



ANNUAL REPORT

2019-2020

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Thank you to our generous supporters

Volunteer for Knox has been supported by a grant from the Knox Council Community Development Fund. Volunteer for Knox is governed by Knox Learning Alliance and is a member of Volunteering Victoria.



INTRODUCTION

Purpose

Volunteer for Knox aims to place passionate and willing volunteers with local not-for-profit organisations in need. The Volunteer Resource Centre's purpose is to increase volunteering opportunities for organisations and individuals in Knox.

We work with other strategic partner organisations in Victoria to promote and build a vibrant, strong volunteering community that is inclusive, respected and sustainable.

We lead research, policy, professional development, hold sector-wide events and undertake innovative initiatives, in conjunction with volunteer peak bodies across Australia, to support the sector. A core part of our work is providing training for leaders of volunteers on the National Standards for Involving Volunteers. Our Continuing Professional Development Program recognises and encourages the professionalism of leaders of volunteers.

We define volunteering as “time willingly given without financial gain and for the common good”. This broad definition encompasses diverse organisational and informal means of civic participation.

Volunteering Victoria works alongside the Victorian Volunteer Support Network (VVSN) to support the volunteering sector. This place-based network of Volunteer Support Organisations (VSOs, otherwise known as Volunteer Resource Centres) facilitates volunteer placements, regional coordination and capacity building for leaders of volunteers.

Volunteering in Victoria

Volunteers are an enormous workforce in Victoria and Australia. More than 1.5 million Victorians are volunteers. Volunteer services have many intangible benefits for Victorian communities and also contribute the equivalent of tens of billions of dollars in value to the state (the latest estimation of this contribution was \$23 billion).

Volunteering occurs in almost every sector, including the following:

Advocacy	Aged care	Animal	Arts and culture
Community services	Disability	Education	
Emergency services	Environment	Faith-based	
Health	Heritage	Legal	Local government
Mental health	Migrant services	Museum	
Neighbourhood houses	Recreation	Seniors	
Sport	Tourism		

Volunteers deliver services which are essential for the Victorian Government. Volunteers, for example, provide emergency services, parks and environmental management, legal and advocacy services, and other human and community services. Put simply, the Victorian Government would likely not be able to adequately deliver for Victorian communities without the participation of volunteers.

Volunteer for Knox

Volunteer for Knox is the Volunteer Resource Centre servicing the City of Knox and is located at Coonara Community House, 22 Willow Rd, Upper Ferntree Gully, Victoria.

Volunteer for Knox was funded by Knox City Council in 2014 and is jointly governed through a partnership between the five Knox Neighbourhood Houses – Coonara Community House, The Basin Community House, Rowville Neighbourhood Learning Centre, Mountain District Learning Centre and Orana Neighbourhood House.

Volunteer for Knox currently has 125 registered Organisations and in the past six years has referred more than 800 volunteers to Volunteer Involving Organisations.

Benefits of Volunteering

One of the better-known benefits of volunteering is the impact on the community. Unpaid volunteers are often the glue that holds a community together. Volunteering allows you to connect to your community and make it a better place. However, volunteering is a two-way street, and it can benefit you and your family as much as the cause you choose to help. Dedicating your time as a volunteer helps you make new friends, improve your mental health, expand your network, gain work skills and boost your social skills.

CO-ORDINATOR'S REPORT

Volunteer for Knox has a new website, logo and fresh vision after working with the Knox Learning Alliance and Knox Council on a new strategic plan in November 2019.

Our new slogan is "Change Someone's World."
Statistics reveal we are indeed doing that!

Our data shows Volunteer for Knox is growing significantly every year especially with new enquiries for advertised volunteer positions. The Covid-19 pandemic has undoubtedly been the most challenging ever experienced in this sector. But when lockdowns were announced in March Volunteer for Knox was inundated with expressions of interest in positions. Data reveals they tripled during this time with remote and online positions the most popular. This also allowed the positions to be advertised nationally and even internationally. With highly skilled workers now out of work many wanted to offer their services in marketing, graphic design and online tutoring. The Basin Music Festival event organisers received five highly skilled graphic designers in just a few days.

Volunteer for Knox staff quickly turned around their induction methods and created an online video uploaded to You Tube and online registration forms. But by far our biggest success was creating a series of online workshops including Zoom training, Work/Life Balance workshops and Managing Cultural Diversity. This will be continued into the new financial year with access to many trainers and training through the community house network.

Volunteers and volunteer involving organisations are a vital part of recovery in this time of crisis, and it is very important to keep them engaged and informed.

Sally Dusting Laird
Volunteer for Knox Co-ordinator

Registered Organisations

Volunteer for Knox assists 125 registered non-profit organisations in the City of Knox and this number grows every year. We assist with finding people to volunteer for organisations, develop training programs for volunteers and managers on demand, improve how they manage volunteers and offer support in understanding their legal and regulatory responsibilities.

The services include:

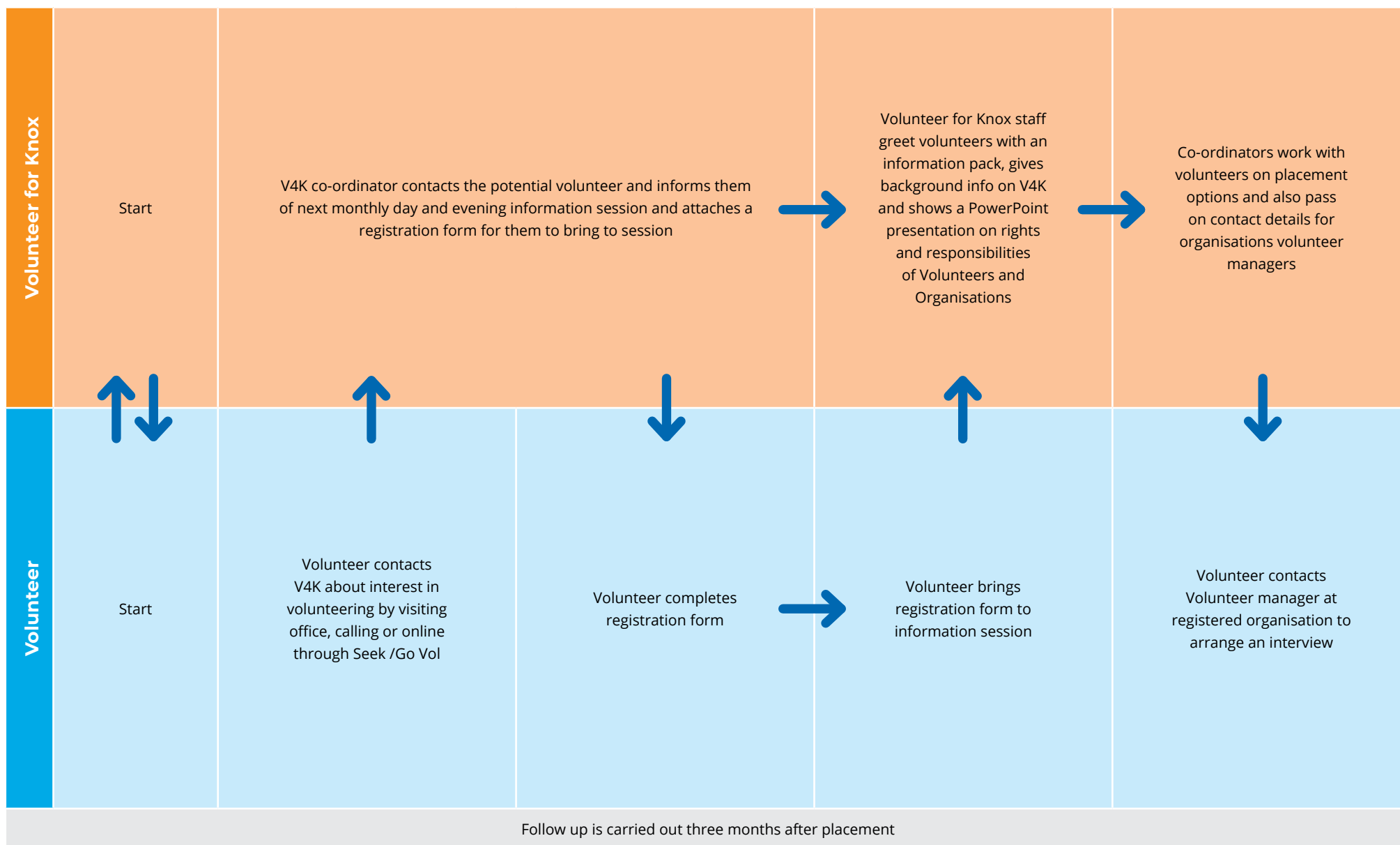
OP shops	Environmental groups	Education
Migrant and refugee support	Mentoring	Aged care
Disability services	Community houses	
Pet companions	Sporting clubs	

The Volunteer Journey at Volunteer for Knox

Sometimes people 'fall into' volunteering, but most of the time people make a conscious decision to volunteer and then face the challenge of where to begin. Volunteer for Knox aims to place passionate and willing volunteers with local not-for-profit organisations in need. The Volunteer Resource Centre's purpose is to increase volunteering opportunities for organisations and individuals in Knox. So, where to start?

SWIM Lane: Identifies responsible parties and the points in the process at which they are involved (horizontal flow across vertical silos)

This SWIM lane (see next page) depicts the Volunteer Journey at Volunteer for Knox.



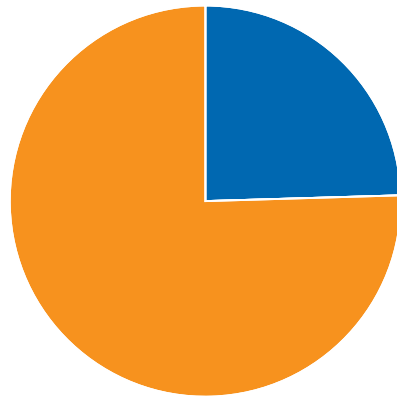


ANNUAL SNAPSHOT

– THE VALUE OF

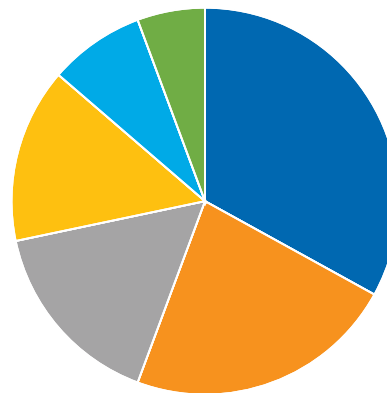
VOLUNTEERING IN KNOX

Gender



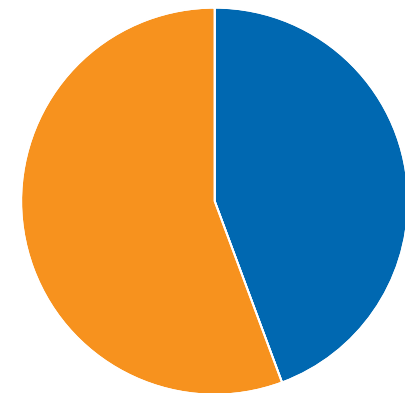
■ Male ■ Female

Age



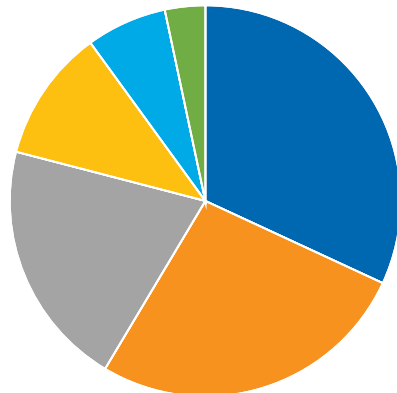
■ 25 and under ■ 36-45 ■ 56-65
■ 26-35 ■ 46-55 ■ 65 and over

Country of Birth (Simplified)



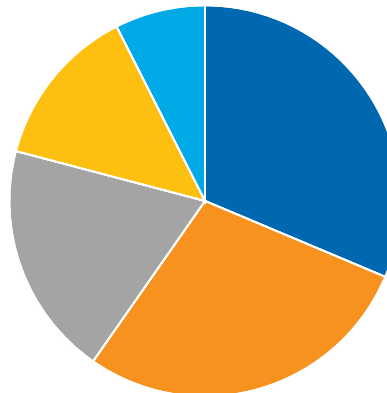
■ Australia ■ Overseas

Current Work Status (Simplified)



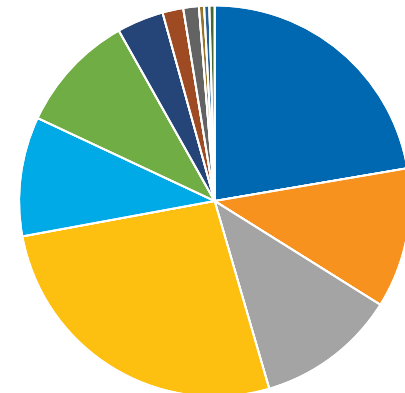
■ Employee (all types) ■ Home duties
■ Unemployed ■ Retired
■ Student ■ Other/not listed

Employee Type



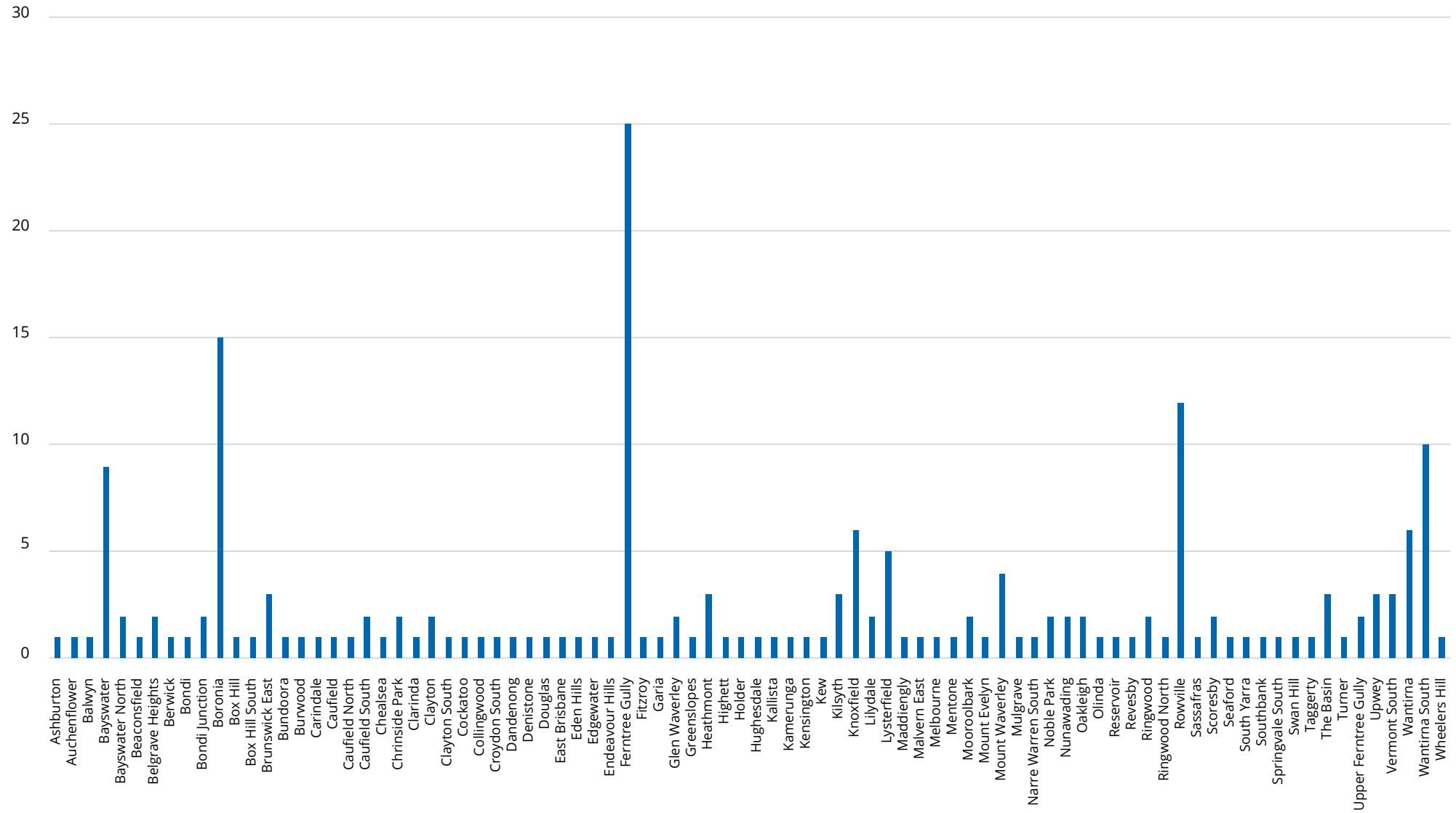
■ Casual employee ■ Full-time employee
■ Part-time employee ■ Type not listed
■ Self-employed

Referrals (Category)



■ Disability ■ Op shop ■ Aged Care
■ Environment ■ Charity ■ Childcare
■ Education ■ Events ■ Sport
■ Community ■ Immigration ■ Animal

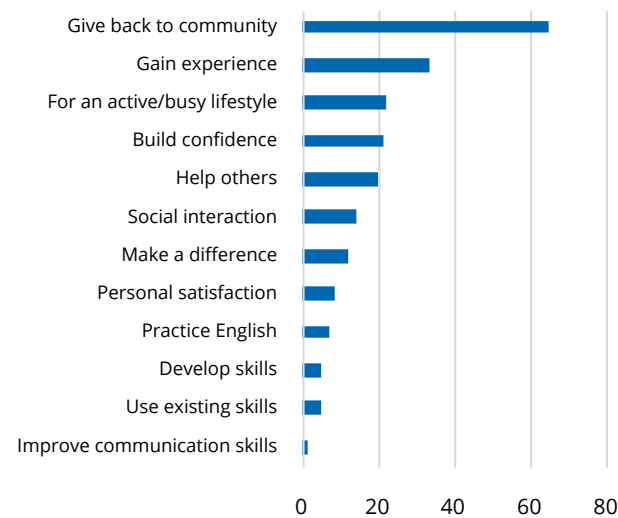
Suburb



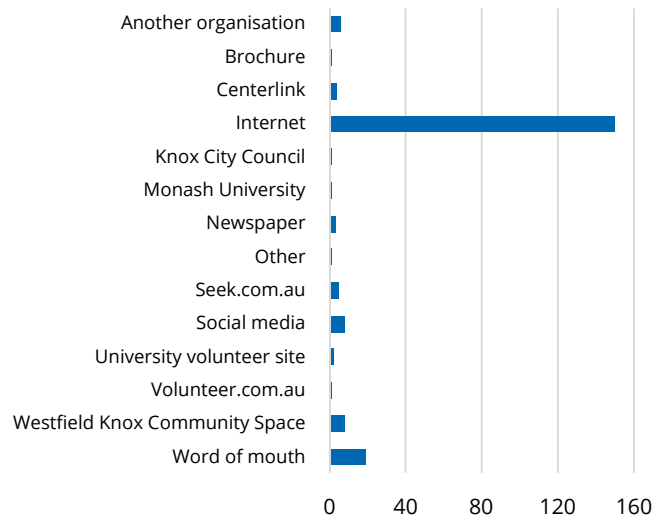
Education



Reason For Volunteering



How They Heard About V4K



Value





KEY OBSERVATIONS AND OUTCOMES

Provide an accessible and responsive Volunteer Resource Centre with a recognisable service profile to promote and facilitate volunteer activity and participation across the Knox municipality.

Volunteer for Knox went on the road this year and held pop up information sessions at Westfield Knox Community Space, the five neighbourhood houses, Stringybark Festival, schools, employment agencies and retirement villages.

Our monthly information sessions are now rotated around the community houses for added exposure to our governance team and Volunteer for Knox teardrop flags have been installed outside each house to encourage enquiries.

The Community Space is manned for two full days by our team of Volunteer for Knox Ambassadors who engage people through craft and knitting and then refer them onto the office.

All five Knox community houses act as Kiosks and a referral service to Volunteer for Knox and all have brochures displayed and links on their own websites.

An information kit was also developed for attendees and distributed during our monthly information sessions on the rights and responsibilities of volunteers. It also provides many resources to make their volunteering experience a great one.

A quarterly seasonal newsletter informs organisations and volunteers of current trends and events with a special Covid-19 newsletter sent out to keep everyone up to date with the developing situation with helpful resources attached.

Recruitment and placement of individuals interested in volunteering in Knox.

Volunteer for Knox now has their own team of volunteers to assist with recruitment and placement of volunteers. Their job roles include data entry in our Viktor Volunteer Management System, assisting with follow up calls to organisations and volunteers to check on needs and position satisfaction and also attending festivals and events.

The Volunteer for Knox website is regularly updated and a search engine placed on our home page which is connected to Seek and Go Volunteer. There is also a page setup with current Volunteer for Knox opportunities.

Volunteers are placed within a two week period from induction session to placement and follow up calls are made after a three month period. Volunteer for Knox conducted a survey with volunteers to gauge their satisfaction in their placement. Around 20 per cent responded (similar number to other VRC's) and were satisfied with their placement.

Expressions of Interest, Recruitment and Referral data – July 1 2019 to June 30 2020

Expressions of interest	Total 873
Volunteer referrals	Total 217 volunteers

Post Covid-19 – March 13 2020 to June 30 2020

Expressions of interest	Total 382
Volunteer referrals	Total 89
New registered services	Total 10
Total organisations registered with V4K	Total 125

Friends of Koolunga Reserve group's advertisement for Conservation Assistants was the most popular position especially for young passionate people driven by their values and specific issues.

Assistance for local volunteer-based and volunteer-involving organisations to effectively recruit, host, support and develop volunteers in line with contemporary best practice.

Volunteer for Knox is an active member of state peak body Volunteering Victoria and also the Volunteering Victoria Support Network (VVSN) The VVSN provides an opportunity for Volunteer Support Services and Resource centre co-ordinators and managers four times a year to share information and resources, discuss issues of common interest, access professional development and make new connections and collaborate on projects and activities.

Volunteer for Knox staff attend professional development workshops through Volunteering Victoria to keep up to date with current trends and inform our registered organisations during our bi-annual network meetings. Updating links consistently on the website to Volunteering Victoria resources and VV newsletters was especially important during the Covid-19 period.

Volunteer for Knox co-ordinators also conducted surveys with our registered volunteers and organisations to find out what training they needed to upskill and four online training sessions were developed following feedback via Zoom.

“Having access to training and trainers from the many courses run at the five community houses gives Volunteer for Knox unique access to adult learning opportunities that other Volunteer Resource Centres don’t have.”

Training sessions

1. How to host a Zoom meeting

2. Start using Zoom

3. Work/life balance workshops

4. Manage diversity in the workplace

Enrolments

73 people

This included staff from Volunteering Victoria and Swinburne University.

Projects

A project was conducted with six independent opportunity shops in the City of Knox to support them at quarterly meetings with marketing plans and recruiting, training and retention of their volunteer staff. A videographer was engaged to produce a video featuring the op shops in a promotional video that is played at the Westfield Knox community space and also in store at their op shops and on social media.

Over the past six years Volunteer for Knox has been involved in recruiting volunteers for the annual Knox Infolink Share the Joy appeal. We engaged with a number of local corporate organisations during this process and they now offer their services annually by providing staff to assist with packing and distributing hampers.



Enhance community awareness of the contribution made by volunteers to community life and the local economy.

Volunteer for Knox now has a new updated website, logo and slogan "Change Someone's World." Our website is ranking Number 1 on Google when searched and includes a register of resources including funding opportunities for our registered organisations, community snapshots of volunteering in Knox along with case studies from registered organisations and volunteers.

Our Facebook page has just reached 520 likes and is updated regularly with job opportunities, industry updates and includes resources to assist organisations in celebrating volunteers.

Volunteer for Knox celebrates International Volunteer Day in December and National Volunteer Week in May annually using

social media as a promotional tool and visiting organisations to acknowledge their volunteers with certificates and gifts.

National Volunteer Week was a little different this year due to Covid-19 lockdowns but we still celebrated by running a competition on Facebook. Volunteers and organisations were asked how volunteering benefited them. The first five entrants were given gift vouchers and their stories and photographs featured on our website, Facebook and Instagram.

Volunteer for Knox engaged with Swinburne University English as a Second Language staff to talk to their students last November about the benefits of volunteering including giving an insight into Australian culture and opportunities to practice English.

Preliminary plans were made with Swinburne staff to offer training at the community houses to develop these skills once they had completed their TAFE course.

Our data reveals that around 50% of our registered volunteers were not born in Australia so we have engaged with local multicultural groups including the Filipino community, Chinese Community and Indian community to celebrate special events and promote volunteerism at the Westfield Knox Community space.

Provide municipal level role in local volunteer sector planning and advocacy. Contribute to data collection emerging trends and analysis of volunteering issues in Knox to inform local advocacy and service planning.

In 2019 staff assisted Knox Council Volunteering Business Partner Ruth Morgan with surveys and data collection with the Volunteer Your Way project to plan for the future volunteering environment in the City of Knox.

The Westfield Knox community space was used as a data collection point and involved the Volunteer for Knox Ambassadors conducting surveys and collecting information from the general public.

Volunteer for Knox is an active member of the Volunteer Victoria Support Network (VVSN) attending quarterly meetings.

Through the VVSN network Volunteer for Knox has joined a consortium of VRC's to apply for funding to train volunteers with disabilities across Victoria.

Visited the City Of Boroondara to meet with Laura Lynch to discuss the Viktor database our different models and short term projects for skilled volunteers, such as accounting, web development, photography, and marketing

Needs surveys of volunteer involving organisations are conducted and appropriate training and resources developed, promoted and or provided.

We have established, facilitated and maintained a Volunteer for Knox network of volunteer involving organisations; including biannual network meetings, and online communication.

V4K staff and steering group (Knox Learning Alliance) meet on a regular basis with council staff to provide ongoing information around volunteering activities. Our V4K Viktor database also gives council information on emerging trends and informs our service planning.

THE IMPACTS OF VOLUNTEERING DURING COVID-19

March 13 2020 – June 30 2020

The COVID-19 pandemic was the biggest, most disruptive event to the volunteering sector in the past century.

In Victoria, in addition to health concerns and the spread of the virus among members of the community, the key impacts to volunteering were from the requirements for social distancing of 1.5 metres, restrictions to gatherings and specific activities and the Victorian Government's 'stay at home' messaging.

The impact also brought a surge of interest in formal volunteering opportunities, with many highly skilled people losing jobs and people wanting to "help" during this difficult time.

Volunteer for Knox expressions of interest to volunteer tripled during this period.

Expressions of interest **Total 382**

Volunteer referrals **Total 89**

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a catalyst for Volunteer for Knox to encourage organisations to modernise and streamline their practices. This included initiatives to develop online training via Zoom to encourage and develop their online skills, inducting volunteers online and connecting to registered organisations and volunteers through other digital means, like social media, Facebook and Instagram. Much of this work was innovative and improved efficiencies.

Volunteer for Knox developed four training sessions over the May, June period to keep volunteers and agencies connected.

- Developed an online induction video for volunteers to watch and register. Working really well and will continue to use in the future
- Created online registration forms
- Hosted a Volunteer for Knox network meeting via Zoom with registered organisations.

About 20 volunteer managers attended to discuss their current issues. Biggest attendance ever.

- With our encouragement a number of Knox organisations have developed Virtual job roles such as assistance with business planning, fundraising, grant applications and updating websites and social media
- Contacted all our registered organisations via phone/email to see how we can assist and encourage them to create virtual job roles if possible
- Emailed newsletters to keep organisations up to date with current situation and resources
- A number of Knox organisations have developed Virtual job roles and these roles are now advertised nationally through Seek and Go Volunteer via our Viktor database. We have people applying from most states in Australia as they can work from home. Many are highly skilled.
- Volunteer for Knox was inundated with expressions of interest in the Virtual job roles with so many professional people laid off during this time and wanting to use their skills to help others.

The virtual job roles have included:

- Online tutors to support socially isolated migrants and refugees to learn English
- Compiling content for social media posts and/or community newsletters (articles about anything that might be of interest to those isolated from community, e.g. Recipes, garden tips, good books to read, local businesses providing delivery services, information about local organisations to get involved with after the crisis, interesting local places to share, photos from your daily walk, ideas for relieving boredom, local history and reminiscences.

- Letterboxing community newsletters particularly to those unable to access the Internet (collection from select community locations or by printing a few copies at home and letterboxing them to your direct neighbours)
- Becoming a pen pal for people who are isolated including in Aged Care (envelopes and stamps will be posted to you)
- Assisting with hosting online social events such as Talking café, cooking, gardening, craft demonstrations
- Providing assistance to people have trouble using their devices to connect to social media etc. – via phone or email
- Registering and inducting volunteers so they are ready to go when lockdowns are lifted
- Circulating resources and updates for organisations and volunteers through social media and website
- Keeping Volunteer for Knox website and social media updated (Facebook and Instagram)
- Liaising with peak body Volunteer Victoria and other state-wide volunteer resource centres to keep up with current trends and participating in online support network meetings

As members of the Volunteer Victoria Support Network and feedback from our network meeting indicated that the situation was very similar at Boroondara Resource Centre and Eastern Volunteers while our country resource centres were severely affected and had little to no interest in volunteering.

We embraced online training with 73 people enrolling online! We have had great feedback from Volunteering Victoria and Swinburne University staff who also participated.

Volunteering Victoria asked Volunteer for Knox to write a case study on the innovative changes we implemented quickly due to Covid-19.



TRENDS

2016-2020

Total registrations

Registrations have grown significantly over the past three years with 212 new volunteer registrations in 2019/2020 (this was on top of no longer placing KCC volunteers as requested 12 months ago which accounted for 20% of our original annual volunteer intake) taking the total volunteer registrations with Volunteer for Knox to 638.

Gender

The trend for females to outnumber males continues with 75 per cent female volunteers. No volunteers identified as other than male/female.

Age groups

Ages	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020	Grand Total	Trend
25 and under	34	27	27	70	122	Fluctuates
26-35	29	17	25	48	103	Fluctuates
36-45	14	18	29	34	72	Increase
46-55	26	15	14	31	81	Fluctuates
56-65	32	37	35	17	136	Fluctuates
65 and over	16	14	12	12	58	Steady
Grand totals	151	128	142	212	638	

Observations on age groups

35 and under and 56-65 year olds are the core volunteering groups.

Type of volunteering

Regular volunteering is by far the most popular. There is potential to explore the opportunity for registered organisation's to consider offering more special event volunteering. The Basin Music Festival (Pre-Covid-19) was extremely popular with volunteers.

Reasons for Volunteering

The top reason for people volunteering is to Give Back to the Community followed by Gaining Work Experience and Building Confidence. Nearly 50 per cent of people volunteering came from an Administration background followed by Education, Customer service, Healthcare and IT.

Job seekers

Approximately one third of all registered volunteers declare that they are seeking work. This has remained consistent over the last three years. Volunteering is recognized as a pathway to employment but perhaps V4K could be an enabler for registered organisation's to have a more structured approach to supporting their volunteers seeking work?

Diversity

Around 50 percent of the V4K registered volunteers are born overseas. They come from thirty six different countries. In 2016/2017 fifty-one percent were born overseas from 31 different countries and in 2018/2019 forty-five percent were born overseas from 26 different countries. China, India and Sri Lanka are the top three. A very diverse volunteer team.

The fastest area of growth for volunteering within Volunteer for Knox has been by people with a disability. In 2016/2017 eight volunteers identified as having a disability. In 2017/2018 thirty-seven identified as living with a disability and nearly 20 per cent in 2018/2019 This represents an increase of around 300 per cent in the last couple of years. It reflects greater levels of advocacy and self-advocacy in the disability sector as well as government policy to move people from disability pensions into the workforce. Physical disability and mental illness is the most often disclosed.

Languages other than English

V4K volunteers spoke a total of 49 languages other than English with Mandarin, Cantonese and Hindi being the top three.

Volunteer frequency

Most volunteers -3 – 6 hours a week.

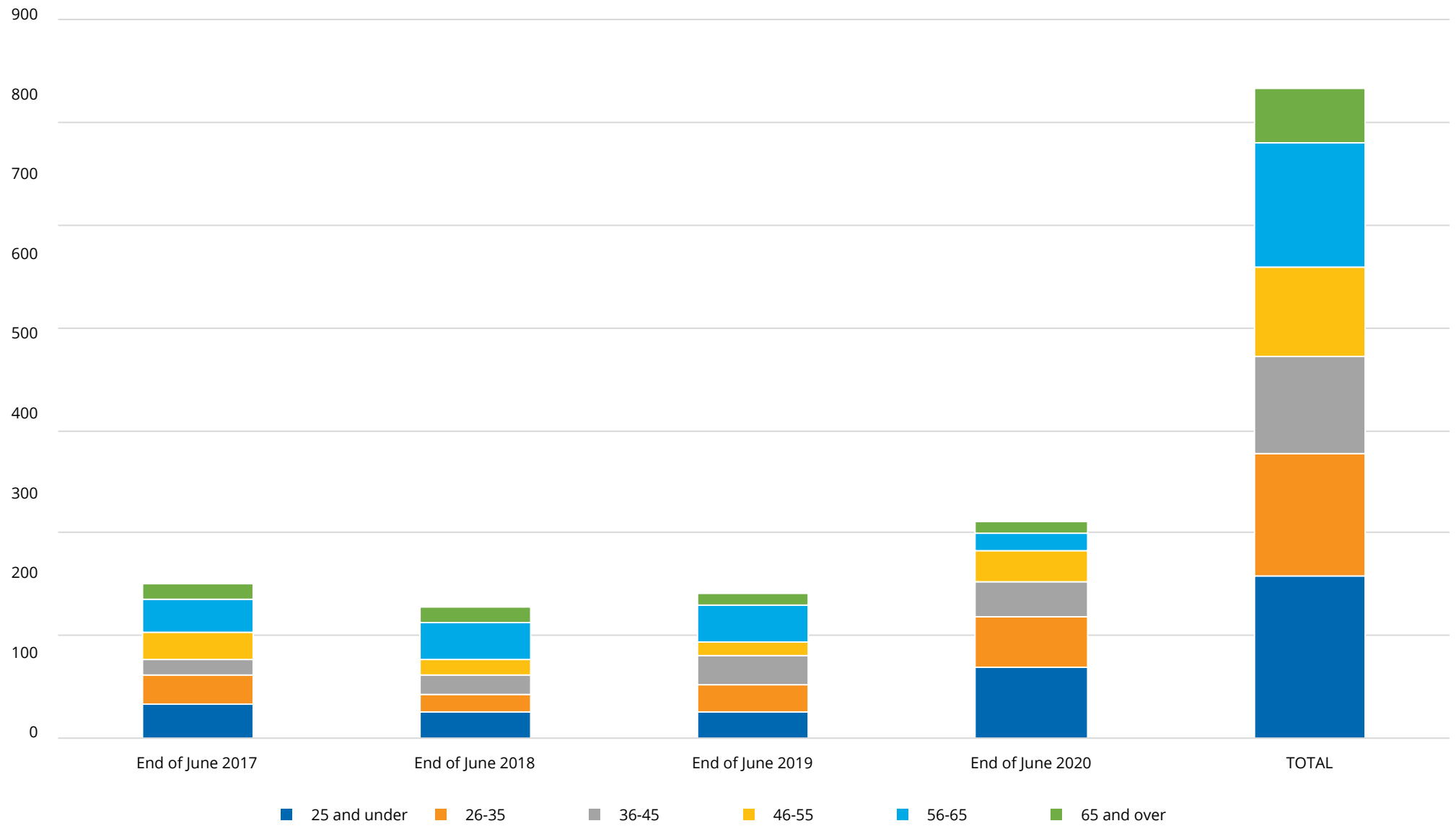
How did you hear about Volunteer for Knox?

Over the past five years the internet has been the most popular method of finding out more about Volunteer for Knox, followed by Word of Mouth, the Westfield Knox Community space and other organisations.

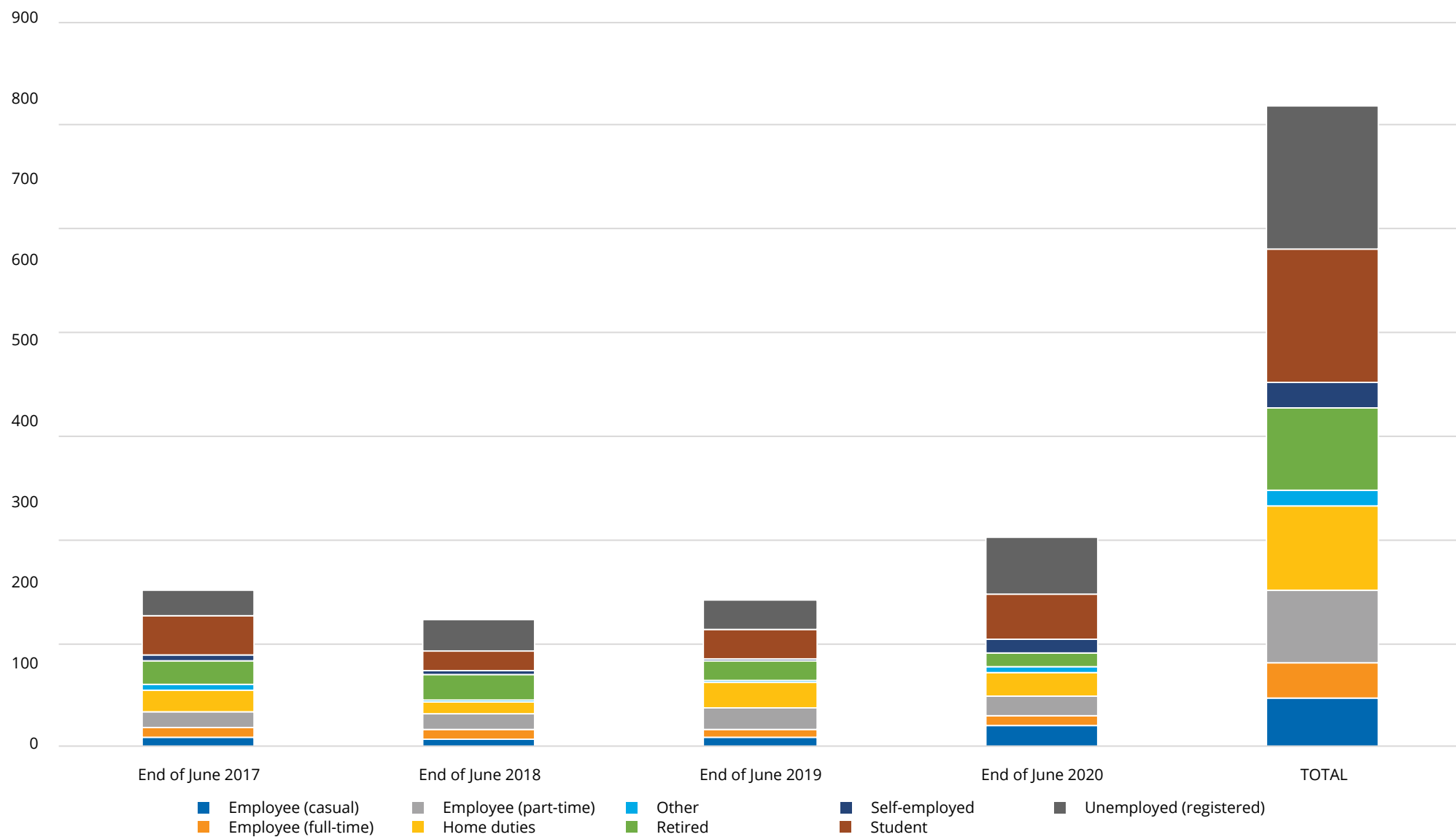
Employment status

Students, jobseekers and part time employees are the top three groups looking for volunteer opportunities.

Age (Comparison)



Current Work Status (Comparison)



A grayscale photograph of two women sitting at a desk. The woman on the left is smiling and leaning forward, while the woman on the right, wearing glasses and a floral shirt, looks directly at the camera. A computer monitor and keyboard are visible on the desk to the right. The image is framed by blue and orange geometric shapes at the top and bottom.

CASE

STUDIES

FRIENDS OF KOOLUNGA RESERVE

Friends of Koolunga Reserve has been Volunteer for Knox's most popular service in the past 12 months with 70 people expressing interest in roles as Environmental and Conservation Assistants.

Friends of Koolunga reserve are a group of volunteers who help to restore the bushland at the reserve, on Forest Road, in Ferntree Gully. They plant back local indigenous species (trees, shrubs, grasses, herbs, etc.) and remove weed species and work closely with Knox City Council.

Koolunga Native Reserve is owned by the City of Knox and is based at the bottom of the foothills of the Dandenong Ranges and the flora reflects that of the ranges and also the surrounding lowlands.

Koolunga was obtained by Knox Council in 1967 as a recreation reserve. The area had primarily been used as a daffodil farm, and by the locals as a rubbish dump along the creek. Daffodils still appear each year but the rubbish has largely been dealt with. The six hectare (15 acre) area of Koolunga now consists of some remnant bush land and areas of mown grass where orchids appear despite the previous intensive horticulture use.

In 1994, a Friends Group was established which has been active ever since.

The majority of volunteers expressing interest in the positions are aged in their 20's and usually completing a university degree in environmental science or simply have an interest in the natural environment.

Friends of Koolunga Reserve registered with Volunteer for Knox in 2019.

They have six regular members who contribute at least two hours a month and three additional members who often contribute another 4-20 hours a month each.

Co-ordinator Moyra Farrington said many of the volunteers attend for short term projects but some have stayed on.

When the volunteers are referred from Volunteer for Knox they are asked to contact Moyra who welcomes them into the group and gives information about their activities and educates them about the local plants, birds, animals and specific projects.

"We plant, weed, take surveys of birds and wild life and engage closely with the local community via Facebook and run community events," Moyra said.

"One of the biggest issues we face is getting volunteers to attend on a regular basis.

"Some are only available at times when it isn't convenient for us to hold working bees.

"We have been operating for 25 years and have always tried to attract new volunteers and when Volunteer for Knox offered us assistance we gladly took it.

"Volunteer for Knox has provided extra assistance and introduced many new and interesting people to our group.

"Volunteers enable us to accomplish much more work in planting and weeding and generally maintaining our reserve. Most adapt quite quickly. The tasks aren't complicated or too demanding.

"We love to welcome new volunteers and make the experience interesting, friendly and rewarding in learning new skills and try to give them the feeling that their efforts are very much appreciated."





AUSTRALIAN JAZZ MUSEUM SECRETARY AND RECRUITMENT OFFICER – MARGOT DAVIES

The Australian Jazz Museum, incorporating the Victorian Jazz Archive, is located in Koomba Park, 15 Mountain Highway, Wantirna, Victoria. It is an Incorporated Association arising out of a meeting held in Sydney on 23 June 1996 to address the growing concern among the jazz community that the rich Australian jazz heritage was at risk of being lost.

Their mission is to collect, exhibit, preserve and store on a permanent basis all material and memorabilia of whatever nature pertaining to jazz music, performed and/or composed by Australian musicians, covering the period from the 1920's through to the present day.

Margot Davies is the Secretary and Recruitment Officer at the Australian Jazz Museum in Wantirna for nearly six years.

She grew up in Ivanhoe, with hardworking parents who were always involved in their community and childhood activities.

"My volunteer work has involved working at Meals on Wheels, the Jazz Museum and I'm also a member of Zonta International a women's service club that works towards women's rights and equality," Margot said.

"I volunteered at my son's schools serving on a number of committees and now help out at my Grandkids school which I really love and being involved gives me a great deal of pleasure.

"I initially became a volunteer to keep busy.

"When I retired I knew I didn't want to sit home. I wanted to do something with my time that meant something and I finally found the Jazz Museum where I have been for nearly six years.

"I've been Secretary and on the Committee of Management for the same period of time.

"I like to keep busy so I'm also in charge of recruiting and managing the volunteers.

"Social interaction is great and I really enjoy getting to know all the volunteers at the Museum.

"I've kept my skills up to date, learnt a lot more about jazz and it's great to be part of something with a purpose.

"The Museum has up to date computer systems, and I've also learned to be open to new ideas that will help the museum be a world class Museum.

"I was made to feel like I could help the Museum out from the first interview."

Margot said she had achieved her personal volunteer goals especially over the last six years.

"I love helping out. I feel I have contributed to the Museum and as a volunteer I am happy to turn my hand to anything that needs to be done," Margot said.

"I've learned that the work being done is worthwhile and could not be achieved without volunteers."

I have found Volunteer for Knox staff very supportive, friendly, and keen to help in a professional manner. Nothing is ever a problem."

Margot has a message to people in the community thinking of volunteering.

"Give volunteering a try! You can make a difference, you can learn new skills and you can make friends along the way. Australia would not be the place it is without volunteers and age doesn't matter!"

MOUNTAIN GATE OP SHOP RETAIL VOLUNTEER – AVA FAKHAR

Ava came to Volunteer for Knox to find a placement where she would feel safe, secure, learn new skills and practice her English.

The 28-year-old and her husband emigrated from their home town of Isfahan, in Iran, in June 2018.

Ava describes Isfahan as a big traditional city, where tourists visit to view the local sights and infrastructure.

Ava holds a Bachelor of Electrical Engineering qualification and attends Deakin University to learn further skills and gain qualifications in data analysis.

She and her husband now have permanent resident visas in Australia. Her brother lives in Melbourne and her sister in Perth.

Her mother still resides in Iran and is a regular visitor to her “Australian family”

The secretary of the Mountain Gate Op Shop, Anne Abbott, met with Ava and agreed they would be a great match especially because she wanted to socialise, learn, give back to the community and feel welcomed and united in a team environment.

Ava lived locally and volunteered every Thursday from 9.30-4pm and did not miss one shift as it was her “happy day”.

Ava’s mother visited at Christmas where the amazing volunteers at Mountain Gate Op Shop extended a lovely welcome with a

special lunch for Ava and her mother.

Before Ava and her husband immigrated they spent years learning English and it was mandatory for residence status that they both passed an English test.

She looks back and smiles at how she felt when she first arrived to how she feels now and contributes much of her confidence and security to the volunteer team of Mountain Gate.

Ava highly recommends volunteering for socialisation and she feels it is purposeful, giving something back to the community and is happy the funds from the Mountain Gate Op shop goes to families with the greatest of needs.

Ava has learned new skills in communication, organisational skills, customer service and gained a greater self-confidence.”



ADMINISTRATION AND CHILDCARE VOLUNTEER – JOAN IMPEY

Joan Impey has lived in The Basin for more than 50 years. She has two adult children and when her husband passed away seven years ago she found herself living alone.

Joan worked at the Commonwealth Bank and decided to end her work journey and retire in 2018. When she initially retired, at first, she said: "I was happy to do nothing".

But as time progressed, she noticed herself staying in bed longer and longer. After waking up and completing her usual routine, it would only be 10:30am. She questioned, "now what am I going to do with myself? How am I going to spend the rest of my life?"

Joan noticed herself watching more and more television, and essentially was becoming increasingly depressed. She even questioned if this was going to be what the rest of her life looked like.

Joan was losing her social contacts and there would be days where she would speak to nobody.

She knew she had to do something, otherwise her life would continue on that repetitious and lonely downward spiral. Joan didn't really know what to do, so she went online and started to research opportunities.

That's where she finally found Volunteer for Knox. She filled out the application form online and attended an in-person induction which filled her in on all her rights and responsibilities as a volunteer. Still unsure about where she wanted to volunteer the team from Volunteer for Knox steered her in the right direction.

"I was at a loose end, I didn't know if I wanted to go here or there," she said. "It's almost like going into a restaurant without looking at the menu."

Joan noticed that administration and looking after young children appealed to her, and there was an opening at a local community house that suited her perfectly.

"I come here every Monday from 9am until 4pm, and you will not get me away from this place," she said.

"I like the interaction with the people who come in and talking on the telephone. The staff are just fantastic!"

However, she began to notice that one day a week wasn't enough. She needed something else to continue to give a sense of purpose. And again, with the help of Volunteer for Knox, she thought she'd express her interest in working with children.

Volunteer for Knox put Joan in touch with the co-ordinator of local kindergartens. Very soon she was scooped up after seeing the passion in her application, and has been there ever since for two mornings a week.

"The Volunteer for Knox staff were able to guide me by showing me the options and where I would be likely to find vacancies," she said.

When Joan has to leave after her day is over at the kinder, some children say "you can't go!" which makes her feel important, and valued. If they need her for extra days, she's happy to go along to assist as she loves working with the centre and the staff.

"It's made such a difference in my life," Joan said.





COMMUNITY SPACE AT WESTFIELD KNOX

The Community Space at Westfield Knox has become a wonderful reprieve from shopping for many people since its inception nearly six years ago.

Its inviting park like atmosphere with benches, plants and videos playing is a welcome respite for local employees and busy shoppers.

This year saw an upgrade with new flooring of Forest Green carpet tiles.

However, most importantly the Westfield Knox Community Space has highlighted local community groups and what they do best to the public since 2014.

For some regular users, like the TOWN club (Take Off Weight Naturally), the Knox Community Chess Enthusiasts and the Australian Filipino Community it is the only place they can call home and come together as a group.

The aim of the Community Space is to celebrate community, volunteering and learning in the Knox community. This space has enabled the:

- Promotion of important services provided in the community
- Recruitment of new members and volunteers
- Promoting Volunteer for Knox Resource Centre
- Celebration of community achievements
- Educating the community about issues and events
- Adult Learning Opportunities

- Showcasing local sporting clubs and schools
- Cultural celebrations
- Reducing social isolation for seniors

In the past year we hosted many local groups including Fairhills High School Band, Occupational Therapists from Knox Council, the Immerse Art Exhibition, the Knox Community Chess Enthusiasts, artists from The Hut Art Gallery in Ferntree Gully, community knitters/crafters and a new addition to our program is a weekly community playgroup, run in partnership with Citylife Community Care.

The Aussie Veterans op shop also used the Community Space for five days over the Remembrance Day period displaying war memorabilia that attracted many children, their parents and grandparents.

One of our incredible success stories is the ongoing growth of the Knox Community Chess Enthusiasts (KCCE) who recently celebrated three years at the space. KCCE utilise the space every Thursday from 10am until 4.00pm. They were bursting at the seams this year with interested people even waiting patiently in line to play. So with the help of Coonara Community House, KCCE applied for a Knox Council grant and received funding to expand to Rowville library every Friday and also increasing their sessions to once a month on Saturdays.

KCCE founder and co-ordinator Eddie Atacador started the group when he saw a need to form a hub for seniors like himself waiting for his wife to finish shopping. Three years later, it is a melting pot of people from all walks of life, genders, abilities, young and old, playing and sharing a cuppa. A true example of community development in action.

In the last 12 months 960 people participated in playing chess and over the past three years KCCE has touched the lives of more than 2000 members of the community.

Eddie has also been nominated by Volunteer for Knox staff and Knox City Council for a Westfield Knox Local Hero Award with the winner receiving 10,000 for their community group.

Westfield Knox has continued to provide the Community Space to Coonara Community House to contribute to the ability of local community groups to promote themselves as well as recruit valuable volunteers.

The Space is located on Level 1 next to Liquorland and opposite the fresh food market.

We have hosted more than 150 community organisations and around 1000 events over the past six years.

The ACFE board and Knox City Council contributed towards the initial setup and now it is resourced by the five community houses in Knox, including The Basin, Mountain District LC, Rowville NLC and Orana.



EXPENDITURE

REPORT

VOLUNTEER RESOURCE CENTRE FINANCIAL EXPENDITURE

1st July 2019 – 30th June 2020

Expenditure Description (itemised summary)	Amount \$ (GST exc)
Governance	14401.06
Staffing	93932.62
Web Maintenance/Design of Promotional Marketing Products	6914.60
Administration Costs	17152.72
TOTAL	\$132401

