

Media Release: Thursday 30 July, 2015

## New Definition of Volunteering in Australia

The new definition of volunteering has been expanded for the first time in 20 years to recognise the new ways Australians give their time.

**New Definition 2015: *Volunteering is time willingly given for the common good and without financial gain***

Volunteering Australia Chief Executive Officer Brett Williamson said the new definition followed an extensive two year, nationwide consultation to understand what activities we considered as volunteering today. "A lot has changed in 20 years, including how people volunteer," Mr Williamson said.

"The new definition captures newer forms of volunteering such as online volunteering, spontaneous volunteering, corporate volunteering and social entrepreneurship. It is broader, more inclusive and for the first time, recognises informal volunteering."

Mr Williamson said the previous definition developed in 1996 was out-dated because it only recognised formal volunteering undertaken for not-for-profit organisations. It did not capture virtual volunteering, volunteering for private organisations or informal volunteering in the community.

Changes in public policy such as the Work for the Dole program had also created grey areas around volunteering which needed to be clear. The new definition also clarifies civic participation activities which are not considered volunteering: direct family responsibilities; compulsory internships or work experience; participation in Work for the Dole programs; court orders such as community service and compulsory volunteering as part of study, are all excluded from the new Australian definition of volunteering.

"The new definition of volunteering in Australia makes clear that volunteering is time willingly given for the common good and without financial gain," Mr Williamson said.

According to Evelyn O'Loughlin, CEO Volunteering SA&NT, "The new definition will help us accurately measure and value volunteering. Importantly, it provides us with a clear and common understanding of what volunteering is, which will ultimately support the integrity of the work volunteers do."

"The fact that the latest ABS data reflects a decline in volunteering in all States and Territories, we want to be sure that we are measure the right things going forward."

The supporting explanatory notes for the definition will be re-assessed in six months and annually thereafter. Feedback can be directed to Volunteering Australia at [admin@volunteeringaustralia.org](mailto:admin@volunteeringaustralia.org)

Information on the new definition of volunteering including explanatory notes and frequently asked questions is available at [www.volunteeringaustralia.org](http://www.volunteeringaustralia.org)

### Media Enquiries:

Pat Austin, Volunteering SA&NT: [pat.austin@volunteeringsa-nt.org.au](mailto:pat.austin@volunteeringsa-nt.org.au) Ph 08 8221 7177, 0424 199 987

Kylie Hughes, Volunteering Australia: [kylie@volunteeringaustralia.org](mailto:kylie@volunteeringaustralia.org) Ph: 02 6251 4060