The Salvation Army
Australia Southern Territory

TSA Volunteer Engagement Blueprint


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TSA VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT BLUE PRINT

A strategic plan for the development and delivery of contemporary and relevant Volunteer Management practices, policies, processes and materials that assist in achieving the Territory’s Mission.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this document and appendixes is to inform and transform the current volunteer engagement across the Southern Territory from a reactive model to one of considered inclusion.

The Salvation Army Australia Southern Territory (AUS) volunteer engagement and management is segregated into different areas of the Army with inconsistent policies, procedures and materials. There are significant lost opportunities and risks presented without a well-articulated overarching strategy and structure to resource, establish and maintain volunteer management best practice. The present roles and resources of state volunteer coordinators are limited. This affects their ability to resource and influence the level of professionalism in volunteer engagement to match the community expectations and legislative requirements.

BACKGROUND

Up until recently there has not been a dedicated Territorial resource to oversee the engagement of volunteers with only some States with a part time volunteer coordinator. In addition, the Victorian Volunteer Coordinator (PT) reported to different departments over the 8 year period. With the replacement and upgrade of this role to Territorial (includes Victorian accountability) position (FT) there continues to be debate on where volunteer management should sit within the organisation. This vacillation is not uncommon within charity circles and is discussed at volunteer management conferences and network meetings. The effect of this uncertainty has negative consequences on the resourcing and placement of the area. It is commonly agreed the volunteer management is best placed when reporting to either the CEO or COO to position and develop a fully integrated and inclusive volunteer engagement model. For The Salvation Army it is not evident within the existing organisational structure.
whether this is viable. The main consideration is that the needs and benefits of volunteer engagement are realised across all business areas: Personnel, Programmes and Business (including Salvo Stores and Employment Plus).

**HIGH LEVEL OBSERVATIONS**

Since starting on the 21 January 2013 the newly appointed Territorial/Victorian Volunteer Coordinator has assessed the existing resources, policies and practices. This has incorporated reviewing the existing material and tools plus meeting many key stakeholders across the Territory via phone and face to face meetings. There is consensus across the Territory, volunteer engagement has not been given the resources or mandate to provide the framework needed by those on the frontline. To date there has not been any resistance or lack of openness to improve on how volunteers are involved, in fact there is a keenness for Territorial guidelines/ minutes and materials to be provided. Community support centers and corps are keen to have a framework to follow to ensure they are not putting their clients, volunteers, corps members, the organisation, or themselves at risk.

The Territorial/Victorian Volunteer Coordinator has rated the volunteer engagement performance within TSA AUS as unacceptable. On a rating scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is non-existent to 10 which is best practice imaginable, TSA AUS is assessed as no greater than 2. There are some champions amongst the social programs and corps, but given the poor infrastructure and materials provided, the score would lift to 5, largely based on their openness and inclusive approach to volunteer engagement. A significant number of Volunteer Engagement related practices, policies, procedures, systems and tools do not exist. Many of those that do exist are ‘broken or blunt’ or do not work effectively and or efficiently due to the inadequacy of their design, currency and or usage. TSA AUS carries significant ongoing exposure to risks associated with poor volunteer management practice including but not limited to:

1) Integrity checks

- There is no Territory minute or framework on which volunteer roles require integrity checks. Stakeholders guided by State legislation only.
- Some corps officers not willing to undergo integrity checks
- Low compliance in recording volunteer details on existing Volunteer Management System (VMS).
- For those recorded on the VMS there is no ability to produce reports or integrity check renewal dates.
• Not able to locate volunteers when receive subpoena or more importantly a negative WWC etc.

II) Accreditation for Government funding and applications for grants & foundations

• Accreditation requires documentation of volunteer records and engagement, non-compliance can effect ongoing funding. Limited to no appropriate screening (to include: interview, assessment in some cases, reference checks outside of police/working with children – although undertaken by some parts of the organisation)
• THQ, Divisional & State knowledge of volunteer records are limited and incomplete - Limited or no role profiles, expectations and performance management process articulated

III) Reputation

• Not able to meet expectations from individuals regarding their interest to volunteer with the Salvation Army – many people register on our online volunteer system but do not receive contact from TSA
• No framework around corporate volunteer or other volunteer engagement programs. Lost opportunity to partner and influence various groups of people.
• Limited information to prospective volunteers – ie role profiles, information sessions, process of recruitment

IV) Industrial relations

• Some volunteers engaged in roles identical to paid roles. Many volunteer roles are not documented in a formal role profile document whereas others use the same format as paid roles.

V) Volunteer, Client and Organisational Safety

• OH&S induction and training limited & available material (if used) not viable. Limited circulation of sub-standard volunteer handbook. No or limited documented, developed and implemented training for volunteers on their specific role. Training is generally on the job, although in some quarters (ie Tasmania) training is provided to volunteers who assist with the Doorway program.

VI) Inability to measure volunteer contribution – numbers, length of service, hours given

• Inability to provide measurements on the number of volunteers for annual reporting and to calculate the hours and financial value of TSA volunteers. This is due to the limited usage of the current Volunteer Management System and/or keeping it up to date. Presently
the VMS has a recording of 2,643 volunteers assigned to a specific role across the Southern Territory which is agreed is not a true reflection of the actual.

PRESENT OPPORTUNITIES NOT FULLY REALISED:

There is an appreciation in the Australian community Not for Profit organisations require assistance to achieve the good work they do in the community. This assistance can come in different forms; financial, supporting the views and positions of the organisation (advocacy) and getting directly involved through volunteering. Australia continues to have a high participation rate with 36% of people report they volunteer in some capacity each year. Listed below are the reasons why it is an imperative for TSA to partner with members of the Australian community and why we need to be intentional and professional:

• Reflects and reinforces the central place TSA has in the community to help those in need

• To produce evidence of the esteem the community has on the work of TSA to give them opportunity to make a difference

• Provide TSA the opportunity to shape and influence thousands of every-day people and those with significant influence on the mission and vision of The Salvation Army.

• To shape the future social and welfare workers, counselors and other people helping professions through high quality work placement and work experience programs. These students may be our future advocates, officers, employees, donors, bequests

• Provide more clients and others with a sense of well-being that there are people who want to help them without financial gain

• Inspire paid staff to do better and give more

• Provide a human resource beyond paid staff and expand the services we can provide the community
• To communicate to our volunteers to inform, educate and engage in other volunteer or community opportunities.

• To have the opportunity to build a sense of corporate belonging and appreciation for their services through an implemented retention and recognition strategy.

• Report on volunteer statistics to assist in the application for funding and grants demonstrating value for money to extend service delivery of the money granted (seen as value for money)

• Provide staff the opportunity to achieve goals beyond their own personal resources - due to lack of time or skill. If done well, it relieves pressure and stress in sharing the work and emotional burden

RECOMMENDATIONS:

There are many reasons for TSA to develop a sophisticated and strategic approach to volunteer engagement. The external pressures of legislation and reputation should stimulate the need to invest. Hopefully though, it is the missed opportunities identified above that inspire and encourage us to invest the time and resources to secure TSA as future leaders in volunteer engagement. In doing so, we secure the place of The Salvation Army in the community as Christ’s message of hope.

Appendix 1 outlines the key areas of concern and documents the risks and their significance from a legislative, reputation and resource management perspective. Projects are identified and a suggested rating on their priority.

Appendix 2 outlines the functionality of the existing Volunteer Management System (VMS) and compares it to Volunteer Squared (V2), the VMS system adopted and rolled out by Salvo Stores in March this year. It is apparent on reading this document the existing tools are outdated and do not reflect the organisation effectively externally or meet the needs of the organisation internally.