

Media Release

Volunteering as a force for social inclusion

Monday 20 October 2014

Today Volunteering ACT invited key people in the volunteering sector to tackle the broad social challenge of inclusion. In 2011 one quarter of Australians, aged above 15, experienced some level of exclusion and over one million Australians experienced deep exclusion.

Volunteering ACT sees volunteering as a force for social inclusion enabling people to play a fuller and more satisfying role in the lives of their communities and societies.

'Today presents an opportunity to strive towards a sector where volunteering opportunities are accessible to all. We are advocating for this through our very successful Inclusive Volunteering Program which facilitates vulnerable people into volunteering placements.

'Our program has adopted a broad approach to inclusion with a particular desire to help those people who fall through the cracks in relation to community sector support. We have assisted a range of people including those with disabilities, asylum seekers, people transitioning from prison back into the community, people with workplace injuries and more to gain a volunteering placement – giving them a meaningful and selfless activity in their lives' said Maureen Cane, CEO, Volunteering ACT.

Volunteering ACT's Inclusive Volunteering Program is currently in its third year thanks to the generous support of Disability ACT and The Snow Foundation.

The forum focussed on encouraging organisations to welcome people from all walks of life into their organisations. This focus is key to the success of the future of strong volunteer programs within organisations, which was identified as a priority in *The State of Volunteering in the ACT 2013* report.

Mary Porter AM MLA and founder of Volunteering ACT and Georgina Byron, CEO of the Snow Foundation, announced two exciting initiatives to encourage organisations to have an inclusive approach to the engagement of volunteers.

'It is my pleasure to launch a new resource developed by Volunteering ACT to put inclusion on the agenda of volunteer involving organisations: *Let's Talk About Inclusion: Promoting Inclusion in Your Volunteer Involving Organisation*. This resource provides tools for organisations to assess their accessibility and encourage a mindset that identifies inclusive possibilities,' said Mary Porter AM MLA.

Georgina Byron, CEO of The Snow Foundation, announced a new recognition strategy highlighting leading organisations in the inclusive volunteering space, 'this strategy is an excellent initiative from Volunteering ACT. It celebrates the achievements of organisations that are committed to inclusion. It is my pleasure to announce the two inaugural Inclusive Champions: Vilaggio Sant' Antonio and Woden Community Service.'

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