

MEDIA RELEASE

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GOVT BACKING IS VITAL FOR VOLUNTEERING'S FUTURE

National Volunteer Week – 20-26 May 2024: 'Something for Everyone'

'Volunteering is vital for community wellbeing and is personally rewarding', said St Vincent de Paul Society National President, Mark Gaetani, 'and in National Volunteer Week, as throughout the year, I honour the efforts of the Society's 45,000 members and volunteers around Australia.'

'Our conference members provide assistance to thousands of families and individuals in need, while our shop volunteers are essential for the running of our much-loved Vinnies op shops.'

'Our volunteers range in age from their teens to their eighties. Many are retired and have every right to take it easy, but they still put in countless hours helping others in a variety of ways.'

'Yet volunteering depends on co-investment from Government in many areas,' Mr Gaetani said.

'In recent years and on the back of the pandemic, volunteering has been on a downwards trajectory and if prompt action is not taken to reverse this trend the future of volunteering is in jeopardy.'

'We note that the Federal Budget included funding for the Australian Bureau of Statistics to collect key national data on volunteering. More comprehensive and frequent data is indeed vital to support the implementation of the [National Strategy for Volunteering](#) (2023-2033).'

'However, the main responsibility for taking effective action rests with the Australian Government. The Society is seeking a commitment for the implementation of the National Strategy, which requires the allocation of resources for its success.'

The National Strategy is a 10-year blueprint for a reimagined future for volunteering in Australia. It provides a clear and compelling case, underpinned by robust data and evidence, for targeted and sufficient investment in volunteering and the celebration of the role it plays in creating thriving communities.

Mr Gaetani said, 'As the theme for National Volunteer Week says, volunteering indeed offers something for everyone, both those who volunteer and the communities that benefit from the effort the volunteers put in.'

'Volunteers are vital in so many areas, from assisting aged care and health services to responding during emergencies and improving disaster readiness, and supporting sporting activities.'

'We agree with the peak body Volunteering Australia who have advised the Minister for Social Services, Amanda Rishworth, that investing in the implementation of the National Strategy for Volunteering is a wise and fiscally responsible decision. It is a moral imperative to foster greater cohesion in our local communities at a time when a growing range of challenges are threatening to pull us apart.'

'It is an investment in supporting the wellbeing of our communities, the strength of our social fabric, and the resilience of our nation.'

- *Photo of National President, Mr Mark Gaetani, is available on request.*

The St Vincent de Paul Society in Australia consists of 45,000 members and volunteers who operate on the ground through over 1,000 groups located in local communities across the country.

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