

# Breaking Down Barriers to Volunteering



OUTCOMES | STORIES | LEARNINGS

Project Partnerships Program

# Acknowledgements

The Volunteer Management Activity (VMA) program aims to create a thriving, inclusive and diverse volunteering culture across Australia. The Centre for Volunteering is proud to partner with the Australian Government Department of Social Services, funders of the VMA program, to deliver projects that provide advice, support and resources to encourage volunteering among identified groups. The projects will build the capacity of volunteer managers and Volunteer Involving Organisations to better engage diverse volunteers and will enhance volunteer management.

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The Centre for Volunteering acknowledges and pays respect to the Traditional Custodian and Elders of this nation and the continuation of cultural, spiritual and educational practices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



*The seven State and Territory volunteering peak bodies acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea, and community. We pay our respect to Elders past and present.*

Funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services.



**Australian Government**  
**Department of Social Services**

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Breaking New Ground

# Welcome

## A Message from the CEO



The Centre for Volunteering is delighted to share this report, which highlights the outcomes of the second round of the Volunteer Management Activity (VMA) Project Partnerships Program.

The objective of the VMA is to increase opportunities for people to participate in the social and economic life of their community through volunteering. The Centre for Volunteering continues to deliver the VMA on behalf of the Australian Government's Department of Social Services.

A major element of The Centre's implementation of the VMA in NSW is commissioning external organisations to deliver projects through the Project Partnerships Program. These projects will assist volunteer managers to break down the barriers to volunteering for the members of community groups including: First Nations Peoples, Newly Arrived Migrants, People with a Disability, Vulnerable Women, Young People aged 12-18, People who are Unemployed and Older Persons.

For this round, external organisations were invited to apply for project-based grants to develop online resources that support Volunteer Involving Organisations (VIOs) and volunteer managers to build their capacity to better engage volunteers from these community groups in a meaningful and respectful way.

Approved partners came from a variety of organisations with experience in areas such as community and migrant support, youth programs, conflict resolution, higher education, project management, compliance and quality improvement.

We thank our project partners for their commitment to developing quality resources and we are pleased to share some of the outcomes, stories and lessons learned from these projects in this report.

We hope the insights and case studies – along with resources that have been produced – will empower volunteer managers and VIOs to continually improve their volunteer programs by strengthening their diversity and inclusion practices.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gemma Rygate". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Gemma Rygate  
CEO, The Centre for Volunteering

For more information, training and resources, visit our website: [volunteering.com.au](https://volunteering.com.au)

# Our Voice

## Kids Giving Back

[kidsgivingback.org](http://kidsgivingback.org)



“Volunteering at a young age can have long lasting effects.”

Anthony



### About the Project

This project showcases young volunteers from diverse cultural backgrounds, highlighting the importance of different perspectives and experiences. The materials demonstrate the benefits of youth involvement for both individuals and VIOs, while also empowering young people by providing a platform to share their views. These stories serve to inform and support volunteer managers to engage young people and effectively deliver inclusive volunteering programs.

This package includes three videos and a downloadable checklist that cover various aspects of youth volunteering. The first video features young people aged 12 to 18 sharing their perspectives on volunteering. The second and third videos provide practical advice on running youth volunteer programs, featuring interviews with volunteer leaders. The downloadable checklist serves as a step-by-step guide for volunteer managers to create meaningful and engaging volunteer opportunities for youth ensuring safety, supervision and a rewarding experience.

[Click to view the resources on the Knowledge Base: Our Voice](#)

## Approach

The project used a co-design approach, engaging young people from diverse backgrounds to ensure the content is inclusive and appropriate. They were the primary stakeholders, shaping the project's direction to align with their motivations, interests and expectations for volunteering. The involvement of parents and caregivers ensured the project was safe, ethical and respectful, while VIOs provided insights into running youth volunteer programs.

To further support the project, two volunteer managers shared their experiences and advice on creating meaningful youth volunteering opportunities.

A video strategist also contributed, with expertise in video production, storytelling and communication strategies, ensuring the content was visually appealing and engaging.

The 'Step-by-Step Guide for Creating Youth Volunteering Opportunities' was developed to assist volunteer managers in implementing appropriate and safe youth volunteering practices. This downloadable PDF includes a convenient 10-step checklist, complete with tips and links to useful resources for easy reference.

## Expected Learning Outcomes

- Identify the barriers and challenges preventing young people from getting involved in volunteering, together with strategies to overcome these issues to create a more inclusive and accessible volunteer program.
- Identify how to confidently engage with youth volunteers in a positive way.
- Increase engagement and retention of volunteers by creating meaningful opportunities.
- Recognise the value of partnerships between VIOs in fostering collaboration, promoting best practice and reducing barriers to youth volunteering.
- Understand how these partnerships can help to create impactful volunteer programs.

## Anthony – CEO for a Charity Reducing Landfill and Supporting Vulnerable People

Anthony is the CEO for a charity that diverts clothes from landfill, to give to people in need. With over 6,000 volunteers supporting their work, the organisation engages youth volunteers through dedicated programs.

“Volunteering at a young age can have long lasting effects,” said Anthony. “We create opportunities for young people to volunteer, to embed in their DNA the importance of giving back to the community.”

This organisation’s model focuses on partnering and collaboration. Accordingly, access to the proper tools for engaging younger community members to highlight the benefits of volunteering is helpful.

Anthony mentioned that there is a lack of awareness about the tasks young people can do, as well as a gap in meaningful volunteer opportunities for them. He also pointed out that limited resources to support VIOs can hinder this engagement. The more these resources created by Kids Giving Back are shared, the more people will learn about opportunities for young people to become involved.

The videos produced by Kids Giving Back provide a great perspective from younger people on the value of volunteering for them and also showcase their work and its impacts. In particular, the video featuring young people aged 12 to 18 sharing their volunteering experiences, has been a great tool for Anthony’s organisation to give parents and carers an understanding of the different types of tasks their children can do when volunteering.

Another key takeaway for Anthony is the power of personal stories of impact to support engagement and recruitment of young people. He said it is important to share these stories with them so they can understand what they are doing is really making a difference in the community.

# Conversations that Matter

**Voluntas**

[voluntas.com.au](http://voluntas.com.au)

“The resource has equipped me with additional tools to handle challenging conversations with more confidence and empathy.”

Chantelle



## About the Project

This project provides information, practical examples and tools to support volunteer leaders and VIOs to identify, manage and resolve conflicts in a safe and collaborative way.

The package contains a series of four interactive e-learning modules covering the topics:

- Negotiation
- Conflict Management
- Difficult Conversations
- Mediation

Additionally, four separate pre-recorded webinars were created to expand on the e-learning modules through engaging and insightful conversations with industry experts. Drawing on their experience, speakers share case studies and practical advice to help volunteer leaders navigate the world of conflict resolution.

[Click to view the resources on the Knowledge Base: Conversations that Matter](#)

## Approach

Unresolved conflict jeopardises volunteer health and retention, while also causing stress for the people who witness it.

To help address this issue, Voluntas harnessed their strong relationships and combined experience of 50 years in the volunteer and conflict management sectors, as well as their previous experience in creating resources and training, to develop a suite of best-practice resources. These resources are designed to support VIOs negotiate and manage conflict in an inclusive and respectful way, using appropriate terminology and accommodating the needs of different groups and individuals.

Technical expertise was applied in the development of the e-learning modules to ensure a consistent and high-quality user experience.

Each module contains information, training videos and quizzes to guide the user through the four topic areas which provide a varied and interactive learning experience.

To create webinars, Voluntas collaborated with their network of subject matter experts from several sectors. These recorded conversations expand on and complement the information contained in the e-learning modules, sharing practical strategies, advice and real-life examples of managing conflict.

### Expected Learning Outcomes

- Use enhanced negotiation and conflict management skills, leading to improved relationships, higher volunteer retention and cost savings.
- Identify causes of conflict and implement conflict resolution techniques.
- Foster respectful conversations and accommodate diverse needs of particular groups and individuals.
- Develop a shared language and culture across the organisation through inclusive training.

## Chantelle – Volunteer Recruitment and Engagement Coordinator for an Organisation Assisting Marginalised and Vulnerable Communities

Chantelle works for a large VIO where she manages the recruitment, training and ongoing support of volunteers. She is also responsible for fostering a positive culture that encourages volunteer growth and development within the organisation.

Her role involves navigating challenging conversations, such as addressing concerns, resolving conflicts and giving constructive feedback. Chantelle found the module ‘Having Difficult Conversations’ particularly relevant to her work. She was eager to learn how to handle these conversations in a way that fosters understanding and cooperation. What stood out to her were the practical strategies for managing tough talks with empathy and clarity.

Key takeaways for Chantelle included the importance of having a clear structure for difficult conversations, from preparation to execution. She now understands the value of active listening, staying open to other perspectives and remaining calm under pressure. She also learned techniques for framing conversations positively, even when discussing sensitive topics.

“The module has equipped me with additional tools to handle challenging conversations with more confidence and empathy,” said Chantelle. “These strategies will help me manage volunteer concerns and ensure that conversations remain respectful and solution focused.”

Chantelle liked the user-friendly format, breaking down complex communication strategies into easy-to-follow steps. She believes the skills she learned will not only improve difficult conversations but any interaction where clear, respectful communication is essential for building trust and collaboration.

“I am confident that applying these strategies will strengthen relationships with our volunteers, improve communication and boost engagement, ultimately reducing misunderstandings and improving volunteer retention,” Chantelle said.

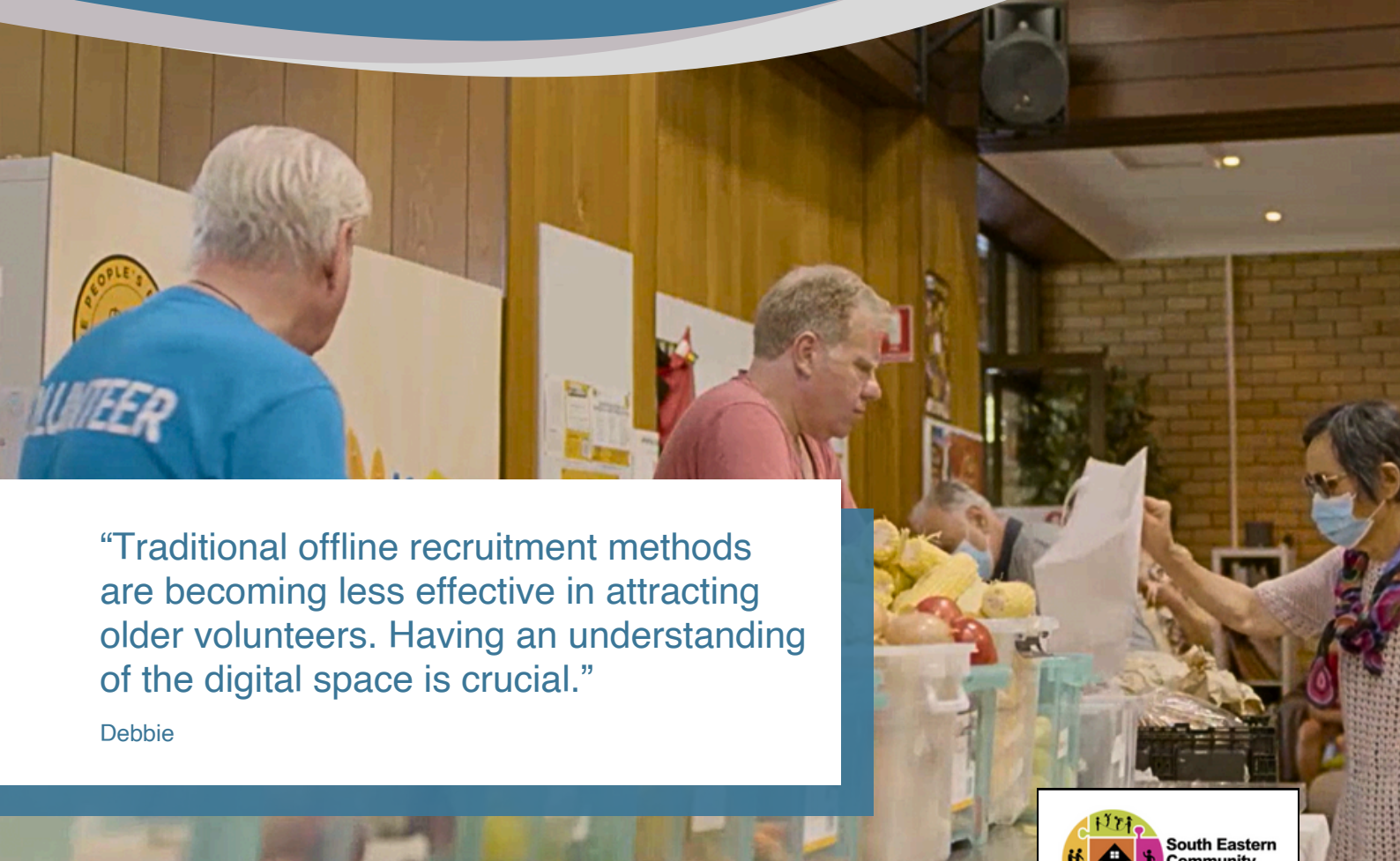
In recommending this module to volunteer leaders, Chantelle said “Whether you’re new to the role or have years of experience, it provides valuable insights to improve how you manage and engage with others.”



# Out of Work and Into Volunteering: Marketing Tools for Effective Recruitment of Young People and Older Adults

South Eastern Community Connect

[secc.sydney](http://secc.sydney)



“Traditional offline recruitment methods are becoming less effective in attracting older volunteers. Having an understanding of the digital space is crucial.”

Debbie



## About the Project

This project consists of an e-learning package containing four modules that outline digital marketing strategies for attracting volunteers. Drawing on the insights of volunteer managers and volunteers, it focuses on ways to recruit those in the age groups of 18-24 and 55-64 who are experiencing unemployment. The package provides two easy-to-execute marketing campaigns that:

- Showcase the cause by highlighting how volunteers' time and effort make a meaningful difference to the organisation and their community.
- Showcase the benefits for volunteers through flexible scheduling, training, support, paths to paid employment and rewards.

The modules are targeted at VIOs that do not have an in-house marketing team and include instructions, videos and ready to use downloadable resources on how to engage the target audience and deliver relevant best-practice communications across all digital platforms.

[Click to view the resources on the Knowledge Base: Out of Work and Into Volunteering](#)

## Approach

Volunteering is one pathway that people experiencing unemployment can seek to re-enter the workforce.

To develop the content for this project, focus groups with 27 volunteer managers were conducted by South Eastern Community Connect (SECC), along with interviews with 15 current or former volunteers aged 18-24 and 55-64 who had experienced unemployment. This research provided a variety of perspectives and experiences that enhanced the project's validity, leading to comprehensive conclusions. A research report with the findings related to the needs of the sector and volunteers across NSW is included for download in the e-learning.

The modules for the e-learning were developed with Rise 360, ensuring an interactive experience for users. A workbook serves as a course companion, which can be downloaded from the introduction module and used in printed or editable PDF format. As users progress through the course modules, they are prompted to complete activities which can be recorded in the workbook; these include templates, checklists, planning tools and goal-setting exercises. The modules also contain easy-to-download resources, including templates, images and videos.

Using a range of multimedia and design techniques, SECC delivered high-quality training modules.

This project demonstrates the power of community engagement and storytelling.

### Expected Learning Outcomes

- Plan an effective volunteer recruitment campaign with clearly defined volunteer opportunities that target different age groups.
- Leverage social media platforms to reach a wider audience and share information about volunteer opportunities.
- Manage an effective website.
- How to partner with local businesses to enhance your organisation's volunteering opportunities.
- Effectively use email marketing, Canva and AI tools.
- Effectively tell your organisation's story.
- Create strategies to recognise and appreciate volunteers.

## Debbie – Volunteer Coordinator for a Community Service Organisation

Debbie's role spans the Central West of NSW where she recruits and supports over 25 volunteers to deliver social and pastoral care support services.

Debbie recently noticed that traditional offline recruitment methods, such as posters and leaflets, are becoming less effective in attracting older people to her organisation's volunteer programs, leading her to improve her understanding of the digital marketing space. The 'Out of Work and Into Volunteering' e-learning was a perfect way for Debbie to refresh existing skills and to learn new ones.

One key takeaway for Debbie was learning more about the art of storytelling to support volunteer recruitment. She found the resources on crafting compelling stories particularly useful, offering a clear structure and templates for creating engaging social media posts. The 'Creating Content' module helped her understand how to write impactful narratives that resonate with potential volunteers.

Debbie is also keen to master Canva to create more professional-looking e-newsletters, enhancing communication with her volunteers. The 'Tools and Resources' module was a great starting point for further training. Through a link in this module, she was also able to access the Canva for Nonprofits program which means she can use premium features for free.

Even though Debbie uses online platforms like Facebook to reach her target audience, it was encouraging for her to know that social media is still beneficial for recruiting older volunteers, especially because trends can change rapidly in the digital space.

Debbie found the e-learning package easy to navigate, particularly valuing the short introductory videos for each module. These offer a clear overview of what to expect, delivered by a friendly face that helps guide users through the content.

"Working in a remote location, it's reassuring to know that these kinds of resources are easily available for free online", Debbie said.

# Increasing Volunteer Participation for Student Migrant Communities

University of Technology – AusLEAP program  
[uts.edu.au](http://uts.edu.au)

Identifying the individual goals and needs of a volunteer is important for a positive and meaningful volunteer experience.”

Ranmalie



## About the Project

This project consists of four e-learning modules focusing on engaging new migrants as volunteers, in particular students. It explores how volunteering benefits people from migrant communities to combat various challenges including employment difficulties, language barriers, self-confidence, social isolation and unfamiliarity with Australian culture. Through this project, the University of Technology (UTS) also demonstrates how connecting migrant communities with volunteering opportunities can benefit the VIOs they engage with.

The e-learning draws on the lived experiences of international student volunteers and insights from volunteer managers to inform engaging video content. Topics covered in the e-learning package include:

- An overview of demographics of migrant communities and volunteers in Australia.
- The challenges faced by newly arrived migrants studying in Australia.
- Volunteering as a solution for meaningful engagement, connection and cohesion in building resilient communities.
- Strategies to support volunteer to leaders engage, influence, empower and celebrate migrant volunteer connections.

[Click to view the resources on the Knowledge Base: Increasing Volunteer Participation for Student Migrant Communities](#)

## Approach

The design and development of the e-learning package was informed by a literature review and analysis about cross-cultural challenges for new migrants, in particular international students. The research highlighted volunteering as a key strategy for socially integrating new migrants. It also emphasised how volunteering builds skills, knowledge and work experience, serving as leverage for future employment.

To build on the research, the experiences of international student volunteers and insights of volunteer managers were gathered through a series of interviews and presented in engaging video content throughout the e-learning package. These videos help volunteer managers and VIOs to recognise the challenges faced by newly arrived migrants, helping them to create inclusive and supportive environments. They also highlight the benefits of multilayered multicultural volunteering which often extends beyond the individual volunteer and VIOs, to the diverse communities they are part of and the broader Australian community.

Critical to the development of the project was engaging a videographer to record and edit the interviews with students and volunteer managers, as well as an instructional designer, content writer and researchers.

Rise 360 was used to develop content, ensuring an interactive and engaging experience for users.

The e-learning introduces relevant content including background information and activities, success stories from student volunteers sharing what inspired them to volunteer and their achievements. It also features insights and engagement strategies from volunteer managers that reinforce the key role they play in delivering impactful and successful volunteering opportunities.

Through access to these digital resources, volunteer leaders and VIOs can understand how to engage and support new migrants, in particular students.

## Expected Learning Outcomes

- Understand the demographics of migrant populations and migrant volunteers in Australia.
- Understand the common challenges and barriers faced by student migrant volunteers when studying and living in Australia.
- Understand the benefits of volunteering in creating meaningful engagement, connection and cohesion in building resilient communities.
- Develop strategies to create a successful volunteer journey that engages, influences, empowers and celebrates migrant volunteer connections.

“It’s difficult to get enough volunteers across Australia... so, if there’s a source of people who are willing and able to volunteer, it makes sense that we do all we can to engage with them.”

Coralie, Volunteer Manager featured in the e-learning modules

## Ranmalie – Volunteer Coordinator for a Conservation Organisation

In her role as a Volunteer Coordinator for a large heritage conservation organisation, Ranmalie focuses on recruitment, onboarding processes, training and managing volunteers. She also oversees other volunteer coordinators at the organisation's heritage properties in regional and remote locations.

Ranmalie often speaks to new migrants and encourages them to consider volunteering, referring to the many benefits showcased in the e-learning. She said, "Many have no idea about the advantages of volunteering. Having strategies to help promote volunteering and present it as an opportunity is important."

In the 'Empowering Success' module Ranmalie was introduced to the four stages of a successful volunteering journey which outlines strategies to best engage, support, celebrate and empower volunteers from migrant communities.

Ranmalie said the e-learning package created by UTS reinforces the many benefits that migrant volunteers can bring to an organisation through different perspectives and experiences. It also served as a reminder of the important role her organisation plays in the community through providing appropriate opportunities for diverse communities, such as migrants, to volunteer.

As a migrant herself, Ranmalie wishes someone had suggested volunteering to her when she first moved to Australia, as it would have helped her to assimilate faster into the Australian way of life. For example, by practicing speaking English and understanding the Australian accent through to exploring career options.

The resources also highlight the importance of understanding the individual motivations for volunteers.

"I don't think we can categorise all migrant groups in the same way. Identifying the individual goals and needs of a volunteer is important for a positive and meaningful volunteer experience" she said.

Ranmalie said the e-learning is a good resource for volunteer leaders who are learning more about how to engage migrant volunteers. She has shared it with the volunteer coordinators she oversees in regional and rural NSW to support them with outreach, especially in those areas with high migrant populations.

## Maria – Community Mobilisation for a Humanitarian Aid and Community Services Organisation

A key function of Maria's role is to recruit and mobilise volunteers across NSW and the ACT. As a large organisation, they are constantly seeking to grow their volunteer base to support their many services and programs. Her recruitment channels span various community groups, including universities, colleges, seniors and youth.

Maria said the e-learning package developed UTS emphasises the importance of engaging with diverse volunteers for VIOs. It also reminds volunteer managers to highlight the benefits of volunteering for international students, such as improving language skills and gaining job experience.

Maria enjoys working with migrants, offering opportunities that help them give back to their community. Understanding their passions and motivations helps match them with suitable roles and keeps them engaged. "People from different backgrounds and cultures can all learn from each other," she said.

"The most important thing is that they are having a great time... if they are enjoying what they are doing – then they will invite their friends!" said Maria.

As described in the 'Empowering Success' module, it is important to provide migrant volunteers with tailored opportunities and support. Maria strives to provide a successful volunteering journey by aligning her strategies to those outlined in the four stages: Engagement, Support, Empowerment and Celebration. For example, because Maria's organisation has a close relationship with universities, she is able to collaborate on events that showcase their work and use them as a recruitment opportunity.

The e-learning has contributed to an increase in volunteers for Maria's organisation, including those from diverse migrant populations such as Latin American, Korean, Asian and European communities. Maria said that the modules continue to be a useful tool, providing strategies and tips to support her outreach efforts.

As a result, Maria has grown in her role and strengthened the organisation's ability to serve its diverse communities. She encourages fellow volunteer managers to use the resource to foster a more inclusive volunteering environment.

# Do More with Less: Implementing Effective Volunteer Management on a Shoestring Budget

Sydney Children's Hospitals Foundation  
[schf.org.au](http://schf.org.au)

“Give your volunteers  
worth and understand  
their currency.”

Vanessa



## About the Project

This project consists of eight video modules and complementary fact sheets focusing on strategies and ideas for implementing a volunteer program, particularly for new volunteer leaders where prior knowledge may be limited. Presented in an animated style, the videos are fun and engaging to watch. The accompanying downloadable PDF fact sheets reinforce the video content and provide further reference material.

A total of eight videos (plus an introduction) and fact sheets that cover the following topics:

- Implementing the National Standards for Volunteer Involvement
- Starting a Volunteer Program
- Onboarding Volunteers
- Inclusive Volunteering
- Volunteer Communications
- Volunteer Supervision
- Volunteer Program Improvement
- Authentic Volunteer Recognition.

Click to view the resources on the Knowledge Base: [Do More with Less](#)

## Approach

In the past four years, the Sydney Children's Hospitals Foundation (SCHF) has increased its pool of active volunteers by 730%. This was achieved with limited budget and resources. The goal of this project was to share the insights and expertise from their successful volunteer program with the broader not-for-profit and volunteering sector.

The project supports volunteer managers to expand their programs by building diverse and inclusive volunteer bases that reflect Australia's cultural, linguistic and socio-economic composition. It provides real-world examples, helping VIOs to use existing resources effectively, while honoring their legacy and relationships.

SCHF consulted with VIOs and their own diverse volunteer team leaders (including youth, seniors, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) volunteers and people with disabilities) to ensure the content addressed real needs. This feedback informed the creation of modules and fact sheets.

To bring the project to life, SCHF engaged a videographer and animator to develop animated videos featuring mascots Milo and Minka, guiding users through the modules in an engaging way.

Aligned with the National Standards for Volunteer Involvement, each module focuses on best practices for volunteer engagement and support. When the resources were published, SCHF was the only VIO in NSW to have achieved accreditation for achieving the National Standards for Volunteer Involvement and endorsement as an Exemplary Volunteer Involving Organisation. This expertise and first-hand experience informs the modules, providing practical support to guide volunteer engagement within the National Standards Framework.

## Expected Learning Outcomes

- Create strategies and practical tips for setting up a volunteer program with minimal budget.
- Build confidence in your ability to create a diverse and inclusive volunteer base.
- Gain an overview of the National Standards for Volunteer Involvement and how they can support best practice.
- Understand the concept of 'volunteer currency' (otherwise known as their motivations to volunteer) and how this can open up opportunities for volunteers to help within your organisation.

“In addition to saving money and doing things efficiently, the [resources] restored our hope of building a great volunteer team despite not having a large pool of money to dip into.”

Shen

## Vanessa – Manager of Donations & Supporter Services for a Children’s Cancer Support Charity

With a shift in her role allowing more time to dedicate to the organisation’s volunteer program, Vanessa used the SCHF developed e-learning to help set up and streamline several processes. This included setting up a strategic plan, developing a template for volunteer job roles, streamlining the volunteer registration process through the implementation of an online expression of interest form and implementing a ‘Volunteer Promise/Agreement’ to facilitate the onboarding process. All of these improvements have resulted in increased volunteer recruitment and engagement.

A key takeaway for Vanessa from the e-learning was the recurring theme that the best way to attract and retain volunteers is by keeping the process simple yet effective.

Vanessa said, “Giving our volunteers worth and understanding their currency – has been an important learning for us.”

The ‘Onboarding’ module introduced Vanessa to a cost-effective volunteer management software platform, making it easier to monitor and communicate with volunteers. What was once a manual process is now streamlined and the new system has greatly enhanced the volunteer experience, with many reporting how easy it is to use.

A more user-friendly approach was adopted for orientation for one-off roles. For example, at fundraising events and activities, Vanessa introduced ‘Volunteer Briefs’ which provide a concise outline of all the key information and expectations volunteers need to know.

Vanessa said the SCHF video modules were easy to interact with due to their user-friendly structure and engaging animated format. It helped to have a recap at the end of each module. Being able to download and print the fact sheets has also meant that she has an easily-accessible guide for reference.

## Shen – Founder of a Not-for-Profit Organisation Providing Free Optical Care

This recently launched charity initiative is helping to provide free eye tests and glasses to homeless individuals. This is achieved through the support of volunteer Optometrists and Optical Dispensers, with plans to eventually expand across New South Wales.

To support the planned expansion, Shen engaged with the SCHF modules and fact sheets for advice on how to set up an effective volunteer program. He found they offered practical, cost-effective strategies for managing volunteers, which he and his team were able to quickly put into action.

By utilising these resources, Shen saved time and money, while successfully launching a volunteer program.

From the initial idea to the launch of their marketing efforts, the entire process took just five weeks.

The resources introduced basic and cost-effective tactics such as implementing a simple Excel spreadsheet to track volunteers. Free, yet highly effective, this saved the team between \$50-80 per month in administrative costs.

“In addition to saving money and doing things efficiently, the [resources] restored our hope of building a great volunteer team, despite not having a large pool of money to dip into,” Shen said.

Shen also learnt that Seek Volunteering, a free service, could help them attract volunteers for specialised roles. This led to over 30 applications for a social media content creator position, resulting in two volunteers being onboarded to run the charity's social media marketing team.

**“To attract and retain volunteers, the best thing you can do is make the process simple yet effective.”**

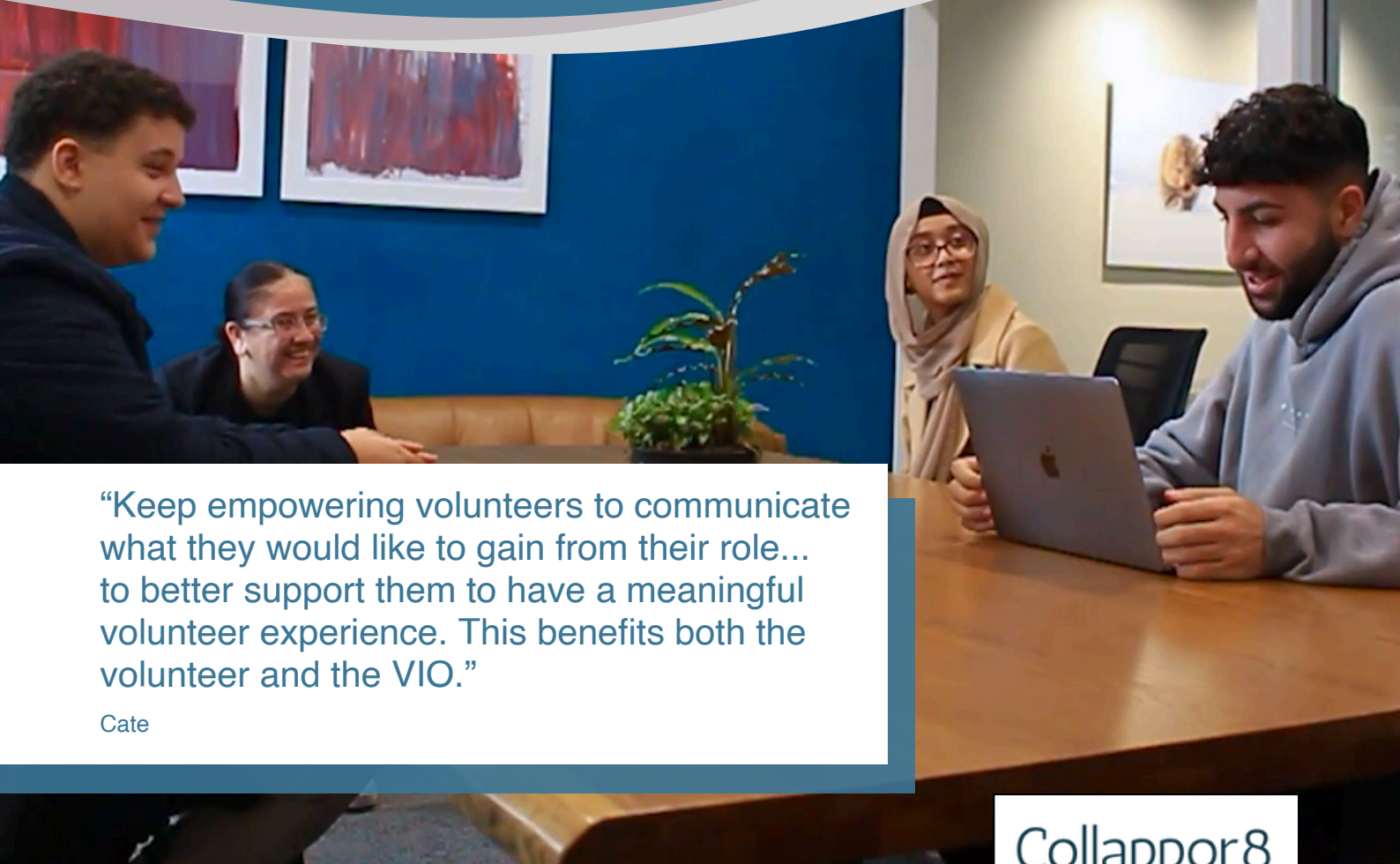
SCHF Volunteer Lead



# Community-Informed Volunteering

**Collappor8**

[collappor8.com.au](http://collappor8.com.au)



“Keep empowering volunteers to communicate what they would like to gain from their role... to better support them to have a meaningful volunteer experience. This benefits both the volunteer and the VIO.”

Cate

**Collappor8**

## About the Project

Drawing on their network of well-established charities, not-for-profits, service partners and volunteers, Collappor8 brought together a diverse range of community voices to share insights and strategies to break down barriers to volunteering, with a focus on young people. This project includes 12 written blogs, 6 video blogs and 6 training videos designed to help volunteer managers and VIOs recognise and address both common and uncommon challenges in their youth volunteer programs.

The mix of written blogs, video blogs and video training caters to different learning styles ensuring broad and diverse reach and engagement. Topic areas include:

- General strategies for VIOs and Volunteer Managers.
- Recruitment, engagement, retention and supporting high-quality work and volunteer satisfaction.
- Essential organisational know-how to support a healthy Not-for-Profit.

[Click to view the resources on the Knowledge Base: Community-Informed Volunteering](#)

## Approach

This project leverages Collapor8's extensive network of NFPs, charities and VIOs to create a comprehensive training package for volunteer managers and VIOs working with youth. It was guided by a steering committee of successful leaders from volunteer-led organisations, offering valuable insights, resources and experience.

Subject matter experts from various sectors, including faith, business, arts, health and disability, came together with volunteer leaders from youth-focused VIOs to create practical and relatable content. Youth involved in work experience and internships with Collapor8 played a key role in scripting and filming training videos and providing immediate feedback on effective strategies for engaging youth volunteers. Community consultation included input from a range of volunteers, ensuring the materials reflected diverse perspectives.

Collapor8 prioritised expert guidance on youth engagement to ensure their voices and concerns are heard and addressed. The resources were developed with simplified language in video and written formats to cater to various learning styles.

The resulting content equips volunteer managers with the tools and confidence to effectively engage, support and promote youth volunteering, ensuring their valuable contributions are recognised and celebrated.

## Expected Learning Outcomes

- Identify and address barriers to youth participation and engagement in volunteering.
- Create and maintain safe, inclusive environments that foster positive youth involvement and VIO culture.
- Implement reasonable workplace adjustments to accommodate the needs of young people.
- Develop strategies for effective recruitment, retention and acknowledgment of volunteers.
- Frame internal and external communications to promote the value of volunteering.
- Collect and analyse data to manage programs and ensure the sustainability of VIOs.
- Utilise resources effectively in organisational and HR management, respecting time, availability and deadlines.

## Cate – Community Programs Coordinator for a Community Support Organisation

Cate is the Community Programs Coordinator for an organisation where she connects over 150 volunteers with community members in the Northern Beaches of Sydney to help reduce social isolation.

The 'Passion to Purpose' training video initially caught Cate's attention. She said it was an important reminder to keep empowering volunteers to communicate what they would like to gain from their role, in order to better support them to have a meaningful volunteer experience. This benefits both the volunteer and the VIO.

A key takeaway for Cate was the importance of always listening to your volunteers and understanding their needs. This is especially relevant given the sector in which Cate works, where volunteers often need a break from the emotional impacts of their work. She also highlighted the importance of constant engagement and recognition in nurturing a happy and healthy volunteer environment.

One of the main things Cate enjoyed about the resources was gaining an insight into the plethora of volunteer roles that are available. The content also reminded her of the importance of being flexible and creating roles that are meaningful.

Cate liked the various formats and structures for delivering the information. This gave her flexible options for engaging with the content, such as listening to the audio content while driving. She also found the presenters easy to listen to, explaining the subject matter clearly.

"If you are new to the volunteering sector, you could learn a lot from these resources as they are very comprehensive covering a broad spectrum of content," Cate said. "And if you are familiar with the volunteering sector, these resources can be a great reminder about engagement and support strategies to help remove the barriers to volunteering."

# Breaking Down Barriers to Volunteering

The Neighbourhood Centre – Bathurst  
[binc.org.au](http://binc.org.au)



“Being flexible and respectful is important for maintaining engagement and supporting volunteers in a way that keeps them interested.”

Faith



## About the Project

This project consists of eight videos and fact sheets that address the challenges of engaging volunteers from diverse backgrounds to enable them to take the ‘first steps’ to volunteering.

The videos can be used by volunteer managers to showcase the benefits of volunteering and to prepare individuals for their volunteering journey. Easy-to-read fact sheets complement the videos by providing the volunteer manager with advice, strategies and further resources for engaging potential volunteers. Topic areas include being volunteer ready; volunteer skills, interests and motivations; when English is not a volunteer’s first language; where and how to apply for volunteer roles; presentation; communication; interview preparation; and starting a volunteer position.

In addition, a series of 10 blogs share stories from community members about why they volunteer and the impact their contribution has on the organisation and their community. The blogs also contain key takeaways to help volunteer managers improve engagement with their own volunteers.

[Click to view the resources on the Knowledge Base: Breaking Down Barriers to Volunteering](#)

## Approach

This project was developed to address a gap in resources for disadvantaged individuals who struggle to take the first steps into volunteering. It is designed to help engage volunteers from diverse backgrounds and aims to build volunteer readiness, reduce barriers to volunteering and increase a VIO's capacity to foster and support more inclusive, resilient and healthy volunteering.

Using a co-designed approach, The Neighbourhood Centre harnessed the expertise of VIOs, community leaders and specialist design consultants to create a suite of resources showcasing volunteer-owned solutions.

Helping to inform the content were bi-monthly network meetings with volunteer leaders which included guest speakers from priority groups sharing their experiences and strategies for fostering understanding and acceptance.

To accommodate different learning styles, they combined video content with easy-to-read downloadable fact sheets that provide additional information to support volunteer leaders who may lack the time and/or experience to support diverse volunteers.

Personal stories were collected from community members and presented as blog posts, highlighting their motivations for volunteering. They also include practical insights for volunteer managers, aimed at enhancing their ability to engage and support their volunteers effectively.

### Expected Learning Outcomes

- Understand the barriers people face to becoming a volunteer and strategies to facilitate participation.
- Understand the benefits of building positive connections between VIOs and potential volunteers.
- Effectively support diverse volunteers.
- Encouraging open communication with volunteers.
- Understand the benefits of sharing volunteer stories to enhance recruitment.

## Faith – Volunteer Coordinator for a Community Radio Station

Faith works at a community radio station in Central West NSW, supporting volunteer recruitment, onboarding, training and rostering. The station engages volunteers aged 17 to 97, including several with special needs.

Faith found the resources from The Neighbourhood Centre easy to engage with, as the content is well-organised and easy to follow. She said that because the videos include a voiceover and on-screen text, they are easily accessible and provide practical information for new volunteers, while the fact sheets offer useful advice for volunteer leaders to support engagement. The combination of videos and fact sheets works well for Faith and she is happy to have these resources available so that she can use them as a handy reference guide to support her role.

The video and fact sheet on 'Where and How to Find Volunteer Roles and How to Apply' gave Faith helpful insights on recruitment. This topic highlighted the benefits of offering multiple options to attract a diverse range of volunteers. In addition to the recruitment channels currently employed, which are online and word of mouth, Faith plans to place flyers with information about volunteer opportunities in local shops.

Faith particularly enjoyed the blogs featuring stories from community volunteers. She appreciated learning about the variety of roles and different motivations for volunteering as it's not always just about giving back to the community. Faith said, "Many of our volunteers contribute their time to multiple organisations, so the key takeaways section at the end of each blog was especially helpful. The advice about being flexible and respectful of your volunteers' time stood out for me, as it's important for maintaining engagement and supporting volunteers in a way that keeps them interested."

Faith is often asked by local VIOs to promote volunteer roles on the radio. She said this is a great channel for promoting the 'Breaking Down Barriers' resource and plans to share it with the volunteer leaders she connects with. To help facilitate a positive experience for new recruits, Faith also intends to use the videos to support the recruitment and onboarding process for the diverse range of volunteers at the radio station.

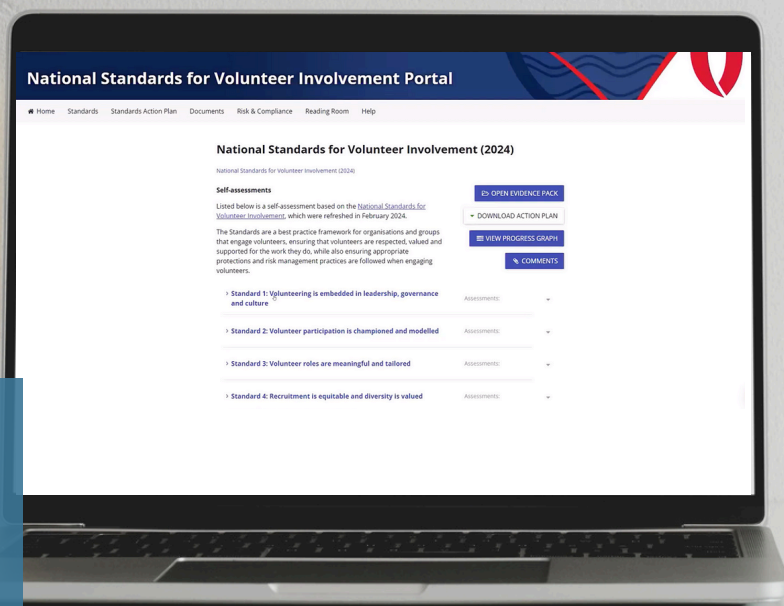
# Access for NSW VIOs to the National Standards for Volunteer Involvement Self-Assessment Tool

Breaking New Ground

[ngoservicesonline.com.au](http://ngoservicesonline.com.au)

“We are meeting the National Standards for Volunteering... this is how we’re going to thrive.”

Linden



## About the Project

Breaking New Ground (BNG) partnered with The Centre for Volunteering to give a broader range of small to medium-sized VIOs access to the existing National Standards for Volunteer Involvement Self-Assessment Tool. Through this partnership, licenses were made available at no cost to VIOs for a period of 12 months.

In addition to the online Self-Assessment Tool, a 20-minute video was created by Breaking New Ground offering an overview of the resource and tips on how users can maximise its use.

The online Self-Assessment Tool empowers VIOs to meet the National Standards for Volunteer Involvement by measuring the organisation’s performance in volunteer involvement and provides the information needed to achieve best practice and work towards excellence in engaging diverse volunteers in a meaningful and respectful manner. The project especially benefits small, resource-poor VIOs to drive their continuous quality improvement processes.

Once an organisation demonstrates that they meet the National Standards for Volunteer Involvement and have the systems and processes in place to continue to meet these standards, they can choose to go on to be endorsed as an Exemplary Volunteer Involving Organisation (EVIO).

[Click to view the resources on the Knowledge Base: National Standards for Volunteer Involvement Tool](#)

## Functions of the Self-Assessment Tool

- Assessment of the organisation's performance against the Standards.
- Recommendations on how to achieve compliance with the Standards.
- An automatically generated action plan for best practice.
- Effective workflow management tools, including a shared digital workspace, the ability to assign actions and a weekly reminder system.
- Resources to help VIOs progress through the online portal and run their organisation. A sample of these include:
  - The National Standards for Volunteer Involvement: Framework, Evidence Guide and User guide – accreditation.
  - Templates such as a Volunteer Position Description and Risk Register and Management Plan.
  - Policy documents for Risk Management and Volunteer Reimbursement Policy.
  - Good Practice Guide for Volunteer Involvement.
  - Access to free resources via the National Knowledge Base.

### Expected Learning Outcomes

- Understand the requirements of the National Standards for Volunteer Involvement and access associated evidence guidelines.
- Understand how to regularly monitor compliance with the Standards and link evidence of compliance to each Standard within the portal.
- Use the portal to benchmark self-assessed compliance status against other organisations.
- Use the portal to identify areas for improvement and generate a quality improvement plan for the Standards.
- Use the portal to generate a compliance report, which can also be remotely accessed for desktop review.

## Engagement with the Self-Assessment Tool

By the end of the 12-month period, 72 VIOs had used the complimentary subscription.

A total of 31 subscribers progressed self-assessment work against the National Standards. The remaining subscribers accessed resources in the tool.

Of the 31 who progressed self-assessment work against the National Standards for Volunteer Involvement, the average self-assessment status for completion was 60%. There were 14 subscribers who achieved between 80-100%, including 9 between 90-100%.

Two organisations have since gone on to meet all criteria for the National Standards and were endorsed with the Exemplary Volunteer Involving Organisation (EVIO) accreditation.

During the 12-month period, The Centre for Volunteering provided ongoing support for VIOs engaging with the Self-Assessment tool. This included reviewing evidence uploaded to the portal and providing feedback, 1:1 meetings as required and a series of webinars and online training opportunities to showcase each of the National Standards and promote engagement with the self-assessment tool.

**“It’s rewarding knowing that you run a service which is ‘best practice’, that we are caring for volunteers in a way that supports them – but there are still things we can improve. There are ways we can be more agile and be future focused in our approach to volunteering.”**

Belinda

## Belinda – Head of Volunteer Services for a Community Service Organisation

As a well-established VIO, Belinda expressed confidence in delivering a respected volunteer program – we have good systems, processes, resources and are well supported by the organisation’s leadership team. For Belinda, engaging with the BNG Self-Assessment Tool was more about validation of what the organisation was already doing and acknowledging that there is always room for improvement.

“It’s rewarding knowing that you run a service which is ‘best practice’, that we are caring for volunteers in a way that supports them – but there are still things we can improve. There are ways we can be more agile and be future focused in our approach to volunteering,” said Belinda.

“Working through the portal was straightforward. You just read through the guidance materials provided and upload your evidence. The challenge was to set aside the time to complete the process, however it was less time consuming than anticipated. Overall, it took about 10 hours to complete, over a few days and it was great to be able to do this in our own time,” said Belinda.

The evidence included strategic documents and supporting materials such as their volunteer handbook and other information about the type of training the organisation does.

Belinda commended the quality of the guidance materials in the portal. The tool provides a good spectrum of what is required to manage a volunteer service. She said it’s easy to just jump in and get started!

Going on to achieve the EVIO accreditation, Belinda commented that it demonstrates to the leadership team within the organisation that they have a quality volunteer program, that is now externally and independently validated. It also confirms for new volunteers that they are coming into a well-run program.

“The best people require the best processes, and that’s important to meet the interests of the people we care for,” acknowledged Belinda.

## Linden – Volunteer Manager, People and Culture Team for a Critical Healthcare Training and Support Organisation

As the person who oversees volunteer operations for a large VIO in New South Wales, Linden said that engaging with the self-assessment portal was an enjoyable experience from start to finish.

The process helped Linden to identify gaps in their volunteer program and provided practical ideas to enhance their volunteer involvement practices. More than just meeting criteria, this process strengthened their overall approach, allowing them to better understand their current program and understand what they needed to work on. Self-assessment across the eight National Standards for Volunteer Involvement was not only educational but also provided valuable insights into what the organisation was doing well and areas that could use improvement.

Linden further noted that the team at The Centre was both professional and supportive throughout the process.

According to Linden, having progressed to achieving the EVIO accreditation was a positive step for the organisation. “A big part of getting the accreditation is being able to demonstrate to potential and existing volunteers that they are part of a quality organisation that will look after them and their interests. There is a signaling effect. It gave us the confidence to say, we are meeting the National Standards for Volunteering... this is how we’re going to thrive.”



Pictured: Gemma Rygate – CEO, The Centre for Volunteering (L) and Linden Regina – St John Ambulance NSW (R)