BACKGROUND

The Economic Value of Volunteering in South Australia report (Ironmonger 2011) estimated that volunteering is worth more than $4.9 billion annually to the South Australian economy. Using this figure it has been estimated that people who volunteer in the City of Tea Tree Gully contribute well over $355 million annually to the local economy through their efforts.

AIM OF THIS STRATEGY

This strategy outlines our vision for volunteering in the City of Tea Tree Gully over the next five years. Its purpose is to guide our own volunteering activities and how we can support volunteering in the wider community during this period.
WHY HAVE A VOLUNTEER STRATEGY?

Anecdotally we know that our City’s residents are engaged in many and varied volunteer activities that make an invaluable contribution to our community.

We are committed to encouraging, supporting and recognising the importance of volunteering in our local community. Besides having economic value, volunteering gives people a way to connect with and help others in their local community.

Having a Volunteer Strategy means we can:

• Respond to new and emerging trends around volunteering
• Identify future opportunities for volunteering across Council
• Make sure we have relevant systems and processes in place to respond to the needs of the community
• Promote best practice in volunteering.
Alignment with federal and state government volunteer strategies
In recent years, the federal and state governments have developed their own volunteer strategies. Both strategies highlight the important role that all levels of government have in developing and supporting the volunteer sector.

**Australian Government context**

The National Volunteering Strategy is a call to action for governments, business, not-for-profit organisations and the Australian community. It recognises that creating and sustaining a stronger volunteering sector will require a whole-of-sector effort. The strategy explores emerging issues and challenges for the volunteering sector and provides a set of strategic directions to address them. These include:

- Responding to trends that are changing the way people volunteer
- Harnessing information technology
- Reducing the complexity of regulation and risk management requirements
- Strengthening volunteer management and training
- Improving advocacy for the sector
- Increasing the recognition of volunteers.

**State Government context**

Working in partnership, Volunteering SA/NT, the State Government, the Local Government Association and Business SA recently developed the Volunteering Strategy for South Australia in response to the National Volunteering Strategy. This strategy explores the national directions and suggests the following focus areas for strengthening volunteering within the state:

- Investing in foundations of volunteering
- Promoting the benefits of volunteering
- Using best practice and high quality standards
- Continually looking at ways to improve volunteering.
DOCUMENTS THAT SUPPORT THIS STRATEGY

**Strategic Plan 2011–2015**

This strategy supports many of the objectives of our Strategic Plan, particularly strategic objective 8:

8. Foster family and community development

8.1 Offer a diverse range of community programs, service and events that meet changing needs and create a sense of community.

8.1.4 Build social connections and community strength and capacity through volunteering, community based social activities, events and support programs.

The Volunteer Strategy identifies how volunteering can help us to achieve this objective.

**Ageing Strategy 2010–2015**

Our Ageing Strategy has shown that older people are increasingly interested in volunteering that allows them to pursue their own passions and interests while helping others at the same time.

To make the most of this trend, we need to align our volunteer opportunities with the motivations and interests of this demographic.
STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT
A critical element in developing this strategy was consulting volunteers themselves. We surveyed and spoke with current and potential volunteers to find out what they wanted to gain from volunteering and how our program could best match these needs.

Through the community engagement we sought to:

1. Identify what current volunteers and potential volunteers are seeking from participating in a volunteer program including:
   • Types of programs of interest to volunteers
   • Desired frequency for volunteering
   • Barriers that prevent people from volunteering
   • Explore the possibilities of overcoming those barriers
   • Look at how best to use volunteer skills and experience
   • Possible future linkages and partnerships for development.

2. Identify opportunities to improve our volunteers’ experience and increase volunteer participation at Council.

Current and potential volunteers were invited to participate in a range of activities. This included an online community survey, focus groups with current volunteers and a number of one-on-one interviews. In total 186 people participated in the engagement process.
We learned from the engagement process there is often disconnect between what people are seeking or motivated by when offering to volunteer their time and what is offered by us and other organisations. In particular, it was evident that our volunteer opportunities need to adapt to make sure they closely align with volunteer needs and motivations.

The community engagement process highlighted the following opportunities for consideration:

1. Matching volunteer needs and motivations to our volunteer opportunities

   This includes the need for volunteer opportunities that:
   • Are short term or one-off
   • Allow volunteers to use their interests and hobbies
   • Give volunteers transferable skills.
2. Increased promotion and clearer communication about available volunteer opportunities

3. Well trained and skilled staff in managing volunteers.
Vision for volunteering

Strengthening our community by inspiring, valuing and celebrating volunteering.

Strategic objectives
To achieve this vision the following strategic objectives have been developed:

- Valuing and recognising the contribution of volunteers across the community
- Meeting volunteer skills and motivations through tailored volunteer opportunities
- Linking people to volunteer opportunities throughout the City of Tea Tree Gully
- Increasing the skills and experience of young people through volunteering
- Providing volunteering opportunities for people from diverse backgrounds and with special needs
- Supporting volunteers by increasing capacity of City of Tea Tree Gully staff

Volunteer strategic objectives

Objective 1 – Valuing and recognising the contribution of volunteers across the community
We recognise the importance of promoting the achievements and contributions volunteers make to our local community. Active recognition and promotion of volunteer achievement is vital to keeping volunteers engaged. Volunteer management best practice suggests that any recognition of volunteers needs to be tailored to meet individual needs.
Objective 2 – Meeting volunteer skills and motivations through tailored volunteer opportunities

People wanting to volunteer are often seeking roles that are flexible and they are motivated by positions that use their interests, skills and abilities.

By adopting a more planned approach to identifying opportunities volunteers can be engaged with, we can also develop relevant recruitment strategies.

Objective 3 – Linking people to volunteer opportunities throughout the City of Tea Tree Gully

We will work with community organisations in the areas of recruitment and promotion of their volunteering opportunities. We will develop a more formal arrangement for referring potential volunteers to other agencies seeking volunteers.

Objective 4 – Increasing skills and experience of young people through volunteering

Young people generally have different interests and expectations of their volunteer experience from those of older volunteers. Volunteering is an important way for young people to develop their skills and experience to assist in future employment. By developing strategies to engage young people’s different interests and expectations, we can grow the number of volunteers from this age group.

Objective 5 – Providing volunteering opportunities for people from diverse backgrounds and with special needs

In order to make our community more inclusive, we aim to provide volunteer opportunities to people from all different backgrounds and abilities. This will include developing practices to increase the number of people volunteering and have a disability or are from a non-English speaking background.

Objective 6 – Supporting volunteers by increasing capacity of City of Tea Tree Gully staff

Providing volunteer training and support to staff that coordinate volunteer programs will lead to better volunteer management practices and, ultimately, contribute to greater volunteer satisfaction.

Volunteering Australia’s National Standards for Involving Volunteers in Not-for-Profit Organisations provides a framework around best practices in volunteer management. As a supporter of best practice in volunteer management, we will implement and review our practices regularly to make sure they are in line with these national standards.
We will monitor and report on the Volunteer Strategy by:

• Developing an action plan that outlines the role of responsible Council staff in achieving the strategy’s objectives

• Establishing a volunteer reference group to provide advice and monitor progress against the strategy’s action plan. This group will meet at least twice yearly and will consist of staff, current council volunteers and volunteers from community organisations.

Our methods of reporting will include:

• An annual report to Council, detailing achievements of the Volunteer Strategy

• An annual forum to report to Council’s volunteers.
REFERENCES

Ageing Strategy 2010–2015
(City of Tea Tree Gully, 2010)

National Standards for Involving Volunteers in Not-for-Profit Organisations
(Volunteering Australia Inc., 2001)

National Volunteering Strategy
(Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2011)

Strategic Plan 2011–2015
(City of Tea Tree Gully, 2011)

The Economic Value of Volunteering in South Australia
(Duncan Ironmonger, 2011)

Volunteering Strategy for South Australia 2014–2020
(Volunteering SA/NT, Office for Volunteers, Business SA and Local Government Association of SA, 2014)

City of Tea Tree Gully Volunteer Survey Report 2013
(City of Tea Tree Gully, 2013)