



Volunteering Australia
Submission to the ILC Commissioning Framework Consultation

April, 2016

National Disability Insurance Agency

Contacts

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Submission

About Volunteering Australia

Volunteering Australia is the national peak body for volunteering. We work to advance volunteering in the Australian community.

Volunteering Australia's vision is to promote strong, connected communities through volunteering. Our mission is to lead, strengthen, promote and celebrate volunteering in Australia.

We work collectively with the seven State and Territory volunteering peak bodies listed in Attachment A (**Peaks**) to deliver national, state and local volunteering programs and initiatives in accordance with the Government's priorities.

Introduction

Volunteering Australia welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) in relation to the Information, Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) Policy Commissioning Framework.

This submission responds to those questions posed by the NDIA as part of the Commissioning Framework Consultation. It also acts as a background document for volunteer involving organisations (VIOs) preparing to engage with the NDIS.

This submission responds specifically to Questions 3 and 4, which explicitly address the role of volunteering in the NDIS as a means of increasing social capital, and how to prepare the sector for the requirements of the ILC sourcing process.

Whilst Volunteering Australia is very enthusiastic about the introduction of the NDIS, the positive impact that it will have for those with disability, and the potential of ILC programs to engage more volunteers in a sector that has identified gaps, we also wish to ensure that any increase in volunteer engagement is met with adequate funding.

Volunteering Australia would welcome the opportunity to address any further questions or considerations that this submission might raise.

Background

Volunteering plays a critical role in Australian society, and in Australia's economy. Dr Lisel O'Dwyer of Flinders University has estimated the annual economic contribution of volunteering in Australia at \$290 billionⁱ. This figure takes into account the value that would otherwise be placed on paid work hours, the emotional impact of volunteering – for both the community, and the volunteer – and the impact of the lives saved through volunteering activities such as meals on wheels, surf lifesaving, and in emergency services.

Volunteering continues to engage a large number of Australians in increasingly diverse and important ways. In 2014, approximately 5.8 million Australians, or 31 per cent of the population, participated in some form of volunteering.ⁱⁱ This was the first time volunteering rates declined in

Submission

almost twenty years, a shift that can in some part be attributed to Australians saying they feel increasingly pressured for timeⁱⁱⁱ, but may also be due to under-reporting or self-identification of what constitutes a volunteer activity^{iv}. Despite a drop in reported participation, volunteers are still heavily relied upon for the service they provide. The generosity of Australia's community is also demonstrated through the outpouring of spontaneous volunteer support that follows disasters – following the 2009 Black Saturday Bushfires, for example, over 22,000 people offered their support.^v

In many cases, the true economic value of volunteering is dramatically underestimated when volunteer hours are accounted for at a lower hourly value than paid work hours – for example, the Federal Government's Regulatory Burden Measurement Framework places the average hourly value of paid labour at \$34.20, with an additional scaling up at a multiplier of 1.75 placing the total at \$59.85 an hour. In comparison, unpaid or volunteer hours spent meeting regulatory reporting needs are valued at \$29 an hour as "leisure time".^{vi}

Just as volunteers are being asked to contribute more than ever before, so too are volunteer support organisations (VSOs) and volunteer involving organisations (VIOs) are being asked to do more with their scarce and diminishing resources. The role of VSOs is diverse and complex – they are the go-to organisations for all matters related to volunteering; whether it is to advertise roles and match them to volunteers, run training for volunteer managers and community members, manage corporate volunteering programs, advocate on behalf of the volunteer sector, implement specialised volunteer programs for people experiencing disadvantage, and host numerous volunteer recognition events. Often they are called upon by other placement services or Government agencies seeking to place clients into unpaid work, which in turn adds to the demand that they must respond to. This extra demand is not being matched with extra or consistent funding.

In this submission we discuss the role that volunteers are likely to play within the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

In an Australian population of over 23 million people, over 4 million, or 20% report as having a disability resulting from a health condition. Over 1.3 million Australians report as having a "profound or severe disability".

In 2010-11 there were 2,283 disability support service agencies funded by State/Territory or Federal government throughout Australia, managing 13,883 service type outlets. The majority of service providers (82%) were in the non-government sector and the majority of those (86%) were income tax exempt charities.^{vii}

In 2011, the release of the Productivity Commission's final report, *Disability Care and Support* inspired an entirely new vision for providing care and support for those people experiencing disability in Australia. On 7 December 2012, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) signed an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) for the NDIS Launch. Further to this, states and territories have signed bilateral agreements with the Commonwealth detailing the operational and funding arrangements for the NDIS in each trial site^{viii}. The NDIS was first launched in July 2013^{ix}.

The NDIS has commenced with a series of initial trial sites:

1. Barwon region, Victoria
2. Nepean Blue Mountains area, New South Wales (for children and young people aged under 18 on 1 July 2015)

Submission

3. Newcastle and Lake Macquarie areas, New South Wales
4. South Australia (age 13 and under on 1 July 2014)
5. Tasmania (for people age 15–24)
6. Australian Capital Territory
7. Barkly region, Northern Territory
8. Perth Hills area, Western Australia^x.

Agreements for the full roll out of the NDIS have been reached with New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania, the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory. The Scheme will be available to all eligible residents in the Australian Capital Territory by July 2016, in New South Wales and South Australia by July 2018, and in Tasmania, Victoria, Queensland and the Northern Territory by July 2019. Western Australia has agreed to a two-year trial of the NDIS from July 2014^{xi}.

The NDIS is an ambitious program which will provide \$22 billion a year to support 460,000 people with disability providing greater choice, control and access to services^{xii}. It is based on three tiers:

- Tier 1 recognises that everyone in Australia is a contributor to the Scheme and may need to draw on it at some time in their lives (e.g. following a catastrophic injury resulting in lifelong disability)
- Tier 2 - now referred to as Information, Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) - provides general information about support options and generic services for people who have a disability, but not at the level that a person requires daily assistance with everyday living tasks; this Tier will potentially be accessed by millions of people
- Tier 3 provides individualised planning and funding for people who require specialised supports.

ILC is unique from the other two tiers as it is the only tier where programs are funded through block payments as opposed to the individualised, user-driven model of tiers 1 and 3. It is the ILC Framework with which this submission concerns itself. The ILC Policy Framework (2015) outlines two broad aims for ILC:

1. To provide information, referral and capacity building supports for people with disability, their families, and carers that are not directly tied to a person through an individually funded package
2. To partner with local communities, mainstream and universal services to improve access and inclusion for people with disability.

The Policy Framework identifies five activity streams:

1. Information, linkages and referrals
2. Capacity building for mainstream services
3. Community awareness and capacity building
4. Individual capacity building
5. Local area co-ordination (LAC).

Submission

Only programs which are able to demonstrate their relevance to at least one of these activity streams will be funded under ILC.

In preparing this submission, we took advantage of a number of opportunities to consult with organisations represented by Volunteering Australia, as well as with the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) and with others in the community, health and social services who are likewise impacted by the roll-out of the NDIS. In particular, the following consultations contributed to our research:

- Representation at the ACT ILC Consultation Session, 1 March 2016
- Discussion between representatives of the NDIA and representatives of Volunteering Australia, Canberra, 15 March 2016
- Presentation at the National Volunteering Conference, Canberra by Ms Sarah Wilson (Volunteering & Contact ACT) and Ms Meghan Hopper (Senior Policy Officer – Volunteering Australian and Volunteering Victoria), 8 April 2016
- Attendance at the VCOSS Consultation on the NDIS ILC Commissioning Framework, Melbourne, 16 March 2016
- Face-to-face, email and telephone discussions with VIOs.

We would like to extend our appreciation to all of the organisations and representatives who took the time to share their experiences or thoughts with us in preparation of this document.

Volunteering and the National Disability Insurance Scheme

Volunteering Australia has chosen to focus our response to this consultation on the two questions which are of most relevance to our sector, Questions 3 and 4. Other organisations will be better placed to respond in detail to Questions 1, 2 and 5, and in particular we support the submissions made by the Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS) and its state-based partners as wide-reaching overviews of the NDIS and its impact in the social services and charitable sector.

3. How to grow social capital in the sector, particularly volunteering

While there are many different definitions of social capital, in this context social capital means things like volunteering or the relationships that organisations have with others in the community that contribute to the work of the organisation and help people with disability and their families.

As we see it, there are two distinct ways in which volunteering directly interacts with the ILC.

The first is when volunteers are engaged by organisations that deliver services under the ILC.

The second is when disabled individuals are placed in volunteering roles as part of their NDIS program.

There are unique benefits and concerns relevant to both of these which we would like to address in this submission. In order to do this as comprehensively as possible, we have divided our response

Submission

to this question under two headings: ‘Participation of Volunteers in the Disabilities Sector’, and ‘Engaging NDIS Participants in Volunteering Opportunities’.

Participation of Volunteers in the Disabilities Sector

Our consultations with NDIA representatives up to this point (1 March 2016, Volunteering Australia and Volunteering and Contact ACT NDIS ILC Consultation, Canberra; 15 March 2016, Volunteering Australia and ILC meeting, Canberra; 16 March 2015, VCOSS Consultation on the NDIS ILC Commissioning Framework, Melbourne) reinforce that one of the goals of the ILC is to attract more volunteers to the disability sector and ultimately increase volunteer numbers. Page 12 of the *Information, Linkages and Capacity Building Commissioning Framework – Consultation Draft* identifies “hear(ing) from people with disability, their families and carers and people who work in the sector about... ways in which ILC can be used to encourage investment in social capital, such as volunteering”^{xiii} as one of the priorities of this consultation round.

Volunteering Australia agrees that there currently exists a significant gap, in that the number of volunteer positions advertised in the disability services sector continues to exceed the number of willing and able volunteers. Our 2016 *State of Volunteering in Australia* report showed that only around 15% of the 2,304 individuals surveyed indicated that they were interested in volunteering in the Disability Services sector, and that consequently this was the fourth-most likely sector to be advertised on the GoVolunteer platform, with over 1000 positions advertised at the time of the survey. Close to 30 VIOs in the disability services sector indicated that they were in need of 151 volunteers or more to fill vacancies.^{xiv} Of course, this trend is not unique to the disability sector; overall, 86% of VIOs report that they have more positions to fill than there are volunteers available to fill them.

Volunteering Australia is, of course, broadly supportive of action to increase the number of volunteers in Australia, and in this case within the disability sector. We are cautious, however, of Government calls to increase volunteer numbers when these calls are not matched by pre-approved funding to support the accompanying volunteer management and resourcing that is required.

Whilst volunteering is “time willingly given for the common good and without financial gain”^{xv}, it is important to note that volunteer programs do not come without cost to the VIO. The effective management of volunteers is an important consideration for any organisation considering implementation of a volunteer program as part of their NDIS strategy. Volunteers do not simply walk on to site, pick up tools and get to work; rather, volunteering programs require effective recruitment, training, program development, management and oversight in order to be successful. These things can only be delivered through adequate funding.

As an example of past precedent, we would point toward the federal government campaign that took place in the aged care workforce, which saw volunteer numbers rise by 55 per cent over the period 2000 to 2009.^{xvi} An ensuing Productivity Commission report in 2011 identified the impact of this unprecedented growth in volunteer numbers, recommending that “funding for services which engage volunteers in service delivery should take into account the costs associated with volunteer administration and regulation and appropriate training and support for volunteers,” and further that only as a result of improved conditions and funding for volunteer managers would barriers to individuals volunteering be reduced and organisations’ ability to harness volunteers be improved^{xvii}. There is no evidence that the recommendations of this Productivity Commission report have ever been implemented in relation to the resourcing of volunteer management in the aged services.

Submission

Relevantly, the Terms of Reference to a recent Senate Inquiry into the Aged Care Workforce neglected to mention the contribution of volunteers to that workforce at all.

Volunteering Australia is eager to avoid a similar misstep in the disability space. As such, we feel it is necessary to emphasise quite strongly that any call for an increase in volunteer participation in the disability sector must be met with an equivalent increase in funding for volunteer management.

Those organisations within the disability sector that do engage volunteers overwhelmingly report positive feedback around the role of volunteers in their organisations. In late 2015, a small working group of Victorian disability organisations that provide support to people with a disability through volunteers in a primary service role (including Extended Families Australia, Inclusion Melbourne, Interchange Incorporated and People Outdoors) decided to conduct a survey to measure the preparedness of volunteer-involving disability service organisations before the roll-out of the NDIS. 47 separate organisations completed the survey; collectively these organisations engage a total of 5,175 volunteers to support 11,214 people with disability, delivering in excess of 370,475 hours' support in 2014-15 alone^{xviii}.

The authors of this report expressed alarm at the general lack of preparedness for the NDIS shown by survey respondents. Whilst nearly all of the respondent organisations (96%) indicated a desire to continue to provide volunteer supports under the NDIS, only one third (33%) had made any plans to transition their volunteer program into the NDIS.

The *Survey of Victorian Disability Organisations* concluded that whilst building social capital is a stated goal of the NDIS and in particular ILC, there was concern in the sector that the Scheme "could inadvertently limit or destroy some of the social capital that enables people with a disability to enjoy real community inclusion"^{xix}. The lack of clear pathways for existing programs into the NDIS, transparent information around process, and guaranteed funding options were all barriers to volunteer-involving disability organisations preparing for, or engaging with, the NDIS.

During consultations Volunteering Australia participated in as part of this process, another question put to us was whether there are certain roles to which volunteers might best be suited within the disability sector, and conversely whether there were roles that might be considered inappropriate for volunteers. It is our position that volunteers should be treated as a valued and equal contributor to the workforce and that they be subject to the same basic rights as paid staff. We believe volunteers are well placed to fill any role for which they are skilled/qualified, willing and available; however, in line with Fair Work Australia guidelines we do not support the replacement of paid staff with volunteers. Ultimately, this kind of behaviour does not value volunteers for their worth, just as it does not value paid members of the workforce (for more on this topic, we recommend the Volunteering Victoria draft position statement, *Replacing paid staff with volunteers*^{xx}).

Most organisations who utilise volunteers within the disability space would argue that there is a substantive difference between paid staff and volunteers and the outcomes that each achieve. The aforementioned *Survey of Victorian Disability Organisations* found that 83% of respondents saw the role of volunteers as unique, with most comments gravitating around extra social connection and community participation, genuine relationships, and the value of lived experience as outcomes of volunteer programs.

"Volunteers have more time to give for social interaction, therefore increasing much needed social networks for people and meaningful relationships are formed by sharing common interests, values and goals. This extra time and attention leads to improved self-esteem and

Submission

general wellbeing as well as providing life enhancing opportunities and experiences for those people accessing our services.”

“We find volunteers are very committed with no expectations and see the person and not the disability. Volunteers can come with various skill sets which can be very advantageous in program planning whereby some staff have been trained in disability only which can sometimes hamper progression.”

Specialist training for volunteers in the disability support workforce is an area of particular need. This need is heightened by rapid change, turnover and demand within the paid disability support workforce. The 2011 Productivity Commission report into Disability Care and Support called for a paid disability support workforce of 160,000 full-time workers – more than double the current number.^{xxi} Yet increased casualisation of the disability workforce, together with low average wages and emotionally and physically challenging workplace conditions, have all led to a high staffing turnover. There has been some concern expressed that a competitive user-initiated funding system such as that embodied by the NDIS will, in fact, exacerbate this.

If a position is genuinely voluntary in nature and is established with the right intentions and motivations and in line with Fair Work Guidelines, there are numerous examples of volunteers performing highly skilled and demanding roles. These include volunteer lawyers who practice at asylum seeker resource centres and community legal centres around the country, volunteer doctors who travel internationally with Medecins sans Frontieres or the voluntary international veterinary care provided by World Vets. We recommend Volunteering ACT’s *Designing Volunteer Roles Guide*^{xxii} for further information on this topic.

Volunteering Australia supports the right of VIOs to ultimately establish what boundaries are unique and appropriate to them in this regard, as long as these boundaries are in accordance with all legal regulations, including Fair Work Guidelines. Furthermore, viable volunteering roles should embody the principles and benchmark practices found in the National Standards for Volunteer Involvement.

Engaging NDIS participants in volunteering opportunities

The NDIS has proactively identified volunteering as a positive means of engaging participants with a disability. A number of examples cited as part of the NDIS website’s *Examples of services and support* page incorporate volunteering as a means of social engagement or a pathway into the paid workforce, including ‘Hope’s Active Life’:

“Hope aspires to go to university to study zoology. Hope also wants to do a certificate course in animal studies, plus hands-on experience as a wildlife rescue volunteer to further prepare her for zoology, and gain casual employment in this field.”

and ‘Margaret targets a career’:

“Margaret, 58, of Newcastle, with long-standing spinal multiple sclerosis, has been assessed as medically unfit for employment... After initial discussion of Margaret’s interests, it was agreed upon to pursue her creative side. After several options were ruled out she settled upon floristry...

Her Local Area Coordinator (LAC) assistance developed into a three-tiered approach:

Submission

- enrolment in appropriate floristry training
- volunteer or work experience to support this training
- aiming for part-time work or a part-time business in floristry.^{xxiii}

Whilst Volunteering Australia is delighted to see the NDIS embracing volunteering as an accessible and welcoming pathway into social inclusion and potentially even the paid workforce for participants, we do emphasise the barriers that currently exist in many settings and the additional supports that will need to be put in place in order to ensure a positive experience for all involved.

Aside from the very basic references to volunteering as a pathway for NDIS participants above, the current ILC Framework has not sufficiently considered how people with a disability can volunteer themselves to improve their own health and wellbeing, and make a valuable contribution to the community. The Inclusive Volunteering Program (IVP) in the ACT was piloted in 2012 with the aim of assisting people with barriers to become involved in voluntary work. Additionally, the Program sought to educate VIOs on the importance of inclusion, and provided practical advice on how to adapt their volunteering programs to facilitate the placement of people with barriers.

Volunteering Australia is of the view that ILC can operationalise the goals of the Inclusive Volunteering Program by emphasising the importance of participation in volunteering by people with a disability. The most empowering aspect of the IVP is its ability to turn people from service users to service providers. Research shows that people who volunteer are happier and healthier than those who do not volunteer, with these benefits arguably even greater for people who experience barriers in their lives. Anecdotal evidence collected over the lifespan of the IVP has also shown that organisations who involve volunteers with barriers have observed flow on effects to other volunteers and clients. People with barriers provide different perspectives and are often more relatable to service users who identify as having a barrier themselves.

Adequate consideration has not been given to volunteering as a pathway to participation and inclusion for people with a disability. We would advocate for further consultation in this area to ensure that ILC, and the NDIS more generally, provides opportunities for people with a disability through volunteering.

The 2016 *State of Volunteering in Australia Report* identified a Key Finding that under-resourcing (both human and financial) of VIOs often meant that they were inhibited in engaging volunteers with barriers, including those with a disability. 46% of those organisations surveyed indicated that they were completely unable to engage volunteers with barriers, with 51% of those organisations saying that this was due to not having the requisite resources.^{xxiv} Additionally, an analysis of positions advertised on the online GoVolunteer platform identified that only 33% of roles facilitated access for people with a physical disability. In light of this concerning data, we are wary that the organisational environment is in many cases not “ready” to accommodate the needs of volunteers with a disability and that infrastructure supports may need to be provided, particularly for smaller, community-based organisations.

In addition, we are aware that many smaller VIOs in particular may not have had the opportunity to participate in Disability Awareness Training, due either to funding restraints or lack of access. We are aware of one example in Victoria where an organisation had already begun engaging disabled volunteers to assist with an outdoor program but, several months into this program and following an incident, had decided to seek training opportunities to assist them to better manage their disabled volunteers – ideally this training should have taken place prior to the program commencing. Our research has demonstrated that training of this nature may often be offered

Submission

only on a sporadic basis, may be expensive where it has to be commissioned on a one-off basis, or may be inaccessible, especially in rural and remote areas.

We would be strongly supportive of any measures taken as part of ILC or through the NDIS to better promote Disability Awareness Training, where it can be located and how it can be of benefit to VIOs. Optimally we would like to see funding support provided through the NDIS for VIOs to participate in Disability Awareness Training free of charge or at a subsidised rate, and/or for Disability Awareness Training aimed at VIOs to be provided in more suburban, rural and remote locations.

The concerns that we have raised earlier in relation to funding support for VIOs and volunteer support organisations (VSOs) to facilitate volunteer engagement in disability organisations, hold to be equally true in relation to VSOs facilitating placement for NDIS participants. We are anecdotally aware of VSOs who have struggled to place potential volunteers under, for example, the Centrelink Mutual Obligation program, particularly where those potential volunteers have barriers relating to age or a medical condition. We want to ensure that placements are able to be found which meet the unique needs of NDIS participants as well as the organisation with which they are placed, in order to ensure that everybody involved has a positive experience.

Submission

4. How to prepare the sector for the requirements of the ILC sourcing process

The Agency is moving to a nationally consistent framework for ILC. Funding will be provided to organisations through an open competitive grants process.

A concern that has been raised by a number of the organisations represented by Volunteering Australia relates to the receipt of NDIS program funding in order to deliver programs staffed by volunteers, and the manner in which this should be handled. Concerns include:

- that by paying for a service staffed by volunteers, the expectations of the NDIS participant will change (for example, in relation to their relationship with the volunteer, the expectations that they will have of the volunteer and the scope of their role)
- that by being engaged in voluntary work for which they know the organisation is being paid a fee, the experience and/or expectation of the volunteer will change (for example, they will feel less valued for their work, an expectation will develop that the voluntary role will transition into a paid one)
- that (in an absolute minority of cases) unscrupulous organisations will choose to replace paid staff with volunteers in order to profit from the NDIS funding arrangement.

This is, of course, a double-edged sword. As has already been canvassed, the cost of recruiting, placing, supervising and resourcing volunteers must be adequately funded in order for volunteer programs to be sustainable under the NDIS. The NDIS fee is necessary as a means of constructively resourcing these costs. Ultimately, however, the lack of need to pay an hourly rate and associated employee costs such as superannuation does mean that delivering programs as volunteer-based is of lower cost to the organisation over the long term. As such the ILC funding model will need to consider what difference, if any, is applied to the funding of volunteer-based programs as opposed to staff-based programs. In reaching this determination the NDIA should consider the concerns we have raised in this submission and continue consultation with the sector.

Another potential concern is that effective but small community-based providers that rely heavily on volunteer participation may not be able to adapt quickly enough to the changing environment and may exit the market. Many not-for-profit organisations within the disability space are small and specialised in nature, with their work often developing out of a need identified by the family or carer of a person with a disability.

Costing under the NDIS is complex and challenging. For many small organisations without adequate resourcing to spend the time educating staff on the intricacies of NDIS funding and reporting structures it may provide too great of a barrier to participation. For those who do participate, we are already finding that organisations are removing or reducing necessary training, buddy shifts, and proper induction processes for their paid workforce, let alone their volunteer workforce. We are concerned that this represents a significant risk to the safety and wellbeing of the disability sector workforce. Organisations that we represent who have participated in the NDIS trial have also reported that the NDIS costing structure is insufficient, barely covering direct support worker payments let alone organisational day-to-day costs, on-costs or management costs. We are concerned that this does not leave room for the cost of managing and supporting volunteers, which will lead to organisations placing volunteering programs in the “too hard” basket.

Relevantly, it has been our experience in dealing with changes to the federal grants funding space (for example, the changes to the Department of Social Services grants program in 2015) that larger

Submission

providers tend to be advantaged in seeking competitive funding. This is potentially due to a variety of reasons – stronger name recognition; better resourcing to promote their service to new users within a user-selected or user-pays model; larger or more long-term existing infrastructure; a greater ability to expend staff resourcing on paying applying for grants. In comparison, it is often small providers who have set up existing niche programs and established important links with the local community, in spite of limited resourcing and staff, who are often stretched so thin delivering programs that they do not have the capacity to either apply for grants or keep up with the reporting demands of many government grant programs.

Many of the concerns associated with competitive term-limited grants-based programs were canvassed in the findings of the recent Senate Inquiry into the impact on service quality, efficiency and sustainability of recent Commonwealth community service tendering processes by the Department of Social Services^{xxvi}, and in the subsequent Government response^{xxvii}. Both emphasised the importance of long-term sureness and confidence in funding for social services providers^{xxviii}. Submissions made to the Senate Inquiry process by Volunteering Australia and a number of our State and Territory partners highlighted the problematic nature of competitive grants in the social services and not-for-profit sectors, noting that these grants reduce certainty, lead to short-sighted decision-making and program-setting, detract from the ability to hire staff, tie up staff time in preparing grant applications and responding to reporting red-tape, and do not provide the time and resourcing necessary to properly establish, deliver and measure successful and sustainable programs. Grant-based funding also fails to accommodate the day-to-day costs of running a not-for-profit organisation – expenses like administration, human resources, training, even operational costs such as electricity. In a user-driven system, promoting your program in order to attract participants is also a significant cost consideration. The reality is that organisations do not begin at the time that grant funding does – a lot of work goes into everything that happens before funding is secured.

Case Study: Interchange Incorporated (VIC, SA & QLD)

In June 2014 the Victorian Department of Health provided funding to Interchange Incorporated to consider how volunteer coordination, through the lens of the Interchange Host Program, can be integrated within the NDIS context. Their report, *Volunteer Supported Service Models within the NDIS context through the lens of the Interchange Host Program (2014)* is the outcome. .

Interchange provides a broad range of services to support children and young adults with a disability and their families. The Interchange Host Program matches a child or young person with a host volunteer to provide care and support on a regular basis. Whilst over time the focus of the program has changed from one of respite for the family to one of family and community inclusion for the child (participant) with individualised outcomes, Interchange emphasise that benefits for the broader community, as well as government are also realised.

As with any volunteer program, it is impossible to place a value on all of the benefits created through relationships nurtured, friendship, inclusion and personal development. In light of this Interchange have attempted to place a dollar figure on the time provided by volunteers in support of their program. The *Economic Value of Volunteering in Victoria* report commissioned by the Department of Planning and Community Development (DPCD) measures volunteering through an opportunity cost rate (i.e. the wage the volunteer would have earned had they spent the same amount of time undertaking paid work). In 2011 DPCD projected an opportunity cost wage rate of \$28.99 per hour, which subsequently rose to \$34.89 per hour in 2016. As Interchange conducted their report in 2014, they determined to average this rate at \$32.50 per hour. Based on an

Submission

estimated 120,000 volunteer hours, they therefore calculated the annual value of the Interchange Host Volunteer program to be \$3.9 million.

As part of their report, Interchange considered how their Host Program could best be funded under the NDIS. They arrived at the conclusion that ILC (Tier 2) block funding would be a better fit than individualised funding delivered under Tier 3. They noted that their program is congruent with the notion of “capacity funding” and that it met ILC objectives. In summary, they argue that “(ILC) capacity building is necessary to ensure a level of minimum viability, particularly for smaller service providers in rural areas”. Overall, however, they still had concerns with the ILC funding model:

- That the program may not be perceived as ‘NDIS-like’ as funds are not tagged to individual NDIS participants
- That it may limit capacity for growth in response to demand
- That measures and reporting still need to be determined

Interchange were concerned that, “it is theoretically possible, although not practical or beneficial, for the Interchange Host Program to be funded under any of the three (tiers)... Because of the aspirational nature of the program, and the likelihood of making successful matches for some participants but not others, it is unrealistic to expect that the program can be individually funded.”

As we have done earlier in this report, Interchange emphasised the importance of NDIS funding resourcing the recruitment, screening, assessment, matching and training of volunteers:

“The demand for host families is high with the sample group of service providers reporting extensive waiting lists for host families. The most valuable component in the process but the most time consuming and therefore costly is the recruiting, screening, assessment and matching of volunteers with participants. The comprehensive screening, assessment and matching processes, training and first year of support are vital to ensure a successful match.”

Source: Interchange Inc. (29 August 2014) Volunteer Supported Service Models within the NDIS context through the lens of the Interchange Host Program, HDG Consulting Group: East Melbourne.

Conclusion

Volunteering Australia agrees that Australia should aim to engage more volunteers in the disability sector, as we acknowledge that volunteering programs provide important social capital and fill an identified gap. We are also supportive of NDIS participants being provided with an opportunity to participate in voluntary roles, both as a mechanism for social inclusion and as a potential means of gaining the experience necessary to transition into the paid workforce. We are concerned, however, that many of the structures and supports necessary are not yet in place, and must be established and adequately resourced if volunteering under the NDIS is to be a success.

If the NDIA is eager to promote and encourage volunteering through their implementation of the Information, Linkages and Capacity Building Framework, then significant funding support will be necessary, particularly in the areas of Disability Awareness Training for volunteer involving organisations; infrastructure to support the participation of disabled individuals in small organisations; and most importantly, volunteer management. We encourage the NDIA to continue

Submission

to liaise with the volunteering sector in order to ensure the delivery of a volunteering model that is successful and appropriately resourced and supported to ensure maximum participation.

Submission

Authorisation

This submission has been authorised by the Chief Executive Officer of Volunteering Australia.



Brett Williamson OAM

Chief Executive Officer

Endorsements

This submission has been endorsed by the seven State and Territory volunteering peak bodies listed in Attachment A.

Glossary

Peaks	The seven State and Territory volunteering peak bodies (listed in Attachment A).
VA	Volunteering Australia is the national peak body for volunteering in Australia. It works collectively with the peaks to deliver national, state and local volunteering programs and initiatives.
VIOs	Volunteer-involving organisations are organisations that utilise volunteers as part of their workforce.
VSOs	Volunteer support organisations (also known as volunteer resource centres or services) provide place-based volunteer support services to volunteers and VIOs in their locality.

Submission

- ⁱ Flinders University (31 October 2014) 'Volunteering worth \$290 billion a year', available online at <http://blogs.flinders.edu.au/flinders-news/2014/10/31/volunteering-worth-290-billion-a-year/>.
- ⁱⁱ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2015) 'General Social Survey: Summary Results, Australia, 2014', available online at <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4159.0>.
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Submission

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