

Volunteer Census 2018



INFORMING
VICTORIANS
FOR 50 YEARS

About Us

Community Information & Support Victoria (CISVic) is the peak body representing local community based not-for-profit agencies.

We advocate to government and other peak bodies on behalf of our members.

We support our members to offer services to community members who need help, especially the vulnerable and disadvantaged.

We offer training and support to our volunteers and paid workforce, so they can learn new skills and help others in the community.

Our membership is made up of agencies from across metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria. They assist people experiencing personal and financial difficulties by providing information, referral and support services.

Description of volunteers

The CISVic workforce is diverse. Though volunteer positions and roles vary, each volunteer contributes to the provision of support for those in our community who are disadvantaged. Volunteers bring their own skills, knowledge and life experiences to the work they do. The ratio of volunteers to paid staff is 10:1 demonstrating that without volunteer participation, there is no way that we could provide the services and support that we do.

Why we did the Volunteer Census

The Volunteer Census was conducted to provide an up-to-date picture of our volunteer base. We wanted to identify who our volunteers are and highlight their strengths and impact. We also aimed to explore areas of practice where we are doing well and where we can collectively improve and further develop.



Executive Summary

For 50 years volunteers have been providing critical support to fellow community members who felt they had nowhere else to turn. Community information and support services, formerly Citizens Advice Bureaus, were founded and run through the goodwill, of dedicated and socially conscious volunteers. Through their work they provided a listening ear, help for those in need and directed people to appropriate agencies for further support.

In 1973, from first available records, the Victorian community information and support sector had a volunteer workforce of 384 across 25 agencies. Fifty years, on CISVic now has a membership of 58 agencies with a volunteer workforce of 3028.

We have taken this opportunity to take stock and explore how we as a sector engage and support our volunteer workforce.

Key Findings:

- Volunteering in our agencies has positive influences on volunteers' wellbeing.
 - Our volunteers are well supported by their agencies.
 - Agencies' practices and procedures are aligned with The National Standards for Volunteer Involvement.
 - Agencies and CISVic could be doing more to measure and account for the impact of our volunteers' contribution.
 - CISVic need to improve their communication of the development and training opportunities available for volunteers.
 - There is a need for training in more diverse settings, including 'in house' training.
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Methodology

The Volunteer Census is comprised of two distinct surveys: one for volunteers and one for agency representatives. All volunteers and agency representatives in the CISVic membership were invited to participate. Participants could complete the survey physically or online.

Six hundred and twenty-four volunteers completed the volunteer survey. This group represents 20 per cent of our volunteer workforce.

A further 34 agency representatives undertook the agency survey, representing nearly two-thirds of our entire agency membership. Not all respondents in both surveys answered every question.

Ardoch Youth Foundation

Ardoch Youth Foundation (Ardoch) is an associate member of CISVic and like other members, volunteers are at the heart of their activities, both through their community volunteer programs for individuals and through corporate volunteering. Ardoch is focused on improving educational outcomes for children and young people in disadvantaged communities and recruiting, training and placing volunteers to support this.

Ardoch's volunteers make up nearly 50 per cent (1600) of the volunteer numbers reported in the agencies surveys for this census. They also provide a unique

service to the community, one that is different to our other members.

While Ardoch participated in the agency survey, individuals did not participate in the volunteer survey. In order to properly represent Ardoch, we have separated out Ardoch's volunteer data and highlighted it below.

- 50% female and 50% male
- 80% have been volunteering for up to 6 months
- 2199 hours of volunteering is contributed per month

Ardoch conduct their own volunteer surveys which, when last done in 2017, showed:

- 92% of responses indicated they made a positive contribution in their community through participation in Ardoch's programs
- 86% of responses indicated their satisfaction as an Ardoch volunteer
- 93% of responses rated the customer service and communication from

Ardoch staff as good to excellent We thank Ardoch for their involvement in this census and acknowledge the great work they do in supporting their volunteers.

National Standards of Volunteer Involvement

In 2015, Volunteering Australia introduced the new National Standards for Volunteer Involvement (Standards) to provide a framework of best practice for supporting the volunteer sector.

The 8 Standards of volunteer involvement



1: Leadership and Management

Leadership promotes a positive culture towards volunteering and implements effective management systems to support volunteer involvement.



2: Commitment to Volunteer Involvement

Commitment to volunteer involvement is set out through vision, planning and resourcing, and supports the organisation's strategic direction.



3: Volunteer Roles

Volunteers are engaged in meaningful roles which contribute to the organisation's purpose, goals and objectives.



4: Recruitment and Selection

Volunteer recruitment and selection strategies are planned, consistent and meet the needs of the organisation and volunteers.

The Standards provide good practice guidance to organisations with volunteers, including risk and safety management. This, in turn, improves the volunteer experience for all.

There are eight Standards addressing the key areas of volunteer involvement. Throughout this report we have considered how our agencies and CISVic align with the Standards.



5: Support and Development

Volunteers understand their roles and gain the knowledge, skills and feedback needed to safely and effectively carry out their duties.



6: Workplace Safety and Wellbeing

The health, safety and wellbeing of volunteers is protected in the workplace.



7: Volunteer Recognition

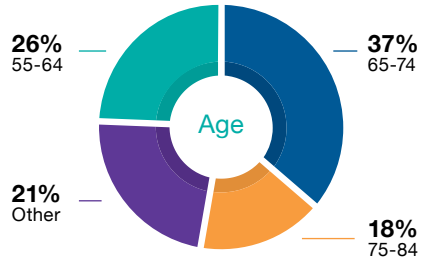
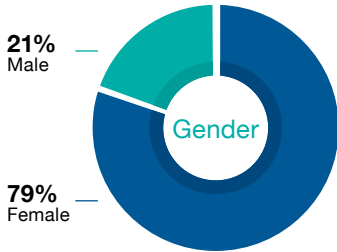
Volunteer contribution, value and impact is understood, appreciated and acknowledged.



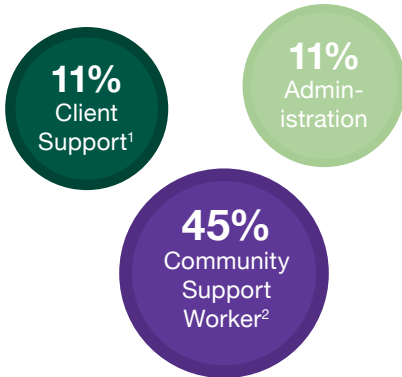
8: Quality Management & Continuous Improvement

Effective volunteer involvement results from a system of good practice, review and continuous improvement.

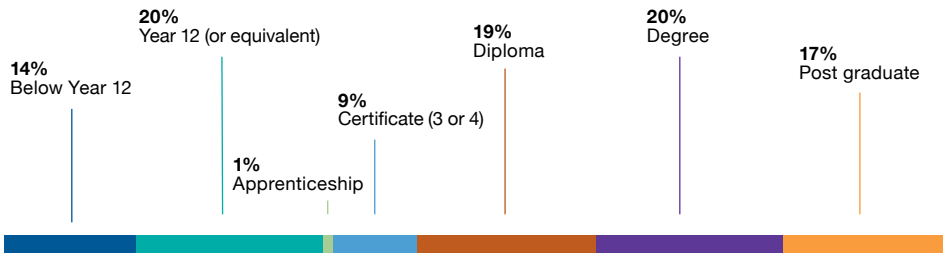
Survey findings. Who are our volunteers?



The top three roles they volunteer in are:

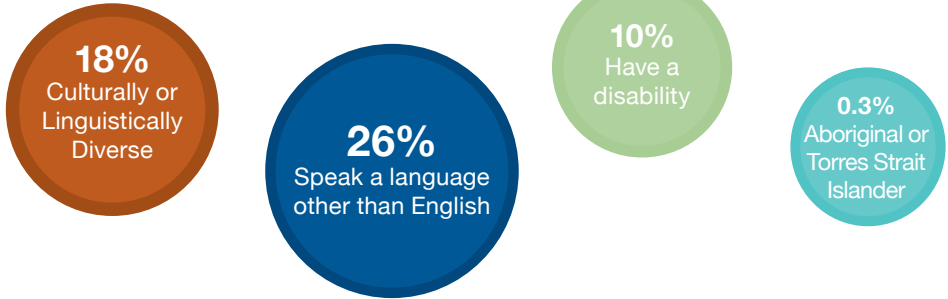


Their levels of education are:

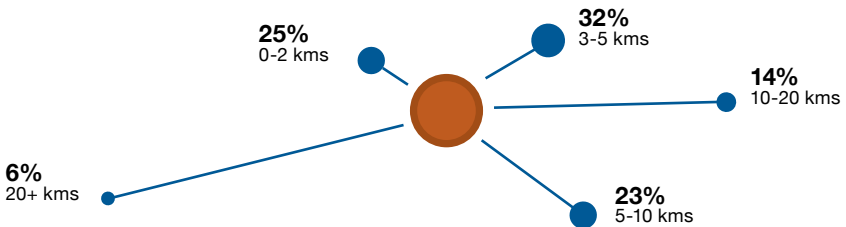


¹Roles that support clients, such as NILs, Tax Help, Casework, etc.
²CISVic trained interviewer

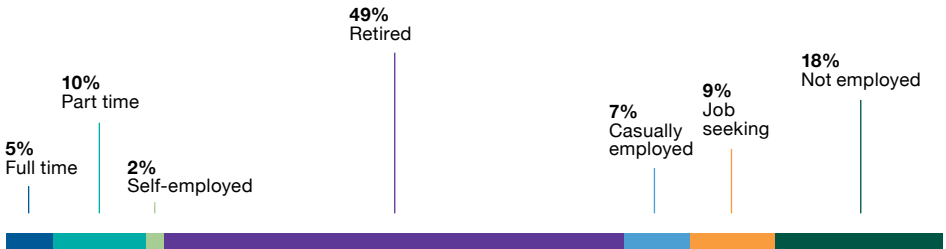
They identify as:



They live this far from where they volunteer:

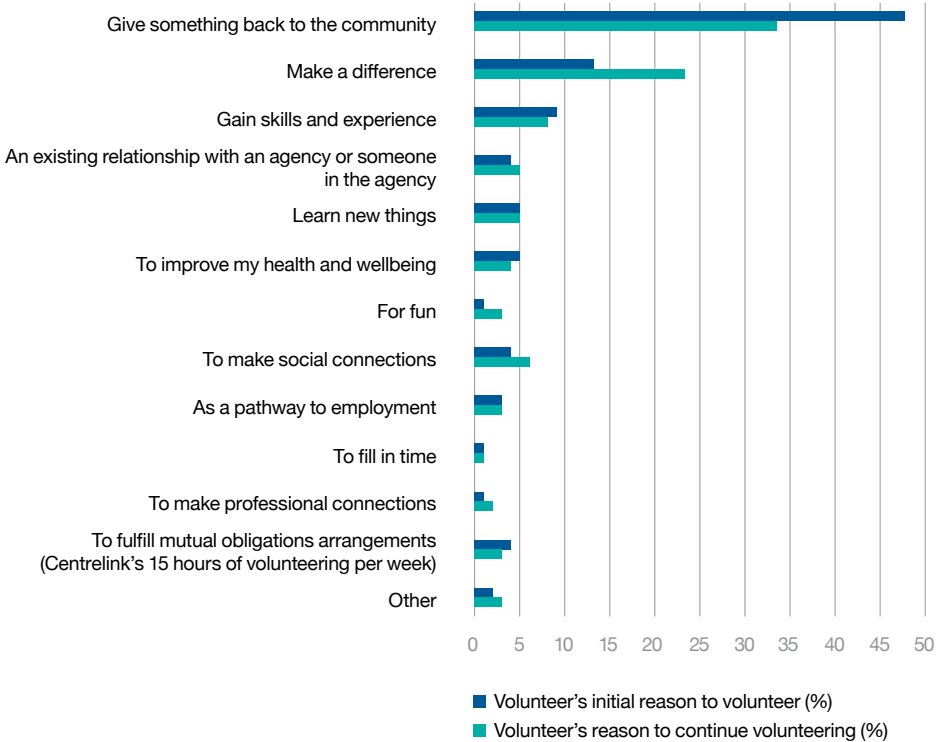


Their employment status is:



Volunteer Roles

The main reason our volunteers started volunteering was that it allowed them to give something back to the community (47%). This continued to be the top reason our volunteers continue to volunteer (33%).



“After a busy and fulfilling career as a teacher, which involved interacting with many people and making a meaningful contribution to the community, I was looking for a substitute activity in another busy and meaningful organisation, where I could make use of some of the skills and attitudes learned over a lifetime.”

“Helping people who are in difficult circumstances has always been a part of my life. As someone who has completed a degree, it is also vital to stay in the sector. Volunteering has also allowed me to meet wonderful people, network, learn valuable resources in helping clients, and contribute to the community.”

Our Stories

Why they chose this role

Volunteers were asked why they chose their respective volunteer role. Across the responses there were five main reoccurring themes. They are, in order of their frequency:

- Established skillset and upskilling,
- Alignment with personal interests, values and goals,
- Contribution to community,
- Role availability and need, and
- Social connections.

Impact the role has had

Volunteers were asked what impact their role has had on them. Across the responses there were five main reoccurring themes They are, in order of their frequency:

- Personal satisfaction and self-worth,
- Awareness and understanding,
- Social connections,
- Skills and confidence, and
- Sense of appreciation.

"I have always volunteered throughout my life - I struggled throughout my life and the kindness of strangers has helped me - so it is my turn to give back. However, the joy and fulfilment I get with helping others is wonderful and hence why volunteering has always been something I intend to do."

After retiring from a career in the community sector, **Geneille** wanted to find a volunteer position where she could make the most of her skills. Geneille has now been volunteering for 17 years and finds it very fulfilling to be able to assist people in need.



"I certainly do recommend this volunteer work to others. I know the education, training and support we are provided with ensures (that) a sometimes difficult and challenging job is not only worthwhile, but is (also) achievable by those not yet experienced in the area"

Experience within the Agency



Length of time volunteering with the agency

Longevity of volunteering has always been a key attribute of our sector, with many volunteers dedicating upwards of ten years. This continues to be the case with 20 per cent respondents volunteering at their agency for more than ten years.

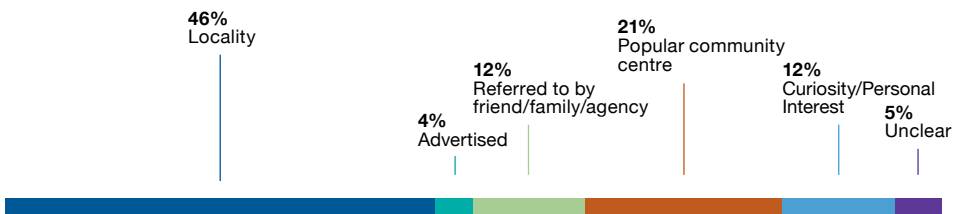
26% have been volunteering at their agency between two to five years

Why they chose this role

Nearly half (46%) of volunteers responded that they had chosen their respective agency due to the agency's location. A further 20 per cent of volunteers chose their agency due to the agency's popular reputation.

95% of volunteers are likely or more than likely to recommend volunteering at their agency to others

Reason for choosing agency



Volunteer involvement

Overall, volunteers positively reported on their involvement in agencies. Nearly all volunteers (95%) believed that their work was meaningful in directly supporting the agency. To a lesser degree, volunteers believed agencies were making the most of their skills and expertise.

Volunteers beliefs regarding their participation in their agency	volunteers that agree/strongly agree
Respected member of agency	92%
Making the most of their skills and expertise	82%
Work is meaningful in directly supporting the agency	95%

Our Stories

Volunteer understanding of their agency

Over two-thirds (68%) of volunteers reported having a high understanding of their agency vision, mission or goals.

Similarly, across agency practice, systems and procedures overall, volunteers indicated having medium to high understanding.

Volunteer understandings of their agency's practice, systems and procedures	Low	Medium	High
Vision, Mission or Goals	2%	30%	68%
Strategic Plan/ Direction	10%	46%	44%
Policies and procedures	5%	40%	55%
OHS & Risk management systems	8%	44%	48%
Complaints and grievance procedures	10%	42%	48%

Being raised in a country community where her mother was very involved as a volunteer, **Margaret** had always expected that she would do the same. Impressively, Margaret has been volunteering for Mornington Community Information and Support Centre for 35 years. Margaret highly recommends volunteering, as she believes it broadens your understanding of the lives of others.



“[A positive effect of my volunteering] is meeting and working with a vast range of wonderfully dedicated volunteers and staff”

Supports within the Agency



93% of volunteers agree or strongly agree that they feel supported in their agency

98% of volunteers know who they can speak to if they have any issues relating to their role

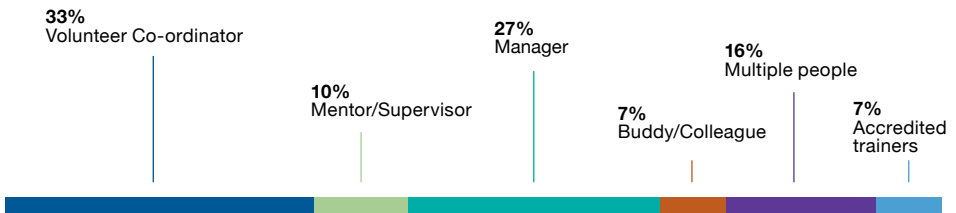
The vast majority of volunteers (82%) responded they feel very safe at all times when performing their volunteer role. Only one volunteer (0.2%) answered that they often feel unsafe.

90% of volunteers agree or strongly agree that they receive enough direction to perform their role properly

86% of volunteers agree or strongly agree that they feel there was an appropriate induction to the role and the agency relating to their role

No agency reported having no formal induction/orientation procedure. The person/s responsible for inducting/orienteering new volunteers, including informing them of the agency's policies and procedures and ensuring they understand expectations of them, varied across agencies. Most often the Volunteer Coordinator (33%) was reported as responsible for inducting and orienting volunteers, followed by the Manager (27%).

Person/s responsible for inducting/orienting new volunteers



72% of volunteers were aware of further volunteer roles and opportunities that they can take up within the agency

38% of volunteers had taken up further roles and opportunities within the agency

Our Stories

What can CISVic do better?

Agencies were given the opportunity to provide feedback on how CISVic could do better to support their volunteers. Half (50%) of the agencies responded more diverse training locations are needed. This included offering online training opportunities.

Other responses included:

“Through advertising for volunteers on behalf of the organisation as a whole”

“Not increasing the cost of the course [Community Support Worker Course] - the cost of the course is very expensive”

“Funding the coordinator’s role”

“Advertising the annual [training] calendar earlier”

Volunteer supports

Agencies were asked if there were unlimited resources, what type of volunteer support would they want? The most common response among the agencies related to more paid positions that would support volunteers’ work. Most frequently this was named as the wish for a Volunteer Coordinator, however some agencies also listed other specialist roles, such as social workers or a funding officer.

“Minimum 3 days per week Volunteer Coordinator to do: recruitment, induction, communications, records management, volunteer appreciation, volunteer training.”

“A fully paid full time manager / coordinator.”

Susanne has been volunteering for Cranbourne Information & Support Service (CISS) for 39 years after seeing a position advertised in the local newspaper. Through volunteering at CISS, Susanne has built strong friendships with other volunteers and staff. Susanne believes she has also increased her awareness of social problems that impact vulnerable community members.



“[Volunteering] has made me more empathetic and tolerant towards people, especially [toward] people who struggle daily to survive”

Volunteer Training



49%

of volunteers had completed the CISVic Community Support Workers Course. A further 3% were in the process of completing it

All volunteers who are engaged in the delivery of face-to-face support to community members are required to complete the Community Support Workers Course, with exception to volunteers of our associate member agencies. This nationally accredited training helps skill volunteers in assessing client needs and delivering appropriate services. Along with the accredited course, volunteers are offered a suite of training that continues to enhance their capacity to provide appropriate services to the community.

Agency satisfaction with CISVic training

Overall, agencies reported they were satisfied with the accessibility of the training CISVic offered. Agencies also reported that they were satisfied that the volunteer training offered supports the agency's work.

Agencies were least satisfied with the location of training delivery. Additional comments expressed a need for more diverse locations.

Other agencies also added that:

"(It's) difficult to manage availability of volunteers and availability of courses"

"Many volunteers have been with us for a considerable time and have a wealth of experience so do not always see the need for more training".

Volunteer awareness of CISVic training

Volunteers were asked to indicate their awareness of CISVic's regular non-accredited training:

64%

of volunteers were unaware or unsure of CISVic's Working with Interpreter training

55%

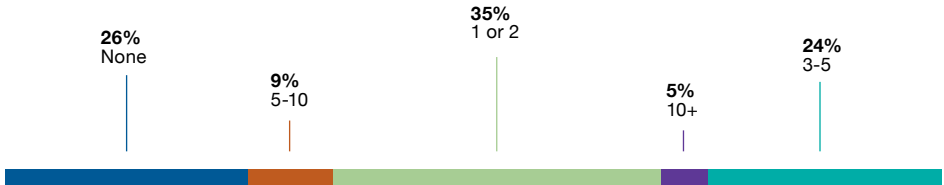
of volunteers were unaware or unsure of CISVic's Recognising and Responding to Family

64%

of volunteers were unaware or unsure of CISVic's Building Upon Your Interview Skills training

Training attended

Over half (59%) of volunteers responded that they had attended '1 - 5' training sessions over the last year. The most commonly reported answer was '1 or 2' trainings (35%). Over a quarter (26%) of volunteers reported that they had not attended any training sessions.



Volunteer training needs

Volunteers were asked what training would better support them in their roles. Types of answers varied across the responses, with four main themes reoccurring. In order of frequency, they were:

- Training modalities,
- Client needs,
- Administration and governance, and
- Working with clients.

“Within the agency - training on various procedures for different services. Currently we learn on the job and sometimes it can be quite unnerving going into an interview and being asked about certain services we don't know the procedures for”

“Mental health awareness training would be beneficial in carrying out the role of community support worker”

“To become more relaxed with use of computer.”

“More counselling courses”

Many volunteers expressed the need for more 'hands-on' courses and increased in-house training about the specific services and procedures within their agency. Further reoccurring responses among volunteers were the need for 'refresher' courses and training in dealing with conflict.

Nearly two-thirds (62%) of volunteers responded that they were happy with the training they currently received or believed extra training was not applicable to their role.

Identification of training needs

Only 50 per cent of agencies reported having a process to identify skill needs for volunteers. Some agencies elaborated on how often they underwent the process. The most common responses were “annually” and “on a needs basis”.

Volunteer Recognition



Across agencies, the average number of hours worked per individual volunteer was 21 hours per month. When asked, on average, how many hours per month does each of their volunteers contribute, agencies gave varying responses ranging from two to 112 hours per month.

16,523 collective average hours volunteered monthly

501 average hours volunteered per agency per month

Recording hours

The majority of agencies (69%) reported that they record volunteer hours. Just over half (54%) of agencies reported they record these daily.

Agencies were asked how they used the information gathered about volunteer hours. The most popular (38%) answer given was for reports to financial stakeholders and when applying for funding. The second most common response (31%) was for other reporting purposes, such as, reports to the Board of Management, and in agency newsletters and Annual Reports. Some agencies (14%) use the information for in house recording purposes, such as tracking hours over the years and monitoring whether volunteers are active or not. Two respective agencies also listed they used the information “almost never” and “to ensure volunteers are keeping up with community info and involvement”.

Volunteer return on investment (ROI)

ROI measures the dollar value benefit provided by volunteers against the cost of programs provided, taking into account the cost otherwise of the volunteers labour. When asked whether agencies utilise ROI to measure the impact of their volunteers, only 17 per cent reported that they do.

Volunteer contribution

Sixty-seven per cent of volunteers understood the benefit their volunteer contribution has on the agency as high.

Our Stories

Volunteer feedback

The majority of agencies (83%) reported using informal or on the job processes to gain feedback. Less than a quarter (20%) of agencies utilised anonymous feedback methods. Two agencies reported that they respectively use performance appraisals and agency communications to gain feedback.

Volunteer pathways

Over two-thirds (80%) of agencies reported that volunteering provides a pathway to paid employment within the agency either occasionally or frequently. Twenty-eight agencies gave information on how often this occurred. Reportedly volunteering provided a pathway to employment within the agency on 68 occasions in the last 12 months. The responses ranged from zero to twelve occasions.

“(I would like) more pathways to employment”

“I would like to see current volunteers (not committee of management) be able to transition into paid employment”

In regard to people of 55 years and older looking for volunteering to meet mutual obligations, 33 per cent of agencies stated that they would never or very rarely offer them volunteering to meet this requirement, compared to 53 per cent occasionally and 13 per cent frequently.

Fifty-three per cent of agencies never or rarely provide opportunities for volunteers engaged in Work for the Dole, compared with 33 per cent occasionally and 13 per cent frequently.

Matthew has been volunteering for one and a half years with Cranbourne Information & Support Service (CISS). Matthew chose to volunteer to gain more experience in case management and the community services sector. Through his role, Matthew has learned to be more mindful of others.



“Volunteering has exposed me to different ways of thinking and broadened my knowledge”

Volunteer Networking



Volunteer networking opportunities

A key function of CISVic is to provide opportunities for our members and their workforce to come together to share information, ideas and resources, discuss issues, access professional development, and to make new connections or strengthen existing ones.

Volunteers were asked to indicate their awareness of some of CISVic's networking and information sharing approaches:

71% of volunteers were aware of CISVic's website

45% of volunteers were aware of CISVic fortnightly e-bulletin

34% of volunteers were aware of CISVic's Bi-annual Conference

Twenty-three per cent of volunteers indicated that they are unaware or unsure of CISVic and a further sixty-five per cent are unaware or unsure of CISVic's Community Support Worker Case Discussions (a facilitated peer to peer learning forum for volunteers).

Agency networking

More than two-thirds (70%) of agencies responded that they attended a local Volunteer Network.

Of the agencies participating in Networks, the person responsible for attending varied across agencies. The most frequently reported was the Volunteer Coordinator. Other answers included the President, the Emergency Relief Coordinator, Managers and Community Support Workers. One agency also added that 'all members are given an opportunity to attend'.

The majority of agencies (60%) reported being a member of Volunteering Victoria.

Agencies utilised local volunteer networks and resource centres to support volunteers. Some agencies also responded that they use their local council, service clubs, schools, community groups and support services, such as the Salvation Army and Turning Point.

Our Stories

Committees of Managements (Boards)

Impressively many agencies (29) identified their Committee of Management (Board) volunteers as being members or past members of organisations or professional associations that support the work of the agency. Notably, the representation of Social Work/Health/Community Services field was 90 per cent.

When asked whether their Committee of Management (Board) volunteers also performed other roles within the agency, 27 agencies identified the following roles:

Number of volunteers	Roles
96	Community Support Workers,
61	Administration/receptionists,
43	Coordinators/Managers,
23	Logistics (e.g. food pickup, stock control, etc.)
17	Fundraising
17	Project work
13	Client support (other than CSW)
10	Promotions/online promotions
6	Something else
2	Opportunity shops.

After **Lyndell** retired she wanted to do something useful in the community where she could use her time positively and further develop her skills and experience. After a recommendation from a friend, Lyndell has now been volunteering at Bayside Community Information and Support Service (BayCISS) for 20 years. Despite the long span of her volunteer career, Lyndell adds that each time she works at BayCISS she still learns new things everyday.



“(The best thing about volunteering) is meeting and working with like-minded colleagues.”



Advertising roles

Agencies reported the most frequently used means of attracting new volunteer roles was through word of mouth (79%), current volunteers/workers (76%) and through the local media (52%).

Similarly, volunteers indicated the most popular means by which they learned about their role was through word of mouth (23%), friend/s and family (17%), and through the local newspaper/radio (15%).

Interestingly, despite nearly half of agencies (45%) reporting that they advertise volunteer roles through community or church bulletins, only three per cent of volunteers indicated this method is how they learned about the role.

Recruitment

Seventy per cent of agencies indicated they have a documented recruitment and selection process. Nearly all (97%) volunteers indicated that they found the recruitment process easy to understand and felt informed throughout the process of becoming a volunteer.

Three quarters (73%) of agencies responded that they did not target volunteers with specific characteristics. Of the agencies (27%) that did target volunteers, retirees was the most frequently occurring answer. One respondent citing “they are more likely to give a much longer term of service considering the time spent training volunteers” as their reasoning.

The second most frequently targeted group was those who hold specialist skills for specific roles, such as money management skills.

Respondents also listed students in community services courses and individuals who hold strong interpersonal skills.

The majority of agencies (83%) do not recruit new volunteers for short term projects or roles in their agency.

Of the agencies who responded that they do recruit short-term volunteers, the majority elaborated that they externally advertise these roles. One agency also said they ‘usually use students’ for this type of work.

Barriers to recruitment

The most common responses regarding barriers to recruitment was the environmental capacity of the agencies (39%), such as not having enough room or lack of disability access. A further twenty-six per cent of agencies reported that there was limited work available.

Screening

Interviews were the most frequently used screening practice by agencies, with all answering that they utilised this process. Nearly all agencies (93%) indicated that they also utilised police checks. Some agencies also cited the use of alternative screening processes, such as probation periods and not accepting existing clients.

Screening practices	%
Police checks	93
Referee/character checks	62
Working with Children checks	69
Interviews	100
Other	14

Position descriptions

Many (60%) agencies said they have position descriptions for all volunteer roles. No agency reported that they did not have position descriptions for at least some volunteer roles.

Volunteer responses showed that the vast majority (81%) had received a position description prior to, or upon commencing, their role.

One-third (33%) of agencies responded that the position descriptions were reviewed annually, with a further 23 per cent of agencies reporting that a review occurred twice a year.

Engagement

Over half (60%) of agencies believed their volunteer base represented the local community they are based in.

36

average number of volunteer enquiries annually. The majority of volunteering enquiries resulted in recruitment.

64%

of enquiries resulted in new volunteers

Volunteer Management



38% of agencies are
Volunteer only

3228 is the number
of volunteers across
the 34 agencies that
responded

Volunteer coordination

Of the 34 agencies that responded 87 per cent have a Volunteer Coordinator or someone who includes this as a component of their job. Over half (59%) have this as a paid position, funded through a range of options including absorption into other position's funds, government funding, philanthropy or self-funding.

Agencies also indicated that responsibility for volunteers across a range of tasks is broadly shared across leaders within many of the agencies.

Agencies were asked what priority they place on the following systems for supporting and managing their volunteers:

The following percentage of agencies indicated these systems were of a high to very high priority	
Procedures or systems that assist in identifying, assessing and managing risk/ and OH&S	73%
Volunteer records are collected, kept secure and maintained	97%
Opportunities to informally debrief	87%
Opportunities that develop effective working relationships (team building)	67%
Requirements around level of training needed	73%
In house training	87%

Our Stories

Agencies were asked how well they rate themselves in the following volunteer management systems:

The following percentage of agencies indicated this was of a neutral to high priority

Formal supervision	67%
Performance development processes (yearly performance planning)	60%
Processes to identify 'skill needs' of volunteers (effective work practices)	77%
External training	73%
Provision of additional volunteering opportunities (pathways, skill development)	73%

The following percentage of agencies rated these management systems as excellent:

Responsibilities for managing volunteers is clearly defined and communicated	50%
Volunteer roles in the agency are clearly defined and documented	70%
Roles are systematically reviewed	33%
Policies and procedures relating to volunteers are clearly defined, documented, communicated and implemented	60%
Clear risk management processes are in place	47%
Resources are considered and allocated to volunteer involvement	47%

Fifty-three per cent of agencies indicated that they had room for improvement in the management of systematically reviewing roles.

Marzza initially learned about her volunteering role at Cranbourne Information & Support Service when looking to develop skills and gain work experience in the community sector. Marzza has now been volunteering for five months and believes her new experiences have made her a more compassionate and caring person. Marzza adds “it feels like the world has gotten bigger, as I am more aware of people and their feelings”.



“I think it’s really important for young people to get involved. It helps them integrate with people from all ages and learn how to talk to strangers. Mostly it makes you more confident and independent.”

Summary

For 50 years we, the community information and support sector, have seen volunteering at the heart of what we do. Volunteer involvement in the delivery of our work with the community is critical and something that our member agencies continue to value, work hard at and admire.

The National Standards for Volunteer Involvement provide guidance for agencies to best support their volunteers. In this report we have identified where volunteer involvement aligns with these standards. Overall, agencies had a strong alignment across all of them.

The findings from our census surrounding volunteers' experiences were also overwhelmingly positive. Volunteers expressed feeling supported and appreciated by their agencies and believed their roles and community contribution to be meaningful. The strong support and direction from agencies is reflected in the remarkable commitment from our volunteers. Nearly two thirds of volunteers in the census have been with their agency for more than two years. Impressively, 20 per cent had been volunteering in their agency for more than ten years.

Volunteers have also expressed a greater sense of wellbeing. Many volunteers shared that through their volunteer roles, they have developed increased feelings of personal satisfaction and positive self-worth. Throughout the report, volunteers also repeatedly commented on how much they valued the social connections and friendships they had made through their volunteering. It is encouraging to see that not only are our agencies able to provide impactful and meaningful experiences for community

members who access our services, but that our volunteers are also able to achieve vast benefits through their role. It should be regarded as a great achievement by agencies, volunteers and CISVic alike that nearly all volunteers in the census responded that they would recommend volunteering in their agency to others.

As we look to the next 50 years there are some areas that provide opportunities to improve. With only 17 per cent of agencies reporting, they use Return on Investment and a further 29 per cent advising that they don't capture volunteer hours, one of the areas needing further development in is the measuring and accounting for the impact of our volunteers' contribution.

Communication from CISVic to volunteers could also be improved, as a lack of awareness from volunteers of CISVic's development and training Opportunities, was highlighted. Further, volunteers and agencies alike indicated the need for greater types of training delivered across more diverse locations, including more 'in house' training.

CISVic sincerely thanks all volunteers and agencies for taking part in the Census, your willingness and openness in sharing your experiences and views is greatly appreciated. We would also like to acknowledge and thank the volunteers who shared their volunteer stories, highlighted throughout the report. Finally, we thank our two wonderful RMIT students on placement, Miranda and Fola, who generously worked on the census and census report.

Volunteer thoughts

On the community sector

"Together we do a great job, imagine what we could do if we had more financial help, infrastructure and technology."

"Very disappointed with expectations made by government on community agencies without providing relevant funding."

"Volunteers in general are not given enough accolades by the state and federal governments for the work they do."

"There should be more pressure on politicians to improve housing standards and availability for communities as it is at crisis point!"

On what they wish they could provide (if they had more funding and resources)

"A greater capacity to support the needs of our clients with material aid."

"Grants to families and individuals that have the will to be self-sufficient but need assistance to get over the current crisis."

"An increased range of support services based on the needs of the clients, such as increasing the amount of food voucher support and other material aids."

"Help with emergency and long-term housing."

Anything else to add?

"I hope everyone does some volunteering within their lifetime because giving back to the community is priceless. It's great to know you are doing something to help others and hopefully one day we can all help each other and have a world without poverty and full of peace. Everything is possible so let's hope and pray for a global solution. Wouldn't it be wonderful!"

"Volunteers are an amazing bunch of people. I am very grateful for the opportunity to work with these amazing people."

"I have fully enjoyed being a volunteer and always let my friends know that I do it. I am very proud of my contribution and encourage others to volunteer themselves."

"I am beyond grateful for the opportunity to help. More than happy to be able to make a change in someone's life."

"Volunteering has helped me cope with my husband's death."

"I no longer live in the municipality, but have found it impossible to leave, as long as I can be of use. The work makes me aware of how fortunate I have been, and the agency is such a pleasant, caring place to work."

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helping local communities
help local people