



# BUSINESS CASE FOR A VOLUNTEER RESOURCE SERVICE

Campaspe Murray Region

PREPARED BY EASTERN VOLUNTEERS  
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY BUSINESS CASE

For a maximum investment of \$364,484 per annum with 2.5% increments annually and a one off establishment cost of \$33,000 to establish a hub and spoke place-based Volunteer Resource Service, Campaspe with its Murray River townships of Moama and potentially Mathoura would reap an increase in its Regional Gross Product of \$246 million per annum.

Given its current reported rate of volunteering i.e. 25.1% of the regional population, there is room to grow volunteering both formal and informal to the state average of 42.1% in Campaspe’s major industries of health care and social assistance, education and training, public administration and tourism. There is also growth potential in arts and culture, environmental and animal welfare.

Most volunteering in the region happens within one’s own community so the recommended model of service, is a hub VRS in Echuca providing the infrastructure for township-based support of volunteering through place based VRS services operating in Echuca/Moama, Kyabram, Rochester Rushworth and their respective catchments. This community development model would harness the local volunteering into a co-ordinated and fully supported model which addresses the key risks associated with maintaining the current siloed approach in each community. It is critical to note that these township VRS’s must be supported by the infrastructure provided by the Hub and are not stand-alone options for funding.

By harnessing and supporting the existing formal and informal volunteering, Campaspe could easily increase the current economic contribution of its volunteering from \$1.7billion per annum to \$3.5billion per annum when it reaches state average . To do this it needs to develop community-based approaches to volunteering which:

- understand and structure opportunities to the way people want to volunteer,
- utilise volunteering as an employment pathway for young people, those with additional barriers to employment and those re-entering the workforce.
- assist organisations and community groups to provide a diversity of volunteering opportunities in an integrated paid/volunteer workforce
- provide equity of access to volunteering for all community members irrespective of ability or level of disadvantage they experience
- manage volunteer leakage ie. Loss of volunteers who have poor experiences in trying to volunteer
- strategically utilises a volunteer workforce across the community

Campaspe’s current volunteering character has many risks including continuation of a siloed approach which impacts key policy and decision makers capacity to recognise and strategically harness the significant workforce contribution being made to the region by volunteers. Volunteering builds the regions social capital which residents’ site as the major reason they live in the area. Volunteering also delivers a plethora of services which if Council or other governments were to fund

would cost \$8435 per annum per volunteer or \$60.6million per annum based on the evidence provided in The State of Volunteering in Victoria Report 2020.

Volunteering costs a volunteer \$6.70<sup>1</sup> per volunteer hour and given the socio-economic profile of Campaspe Murray River, transport costs for an Echuca based VRS or Echuca based opportunities would be a major barrier to volunteering for those not living in Echuca. The hub and spoke model proposed in this business case ensures that no matter where a person lives in the region, they are able to equitably access volunteering opportunities. It also provides the necessary structure and support for the management of volunteering in a community and builds the professional skills required to manage a volunteer workforce especially one which is rightfully integrated with a paid workforce. COVID has demonstrated for VRS' across Victoria that there is also much work to be done in supporting informal volunteering in communities to ensure not only the volunteer, but the community group/organisation is able to successfully meet the outcomes they all seek.

A Volunteer Resource Service in Campaspe will be a significant contributor to building social inclusion and connection through providing the resources and opportunities for volunteering for people of all capabilities which ensure that people can Learn, Work, Engage and Have a Voice. This is the very definition of social inclusion.<sup>2</sup>

It will ensure an inclusive approach to volunteering for people with barriers to community connection and participation. It will assist organisations and community groups to open up opportunities for all the community who want to volunteer and will assist and support them to provide the right opportunities to meet the way people want to volunteer and for the way services need to be delivered. The hub and spoke model provides these opportunities in an accessible way within townships and their catchments.

Campaspe Murray River has much to benefit from a focus on volunteering as an employment pathway for its young people. It has virtually no traction in this area and a VRS could bring together the major stakeholders to build pathways from school level on. *The expenditure associated with volunteering in Victoria is estimated to generate in the order of 71,364 jobs, of which 47,467 are full-time. This refers to jobs created economy-wide and not just in the volunteering sector. This realises a wage benefit of \$5.0 billion that is directly returned to households, with an equivalent welfare cost avoided by government.*<sup>3</sup> That would provide a wage benefit to Campaspe of \$150million per annum.

There is no “lightning rod” for volunteering in the region which ensures that volunteering is understood, promoted at all levels within community and government and is strategically coordinated to make best use of the human resources available. The VRS is this lightning rod which should operate across three levels in Figure 1 below:

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<sup>1</sup> <https://stateofvolunteering.org.au/executive-summary/>

<sup>2</sup> Inner east Primary Care Partnership Social Inclusion Framework 2020

<sup>3</sup> <https://stateofvolunteering.org.au/economic-impact/>

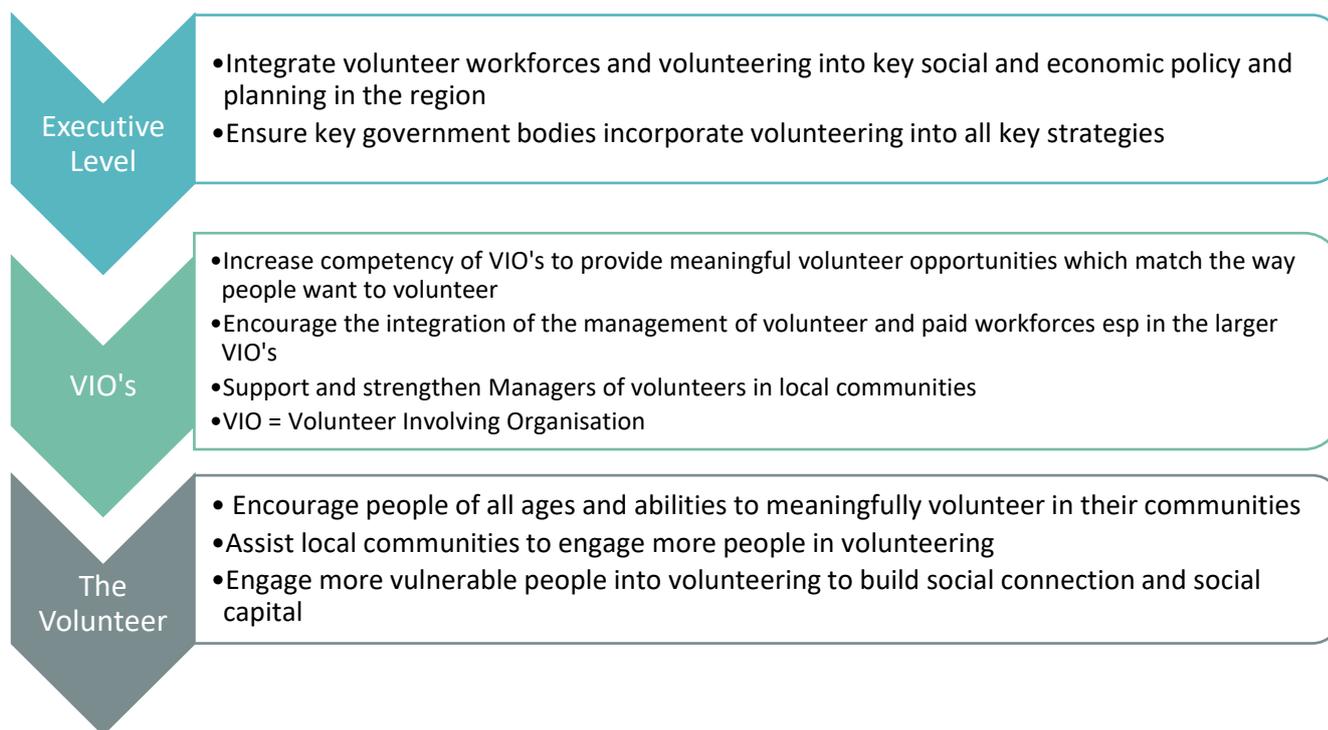


Figure 1: Three levels of operation of the Volunteer Resource Service

## INTRODUCTION

The Campaspe-Murray River Vibrant Volunteers Network [VVN] commissioned Eastern Volunteers Consulting [EVC] mid-2020 to prepare a business case for a Volunteer Resource Service. Specifically, VVN requested:

1. Research varying models of volunteer resource centres/services that support both community and organisations/members. This would include funding options, physical space opportunities and operating models.
2. Develop business case options that are relevant and suitable to the Campaspe Murray River area.

## METHODOLOGY

EVC developed a three-phase methodology to determine the most appropriate service model for a Volunteer Resource Service.

### **Phase 1: Profile of Volunteering:**

Work with VVN to gather key data:

- ABS estimate of volunteering in catchment
- VVN data on volunteering
- Age Profile of catchment
- # human and community services by LGA within catchment
- Identification of key towns / centres within catchment

- Reports or strategic plans of Local government and large charities NFP's
- Summarise Ministerial Report data for volunteering in Victoria

### **Phase 2: Interviews – to be conducted by zoom:**

- Interviews with VVN members to identify key variables needing to be considered in any model and what works in service delivery in other sectors now.
- Interviews with large service delivery organisations- people to be identified by VVN.

### **Phase 3: Review of Service/Operating Models:**

- Explore different models of service delivery of VRS/VRC- strengths and weaknesses
- Assess impact of COVID on volunteering opportunities
- Zoom session with VVN to explore model options.

Due to some COVID related delays in interview schedule the work has been pushed out to a December conclusion.

## WHAT IS A VOLUNTEER RESOURCE SERVICE?

There are three types of volunteering organisations in Victoria.

1. **Volunteer Resource Centres funded under Commonwealth VMA Grant.** These are place based VRC's with a mandate to assess and match individuals especially those with barriers to community participation into volunteering opportunities and to train educate and strengthen volunteer management and capability across all sectors of volunteer involving organisations [VIO]. They have a purely external focus and do not operate from a singular policy position. 34 of the 79 local government areas in Victoria are covered by 17 VRC's with an average allocation of \$74,000<sup>4</sup>. In some regions these are supplemented by local government funding and programs. Where VRC's do not have current reach some local governments fund this place-based work. It is these organisations that represent the current place-based infrastructure for volunteer manager training and capacity building across Victoria. **Campaspe does not have a funded VRC nor does local government contribute.**
2. **Volunteer Resource Services funded primarily by local government:** VRS's are funded through local government for the specific purposes of implementing local government policy e.g. Health and Wellbeing Plans and retain the external focus of assisting people into volunteering opportunities and/or strengthening the volunteering management and infrastructure within the LGA. Not all local governments fund this external focus and where they fund for their own purposes entirely, they fall into the third category.
3. **Organisations that have an entirely internal focus for the volunteer services and programs:** these organisations can range from small to large state wide and national VIO's that focus only on their internal needs for a volunteer workforce to deliver their services. These include hospitals, aged care facilities, CFA, Zoos Victoria and the like. Often these organisations look to VRC's or VRS's to support their internal capacity through manager training, place-based networks of support such as volunteering communities of practice. More often than not, these

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<sup>4</sup> Commonwealth of Australia, Dept Social Services: Volunteer Management Activity Grant Opportunity Guidelines. December 2017

organisations attract better resourcing than the VRS's and VRC's from government who continues to fund volunteering in silos.

A Volunteer Resource Service [VRS] is being used in this report as the generic title to represent those place-based organisations that have an external focus on volunteering and meet the following criteria for eligibility to the Victorian Volunteer Support Services Network:

- Provides information to individuals about volunteering
- Provides a referral service that is responsive to the needs of volunteers, potential volunteers and volunteer involving organisations
- Provides resources and support to volunteer involving organisations in the recruitment and management of volunteers
- Promotes and celebrates volunteering and volunteering opportunities

and provides these services beyond the agency's own activities.

Campaspe is not funded for a Volunteer Resource Service and local government does not invest in a VRS. This business case addresses the need for such an externally focussed VRS in the Campaspe Murray River region.

## WHY VOLUNTEERING?

The current Australian definition of volunteering is “time willingly given for the common good and without financial gain”.<sup>5</sup>

The inaugural State of Volunteering in Victoria 2020 Report<sup>6</sup> commissioned by the Victorian government through Volunteering Victoria has demonstrated that:

- In 2019, 2.3 million Victorians aged 15 and over – 42.1% of the adult population volunteered.
- Victorian volunteers contributed \$58.1 billion dollars of value to our economy last year, including:
  - \$19.4 billion in costs to replace the labour volunteers contribute to Victoria
  - \$8.2 billion contribution to Victoria's Gross State Product (GSP).
  - Collectively, the findings show investing in volunteering provides a net return of approximately \$3.70 on every dollar invested.
- Volunteers contribute on average 223.9 hours a year or 4.3 hours every week with their fellow Victorians.
- The volunteering sector is over one and a half times larger than the Victorian government sector and nearly half the size of the private sector.
- Nearly a quarter (24.7%) of all responding volunteer involving organisations engaged volunteers in delivering services funded by the Victorian State Government.
- Volunteers give their own resources \$6.70 per day to deliver their volunteering services with recompense from VIO's not matching this.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/wp-content/uploads/FAQs-Launch-of-Definition-280715-final.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> <https://stateofvolunteering.org.au/>

- 39.5% of people volunteering did so in formal volunteering opportunities, 44.5% of volunteers volunteered both formally and informally. 15.6% of volunteers donated their time exclusively in informal contexts.
- 66.0% of volunteering occurred within the volunteer's local community. 16.9% of volunteering took place online.
- Volunteering is significantly more than donated time. Rather, this report shows an increasingly professionalised workforce, with leaders of volunteers actively developing the skills and careers of Victorians through volunteering. There is further potential through volunteering, to contribute even more to Victorian productivity and community wellbeing.

Volunteers provide a vital workforce alongside the paid workforce which delivers core community services from health and wellbeing services to tourism, environmental, emergency management, aged care, child and family services and every other sector you can think of that serves local communities.

Many people volunteer without naming it. This is called informal volunteering and is an untapped opportunity to support and expand the capacity and power of local volunteer workforces. Informal volunteering occurs for instance in sporting organisations, schools and other parent/child related activities where families are just doing their bit for their children. It also occurs in small regional and rural communities who see their contribution as just what you do in small towns to survive and live a quality lifestyle.

There is of course formal volunteering which is the most visible to communities and policy makers. Formal volunteering is where volunteering occurs within organisations (including institutions and agencies) in a structured way. The City of Greater Geelong expands this definition to:

***Formal volunteering** is an activity which takes place through not for profit organisations or projects and is understood 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.<sup>7</sup>*

The Ministerial Council for Volunteers found in its report in 2017<sup>8</sup> that volunteering occurs across the ages even though we often think of the volunteer as an older person.

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<https://www.geelongaustralia.com.au/volunteer/article/item/8cfa768e9c0b9df.aspx#:~:text=Formal%20volunteering%20is%20an%20activity,in%20designated%20volunteer%20positions%20only>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.volunteer.vic.gov.au/ministerial-council-volunteers#:~:text=The%20Ministerial%20Council%20for%20Volunteers,and%20strengthen%20the%20volunteer%20sector>.

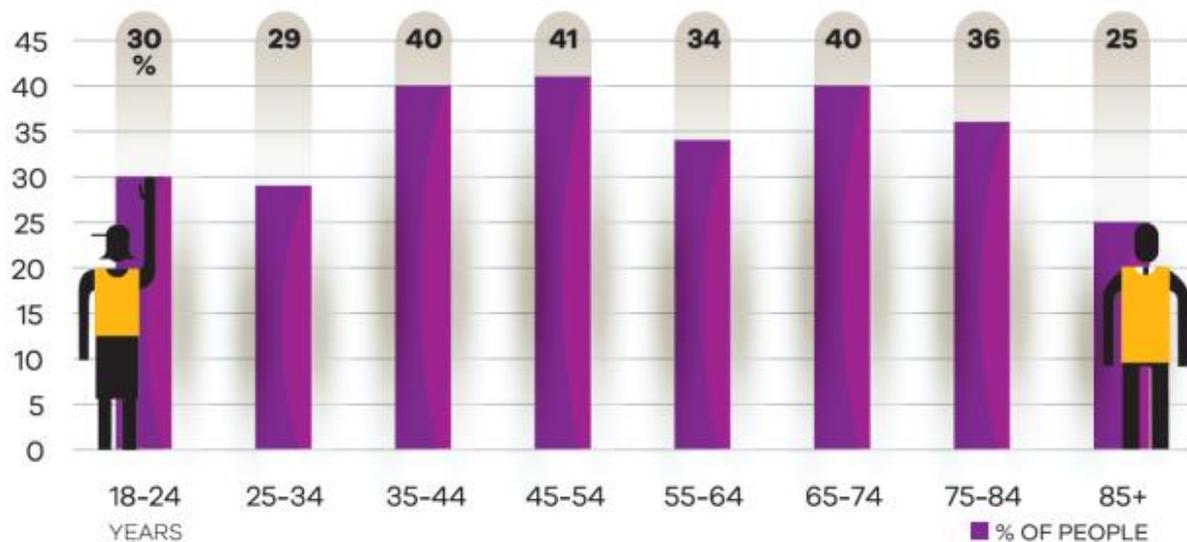


Figure 2: Age Trends in Volunteering

People of different ages volunteer for different reasons and in different ways. Younger people utilise volunteering as an employment pathway and many in their mid to late 30's return from raising children to the workforce through volunteering. People involved in child rearing utilise volunteering to remain connected to community and to assist their children's development e.g. community playgroups. People over 55 may volunteer through mutual obligation programs of the Commonwealth or seek to give back and support their communities as their working lives diminish. The trend towards casualised part time workforces also lends itself to people volunteering more to support their communities.

Volunteering is also utilised for settlement purposes, being a great way to meet new people in your local community and improve your language proficiency.

The report also showed where Victorians were volunteering:

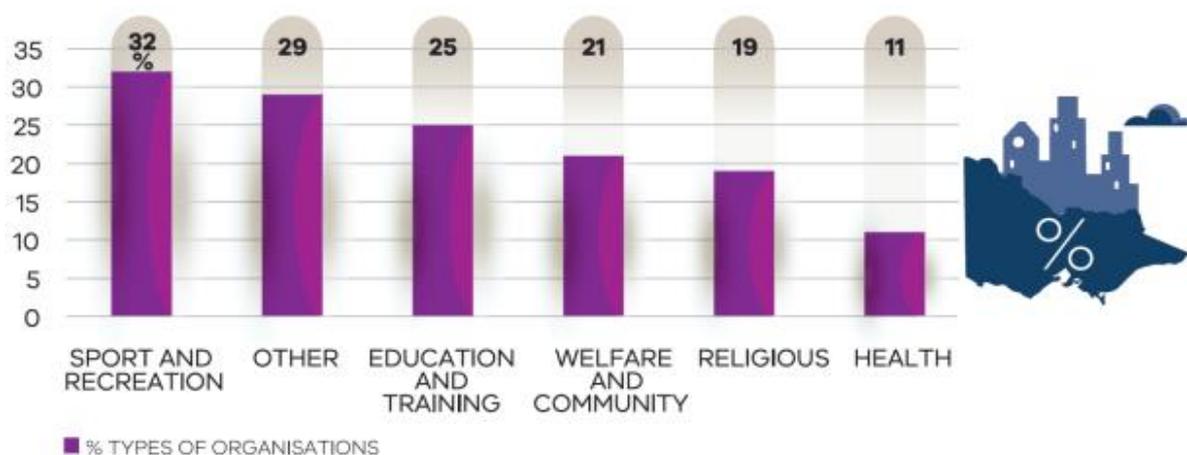


Figure 3: Where people volunteer

The 'other' category includes arts and heritage; business, professional and union; parenting, children and youth; emergency services; environment and animal welfare; international aid and development;

law, justice and political; other recreation and interest; ethnic and ethnic-Australian groups; and other organisations.

SEEK<sup>9</sup> have demonstrated that increasingly people are seeking different volunteering opportunities to the traditional one day a week long term commitment which we have become used to in the past. These are moving toward shorter-term project-based opportunities, virtual volunteering and mixed skill volunteering with larger cohorts of skilled volunteers looking for opportunities to contribute and participate.

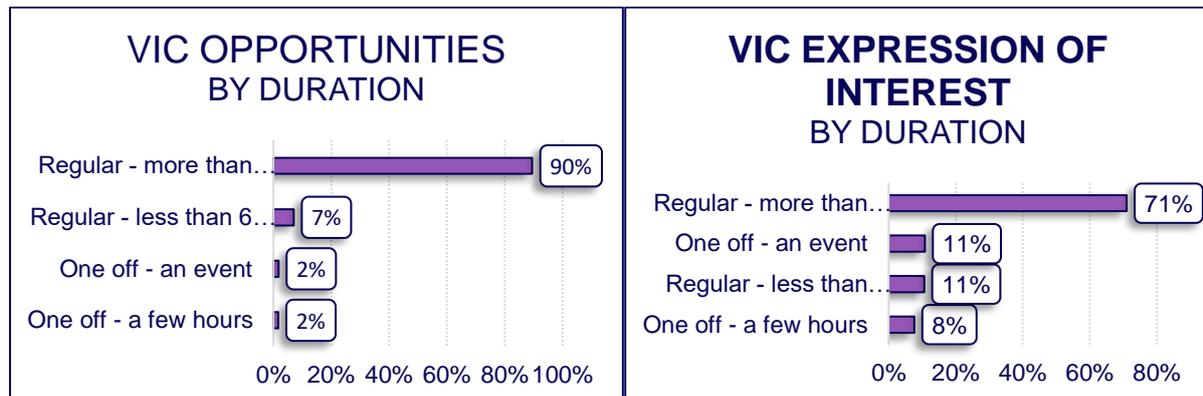


Figure 4: The growing mismatch of volunteer opportunities to the way people want to volunteer

This data coupled with the most recent data on time volunteers give each week i.e. 4.3 hours a week means organisations looking for volunteers in the future will need to provide a far more diverse range of opportunities and will need to think differently about how they utilise their volunteer and paid workforces. The imperative is to be strategic and integrated in approaching volunteering in the coming decades.

The Campaspe Murray River Region could not provide services to their communities without volunteers however the lack of a VRS means this volunteering is likely:

- **To occur in silos** e.g. within towns or specific interest groups. This grows inequitable financial support for volunteering with some VIO's receiving greater resourcing for their volunteer workforces than others. It also grows inequity in where volunteering can deliver outcomes for communities.
- **To occur without adequate support or co-ordination.** Volunteer workforces are not strategically utilised to achieve health and wellbeing outcomes, or other policy outcomes sought by governments or communities. Volunteer managers are not provided with the necessary education and support to manage their formal workforces. This will impact heavily on inclusive volunteering i.e. opportunities for people with disabilities to meaningfully volunteer in their communities. Evidence is clear that organisations and groups need support and education to provide inclusive volunteering opportunities.
- **To occur in a way which promotes volunteer leakage** i.e. A person approaches a volunteering opportunity and is turned away either because opportunities do not exist, or they are not the right fit. That person risks being lost to future volunteering without a pathway like a VRS to assist them to find the right opportunity for them.

<sup>9</sup> SEEK presentation to Volunteering Victoria State Conference 2018

- **To occur where management sees volunteers as gap fillers** and not a legitimate workforce to integrate with their paid workforce.
- **To occur in traditional opportunities which no longer meet the way people want to volunteer.** Organisations are not supported to offer the diversity of volunteering opportunities which is needed to respond to the changing trends in volunteering.

## THE ECONOMIC VALUE OF VOLUNTEERING

The State of Volunteering in Victoria Report<sup>10</sup> quantified the economic value of volunteering. The Report showed that :

*In 2019, it is estimated that volunteering in Victoria enabled at least **\$58.1 billion** worth of benefits across the State. The sum of commercial benefits worth **\$31.8 billion** and civic benefits valued at **\$26.3 billion**. The Gross Value Added of volunteering to the Victorian economy is **\$8.2 billion**, or **1.8%** of Victoria's Gross State Product of **\$446.1 billion**.*

It identified that the Producers Surplus is \$1.2 billion. The Producers surplus is defined which *is distributed among all Victorian firms who contribute intermediate (such as partly finished goods and/or services that are used as inputs in the production of other goods and/or services including final goods and/or services) or final goods and/or services that are consumed as a result of volunteering in Victoria, and not just volunteering producers.*

*Our study found that **56.9% of volunteers** believed their volunteering added an average of **35.9% value to their productivity** in their paid employment. Therefore, the extent to which volunteering in Victoria improved the productivity of individuals in 2019 (a benefit enjoyed by their employers) is estimated to be **\$30.5 billion** defined as the Productivity Premium.*

*The expenditure associated with volunteering in Victoria is estimated to generate in the order of **71,364 jobs**, of which **47,467 are full-time**. This refers to jobs created economy-wide and not just in the volunteering sector. This realises a wage benefit of **\$5.0 billion** that is directly returned to households, with an equivalent welfare cost avoided by government.*

*Volunteering-related expenditure of **\$8.7 billion** (direct costs) generated approximately **\$1.9 billion in tax revenue** for the government.*

## THE CAMPASPE MURRAY RIVER REGIONS VOLUNTEERING CHARACTER

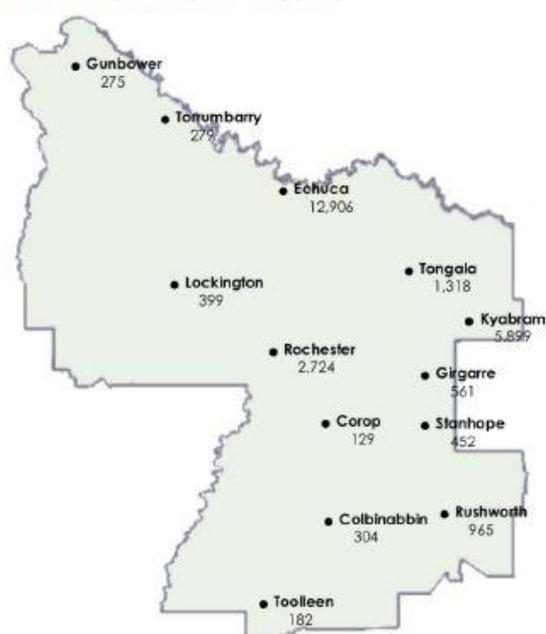
For this business case the Murray River Council regions considered were those directly alongside the Campaspe Shire border namely Womboota, Moama, Mathoura ,Thyra and Aratula. Womboota, Thyra and Aratula had populations too small to consider.

Campaspe Shire is defined in the diagram below<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> <https://stateofvolunteering.org.au/economic-impact/>

<sup>11</sup> Campaspe PCP: Community Health and Wellbeing Profile July 2020

Figure 8. Usual Resident Population by Town - Map (2016)



2016 Census of Population and Housing, Basic Community Profiles, ABS 2018

Figure 5: Campaspe Region

Using these towns as the guide the current age profile and distance from Echuca has been determined<sup>12</sup>. Projections to 2036 do not significantly change the character of volunteering in these figures.

Table 1: Age Profile of Campaspe and Distance from Echuca of Townships

Town	# population 2016	# 2036 by district	Kms from Echuca	# 18-24 yrs.	# 25-34 yrs.	# 35-49 yrs.	# 50-59 yrs.	# 60-69 yrs.	# 70-84 yrs.	# 85+
Gunbower	275		41.6	35	41	95	95	91	64	8
Torrumbarry	279		34	18	28	48	57	41	23	3
Echuca	12906	16385	0	1066	1520	2459	1894	1782	1798	451
Lockington	399		36.2	71	63	132	139	89	98	24
Tongala	1318		27.5	153	209	328	242	246	219	74
Rochester	2724	7827	28.5	204	244	443	464	472	537	140
Kyabram	5899	11146	39	520	738	1196	964	991	1046	303
Girgarre	561		43.4	45	55	97	76	89	60	10
Corop	129		46.2	15	7	21	22	20	27	0
Stanhope	452		48.1	57	53	127	144	141	131	30
Colbinabbin	304		59.6	13	29	54	41	33	51	9
Rushworth	965	3726	73.8	88	98	178	242	246	239	45
Toolleen	182		75.3	5	8	27	30	42	25	3
	26393	39084		2290	3093	5205	4410	4283	4318	1100

<sup>12</sup> Idprofile Campaspe Shire Council

The Moama Mathoura profile is:

Table 2: Moama/ Mathoura age profile and distance from Echuca

Town	# population 2016	Kms from Echuca	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70-79	80-89
Moama	6165	5.6	513	634	742	716	913	818	339
Mathoura	12373	44.4	975	1127	1401	1835	2022	1493	660

It is reasonable to assume people will travel to a centre for volunteering opportunities however without adequate public transport this is going to cost the volunteer. It is reasonable to assume people would not travel more than 20-30 minutes so VRS services and volunteering opportunities need to be made accessible to communities in under 30km from home to ensure volunteering is viable.

Given volunteers spend on average \$6.70 per hour to volunteer<sup>13</sup> coupled with the socioeconomic profile of Campaspe and Murray, the travel costs of volunteering will be a potential barrier to volunteering if opportunities were not place based in the community's people are living in.

Summarising age trends for volunteering purposes:

#### Campaspe:

Table 3: Age trends for volunteering in Campaspe

Service Group	Age	Population	% of population
Parents and home builders	35 - 49	6,335	17.1
Older workers and pre-retirees	50 - 59	5,374	14.5
Empty nesters and retirees	60 - 69	5,097	13.8
Seniors	70 - 84	4,839	13.1
Young Workforce	25 - 35	3,520	9.5

This indicates a profile which should be targeting volunteering as an employment pathway for parents re-entering the workforce, for mutual obligation and transition into retirement. There is significant room to grow youth volunteering as an employment pathway. Succession planning is needed as 60-84 years make up 27% of volunteers and COVID will certainly have had an impact on this.

There is room to grow the potential volunteering in the under 49's or convert the informal volunteering in these age brackets to more supported formal volunteering.

#### Murray River overall:

Table 4: Age Trends for volunteering in Murray River region

Service Group	Age	Population	% population
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<sup>13</sup> Volunteering Victoria; The State of Volunteering in Victoria 2020

<b>Empty nesters and retirees</b>	60 - 69	1,864	16%
<b>Parents and homebuilders</b>	35 - 49	1,852	15.9%
<b>Seniors</b>	70 – 84	1,841	15.8%
<b>Older workers and pre-retirees</b>	50 - 59	1,652	14.2%
<b>Young workforce</b>	25 - 34	1,089	9.3%

The Murray profile again shows 32% of its volunteers are 60+ years and likely to have been impacted by COVID. There is room to grow youth and family volunteering.

The most recent Campaspe profile of volunteering by township is:

**Table 5: Profile of volunteering in Campaspe**

District	Volunteers	% of population by town	Not Volunteers	Not Stated
<b>Campaspe Shire</b>	<b>7,528</b>		<b>19,751</b>	<b>3,148</b>
<b>Echuca</b>	2,537	22.1%		
<b>Kyabram</b>	1,574	25.3%		
<b>Moama</b>	1,092	21.6%		
<b>Echuca (West)</b>	1,015	21.9%		
<b>Echuca (Central – East)</b>	1,000	21.8%	3,580	
<b>Kyabram (West)</b>	852	24.9%	2,569	
<b>Lockington - Gunbower and District</b>	832	26.4%	2,322	
<b>Tongala and District</b>	748	25.8%	2,151	
<b>Rochester</b>	728	27.8%	1,887	
<b>Kyabram (East)</b>	726	25.7%	2,096	
<b>Rushworth and District</b>	560	27.1%	1,504	
<b>Stanhope and District</b>	554	27.8%	1,441	
<b>Echuca (South – East)</b>	522	22.9%	1,750	

The average rate of volunteering in the Campaspe/Murray River region is 25.1% significantly less than the 42.1% of the adult population found in the State of Volunteering in Victoria Report. Whilst reporting factors and the lack of reporting of informal volunteering could influence this figure there is room to grow volunteering in the region.

There are many factors which influence rates of volunteering including:

- Age
- Previous success or lack of success in participating in community
- Vulnerabilities which impact people's participation e.g., disability, language, race, poverty
- Income
- Distances to travel to volunteer and its cost e.g. \$6.70 per hour
- Time available to volunteer
- Skills, competencies and interests one has to share
- Education level
- Employment status
- Access to affordable transport
- Agricultural workloads
- Ease at which you can identify volunteering opportunities to meet your needs

Interviews with key stakeholders showed the following volunteering trends are experienced in the region:

- Overwhelmingly volunteers are the older cohort for formal health and community service work and more the 30-50's for sporting organisations.
- Volunteer opportunities being offered formally are the more traditional roles with expectations of ongoing volunteering commitment. Some changes are occurring in neighbourhood houses with new opportunities, but it is not significant.
- There is no significant use of volunteering as an employment pathway by and for younger people
- There is little inclusive volunteering occurring where people with barriers especially disability [including mental health] could volunteer
- People generally volunteer in their own local communities with Echuca having a drive-in drive out population which sees people return to their communities where they have time to volunteer
- There have been mixed attempts to reach out to indigenous communities to engage them in volunteering
- Formal volunteering is occurring in health and aged care services and services reported not being short of volunteers but as they tend to be the older cohort and more set in their ways, opportunities to change the culture of volunteering can be challenging in these settings.
- People may not be able to afford to travel beyond their communities to volunteer if they are required for in person volunteering
- Much of the smaller town volunteering is not named or recognised as volunteering and perhaps not as well supported as it could be.

- Volunteering is happening in silos with not a great deal of cross fertilisation and usage of volunteers between organisations. This also means duplication of many of the recruitment and promotion activities.
- Management in many of the larger organisations and/or the movers and shakers of the region do not always respect the volunteering workforce overall and remain seeing it as gap filling rather than a valid workforce to integrate with paid workforces.
- There is no centralised bank of volunteering opportunities in the region which people can access to meet their need to volunteer. This unfortunately promotes volunteer leakage.
- The region is defined by its big 4 towns and their sub-regions, Echuca/Moama, Kyabram, Rochester and Rushworth and their respective catchments
- COVID has impacted the older volunteering age groups and there will be challenges in returning volunteer workforces to manage
- Agricultural issues were not significant in impacting volunteering rates
- Real opportunities exist to grow volunteering especially among younger people and as a succession plan for the continued delivery of services in the region.
- There is no “lightening rod” for volunteering in the region which ensures that volunteering is understood, promoted at all levels within community and government and is strategically co-ordinated to make best use of the human resources available.

The Campaspe Our Future 2015<sup>14</sup> report summed up the challenges and opportunities for the region which impact volunteering as:

- An ageing population and a younger population with a donut effect with other ages less representative. Some of this is seen in the population data above esp. the 25-34-year olds.
- A drain away of people of working age
- A homogenous community with little CALD representation but signs that it was growing
- A larger indigenous community
- Low education and income levels
- Workforce changes which may impact the current workforce profile with loss of manufacturing jobs and impact of AI and automation both in manufacturing and farming reducing the labour force requirements
- Changing skills patterns required for new employment opportunities.
- Health issues such as AOD issues in younger people, ageing related health issues and rates of family violence which can adversely impact community participation through volunteering.
- Increasing expectations of the community on Council for community facilities may not be able to be met as Council revenue reduces , seeing reduction in services potentially and user pays options being considered.
- Growth of tourism base
- Strong belief in the benefits of community, which is friendly, safe, healthy
- Strong appreciation for the quality of life that living in the region provides.

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<sup>14</sup> Campaspe Shire Council: Campaspe Our Future: Strategy for the future of our Community 2015

Volunteering is central to a community's social capital. Social capital is defined by the OECD as "networks together with shared norms, values and understandings that facilitate co-operation within or among groups". There are 3 types of social capital

1. Bonds: Links to people based on a sense of common identity ("people like us") – such as family, close friends and people who share our culture or ethnicity.
2. Bridges: Links that stretch beyond a shared sense of identity, for example to distant friends, colleagues and associates.
3. Linkages: Links to people or groups further up or lower down the social ladder.

Social capital is the very thing that Campaspe residents' value, that sense of community, involvement with others and sharing to build community.

The region is not taking advantage of volunteering as a clear pathway to build this social capital as the foundation for its future economic and social development.

## VOLUNTEERING , THE VRS AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

The recently released Social Inclusion Framework 2020<sup>15</sup> provides sound evidence of the links between volunteering and social inclusion. Social inclusion is defined as per the Commonwealth Social Inclusion Board's original definition:

*Being Socially Included Means That People Have The Resources, Opportunities And Capabilities They Need To:*

- **Learn** -participate in education and training
- **Work**- participate in employment, unpaid or voluntary work including family and carer responsibilities
- **Engage** -connect with people, use local services and participate in local, cultural, civic and recreational activities
- **Have a Voice**- influence decisions that affect them

Volunteering promotes and builds social inclusion by enabling people to engage within their communities and participate in civic life. It prepares people for employment and significantly impacts people's confidence to have a voice.

The framework notes *the context for the importance of social inclusion as a priority for health is highlighted by the 2008 report from the World Health Organisation Commission on Social Determinants of Health. This report states that "being included in the society in which one lives is vital to the material, psychosocial and political empowerment that underpins social wellbeing and equitable health" (page 18).*

The Framework identifies that in order to Learn, Work, Engage and Have Voice people need to have:

- **Resources**- good health , transport ,safe environment , housing , adequate income , urban design . social infrastructure , community facilities

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<sup>15</sup> Inner East Primary Care Partnership Social Inclusion Framework 2020

- **Opportunities**- freedom from discrimination eg. based on gender, race, ability, age, faith, sexuality , options, a variety of means , accessibility
- **Capabilities** -freedom to choose , physical capacity , emotional capacity , self respect , adequate nutrition

A Volunteer Resource Service in Campaspe will be a significant contributor to building social inclusion and connection through providing the resources and opportunities for volunteering for people of all capabilities. It will be the lighting rod for inclusive volunteering for people with barriers to community connection and participation. It will assist organisations and community groups to open up opportunities for all the community who want to volunteer and will assist and support them to provide the right opportunities to meet the way people want to volunteer and for the way services need to be delivered. The hub and spoke model provides these opportunities in an accessible way within townships and their catchments. Volunteering builds self respect.

## THE ECONOMIC VALUE OF VOLUNTEERING FOR CAMPASPE MURRAY RIVER REGION

Campaspe makes up 0.6 % of the Victorian population in 2019. The gross regional product is estimated at \$1.99 billion, which represents 0.44% of the state's GSP (Gross State Product).<sup>16</sup> Its largest industry is healthcare and social assistance, an industry reliant on a paid and volunteer workforce mix. It has 4223 businesses and 18400 local jobs. 80% of local workers live in the area. Campaspe's market profile states: *The people who live in an area are one of the most important resources that an economy draws upon, both as a market that consumes goods and services and as a source of labour.* This labour needs to be seen as both paid and volunteer workforces.

Campaspe has a SEIFA index of 967 and an IRSAD rating of 943 which is in the second category of ratings identifying a significant level of disadvantage for the region commensurate with its regional neighbours. In 2016 Moama had the lowest level of disadvantage for the region. Within the region Echuca was the least disadvantaged town with Kyabram having the larger levels of disadvantage. The differences were however very small in nature.<sup>17</sup>

## SO, WHAT DOES THIS TELL US ABOUT THE POTENTIAL ECONOMIC VALUE OF VOLUNTEERING?

Campaspe's volunteer workforce is ill defined as it has not received the attention it requires regarding its economic contribution to the region. If we take the estimated average rate of volunteering as 25.1% and exclude residents under 15 years of age, then 30990 residents could potentially volunteer. On average therefore 7778 people are volunteering with potential for 13047 to volunteer if Campaspe reached the 42.1% volunteering rate of Victoria. Given 2.3million people volunteer in Victoria Campaspe currently has 0.3% of this population with room to improve this to the state average and represent 0.6% of the state's volunteering population.

The table below takes the economic figures from the State of Volunteering in Victoria and applies it to the regional economic contribution of volunteers currently [0.3%] and potentially [0.6%] should the state average be reached. It is a proxy guide to the potential economic value of volunteering in the region and in no way represents economic modelling , as this is too costly.

<sup>16</sup> <http://economy.id.com.au/campaspe>

<sup>17</sup> <https://profile.id.com.au/campaspe/seifa-?SeifaKey=40004>

Table 6: Economic profile of volunteering in Campaspe

Economic indicator used in State of Volunteering in Victoria Report	Current 0.3%	Potential 0.6%
<b>Overall economic contribution</b>	\$1,743,000,000	\$3,486,000,000
<b>Commercial Benefit</b>	\$954,000,000	\$1,908,000,000
<b>Civic Benefit</b>	\$78,900,000	\$157,800,000
<b>Gross Value Add to gross regional product</b>	\$246,000,000	\$492,000,000
<b>Producers surplus</b>	\$36,000,000	\$72,000,000
<b>Productivity Premium</b>	\$915 million	\$1,830,000,000
<b>Wage Benefit</b>	\$150,000,000	\$300,000,000
<b>Tax Revenue</b>	\$57,000,000	\$114,000,000

Volunteering is of significant economic value to the Campaspe Murray River region and is undervalued in its management, in policy and economic development. Volunteering’s potential economic contribution of \$3.48billion to the region is 27% greater than the current \$1.99 billion gross regional product with a gross value add currently to the GRP of \$246 million.

## HOW TO INFLUENCE RATES OF VOLUNTEERING

In order to grow the base of volunteering and therefore the strength and capacity of its communities the region needs to:

- Have leadership in volunteering which promotes at all levels the value of volunteering, strategically takes advantage of this value and centralises the pathways into volunteering for people of all ages and abilities.
- Locate volunteering in key policy, economic development and social services strategies
- Change the public face of volunteering from a little old tea lady in a hospital to recognising the diversity of volunteers already in the community and the support that can be offered to volunteers and community organisations and groups who need them as a workforce. VVN has been a real benefit to the community in this endeavour.
- Provide opportunities which meet how people want to volunteer and provide more diverse opportunities to attract a more diverse volunteer workforce.
- Think more broadly: Management and volunteer managers/co-ordinators need support to think and act more broadly with their volunteer workforces particularly post COVID and wherever possible manage them in an integrated way with paid workforces.
- Diversify who benefits from volunteer workforces-look strategically at where volunteers can value add across the spectrum of life in the region. Don’t let it just happen in an ad hoc way.
- Engage young people in volunteering as an employment pathway. There are enormous opportunities for young people to gain valuable employment skills and competencies from a young age through formalised, conscious and conscientious volunteering.
- Support organisations and community groups to increase their inclusive volunteering opportunities especially in the delivery of community and health services.

- Harness the localised volunteering around the four main towns as hubs to reflect how people currently volunteer and how they can afford to volunteer.
- Focus on how tourism volunteering is being co-ordinated and strategically harnessed across the region and where volunteers can value add to the tourism industry.
- Stop operating in silos which duplicate a range of volunteer recruitment, promotion and support activities.
- Utilise existing community connectors and local community organisations to promote place-based volunteering.
- Engage and enthuse those population groups who have not had the best experience of engaging with or participating in community and support them into meaningful volunteering.
- Utilise volunteering as pathways to reskill for new employment opportunities
- Ensure volunteer workforces remain agile and flexible in what and how they operate
- Build the recognition of a regional culture of volunteering, measure and celebrate it as it will bring people to communities.
- Engage towns in becoming aware of their volunteering rates and celebrate them
- Develop localised models of volunteering for succession and renewal in each key township.

## THE MODEL OF A VOLUNTEER RESOURCE SERVICE

Given the localised nature of volunteering in Campaspe, the socio-economic profile of the communities and the existing levels of informal volunteering a hub and spoke model is considered appropriate for the region. This model takes advantage of the unconnected volunteering already occurring in local towns and harnesses that existing energy and enthusiasm to grow volunteering in a formal way and support and strengthen its management at the local level.

There is also a need for a three-tiered approach to be taken to strengthen the strategic use of volunteer workforces within the region. These workforces provide much needed community services:-

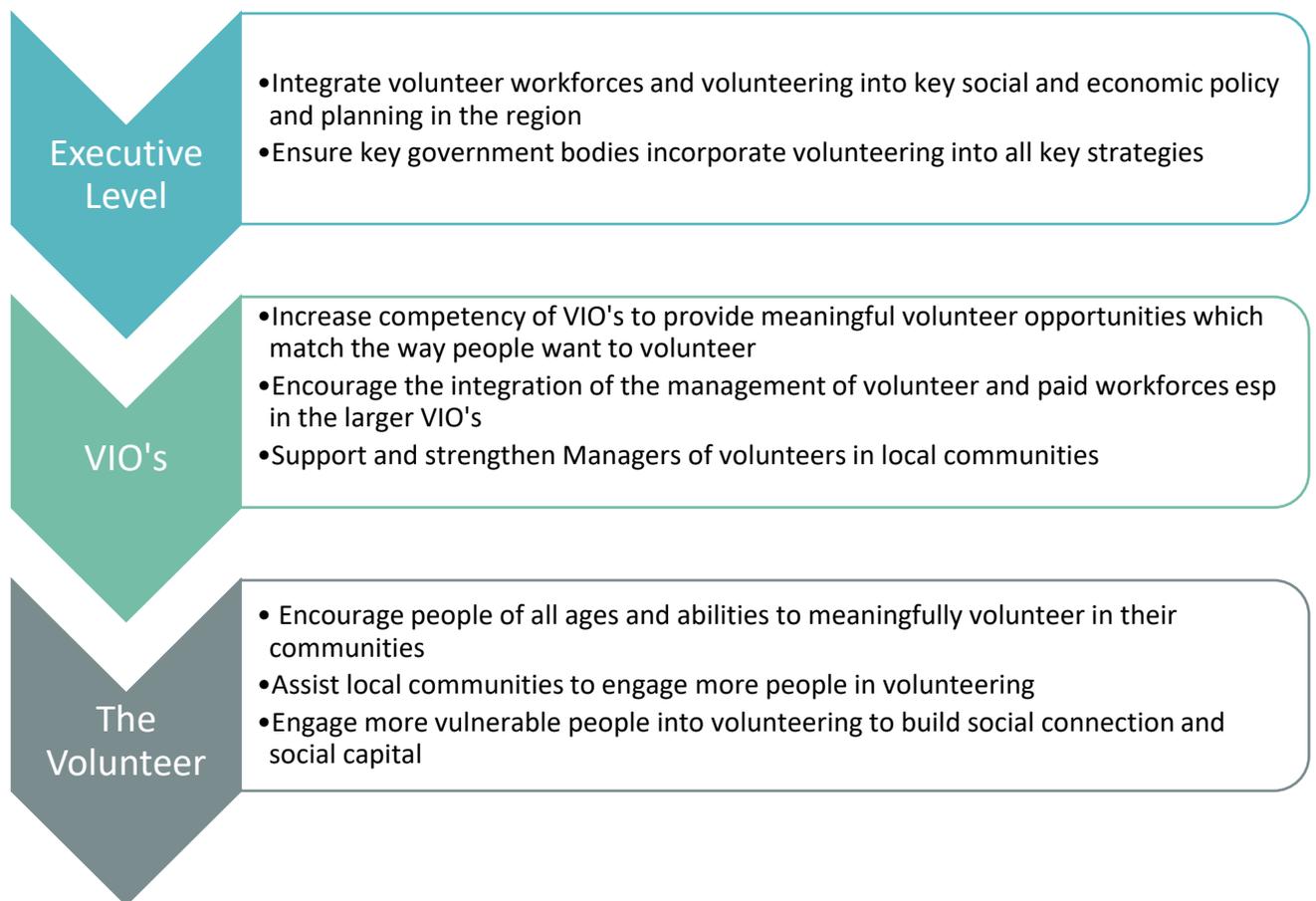


Figure 6: Three levels of operation of the Volunteer Resource Service

A Volunteer Resource Service hub needs to be located in Echuca with an establishment period of 6-12 months before adding the spokes. Township based VRS's should exist in Kyabram, Rochester and Rushworth servicing the township and their respective catchments. These township based VRS's would be supported out of Echuca and consist of part time community development workers charged with the role of engaging and bringing together the existing volunteering efforts in each community and building this into a formalised system of volunteering for those towns and surrounding communities. These workers should preferably be recruited from within those communities and trained and supported through the hub. This will provide for strategic use of people who want to volunteer and the development of meaningful opportunities locally so people can find the right opportunity for them and services can be expanded or strengthened.

Each township based VRS would incorporate:

- Volunteering strategy and plan for the township
- Co-ordinating mechanism developed with the community and managed by the VRS
- Training and support strategy
- Matching and placement services through volunteer connector teams and champions in each township. Volunteer Connectors are volunteers themselves trained and supervised to screen and assist people to identify the right volunteer opportunities for them and match them to what is available in their catchment regions. This work can intensify where there are

barriers to participating in community such as language or disability issues which require additional support to be in place within organisations.

- Promotion of volunteering through Volunteer champions
- Involvement in emergency management plans for the townships

The Echuca Hub VRS would provide the same roles as the township based VRS's for the Echuca/Moama community and in addition have a EO who could operate at executive level within the region to embed volunteering in population level strategies for key systems including local government, health, economic development, sporting and leisure and tourism systems. The Murray River region would need to invest in the model to provide a worker for Mathoura.

The Echuca hub would be accessible and contain:

- Drop in facilities to interview prospective volunteers as well as self-help computer access to search for opportunities.
- Administrative areas for volunteer and paid VRS staff
- Current IT and communications capacity
- Training facility
- WeVolunteer for credentialing
- Centralised databank of volunteering opportunities which can be accessed across the region. The VRS can utilise VIKTOR as the databank but also assist VIO's and volunteers to utilise SEEK Volunteer more broadly. Currently there are few opportunities on SEEK Volunteering in the Campaspe region.

The hub could be co located with other services but should be visible within the town square area of Echuca.

The VRS would be an independent Association with a Board of Governance. It is particularly important that the VRS is seen as a non-aligned entity servicing all organisations and community groups equitably across diverse sectors and not aligned with any particular sector eg aged care, tourism, local government. It is an independent hub of expertise on volunteering. This does not however preclude it being co located in townships with key services such as a Council service centre or neighbourhood house. The VRS must build its own brand. It is ideal that the township VRS services be supported by the decision makers and leaders of that township.

The VRS must apply for charitable status with the Australian Charities and Not for Profit Commission [ACNC] in order to offer attractive packaging for staff. An Association should be formed prior to VRS funding to establish the governance foundation for the VRS and to make application for funding. Auspice arrangement could also be put in place in the interim with an MOU that if funded the VRS would become its own Incorporated Association within 6 months and the funding transitioned across. This should always be acknowledged in any funding application if this is the option taken. A leadership group should form in early 2021 to guide the preparatory work for this to occur. This is particularly important given the Primary Care Partnership's future is unclear as is VMA funding from the Commonwealth. The Campaspe Murray River VVN supported by a backbone organisation would be ideal for this.

## INVESTMENT IN A VOLUNTEER RESOURCE SERVICE

Table 7: Investment Profile for VRS

Item	Description	Investment per annum	Options	Potential Offset of costs
Executive Officer	3-day week position \$125,000 pro rata contract	\$75,000	To attract a senior executive 4 days may need to be offered at an additional \$25,000	
4 VRS community development workers	10 hours a week @ SCHADS Award Level 7 Pay Point 1 Community Development classification \$49.50 per hour	\$102,960	These could be offered as 2 roles if that assists with recruitment  Increments need to be factored into the funding budget to take them to pay point 3	
On Costs 18%		\$ 32,033	Adjust as increments are paid annually	
Hub Rental	Echuca Hub	\$ 30,000	Small office space in Echuca was priced between \$18,000 and \$30,000.	Co-location in Council Service centre reduce this to below \$10,000
Home based utilities contribution	Annual rate for Community Development workers working from home to cover home work office \$10 per week per community development worker	\$2,080		Co-Location in a township organisation with peppercorn or no overhead cost
Travel	Community Development workers use own cars @ reimbursement rate of .72cents per km. 10,000 kms per CD worker per annum or 208 kms per week for 48 weeks.  \$2000 EO travel	\$30,800		
Consumables	Stationary, office supplies, health and safety PPE/Infection Control,	\$5000		

Item	Description	Investment per annum	Options	Potential Offset of costs
Telephone		\$12,000		
Printing	Including photocopier lease and usage charges	\$8,000		
Marketing	Collateral production, advertising	\$ 3,000		
Volunteer Reimbursements	\$ 2.50 per VRS volunteer hour for 10,400 hours per annum or 5 hours per volunteer per week for 20 VRS volunteers per week	\$13,000		
Volunteer Credentialing	VRS volunteers @ \$25 per volunteer for 50 volunteers per annum	\$1,250		
Online and other subscriptions	Zoom,issuu and VV subscriptions	\$ 2000		
Bookkeeping	would be outsourced on a 2-3-year contract \$90 an hour for 2 hrs week including full preparation of Board financial reports	\$9360		
Volunteer Events	Local expo's, annual volunteer promotional event	\$5,000		
IT maintenance and contracts	Annual IT contract	\$5,000		
Audit and Bank Fees		\$ 4,500		
Staff training and development		\$ 3,000		
Assets purchased < \$5000		\$ 2,000		
Utilities		\$ 3,500		
Training Workshop Costs		\$15,000		
<b>Total Per Annum Investment</b>		<b>\$364,483</b>	Plus, salary increments and additional on costs over 3-4 years	<b>\$ 330,403</b>
<b>ESTABLISHMENT COST</b>				
Hub Fit out	IT and office fit out for office, interview and training room	\$25,000	One off cost	Offset with co-location
Establishment costs for community development workers	Laptop Mobile Phone	\$8000	One off cost	
<b>One Off Establishment Costs</b>		<b>\$33,000</b>		<b>0</b>

## FUNDING OPTIONS

There are a number of government funding options which could assist the VVN to obtain a Campaspe Murray River VRS.

The Victorian government is embarking on a Victorian Volunteering Strategy with an expectation that funding will be released post 2022. The Victorian government at this stage has committed to place-based Volunteer Support Organisations and the roles of these place-based resources will be developed with the Ministerial Taskforce and all stakeholders. This offers the VVN a prime opportunity to look to beyond 2022 for a VRS style VSO utilising the service model and costings within this business case. This funding is considered more reliable than Commonwealth investment at this point in time.

Campaspe Council is renewing many of its plans and it is now time to ensure volunteering strategies are incorporated into social, economic and Health and Wellbeing plans at minimum.

The Commonwealth has undertaken an evaluation of its Volunteer Management Activity and was committed to consultation with the sector to redesign this stream. Consultation has been halted by COVID and the temperature for reinvigorating this is not known at this stage. If it occurs it will be in 2021. The VMA Consultants Report whilst based on poor evidence recommended VRS's be reduced to 20 across Australia with funding of \$120,000 as the Commonwealth was not growing the pie. This has been disputed heavily and the future of VMA is unknown especially given the impact of COVID. It is unlikely without significant additional investment from the Commonwealth that any VMA funding would provide viable and sufficient funding for a VRS. It may be sufficient to fund one hub but certainly no spokes. VVN should position to apply for one of the VRS hubs with a view to establishing it in Echuca for the north west or north central regions of Victoria. This would not be ideal however it could form the basis for service expansion post 2022 through a mix of state and Commonwealth funding.

VVN could investigate philanthropic or corporate funding for a start-up using volunteering as the basis for building community capacity and social capital post COVID. These grants can be accessed at Our Community Funding Centre and is worth the investment of time to assess the usefulness of these. To access the level of start-up funds required VVN would need to find an auspice organisation with Public Benevolent Institution status and will need to approach potential funders to pitch their plan. VVN would be more successful in pitching a start-up VRS hub in Echuca and applying for \$100,000 with a view to build the spokes in later years with other funding sources. To fund the whole model a local corporate would be the most likely to invest in this for a start-up period of 3 years.

Key areas to scope would be philanthropic funders interested in:

- COVID Recovery funding with focus on volunteering to return people to community and build social inclusion and connection.
- Youth unemployment- using volunteering as an employment pathway
- Community connection and strengthening especially post COVID
- Regional Victoria focussed funding streams e.g. RRR
- Economic development

- COVID recovery funding where volunteering as a reskilling or employment pathway can be focussed upon
- Disaster or Community Recovery using volunteering to re-engage people with community-in partnership with local government
- Tourism funding

The VVN at minimum needs to get volunteering into key strategy documents especially at the local government level. Volunteering should be central to economic development plans, emergency management plans, tourism strategy, Health and Wellbeing Plans and many of the state government’s outcomes frameworks.

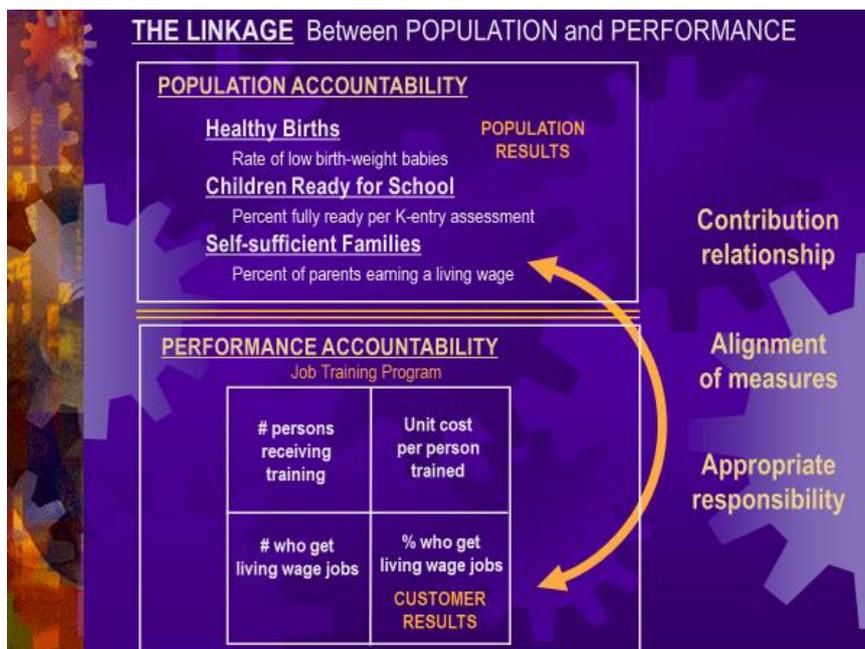
It would assist the VVN to articulate the contribution of volunteering to the Victorian Outcomes Frameworks articulated in its Outcomes Reform in

Victoria <https://www.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-02/Outcomes-reform-statement.PDF> with a keen focus on :

- Disability Outcomes Framework
- Mental Health Framework
- Public Health and Wellbeing Framework
- Primary Prevention
- Community Resilience
- Aboriginal People

This will prepare the VVN for funding streams arising in any of these areas.

Using Results Based Accountability™ methodology VVN has developed its strategic plan and outcomes framework. From this it can articulate its contribution to the population outcomes frameworks which the Victorian government and its departments are developing<sup>18</sup>:



<sup>18</sup> <http://resultsaccountability.com/results-based-accountability-101-2013-slides/>

Should the VVN need to apply for funding in parts then it should stage the introduction with clarity of the costs of each component of the model:

#### HUB COSTS:

These costs define the hub only and not the cost of the Echuca VRS service delivery. Items which contribute to the infrastructure of a Volunteer Resource Service have been included here.

Table 8: Hub Unit Cost

Item	Cost	Potential Offset
<b>Executive Officer plus on costs</b>	\$88 500	none
<b>Rental</b>	\$30,000	Co-Location- could reduce this from 0 to \$10,000 per annum
<b>Marketing</b>	\$ 3,000	
<b>Bookkeeping</b>	\$ 9,360	
<b>Travel</b>	\$ 2,000	
<b>Consumables- 1/5 of overall budget</b>	\$ 1,000	
<b>Telephone-1/5 cost</b>	\$ 2,400	
<b>Volunteer Events</b>	\$ 5,000	Reduced with grant funds
<b>Printing</b>	\$ 8,000	
<b>IT maintenance and contracts</b>	\$ 5,000	
<b>Audit and Bank Fees</b>	\$ 4,500	
<b>Staff training and development</b>	\$ 3,000	
<b>Assets purchased &lt; \$5000</b>	\$ 2,000	
<b>Utilities</b>	\$ 3,500	
<b>Training Workshop Costs</b>	\$15,000	Offset by user pays
<b>Online subscriptions</b>	\$ 2,000	
<b>Total per annum investment</b>	<b>\$184 260</b>	
<b>One off establishment cost</b>	\$33,000	Can be offset through co location

#### TOWNSHIP AND CATCHMENT BASED VOLUNTEER RESOURCE SERVICES: UNIT COST PER SITE

As described these township based Volunteer Resource Services would be located in Echuca/Moama, Rushworth and catchment, Kyabram and catchment and Rochester and catchment. This is the service delivery arms focussed in individuals wishing to volunteer and the support and strengthening of organisations and community groups utilising volunteer workforces.

Table 9: VRS site unit cost

Item	Cost	Potential Offset
<b>VRS community worker plus on costs</b>	\$30,373	
<b>Home based work contribution</b>	\$ 520	Offset by co location
<b>Travel</b>	\$ 7,200	
<b>Consumables</b>	\$ 1,000	
<b>Telephone</b>	\$ 2,400	
<b>Volunteer Reimbursement</b>	\$ 3,250	
<b>Volunteer Credentialling</b>	\$ 313	
<b>Total per annum</b>	<b>\$ 45,056</b>	

## STAGED FUNDING

The funding could be staged should insufficient funding be available however this is not ideal as it introduces immediate inequity in the access to VRS support for townships and catchments outside of Echuca/Moama. Funding can be offset through strong partnerships with large community organisations such as local government or health where some of the infrastructure costs can be absorbed by those organisations and defrayed from the Hub.

Suggested staging is [ excluding one off costs]

Table 10: Staged Funding

Stage	Funding For	Cost
1	<b>Hub and 1 VRS site</b>	<b>\$229,316</b>
2	<b>Extend 1 VRS site</b>	<b>\$274,372</b>
3	<b>Extend 1 VRS site</b>	<b>\$319,428</b>
4	<b>Finalise to 4 VRS sites</b>	<b>\$364,484</b>

It is critical to understand that individual sites cannot exist without the infrastructure provided by the Echuca hub.