



Joanne Ryan MP

Federal Member for Lalor | Opposition Whip

To whom it may concern,

I write in support of Volunteer West. In the western suburbs of Melbourne, volunteering is essential to the vibrancy and culture of our communities. This is a fact that is increasingly salient in the COVID and post-COVID context.

This is particularly true in the outer suburbs and in the electorate of Lalor, specifically where new housing developments are being built in seven growth points across the city of Wyndham. Wyndham has grown from a city of 201000 in 2015 to a city of 270000 in 2020. Yearly, Wyndham experiences population growth by approximately 6%, which far exceeds the Greater Melbourne average of approximately 2.5%. The dramatic and sustained growth is reflected in raw numbers and creates significant challenges.

The affordable housing being built attracts many first home buyers from new and emerging demographics best summed up by the over 100 first languages spoken and the number of residents born overseas at 41.5 %, which also exceeds the Greater Melbourne average of 33.8% . The challenges around employment, infrastructure and livability are immense and constant. The biggest challenge however beyond employment and infrastructure is community building itself. This work is often done in our local schools, sporting, hobby, faith and community organisations where volunteering plays a significant role in connecting and growing a collective sense of belonging.

The quality of volunteerism and capacity building in individuals and groups in volunteering is therefore critical in the success and depth of our communities in all facets of life.

Despite volunteers playing such vital roles in our communities, Volunteer West, the Volunteer Resource Centre that services 6 local government areas in the Western Suburbs, is severely underfunded.

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Given that every dollar of Commonwealth Volunteer Management Activity funding directly brings a return on investment of \$83 (with other indirect social cohesion benefits too), the core VMA funding investment must go well beyond the average 25 cents per person per year currently provided (i.e. \$18.8m over 3 years for all Australia).

For Melbourne’s western-metro region, Volunteer West’s receipt of VMA funding is actually 13.3 cents per person per year (\$117k for 880,000 people in the region), well below this low average of 25 cents per person per year.

After having spoken to the CEO of Volunteer West, I am confident that our communities will benefit immensely from this Volunteer Resource Centre receiving funding which is proportionate to its size and reach. Volunteer Resource Centres provide enormous support to community services that rely on volunteers, particularly through the provision of recruitment, training and support services.

Volunteer West currently is the only volunteer resource centre in Melbourne’s metro-west and has a clear mandate and commitment to champion and advocate for volunteers in the region. As one of the largest growth corridors, Melbourne’s west needs a strong VRC to enhance the effectiveness of our volunteering sectors.

Yours sincerely,

Joanne Ryan
Member for Lalor
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