

Victorians Volunteering for Nature

ENVIRONMENTAL VOLUNTEERING PLAN



OCTOBER 2018



Environment,
Land, Water
and Planning



Aboriginal acknowledgement

The Victorian Government proudly acknowledges Victoria's Aboriginal community and their rich culture and pays respect to their Elders past and present. We acknowledge Aboriginal people as Australia's first peoples and as the Traditional Owners and custodians of the land and water on which we rely. We recognise and value the ongoing contribution of Aboriginal people and communities to Victorian life and how this enriches us. We embrace the spirit of reconciliation, working towards the equality of outcomes and ensuring an equal voice.

Front cover photograph by Tracey Koper



Minister D'Ambrosio and Lecki Ord planting at Westgate Park. Photo: Lyn Allison

Minister's foreword

Victoria's environmental volunteers and volunteer groups have enriched our natural environment and way of life beyond measure. They play a vital role in supporting sustainable land management and providing environmental stewardship.

Victoria has a strong history of environmental volunteering, with volunteers contributing enormously to improving our environment, our local communities and our economy. Many Victorians give their time freely to a wide variety of environmental causes and organisations.

However, environmental volunteering is changing. Volunteering needs to fit in with our increasingly busy lifestyles and our changing expectations. The sector needs to find new ways to reach, recruit and retain volunteers, and to manage administrative and legal requirements.

Over the past year, the Victorian Government has worked with environmental volunteers, volunteer groups, the community and government agencies to explore how to maintain, support and grow the environmental volunteering sector.

Victorians Volunteering for Nature – Environmental Volunteering Plan takes a fresh look to ensure we can all volunteer for nature when, where and how it suits us. This Environmental Volunteering Plan will expand and reinvigorate environmental volunteering for all Victorians to get involved.

We are setting a new direction based on sustaining, expanding, valuing and understanding volunteering in Victoria. Each area has practical and contemporary ideas to support the environmental volunteering sector, such as improving administration, training volunteers, increasing collaboration and using digital communication tools to engage and share information.

We also want to celebrate the important environmental, social and economic contributions of our environmental volunteers. It is essential that our volunteers feel valued and others see and value their contribution.

I would like to thank the environmental volunteers, groups and organisations and the Environmental Volunteering Expert Group that helped develop this Environmental Volunteering Plan. Through their example and by way of this plan, we can encourage every Victorian to value and connect with nature, for a healthy natural environment that we actively care for.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Lily D'Ambrosio'.

The Hon. Lily D'Ambrosio MP

Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change
Minister for Suburban Development



Don Love, Friends of Beware Reef, surveying South Pinnacle at Beware Reef

Supporting the environmental volunteering sector

Volunteers contribute significantly to Victoria's environment, local communities and the economy and our many environmental volunteer groups play a critical role in managing, protecting and improving our natural environment.

However the nature and extent of the volunteer sector is changing. Victorians are still committed to volunteering but in a way that suits their lifestyle. Changing demographics, different social needs and increasing legal and administrative requirements affect how environmental groups operate and how they reach, retain and recruit volunteers.

The Victorian Government recognises these challenges and wants to better support, coordinate and enhance environmental volunteering in Victoria, so we can enjoy the economic, environmental and community benefits for years to come.

Purpose

Victorians Volunteering for Nature – Environmental Volunteering Plan is a coordinated and revitalised approach to environmental volunteering that will support and foster a sustainable, modern, effective and valued environmental volunteering sector in Victoria.

It looks at how we can support and sustain the existing environmental volunteering sector, while encouraging more active involvement from Victorians by making the sector more relevant and accessible.

The personal wellbeing of Victorians and the economic wellbeing of our state are dependent on the health of the natural environment. If we can increase our collective understanding of this concept, we may see more people participating in environmental volunteering activities.

This Environmental Volunteering Plan outlines four focus areas to address the challenges and issues currently experienced by the sector and offers ways to overcome barriers to attracting new volunteers.

Key focus areas



Sustain



Expand



Value



Understand

Scope

Environmental volunteering is a term that covers a wide range of environmental and sustainability activities carried out by individuals and community groups. This plan supports the full spectrum of what it means to volunteer for the natural environment. It considers all environmental volunteering in Victoria, not just programs currently supported through the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP).

Developing this plan

This plan was developed by DELWP in consultation with Victorian environmental volunteer groups and peak bodies (listed in Appendix). Over the past year, we have researched the sector, talked to stakeholders and received feedback through our environmental volunteering survey to understand the most significant challenges for the sector and how to resolve them.

We worked with an Environmental Volunteering Expert Group (listed in Appendix) to develop a range of actions and ideas to sustain environmental volunteering, improve the experience of volunteers and expand opportunities for participation.

Protecting Victoria's environment

Protecting Victoria's Environment – Biodiversity 2037 establishes the Victorian Government's plan to stop the decline of the health of our native plants and animals and improve our natural environment. Biodiversity 2037 establishes a long-term vision and goals, with specific targets to deliver on these goals.

Supporting, improving and expanding the environmental volunteering sector in Victoria will contribute directly to the vision and goals of Biodiversity 2037. Of particular relevance is the target of five million Victorians acting to protect the natural environment by 2037. (See below).

Delivering the plan

DELWP is responsible for delivering the Environmental Volunteering Plan in partnership with portfolio agencies such as Parks Victoria and Catchment Management Authorities, and the environmental volunteering sector.

Victoria's Environmental Volunteering Plan is an opportunity to transform the environmental volunteering sector and give DELWP and its portfolio agencies the capacity to respond to the changing needs of the sector.

Environmental volunteer groups and programs engage and inspire individuals and communities to sustain the health of Victoria's environment

Victoria's Biodiversity Plan 2037 Vision, goals and targets

VISION Victoria's biodiversity is healthy, valued and actively cared for

GOAL Victorians value nature

Targets By 2037

- All Victorians connecting with nature.
- Five million Victorians acting to protect the natural environment
- All Victorian Government organisations that manage environmental assets contribute to environmental-economic accounting

GOAL Victoria's natural environment is healthy

Targets A net improvement in the outlook across all species by 2037, so that:

- No vulnerable or near-threatened species will have become endangered
- All critically endangered and endangered species will have at least one option available for being conserved ex situ or re-established in the wild (where feasible under climate change) should they need it
- We achieve a net gain of the overall extent and condition of habitats across terrestrial, waterway and marine environments



Landcare Australia Limited

Environmental volunteering in Victoria

Victorians have long been acting to protect their environment. Over the past four decades, a diverse number of environmental volunteering groups and programs have emerged, with an estimated 100,000 Victorians participating in environmental volunteering each year. These volunteers make an enormous contribution to protecting and enhancing Victoria's environment.

Environmental volunteering includes a diverse range of activities. It has expanded beyond more traditional conservation activities such as planting, weeding and land management to encompass concerns for use of resources, climate change and sustainability, with activities such as advocacy, virtual volunteering and citizen science.

At its core, the environmental volunteering sector focuses on protecting the environment for social, economic and environmental purposes, as well as safeguarding the environment for future generations.

Why volunteer?

Volunteers carry out important work that makes our communities stronger, more resilient and better places to live.

In return, volunteers benefit from improved wellbeing and a stronger community connection. Reduced stress and better physical and mental health (which increase longevity) have all been reported as benefits of volunteering.¹

According to DELWP's environmental volunteering survey conducted in June 2018, most people get involved in environmental volunteering to:

- help the natural environment and all forms of plant and animal life
- give something back to society or community
- help future generations
- gain a sense of satisfaction.

Environmental volunteers are often motivated to contribute because of a special connection to their local environment, landscape or community. This may be a connection to a special place, a local area, a protected area, national park, beach, river, wildflower or favourite native animal.

WHAT IS VOLUNTEERING?

Volunteering Australia defines volunteering as 'time willingly given for the common good and without financial gain'. This broad definition encompasses the spectrum of volunteering activities including formal, informal, community and corporate. Volunteering may also be regular, event-based or spontaneous.

Source: Volunteering Australia 2015, 'Definition of Volunteering', accessed October 2018 from www.volunteeringaustralia.org/policy-and-best-practise/definition-of-volunteering.

ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTION OF VOLUNTEERING

Across all sectors, Victoria's 1.5 million volunteers contribute millions of hours of unpaid work each year to their communities. The economic contribution was projected to be worth around \$23 billion to Victoria in 2011, and this is set to reach \$42 billion by 2021, if the current rate of growth remains unchanged.

Source: Ministerial Council for Volunteers, *Volunteers in Victoria: Trends, challenges and opportunities*, State Government of Victoria, June 2017, p. 34.

¹ Volunteering Victoria, 'The impact of volunteering on happiness and health', 8 August 2016, accessed on 5 October 2018 from volunteeringvictoria.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Info-sheet-on-health-and-happiness_working-file-August-2016.pdf



A snapshot of Victoria's environmental volunteering activities

Victoria has an impressive record of environmental action through volunteering. For decades, many individuals, groups and organisations have contributed to the health of our water, land and biodiversity.



Citizen science

Citizen science typically involves volunteers collaborating with scientists to enhance knowledge and support management of biodiversity. Two examples are **BirdLife Australia** which monitors birds to increase scientific knowledge of species, and the **Frog Census** which is a community monitoring program that collects data on frog populations to inform planning and decisions on waterway health.



Marine and coastal volunteers

Hundreds of volunteers give their time to protect and enhance Victoria's coastal and marine environments. Groups such as **ReefWatch**, **Fishcare Victoria** and **Coastcare** support volunteers to carry out activities to maintain and improve our 2000 km of coastline and engage communities about marine and coastal management.



Water programs

Waterwatch is a citizen science program where volunteers monitor water quality and other indicators (chemical, biological and physical) to give a better understanding of waterway and catchment long-term health. **EstuaryWatch** is a program for monitoring estuary health.



Landcare

Landcare represents thousands of people across Victoria, working together to increase biodiversity and promote the sustainable management of land. There are around 600 Landcare groups and 64 networks, and these groups cover 52 per cent of the state – 68 per cent of private land and 21 per cent of public land.



Zoos Victoria

More than 800 volunteers are part of the current **Zoos Victoria Volunteering Program**. This program is integral to fighting wildlife extinction.



Friends groups

A Friends group is a group of people with an interest in supporting a park, conservation reserve or species of native flora or fauna. Most Friends groups look after municipal parks and waterways, but many also work in national and state parks. The **Victorian Environment Friends Network** is the peak body for Friends groups in Victoria.



Parks volunteers and outdoor enthusiasts

More than 200 groups help Parks Victoria maintain and protect our diverse network of parks, including Friends groups, community organisations, educators and researchers.

At **Phillip Island Nature Parks**, volunteers help with educating and guiding visitors, research on penguins, beach clean-up activities, revegetation, threatened species, wildlife recovery, and administration. Recreational user groups such as **4WD clubs**, **bushwalkers**, mountain bike clubs and shooting associations also work to protect local environments.



 **Climate change and sustainability**

Victoria has more than 60 climate change networks, sustainability and community energy groups. Initiatives delivered include Boomerang Bags and Repair cafés. **Keep Victoria Beautiful**, a community organisation, also empowers local communities to take pride and care for their local environment. They run events and activities such as Tidy Towns, Sustainable Cities and Adopt a Roadside.

 **Gardening**

Volunteers with an interest in gardening may volunteer at indigenous nurseries, **Gardens for Wildlife** and community gardens. Volunteers also help run the **Royal Botanic Gardens** as guides, herbarium volunteers and garden ambassadors.

 **Wildlife programs**

Wildlife rehabilitation volunteers, authorised as Wildlife Shelter Operators or Foster Carers by DELWP, care for and rehabilitate sick, injured and orphaned wildlife.

Land for Wildlife (Victoria) is a voluntary wildlife conservation program where volunteers protect and restore habitat for native wildlife on their land. Habitats include forests, woodlands, heaths, grasslands and wetland environments.

 **Corporate volunteering**

Many businesses invest and commit resources to volunteering through staff volunteering programs, sponsorship, and in-kind support of volunteering projects.

 **Not-for-profit**

Not-for-profit organisations such as **Conservation Volunteers Australia** and **Greening Australia** organise volunteers to restore the landscape. Other charities, philanthropic and advocacy groups are leading other opportunities for environmental volunteering.

Trust for Nature develops conservation covenants to protect native plants and wildlife on private land. Volunteers help with planting, weeding, fencing, monitoring and field events.

 **Local government and government agencies**

Many government agencies create programs to support and expand environmental volunteering, including: local councils; catchment management authorities; committees of management; water agencies; the **Environment Protection Authority**; the **Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources**; and DELWP.



Landcare Australia Limited

The changing volunteer landscape

Understanding how the volunteer landscape is changing is important, so we can act accordingly. We want to see continual improvements in the environmental volunteering sector so that we can meet community expectations and continue to care for our natural environment in the years ahead.

We have limited data on the environmental volunteering sector, but trends across the entire volunteer sector in Australia suggest that people are continuing to sign up to volunteering, but for less time than in the past. According to the Ministerial Council for Volunteers, Australia-wide rates of volunteering declined from 42 per cent of the population aged over 15 years in 2006, to 32 per cent in 2014.²

Our participation in volunteering changes as our work, study and family commitments fluctuate throughout our lives. The overall trend shows the Victorian population to be increasingly time poor, with less time to commit to long-term volunteering. This makes it challenging for organisations that depend on volunteers to attract new volunteers and ensure enough participation to provide a stable volunteer workforce.

² Ministerial Council for Volunteers, *Volunteers in Victoria: Trends, challenges and opportunities*, State Government of Victoria, June 2017, p. 12

Trends in environmental volunteering

Environmental volunteers make up only four per cent of Australian volunteers. In Victoria, the current estimate of environmental volunteers is about 100,000.

As mentioned above, if current rates of decline in the volunteering sector continue, we will see less people acting to care for and protect the environment. This trend may be exacerbated in the environmental volunteering sector due to several characteristics.

Firstly, environmental volunteers tend to be older than the wider volunteering sector. While older Victorians may have more time for volunteer activities, environmental volunteer groups find it hard to recruit younger volunteers.

Secondly, more environmental volunteer groups are based in regional and rural Victoria compared with urban areas. We want to respond to the trend of population growth in our cities by providing more opportunities for Victorians living in urban areas.

Thirdly, the sector tends to offer structured, group-based volunteering opportunities that often need an ongoing commitment from members. This form of volunteering is not consistent with the emerging demand for event-based volunteering opportunities.

Lastly, the sector lacks diversity, with fewer volunteers from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities.³ We see fewer volunteers from CALD communities, as they are more likely to be involved in informal volunteering. We need to find ways to strengthen diversity in our environmental volunteering programs.

³ Ministerial Council for Volunteers, *Volunteers in Victoria: Trends, challenges and opportunities*, State Government of Victoria, June 2017 p. 20

⁴ Ministerial Council for Volunteers, *Volunteers in Victoria: Trends, challenges and opportunities*, State Government of Victoria, June 2017

What volunteers want

Our recent survey suggests most Victorians are passionate about caring for our natural environment, but want greater flexibility in how and when they volunteer – volunteering needs to be balanced with family, work, study and caring responsibilities.

Volunteers want more event-based volunteering that enables them to make short-term commitments to a cause. And they want easier access to these volunteer opportunities, which are currently not always accessible or readily available.

Survey respondents want meaningful volunteer roles and to be recognised and valued by the organisations they work with. Some want to volunteer through their workplace or are looking for pathways to employment and skills development.⁴

While we know that compliance with administration and legal obligations is essential to protect the safety of volunteers and the community, groups and volunteers want these requirements to be made easier.

Photo Craig Moodie





Julie Renouf/Zoos Victoria

Opportunities for environmental volunteering

There are many successful environmental volunteering programs, many of which are supported by the Victorian Government. We want to continue supporting these programs, while also responding to the emerging trends, challenges and opportunities to expand the environmental volunteering sector.

Top ten ways to overcome barriers

Based on our survey, research and extensive consultation with the environmental volunteering sector and related organisations, here are the top ten ways to overcome barriers to environmental volunteering:

- 1 Make administration easier**
Make it easier for people to volunteer, deliver programs and comply with administrative obligations with simplified and fit-for-purpose administration and legal requirements.
- 2 Build capacity and capability**
Support volunteers and groups to develop better skills and deliver greater results.
- 3 Improve sector collaboration**
Encourage government agencies to work together and share resources to improve governance. Promote tools that support better collaboration between networks and groups of volunteers.
- 4 Involve more young people**
Create volunteering opportunities that appeal to young people.
- 5 Attract more diverse volunteers**
Create broader programs that encourage participation of volunteers from all backgrounds, cultures, nationalities and abilities, so that everyone has the opportunity to feel connected to their local community through volunteering.

KEY FOCUS AREAS

We have condensed the top ten ways to overcome barriers into four focus areas, as shown below. Each focus area lists actions and further ideas to be considered.



Sustain

To sustain existing environmental volunteering programs and networks

Support and respond to the evolving needs of the environmental volunteer landscape by improving access to grants, guidelines, technical assistance and training, while streamlining administration requirements.



Expand

To regenerate environmental volunteering and encourage more Victorians to act for nature

Facilitate opportunities for all Victorians to volunteer by developing innovative ways to act for the environment.



Value

To value and recognise the contributions of environmental volunteers

Communicate and celebrate the efforts of environmental volunteering so that volunteers know they are making a difference.



Understand

To understand the diverse needs of the environmental volunteering sector

Understand motivations, barriers and opportunities concerning volunteering to inform program design and continuous improvement.

Barriers to participation

According to DELWP's environmental volunteering survey (June 2018), the top three barriers to participation are:

- lack of time due to work or family commitments
- involvement in other community organisations such as schools, sporting clubs and churches
- a general lack of relevant information about environmental volunteering, the skills needed and the activities on offer.

6 Reimagine volunteering

Look for flexible, event-based and short-term volunteer opportunities to entice more people to volunteer. Develop new ways to match volunteers' skills with the right activities. Encourage communities to initiate volunteering opportunities that are relevant to them.

7 Harness technology

Help volunteers use existing tools and systems and develop new ways to communicate and collaborate, for example, social media, apps and drones.

8 Partner with Aboriginal communities

Engage Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians to participate in volunteering projects and build relationships between volunteer groups and Aboriginal communities.

9 Understand more about environmental volunteering

Monitor, review, research and report on volunteering efforts, activities, achievements and outcomes, so we have good data to develop programs and promote the sector.

10 Celebrate and promote volunteering

Volunteering is rewarding and often fun. We need to showcase, share and value the contribution and achievements of volunteers. By repositioning and promoting volunteering, we can appeal to new volunteers and help Victorians see how it benefits them, their community and the state's environment and biodiversity.



Sustain

Support and respond to the evolving needs of the environmental volunteer landscape by improving access to grants, guidelines, technical assistance and training, while streamlining administration requirements.

We need to make it easier for volunteers and groups to get on with the job of volunteering. Volunteers are keen to see government improve the legal and administrative process to reduce unnecessary inefficiencies. We need some level of administration to protect volunteers and volunteering activities, but not so much that it becomes a burden and detracts from looking after our natural environment.

Actions we will take

Action	How we will do this
Improve administration of government grants	<p>Coordinate our approach to communicating all available DELWP grants for the volunteering sector.</p> <p>Develop a grants calendar for DELWP's website.</p> <p>Standardise administration of DELWP grants and apply a simplified governance approach, based on size of projects (total funding requests and risk profile of proposed projects).</p>
Promote cost-effective insurance	<p>Promote and make the most cost-effective insurance available to all environmental volunteering groups.</p>
Develop a statement of collaboration	<p>Encourage programs and agencies to work together to put volunteers at the centre of program design and delivery.</p>
Build relationships between volunteer groups and Aboriginal communities	<p>Promote existing relevant Indigenous projects and support the development of cultural competency through the volunteer network and existing Landcare coordinators and facilitators.</p>
Engage Aboriginal communities	<p>Engage Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians to participate in volunteering projects.</p>



Left: Yarra Ranges Landcare Network's first Landcare for Singles planting in 2011 at Birdsland Reserve in Belgrave South.
Below: Students from Chewton Primary School checking reptile monitoring stations.



Expand

Facilitate opportunities for all Victorians to volunteer by developing innovative ways to act for the environment.

Volunteering contributes to an inclusive and cohesive society where everybody feels valued and connected to their local community. We need to change the environmental volunteering experience if we are to meet changing volunteer and community expectations.

We want volunteering opportunities that encourage and inspire young people to participate. We would also like to see clear pathways to employment via volunteering.

Our recent survey suggests Victorians want more event-based, spontaneous and short-term opportunities. We need a relevant and engaging approach that promotes the social and economic benefits of volunteering, beyond the more obvious environmental benefits.

Virtual volunteering also has the potential to attract volunteers who have not traditionally been involved in outdoor environmental activities. We need to consider a wider variety of offerings and using technologies and different communication platforms to reach our diverse community.

Actions we will take

Action	How we will do this
Targeted urban volunteering grants stream	Collaborate with local councils to develop a range of delivery mechanisms.
Promote youth volunteering	Work with existing volunteer programs and organisations to promote youth volunteering and explore ways to broaden participation, including through the ResourceSmart Schools program.
Implement a 'Wisdom of Volunteers' matching service	Match and link existing volunteer groups with local schools.
Partner with universities	Partner with Victorian universities to promote environmental volunteering, for example during National Volunteer Week.
Introduce schools to the Adopt a Native Species or Adopt a Patch program	Introduce the 'Adopt a' concept to schools and link to existing organisations and programs for implementation.
Build TAKE2 business partnerships	Work with the existing TAKE2 business partnerships to promote volunteering opportunities.
Encourage volunteering in culturally and linguistically diverse communities	Work with multicultural organisations, including the Victorian Multicultural Commission, to promote environmental volunteering.
Develop a virtual volunteering service	Match skills with volunteer groups using a virtual volunteering service. Work with existing volunteer peak organisations to explore the most cost-effective and efficient model.
Showcase volunteering success	Develop case studies to showcase the people and projects run by volunteer groups.



Value

Communicate and celebrate the efforts of environmental volunteering so that volunteers know they are making a difference.

Environmental volunteers generally feel that their contribution is recognised within their group or organisation, but not by government or the broader community.

We need to showcase, share, value, recognise and celebrate volunteer achievements so that our volunteers feel valued and understand their collective impact on the health of our state.

Increased public recognition of volunteers may raise the profile of volunteering and the awareness of volunteer opportunities in the community, leading to improved volunteer recruitment.

Actions we will take

Action

How we will do this

Promote the benefits of volunteering

Tell the environmental volunteering story to reach more Victorians' hearts and minds. Explore maximum reach communication methods to promote the benefits and expand participation in environmental volunteering.

Add environmental volunteering to the Victorian State of the Environment Report

Make sure environmental volunteering is captured in the Victorian State of the Environment Report to recognise the contribution made by volunteers to environmental conservation in Victoria.

Friends of the Prom weeding sea spurge





Understand

Understand motivations, barriers and opportunities concerning volunteering to inform program design and continuous improvement.

The more we know about the environmental volunteer sector, the more we can take steps to improve it. With a better understanding of motivations, barriers and opportunities, we can make targeted programs and improve the volunteer experience, leading to better outcomes for our natural environment.

We need to monitor, review, research and report consistently on volunteering efforts, activities, achievements and outcomes.

Improved data will also help us develop the other three focus areas. For example, sharing the known benefits of volunteering can potentially inspire others to act for the environment.

Actions we will take

Action	How we will do this
Build connections	Identify and promote opportunities for volunteers to connect nationally and internationally to learn from others and share best practice.
Create an annual volunteering report	Create an annual volunteering report to measure and better understand the environmental volunteering sector and establish a baseline using the Victorians Volunteering Nature Foundation Research.





Other ways to support environmental volunteering

In our conversations with stakeholders, we received many valuable ideas to maintain and expand the environmental volunteering sector. We would like to explore their potential as we work on the actions under the key focus areas in the years ahead. The ideas are mapped against the top ten ways to overcome barriers to participation, as described in the earlier section.



Options for environmental volunteering

Barrier theme	Ideas	Key focus
Make administration easier	Pilot a 'passport-style' volunteering card so environmental volunteers can work more easily at multiple volunteer opportunities. The passport would give volunteers a transferable volunteer ID that includes credentials such as police and working with children checks	SUSTAIN
	Investigate a longer-term environmental volunteering government grants program	SUSTAIN
	Develop a centralised 'umbrella' environmental volunteering website portal and app to coordinate existing information by linking to current sites, as well as offering a 'front door' for new environmental volunteers	SUSTAIN
	Create a small 'set-up' grants fund to offset administration and incorporation costs for new groups	EXPAND
	Develop a consistent generic environmental volunteer induction process, based on existing models and information available	EXPAND
Build capacity and capability	Adapt and adopt the national volunteer standards to give environmental volunteers a minimum fit-for-purpose set of standards (in partnership with the Ministerial Council for Volunteers)	SUSTAIN
	Use and adapt existing training modules and increase accessibility to all environmental volunteers and volunteer managers. Where appropriate, develop and deliver new modules	SUSTAIN
	Enhance existing facilitator model to support a range of environmental volunteers	SUSTAIN
	Periodically review the delivery arrangements to support volunteers to check models are appropriate, equitable and fit for purpose. This may include current government support mechanisms such as providing resourcing for facilitators and coordinators	SUSTAIN
Improve sector collaboration	Hold statewide environmental volunteering coordination network meetings twice a year to facilitate collaboration between department-led and other volunteer programs. Alternate meetings between Melbourne and regional Victoria	SUSTAIN
	Pilot a statewide 'volunteers decide' event with diverse representation from the environmental volunteering sector. The event could use 'participatory budgeting' principles to generate ideas to support volunteering, with a nominated budget that attendees decide how to spend to support project ideas	SUSTAIN
	Offer a suite of ecological, technical and practical seminars, events, workshops and training activities	SUSTAIN
	Continue to scan the volunteering landscape to look for mutually beneficial opportunities to partner with organisations and corporates and explore further cross-sectoral approaches	SUSTAIN
	Establish a Ministerial Environmental Volunteer Advisory Group to advise, promote achievements and offer coordinated input to the Ministerial Council for Volunteers	UNDERSTAND

Barrier theme	Ideas	Key focus
Involve more young people	Create an annual environmental volunteering youth ambassador bursary to promote the benefits of volunteering to young adults	VALUE
	Explore pathways to employment by supporting Victorians to discover new skills and capabilities, while contributing to the Victorian community throughout their employment journey and through university and workplace transition opportunities	EXPAND
Attract more diverse volunteers	Explore an Aboriginal Facilitator Program with multiple positions which incorporates all environmental volunteering opportunities	EXPAND
Reimagine volunteering	Create environmental and conservation 'master plans' in partnership with volunteers, setting out statewide environmental and conservation priorities to achieve maximum environmental benefit	SUSTAIN
	Pilot and evaluate event-based volunteering opportunities to learn more about widescale engagement in short-term volunteering. Provide resources to help volunteer groups offer new event-based opportunities	EXPAND
	Expand programs in which Victorians volunteer their land for conservation, for example, through conservation covenants or programs such as Land for Wildlife	EXPAND
Harness technology	Promote and support use of existing tools and systems such as Naturekit and Strategic Management Prospects to help volunteers identify the best actions to take and report on their achievements	SUSTAIN
	Develop and extend citizen science projects to connect scientists with volunteers	EXPAND
	Continue to review, adopt and encourage modern technologies to improve the volunteer experience to make it more accessible and easier to participate	SUSTAIN
Partner with Aboriginal communities	Establish an Aboriginal panel of providers so the volunteering sector can engage Traditional Owners and other Aboriginal Victorians for cultural awareness training relating to Caring for Country	SUSTAIN
Understand more about environmental volunteering	Develop and distribute a simplified method to measure value and return on investment of environmental volunteering	VALUE
	Monitor and evaluate models for volunteering internationally and in other jurisdictions to continually improve our understanding of best practice in this sector	UNDERSTAND
	Update or improve existing maps of volunteer groups and projects to show who's who and where environmental volunteering opportunities are happening across the state	UNDERSTAND
Celebrate and promote volunteering	Use environmental volunteering champions to promote environmental volunteering, particularly in the lead-up to National Volunteer Week	EXPAND
	Review and refocus the existing suite of awards programs to recognise and reward volunteering. Add a volunteer category to the annual Premier's Sustainability Awards to recognise the contribution of volunteers	VALUE
	Design and deliver a series of social media mini-campaigns to promote and make environmental volunteering more recognisable and accessible. Highlight health and wellbeing benefits of volunteering – social, mental and physical	VALUE
	Make communications and promotional products accessible beyond DELWP. Share with organisations, local governments and groups for greater reach and continuity of communication and promotional efforts	VALUE



Moving forward

The Victorian Government will work on the actions and ideas in this plan to move towards a revitalised environmental volunteering sector, with more Victorians valuing and actively caring for our natural environment.

DELWP will begin working with its portfolio agencies and the environmental volunteering sector to address the challenges, issues and barriers to participation outlined in this Environmental Volunteering Plan. We will review and update this environmental volunteering plan within five years to ensure we are responsive to any changes in the volunteering landscape.

Using this plan, we will support, coordinate and enhance environmental volunteering in Victoria so that we foster a sustainable, modern, effective and valued environmental volunteering sector for years to come.

Appendix

Environmental volunteer groups and peak bodies consulted

We consulted the following environmental groups and organisations to create the *Victorians Volunteering for Nature – Environmental Volunteering Plan*.

ANGAIR (Anglesea, Aireys Inlet Society for the Protection of Flora and Fauna)
Central Victoria Biolinks Alliance
City of Melbourne
Conservation Volunteers Australia
Corangamite Catchment Management Authority
Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources
Fishcare Victoria program
Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning
Arthur Rylah Institute
Biodiversity Division
Landcare Program
Coastcare program
Waterwatch program
Climate Change Group
Local Government Victoria
Indigenous Inclusion Team
Department of Health and Human Services
Volunteering team
Environment Protection Authority
Friends of Braeside Park
Friends of Merri Creek
Friends of Tyrone Foreshore, Rye

Greening Australia
Intrepid Landcare
Keep Victoria Beautiful
Knox City Council
Knox Environment Society
Landcare Victoria Incorporated
Manningham City Council
Melbourne Water
Ministerial Council for Volunteers
Moonee Valley Council
Municipal Association of Victoria
Nature Stewards
Office of the Commissioner of Environmental Sustainability
Parks Victoria
Philip Island Nature Park
Port Phillip EcoCentre
Port Phillip Westernport Catchment Management Authority
Sustainability Victoria
Victorian Environment Friends Network
Victorian Mallee Fowl Recovery Group
Victorian National Parks Association
Yarra Ranges Council
Yarra Ranges Landcare Network
Zoos Victoria

Environmental Volunteering Expert Group

The Environmental Volunteering Expert Group is a ministerially appointed group of experts that gave input and advice on how to strengthen and expand environmental volunteering in Victoria. Members include:

Cathy Willis	Manningham City Council
Claire Dunn	Municipal Association of Victoria
Graham Phelps	Corangamite Catchment Management Authority
Greg Bain	Melbourne Water
Helen Coleman	Ministerial Council for Volunteers
Leesa Riley	Parks Victoria
Lian Wilson	Zoos Victoria

Paul Paton	Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning Indigenous Inclusion Team
Peter Codd	Regional and community engagement specialist
Dr Sophie Bickford	Central Victoria Biolinks Alliance
Stephen Derrick	Victorian Environment Friends Network
Terry Hubbard	Landcare Victoria Incorporated

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