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# ANNUAL REPORT

2021



If volunteers are the lifeblood  
of our community,  
organisations such as  
**Volunteer West** are at the heart  
of it.

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*Kashif Bouns, General Manager  
Western Bulldogs Community  
Foundation*

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# 2021 at a glance...

We grew our network of community organisations to

**210**

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We participated

**10**

research projects

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**8**

Successful program launches:

VolBoost, VolPro, VolConnect, VoltAge, VolREACH, WestSeed, VolQ, PD Pivot

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We delivered

**741**

volunteer referrals - the largest number of yearly referrals since we opened in 2012

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**41**

Workshops, training and outreach events

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**\$1 million**

Grant from the Working For Victoria initiative

## About

Volunteer West is the regional peak Volunteer Resource Centre servicing the western metropolitan region of Melbourne since 2006.

We are a registered charity and the only volunteer resource centre in the region. We work across six local government areas with a population of around 1 million people – that's 20 percent of greater Melbourne's population. With a diverse demographic, the region has unique community strengths. At the same time, it also has challenges as a growth area requiring more infrastructure.

## Mission

Our mission is to improve the health and wellbeing of people in Melbourne's West through volunteering that empowers and engages.

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We are driven by our values:

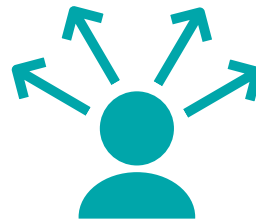
### AUDACITY



### IMPACT



### AMPLIFY



### EMPATHY



Our work is focused on **convening**, **championing** and **collaborating** to build an inclusive volunteer movement.

### Our Work

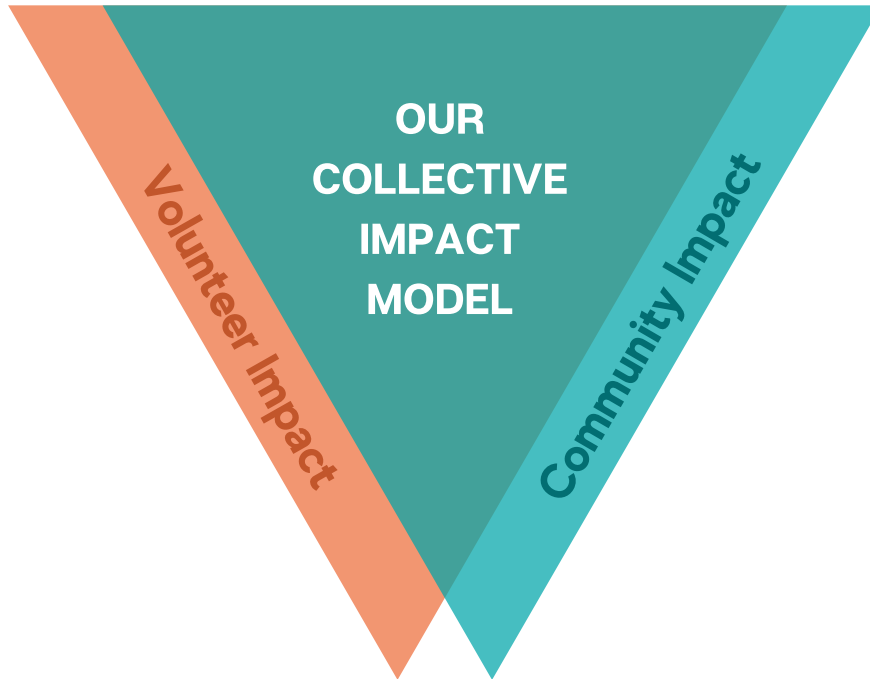
- Supporting community members find volunteer opportunities. Our strength is in providing personalised guidance and support through a volunteer-for-volunteers model
- Providing training and support to coordinators and managers of volunteers, and to organisations that run volunteering programs
- Advocating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

**Social cohesion**

**Volunteer Wellbeing**

**Active citizenship & Participation**

**Volunteering Confidence**



**Volunteer-to-Job Potential**  
**Economic contribution of volunteering**

Our collective impact model is centred on people and the community.

The volunteering journey empowers people to bring about impacts for themselves and their community: personal wellbeing, confidence in the volunteering journey, and employment pathways.

We move forward with a systems-thinking approach. With people and community, we can create and enable enduring systemic changes: **greater social cohesion, active citizenry, and economic contribution.**

# Message from the President of the Board

At seemingly lightning speed, another year has flown by!

Excitingly, it has proven to be Volunteer West's most successful year to date in setting records.

Through the audacity, vision and confidence of our CEO Thu-Trang Tran, and assisted by the able Marijke Fotia, Volunteer West made a pitch for funding in excess of \$1 million from the Victorian government and was entrusted to be proud participants of the Working for Victoria program.

It meant that our staff strength would increase from four to 25 for the duration of the six-month program.

We welcomed an eclectic mix of newcomers to our staff who brought with them a wide range of skills and experiences. It meant that some of our volunteers had the opportunity to change roles and become staff members. It meant much to some who were able to secure a paid position during the turmoil thrown at them during the uncertainty of the pandemic. It meant for some, their first employment post university.

Remarkably all staff executed their roles admirably without the benefit of a permanent office - operating in a hybrid environment from home and meeting up at select venues once or twice a week where COVID-safe protocols permitted.

At the Board, we farewelled Sinead and Tracey who left due to their work commitments. I wish to place on record our deepest appreciation for their time and contribution to Volunteer West.

We were also pleased to welcome Eylul, Nanthesh, and Simone onboard toward the end of 2020. I wish to thank the Board for their commitment, dedication and enthusiasm in discharging their roles and supporting the Management away from any spotlight. Special mention to Bernard and Karen for the extra time they put in for the Executive Committee responsibilities.

Our profile and visibility within the community and indeed beyond has taken a significant upsurge. Volunteers do great things for the community. We want to make it easier for people to do great things for their community. We brought our support services into people's lives: we went to shopping centres, farmers' markets, community centres to meet people in their daily routines. People had a chance to share their stories, learn and find volunteering roles meaningful to them.

More recently, national recognition was achieved with our very own Marijke winning the Third Sector's Emerging Leader of the Year Award - a truly fantastic achievement.

Not least, I wish to put on record our appreciation and admiration to our CEO Thu-Trang, along with Marijke, Ash, and all the staff and volunteers for the many firsts achieved for Volunteer West, and for Melbourne's West, and the ground-breaking work that they continue to do.



Roland Selvanayagam

# Message from the CEO

It brings me great pride to look back on the year as a remarkable achievement against the odds.

Volunteer West received the largest grant for volunteering in our 14-year history, and the largest for volunteering in Melbourne's West, to enable us to support our community through connection during the ongoing effects of the pandemic.

The stories you read are reports of our collective impact. We didn't do it alone. They are stories of change, that could only happen with the early support of our local council officers, coordinators, managers of volunteers and volunteers.

This year is also a story of our audacious leadership in reimagining volunteering and building back better, providing more resources to people and communities in the West along with raising the profile and importance of the volunteering sector.

**We are shifting the conversation.**

**We are elevating volunteerism practice-leadership.**

**We are amplifying the voices that need to be heard.**

It is an incredible feat of agility adapting to the growth required upon launching the VolConnect program. The strength of being a small organisation is our ability to be agile, quickly inhabiting the new-normal, and shaping our culture.

All the above was brought about from the hard work of our team scaling up from four to 25 VolConnect staff, made possible through the Working for Victoria grant.

In six months, we built an organisational culture of collaboration, trust and empowerment. All this was achieved despite the ongoing uncertainty of the lockdown situation and changes in government funding. Our Board's trust and unwavering support for each one of us set the tone. Our VolConnect team reflected on their journey as one of learning to prioritise wellbeing, learning about the processes of social change, and of learning new skills for the next ventures.

We challenged ourselves to live up to the value set for our work with community: Audacity, Impact, Amplify, and Empathy. And we embodied them wholeheartedly.

The stories of our impact within this annual report more than attest to those values.



Thu-Trang Tran



# Here for Volunteers

*Bringing volunteering closer  
to people's lives and values*



## OUR ETHOS

Bring volunteering into people's lives and meeting people in their daily routines



We went to shopping centres, farmers' markets, and other community spaces to meet people in their daily routines



**6** outreach events held in March-June

Make it easier for people to seek help in the comfort of their own home



We referred volunteers through our Volunteer Support Service via phone and email



**741** volunteers referred to help support their local communities

People of all backgrounds can volunteer



We supported, coached and trained organisations to practice inclusive volunteering



Assisted **58** organisations to write & advertise **79** volunteer positions that are inclusive & meaningful

People have a chance to share their stories, learn and find volunteering roles meaningful to them



We elevate the needs and wellbeing of volunteers



**21** stories shared as blog pieces

# VolConnect

Our major achievement this year is the successful implementation of our **\$1m** VolConnect program over six months, starting in March 2021. The program funding is part of the Victorian Government's Working for Victoria initiative.

VolConnect focused on bringing practical supports for volunteers in the community. This centred on services that enhance inclusive community volunteering, where volunteering is a pathway to employment for many.

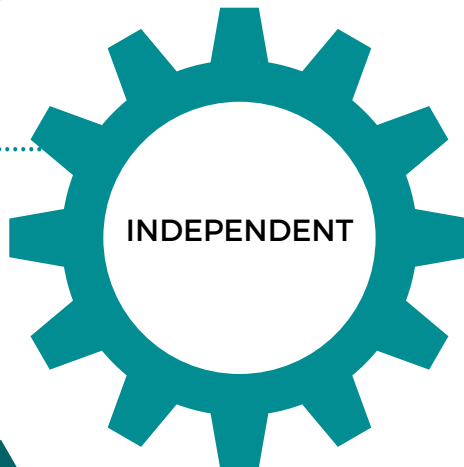
Since VolConnect was announced in January 2021, Volunteer West grew from four to 25 employees to increase organisational capacity to provide focused COVID-19 recovery.

VolConnect is also a success story of organisational adaptation and transformation. We achieved the scaling up challenge. We did so by innovating creative forms of hybrid and flexible working arrangements, cultivating a culture that manifested our values: Audacity, Impact, Amplify, and Empathy.



- Outdoors
- Cafes
- Community spaces
- Online

- Working from home
- Flexibility
- Weekly wellbeing time
- Strengths-based



- Community centres
- Shopping centres
- Community spaces
- Farmers markets



## How we scaled

This model incorporates flexibility, Covid-safe practices and is responsive to community needs.

Additional economic benefits to the communities where we work through engaging small businesses..



## VolConnect Launch Event

VolConnect was officially launched in May 2021 with a successful (and rare) in-person event taking place at Footscray Community Arts Centre.

The event featured a keynote address from General Manager of Western Bulldogs Community Foundation General Manager Kashif Bouns, plus guest speakers, Member for Footscray Katie Hall (appearing on behalf of the Honourable Jaala Pulford), and Volunteer West CEO Thu-Trang Tran.

The three speakers agreed on the vital role of volunteering, the strength of the diversity of the West, and celebrated the major investment into the West that the \$1m funding for six-months represented.

Thu-Trang impressed on the need for consistent ongoing proportionate funding to build up volunteering in the West.

”  
*For a strong thriving community, we need volunteering to stay strong and for volunteering to stay strong we need to support volunteers’ managers and coordinators and organisations such as Volunteer West that build capacity in our community to help recruit, develop and retain our volunteers.*

- Kashif Bouns, General Manager Western Bulldogs Community Foundation

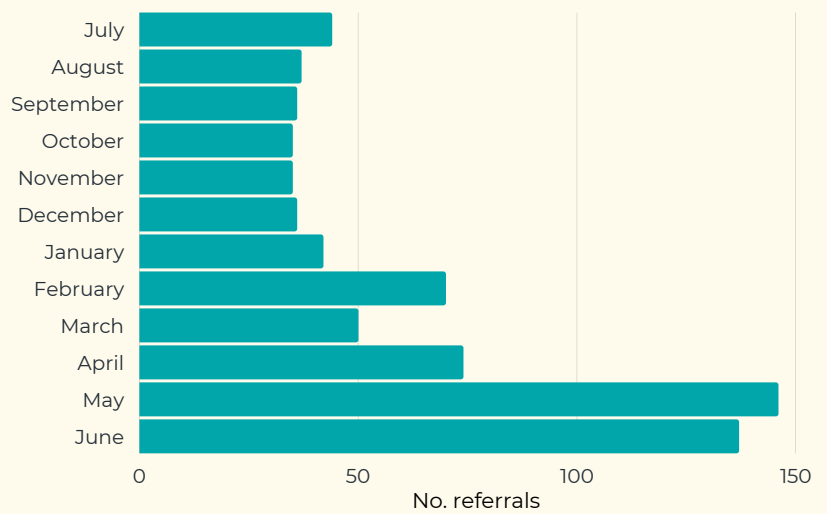
”  
*We see our contribution and unique role in the West is to advocate for and marshal resources to groups that would struggle to get them: the small and medium community groups who often are the first welcoming doors for volunteers and newcomers, and all are the fabric of our society.*

- Thu-Trang Tran, CEO Volunteer West

# Volunteer Support Services

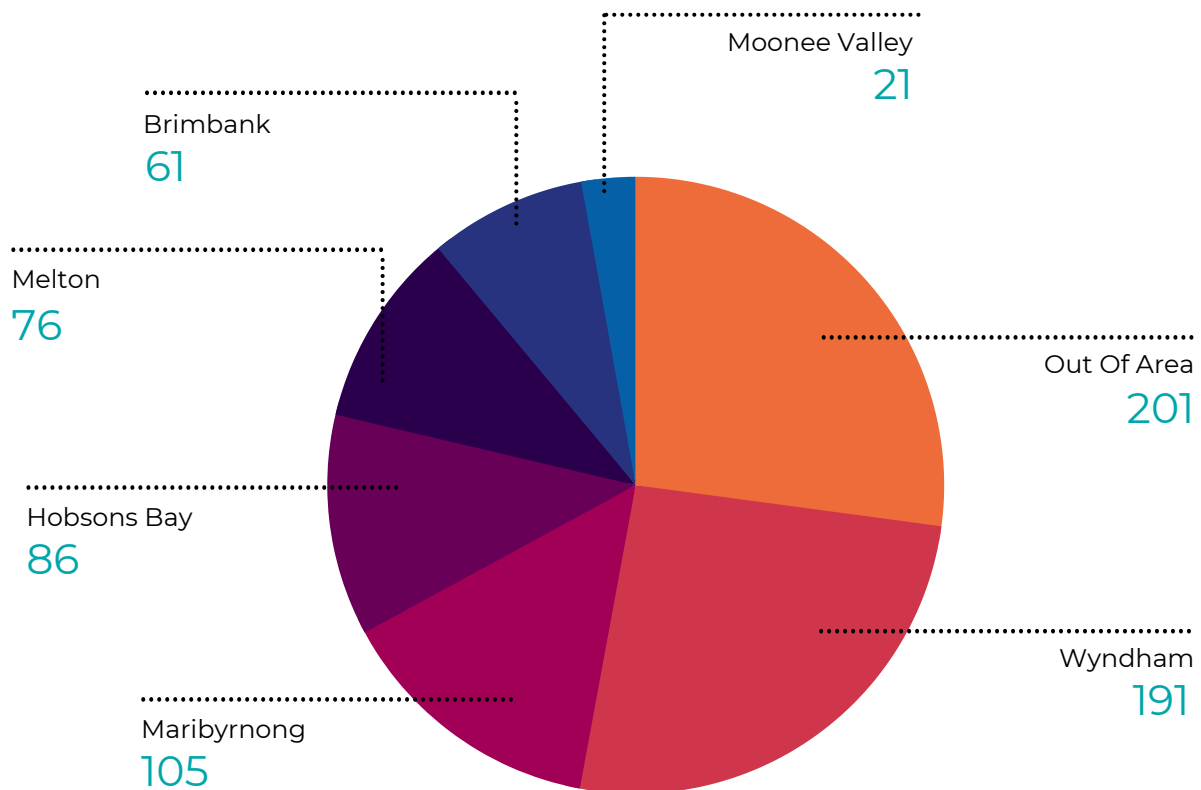
Our Volunteer Support Services supports local community organisations, services providers and volunteers through referral services, training, and outreach. This period has seen unprecedented challenges and successes for the team. We adapted our services to meet the challenges of lockdowns and continue to respond to a surge in interest for support services from individuals and organisations, especially since the launch of the VolConnect program.

Referrals by month 2020-2021



Total: 741 volunteer referrals

Referrals by local government area 2020-2021



From a CALD background

376 (51%)

People with a mental health disability

16 (2%)

People with other types of disability

67 (9%)

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

2

# WestSeed - Growing Grassroot Groups

In Melbourne's West, small community groups play an important role in supporting Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities. However, they are often isolated and under-resourced. Many struggle to run projects with limited resources, and community leaders experience burnout. This situation has been further exacerbated with the added burden of COVID-19.

"WestSeed – Growing Grassroot Groups" is Volunteer West's innovative response to address the entrenched problem; it aims to empower community leaders to build multicultural and mutually supportive networks. The project achieved this by facilitating connections and offering practical support.

## WestSeed's three components



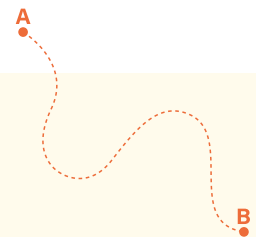
### CONVERSATION

One-on-one meetings where the groups talk through their challenges, strengths, and aspirations



### SERVICE PACKAGE

A free tailored service package offered based on the conversation. The services included volunteer recruitment, promotion via WestSeed Community Map and a blog post series



### MOVEMENT

Asset-based community development workshops where the groups discussed collective actions to overcome common challenges

» The impact of WestSeed is inclusive volunteering, so that more diverse members of the community can participate in welcoming groups and communities.

# PD Pivot

The PD Pivot service has also seen a significant increase in the number of organisations contacting Volunteer West to develop position descriptions. We have taken time this year to streamline our PD Pivot service to ensure the process is as smooth as possible. A big push is being made to develop position descriptions that are inclusive for people from diverse backgrounds.

*When I realised the need for volunteers at the society, I contacted Volunteer West. After they made suggestions for the position descriptions, the ad was up, and interest started coming within a week.*

- Graeme Reilly, Secretary of the Altona and Laverton Historical Society

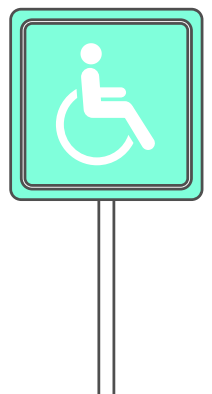
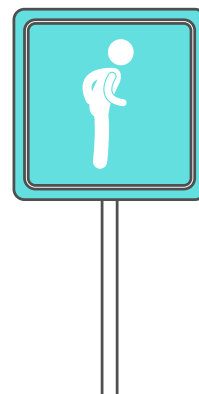
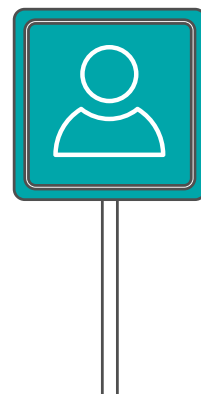


# PD Pivot

Bespoke Position Description Service

» Assisted **58** organisations to write **79** inclusive position descriptions

Avalon Carr from our Volunteer Support Services team wrote an insightful two-part series of articles on PD Pivot. Below is an excerpt on how trust plays an important part in building connection




Trust that the first step can be as simple as including the following statement in your PD: “This role can be made suitable for someone with a disability – we are happy to talk with you about your needs”. And then, when you are interviewing potential volunteers, asking them “Are there any accommodations we can make for you to be able to do this role successfully?”

## 6 Outreach events

held March - June 2021



It is a testament to Volunteer West's hard-working Volunteer Support Services team that successful community-facing events were conducted throughout 2021 while adapting to rolling lockdowns and changing restrictions. 

Outreach events were designed to better connect with members of the public by going to where people go about their daily routines, and by having a display that encourages storytelling and activities.

The outreach events resulted in the promotion of volunteering opportunities, celebrating volunteering with a story-board activity and informing the public about services for individuals and organisations.



On Friday 21st May, the Volunteer Support Services team held an outreach event at Pacific Werribee Shopping Centre in Hoppers Crossing. The aim for the day was to raise awareness about volunteering, Volunteer West services, and learn about community perceptions of volunteering. The event was a big success with engaging with a wide range of people. The event was also attended by Mayor of Wyndham City, Councillor Adele Hegedich (pictured second from left).



# Here for Community

*Building strong connections deeply with our community*

## OUR ETHOS

Support COVID-19 adaptation and resilience



Deliver adaptation skillset training to volunteer managers



23 sessions of VolBOOST training delivered to 39 participants. Satisfaction rating of 4.71 out of 5

Active listening helps you empathise with people around you



All Volunteer West staff completed Accidental Counsellor training



*“Actionable strategies are very helpful to assist with professional or personal accidental counsellor situations”*  
- Participant

Relationships and community networks are vital assets & catalysts for social change



Established the WestSeed regional network, and visually mapped for public visibility



A mutually supportive network of 119 grassroots & multicultural organisations to share community assets

Uplift the profile of volunteer managers and their craft of volunteer engagement



Pioneered VolPro, a bursary program to sponsor volunteer engagement practitioners to complete professional development



13 volunteer managers will gain the title of Professional Leader of Volunteers

Impactful research to advance volunteering policy and practice



Participated in 10 research projects for councils, VicGov Volunteering Taskforce, CALD communities and youth volunteering



We are shifting the conversation, elevating practice-leadership, and amplifying the voices that need to be heard

Increase skills in volunteers and volunteer managers as community builders



35 training sessions delivered with 301 participants



*“Often as volunteer managers/coordinators we are working in isolation so the opportunity to come together is valued very much”* - Participant



## » Volunteer Managers Network

The Volunteer Managers' Network convenes meetings of volunteer managers and coordinators in Melbourne's West. Each meeting featured a different theme and provided an opportunity for Volunteer Managers to come together to discuss issues related to volunteering, problem solve, share information and celebrate success.



Between March and May, there was a 41% increase in the number of volunteer manager registrations with 22 new volunteer managers signing onto the network.

The Network has seen significant increases in participation and engagement

with **90** engaged members

and an average of **25** attendees per meeting.

The 10 network meetings throughout the year included topics on:

- Partnerships and Collaboration
- Designing inclusive position descriptions
- Advocating for your program
- Research and Evidence
- COVID-19 Updates
- Connecting to network
- Celebrating volunteering



### Testimonial: Wintringham

*I have been involved with Volunteer West for around three years, attending meetings and any training on offer. Which I have found to be very valuable in my role as it is a great way to meet other volunteer coordinators and a good platform for information sharing. This was especially true through COVID-19 as we all have had to become very creative to keep our volunteers engaged with our residents and clients.*

- Lauren Smith, Volunteer Coordinator at Wintringham

## » VolPro

Supporting leaders of volunteers across Melbourne's West to participate in Volunteering Victoria's Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Program.

Volunteer West sponsored 13 external organisations to complete the program which is due to be completed at the end of 2021. Participants came from a range of organisations representing sectors including youth, sports, disability, environment, museums and community centres.

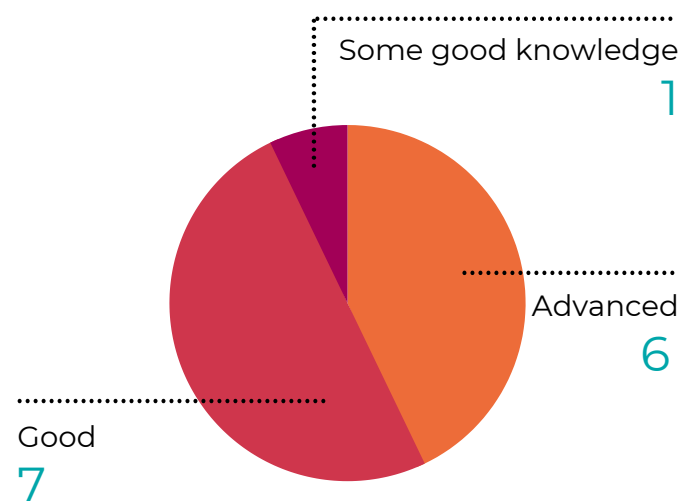
As an extension of the VolConnect volunteer-to-job program, 15 Volunteer West staff opted to participate in VolPro. One of the aims of our Working for Victoria VolConnect funding is to also foster new champions of volunteering amongst our VolConnect team.

Participants will receive a certification and right to use PLV (Professional Leader of Volunteers) after their name. It also gives wider recognition of volunteer management as a profession.

VolPro is an example of working collaboratively with Volunteering Victoria to elevate professional development of practitioners in volunteering engagement.

### VolPro Participant Survey Question:

*I would rate my current knowledge of the volunteering sector & volunteering practices are:*



Gina Cotel is Volunteer West's Project Officer - Volunteer Managers Network. With extensive experiences in volunteering, she has nonetheless gained some deep insights about volunteering and volunteer management.



*"My understanding about volunteering has changed in three important ways; how volunteering contributes to the economy, benefits to individual's wellbeing, and about the infrastructure organisations need to have in place to manage volunteers."*

Gina says that with these experiences she is more confident supporting managers and coordinators of volunteers because she knows better the benefits volunteering brings to society, the challenges volunteer managers face and their resource constraints.

## » VolBoost

VolBoost was launched in November 2020 to adapt volunteer management skills and volunteer programs so that volunteer placements can be made available to match the challenges of COVID-19. In total, we trained five cohorts with 39 leaders of volunteers to build their confidence and develop new roles to support their recovery from the pandemic and in particular the Melbourne lockdowns.

Participants responded positively to the training modules and reported significant improvements in the knowledge, skills and confidence relevant to their roles as volunteer managers and coordinators.

### VolBoost training and support package

Way 2 Go Training - Session 1 and 2

Accidental Counsellor Training - Session 3

Virtual Volunteering - Session 4

Get Ready to Boost! - Session 5

Following the VolBoost training, the team ran two drop-ins to give volunteer managers the opportunity to share their challenges and ask volunteer management related questions. These sessions will be used to develop Frequently Asked Questions and other resources for Volunteer Managers.

Based on the feedback and participant development over the course of the funding period this is a well-tested program that could be carried out as an ongoing service to the network within Melbourne's West.



## TESTIMONIALS FROM VOLBOOST PARTICIPANTS

*I think the most valuable aspect of the series was giving myself permission to think about opportunities and step back so that new ideas might emerge or remind me of ideas that had dropped off my radar and are now back on.*

*The exchange of ideas, information and support from mentors, co-participants and Volunteer West facilitator Pakiza are all appreciated. Thank you very much!*

## » VolQ

VolQ offered an open invitation to all volunteer managers to ask any volunteer management or compliance questions during three online drop-in clinics. The clinics held in May and June 2021 supported 4 volunteer managers with their unique questions. Participants "felt more confident" after discussing their problems with the team.

# » WestSeed - Seeding an Inclusive Volunteering Movement

119 one-to-one conversations with volunteer involving organisations

150 map pins



WestSeed connects organisations with Volunteer West's core services. In June 2021 WestSeed also launched an online community map that promotes organisations, a series of blog posts highlighting linked UN sustainable development goals and in July and August 2021 networking and collaboration workshops.

## DEEPLY CONNECTING AND LEARNING WITH OUR COMMUNITY

From the one-on-one meetings with 119 community groups, the project team derived four common topics of community groups' interest: **Funding, Legal issue, Volunteer Engagement, and Promotion & Events**

3 workshops, 69 participants

272 unique connections visually mapped

These topics were further explored at three workshops where the community leaders brainstormed together.

**Top challenges identified:**  
COVID-19 and difficult systems

**Proposed solutions:**

- Collective approach – collaboration and networking, asset library, community noticeboard and media
- Individual approach - capacity building, clear internal systems
- Relational approach – community development approach to volunteer engagement



## » Advocacy

Volunteer West has continuously engaged in advocacy at the state and national levels including meetings with state and federal MPs and as a member of the Ministerial Taskforce for Victorian Volunteer Strategy.



The decline in volunteering and support in the volunteer sector has put pressure on Volunteer Supporting Organisations and Volunteer Resource Centers to meet their communities' needs. Not-for-profits are reporting more demand for services but lack volunteers. Volunteering has been severely disrupted from the pandemic, with people finding it increasingly difficult to volunteer due to systemic social and economic conditions.

### ESTABLISHING VOLREACH AS AN ADVOCACY PLATFORM

To advocate for volunteering and for the West, CEO Thu-Trang Tran engaged in an extensive number of presentations to leaders and forums in government and political parties to establish the VolREACH platform:

#### Volunteering Research Engagement Advocacy Community Hubs

She has written two blog posts sharing the VolREACH vision, evidence for action, and her personal motivations. The online VolREACH launch event was attended and well-received by 50 potential partners. More on VolREACH page 27.

## GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

» Commonwealth Review of Volunteer Management Activity Funding

2020

» Ministerial Taskforce for Victorian Volunteer Strategy

2020 - 2021

» Maribyrnong City Council – Future of Volunteering & Civic Participation

2021

» Moonee Valley Council Plan

March 2021



Australian Government



# » Research Theme: Amplify understanding of volunteering in diverse communities

## Our action-research approaches

### Stories of new volunteering frames and narratives:

We seek to understand, not impose our own assumptions or frames.

### Each touch-point contributes to the community:

We conduct data-collection through sharing insights rather than 'extraction'. We aim for partnerships and sustained engagement.

### Strength-based:

We learn what works and how this is done, and with permission, amplify the strengths.

### We are accountable to the community:

We report back and validate our insights with the community. We ensure rigour and depth to achieve practice-leadership.

Ongoing engagement with national and Victorian networks of volunteer sectors allows for identifying opportunities to bring to the region.

## Pathways to Volunteer Participation for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities in the Brimbank and Melton local government areas

While COVID-19 has significantly disrupted volunteering in Victoria and nationally, there is also evidence that volunteers from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities have played a critical role to respond to the adverse impact of the pandemic. Volunteer West is conducting research that aims to better understand the enablers and barriers to volunteering among CALD communities in Melbourne's West. We seek to learn from the experiences of community organisations to identify critical success factors in engaging CALD communities in emergency response. The research focuses on two volunteer-involving organisations in Brimbank and Melton as case studies. Insights can be applied to increase volunteer engagement and address the underrepresentation of CALD communities. The research is supported by the Department of Families, Fairness, and Housing.



## Role-based volunteering || Fluid volunteering

A key finding is a need to re-conceptualise active forms of volunteering as role-based volunteering and fluid volunteering (rather than informal vs formal) with resulting practice implications.

**Role-based volunteering** is bounded by roles and agreements.

**Fluid volunteering** is shaped by needs of circumstance and capability of the individual volunteer, allows movement across various roles.

Volunteering experiences go beyond the common formal-informal categories of volunteering, where the 'informal' label is often associated with volunteering undertaken in multicultural and multifairth context. Such labelling has a disenfranchising effect.

## Volunteering, Participatory Action and Social Cohesion Research Report

This national research was commissioned by the Commonwealth Government. CEO Thu-Trang Tran was an advisory member to the research, as part of the National Network of Volunteer Resource Centres (NNVRC), and helped shape the report's policy implications. The NNVRC, with researchers Think Impact, coordinated a series of launch events across three states to share and debate the findings that called for a reimagining of volunteering as participatory action for social cohesion and that requires flexible funding.



The idea of a 'mutually supportive community' is critical to understanding both social cohesion and volunteering



Recommendation: Acknowledge Volunteer Resource Centres (VRCs) are in the best position to foster the development of participation-building infrastructure in support of social cohesion

Thu-Trang challenged the current linear framing of volunteering and proposed researchers develop a mosaic concept of volunteering.



## Connecting New Migrants Through Volunteering with Hume City Council

Hume City Council engaged Volunteer West as a consultant on the “Connecting New Migrants Through Volunteering” pilot project. The project aimed to strengthen community organisations cultural competency to support inclusive volunteering for new migrants and increasing community organisations' understanding to value volunteering as a pathway to employment for new migrants. Regional Programs Manager Marijke Fotia found that three key themes emerged from running workshops and community forums that shaped Volunteer West’s recommendations. Facilitating **connections** and building **confidence** with new migrants and community organisations can leverage the **opportunities** that come from new migrant volunteering.



### » Sports Volunteering



CEO Thu-Trang Tran was invited to contribute to Sport Australia’s national volunteer strategy development where she emphasised the need for the body to properly invest in **local** volunteering supports for **local** sports clubs. Sport volunteering is significant, being the biggest cohort of volunteers across all sectors (ABS 2020).



Through partnerships with Victoria University and Western Bulldogs Community Foundation, we are supporting sports volunteering to be more inclusive of newly arrived migrants and refugees. Devising strategies that reflect localised engagement between clubs and local volunteer resource centres.

### » Youth Volunteering

This empirical research aimed to gain a deeper understanding about opportunities to engage young people in volunteering in Melbourne's West.

18 - 24 year olds are under-utilised in the volunteering space

Volunteer West commissioned surveys to be conducted with young people aged 18-24 residing in the local government areas of Brimbank, Hobsons Bay, Maribyrnong, Melton, Moonee Valley, and Wyndham. Findings from 241 participants show that many of them have been involved in either formal or informal volunteering and are motivated to volunteer given the right opportunity. Overall, young people in Melbourne’s West hold a positive view of volunteering, which suggests a very promising and hopeful future for youth volunteering in the region.

Barriers to volunteering have been identified, including work, family commitments, and a lack of flexible options. It is therefore important to widely disseminate volunteering opportunities to young people, offer flexible hours and online options, and provide clear and transparent information about what the volunteering roles involve.



## REPRESENTING VOLUNTEER WEST & SHARING PRACTICE LEADERSHIP

During the past year Volunteer West's leadership has been highlighted through presentations, talks and invitations to events.

- A leading voice in the National Network of Volunteer Resource Centres, convening learning opportunities for CEOs.
- Endorsed as a provider of professional development for Volunteering Victoria's CPD program.



CEO Thu-Trang Tran was appointed to the Ministerial Taskforce for Victorian Volunteer Strategy. Thu-Trang was also a panelist at:

- Volunteering Victoria's Build Back Better Forum
- Hobsons Bay Volunteer Photographic Expo event at Louis Joel Gallery
- Australian Vietnamese Arts Volunteer Celebration

Regional programs manager Marijke Fotia became a mentor in the Volunteering Victoria Mentoring program, facilitated training on Volunteer Recruitment with organisations in Hobsons Bay City Council as well as presented on Recognising Volunteers for Hobsons Bay City Council.



Team Leader for Volunteer Support Services Ash Lee joined Marijke to present at Victoria University's Changemakers webinar series on inclusive volunteering (June 2021). She delivered an information session for Gordon Tafe on volunteering (June 2021) and Volunteer Confidence Training for AMEP run by Community + and for Learning for Earning Festival.



## ELEVATING PRACTICE-LEADERSHIP

### THIRD SECTOR AWARDS - EMERGING LEADER OF THE YEAR

The Third Sector Awards, presented by Austpost, is a national awards celebrating and recognising the best NFP practices around Australia. Providing an unbiased and objective point of reference, the Third Sector team of judges score hundreds of entries across multiple categories to showcase the very best in the sector.

This year, the Third Sector Awards announced our Regional Program Manager, **Marijke Fotia**, as Emerging Leader of the year!

Marijke facilitated the scaling up of Volunteer West's operations from four staff members at the beginning of 2021 to a team of 25 during the VolConnect period. This led to the implementation of specialised programs being deployed to serve 179 actively engaged organisations in the community.

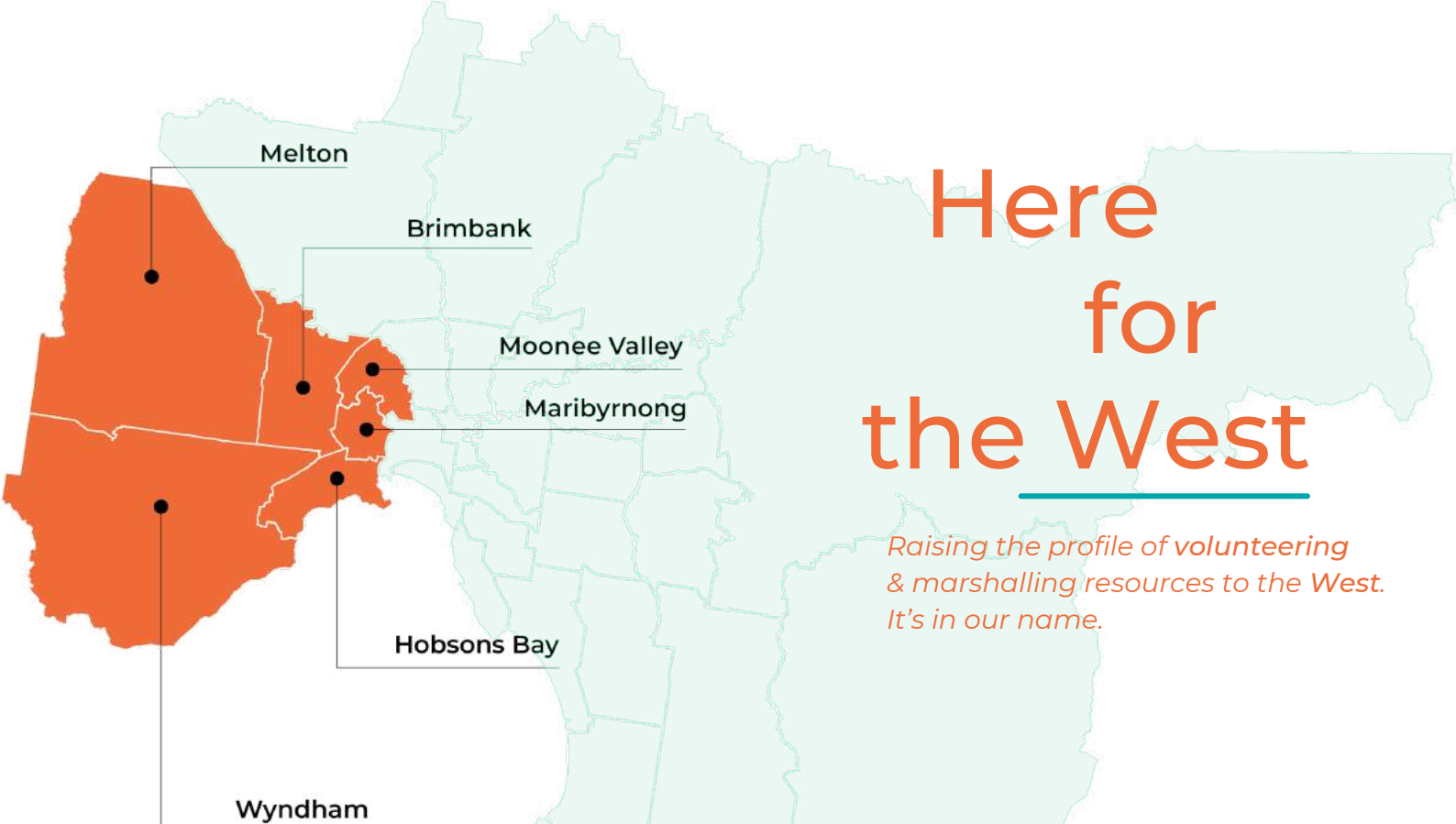


### VOLUNTEERING VICTORIA BOARD NOMINATION



Ash Youkyoung Lee has been nominated for the Volunteering Victoria board. Ash is a passionate Community Development and Volunteer Engagement professional. Having worked with diverse volunteers and supported over 100 multicultural community groups, Ash believes that frontline volunteer managers must be recognised as the leaders and change makers.

Ash will bring to the Volunteering Victoria board practice-leadership in volunteering engagement, with novel theoretical lens of sociology, anthropology, and community development.



# Here for the West

*Raising the profile of volunteering & marshalling resources to the West. It's in our name.*

## OUR ETHOS

**Audacity** - to follow new paths, to think and do big for our region and for national policy change



## OUR ACTIONS

Working with VoIREACH collaborators to address the ongoing under-resourcing of community volunteering



## COLLECTIVE IMPACT

VoIREACH has been well received by stakeholders and has short, medium and long-term impacts predicted

**Amplify** - the strengths of people and communities to flourish by marshalling resources to them



Telling the stories of volunteering in the West through blog series, social media, traditional media, and the VoltAge project



More connections and opportunities. Increased the visibility of volunteers, leaders in volunteering, and community groups

**Impact** - for volunteers and their communities through our approach of convening, championing, and collaborating for enduring change



Impactful collaborative projects:  
- Western Bulldogs Community Foundation 'Digital Connectors'  
- Victoria University's Changemakers



Digital Connectors: participation of 400+ women.  
Change Makers: 60 volunteers lead inclusion projects in sports

**Empathy** - volunteering is empathy in action



Empathetic leadership providing employment and support for people in Melbourne's West



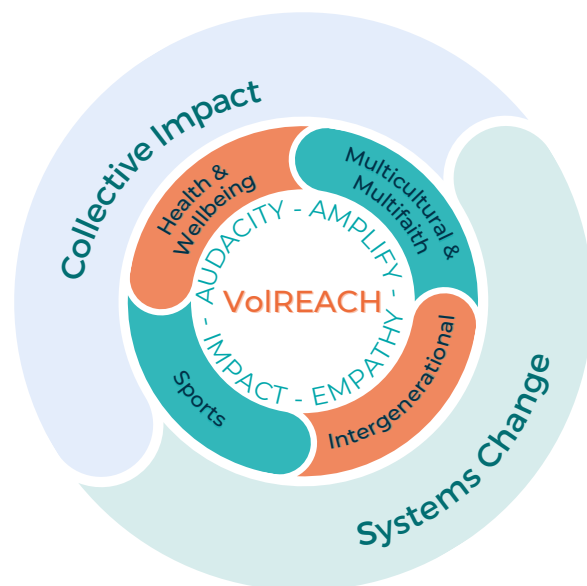
The VolConnect program hired and trained 28 new staff and equipped them to be champions of inclusive and meaningful volunteering

# VoIREACH »

**VOL**unteering  
**R**esearch,  
**E**ngagement &  
**A**dvocacy  
**C**ommunity  
**H**ubs

We unveiled VoIREACH, a collaborative platform that works to address the ongoing under-resourcing of community volunteering, and to advance volunteering policy and practice. Success means community volunteering is better resourced, better trained, and better respected.

**VOLUNTEERING IS COMMUNITY BUILDING**



We have received enthusiastic support for this audacious vision from many collaborators, including endorsement from community leaders for our trailblazing initiative:

- Hon Bill Shorten MP, Member for Maribyrnong
- Mr Steve McGhie, Member for Melton
- Mayor Clarke, Maribyrnong City Council
- Mayor Marsden, Hobsons Bay City Council

## » How will we achieve this?

By reimagining and doing volunteering **differently**

By employing a **relational** approach to building a **human learning system** to drive **social change**

By seeking co-investors for a truly **collaborative platform** for collective impact & systems change

*Four hubs to foster greater collaboration, innovative research and evaluation, and leadership training: Health and Wellbeing, Sports, Intergenerational, Multi-cultural and Multi-faith. These themes reflect community strengths and policy priorities. What binds the hubs are shared values, our innovative Collective Impact Framework, and a systems-thinking approach to our work.*

- Short-term**
- Introduce the VoIREACH collaborative platform to a range of partners
  - Secure seed funding to initiate the collaborative projects to reimagine volunteering

- Medium-term**
- Provide more resources to people and communities in the West
  - Advance volunteering practice towards a person-centred, systems-change model for enduring impact, leveraging pioneering best-practice projects
  - Innovate data-informed evaluation, research, and policy insights to measure what counts for volunteers and communities
  - Raise the profile of the sector by educating volunteers, community and supporters of the positive impacts of volunteering
  - 'Build back better' by scaling up to meet growing unmet post-pandemic needs and stem the decline in volunteering in large segments

- Long-term**
- Ensure the long-term practice of inclusive volunteering experiences that sustain personal well-being and building community resilience becomes commonplace

# TELLING THE STORY OF VOLUNTEERING IN THE WEST

The successful implementation of the VolConnect program has resulted in an increase of stories to be told in relation to the work conducted by Volunteer West and the organisations we work alongside.

Our capability to tell these important stories was bolstered by the onboarding of communications staff as part of the Working for Victoria program. This allowed for the development of communications assets and strategies that will carry on into the future for Volunteer West.



This storytelling helped connect Volunteer West with volunteers and communities to create strong support networks and will continue to help tell the story of Melbourne's West.

Staff were supported by a talented base of volunteers who were provided with guidance and assistance in upskilling across a range of design and social media tools.

In 2020-2021 Volunteer West grew our presence through channels including the [volunteerwest.org.au](http://volunteerwest.org.au) website, which included the successful storytelling project VoltAge and a broad range of informative blog posts from CEO reflections to volunteer profiles.



## Annecto

*I love Volunteer West! When I first heard of this organisation around five years ago, I attended because I felt all alone, and I had no networks or connections then. When I discovered that there were other individuals who shared some of my challenges, I felt right at home. Volunteer West provided that safe space for me to share and get advice.*

*I recently attended VolBoost and now planning on obtaining my Professional Leaders of Volunteers certification through the VolPro program. There are so many opportunities available through Volunteer West, it is really fantastic to see it growing, and for me to feel so supported.*

- Mimi Laurilla, Volunteer Coordinator at Annecto

# COMMUNICATIONS & STRATEGIC ENGAGEMENT

➤ Social media channels boosted campaigns from affiliate organisations including Western Health, Volunteering Australia, Western Bulldogs Community Foundation, and more.

## SOCIAL MEDIA

6 volunteer profile pieces published and shared on social media



4 volunteer manager profile pieces published and shared on social media in May and June 2021



6 Average no. of social media posts per week promoting volunteer stories, community events, health initiatives including COVID-19 resources, support services, and local council events and initiatives



Facebook followers grew by

68%



LinkedIn followers grew by

171%

## WEBSITE

21 blog pieces posted

➤ WestSeed community map launched with accompanying blog series.

➤ Launch of monthly newsletters for volunteers with engagement rates almost double the industry standard

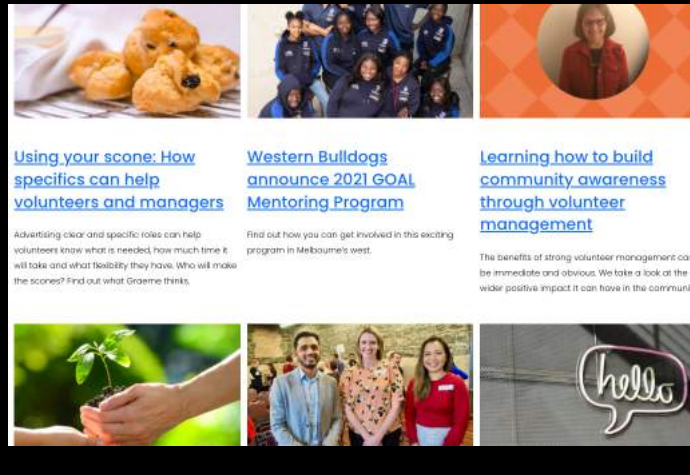
Newsletter Subscribers as of June 2021:

Volunteer newsletter

903

Volunteer manager newsletter

716



1427 unique monthly browsers

4003 unique page views on volunteerwest.org.au as of June 2021

# PROGRAMS FOR THE WEST

## VOLTAGE

PHOTOGRAPHIC  
STORYTELLING PROJECT  
ACROSS THE GENERATIONS



Volunteers from different generations paired up to create photographic stories about their community. Participants were empowered to use their own technology to take photos and craft text to communicate the story behind their images. The stories vary in style and content - we encouraged participants to nurture their creativity and to follow the direction they saw for the project.

### Victor

Victor has been coming to the Men's Shed 2 times a week for a few months now. His focus is on making dice which he sands, paints and glosses.

He comes to the Men's Shed because he is good company and he is respectful.



VoltAge was made possible through partnerships with the Maribyrnong City Council and Moonee Valley City Council.

We thank all participants for their contributions to the project.



## » Vollies of the West

One of the great aspects of engaging with volunteers is hearing the impact that volunteering has on a diverse array of unique stories. Our Vollies of the West series empowers volunteers on a platform shared through our social networks and newsletters. The series has featured individuals working with organisations including Moonee Valley City Council, Western Bulldogs Community Foundation, The Migrant Hub, Tarneit Football Club, and more.



## » WestSeed Blog Series

A special 10-piece series of articles was published as a companion to the WestSeed program, showcasing the many organisations who joined the project by highlighting how they respectively align with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

This highlighted the organisations with a community focus making an impact on global goals and served as a guide for potential volunteers to seek out an organisation that aligns with their passions and values.

By connecting community volunteering to the Sustainable Development Goals, we have demonstrated how our community is part of a global movement.

## » Traditional Media

Volunteer West engaged traditional media to ensure awareness of our services we can provide to our community. We got our stories on:

- The Westsider Newspaper
- Flemington-Kensington News
- Star Weekly



### Western Health

*Over the years I've benefitted from the professional development offered, the networking opportunities and have also appreciated that there is a place to refer potential volunteers to find a more suitable program fit. Volunteer West's role as a central point of contact, resource and collaboration is invaluable.*

- Eve Repo, Volunteer Coordinator  
at Western Health

## » West 4 West

A multi-sector leaders forum, aiming to create a volunteering culture in Melbourne's West that goes beyond the traditional boundaries of community or government to business leaders. Restrictions and lockdowns prevented meetings which meant we pivoted West 4 West, joining its aims with our audacious platform – VoIREACH.



## » Digital Connectors

### PARTNERSHIP WITH WESTERN BULLDOGS COMMUNITY FOUNDATION



Volunteer West collaborated with the Western Bulldogs Community Foundation to pilot the 'Digital Connectors' project as part of the Daughters of the West health and wellbeing program.

The Daughters of the West program was run over eight weeks from October 2020, aiming to educate women on key issues impacting women's health including nutrition, mental health, physical activity and respectful relationships. Due to COVID-19 the program had to be delivered virtually via Zoom and some participants needed support to access the program digitally.

### Volunteer West recruited and supported the induction and training of 11 skilled Digital Connectors to work with the Foundation.

The Digital Connectors were integral in the success of the Daughters of the West program, which saw its highest community participation of over 400 women since it started three years ago.

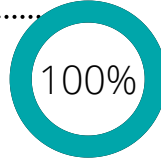


*One of our favourite stories has been a woman with a disability \*Cat who participated [in Daughters of the West] last year but hadn't signed up for the online program. Cat attended the disability support group she is part of, and she called afterwards to say she wants to participate but doesn't even have a smart phone/tablet/computer. Lori called her and talked through all the issues, sourced a tablet for her and then trained her to use it. It's just one story out of at least a dozen but definitely has made a difference to that participant.*

- Alyssa Huxtable, WBFC

100% Digital Connector volunteers who completed the feedback survey strongly agreed with:

» *I felt supported throughout the volunteering experience.*



» *I enjoyed my engagement with the Western Bulldogs Community Foundation and Volunteer West.*

» *I would like to be considered for future volunteering activities.*



*Imagine if you are an isolated person who doesn't have digital literacy in lockdown, they didn't have very many ways to connect with the outside world. Our digital connectors helped them connect digitally with passion and compassion. The feedback we received was immensely positive. Someone from Horsham told us that she was completely isolated and in a dark place, but our digital connectors provided her a lifeline that helped her get through the lockdown. How wonderful is that and it was only possible because of the partnership that we had with Volunteer West.*

- Kashif Bouns, General Manager  
Western Bulldogs Community Foundation

## » VU Change Makers

### PARTNERSHIP WITH VICTORIA UNIVERSITY



Volunteer West partnered with Victoria University to deliver a two-year project 'Change Makers: Empowering sports to enhance social inclusion for migrants and refugees'. The project is funded by the Victorian Department of Health's Driving Social Inclusion through Sport and Physical Activity program.

As part of the Change Makers project, Regional Programs Manager Marijke Fotia and Team Lead for Volunteer Support Services Ash Youkyoung Lee delivered two workshops about inclusive volunteering.

At the workshops, participating sports clubs were encouraged to freely think about practical challenges and opportunities of working with people when there is a language barrier. Then they were supported to explore creative solutions.

The whole workshop was guided by the 3 powerful concepts:

#### » ACCESSIBILITY

Being neutral is not enough. You can make your club more accessible by demonstrating your commitment to inclusiveness.

#### » SOCIAL DESIGN

A lot of things that are given to us are designed by humans. You have power to redesign tools and environment to help your club be more inclusive

#### » RELATIONAL APPROACH

Instead of stereotyping people, start building relationships and working with them. By supporting each other, you can practice inclusion at a higher level.



Having an open mind is important, but practical questions remain. We encourage you to recognise the challenges and use that knowledge to make an inclusive volunteering environment.

- Ash Youkyoung Lee  
Team Lead for Volunteer Support Services  
Volunteer West

# ORGANISATION INFORMATION

## Board of Management

Roland Selvanayagam, *President*  
Bernard Fernandez, *Secretary*  
Karen O'Duil, *Treasurer*  
Christine White, *General Member*  
William Burrows, *General Member*  
Tracey Christodoulou, *General Member*  
- Resigned May 2021  
Sinead Mildenhall, *General Member*  
- Resigned January 2021  
Nanthesh Sivarajah, *General Member*  
- Appointed November 2020  
Simone Singh, *General Member*  
- Appointed November 2020  
Eylul Top, *General Member*  
- Appointed November 2020

## VolConnect Staff

Ibrahim Alromaihi, *Project Officer- Volunteer Support Services*  
Ibrahim AL-Mahdi, *IT Support Lead*  
Hazel Bout, *Project Officer – Volunteer Support Services*  
Karin Bouvin, *Digital Trainer*  
Avalon Carr, *Project Officer – Volunteer Support Services*  
Clare Corbet, *Project Officer – Partnerships*  
Gina Cotel, *Project Officer – Programs Support*  
Lavanya Dillibabu, *IT Project Officer*  
Ana Galvez, *Project Officer - Trusts and Foundations*  
Mursha Gapasin, *Project Officer*  
Rebecca Gleghorn, *Strategic Engagement Officer*  
Dominique Haslam, *Project Officer – Volunteer Managers Network*  
Genevieve Helson, *Digital Communications Officer*

## Staff Members

Thu-Trang Tran, *Chief Executive Officer*  
Marijke Fotia, *Regional Programs Manager*  
Sanjeev Singh, *Programs Manager, Communications*  
- Contract ended December 2020  
Ash Youkyoung Lee, *Team Lead - Volunteering Support Services*  
Phuong MacCallum-Le, *Volunteer Services Coordinator - On Parental Leave*

Tania Hooper, *Project Officer*  
Aldona Kmiec, *Project Lead- Communications & Strategic Engagement*  
Louise Lane, *Project Officer – Partnerships*  
Laura Lopriore, *Project Officer – Volunteer Support Services*  
Morgan Macdonald, *Operations Officer*  
Sana Naqvi, *Business Support*  
Magdalena Ojeda, *Corporate Partnerships Coordinator*  
Lachlan Kanoniuk, *Project Officer – Communications & Strategic Engagement*  
Michelle Risk, *Project Officer – Volunteer Support Services*  
Prithvi Raj Munday, *Digital Project Officer*  
Pakiza Syed, *Project Officer*  
Vaishnavi Sridhar, *Digital Project Officer*  
Peter Wingate, *Project Officer*

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## Volunteers - Thank You

Hazel Bout	Anna Djuric	Magdalena Ojeda	Divya Sinha
Penny Butler	Susan Etheredge	Prithvi Raj Munday	Pooja Sood
Avalon Carr	Hao He	Michelle Risk	Jessica Story-Dolheguy
Michelle Chan	Genevieve Helson	Gaye Riva De Souza	Pakiza Syed
Melanie Claughton	Wendy Ji	Samruddi Sebastian	Minh Tran
Gina Cotel	Amanda Liew	Ramona Selvanayagam	On Wah Wong
Riva DeSouza	Laura Lopriore	Sanjeev Singh	

Our sincere appreciation to the following organisations and businesses that have supported the work of Volunteer West over the last year:

## Organisations

- Albury Wodonga Volunteer Resource Bureau, NSW
- Australian Multicultural Community Services
- Baker & McKenzie
- Brimbank City Council
- Comm Unity Plus Services
- Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, Victorian Government
- Department of Social Services, Australian Government
- Eastern Volunteers
- Hobsons Bay City Council
- Hume City Council
- Hunter Volunteer Centre, NSW
- Justice Connect
- Louis Joel Arts and Community Centre
- Maribyrnong City Council
- Melton City Council
- Moonee Valley City Council
- National Network of Volunteer Resource Centers
- National Institute of Organisation Dynamics Australia (NIODA)
- Northern Volunteering, SA
- Victoria University
- Volunteering Victoria
- Volunteering WA (VIKTOR)
- Western Bulldogs Community Foundation
- Whittlesea Community Connections
- Wyndham City Council

## Key Service Providers

- Bookit Bookkeeping
- DQUBE Solutions
- Elite Counselling & Consulting
- Eye to Eye Graphic Design & Web Design
- Intech
- Red Herring Digital

# INDEPENDENT AUDITORS' REPORT TO THE MEMBERS

## Report on the Financial Report

I have audited the accompanying financial report of Volunteer West Inc which comprises the Statement of Financial Position as at 30 June 2021 and the Statement of Comprehensive Income, Statement of Changes in Equity and Statement of Cash Flows for the year ended on that date, a summary of significant accounting policies and other explanatory notes and the Statement by Members of the Board.

## Board's Responsibility for the Financial Report

The Board is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial report in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards (including Australian Accounting Interpretations) and the Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012 (Victoria) and its associated Regulations. This responsibility includes establishing and maintaining internal control relevant to the preparation and fair presentation of the financial report that is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error; selecting and applying appropriate accounting estimates that are reasonable in the circumstances.

## Auditor's Responsibility

My responsibility is to express an opinion on the financial report based on my audit. I conducted my audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards. These Auditing Standards require that I comply with relevant ethical requirements relating to audit engagements and plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance whether the financial report is free from material misstatement.

An audit involves performing procedures to obtain audit evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the financial report.

The procedures selected depend on the auditor's judgement, including the assessment of the risks of material misstatement of the financial report, whether due to fraud or error.

In making those risk assessments, the auditor considers internal control relevant to the entity's preparation and fair presentation of the financial report in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the entity's internal control.

An audit also includes evaluating the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates made by the board, as well as evaluating the overall presentation of the financial report.

I believe that the audit evidence I have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my audit opinion.

## Independence

In conducting my audit, I have complied with the independence requirements of Australian professional ethical pronouncements.

## Auditor's Opinion

In my opinion: The financial report of Volunteer West Inc is in accordance with the Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012 (Victoria) and its associated Regulations including:

- (i) giving a true and fair view of the Association's financial position as at 30 June 2020 and of their performance for the year ended on that date; and
- (ii) complying with Australian Accounting Standards (including the Australian Accounting Interpretations) and the Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012 (Victoria) and its associated Regulations.

---

**Jateen Kumar**

*Certified Practising Accountant,  
Registered Company Auditor*

# STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME

For the Year Ended 30 June 2021

	Note	2021 (\$)	2020 (\$)
<b>REVENUE</b>	2	943,122	190,145
Employee benefits expense		(823,610)	(144,544)
Rent expense		(2,019)	(4,988)
Telephone and IT expense		(5,599)	(5,464)
Insurance expense		(2,502)	(496)
Depreciation & Amortisation expense		(9,752)	(4,330)
Finance cost		(1)	(1)
Professional fees		(8,474)	(7,664)
Project services expenses		(7,098)	(1,986)
Other administration expenses		(14,608)	(7,455)
Net Surplus attributable to members of the association		69,459	13,217
Other comprehensive income		-	-
<b>TOTAL COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE YEAR</b>		<b>69,459</b>	<b>13,217</b>

# STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

As at 30 June 2021

	Note	2021 (\$)	2020 (\$)
Current Assets			
Cash and cash equivalents	3	705,511	133,370
Trade and other receivables	4	17,250	4,905
<b>TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS</b>		<b>722,761</b>	<b>138,275</b>
Non Current Assets			
Property, plant and equipment	5A	18,017	7,506
Trade and other receivables	5B	1,772	1,886
<b>Total Non-Current Assets</b>		<b>19,789</b>	<b>9,392</b>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>		<b>742,550</b>	<b>147,667</b>
Current Liabilities			
Trade and other payables	6	551,573	26,149
<b>Total Current Liabilities</b>		<b>551,573</b>	<b>26,149</b>
<b>Total Liabilities</b>		<b>551,573</b>	<b>26,149</b>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>		<b>190,997</b>	<b>121,518</b>
Equity			
Retained surplus		190,997	121,518
<b>TOTAL EQUITY</b>		<b>190,997</b>	<b>121,518</b>






## IMAGES

Cover: Ash Lee, Pakiza Syed, Morgan Macdonald, Prithvi Raj Munday – reasons for volunteering  
 Page 2: Pete Wingate, Karin Bouvin, Clare Corbet, Michelle Risk, Gina Cotel, Louise Lane, Thu-Trang Tran, Genevieve Helson - reasons for volunteering  
 Page 3: The VolConnect Team 2021  
 Page 7: Roland Selvanayagam headshot  
 Page 8: Thu-Trang Tran headshot  
 Page 9: Volunteer Support Service Team with members of the community at an outreach event at Maribyrnong Community Centre  
 Page 10: VolConnect team meeting at Kensington Town Hall  
 Page 11: Kashif Bouns - General Manager of the Western Bulldogs Community Foundation, Katie Hall - Member for Footscray, Thu-Trang Tran - CEO Volunteer West at VolConnect Launch Event  
 Page 15: Volunteer Support Service Team at various outreach events at Louise Joel Arts Centre, Williamstown Community and Education Centre, Yarraville Farmers Market, Highpoint Shopping Centre and Pacific Werribee Shopping Centre  
 Page 16: Pakiza Syed - reason for volunteering  
 Page 17: Screenshot from a Volunteer Manager Network meeting in 2020  
 Page 25: Thu-Trang Tran, Marijke Fotia, Ash Lee headshots  
 Page 26: Marijke Fotia - Third Sector Award, Ash Lee headshot  
 Page 31: VoltAge image submissions with image participants Victor Nunez, Pamela Every, Rosamarije De Haas, Louise Lane, Dominique Hes  
 Page 33: Kashif Bouns speaking at Volunteer West's VolConnect Launch Event  
 Page 40: VolConnect Team celebrating National Volunteers Week

Volunteer West acknowledges our work is conducted on the traditional lands of the Woiwurrung and Boonwurrung peoples. We recognise their relationship to this land and pay respect to First Peoples across Victoria and Australia.



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 [twitter.com/Volunteer\\_West](https://twitter.com/Volunteer_West)