



VACT ACTION

Welcome to the first edition of VACT's Newlook news.

Welcome back after the Christmas break. The Board of Governance and staff of Volunteering Act would like to wish you all a very productive and exciting 2003. Apologies to all who thought this would be in print before 2003 commenced, however this is due to two members of the paid staff team moving on to other areas of employment in November 2002.

Tim Stockbridge, previous Referral Manager has returned to the private corporate sector, where his undoubted organisational skills will be much appreciated I am sure. Lisa Hunt, Reception/Admin, has obtained a higher level position in the public service, congratulations Lisa. Two positions are currently being advertised and anyone interested to know more should contact us for details on (02) 6251 4060 or by email on volact@volunteeract.com.au

What's New?

Launch of Volunteering ACT's Australian Capital Territory Agenda for Volunteering 2003-2007

On December 5th 2002 Volunteering ACT launched the first ever strategic plan for volunteering in the ACT. This document builds on similar documents around the world, and in Australia, e.g. The National Agenda, however this document is a product of wide consultation in the ACT between VACT, the community sector, Government and the business sector. It has also been given the support of the peak union body of the ACT, the Trades and Labour Council.

In July 2001, Volunteering ACT, with the support of the ACT Government and the business sector, convened a Summit on Volunteering. The Summit was attended by over 80 people representing organisations with a commitment to volunteering, volunteers themselves, volunteer managers, the business community, and the ACT Government. This set the scene for the development of a volunteer framework for the ACT. The idea of the framework was to set an ACT agenda for volunteering to build on the achievements of the International Year of Volunteers (IYV).

During mid to late 2002 170 people, representing around 100 organisations from government, business and the community, participated in a wide consultation process. Therefore the result is a document that reflects the concerns, issues and hopes of the diverse range of people and organisations that contributed to its development. The framework was renamed "An Agenda for Volunteering for the Australian Capital Territory 2003-2007 to acknowledge its symmetry with the other Agendas around the world.

What is the Agenda?

As a blue print for the development of volunteering in the ACT community for the next five years it provides directions and ideas for, the wide range of organisations who involve volunteers, the business community, unions, and the ACT Government. It identifies many of the most pressing issues which organisations and sectors face in this new century as they try to sustain and build their volunteer base. It responds to the key issues raised during its development process, especially to matters concerning protection, safety, recruitment and retention and partnerships with business.

What will it do?

It establishes some principles around volunteering in the ACT to encourage and support volunteering as an important social and economic activity towards building healthy and inclusive communities: -

Additionally it: -

- Addresses the challenges facing volunteers and organisations involving volunteers including those issues which relate to the protection of volunteers, organisations, and the community
- Encourages key stakeholders to take a leadership role in addressing those aspects which both support and hinder volunteering
- Sets some priorities for action by Volunteering ACT, the ACT Government, the business community, the unions, and other community based organisations with a leadership role on specific issues
- Underpins the development of a code of practice on volunteering to sit within the COMPACT
- Provides practical resources and ideas for volunteer managers, volunteers and organisations.

How can you use the Agenda?

The Agenda can assist organisations to:

- Understand and promote volunteering within some agreed practices which protect people volunteering and make sure the communities in which volunteers work achieve the best possible outcomes from volunteer effort
- Keep and build their volunteer base
- Find solutions to some of the challenges which have made it increasingly difficult to manage and support volunteers
- Access resources which assist in rewarding their volunteers and/or organisations within sectors which work with volunteers
- Understand and respond to the changing face of volunteering in the 21st Century.

An implementation Working Group will be convened early in 2003. If you are interested to be part of this exciting project please contact Mary Porter on 6251 4060 or on

maryp@volunteeract.com.au Remember you don't have to wait till the group gets busy, you can start by implementing some of the strategies in your own workplace.

Copies of the full Agenda document will be sent to all members in the new future. Electronic copies are available in Word and PDF. Further documents, which will underpin and support the Agenda are being developed and will also be available shortly.

Below is the text of the Chief Minister Mr. Jon Stanhope's address at the launch.

I am delighted to be here this morning to speak about volunteering in the ACT, and to launch the “Agenda for Volunteering for the ACT Community 2003–2007”.

Volunteering is the most fundamental act of citizenship and philanthropy in our society.

It is offering time, energy and skills of one's own free will.

It is an extension of being a good neighbour, transforming a collection of houses into a neighbourhood.

Volunteers impact virtually on every aspect of society, including health, education, social services, youth, culture, sports and recreation, the arts, and the environment.

And volunteers come from all walks of life, representing all ages and demographics. They include lawyers who give their time to fight fires, grandmothers who help in childcare, 10 year-olds who take their pets to old people's homes for visits. Someone who is visually impaired may work by phone, another person may give up his or her Saturday afternoon to plant a tree or pick up rubbish from the road.

By caring and contributing to change, volunteers assist to decrease suffering and disparity.

They make contacts, learn skills, gain work experience, build self-esteem, improve their health, sometimes finding paying jobs and sometimes turn their lives around through volunteer work.

They don't work for money; they work for less tangible but equally important forms of remuneration such as satisfaction, appreciation and the opportunity to build skills.

And, while volunteering provides volunteers with a great feeling of fulfillment, it can also articulate unmet needs in the community and the organisation of services to meet them.

In the ACT, there are more than 100,000 Canberrans, young and old, who are involved in volunteering in one way or another. This is the highest participation rate for volunteering for any State or Territory in Australia – a truly remarkable commitment to our community.

But if we are to continue to maintain this level of dedication, and encourage new volunteers, it is crucial that we find ways and means of supporting, training and nurturing the volunteer ethic.

I am pleased therefore that Volunteering ACT, in collaboration with the ACT Office for Ageing, has taken such a major step to develop the “Agenda for Volunteering for the ACT Community” - a blue print for volunteering activity in the ACT.

The key objectives of the Agenda document are to promote the values of volunteering, and establish ways in which we all can support and sustain this vital community pursuit. The Agenda also provides a framework within which the three sectors, volunteering, business, and government can develop their own policies, guidelines and standards in relation to volunteering.

I understand that the development of the Agenda has been undertaken through an extensive consultation process with key stakeholders from the volunteering, community, business and government

sectors, and that it integrates nicely with the national framework for volunteering. I want to take this opportunity to thank all of those individuals and organisations that participated in the consultation process.

However, I believe that the Agenda document is just the beginning of the process. If it is to truly make its mark, and not be relegated to the bookshelf, it is vital that the implementation and evaluation mechanisms be quickly established. I am pleased to see that an implementation planning group, comprised of representatives from the volunteering, community, business and government sectors, will be established shortly to undertake this important piece of work.

I look forward to the development of the implementation plan, and learning of the specific actions that will breathe life into this important community initiative.

In closing, I would like to share with you a quote from George Bernard Shaw, which I believe reflects the aspirations of our volunteering community:

“This is the true joy in life, the being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one, the being thoroughly worn out before you are thrown on the scrap heap, the being a force of nature instead of a feverish little clod of ailments and grievances complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy.”

National Volunteer Skills Centre (NVSC)

The National Volunteer Skills Centre (NVSC) was launched at Parliament House, Canberra on International Volunteer Day.

The NVSC is supported with funding from the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services (FaCS) and will be managed by Volunteering Australia.

The NVSC will offer a range of training and skill development opportunities including downloadable training materials, a resource library and a communications strategy in conjunction with the volunteer sector. VACT'S training Manager, Lorraine Higgins has been invited to join the Course Advisory Panel.

The NVSC will provide a nationally consistent approach for volunteer training and skills development through access to:

- Generic and specialist training materials;
- A comprehensive and up-to-date library of resources; and
- A user-centered communications strategy with the volunteer sector.

Provision of these services will enable the volunteer sector to provide quality training within their own organisations and to ensure that volunteers receive the training they need and deserve.

An Information Kit on the NVSC has been produced for the launch, a copy of which will be distributed to volunteer centres by the end of the week.

As the NVSC develops, more information will be provided on the VACT website and through this newsletter.

VACT Training Calendar

Please note:

Dates and times are now available for you to enrol your volunteer staff for the accredited volunteer skills course and for you to enrol for the 1 1/2 day Volunteers Managers 6 basic

steps in Volunteer Management. Ring Lorraine Higgins, Education Manager, on 6251 4060 or email on education@volunteeract.com.au for more info or the enrolment forms.

Perhaps you would like an orientation session on volunteering for your new recruits or a special course for a particular subject. Lorraine can customise a course for you.

Watch this space for the Volunteers Managers Learning Circles dates!

Announcing New Southside Outreach Service to Organisations and Volunteers

VACT is happy to announce that it is currently in the planning stage of a project, which will see the establishment of an outreach referral service. This service, to operate in Tuggeranong Town Centre region, is in response to the difficulties experienced by prospective volunteers accessing the Belconnen office, living or working in the "far south". It is hoped that this service will become operational in the very near future and its opening will be publicised as widely as possible.

If you are an agency in the southside region you are encouraged to contact VACT to ensure that you are able to utilise this service to assist with your volunteer recruitment needs.

Volunteer Recruitment and Insurance

During 2002 you may have been contacted by a member of VACT's staff in relation to updating your insurance details with us. As you can imagine it is vitality important to VACT that it abides by its contracted obligations to only refer volunteers to organisations who have adequate insurance cover in place. We realise that this has been a trying time for you all and some of you haven't been able to supply that information to date. Still others, a small minority we are glad to note, cannot yet obtain the necessary cover. Unfortunately we cannot refer volunteers to positions where we have no current insurance information. If you are one of the organisations in the above 2 categories you will shortly receive correspondence from us, either electronically or snail mail, to ask you what you have been able to put in place. Hopefully this information will allow your jobs to remain on the books. Note the same condition apply for lodging jobs on GoVolunteer.

Managing your Risk Exposure and Securing your Insurance.

There are some important steps you can take which will reduce your exposure to risk in relation to involving volunteers in your organisation. VACT is able to assist you with the introduction of these. Having the following in place for volunteer staff will ameliorate your exposure considerably. -

- a method of interviewing and selecting new staff
- job descriptions
- clearly outlined procedures to assist volunteers when they run into difficulties.
- an orientation regime for your new recruits and an on-going training program to ensure the staff are equipped with the necessary skills to do the job.
- an identified "volunteer manager" and supervision and support systems
- regular staff assessment

VACT staff can help you with the introduction of any or all of the above. If you haven't yet undertaken the Volunteer Managers Workshop that would be a good place to start.

See below information about the ACT Government Insurance Scheme.

GOVERNMENT REACHES AGREEMENT ON GROUP INSURANCE SCHEME

Treasurer Ted Quinlan has announced that the Government has reached an Agreement in principle with a group insurance provider to provide much needed public liability insurance cover to ACT non-profit and community groups. The Government has successfully negotiated this agreement as the first jurisdiction in Australia outside of NSW to participate.

The scheme has received Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) approval, as the product will serve to enhance competition. The ACCC has announced that Allianz Australia, QBE Insurance and NRMA Insurance owner Insurance Australia Group can collectively offer the insurance under an interim authorisation. Interim authorisation allows the insurers to collectively offer public liability insurance to not-for-profit organisations. The government intends to implement the scheme urgently.

The Government's establishment of the **Risk Advisory Web site** for our local non-profit and community groups has been of significance during negotiations. The web site has the advantage of transferring information between the client and the insurer at no cost. The ACCC approval of the Group Insurance Scheme is welcomed by VACT. We encourage you to log on to www.insuranceriskadvice.act.gov.au to see how this scheme can assist you.

More Money for Small Equipment

Senator Amanda Vanstone announced that the Government would provide \$3 million in equipment grants to not for profit organisations on International Volunteer Day. The grants are for up to \$5,000

There is to be a particular focus on organisations that provide family support and strengthen local communities. It is intended that this will also give the many organisations that missed out last year another chance.

To register interest in the Grants you can phone our toll free hotline on 1800 018 312.or go to VACT's website www.volunteeract.com.au and follow the links.

Release of New Volunteer Coin Set from Mint.

Friday 15th November saw the release of new collector's coin set to recognise the spirit of volunteering. Over 100 representatives of volunteer and community organisations attended a special breakfast at the Royal Mint. Thanks to all that sent their volunteer staff along, it was a terrific morning.

The collector set, of 6 coins, was designed in consultation with Volunteering Australia, the national peak body on volunteering, and is a tribute to the over 4 million volunteers across Australia.

Minister Amanda Vanstone attended the launch and said. "Volunteers truly do make a difference, the work that volunteers perform is as varied as it is inspirational. Whether it is caring for the aged,

planting trees, fighting fires, working in a tuck shop or looking after injured wildlife, volunteers are a crucial and valued part of Australian society.”

The “make a difference” phrase is featured on a banner gold \$1 coin while a 50c piece depicts a kaleidoscope of volunteers from emergency services, meals on wheels, shelters, charity operations as well as conservationists, sports volunteers, firefighters and surf lifesavers. Whilst the ‘group portrait’ on the 20 cent coin, of a cross-section of everyday Australians, is meant to carry the message that anyone can be a volunteer.

In recognition of the outstanding contribution made by Australia’s volunteers, the 2003 Six Coin Set is the first year set to feature a third coin specially redesigned to carry the theme.

Controller of the Royal Australian Mint, Vivienne Thom, said that since the phenomenal success of the Sydney Olympics the world increasingly saw the volunteering spirit as a defining quality in the Australian character. “But the truth is that volunteering spirit has always been there,”

Sha Cordingley, CEO of Volunteering Australia, thanked the Mint for the opportunity to be involved in such an exciting project, and said, “such a wonderful tribute could only help to inspire more people to recognise the value of volunteering.”

NAB Awards for Excellence

Volunteering ACT would like to congratulate the following winners of the National Bank Community Link Awards for 2002. Well done!

The Winners: -

- CSIRO Entomology
- Volunteers in Policing
- Mental Illness Education ACT
- Pegasus Riding for the Disabled

Highly commended: -

- ACT Safety House Association
- Rivers Volunteer Bushfire and Emergency Services Brigade
- Clown Rounds
- SIDS and Kids ACT

International Volunteers Day

What did you do on December 5th, International Volunteer Day? We are aware that numbers of organisations held special events, for instance the Volunteers in Policing Program held a graduation ceremony for their second round of recruits. Congratulations to those volunteers.

We would like to report all your IVD activities to Volunteering Australia, which will relay them to the VA network across Australia. I will also send your news to IAVE, the International Association for Volunteer Effort.

Your organisation can become a member of IAVE and for more information contact us for an application form.

The NRMA has once again agreed to join with VACT in recognising Canberra and region's volunteers through the Volunteer of the Year Awards. Last years awards were a great success recognising over 100 volunteers nominated across a wide range of organisations and activities. You should receive an invitation in the near future to the launch of the 2003 Awards. The Chief Minister, Mr. Jon Stanhope has agreed to officiate at the launch at the attractive venue the Brandman Cricket Pavilion, Manuka on 27th February. Nomination forms will be made available on that day and can also be obtained from VACT and the NRMA after the launch and publicised in the media.

If you would like more information, or would like to express interest in attending the launch now, please phone on (02) 6251 4060 or email volact@volunteeract.com.au Good luck with your nominations, lets break the record with the number that are received this year!

A message from the Folk Festival Office.**2003 EASTER NATIONAL FOLK FESTIVAL**

The website is ready for your secure purchase of tickets. If you cannot order on our website then our ticket office ***OPENS ON 6 JANUARY***. Early bird dates are 31 January or 14 March - depending how much you want to save. After 14 March all tickets are only available at the gates. If you decide to come then please be aware that entry will strictly be by ticket and the site will be closed to those without tickets until the ticket offices open at 8am on Thursday 17 April. Performer and stall applications have now closed, so we are now anticipating the volunteers to send in their forms. Because of insurance needs we need to ensure that no form then no volunteering, and we have a limited number on our insurance policy, so you will need to be quick.

More Awards

It must be the season for awards, see below a host of announcements re special recognition awards, congrats to all the recipients!

Centrelink wins National Service Excellence Award

Centrelink has been recognised for its contribution to quality service and innovation, winning the Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA) inaugural *Award for Excellence in Service*. Centrelink's Multicultural Services Officer for the ACT & Surrounding Region, Richard Harman, said on receiving the Award "Since its inception in 1997, Centrelink has recognised and incorporated cultural and linguistic diversity issues into day-to-day work, supporting this in many practical ways,"

The unit has coordinated and trained a number of Multicultural Service Officers, based in Centrelink Customer Service Centres all over Australia, linking strategically with refugee and migrant communities. Centrelink has also developed an extensive suite of translated information both in print and on the web site.

Prime Minister's Awards for Excellence in Community Business Partnerships

Congratulations to Marymead Child and Family Centre and Acumen Alliance, as ACT winning partnership in the Prime Minister's annual Awards, now in its fourth year. The partnership was awarded in the medium business category and recognised the work of Mary Mead in assisting 800 families and children and that of Acumen Alliance in its work alongside Mary Mead providing financial assistance, board members and skill development for the Mary Mead staff. The partnership also helped Mary Mead extend its community support base and helped the staff of Acumen develop new skills and derive satisfaction from their community work.

The Awards were initiated to encourage and recognise the joint contributions of business and community to projects which address issues of concern to the community. They serve to promote the partnerships themselves and raise awareness in the general community that many businesses are contributing to the social and economic well being of the communities in which they operate. The judging of nominations is carried out by a broad representative group of highly qualified individuals including Sha Cordingley, CEO of Volunteering Australia.

More information about the Awards can be obtained from Glennys Purcell (02) 6212 9538 or via the website www.partnerships.gov.au

Landcare Awards

VACT would like to congratulate the following ACT ten finalists in the National Landcare Awards.

- **Geoff Butler** - for his commitment and individual services to the Landcare program;
- **Environment ACT and community volunteers** - for rehabilitation of degraded areas along a section of the Murrumbidgee River Corridor near Canberra
- **The Sullivans Creek Catchment Group** - for its long-term work on restoring sections of Sullivans Creek;
- **Lake Tuggeranong College and Environment ACT** - for Aquafest, an annual community event incorporating interactive displays by organisations and groups with an interest in water;
- **Geary's Gap/Wamboin Landcare Group** for their book, Look after your natural assets - landcare for the bush block and small farm acreage;
- **Huntly Pastoral Company** - for introducing treestock to supplement remaining remnant native vegetation at 'Huntley', the largest rural lease in the ACT;
- **Environment ACT** - for 'Park Care', a program where people from the community form volunteer groups and work with Rangers to care for local nature reserves and Namadgi National Park;
- **Ginninderra Catchment Group and Environment ACT** - for Catchment Health Indicators, a coordinated approach to monitoring and research at the local, paddock and farm catchments in urban, rural and nature conservation setting;
- **The Friends of Aranda Bushland** - for its significant contribution to removing a large number of woody weed species from the Aranda Bushland;

- **Greening Australia ACT/South-east NSW** - for its Vegetation Investment Project, which aims to achieve broad landscape changes in the conservation and rehabilitation of remnant native vegetation.

Healthpact Awards Promote a Healthy Territory

Recently the Chief Minister Jon Stanhope presented Healthpact's 2003 Certificate of Excellence to the Department of Urban Services. VACT would like to add its congratulations.

An example of the type of activity recognised was the Urban Service's 'Promoting a Healthy Workforce' program. It encourages employees to attend physical activity programs and seminars; they have introduced Carer's Room, developed a skin protection policy, and helped employees to establish their own specific physical activity programs.

A recent national survey demonstrates that such activities helped the ACT become the most active and long-lived in Australia. Surveys also find that being involved in helping other people in the community is good for your health. Organisations, which promote and assist participation by Canberrans in the daily life of their communities, should consider lining up for next years Awards.

Other winners of the Certificates of Recognition included:

- *Healthy People Category Winner* - Belconnen Community Service.
- *Highly commended-* Gungahlin Youth Service
- *Health Communities Category Winner* - Residents of Childers and Kingsley Streets (ROCKS).
- *Highly commended-*Kippax Uniting Church and Winnunga Nimmityjah;
- *Health Environment Category Winner* - The National Heart Foundation ACT Division.
- *Highly commended-*The National Heart Foundation, ACT and the Royal Canberra Show
- *Independent Category Winner* -Urban Services.
- *Highly commended-*Narrabundah Primary School.

NEW AWARDS TO MARK INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

New awards to recognise and celebrate initiatives that promote the inclusion of people with a disability in mainstream community activities were announced on 3 December 2002 by the Minister for Disability, Housing and Community Services, Mr. Bill Wood. He also announced that the introduction of inaugural "ACT Inclusion Awards" to be held next year to mark International Day of People With Disabilities The. Awards will .an opportunity to strengthen and publicly demonstrate the value of an inclusive community. They will focus on and celebrate the skills, abilities and achievements of people with disabilities that occur on a daily basis. The ACT Inclusion Awards will be open to people with a disability, their friends or associates, as well as community organisations. On the International Day of People with Disabilities, The Chief Minister, Mr. John Stanhope launched the publication "Leap Out", a wonderful collection of verse and photographs available through DPI.

Water Restrictions and Exemptions for Community Groups

The ACT Government has introduced mandatory water restriction. We are currently at Stage 1 of this scheme. Details of the scheme are being publicly distributed via a mail-out to all households and businesses and through the media. However, VACT has been asked in its role as a peak representative body to keep our members and stakeholders directly informed.

Stage 1 of the water restriction scheme is the same as the voluntary water restrictions that were recommended to the community in November, but they are now enforceable. If our water supply continues to decline, it may be necessary to introduce further stages of the water restrictions scheme later in the summer.

As ACTEW supplies water to the city of Queanbeyan under contract, the Queanbeyan City Council has decided it will introduce the same restrictions.

Organisations and individuals facing serious detriment as a result of the restrictions can apply for an exemption. Exemption forms can be obtained at www.actew.com.au, from Canberra Connect shopfronts in Belconnen, Civic, Woden and Tuggeranong, or from the ActewAGL Home Connect store in City Walk, Civic.

The ACT has also been drought declared from a rural point of view and we are assisting ACT rural lessees. The ACT Government will continue to monitor the situation and discuss with lessees what further assistance might be appropriate.

The ACT Government is reducing its water use by 15 per cent and signing a voluntary agreement with ACTEW to cut back even more dramatically on water use. Canberra's sportsgrounds and parks have been classified according to their usage levels. The ACT Government is reducing water use on low priority areas either entirely or by up to 50 per cent to balance the need to water highly valuable assets such as Canberra Stadium and key sportsgrounds and parks. The Government will still meet the target of a 15 per cent reduction in overall water use.

Many of Canberra's larger users of water are also signing agreements with ACTEW to cut back dramatically on their water use. These include Parliament House, the Defence Department, the ANU and the Australian Institute of Sport.

For further information, please call ACTEW on 6248 3131 or alternatively you can find information online at www.water.act.gov.au.

Contributions to VACT ACTION

You may be wondering how you can contribute to the new VACT Newsletter? Contributions can be send electronically to maryp@volunteeract.com.au in Word or in the body of an email. To those without electronic means then fax copy to (02) 6251 4161 or mail to PO Box 48, BELCONNEN ACT 2617. You are particularly encouraged to raise issues of concern regarding volunteer management or development, or share ideas, news or innovation with the rest of the network.

Mary Porter
CEO