,000</b>	<b>\$370,000*</b>

\*Funding is primarily identified for staffing costs for the three priority areas with some tasks outsourced to external experts.

## Priority areas

### 1: Action 11: Investigate what volunteers and VIOs might need from a future ACT Volunteer 'Passport' scheme

This initiative aligns with the ACT Wellbeing Framework domains of *Social Connection and Identity and Belonging*.

A Volunteer Passport has the potential to reduce administrative challenges and costs for volunteers and volunteer involving organisations (VIOs) making volunteering more accessible and efficient. VolunteeringACT is seeking funding for the design of a Volunteer Passport pilot. The design stage will involve researching national and international models, consulting with a broad range of volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations to identify their needs and developing a comprehensive project plan for a pilot Volunteer Passport scheme.

During the 2024 election campaign, ACT Labor committed to *explore, in conjunction with VolunteeringACT, the development of a Volunteer Passport to make it easier and quicker for volunteers to sign up for volunteering activities and for volunteering organisations to provide the best possible support* ([2024 ACT Labor Policy Position Statement](#), page 63, and letter to VolunteeringACT dated 30<sup>th</sup> September 2024).

**VACT's Budget Priority 1 funding: Investigate Volunteer Passport**

2026-27:	2027-28	Total
\$90,000	\$50,000	\$140,000

- The scoping and design of a potential Volunteer Passport pilot including completion of a jurisdictional scan, consultation with the volunteer ecosystem and the development of a comprehensive project plan for the implementation of a pilot Volunteer Passport scheme.

**2: Action 12: Improve information sharing and development of resources regarding the Working with Vulnerable People (WWVP) Scheme in partnership with Access Canberra.**

This priority aligns with the ACT Wellbeing Framework domain of *Safety*.

Targeted education for VIOs is needed to address several challenges in the Working with Vulnerable People (WWVP) Scheme checks for volunteers. These include clarity on non-regulated activities where volunteers are not required to hold WWVP checks. Increasing understanding in this area will help reduce unnecessary applications, streamline processes, and ultimately lower administrative costs for the ACT Government.

Over the past 12 months, VolunteeringACT has built a strong and collaborative relationship with Access Canberra, working together to improve processes within the WWVP Scheme as it relates to volunteers. With Minister Cheyne announcing the review of the WWVP Scheme following the 2025–26 Budget stating *the Government is planning to review the scheme in partnership with VolunteeringACT and ACTCOSS* (see Attachment B), it is essential that VolunteeringACT is funded to continue to partner with the ACT Government and our members to ensure the Scheme operates efficiently and effectively for volunteer WWVP checks.

**VACT's Budget Priority 2 funding: Improve information sharing and development of resources regarding the WWVP Scheme in partnership with Access Canberra**

2026-27	2027-28	Total
\$90,000	\$0	\$90,000

- Develop and deliver educational materials and resources to keep VIOs informed about the WWVP Scheme to improve understanding and efficiency across the sector.
- Coordinate and consolidate feedback from a diverse range of members to provide informed advice and recommendations to the ACT Government on improvements to the WWVP Scheme relating to volunteers.

### **3: Action 15: Coordinate the State of Volunteering Survey in the ACT every three years and share findings with the ACT volunteering ecosystem.**

This priority aligns with the ACT Wellbeing Framework domains of *Social Connection* and *Identity and Belonging*.

It is important that local volunteering data is collected every three years to build the evidence base in the ACT as detailed in the 2024 [State of Volunteering Report](#). Funding this priority action will provide ongoing information on the impact of volunteering on individuals, volunteer involving organisations (VIOs) and the wider ACT community.

It will be able to be linked to other ACT datasets such as *Living Well in the ACT Region* and the *ACT Wellbeing Data* as well as contributing to national volunteering datasets. VolunteeringACT has commenced collaboration with the University of Canberra's *Living Well in the ACT Region* researchers to develop and refine volunteering related survey questions to ensure useful and relevant volunteering data is collected.

All other Australian states and territories except Queensland, receive state or territory government funding to undertake this essential research, which contributes to national volunteering datasets. Without ongoing funding, the ACT will be unable to contribute to these national data collections, creating significant gaps in the evidence base for volunteering in the ACT and Australia.

During the 2024 election campaign, ACT Labor committed to the Action Plan to “*improve data governance, collection, sharing, analysis and reporting. These include the ACT Government looking at more ways volunteering impacts can be included within relevant ACT data collections. ACT Labor, if elected, will continue to support these actions*” (Letter to VolunteeringACT dated 30 September).

### ***VACT's Budget Priority 3 funding: Coordinate the State of Volunteering Survey***

2026-27	2027-28	Total
\$90,000	\$50,000	\$140,000

- In 2026, develop and conduct surveys of key stakeholders in the ACT volunteering ecosystem to inform the next ACT State of Volunteering Report.
- Analysis of survey responses by an independent expert in volunteering data as used by other volunteering peak bodies across Australia for their State of Volunteering reports.
- Publish the ACT State of Volunteering Report in 2027 and share with the volunteering ecosystem.
- Explore linkages with other ACT datasets and national volunteering datasets.

## **About VolunteeringACT**

VolunteeringACT is the peak body for volunteering, representing over 200 community organisations. We advocate for volunteers and those organisations that involve volunteers. VolunteeringACT has a vision of an inclusive Canberra, and a mission to foster inclusion by enabling participation and connection. VolunteeringACT is part of the National Network of Volunteering Peak Bodies in Australia.

VolunteeringACT acknowledges 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.

## **Authorisation**

This submission has been authorised by the Chief Executive Officer of VolunteeringACT.

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Jean Giese  
CEO  
VolunteeringACT  
By email: [ceo@volunteeringact.org.au](mailto:ceo@volunteeringact.org.au)

30 September 2024

Dear Ms Giese,

Thank you for the engaged approach you've taken to representing the interests of your member organisations and volunteers. ACT Labor recognises and appreciates the contribution of volunteers across our community, and we look forward to working with VolunteeringACT in the future to ensure the volunteering community in the ACT is supported.

ACT Labor is proud to have, in this term of Government, supported the development and endorsement of the Volunteering Strategy 2024-2034 (the Strategy) and Action Plan 2024-2027 (the Action Plan). The Strategy and Action Plan provide a clear roadmap for the partnership between the ACT Government and VolunteeringACT. If elected ACT Labor will continue to work collaboratively with VolunteeringACT and your members to support the realisation and implementation of the Strategy and the Action Plan.

As part of the Action Plan several commitments have been made by the ACT Government to improve data governance, collection, sharing, analysis and reporting. These include the ACT Government improving the way the ACT Working with Vulnerable People Scheme is administered as well looking at more ways volunteering impacts can be included within relevant ACT data collections. ACT Labor if elected will continue to support these actions.

The Action Plan also contains a commitment to investigate what volunteers and Volunteer Organisations may need from a future volunteer passport with VolunteeringACT as the lead on this. ACT Labor recognises the potential of a passport and if elected will support volunteering in our community by prioritising the investigation of a volunteering passport in

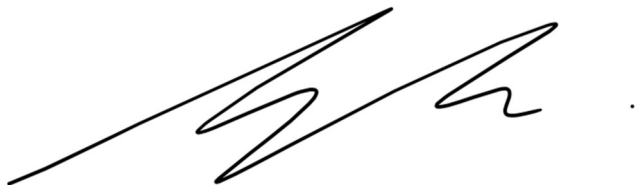
collaboration with VolunteeringACT. We will work with VolunteeringACT to explore options for the develop a volunteering passport to make it easier and quicker for volunteers to sign up to volunteering activities and ensure that volunteering organisations can provide the best support they can to volunteers.

Labor's priority at present is supporting the implementation of the Strategy and the Plan. I note some of the election commitments put forward by VolunteeringACT fall outside the agreed actions in the Action Plan. While ACT Labor will be prioritising the realisation and implementation of agreed actions, we are open to considering additional commitments as part of any future action plans to support and realise the Strategy.

ACT Labor is finalising their broader election commitments including those relating to the ACT for Community Campaign.

Thank you again for your ongoing advocacy and support for volunteering and the volunteering community in the ACT and we look forward to working together in the future to fully realise the objections of the Volunteering Strategy 2024-2034 and Action Plan 2024-2027.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Suzanne Orr', followed by a period.

Suzanne Orr MLA

ACT Labor Spokesperson for Community Services, Seniors and Veterans

## **Statement on the proposed WWVP volunteer registration fee**

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**Released 18/07/2025**

The ACT Government values the contribution of volunteers to the ACT community and recognises that a Working with Vulnerable People (WWVP) registration is a requirement for many volunteering activities. The ACT Government also wants to ensure the ongoing sustainability of our nation-leading scheme so that it continues to serve our community as a mechanism to protect vulnerable people.

After feedback from the community and in close collaboration with both VolunteeringACT and ACTCOSS, the ACT Government will not introduce the \$11 fee for WWVP volunteer registrations, which had been due to begin in September. Minister for City and Government Services Tara Cheyne said the Government's decision was informed by community feedback and stakeholder engagement.

"The intent of the fee was to offset some of the costs associated with administering a scheme which has been identified as far exceeding original modelling and projections since the first review of it in 2017," Minister Cheyne said.

"Many of the 160,000 card holders are not necessarily required to be registered under the law, and while there may be benefits from a wider list of card holders in volunteer roles, this has placed unsustainable pressure on the scheme."

"We are also anticipating that there will be additional requirements under the scheme as part of national responses to concerns in both the early childhood education and care sector and the aged care sector."

"The Government has invested more than \$5 million in this year's Budget to support the continued delivery of the WWVP scheme and will continue to explore further policy improvements to ensure the scheme remains fair, effective and sustainable, while continuing to protect our community's most vulnerable members," said Minister Cheyne.

The Government is planning to review the scheme in partnership with VolunteeringACT and ACTCOSS. This review will consider how the scheme can sustainably maintain the support it provides to sectors of the community who engage with vulnerable people.

Minister for Disability, Carers and Community Services Suzanne Orr said that the Territory will be involved in the national conversation relating to working with vulnerable people checks in key sectors.

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“It is timely to look more broadly at the scheme. This step has been taken in response to the changing national environment relating to checks like the WWVP and other schemes in other jurisdictions.”

“The ACT Government will work with local organisations and community partners to ensure appropriate safeguards remain in place and we continue to operate a nation-leading scheme that is sustainable into the future.”

“The ACT Government values the contribution of each and every person who volunteers their time to support our community, whether it be as part of the State Emergency Service (SES), planting trees with their local environment group, coaching the local sports team or helping with services for those in our community who benefit most from them”.

**Quote attributable to Jean Giese CEO, VolunteeringACT**

“VolunteeringACT wants to acknowledge the ACT Government’s open and collaborative response on this issue. This is a win for the 279,000 volunteers in our city: your voices have been heard. Our joint advocacy with volunteers, community organisations and Government has demonstrated the power of collective action and the value that community places on volunteering.

“VolunteeringACT now renews its focus on delivering the ACT Volunteering Strategy – a roadmap to deliver safe, ethical and sustainable volunteering for all Canberrans. A key component of the strategy is to ensure the appropriate safeguards are in place for volunteering to occur. We are committed to productive conversations with Government, ACTCOSS and other partners to find solutions to the systemic issues within the Scheme. The ACT has a strong volunteering legacy, and this is a clear signal that volunteering will continue to thrive now, and into the future.”

**Quote attributable to Dr Devin Bowles, CEO of the ACT Council of Social Services (ACTCOSS)**

“Volunteers are critical to making our city a genuine community, and help alleviate the impacts of poverty and disadvantage. The Government’s decision demonstrates the value that they place on volunteers.

“ACTCOSS is grateful for the community’s strong support for volunteering. We appreciate the Government’s willingness to listen deeply to the community and its considered engagement on this issue.

“ACTCOSS looks forward to continuing to work with the Government and Volunteering ACT to ensure that the future of volunteering in the ACT remains bright.”

**- Statement ends -**

Tara Cheyne, MLA | Suzanne Orr, MLA | Media Releases

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