City of Rockingham

Community Plan Strategy

Volunteering Strategy 2016 - 2022

city of
Rockingham

Contents

1.   Executive Summary

One of the City of Rockingham's main aims from the Strategic Community Plan is to build a strong community. Strong communities have good stocks of physical, human, social and economic capital. Connecting people to each other, places, spaces and opportunities is vital to this process. Volunteering is a positive way of connecting people that can then significantly contribute to the cohesiveness and well-being of communities and of societies as a whole. Volunteering essentially provides opportunities for individuals to connect to each other and their community in order to make a difference to the community through their endeavour.

Volunteering has long been recognised as an essential tool in building this sort of capital at individual, community and national level. Volunteering WA in an attempt to quantify what this looked like in Western Australia (WA) commissioned the Institute of Project Management (IPM) to measure the value of volunteering to the State. Using their Model of Value Creation, they identified a value of $39 billion dollars across a year to the State.

IPM also identified that each West Australian who volunteers enjoys a personal well-being benefit in terms of quality of life. This benefit across WA was valued at $9.9 billion. It also indicates for every $1 invested in volunteering, $4.50 in benefits is returned to the community.

Importantly Volunteering WA estimates in the same document that by increasing the rate of volunteering by as little as 1% per year an additional $6.12 billion benefits over 10 years will be created.

To understand the local Rockingham context, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics 2011, Rockingham has 13.4% of the population volunteering which is below the WA average of 16.9%, and well below the Australian average of 17.8%. Therefore, from a statistical point of view Rockingham needs to increase its rates of volunteering across the City. If volunteering rates were to decline within the City the impact would be felt across a plethora of community organisations and Not for Profit Support Services. Social and economic capital would be impacted negatively with the risk that the City would be requested to provide more staffing support within the community to deliver competitions and services within the sporting, cultural, social support and emergency response areas.

The development and implementation of a dedicated Volunteering Strategy would provide a clear direction on how to achieve higher levels of volunteering and consequent improvements to both social and economic capital in Rockingham.

Fundamental to this concept is promoting the value of volunteering to the community, and, enabling people to connect to volunteering opportunities. Making use of the right technologies, in the form of online websites, and traditional face to face assistance in the form of a part-time Volunteer Resource Centre are the most recognised, efficient and effective ways forward to increase volunteering rates.

Therefore, in order to strengthen the volunteering sector within Rockingham, the following set of Key Elements (KE) has been developed based on research and community consultation outcomes:

KE1. Supporting Governance and the Promotion of the Volunteer Sector
KE2. Linking Prospective Volunteers to Opportunities
KE3. City of Rockingham (CoR) Registered Volunteers
KE4. Corporate Volunteering

2.   Strategic Objective

Vision for the future: Rockingham strives to match the State average for volunteering rates reported in the 2021 census.

Mission to attain the vision: In order to empower growth in the volunteer sector support the linkage of prospective volunteers to opportunities and promote volunteering as a significant community asset.

The City's commitment to volunteering is stated in the City's Strategic Community Plan (2015 - 2025):

Aspiration B: A Strong Community

Objective 3: Capacity Building and Wellbeing. A healthy community that volunteers, embraces lifelong learning and cultural awareness, and is involved with a diverse range of vibrant and sustainable community, sporting, cultural and artistic organisations and pursuits.

3. Background

3.1 Definition

In 2012 Volunteering Australia began a process of reviewing the current definition of Volunteering in Australia as developed in 1996. The previous definition defined:

"Formal volunteering as an activity which took place through not for profit organisations or projects and was undertaken:

- to be of benefit to the community and volunteer;
- of the volunteers own free will and without coercion;
- for no financial payment; and
- in designated volunteer positions only"

That definition had become outdated in terms of trends having impact on the sector including:

- Informal volunteering
- Skilled volunteering
- Group volunteering
- Corporate volunteering
- Youth volunteering to gain hands on work experience
- Volunteering through places of learning (University Volunteer hubs/leadership roles)
- Spontaneous volunteering (in response to bushfires/floods)
- Virtual Volunteering (Flash mob style volunteering)
- Episodic volunteering (Community Mates style volunteering)
- International/cross-national volunteering

The extensive review process recognised a new definition was necessary to gain a more accurate view of the size, breadth and value of volunteering and to increase recognition of a wider range of volunteering activities. This in turn would assist Volunteer Involving Organisations (VIO) s to challenge stereotypes around volunteering, make volunteering more attractive and accessible and encourage recognition of diversity in the sector.

The outcome from the review was a broader definition released to the sector in 2015:

 "Volunteering is time willingly given for the common good and without financial gain."

Importantly in terms of clarity and international relevance this closely aligns with the United Nations (UN) definition of volunteering:

"Volunteering is an action carried out voluntarily, according to an individual's own free will, not undertaken for financial reward nor stipulated by law, contract or academic requirement, and one for the common good. It includes acts that take place outside the context of a formal organisation on a regular basis (UN 2011:3-4)"

Importantly both the Australian and UN definitions now recognise informal volunteering, such as neighbourhood support.

3.2 International, National and State Context

3.2.1 International

The UN proclaimed the International Year of Volunteers in 2001 in order to recognise the way volunteers contribute to the progress, cohesion and resilience of communities and nations.

In 2011 the UN commissioned a report into Volunteering titled 'State of the World's Volunteerism Report' with a subtitle of "Universal Values for Global Wellbeing". In part this was in recognition that the contributions of volunteers are often ignored when discussing the development of nations. This became apparent with the development of strategic world goals such as the Millennium Development Goals and now the Sustainable Development Goals. While these goals focus on the basics such as long and healthy lives and access to education and an acceptable standard of living, there is less consideration of non-material attainments such as participation, empowerment and active citizenship. Volunteering is a powerful expression of these within a community, and should be included within strategic consideration of community development and community capacity building at community, national and international levels.

The following best describes the focus of the State of the World's Volunteerism Report 2011:

"The recognition of volunteerism is an essential component for the sustainable, equitable progress of communities. Its forms of expression may vary but the central values of solidarity and commitment remain strong."

It recognises that a community's growth is measured not only economically, but by the commitment of its citizens to contributing to the communities in which they live whether that is locally or globally. A strong community is one in which its members display characteristics such as solidarity, reciprocity, mutual trust, belonging and empowerment, all central to volunteerism. Volunteerism is one way people can engage in the life of their local community, feel a sense of belonging and identity that is important in building a strong local community.

The report also identifies the challenges of understanding what volunteering looks like worldwide. It identifies some essential characteristics that led to the definition referred to above as adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2011. These include free will, lack of financial reward, involve outcomes for the common good and can be undertaken anywhere at any time. The report also references the need to find acceptable and accessible ways to identify the volume and value of volunteering to a community.

Importantly when considering the strategic direction for volunteering in Rockingham this report also outlines some of the challenges for volunteerism in the twenty first century. Technological development impacts both the way people volunteer and how they connect to volunteering opportunities, so making use of technology within a community to encourage volunteering is important. The role of the private sector in developing corporate volunteering as a way to demonstrate corporate social responsibility impacts how a local government should consider this challenge. Expanded opportunities for travel and global volunteering can impact availability of volunteers locally particularly among young people.

The follow up 'State of the World's Volunteerism Report 2015' with the subtitle; 'Transforming Governance' was designed to assist governments and organisations to realise the full potential of volunteerism at all levels including the local level. At the local level the report suggests that:

"Volunteerism can increasingly be a vehicle for people in excluded or marginalised communities to be heard, that volunteers form alliances with local governments and other organisations to access the information and strengthen the capabilities they need to be involved."

Thus consideration of empowering location and connection to volunteering opportunities should be central to any strategy aimed at strengthening volunteer effort within communities.

The rest of the report is about the value of volunteerism at the governance level, such as the City's Advisory Committees, as well as issue specific action groups and organisations.

The United Nations reflects universal values for global well-being. As such its identification of volunteering as an accessible connection tool that contributes to a community's strength and resilience is important when considering the value of volunteering to Rockingham.

3.2.2 National

Volunteering Australia is the national peak body for volunteering, working to advance volunteering in the Australian community. Their strategic focus areas are advocacy, research and policy, sector development, positioning and profiling of volunteering and governance and sustainability.

They regularly publish 'State of Volunteering in Australia' reports. The April 2016 report sub-titled 'Help Create Happiness' details the trends, demographics, challenges and successes in the volunteering sector in Australia. It identifies two key policy changes and addresses the question; are the current volunteer engagement and management practices appropriate for the future?

The report identifies the two key policy changes in 2015/2016 as; the issue of a revised set of national standards for volunteer involvement, and, the revised national definition of volunteering. The standards provide guidance and benchmarking tools for VIOs including:

- Leadership and management
- Commitment to volunteer involvement
- Recruitment and selection
- Support and development
- Workplace safety and wellbeing
- Volunteer recognition
- Quality management and continuous improvement

Outcomes in the report are based on 3,044 responses from individuals and 881 from VIOs. The findings were:

- Disconnect between role being offered and roles of interest
- Misalignment between sector on offer and sectors of interest

- Deterrents include lack of flexibility, personal expenses incurred, administrative requirements
- Online recruitment

Other outcomes of interest include the answers to two survey questions in regard to effective recruitment methods. The role and availability of Volunteer Resource Centres (VRC) was one of the top four responses. Lack of resources was also a significant response in terms of impact on the effectiveness of recruitment methods.

Additionally in relation to corporate volunteering more organisations identified that employees preferred short term team type volunteering as the preferred option. Most organisations with a corporate volunteering program identified the top three reasons as:

- Viewed as part of their corporate social responsibility
- Provides employees the opportunity to make a contribution to the community
- Builds team spirit

The report also strongly emphasises the need for VIOs to concentrate on best practice engagement and management practices in line with the National Standards.

The National Volunteering Strategy sets out the Australian Government's vision for volunteering in Australia. The aim of the strategy is to ensure that by 2021 volunteering is encouraged, supported and recognised by all Australians. It states:

"The benefits of volunteering are significant for our nation, for our local communities and for individuals. The benefits are economic, social, cultural and environmental."
It recognises the invaluable contributions volunteers make to the Not for Profit (NFP) sector. Of the estimated 600,000 not-for-profit organisations in Australia, only 60,000 have paid staff. The social and economic impact on communities if these volunteer based NFPs did not exist would be significant. This resonates with the Rockingham community where significant numbers of small and large NFPs would not be able to provide services without volunteers.

The National Strategy used data from 2006-2007 that identified Australian volunteers contributed more than 700 million hours of unpaid work each year to their communities. The value of that unpaid labour was estimated to be over $14.6 billion.

The strategy emphasises the role of volunteering in strengthening community connectedness and social cohesion. It identifies the importance of these social connections at an individual level, often providing meaning, purpose and satisfaction in people's lives. This can lead to an increase in social ties, trust and even perception of safety. This is magnified for those for whom volunteering is difficult such as those with a disability, from an ethnically diverse background, those for whom reading is difficult and those who have limited access to resources.

For individuals, there are also health and wellbeing outcomes including reduced stress, better physical and mental health and greater longevity.

The strategy outlines that the volunteering landscape is changing as a result of wider social, economic and technological change. Technology has transformed the way we communicate and work. Governments, businesses, not-for-profit organisations and communities now work together in different ways.

It ascertains that volunteering rates in Australia are comparable with those in other Organisation for Economic Development (OECD) countries, although reliable comparisons are difficult because definitions and collection methods differ. The 2010 World Giving Index survey found that on average globally 20% of people surveyed had volunteered for an organisation in the month before the survey. In Australia, the reported rate was 38%, compared to 39% in the United States, 35% in Canada and 29% in the United Kingdom.

The National Volunteering Strategy sets out six focus areas for action:

- Respond to trends in volunteering, recognising the need to understand emerging trends to enable development of strategies to attract and retain volunteers.
- Harness technology, recognising information technology can assist to match people to volunteering opportunities and increase participation in volunteering.
- Better regulation and risk management, recognising the need for easier and simpler access to volunteer protection and insurance requirements. Many not-for-profit organisations cite the costs of training and managing volunteers as a significant barrier to the engagement of volunteers.
- Strengthen management and training, recognising the effect of good management on recruitment and retention.
- Strengthen relationships and advocacy, recognising the need for advocacy at all levels to build a stronger volunteering sector and
- Recognise and value volunteering, recognising that adequate recognition of volunteers will inspire more Australians to volunteer.

The strategy underlines the need to attract more young people to volunteering. People aged 18–24 volunteer less (27%) than the Australian average (36%).There is research that illustrates the younger someone volunteers the more likely they are to continue to volunteer for longer periods.

It also underlines the need to engage more baby boomers in volunteering; by understanding they have different expectations of the volunteer experience. Over 40% of baby boomers already volunteer, but there is an opportunity to engage more of them in volunteering activities as they approach retirement.

"Baby boomers want to utilise the skills they have acquired over their working lives through meaningful and 'valued' volunteering opportunities."

Recognition of the type of high powered positions in industries such Administration, Accounting and Information Technology (IT) that potential volunteers from this cohort have held across their working lives should inform the types of volunteering opportunities that need to be identified and targeted. This level of volunteering would aid significantly across the NFP sector in terms of lowering operational costs and supporting sustainability.

There is also the need to be inclusive, to engage volunteers from diverse backgrounds and people with disability.

The strategy also addresses corporate volunteering, identifying that many large corporations provide programs to assist their employees to volunteer. The strategy's research indicated almost 50% of not-for-profit organisations surveyed by Volunteering Australia in 2010 had engaged corporate volunteers in the previous 12 months.

Volunteering Australia also addresses the importance of corporate volunteering to the overall effectiveness of the sector. It conducted an online survey of jobseekers and recruiters on their perspective on Employee Volunteering (EV) and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs with the following outcomes reported:

- 91% of respondents indicated that they would be likely to participate in an employee volunteer program if they were offered the opportunity.
- One quarter of respondents actively selects jobs that have CSR programs and 47% investigate a company's approach to CSR when applying for a position.
- 68% indicated that an employee volunteer program is an important factor when deciding between two similar roles.
- Volunteering was the CSR activity that people were most likely to participate in.
- Almost half of the employers with CSR programs and recruiter respondents had reported an increase in the level of prospective candidates' interest in the employers' community or volunteering programs.
- The majority of respondents with EV programs reported these programs have positive effects on retention, job satisfaction and/or productivity.

At the national level then there is recognition that volunteering benefits our nation, our local communities and individual Australians. Also the need to respond to trends, utilise technology, provide assistance with costs to VIOs, support training opportunities and sector advocacy, as well as commit to recognition of volunteering effort.
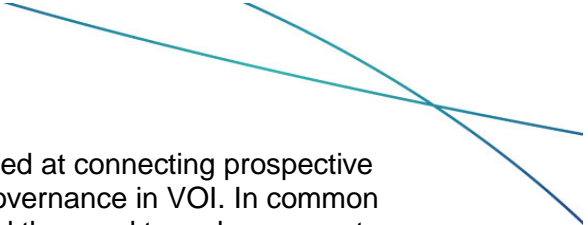
3.2.3 State

Volunteering WA is the peak body for the volunteer sector in WA. In 2015 it partnered with IPM to produce the 'Economic, Social and Cultural Value of Volunteering' report. This report estimates the value of volunteering in WA as $39 billion. The approach used was IPM's Model of Value Creation based on engagement with 1,000 VIOs and 10,000 volunteers from across WA.

The document also reported that Western Australians identify a personal well-being benefit from volunteering of $9.9 billion. It indicates for every $1 invested in volunteering, $4.50 in benefits are returned to the community.

Importantly Volunteering WA estimates in the same document that by increasing the rate of volunteering by as little as 1% per year an additional $6.12 billion benefits over 10 years will be created.

The report also indicated that when considering the numbers of people employed by industry, volunteering is WA's largest. Western Australians donated 15.9 hours/month each equating to a total of 315M hours in the 12 months prior to the report.

Volunteering WA provide a plethora of tools aimed at connecting prospective volunteers to opportunities and strengthening governance in VOI. In common with Volunteering Australia they have recognised the need to make access to volunteering opportunities more available for people with a disability. This has resulted in the development of the Enhancing Access E-Learning Resource Kit, a tool for volunteer managers who are interested in making their volunteer teams more inclusive and diverse. The kit includes resources to help make volunteer teams more open to people with disabilities and those recovering from mental ill health.

Vital Volunteering 2011-2016 prepared by Department for Communities and Local Government is the State's Volunteering Strategy. It outlines the State Government's commitment to supporting and promoting volunteering in WA.

4. Current Situation

Locally according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics 2011, Rockingham with 13.4% of the population volunteering is below the Western Australian average of 16.9%, and well below the Australian average of 17.8%.

Internal stakeholders within various Community Development teams including Community Support and Safety Services and Community Capacity Building have been consulted as to their knowledge of the state of volunteering within the City, through their connections with community and community based organisations.

While volunteerism seems to have been valued within the local community there has never been a strong overarching strategic direction set by the City to define the best way to maximise the volunteer effort locally.

Historically the City of Rockingham provided some financial support to the Peel Volunteer Resource Centre to provide a part time service in Rockingham from Lotteries House. The Centre operated from October 2007 to April 2011 receiving total funding of $30,000 from the City. Anecdotally the Centre provided significant connections to both individuals and VIOs.

In mid-2011 the Peel Volunteer Resource Centre was unable to source ongoing funding for the Rockingham service from the Department for Community Services, now the Department for Communities and Local Government. As a result it ceased to provide a service in Rockingham.

The City has tried over several years to secure this funding with the latest attempt made in December 2015. Correspondence was provided to the relevant Minister for Volunteering. A response was received advising that the Department's recurrent budget for Community Services is fully committed. The Minister also indicated that he has requested the Department to consider the information contained in the City's correspondence as part of future procurement planning processes for volunteering programs. Regular contact is made to ascertain if funding has become available.

As a result volunteering in Rockingham has relied on individual effort to identify and secure volunteer positions, and the ability of agencies requiring volunteers to be able to promote and recruit adequate numbers of volunteers. The City has on an ad hoc basis been able to provide some direction to the community as to bodies that might require their volunteer services.

Currently there is no VRC in Rockingham. Many organisations including the City take a role in providing information to people looking for volunteering opportunities. This usually takes the form of lists of organisations looking for volunteers. Additionally people hear of opportunities through friends, family, word of mouth or through some type of audio, visual or social media.

Some members of the community do access both the Peel and Kwinana VRCs for assistance, but most prefer to access assistance locally.

While many people successfully engage in volunteering as a result, it is piecemeal, and does not maximise the rate of volunteering. People can become frustrated at not being able to locate the exact role they are looking for; the information becomes out of date with many organisations being missed from the list, there is not enough information or contact details are incorrect. Additionally there are numbers of people in the community who do not have the confidence or sense of self-worth that enables them to make connections without assistance.

In an attempt to boost volunteering locally the City supported Community Mates to establish a Rockingham group over 2 years ago. Community Mates is a different approach to volunteering where groups of friends get together for one off volunteering opportunities often at events. The group struggled to maintain membership and eventually ceased to operate. Access to assistance from a VRC would have provided the support required for this type of group to succeed.

Organisations requiring volunteers also struggle to compete for volunteers without the level playing field a VRC can provide. This includes staff expertise in identifying prospective volunteers' interests and matching them to opportunities, ability to promote and professional management of volunteers.

Given the lack of a more formal way of becoming a volunteer, it is gratifying that volunteers undertake such a myriad of roles in Rockingham. It is almost impossible to imagine how Rockingham might work without them:

- Fight fires
- Manage natural disasters
- Coach junior sport
- Patrol our beaches
- Provide first aid at events
- Sew costumes for plays and dance recitals
- Pick up rubbish
- Plant trees and gardens and regenerate dunes and forests
- Take isolated people out for coffee
- Run clubs, groups and organisations
- Talk to people at art centres and museums
- Conduct heritage walks
- Visit the sick
- Make school lunches in the canteen
- Mentor young people finding learning at school difficult
- Care for homeless animals
- Foster/train support animals
- Call bingo
- Welcome people into new social groups
- Make toys for disadvantaged children
- Rejuvenate, bikes, wheelchairs, computers for donation
- Drive people to places they could not otherwise access
- Phone isolated seniors regularly
- Pull neighbours bins out, retrieve their newspapers and mail
- Check on their frail next door neighbour daily
- Assist with community events

The City currently supplies support to a variety of VIOs from a community capacity building approach. Sporting clubs and many other organisations (eg: Rockingham Regional Environment Centre) have received governance support and training from the City enabling them to continue to function organisationally, financially and socially and to build a future growth plan. Other VIOs have had assistance to establish themselves as a new group (eg: Community Garden).

The City does provide volunteering opportunities to the community within City run programs and events such as Castaways Sculpture Award, Art Centre, Safety for Seniors, Rockingham Connect Community Transport Service, Autumn Centre, Youth Advisory Council (YAC), Neighbourhood Watch, Neighbours Unite, Gone Fishing, Seniors and Carers Expo, International Day for People with Disability and Bush Fire Brigades.

The City also currently provides Community Volunteer Recognition Civic functions.

4.1   Community Consultation

It is important in the development of a strategy to consider the community's views through outcomes from community consultation. Consultation occurred via an online survey and mail out to both individuals and local VIOs in regard to:

- What the Rockingham community values about volunteering,
- Their identified issues and
- Factors that prevent people from volunteering.

637 individual and 95 VIO responses were received.

4.1.1 Individuals Outcomes

The outcomes from individual respondents indicated that the majority of respondents are currently in paid employment (39%), of which 48% are working full time, 33% Part time and 20% are casual employees. Additionally 24% are retired, 20% are pensioners, 5% are carers and 11% are unemployed and 11% are studying.

More people who currently do not volunteer reported a number of reasons, including time constraints, other commitments, or were unsure how to locate volunteer opportunities and who to contact to register to volunteer.

Most people were attracted to volunteering because they like to:

- help people in their community or make a difference (83%),
- meet new people (56%),
- enjoy the community connections and involvement that comes with volunteering (47%),
- to keep themselves busy (36%) and
- like the knowledge or skills that they gain from volunteering (35%)

It is positive to note the numbers of volunteers who value the learning they acquire through volunteering given the City's focus on developing Rockingham as a learning community.

Most respondents indicated not liking volunteering for a variety of reasons including:

- Cost
- Administrative burden
- Lack of connections to paid work
- Location
- Lack of flexibility
- No back up from other volunteers
- Limited options
- Lack of support from government agencies
- Volunteers given the tasks employees don't like
- Too busy
- Commitment and personalities

As accessing volunteering opportunities was indicated as an issue for those respondents who don't volunteer, it is interesting to consider the responses to a question regarding accessing volunteering opportunities online.

If the option to access volunteering opportunities was made available online 468 respondents (81%) said they would do so. 309 respondents (61%) said that they would not   access online services and 190 respondents (38%) indicated they would require assistance to access online services.

The main reasons people said they wouldn't access volunteering online was they had no computer/internet access or were not comfortable to use internet or computers, that they prefer face to face contact or were too busy. It is worth noting that the majority of people who stated they would prefer to not access volunteering options online were in the 65 – 75+ age bracket.

Also important to consider is that 89% of respondents believe that training is important to volunteers.

Significantly these outcomes reflect those reported by Volunteering Australia in their 'Key facts and statistics about volunteering in Australia' published on their website on 16 April 2016. Both this report and the consultation indicated that most volunteers worked in sport and recreation and community organisations.

4.1.2 VIOs Outcomes

The outcomes from respondents on behalf of VIOs indicated that of the 93 respondents who currently utilise volunteers, they mostly represented sporting clubs and community groups.

Volunteer retention amongst respondents was very good with 88% stating that they are successful in retaining volunteers. Of the small percentage, (3.3%) who stated that they were not successful in retaining volunteers, the main reasons included family and relationship commitments and time constraints, as well as the ability to provide recognition to their volunteers.

Of the very few respondents who reported not currently utilising volunteers, the main reasons for not doing so were; too hard and they don't know how to engage volunteers because there is no local VRC.

73% of respondents have current vacancies within their organisation for volunteers varying in numbers dependant on the number of positions available.

Volunteer training was seen as being very important by 94% of respondents with 81% already offering some form of training to their volunteers.

The most popular methods (in order) to promote volunteer opportunities were:

- Social Media
- Combination of newspaper, social media, websites
- Via existing club members
- Word of mouth
- Website
- Volunteering WA
- Newspaper

In response to the question; if the City of Rockingham provided a website to promote volunteer vacancies, over 70% of respondents indicated they would use this tool and that the tool would be useful to them.

Responses indicated that the VIOs who responded to the survey could not operate without the use of volunteers. Volunteers fulfil the operational requirements of the organisations thus enabling them to continue to offer their service to the community. Funding was an issue for all respondents with the utilisation of volunteers the main way of keeping costs affordable, and their organisations operating.

When asked what their volunteers enjoyed about volunteering most respondents indicated that most of their employees enjoy giving back to their community.

Consideration of the outcomes of the consultation indicates the need to provide a way to connect people wanting to volunteer to VIOs requiring volunteers. Use of the online websites that the City could make available to the community could work. However a preference for face to face assistance with communication was also reported, especially by seniors within the community.

One of the more successful ways of providing this assistance is access to a VRC, which can be manned by a mix of paid and volunteer staff. The staff can assist a prospective volunteer to identify what they are looking for, refine their online searches to find a relevant opportunity and provide information and assistance in how to go about contacting their VIO of interest. They can also contact the VIO direct for those people who may lack confidence, have literacy issues, be from a CaLD background or is a person with a disability.

Recognition of volunteers and provision of training to volunteers were also identified as important and difficult.

Also of importance is that the outcomes from both individuals and VIOs have direct implications in relation to the new national standards, which are an important guide to strengthening the volunteer sector.

These outcomes from local community consultation are consistent with those reported at international, national and state level by peak bodies.

5. The Way Forward

The community was very clear when asked to identify their aspirations for the City's Strategic Community Plan 2015-2025, that Rockingham should be "a healthy community that volunteers, embraces lifelong learning and cultural awareness, and is involved with a diverse range of vibrant and sustainable community sporting, cultural and artistic organisations and pursuits." As such the provision of a Volunteering Strategy to describe the current situation and describe a cunning plan based on identified key elements aimed at increasing volunteering rates across the City is essential.

Most importantly volunteering supports the availability of current groups and organisations and the development of more to which people can connect and enjoy. Without volunteers Rockingham would not have the range of sports clubs, artistic and cultural classes, community events, support groups and services, activities for children, extra help for children in school, transport options or heritage experiences currently available to identify just a few. Funding from Federal, State, Local Government or private sectors does not stretch to these types of community based organisations and groups. Supporting the sector will ensure the continuation of these community groups and empower the development of more.

Additionally volunteering can contribute significantly to opportunities for learning new skills and acquiring new knowledge, thus contributing to Rockingham as a learning community.

As both the City and the community acknowledge that a healthy rate of volunteering builds the capacity of the community and its experience of well-being, finding ways to support and improve the way people locate, identify and engage in volunteering activities would be a positive way to increase the levels of volunteerism across the City. Special consideration needs to be undertaken to assist in making this process more accessible. It would make connecting to volunteering easier, and more accessible to individuals and VIOs alike.

In order to make opportunities to volunteer accessible, consideration of the needs of seniors, those with non-English speaking background, people with a disability and those who lack confidence, lack computer literacy and may be illiterate need to be considered. A part-time VRC where face-to-face assistance with identifying and connecting to on-line opportunities would be available would significantly contribute to making the sector more accessible locally.

Consideration of the impact of time-poor members of the community on volunteering rates make the investigation of innovative volunteering opportunities such as those delivered by Community Mates (one-off opportunities) and Flash Mob style volunteering opportunities essential. Flash mobs involve a large group of people gathering at one location to volunteer in response to a social media post.

Of overarching importance is the need to promote an understanding of volunteering as a positive and healthy way to engage with and connect to the community. Equally important is the need to promote volunteering as a way to grow a positive and supportive community. This is a role that the City could undertake to increase volunteering rates. It would make volunteering more attractive to community members and VIOs more attractive to prospective volunteers and increase their ability to retain current volunteers.

In line with the Australian National Standards supporting VIOs and prospective VIOs to develop adequate governance procedures and training opportunities would also strengthen the sector and the community.

The City as an administrative body currently attracts local people to provide volunteer support to many of its activities. Ensuring volunteering into City programmes and activities continues to be a positive and rewarding experience and in line with the National Standards will also contribute to a better resourced and more cohesive community.

These ideas have contributed to the identification of the following key elements for the City to pursue to deliver a volunteer friendly and better resourced sector and community.

Key Elements

1.   Supporting Governance and Promoting the Volunteering Sector

To build a cohesive and resilient City, a range of community connections people can access in their daily lives is important and one of these connections is volunteerism. Active volunteers and well supported community groups build connected communities by strengthening the ties between people, encouraging participation and responding to the changing needs of the community.

A basic role then for the City is to encourage people to volunteer by building their awareness of the benefits of volunteering and the opportunities available. Providing a wide ranging, eye catching and effective volunteering promotional campaign annually utilising on-line, print and voice media would be a positive way to encourage people to connect with volunteering opportunities.

Building people's confidence in their abilities and their belief in having something to offer is central to increasing volunteering rates. Providing access for both individuals and clubs to attend relevant workshops, seminars, and guest speakers builds people's knowledge and skills and supports their willingness to volunteer.

Volunteering WA deliver a workshop titled 'Step into Volunteering' which provides an introduction to volunteering, how to go about identifying opportunities and how to get the most out of the volunteering experience. Regular provision of such a workshop across the City would be central to encouraging community members to volunteer.

This type of approach can be very cost effective, with good outcomes from minimal investment (staff time and monies).

The more well-resourced volunteer organisations become within the City, the more sustainable they become and less likely to rely on grant funds. For the City this could mean more organisations enjoying access to the community grants program initially and becoming sustainable over time to become self-supporting.

This approach fits with the City's ethos of Community Capacity Building, Community Support and Safety Services and Libraries. It supports giving the community (in effect the volunteers) the skills, knowledge and resources to implement projects for themselves. Building skills and knowledge in the sporting clubs' volunteer population is already undertaken by the Community Development Officer (CDO) (Sport and Recreation) which aligns to the funding provided by the Department Sport and Recreation for the Club Development program. A range of CDOs work across a wide variety of groups and individuals that support volunteering aimed at improving opportunities in the community. The development of an annual calendar of training opportunities could be a practical measure to implement which supports this concept.

The City will implement an highly visible awareness and marketing campaign utilising on-line, print and voice media to positively impact on rates of volunteering across the City. Celebration of volunteering and volunteer efforts is also important through celebratory/appreciation events and good news stories among other options.

Advocating the importance of volunteering to peak bodies suac as WALGA will be undertaken to reinforce the positive social and economic impacts that volunteering has on local governments.

2. Linking Prospective Volunteers to Opportunities

Providing a clear and understandable linkage between prospective volunteers and organisations requiring volunteers is central to the ability to build good rates of volunteering. Both the research and the community consultation identified that use of the technology such as on-line websites is one way of providing this.

Currently, Volunteering WA provide three online websites that support a potential volunteer to organisation linkage to occur, at very little cost. The three websites are Viktor, Go Volunteer and Seek Volunteering and all are easily discoverable, accessible and user friendly. There is an annual fee to access these websites and several Local Government Authorities (LGAs) contacted stated they provide an annual funding contribution to achieve this.

It is hard to speculate on how many community members know or understand about the three volunteering websites. Therefore, a significant marketing campaign would be required to increase community awareness and education. The provision of volunteering website hyperlinks could be supported on the City's website and particularly on library websites where the community can access computers and tablets. Library staff could support this approach in the same way that they are approached for research assistance. A number of the LGAs approached during benchmarking indicated that libraries had a role in regard providing access to volunteering websites.

There are of course people who require assistance with this approach. For various reasons, utilisation of websites unassisted would preclude them for going forward with the attempt to connect to a volunteering opportunity. For a relatively small financial outlay the City could establish a VRC within one of the City libraries, staffed by a part-time Coordinator who would train a cadre of volunteers to offer the more traditional face-to-face assistance to both   individuals and VIOs. They would empower the vital connection between prospective volunteer and VIO position.

The VRC could be located within the Rockingham Central Library on a part-time basis under the direction of a part-time Coordinator and utilising trained volunteers. This approach has proved very successful for the City of Joondalup, whose volunteering rate exceeds the greater Perth metropolitan rate.

Recognition of the different ways in which people approach their volunteering experience, particularly young people requires the provision of information regarding new and engaging opportunities. Promotion of and support in developing Flash Mob and Community Mates approaches within the City would assist to grow this part of the sector.

3. City of Rockingham Registered Volunteers Management

The City has its own dedicated volunteers who make a significant contribution to the delivery of City of Rockingham projects and initiatives. These volunteers are currently registered with the City and provide support to the Autumn Centre, Rockingham Connect Community Transport, Gone Fishing, Walking Groups, Neighbourhood Watch Neighbours Unite, Bush Fire Brigades, and State Emergency Service, Seniors and Carers Expo, International Day for People with Disability, Castaways, Rockingham Arts Centre and various events.

A dedicated online system of volunteer attraction, management and retention in line with the National Standards needs to be developed to implement a best practice approach to the management of these volunteers. A dedicated governance system of internal procedures would then be developed. It would incorporate attraction, recruitment, retention, procedural management, and induction, code of conduct, training, reporting, insurance and acknowledgement. This system would then be utilised by all Officers managing volunteers in City programs. It would be a universal approach.

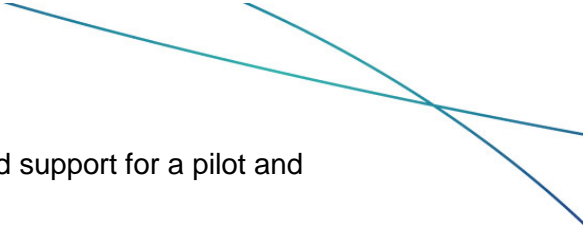### 4. Corporate Volunteering

While corporate volunteering was not addressed in the community consultation, it was identified as an important tool in the growth of the volunteering sector and connected strong and resilient communities internationally, nationally and at a state level. It was acknowledged as a positive example of corporate social responsibility and an example of how organisations including LGAs could demonstrate their commitment to the local community. It is also becoming more evident through research that it is a consideration for job seekers and can impact retention of staff.

Consideration of a corporate volunteering program as a City undertaking is also important in a leading best practice LGA. Corporate volunteering is a complex undertaking requiring commitment by all levels of an organisation. It can be undertaken in a variety of ways from release of staff on an individual basis for an identified period of time, for example one day per year on a specific project, to a group of volunteers working as a team on a specific project, for example a club clean-up or tree planting day.

Consideration must always be given to ensuring the volunteering activity aligns with the City's Strategic Community Plan, or Community Plan Strategies and that the volunteering effort benefits the local community.

A benchmarking exercise across all metropolitan LGAs illustrated that only the City of Canning undertakes corporate volunteering. They provide opportunities to staff to volunteer on a one-off basis as a group at specifically identified events and programs within the City of Canning.

This option would be simpler for the City to implement, and could be piloted as a one off, evaluated and then a decision made in regards to continuing. It involves the employer sourcing volunteer placements for groups of employees. The City (or a broker such as Volunteering WA – working in partnership with a local volunteer centre such as Peel VRC) organises all the logistics surrounding the placement, including securing an appropriate placement, liaison, rostering, risk analysis, transport, equipment if required and catering. The services of a broker would incur fees but may be more efficient where agencies have had little or no experience working with community organisations or lack the resources to undertake the work involved.

Consultation with the City's Manager HR has indicated support for a pilot and evaluation approach.

Encouraging and empowering local businesses to understand the contribution that volunteering has in creating and retaining a strong and connected community is important as a first step in increasing the spread of corporate volunteering across the City. For example the more local businesses instigate corporate volunteering the greater the rate of volunteering across the City. Additionally the availability of corporate volunteering can prompt employees to consider volunteering in their own time, which gain could positively impact the City's volunteering rate.

6. Measuring Success

Both research and professional community development opinion identify major outcomes from a strong volunteer sector for community in terms of connection, inclusion, growth of resilience and personal and organisational wellbeing.

If the City is to invest in an approach aimed at growing volunteering efforts a way of measuring this is required. Assessment of growth in volunteer numbers and use of City provided websites and training opportunities would be essential, and relatively easy to achieve. Community consultation required for the development of the strategy could provide baseline data that could be repeated and reported annually.

To measure the overall outcomes for volunteering in the City could be difficult and complex. The fundamental thought process is that if we have a volunteering strategy it would make sense to somehow measure how effective it is in relation to volunteer development, integration, support and retention as these factors relate to individuals and group outcomes.

Examples may include, if Officers or clubs have noticed an increase in volunteering does this correlate to increased social and community benefit? Measurement tools and functions would need to be considered to gauge these measurement factors and it makes sense to further investigate this concept.

Overall the timing of the Strategy is positive for potential measurement of overall outcomes in terms of the ABS census. The census will be undertaken in 2016 which will provide a measure of Rockingham's current rate of volunteering prior to implementation of the Strategy. It will then be due again in five years in 2021, with the results available in 2022. This will align with the completion of the Strategy.

7. Risk Management

The City has an Integrated Risk Management Framework that ensures risk is considered and managed within community plan strategies. The framework covers both strategic risk and operational risk. Consideration of this strategy has identified a strategic risk that volunteering rates could fall across the life of the strategy.

This risk could impact the City from a financial perspective. Decreased rates of volunteering could result in a loss, or lessening of the availability of community groups and organisations that provide many of the myriad activities available to the community. These activities include sporting, arts, culture and heritage, environment, informal activity, social and philanthropic opportunities, as well as emergency services.

For the City this could have a financial impact through increased funds and staff time spent on professional delivery of community groups, clubs and services that could be delivered by volunteers.

Use of the City's risk matrix rates this as a medium risk.

8. New Actions

New Actions:

1.   Supporting Governance and Promoting the Volunteering Sector

Task	Cost	Team	Commence	Complete
Develop an annual Volunteering awareness and marketing campaign utilising social media, the City website, the Chronicle and local print and voice (radio) media	*10,000*	*CCB/CS&SS/ Corporate Communications*	*April 2017*	*2021/2022*
Lobby WALGA to advertise the value of volunteering within the Local Government sector		*CCB*	*April 2017*	*2021/22*
Provide Volunteer Management Training annually to appropriate community groups, NFPs and VIOs	*5000*	*CCB/CS&SS/ Libraries*	*April 2017*	*2021/2022*
Provide other relevant training as identified to appropriate community groups, NFPs and VIOs	*5000*	*CCB/CS&SS/ Libraries*	*April 2017*	*2021/2022*
Promote National Standards to appropriate community groups, NFPs and VIOs		*CCB*	*2016/2017*	*2021/2022*
Promote Volunteer Benefits Calculator to appropriate community groups, NFPs and VIOs		*CCB*	*2016/2017*	*2021/2022*
Increase promotion of volunteering to under-represented groups including men, vulnerable groups, young people, people with a disability, CaLD and ATSI		*CCB*	*2016/2017*	*2021/2022*
Empower VIOs to gain funding for training and recognition of volunteers		*CCB*	*2016/2017*	*2021/2022*

2. Linking Prospective Volunteers to Opportunities

Task	Cost	Team	Commence	Complete
Develop an Annual Fee for Service contract with a peak body provider to provide a part-time VRC Coordinator	25,000	CCB	January 2017	2021/2022
Establish a part-time VRC within the Rockingham Central Library		CCB/Libraries	January 2017	February 2017
Satellite the VRC to each of the other libraries 1day per month		CCB/ Libraries	April 2017	2021/2022
Establish links to Viktor, Go Volunteer and Seek Volunteer websites, on City websites	5000	CCB/Libraries	January 2017	2021/2022
Promote VRC and volunteer websites to community, VIOs and potential VIOs		CS&SS/CCB/ Libraries	January 2017	2021/2022
Provide 'Step into Volunteering' training 3 sessions per year for potential volunteers across the community	5000	CCB	April 2017	2021/2022
Lobby the Department of Local Government and Communities for VRC funding regularly		CCB	April 2017	2021/2022
Promote the Enhancing Access E Learning Resource Kit to appropriate community groups, NFPs and VIOs		CCB	April 2017	2021/2022
Target highly skilled Baby Boomers as potential volunteers for NFP as a way to build sustainability in the NFP sector		Coordinator VRC	April 2017	2021/202

3. City of Rockingham Registered Volunteers Management

Task	Cost	Team	Commence	Complete
Develop and implement internal CoR universal volunteer management protocols		*CS&SS/CCB*	*2015/2016*	*2016/2017*
Develop and implement internal CoR on-line volunteer management system		*CS&SS/ Business Systems*	*2015/2016*	*2021/2022*
Establish an internal working group of Officers responsible for CoR volunteer management		*CS&SS, CCB/CALF*		
Provide individual or combined joint programs' appreciation event/s in National Volunteer week and during the festive season for CoR volunteers	*2000*	*CS&SS/CCB/ CALF*	*2015/2016*	*2021/2022*
Develop and implement length of service awards/recognition program for CoR volunteers		*CS&SS/CCB*	*2015/2016*	*2021/2022*
Ensure CoR volunteers are linked to the VRC and volunteer websites		*CS&SS/CCB*	*2015/2016*	*2021/2022*

4. Corporate Volunteering

Task	Cost	Team	Commence	Complete
Develop a Corporate Volunteering Program (CVP) offering 3 opportunities per year		*CCB/ HR*	*2016/2017*	*2016/2017*
Implement CVP Pilot program 1 in first year		*CCB/ HR*	*2016/2017*	*2016/2017*
Evaluate CVP Pilot		*CCB/ HR*	*2016/2017*	*2016/2017*
If Pilot successful, Implement 2 CVP opportunities in second year		*CCB/ HR*	*2017/2018*	*2017/2018*
Implement 3 CVP opportunities in third and following years		*CCB/ HR*	*2018/2019*	*2021/2022*
Promote the value of Corporate Volunteering to local businesses		*CCB/CS&SS*	*April 2017*	*2021/2022*
Fund an annual Rockingham Chamber of Commerce promotion of Corporate Volunteering Breakfast	*5,000*	*CCB*	*April 2017*	*2021/2022*

Ongoing Actions:

1. Supporting Governance and Promoting the Volunteering Sector

Task	Cost	Team
CDO Sport and Recreation supporting sporting clubs		*CCB*
CDOs providing support to community groups and individuals		*CCB/CS&SS*
Emergency Services support to Volunteer Bush Fire Brigades and SES		*Emergency Services*
CDO Safety providing support to NHW and NU volunteers		*CS&SS*
Providing Executive Support to identified Advisory Committees		*CCB/CS&SS*
Provision of Community Grants funds to VIOs		*CCB*
Volunteer Civic Receptions x 2	*30,000*	*CCB/Governance*

2. City of Rockingham Registered Volunteers Management

Task	Cost	Team
Utilisation of registered volunteers in CoR programs		*CCB/CS&SS/CALF*
Managing volunteers In CoR programs		*CCB/CS&SS/CALF*

9. Stakeholder Engagement

Key Stakeholders invited to participate	Contributed? (Yes/No)	Engagement method used
Community Members	Yes	Survey online and through random selection mail out, Share Your Thoughts
Volunteering WA	Yes	Stakeholder interviews x 2
VOIs	Yes	Survey online and through random selection mail out, Share Your Thoughts
COR – Managers and Staff Manager Community Capacity Building Manager Libraries Manager Human Resources Coordinator Community Development (Community Safety) Coordinator Sport, Recreation Coordinator CCB Coordinator Autumn Centre Coordinator Emergency Services Project Officer Community Transport CDO (Community Safety) CDO (Sport and Recreation) CDO (Arts and Culture) CDO (Seniors) CDO (Youth)	Yes	Stakeholder interviews. Working Group meetings
COR – The Executive	Yes	Discussion Paper/Draft for comment
COR - Councillors	Yes	Cr Engagement sessions x 2

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