MEDIA RELEASE – COVID-19 SURVEY RESULTS – 11 MAY 2020

SPOTLIGHT ON VOLUNTEERS IN SHUTDOWN

More than seventy per cent of organisations in the Canberra region that involve volunteers in their programs have stood down volunteers during the last eight weeks, according to the results of a survey of members of the peak body VolunteeringACT.

Canberra normally has one of the highest rates of volunteering in Australia, with four in ten people volunteering.

However, CEO of VolunteeringACT, Vicky Darling, said that most volunteering programs in community services, environment, sport, education and the arts have now been suspended.

In the lead up to National Volunteer Week, which runs from 18 to 24 May 2020, VolunteeringACT is shining a light on the enormous silent workforce of volunteers and encouraging others to show their appreciation of volunteers.

“While getting people back into paid employment is an essential priority for government and community, it’s important to recognise the impact of COVID-19 on volunteers.

“Volunteering plays a big part in the lives of volunteers, many of whom do not have paid work with which to keep engaged.

“The theme for National Volunteer Week really means a lot this year - Changing Communities. Changing Lives.”

“Yes, volunteering improves the lives of other people, but it also improves the mental health and wellbeing of the volunteers themselves.

“I think this year has been the year of the volunteer, with an incredible community response to supporting bushfires and community recovery, but there is still so much more to do.”

Ms Darling said that many organisations in the community sector were under enormous pressure to deliver more with less resources.

Survey results also show that:

- 31 per cent of organisations are experiencing an increase in demand for their services.
- 64 per cent of organisations indicated they had found innovative ways to continue involving volunteers in service delivery.

“Volunteers make up around three quarters of all staff in volunteer involving organisations in the Canberra region, so the closure of so many volunteering programs is being felt by some of our most vulnerable community members.

“Next week, we’ll be hitting social media to encourage people to #waveforvolunteers and show their appreciation for volunteers.
“Then, in the weeks following, we will be advocating for changes to the way volunteering is supported, especially as we move into the recovery phase of the current public health emergency.”

Available for Interview
Vicky Darling - CEO, VolunteeringACT

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