City of Whitehorse

Volunteering and Community Participation Strategy 2014 - 2017
Executive Summary

The Whitehorse Volunteering and Community Participation Strategy 2014 – 2017 will guide Council’s approach to supporting, promoting and celebrating the active involvement of its community members in a variety of initiatives that increase community participation.

The Strategy builds on the outcomes of the previous Volunteering and Civic Participation Strategy 2009 - 2013, and continues Council’s commitment to supporting initiatives which value, support and increase volunteering and community participation.

The Strategy is guided by the Council Vision, Council Plan and the Whitehorse Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan and the Environments for Health Framework which details how the environmental, economic, built and social realms have an impact on health and wellbeing, as well as linking with other Council plans, policies and strategies.

The Volunteering and Community Participation Strategy’s development process included an analysis of demographic data, background research, and a review of Federal and State policy documents.

In addition, an extensive program of community engagement sought input into the development of the Strategy. This program comprised several workshops held with Councillors, volunteers, community groups, community members, volunteer-involving organisations and Council officers. Many different priorities, issues, ideas and opportunities were discussed, building on those identified during the background research stage.

As a result of the development process, the following six priorities areas in regards to volunteering and community participation were identified:

1. Supporting volunteer management
2. Promoting and informing
3. Responding to emerging trends
4. Increasing participation
5. Recognising and celebrating
6. Exploring and innovating
Introduction

About Whitehorse

The City of Whitehorse is located 15 kilometres east of Melbourne and covers an area of 64 square kilometres. Whitehorse has an Estimated Residential Population of 159,133 (ID, 2012). This represents an increase of 7,208 people (or 4.8 per cent) since 2006. The municipality is home to 57,207 households; a figure which grew by 3.6 per cent across the same period.

The 2011 Census data also reveals that approximately 21 per cent of residents are aged under 18 years, and 57 percent are aged between 18 and 59. Whitehorse, like much of Victoria and Australia, has a growing population of older people. This is more pronounced in Whitehorse than elsewhere; approximately 17 per cent of Whitehorse residents are aged over 65, as compared with the Melbourne metropolitan average of 13 per cent.

The Whitehorse community is also very culturally diverse. According to the 2011 census, one third of residents were born overseas and one quarter came from a non-English speaking background. The top five countries of birth after Australia are: China, the United Kingdom, India, Malaysia and Vietnam.

Whitehorse is also home to a growing number of international students. These students attend the municipality’s two tertiary institutions, Box Hill Institute of TAFE and Deakin University, as well as several local secondary schools.

Volunteering is an important part of the lives of many people living in Whitehorse. According to the 2011 Census of Population and Housing, 21% of the population of the City of Whitehorse report doing some form of voluntary work, compared to 18 per cent for Greater Melbourne.
About this strategy

The Whitehorse Volunteering and Community Participation Strategy 2014 – 2017 will guide Council’s approach to supporting, promoting and celebrating the active involvement of its community members in a variety of initiatives that increase community participation, including volunteering.

The Strategy is guided by the Council Vision, Council Plan, the Whitehorse Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan and the Environments for Health Framework, as well as linking with other Council plans, policies and strategies.

The Strategy will help Council to deliver its vision to ‘be a healthy, vibrant, prosperous and sustainable community supported by strong leadership and community partnerships.’ (Council Vision, 2013 - 2023).

Figure 1: Relationship between the Volunteering and Community Participation Strategy and other Council plans and strategies.

Council Vision
2013 - 2023

Council Plan
4 year strategic plan

Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan

Municipal Strategic Statement

Specific Strategic Plans
The Whitehorse Volunteering and Community Participation Strategy aligns with the Council Plan and Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan, as well as certain elements of many other Council policies, strategies and action plans. The following list attempts to capture a range of plans however it is by no means a comprehensive list.

Social
- Positive Ageing Strategy
- Diversity Policy and Action Plan
- Disability Action Plan
- Youth Plan
- Early Years Plan
- Recreation Strategy
- Arts, Festivals and Events
- Community Safety
- Community Grants Policy

Built
- Integrated Transport Strategy
- Traffic Management Strategy
- Road Safety Strategy
- Bicycle Strategy
- Recreation Strategy

Natural
- Sustainability Strategy
- Open Space Strategy
- Use of Council Parks and Reserves Policy
- Play Space Strategy
- Recreation Strategy

Economic
- Economic Development Strategy
- Footpath Trading Guidelines
Since the previous strategy, there has been a change in terminology from “Civic Participation” to “Community Participation”. This change reflects input from the community through the engagement and consultation processes. It captures a broader understanding of community involvement, in how people wish to play an active role in their community.

In implementing the Plan, Council is committed to engaging the whole of Council and seeking opportunities to work collaboratively with community members, organisations and the State and Federal Governments.

**Development Process**

The Strategy was developed in consultation with volunteers, Councillors, the Whitehorse community, local organisations, peak bodies and Council officers. It will build on previous achievements and strengthen Council’s capacity to build an inclusive and vibrant community.

The development of this strategy involved:

**Demographic profile:** Development of a demographic profile of the municipality, identifying rates of community participation and volunteering.

**Policy Context:** Review of key policy, research and legislative documents relating to community participation and volunteering across local, state and federal levels.

**Community Engagement:** A broad range of input from the community through multiple options, ranging from providing quick, succinct feedback in the form of a survey, or more in-depth feedback through workshops or via Council’s online portal *Your Say Whitehorse*. A detailed account of all of the engagement feedback has been compiled into a comprehensive appendix document that is available on request from Council’s Community Development Department.

**Development of the Strategy:** Information obtained through the review of demographics, policy context and themes emerging from the community consultations directed the identification of strategic priorities.

**Figure 2: Volunteering and Community Participation Strategy development process**
Defining Community Participation

Community participation is a term which captures the varied ways in which people wish to play an active role in their community. Community participation can be defined as *active involvement in and input into the life of the community*. Community Participation strengthens the community by increasing community engagement, inclusion and social connectedness and by decreasing social isolation and division.

Some ways that people actively participate in their local community are through involvement in:

- Volunteering
- Environmental groups
- Community support groups
- Organised sport, recreation and leisure activities
- Organised groups such as church, community or professional groups
- Civic and political groups
- Organised social groups
- Community learning activities
- Community events, festival and celebrations
- Collective community actions
- Parental participation in schools and children’s activities

Defining Volunteering

There are many definitions of volunteering used nationally and internationally by government departments, peak bodies and organisations.

Volunteering Australia developed the following *Definition of Volunteering* as a result of a national consultation undertaken in 1996.

Formal volunteering is an activity which takes place in not for profit organisations or projects and is undertaken:

- to be of benefit to the community and the volunteer;
- of the volunteer’s own free will and without coercion;
- for no financial payment; and
- in designated volunteer positions only.
The above definition of formal volunteering excludes many forms of informal volunteering, community participation and voluntary activity, especially those undertaken by parents, young people and members of culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

Therefore, for the purpose of this strategy, we have adopted the following broader definition of volunteering put forward by the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria and which takes into account diverse and valuable forms of voluntary activity which are not captured in the definition of formal volunteering:

“Volunteering is freely giving your time and energy to benefit another individual, group, community or cause.”

Some examples of volunteering that fall within this broader definition include:

- Service delivery, such as individuals giving to or supporting recipients.
- Decision-making, such as community planning and advisory committees.
- Community Management of community resources, such as facilities
- Networking and Learning exchanges
- Emergency assistance
- Particular identity groups organizing and caring for their own members
Benefits of Community Participation and Volunteering

Health and Social benefits
There is clear evidence about the benefits of community participation and volunteering on the lives of individuals and communities. The 2011 Victorian Government report, *Indicators of Community Strength*, as well as the 2012 *VicHealth Indicators Survey* presents strong international and local evidence of the positive social and economic impact of community participation for both individuals and communities.
These benefits are summarised below:

For individuals …
- better physical and mental health
- increased satisfaction with life
- positive parenting and improved child development
- success at school
- better employment outcomes
- more positive ageing: better health, less institutionalisation and better cognitive functioning in older people

For communities …
- providing the information individuals, organisations and businesses use to make decisions and generate new ideas (the spread of information and innovation)
- building social cohesion: a sense of solidarity and respect for others
- increasing inclusive attitudes and respect
- increasing a community’s belief it can, and its willingness to, act collectively towards shared goals
- improving community planning that results in solid long term agreements – reducing controversy and creating support for implementation
- turning community assets into outcomes such as jobs, educational achievement, satisfaction, etc.
**Economic benefits**

The significant economic contribution that active community participation and volunteering make is also widely acknowledged. There have been recent attempts to attach an economic value to this contribution, especially that of volunteers. A 2012 study by the University of Adelaide estimated the economic value of volunteering at $200 billion, a bigger contribution to the Australian economy than mining, agriculture and the retail sector (O’Dwyer, 2013).

A 2012 report released by the Victorian Government estimated the economic contribution of volunteering in Victoria at $4.9 billion in 2006. It should be noted that this figure only reflects the value attached to formal volunteering in structured volunteer roles (Ironmonger, 2012).

The report also found a 38% increase in time spent on volunteering in the 15 years between 1992 and 2006. By 2021, the economic value of volunteering in Victoria is projected to be between $30.3 billion and $42.1 billion, depending on the growth in volunteer participation (Ironmonger, 2012).

**Outcomes from previous strategy**

The *Whitehorse Volunteer and Civic Participation Strategy 2009 - 2013* provided a strategic planning focus for Council’s work in the area of civic participation and voluntary activity.

Key themes for the Strategy were:

- Managing Volunteers
- Valuing Volunteers
- Promoting Volunteering
- Supporting Organisations
- Embracing Innovation
- Expanding Opportunities

Some of the key achievements of the previous strategy are listed below under each of the Strategy’s thematic areas:

**Managing Volunteers**

Outcomes achieved under this theme include:

- Review and updating of volunteer policies, procedures, training and record keeping in partnership with Organisation Development Advisor (volunteers), Aged Services and cross-Council Volunteer supervisors to align current practices with Council requirements, Work Health and Safety legislation and National Standards
- Creation of new role - Organisation Development Advisor (volunteers)
- Implementation of new online Volunteer Management System
Valuing Volunteers

Outcomes achieved under this objective included:

- Establishment of a Volunteer Award Scheme for the City of Whitehorse
- Annual Volunteer Recognition event held during National Volunteer Week in May with distribution of Years of Service milestone certificates and gifts.
- Annual celebration held to commemorate International Volunteer Day (5th December)
- Regular acknowledgement of Council volunteers through Whitehorse News articles, profiles on website and Media Releases
- Publication of “Volunteering in Whitehorse” booklet profiling 25 Council volunteers from a variety of backgrounds and programs
- Volunteer profiles posted on Council website to promote volunteering and acknowledge the contributions of volunteers in the local community

Promoting Volunteering

Outcomes achieved under this objective included:

- Development of a Voluntary Activity section on the City of Whitehorse website
- Development of volunteering promotional materials to use at events
- Biennial Whitehorse Volunteer Expo held in November 2009, May 2012 and June 2014 in partnership with Eastern Volunteers
- Biennial publication – “Get Involved: Local Volunteering Opportunities”
- Stalls at local Volunteering Expos – e.g.: Deakin Volunteer Fair, Get Involved Day

Supporting Organisations

Outcomes achieved under this objective included:

- Whitehorse Volunteer Network established in 2010. Ongoing quarterly meetings providing professional development on topics such as changes to Equal Opportunity, Youth Volunteering, Corporate Volunteering, School Community Service programs, CALD volunteers, marketing, volunteer position descriptions, rewarding and recognising volunteers, volunteers with a disability
- Dissemination of information to support volunteer-involving community organisations through email distribution list
- Biennial publication in partnership with Eastern Volunteers – “Get Involved: Local Volunteering Opportunities” profiling local community organisations and their volunteering programs – distributed through Council’s Customer Service centres, Eastern Volunteers, participating organisations and on request
**Embracing Innovation**

Outcomes achieved under this objective included:

- Development of links with schools and tertiary institutions to encourage more younger people to volunteer and increase the number of volunteers in Whitehorse
- In partnership with Whitehorse Manningham Libraries, developed innovative community participation opportunity “Whitehorse Human Library”. Three human libraries held in October 2011, October 2013 and March 2014
- Implemented new Volunteer Management System which will provide opportunities for more direct electronic communication with volunteers

**Expanding Opportunities**

Outcomes achieved under this objective included:

- Intergenerational Programs Forum for schools, aged care facilities and community organisations in Feb 2012
- Continuing collaboration with Deakin University and local secondary schools to implement community service options for students
- Involvement of corporate volunteers in Council volunteering programs
- Establishment of school community service volunteering programs with Meals on Wheels
Snapshot of volunteering and community participation

National

Rates of volunteering in Australia are high and increasing. Research conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics found that in 2010, 36% of Australians aged 18 years and over participated in voluntary work. These 6.1 million volunteers contribute a total of 713 million hours annually (ABS, 2010).

The Australian Bureau of Statistics General Social Survey 2010 also found that:

- 66% of volunteers reported that their parents had done some voluntary work compared to 44% of non-volunteers
- 43% of adult volunteers had undertaken some voluntary work as a child compared to 27% of adult non-volunteers
- Volunteers were more likely to be involved in other aspects of community life than those who had not volunteered in the last 12 month

The highest rate of volunteering was amongst those in the 45 to 54 year age group. Across all demographic groups, it was women in part-time paid employment who had the highest rate of volunteering (49%). The same study found that there is significant variation in volunteering rates between different groups in the community. Lower rates of formal volunteering were reported among people who speak a language other than English at home, people with low education levels and those whose main source of income was a government pension, benefit or allowance (ABS, 2010).

The four most common types of organisation for which people volunteered were:

- Sport and physical recreation
- Community/welfare
- Religious groups
- Parenting, children and youth

It is difficult to find National data which captures all the ways in which people participate in and contribute to their local community. The Australian Bureau of Statistic’s General Social Survey conducted in 2010, measured involvement in community and social groups. 63% of people surveyed had actively participated in one or more social groups during the last 12 months, 35% in community support groups and 19% in civic groups. The most popular types of social participation amongst adults were sport and recreation groups (35%), followed by social clubs providing restaurants or bars (20%) and religious or spiritual groups (18%). The most common forms of community participation amongst children and young people were sport and recreation groups.
Whitehorse

Volunteering

Volunteering is an important part of the lives of many people living in Whitehorse. According to the 2011 Census of Population and Housing, 21% of the population of the City of Whitehorse report doing some form of voluntary work, compared to 18 per cent for Greater Melbourne. It should be noted that Census data captures only formal volunteering roles, and therefore excludes many forms of informal volunteering, community participation and voluntary activity that residents are involved in.

According to the 2011 VicHealth Survey, nearly two in five Whitehorse residents (38.3%) volunteered at least once a month and more than half (54.1%) reported some type of community engagement in the previous 12 months. These rates are higher than the state averages (34.3% and 50.5% respectively).

Volunteering was also measured in the Department of Planning and Community Development Community Strength Survey (2008). Respondents were asked whether or not they helped out as a volunteer. 35% of persons living in Whitehorse reported that they did, as compared with 32% for the Eastern Metropolitan Region and 41% for Victoria.

Citizen Engagement

Data on the participation of Victorians in selected forms of Citizen Engagement were collected in the 2011 VicHealth Indicators Survey. Respondents were asked if they had attended a town meeting or public hearing, met, called or written to a local politician, joined a protest or signed a petition in the previous 12 months.

54.1% of persons in Whitehorse had engaged in at least one of the selected activities in the previous year, compared to 49.4% in the Eastern Metro Region and the Victorian State average of 50.5%. Males in Whitehorse were more likely than females to participate in this way.

![Figure 3: Participation in citizen engagement activities](image_url)
Feeling part of the community

Community Connection was measured in the 2011 VicHealth survey. Respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with feeling part of the community and answers were presented according to a 0-100 range. The average Community Connection score for persons living in Whitehorse was 69, while the Eastern Metro Region average was 71.4 and the Victorian State average was 72.3. Women in Whitehorse had a much higher Community Connection score (71.5) compared with males (66.2).

![Figure 4: Satisfaction with feeling part of the community](image)

Participation in the Arts and Cultural Activities

In the 2011 VicHealth Indicators survey, respondents were asked if they had participated in a range of artistic and cultural activities in the previous month. The response rate for Whitehorse residents was 70.7%, compared to 70.5% in the Eastern Metro Region and the Victorian State average of 63.6%. More females than males in Whitehorse had participated in an artistic or cultural activity.

![Figure 5: Participation in artistic and cultural activities](image)
Policy Context

National

The Australian Government’s National Volunteering Strategy was released in late 2011. It identifies key strategic directions in volunteering which aim to address emerging issues and challenges for the volunteering sector. It recognises the ‘volunteering landscape is changing’, ‘technology has transformed the way we communicate and work’, and ‘while traditional forms of volunteering are still popular, new forms are emerging.’

It set out the following priority areas for action:

- Promote greater engagement of young people in volunteering
- Respond to trends in volunteering
- Harness technology
- Better regulation and risk management
- Strengthen management and training
- Strengthen relationships and advocacy
- Recognise and value volunteering
- Improve information about volunteering

Since the change of Federal Government in September 2013, there has been no information released regarding the implementation of the Strategy or future directions in federal government support for volunteering and community participation.

Volunteering Australia

Volunteering Australia is the National peak body for volunteering, working to advance volunteering in the Australian community.

Volunteering Australia developed the National Standards for Involving Volunteers in Not for Profit Organisations (National Standards) which aim to promote a model of best practice in the management of volunteers.

Volunteering Australia’s National Agenda on Volunteering, initially released in 2001 and updated in 2006, identifies the major issues facing volunteers and volunteer-involving organizations in Australia and the outcomes they wanted to see achieved. It is an important National framework for volunteering.

The Agenda outlines key calls to action to:

- Publicly respect and value in enduring, formal, and tangible ways, the essential contribution that volunteers make to building and sustaining the Australian community
- Ensure that volunteers have legal status and are afforded protection through every piece of legislation and public policy that affects them and their work
• Ensure that all new legislation, by-laws and public policies, developed at any level of government, which may affect volunteers and their work, work only to facilitate and sustain volunteering
• Acknowledge that the activity of volunteering is not without cost and develop means by which Australian volunteers and volunteer-involving organizations are supported and funded to provide valuable services
• Ensure excellence in all levels of volunteer involvement and volunteer management in order to encourage, protect and enhance the work of volunteers
• Ensure that volunteering is a potent, dynamic and unifying social force for community benefit by acknowledging and accepting that it is a diverse and evolving activity

State
At the State Government level, responsibility for volunteering and community participation sits within the Office for the Community Sector within the Department of Human Services.

The Department of Human Services Strategic Directions 2012 – 2016 outlines three key objectives, including “improving people’s lives through building capability and supporting participation”. This objective underlines the community strengthening aspect of community participation.

The Victorian Government operates Victoria’s Volunteering Portal, an online community and information resource for Victorian volunteers and volunteering organisations, which includes an online search function which allows people to search for volunteer opportunities.

Volunteering Victoria
In February 2014, Volunteering Victoria, the state peak body for volunteering, released a Manifesto which outlines the priorities for volunteering in the State and points to current gaps in social, economic and political structures required to support and grow volunteering in our community (Volunteering Victoria, 2014).

The Manifesto defines 8 key priority areas for action, which they consider to be of equal importance:
• Spontaneous emergency volunteering
• Volunteer management
• Youth volunteering
• Multicultural volunteering
• Employee (or ‘corporate’) volunteering
• Building volunteer networks
• Promoting the benefits of volunteering
• Measuring the impact of volunteering
Local

The Whitehorse Volunteering and Community Participation Strategy 2014 – 2017 is guided by the Council Vision, Council Plan and the Whitehorse Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan, as well as linking with other Council plans, policies and strategies.

The Strategy will help Council to deliver its vision to ‘be a healthy, vibrant, prosperous and sustainable community supported by strong leadership and community partnerships’ (Council Vision, 2013 - 2023).

The Council Vision 2013-2023 commits Whitehorse City Council to a set of priorities for future action. These priorities have been translated into five Strategic Directions to reflect and respond to our community’s aspirations, values and needs, that is:

1. Support a healthy, vibrant, inclusive and diverse community
2. Maintaining and enhancing our built environment to ensure a liveable and sustainable city
3. Protecting and enhancing our open space and natural environments
4. Strategic leadership and open and accessible government
5. Support a healthy local economy

The Volunteering and Community Participation Strategy links most closely with

**Strategic Direction 1: “Support a healthy, vibrant, inclusive and diverse community”**.

It aligns closely with several strategies under this strategic direction.

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**Strategic Direction 1:**
*Support a healthy, vibrant, inclusive and diverse community.*

**Strategy 1.1.6:** Promote programs and services that foster social connections within the community

**Strategy 1.1.8:** Continue to support volunteers and explore civic participation opportunities for increased community involvement

**Strategy 1.1.9:** Further strengthen partnerships to implement policies, plans and projects that deliver positive outcomes for the community
Emerging Trends

Volunteering

From a national perspective, the Australian Government’s National Volunteering Strategy, released in 2011, identified several emerging trends and issues:

- More people are volunteering, but for less time than in the past
- The overall rate of volunteering grew from 24% in 1995 to 36% in 2010 (ABS 2011, *General Social Survey 2010*. Cat. no. 4159.0)
- Growth in volunteering is uneven. Rates of volunteering have grown in sport, religion and education, but have declined in community services and emergency management (ABS 2007, *Voluntary work, Australia, 2006*)
- The average number of hours per volunteer has decreased, from 74 hours per year in 1995 to 56 hours per year in 2006. (ABS 2007, *Voluntary work, Australia, 2006*)
- More volunteers want roles that are flexible, or require shorter hours or a shorter term commitment (ABS 2007, *Voluntary work, Australia, 2006*)
- People are increasingly time poor, and volunteering activities compete with greater work and caring responsibilities. (ABS 2006, *Time use survey, 2006*)
- People are also more mobile than in the past, making it less likely that a volunteer will stay for many years in a single role
- The increasing frequency of natural disasters requires a ready supply of skilled emergency management volunteers

Key findings of Volunteering Australia’s 2011 *National Survey of Volunteering Issues* were:

- the importance of having internal resources dedicated to volunteering coordination and management
- the untapped potential of corporate volunteering
- the need to offer more flexible, project-based and innovative volunteering opportunities
- the importance of training for volunteers and managers of volunteers
Community Participation

In recent years, there has been a huge increase in the number and variety of innovative community participation initiatives. Grassroots community projects and larger organised community building initiatives have spread rapidly both internationally and in Australia, facilitated by the use of online social networking.

A few examples of these initiatives which promote active involvement in and input into the life of the community are:

- **Neighbourhood projects**: designed to increase social capital through building social connections, sharing resources and ideas. *e.g.*: community choirs, neighbourhood walking clubs, recycling swap meets, book clubs, garden sharing
- **Community driven place making**: initiatives aimed at improving the appearance or use of shared spaces. *e.g.*: pop-up cafés, urban forests, community gardens, community art installations
- **Community grassroots action**: community members working collectively to take action on issues in their communities. *e.g.*: Transition Towns, Community Action Networks
- **Neighbourhood micro grants**: provided by Local Government to groups of residents to assist them in implementing their own small scale projects to improve their neighbourhood and strength community connections. *e.g.*: City of Port Philip Small Poppy Grants
Community Engagement

A key stage in the development of the *Volunteering and Community Participation Strategy* was a broad community and key stakeholder engagement process. The engagement process was undertaken throughout October / November 2013 and involved engaging a wide range of individuals and organisations in the community to seek their feedback in relation to volunteering and community participation in Whitehorse, as well as Councillors and Council officers.

The community engagement process sought stakeholder feedback on the following seven broad topics of discussion:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rationale</th>
<th>Why people volunteer and participate in their community</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trends</td>
<td>Emerging trends in relation to volunteering and community participation in Whitehorse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barriers</td>
<td>Barriers that prevent or limit people from volunteering and participating in the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issues &amp; challenges</td>
<td>Key issues and challenges faced by existing volunteers and people actively participating in their community and organisations that rely on volunteers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities</td>
<td>Opportunities for Council and / or other organisations to increase and strengthen volunteering and community participation in coming years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnerships</td>
<td>Potential partnerships to support increased and strengthened volunteering and community participation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Supports</td>
<td>Supports required for volunteers and Council staff</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The community engagement program was developed to capture stakeholder feedback in relation to volunteering and community participation in Whitehorse and was designed to ensure that Council could successfully consult a wide range of people. The program was also designed to engage the Whitehorse community, Councillors and other key stakeholders in a meaningful dialogue about volunteering and community participation.

The program comprised a range of different engagement techniques, including online surveying, hard copy feedback forms, workshops and small and large group meetings.

A wide diversity of people were engaged throughout the process, with participants representing a broad profile of the Whitehorse community.

The following provides a brief summary of the program.
Activity summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Stakeholders engaged</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Online survey - <em>Your Say Whitehorse</em></td>
<td>Whitehorse community</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spring Festival</td>
<td>Whitehorse community</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community volunteers / general public workshop</td>
<td>Community volunteers and general public</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community groups workshop</td>
<td>Community groups that rely on volunteers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meals on wheels workshop #1</td>
<td>Council volunteers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meals on wheels workshop #2</td>
<td>Council volunteers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disability Advisory Committee workshop</td>
<td>Members of the DAC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Councillor workshop</td>
<td>Whitehorse City Council Councillors</td>
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<tr>
<td>Council staff workshop</td>
<td>Whitehorse City Council Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary school students</td>
<td>Primary school aged children</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A more detailed overview of the community engagement activities, including an overview of each engagement activity undertaken, details about the activity and a profile of engagement participants has been compiled into a comprehensive appendix document that is available on request from Council’s Community Development Department.

**COMMON THEMES**

The following provides an analysis of the feedback received throughout the engagement process. It seeks to draw out common themes and rank the top items of feedback for each major discussion topic covered.

It must be noted that while an attempt has been made to rank feedback numerically for each discussion topic, the community engagement process was expressly designed to capture qualitative, rather than quantitative feedback. A more detailed summary of the common themes can be found in the appendix document.

**Rationale**

When questioned as to why people choose to volunteer their time and actively participate in their community, participants in the engagement process identified the following as the top reasons:
1. To help other people  
2. To make a contribution to society  
3. For personal reward, recognition & satisfaction  
4. For the social contact with other people  
5. It provides something meaningful / interesting / worthwhile to do with available time  
6. Just for enjoyment / fun  
7. To be involved / participate in something

**Trends**

When asked what they saw as the emerging trends in relation to volunteering and community participation in the City of Whitehorse, participants in the engagement process identified the following as the top ten trends:

1. People are increasingly time poor  
2. People are becoming more self / family focused and less committed to the wider community  
3. It is becoming increasingly difficult to recruit and retain volunteers, especially younger people  
4. People are becoming more averse to commitment  
5. People are looking for less formal, shorter-term, more flexible and more action-oriented forms of volunteering  
6. The rate of volunteering is increasing in some areas / age groups  
7. The rate of volunteering is decreasing in some areas / age groups  
8. There are increasing time, financial and other pressures on volunteers  
9. The nature of volunteering is changing  
10. Volunteering is becoming far more complex

**Barriers**

When asked to identify the key barriers that prevent or limit people from volunteering and participating in the community, participants in the engagement process identified the following as the top barriers:

1. Time required  
2. Commitment required  
3. Training, insurance, OHS and certification requirements  
4. Lack of knowledge about opportunities  
5. Uncertainty about starting something new / joining a new group  
6. Matching interests and time with volunteering opportunities available  
7. Age limitations
Issues & challenges

Participants in the engagement process identified the following as the top issues and challenges faced by existing volunteers and people actively participating in their community and organisations that rely on volunteers:

1. Capacity of organisations to recruit and retain volunteers over time
2. Reward and recognition
3. Financial and governance pressures on organisations that rely on volunteers
4. Increasing roles and expectations of volunteers
5. Training, regulations and insurance
6. The time and expense required to volunteer
7. Low public interest
8. Awareness of volunteering and volunteers

Opportunities

A key focus of all consultation activities was to explore what opportunities exist for Whitehorse City Council and other organisations to increase and strengthen volunteering and community participation in Whitehorse. The top 10 opportunities identified for Council and/or other organisations to increase and strengthen volunteering and community participation in coming years include:

1. Increased promotion and awareness-raising about volunteering, the benefits of volunteering and actively participating, volunteer organisations and volunteer opportunities
2. Tap into new potential sources of volunteers and support volunteer matching
3. Increase recognition of volunteers and volunteer organisations
4. Create easier ways to get involved and start volunteering
5. Provide shorter-term, more flexible and low commitment volunteering opportunities
6. Provide funding, training and material support to assist volunteers and volunteer organisations
7. Encourage greater corporate volunteering
8. Target the recruitment of skilled volunteers for specific roles
9. Create Council projects that could be supported by volunteers
10. Reduce regulatory and administrative requirements

Partnerships

A number of consultation activities included discussions about the opportunities that exist to strengthen volunteering and community participation in Whitehorse
specifically through partnerships. This discussion recognises that Council can only do so much in its ability to influence volunteering and community participation throughout the community and that opportunities can be substantially enhanced through partnerships.

**Supports**

**Supports for volunteers that have worked well over recent years**

A number of consultation activities involved a discussion about the supports for volunteers that had worked well over recent years. Key supports identified were:

- Council recognition of volunteers
- Council’s public promotion of volunteering
- OHS improvements
- Establishment of Community Participation Officer position

Further details of key volunteer supports identified by participants that have worked well over recent years are included in the appendix document.

**Supports required for Council staff**

The consultation workshop with Council staff identified what further supports staff need in relation to volunteering and community participation. Key supports identified were:

- Recognition that supporting volunteers and community organisations takes time and needs to be acknowledged as part of staff’s workload
- Budget to cover the engagement and use of volunteers
- Increased training, guidance and resources for staff

Further details of key supports required for Council staff that were identified by participants, are included in the appendix document.
Priority Areas and Strategic Directions

Based on the analysis of demographic data, current trends, national, state and local policies, and feedback from the community engagement process, as well as outcomes of the previous Volunteering and Civic Participation Strategy and work Council is already undertaking, six priority areas for action have been identified. These priorities and the related strategic directions are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRIORITY AREA</th>
<th>STRATEGIC DIRECTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supporting volunteer management</td>
<td>Continue to provide support, information and training to Council staff who manage volunteers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoting and informing</td>
<td>Increase promotion of and information about volunteering, community participation and community organisations within Council and in the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responding to emerging trends</td>
<td>Promote, support and develop flexible, project-based and short-term volunteering opportunities in response to changing demands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increasing participation</td>
<td>Promote, support and develop programs and initiatives designed to increase volunteering and community participation, especially of specific groups (young people, CALD, international students, people with a disability, professionals, families and men)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognising and celebrating</td>
<td>Continue to recognise and celebrate volunteers and those who are actively involved in their local community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exploring and innovating</td>
<td>Continue to explore, support and develop innovative volunteering and community participation initiatives</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Implementation - Annual Action Plans

Each of the strategic priorities outlined above will form the basis of and guide the development of annual action plans, over the coming four year period, that will work toward strengthening community participation and voluntary activity within Council and within the municipality.

Council will take the lead on certain actions and others will be the responsibility of other levels of Government and community organisations. Council will work in partnership with key organisations and community groups and will continue to engage with community members and community groups to ensure that we continue to respond to emerging trends and issues.

Council will work internally across departments, externally with all levels of government, with community organisations and with the community to deliver the Whitehorse Volunteering and Community Participation Strategy 2014-2017.
References


http://docs.health.vic.gov.au/docs/doc/Whitehorse-(C)

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VicHealth (2011) VicHealth Indicators Survey 2011, Melbourne  

Volunteering Australia (2001) A National Agenda on Volunteering: Beyond the International Year of Volunteers  

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