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MEDIA RELEASE - VOLUNTEER WEST LAUNCHES VOLCONNECT PROGRAM FOR THE WEST

Volunteer West is hosting a launch event for VolConnect – Volunteer-to-Job Program on Wednesday 12th May 2021. VolConnect is enabled by \$1million funding for 6 months from the Victorian Government’s Working for Victoria initiative.

Since VolConnect was announced in January 2021, Volunteer West have upscaled from 4 to 25 employees in order to increase capacity to provide focused and tailored support services to community members and organisations in Melbourne’s West.

The launch event will be welcoming local MPs, councillors and Volunteer West partners to celebrate VolConnect’s achievements thus far, and to hear about the services and programs to come.

The speakers at the launch include:

Keynote speaker - Mr Kashif Bouns - General Manager, Community and Government Relations of Western Bulldogs Community Foundation

Ms Katie Hall - Member for Footscray - attending on behalf of the Honourable Jaala Pulford, Minister for Employment, Minister for Innovation, Medical Research and the Digital Economy, Minister for Small Business

Ms Thu-Trang Tran - CEO of Volunteer West

Other VIPs attending the event include:

Mr Stephen McGhie, State Member for Melton and Parliamentary Secretary for Health

Ms Katie Hall, State Member for Footscray

Dr Catherine Cummings, State Upper House Member for Western Metropolitan Region

Mr Bernie Finn, State Upper House Member for Western Metropolitan Region

Councillor Jonathon Marsden, Mayor Hobsons Bay

Councillor Michael Clarke, Mayor Maribyrnong

Ms Chris Campbell, Policy Adviser to Dr Daniel Mulino Federal Member for Fraser

Mr Scott Miller, CEO of Volunteering Victoria

The demand for volunteer-to-job support services has increased since the Covid-19 pandemic, increasing pressure on community and volunteer organisations to meet the demand.

VolConnect has meant Volunteer West can provide programs and support services based on those demands through:

- Supporting more community members to find volunteer opportunities. Volunteer West's strength is providing personalised guidance and support through a volunteer-for-volunteers model;
- Providing training and support to coordinators and managers of volunteers, and to organisations that run volunteering programs;
- Advocating for the growth of socially inclusive volunteering - in all its forms - across Melbourne's west;
- Advancing volunteering leadership through research and evaluations.

Volunteer West delivers a diverse range of programs and forums including:

- **Volunteer Management Network** - which provides essential support to over 400 volunteer managers from organisations across our vast region.
- **VolQ** - a forum for supporting volunteer managers with consulting services to address concrete questions about their specific work.
- **VolBoost** - an adaptation training and support package program to unlock the volunteering potential of small to medium organisations across Melbourne's west.
- **VoltAge** - a multigenerational mentoring project showcasing volunteering in Melbourne's west through photographic storytelling. These volunteer stories will be launched as a virtual exhibition on the Volunteer West website during National Volunteer Week on Thursday 20th May 2021.
- **VolPro** - a professional development program for leaders of volunteers, partnering with Volunteering Victoria's CPD (continuous professional development) program.
- **WestSeed** - growing grassroot community groups by supporting and connecting culturally and linguistically diverse community groups in Melbourne's west.
- **West4West** multi-sector leaders' forum series, where business and community leaders are invited to set the vision and agenda to create a volunteer culture in Melbourne's west that contributes to the long-term social and economic growth of the region.

These are the first building blocks to volunteering support infrastructure in the West:

VolReach, a truly regional platform for volunteering research, engagement and advocacy for community hubs. Also, in the pipeline are three innovative community-action-and-research projects with partners into volunteering with culturally and linguistically diverse people, sports and youth volunteering.

Volunteer West's collaborative approach to championing volunteering includes being available to support others, to utilise the tools and knowledge developed from this VolConnect Program.

Media inquiries

Thu-Trang Tran, CEO, Volunteer West

Email: trang@volunteerwest.org.au

Phone: 1800 123 VOL (1800 123 865) or 0402 660 651

www.volunteerwest.org.au

About Volunteer West

Volunteer West's mission is to improve the health and well-being of people in Melbourne's west through meaningful volunteering that empowers and engages. We are a registered charity and the only volunteer resource centre in the region. Volunteer West work across six local government areas with a population of over 880,000 people with the region's unique community strengths and challenges as a growth area. The organisation covers 6 local government areas: Brimbank, Hobsons Bay, Maribyrnong, Melton, Moonee Valley, Wyndham. Volunteer West's focus is inclusive volunteering experiences that sustain personal well-being and build community resilience. Volunteer West does this by convening, championing and collaborating to create a sustainable volunteering movement.