Volunteering GEELONG

ANNUAL REPORT 2025-26



Volunteering Geelong

Annual Report 2025–26





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Be Involved
Lend a Hand
Give Back
Be Rewarded

Volunteering Geelong respectfully acknowledge the traditional owners of the lands and waters of Australia.

Volunteering Geelong acknowledge the land we live and work on is Wadawurrung country and belongs to the Wadawurrung people of the Kulin Nation.

We respect and acknowledge this land and its ecosystems and all elders: past, present and emerging.

Volunteering Geelong Inc
ABN 53 611 428 304
Is registered by Australian Charities and Not for Profits Commission

Registration: A0040073C
Regulator: Consumer Affairs Victoria
Registration Date: 22/08/2000

Volunteering Geelong Community Foundation Trust
ABN 43 297 814 948
Is registered by Australian Charities and Not for Profits Commission

Endorsed as a deductible gift recipient – DGR Item 1 effective 16 February 2017

Endorsed for charity tax concessions
Income tax exemption
GST concessions
FBT exemption effective 16 February 2018



Strategy and Mission

Diversity, Access and Inclusion
Creating equitable and accessible volunteering opportunities for everyone.

Community Impact
Strengthening social connections, supporting wellbeing and contributing to positive social and economic outcomes.

Pathways to Employment
Helping people develop skills, gain experience and access training and employment opportunities through volunteering.

Meaningful Volunteering
Connecting people with rewarding opportunities that make a positive difference.

Breaking Down Barriers and Building Capacity
Removing barriers to participation and strengthening the ability of volunteer-involving organisations to engage and support volunteers.

Vision
To support a region where individuals feel motivated to volunteer, have the opportunity to contribute their time, skills and knowledge and are supported and encouraged to enjoy a rewarding volunteering experience.

Mission
As a leading provider of volunteering services, we will coordinate, promote, support & strengthen volunteering in our community to enhance the health & well-being for people and community or charitable organisations within our community.

Purpose
Our purpose is to see the Barwon South West region thrive through volunteerism. We make this a reality by :

a. Promoting and increasing the impact of volunteering in our region.

b. Creating a strong and vibrant volunteer community that promotes inclusivity, respect and empowerment

c. Being a trail blazer and the leading voice for volunteering in our region, with our advice being sought by government, community based organisations, businesses and individuals.

Our Membership Value Proposition (MVP) is focused on increasing positive impacts for our member organisations through the use of our volunteers.

We do this by providing:

a. volunteers matched to your request criteria,

b. volunteers who are appropriately canvassed, accredited and aligned to National Standards and best practices,

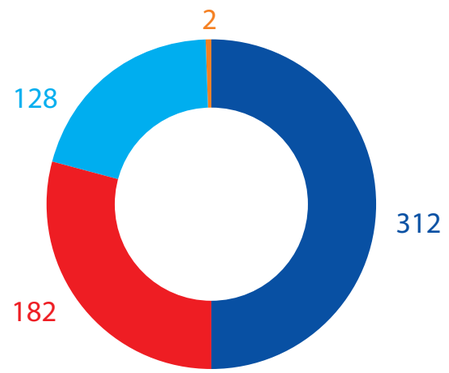
c. timely response turnarounds for volunteer requests,

d. valuable education and advice to assist in maximising volunteer outcomes through contemporary sector knowledge,

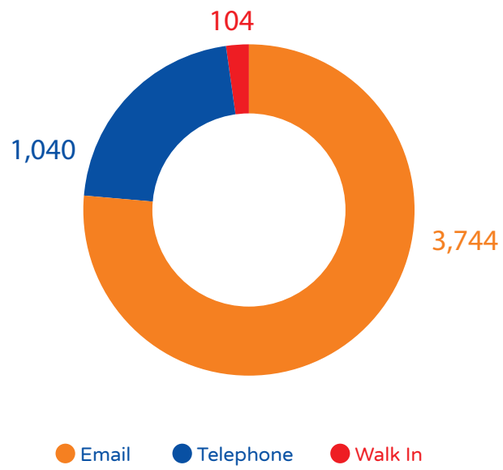
e. an active network to support our volunteer managers

Service Usage Stats
01 July 2025 – 30 June 2026

FACE TO FACE / TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS



COMMUNITY INTERFACE / ENGAGEMENT



EXPRESSION OF INTEREST ONLINE REGISTRATION

July	351
August	372
September	304
October	242
November	304
December	227
January	318
February	287
March	274
April	223
May	284
June	246

Board and Staff



Top Row: Christine Heath (President), Ron Andrews (Vice President), Colin Dempsey (Manager & Board Secretary)

Middle Row: Lily Stefanovic (Treasurer), Keith Fagg (Patron), Lydia Turda (Member)

Bottom Row: Cameron Murnane (Member), Alana Whitten (Business Development)

President's Report



PRESIDENT Christine Heath

The past couple of years have been challenging for many of us and Volunteering Geelong is no exception.

We have moved locations twice, faced uncertainty about our ongoing funding and have had numerous staff and board changes. But these changes have made us reflect, look critically at how we serve our community and make some tough decisions.

As Mahatma Gandhi said : *"Strength does not come from winning. Your struggles develop your strengths. When you go through hardships and decide not to surrender, that is strength."*

We are now located in the Geelong West Town Hall with many thanks to continued generous support from the City of Greater Geelong. We have created a space for members of the community to drop in and have a chat about where and how they might be able to volunteer. We now have staff dedicated to assisting potential volunteers through their volunteering journey - breaking down barriers to becoming a volunteer for our priority groups. We help people navigate the sometimes-difficult path to becoming a volunteer and it is our vision to see our space become a volunteer hub with people dropping in and sharing their experiences.

A highlight of the year was our collaboration with Deakin University which is outlined in our Manager's Report. We have learned a lot from this collaboration and hope that this is a relationship we can continue to foster into the future.

Through all of these changes, our members continued to tell us that our support is very much needed. This was never more evident than at the Volunteering Expo we held in May. We were overwhelmed by the response to this event given it was our first Expo. We had over 40 organisations showcasing the incredible work they do in the community, and many hundreds of individuals wander through to chat and learn about and varied volunteering opportunities. It was an incredible first Expo and we cannot wait to see what the event will look like next year.

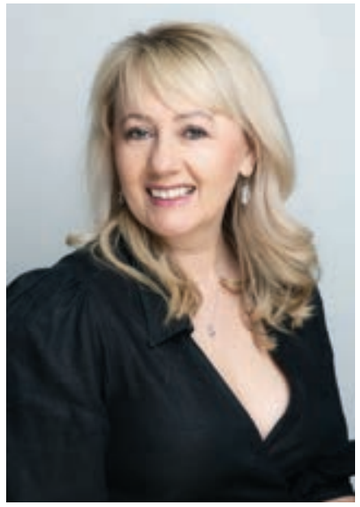
I mentioned earlier we have had some challenging times this year, but by far, the hardest thing we had to face was the tragic loss to cancer of one of our Board members. Kerry Dmytrenko was an exceptional Board Member, an incredible person with great experience in the sector and great compassion, wisdom and intellect. We miss Kerry's always thoughtful and insightful input to the Board and know that her legacy will live on through the work and time she gave so selflessly to our community. Vale dearest Kerry. You were an inspiration to us all and the reason we continue to fight on.

Finally, I would like to thank everyone involved with Volunteering Geelong, our Board, our Staff, our volunteers, our partners, funders, members and supporters. We truly appreciate everything you do to support us and hope that we can continue to support you in return. We are absolutely determined to achieve our vision to build a region where volunteering thrives and we hope you will remain with us on that journey.

To end with another Ghandi quote : *"Service is not a virtue to be added to our lives, but the very purpose for our existence."*

Christine Heath
President

Treasurer's Report



Lily Stefanovic

Commencing the 2025/26 financial year, the Board made the decision to report Volunteering Geelong Inc and Volunteering Geelong Community Foundation Trust separately, rather than as a consolidated position for Volunteering Geelong, as it has done previously. While the two entities share a common goal and purpose, they have different financial and operating models that are best reported independently.

A review of the accounts for Volunteering Geelong Inc for the period 1 July 2025 to 30 June 2026 shows a solid surplus of $38530 on the back of the federal governments continued support of the Volunteer Management Activity program, in conjunction with their financial partner Volunteering Victoria. It is also the result of a conservative approach to maintaining costs. The surplus has contributed to a very solid financial position for Volunteering Geelong Inc to move into the 2026/27 financial year.

A review of the accounts for Volunteering Geelong Community Foundation Trust for the same 2025/26 period shows a deficit of $68577. This result highlights the difficulty in securing funds for additional programs that are typically run through the Trust. It should be noted that the additional expenses, contributing to the loss for the year, was due to the decision to employ a dedicated resource to the Trust. This is seen as a strategic decision to increase the engagement with community and stakeholders to support sustainability into the future.

Our strong financial position has meant we have been able to continue with a $400,000 term deposit with Beyond Bank. However, as funding from the Volunteer Management Activity program has been decreased for the 2026/27 year and will cease for 2027/28, we must continue to explore opportunities in relation to future revenue streams for us to continue to supply services and support volunteer involving organisations.

I would like to acknowledge Armstrong Accounting and Taxation who have prepared the respective Accounts. Based on their review they have provided an assurance they have not become aware of any matter that made them believe that the financial report is not in accordance with the ACNC and gives a true and fair view of our financial position and that the accounts comply with the Australian Accounting Standards.

My appreciation goes to Colin for his continued work in making sure that our finances are properly maintained and that all of our reporting requirements are attended to.

Lily Stefanovic
Treasurer

VOLUNTEERING INC

	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
Income	$543,124	$434,183	$406,957	$518,612	$252,192
Expenses	$347,900	$471,785	$393,639	$280,794	$218,662
Surplus	$191,856	($37,602)	$13,318	$237,818	$33,530
Cash at Bank	$321,109	$262,190	$279,947	$497,833	$534,267
Net Assets	$263,159	$225,556	$238,875	$476,693	$510,223

VGCFT

	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
Income	$24,286	$51,472	$40,316	$219	$0
Expenses	$35,141	$31,774	$20,055	$10,215	$68,577
Surplus	($10,855)	$18,698	$20,261	($9,996)	($68,577)
Cash at Bank	$54,842	$48,346	$82,178	$81,979	$23,910
Net Assets	$91,451	$111,149	$131,409	$121,413	$52,836













Manager's Report



Colin Dempsey

The 2025/26 year was a year of change, with new staff joining the Volunteering Geelong team, new leadership with Christine Heath taking on the role as Chair of the Board and new premises, with City of Greater Geelong continuing to work in partnership with us to ensure we have a place to call home.

The year kicked off with Alana Whitten joining the team in July, in a newly created role focussing on improving our community and stakeholder engagement and promoting not only the work we do at Volunteering Geelong but the enormous contribution made by our member organisations and their volunteers. Alana has done an outstanding job in strengthening our community connections and improving our digital presence, as well as reviewing what our members want and need from us. What a great example our first volunteer expo was in demonstrating the connection volunteering has within the community.

We maintained a strong working relationship with Volunteering Victoria, who is a key partner, along with the federal government, in funding the Volunteer Management Activity (VMA) program of work, which continued to be our main source of funding. Working to remove barriers and create volunteer opportunities for our six priority groups, People with Disability, First Nation People, Newly Arrived Migrants, Unemployed, Youth and Vulnerable Women continued to be a strong focus. I am pleased to report that all our obligations to these key partners were achieved and acknowledged at year end.

In December, we entered into a new partnership with Deakin University. It is a partnership where we feel there is mutual benefit to both parties, as we take on students on placement, studying to be social workers. We welcomed Dave and Nicole from January to June and looked forward to Desty joining us from July. Their engagement with















our organisations using a different lens gave us a great insight into helping us with our VMA activities. Their work in establishing a paper on Pathways to Participation – Strengthening Volunteering in the Greater Geelong Region, has provided us with recommendations to further advance our support of those who need extra assistance to enter volunteering.

In February, Volunteering Geelong relocated to the Geelong West Town Hall. The move provided a more accessible location for our members, volunteers and community, while creating new opportunities to strengthen our local presence. Having a welcoming and accessible space is an important part of ensuring people feel comfortable reaching out, seeking advice and exploring ways to become involved in volunteering. We thank the City of Greater Geelong for their support with the move and their ongoing support.

During the year we were advised by the federal government that the model for supporting volunteering would again change from July 1, 2026 and change again from July 1, 2027. Initially this means a reduction in funding for the current year and no guaranteed funding for the 2027/28 year. This obviously presents some challenges moving forward. Securing sustainable funding has been an ongoing challenge for several years. A challenge that got all the more critical as we need to find a different model moving forward.

I would like to thank the Volunteering Geelong Board, in particular Christine Heath for her support across what has been both a rewarding and challenging 2025/26.

Lastly, I would like to express my appreciation to Judy, our longest standing volunteer, for her ongoing commitment to Volunteering Geelong and for her assistance to me personally. It is much appreciated.

Colin Dempsey
Manager, Volunteering Geelong

Business Report

Community Engagement and Communications



Alana Whitten

2025/2026 Annual Report

The 2025/2026 financial year was a period of positive change, renewed connections and growth for Volunteering Geelong.

Throughout the year, we focused on strengthening relationships with our members, increasing our visibility across the region and making volunteering more accessible to our community. We welcomed new organisations into our network, expanded our community engagement activities and continued to advocate for the important role volunteers play in supporting local communities.

A significant part of our work involved listening. Through conversations with volunteer managers, community groups and local organisations, we gained a clearer understanding of the challenges facing the sector and where our support can make the greatest difference.

Strengthening Community Connections

Building meaningful relationships remained central to our work.

In November 2025, our team travelled to Colac and Warrnambool to meet with representatives from the Foundation for Rural & Regional Renewal (FRRR) Colac Community Hub and Warrnambool City Council's Volunteer Programs.

These visits provided valuable opportunities to share knowledge and better understand the needs of communities across our southwest region. They also reinforced the importance of working collaboratively to improve access to volunteering opportunities beyond Greater Geelong.

Closer to home, we spent time visiting local volunteer involving organisations, meeting the people behind their programs and seeing firsthand the difference volunteers make every day.

These conversations highlighted common challenges around volunteer recruitment and retention, particularly the need for more accessible pathways into volunteering. The insights gathered have helped shape our priorities and strengthened our understanding of how we can provide practical support to organisations.

Supporting Our Members

Throughout the year, we reconnected with our members, listened to their feedback and reviewed how our services could better meet their needs.

With funding pressures affecting community organisations across Australia, we recognised the importance of developing a more sustainable approach to membership while remaining accessible to organisations of different sizes and capacities.

Rather than continuing with our usual membership renewal process, we took the opportunity to listen to members and review our service offering. This work informed the development of a revised membership structure, designed to provide clearer value and more relevant support.

We also began planning an expanded member training program for the second half of 2026. With the generous support of Greater Geelong Mental Health & Wellbeing Local, the program will offer practical workshops at no or minimal cost to members.

Our focus remains on helping organisations feel supported and better equipped to engage volunteers within their communities.

Improving Our Digital Presence

Communications and digital engagement became an increasingly important focus during the year.

We strengthened our presence across social media, sharing regular volunteering opportunities, local community events and stories celebrating the people and organisations making a difference across our region.

Our content also included volunteer-focused podcasts and media features, providing different ways for our community to learn about volunteering and discover opportunities to get involved.

A major milestone was the redevelopment of our website between February and May 2026.

The project responded to the need for a more accessible and welcoming online experience, with clearer pathways for people looking to volunteer and organisations seeking support.

Our priorities included improving navigation, refreshing outdated content and strengthening connections between volunteer opportunities and the people looking for them. We also placed greater emphasis on sharing local stories and making information easier to find.

This work represents an important step towards building a stronger digital presence and improving how our community connects with Volunteering Geelong.

Connecting Volunteers with Community Events

Supporting local events became a growing area of our community engagement work.

During the year, we introduced an event volunteer registration form through our website and expanded our database of people interested in supporting community activities.

This has strengthened our capacity to connect event organisers with potential volunteers and respond to requests for assistance across the region.

We were pleased to support a diverse range of local events, including the Festival of Sails, Cadel Evans Great Ocean Road Race, Gateways Easter Festival and the inaugural upcoming Geelong Marathon.

Our involvement in community events helped increase awareness of volunteering and introduced new audiences to the many ways they can contribute.

These opportunities also reinforced the important role event volunteering can play as an accessible starting point for people who may be considering volunteering for the first time.

National Volunteer Week 2026

One of the year's standout achievements was the successful delivery of the **Geelong Volunteer Expo,** held during National Volunteer Week in May 2026.

The Expo brought together local organisations and community members to celebrate volunteering and explore the many opportunities available across our region.

Geelong Volunteer Expo 2026

- **43 stallholders** representing local volunteer involving organisations
- **More than 280 attendees** connecting with the volunteering community

Feedback from participating organisations was overwhelmingly positive, with many highlighting the value of meeting other community groups and increasing awareness of their work.

While some organisations reported strong interest from potential volunteers, others valued the opportunity to build relationships and introduce their services to a wider audience.

The Expo demonstrated the importance of creating spaces where people can connect directly with the organisations making a difference in their community.

Feedback has also provided valuable insights to guide future events and strengthen opportunities for engagement.

Looking Ahead

As we move into the next financial year, our focus will remain on strengthening the capacity of volunteer involving organisations and creating more inclusive opportunities for people to participate.

We will continue to invest in our relationships with members, expand our training opportunities and improve how we collect and use information to understand the needs of our sector.

Reducing barriers to volunteering will remain a priority, particularly through more accessible recruitment and onboarding processes.

We also look forward to continuing our advocacy work and collaborating with community partners to support positive change across the region.

Above all, we remain committed to being a trusted and approachable Volunteer Resource Centre for Greater Geelong and the surrounding communities.

Our achievements this year reflect the strength of the relationships we share with our members, volunteers and community partners. We thank everyone who has contributed to our work and look forward to building on these connections in the year ahead.

Alana Whitten
Business Development

Geelong Volunteer of the Year Awards 2026

One of the highlights of the year was again the Geelong Volunteer of the Year Awards, held in conjunction with the Rotary Club of Kardinia. It continues to be important that we recognise both volunteers and volunteer organisations who have gone above and beyond to support our community, recognising their commitment and diversity of skills, while raising the awareness of the value and importance of volunteering.

This year there was a record number of nominations coming from forty organisations, ranging across all sectors of the community including health and wellbeing, environment, sport & recreation, youth and emergency services, providing the judging panel with a difficult task in narrowing down to three finalists and a winner in each of the five categories.

We welcomed the Mayor of the City of Greater Geelong, Councillor Stretch Kontelj (OAM), who presented the Volunteer of the Year 2026 award to Anita Ekberg from Look Good Feel Better

The category winners and finalists were:

2026 Award winners & finalists

Volunteer of the Year

Anita Ekberg (Look Good Feel Better)

Finalists:
Deirdre Moss (EdConnect)
Nick Lynch (The Outpost)

Youth Volunteer Award

Alexander Scott (Shoot for Kindness – Block out Bullying)

Finalists:
Thomas De Francesco
(Northern Bay P-12 College)

Jeremy Palmer (Feed Me Surfcoast)

Leadership Award

Alan Murphy (Office of the Public Advocate – Community Visitors Program)

Finalists:
Bruce McGinness (City of Greater Geelong)
Bronwen Jackman (Barwon Health)

Service Award

Phil Reid (EdConnect)

Finalists:
Bernie Stanley (Amber Community)
Brian Gray (Corio Bay Miniature Railway)

Inclusion Award

Scott Smith (Geelong Stars All Abilities Sports Club)

Finalists:
Alannah Waylen (Grovedale Toy Library)
Louise Larkins (Friend In Me)

Sponsors



Geelong Volunteer of the Year Awards 2026 winners and finalists with Mayor Stretch Kontelj OAM


Inclusion Award winner, Scott Smith with Anthony Aitken, Mayor Stretch Kontelj OAM, Chris Burson, and Rowan Story AM RFD of City of Greater Geelong


Volunteer of the Year winner, Anita Ekberg with City of Greater Geelong Mayor Stretch Kontelj OAM


Service Award winner, Phil Reid with Cameron Murnane of Volunteering Geelong

"We make a living
by what we get.
We make a life
by what we give."

- WINSTON CHURCHILL



Volunteering GEELONG

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