



# Volunteer Strategy 2022-2026



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Municipal Emergency Management Plan  
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**This document is available in alternative formats (e.g. larger font) if requested.**

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

**Loddon Shire Council acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land comprising the Loddon Shire Council area. Council would like to pay respect to their Elders both past and present.**



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Loddon Shire Council recognises that volunteers are the backbone behind communities. Volunteers provide vital support for the delivery of a number of services, activities, projects, programs and key community assets.

*“Nothing would happen without volunteers”.*  
(*Volunteering in Loddon Community Focus Group 2022*)

Additionally, volunteering builds the capacity of community members and promotes community connectedness, social inclusion and active citizenship.

Consultation with over three hundred community members has confirmed the personal benefits of volunteering as well as the benefits for the community as a whole. Community conversations have also highlighted the changing nature of volunteering in the Loddon Shire and the growing importance of flexible approaches to volunteering.

Making room for and supporting the next generation of volunteers to step up was viewed by the community as crucial for the future of volunteering in the Loddon Shire. Being open to new ways of attracting and supporting younger volunteers and making volunteering easier are essential in this.

The Loddon Shire Council Volunteer Strategy 2022-2026 captures Council’s vision and approach to supporting and growing community volunteering across the Shire. It highlights the crucial role volunteers play in the community and aims to build and maintain a vibrant and sustainable culture of volunteering.

The Volunteer Strategy has been strongly informed by the community and provides a framework for how to attract, support, retain, recruit, celebrate and recognise volunteers.

Four key overarching strategic directions frame the objectives and strategies in the plan. These themes have been drawn from community consultation, best practice and the national standards for volunteering.

Strategic Direction 1: Promote and Recruit  
Strategic Direction 2: Support and Develop  
Strategic Direction 3: Recognise, Celebrate and Value  
Strategic Direction 4: Quality and Culture

Working together in partnership with the rich and diverse range of volunteer involving services, groups and organisations is essential for maintaining Loddon’s high rate of volunteering into the future.

## 1 PURPOSE

Loddon Shire Council's Volunteer Strategy 2018-2022 shared Council's strategic leadership approach to attracting, retaining, developing and recognising volunteers in the Loddon Shire.

The Loddon Shire Volunteer Strategy 2022-2026 ("Volunteer Strategy") builds on this previous plan with a heightened focus on supporting the community to maintain high levels of volunteerism and lowering the average age of volunteers across the Shire.

Importantly, the Volunteer Strategy responds to the changing landscape of volunteering which is crucial for future sustainability.

## 2 INTRODUCTION

The Volunteer Strategy has been strongly informed by the community and articulates priority areas and strategies that support a vibrant and sustainable culture of volunteering in the Loddon Shire.

The Community Vision 2031/Council Plan 2021-2025 describes the community as:

*The Loddon Shire is a community of communities. Our identity is drawn from our people and their strength. Our character is borne of the land and how it nourishes our community and provides for the economic, social, and recreational pursuits of our community.*

### 2.1 Who we are

The Loddon Shire is 200km north of Melbourne and is within proximity to the major town centres of Bendigo, Kerang and Echuca, making it the perfect location to live or visit.

Covering 6,696 km<sup>2</sup>, the Shire has a population of 7,473 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, Estimated Resident Population 2020).

### 2.2 Community and Council Plan Vision

#### Community Vision

Creating a community where everyone is welcome and has the opportunity to live, work and thrive.

#### Council Plan Vision

Loddon will be a resilient, sustainable and prosperous community of communities.

### 2.3 Related policies, strategies and plans

There are a number of plans and strategies that relate to volunteering:

- Volunteer Strategy 2018-2022
- Loddon Shire Council Plan 2021-2025 and Community Vision 2031
- Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025
- Municipal Emergency Management Plan
- Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2018-2021
- Economic Development and Tourism Strategy 2019-2024
- Environmental Sustainability Strategy – Action Plan 2013-2018



## 3 VOLUNTEERING CONTEXT

### 3.1 Defining volunteering

There are many known definitions of volunteering. This Volunteer Strategy draws on the Volunteering Australia definition of volunteering:

*'Volunteering is time willingly given for the common good and without financial gain.'*  
(Volunteering Australia 2016)

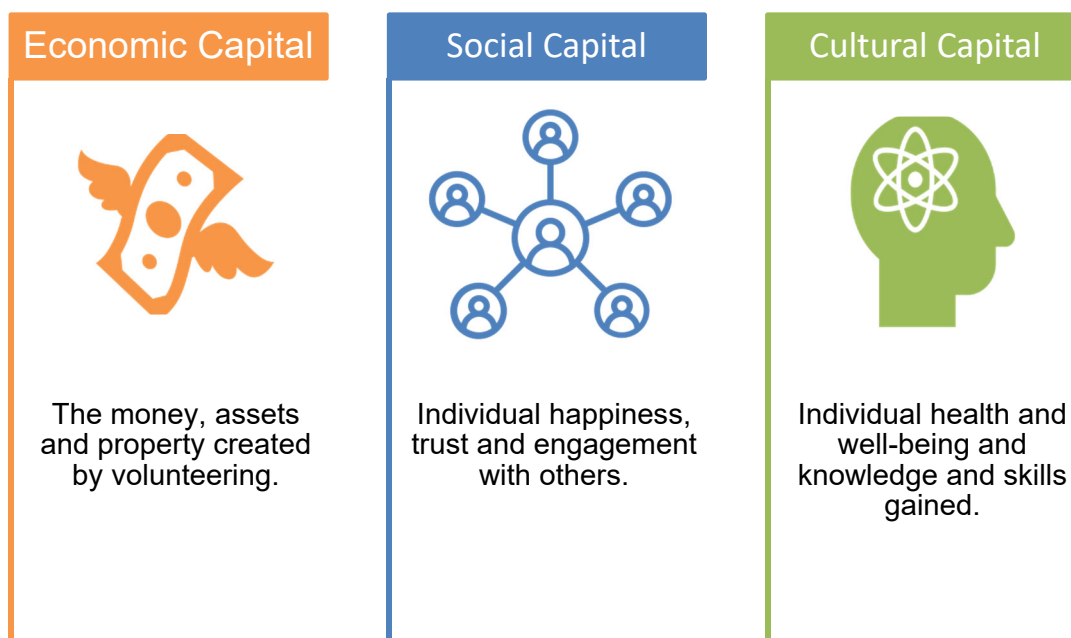
Generally, volunteering would fall under five main categories:

1. Formal volunteering: longer term, structured volunteering
2. Non-formal volunteering: non-funded and unstructured
3. Project based volunteering: projects with clear roles and timeframes
4. Online/virtual volunteering: online actions such as mentoring, peer support
5. Micro volunteering: small actions done online e.g. supporting a cause online, joining a campaign

### 3.2 Volunteering capital

In 2019 the value of volunteering in Victoria was determined to be estimated to be worth \$58.1 billion. Volunteering results in benefits for communities that are economic, social or cultural.

The State of Volunteering in Victoria Report 2020 sets out three main categories for volunteering capital:



Community engagement with Loddon Shire volunteers in 2022 highlighted the importance of volunteering capital in Loddon's communities. Volunteering capital benefits noted were:

- the strong economic value of volunteers
- strengthened community spirit and connections; and
- personal growth, learning, teamwork and leadership opportunities.

### **3.3 The changing volunteer landscape**

There is evidence that volunteering practices are changing. The Volunteering Practices in the Twenty-First Century Report (Millora, 2020) captures these key changes as:

- volunteering shaped by broader social issues and patterns: disasters, climate change and humanitarian volunteer efforts
- volunteering shaped by individual needs and personal benefits in addition to altruistic volunteering
- volunteering driven by a range of personal causes and outcomes
- greater interest in shorter term or one-off volunteering
- rapid spread of new technologies has facilitated greater access to online volunteering; and
- growing recognition of informal volunteering or person to person based volunteering outside of 'formal' groups/organisations.

The top three motivations for volunteering (all ages) revealed by the Volunteering in Loddon Survey were:

1. to contribute to my community (76%)
2. to maintain key services/supports/groups (60%)
3. to support a cause I care about (59%).

The Volunteering in Loddon Survey also highlighted the growing interest in flexible volunteer opportunities, particularly in younger volunteers:

- the under 25 age group was almost twice as likely to want to volunteer non formally (58%) compared to the other age groups; and
- the under 25 age group were least likely to want to volunteer in a formal capacity (37%).

### **3.4 Re-engaging volunteers and COVID-19**

The pandemic has presented challenges resulting in a decline in volunteering across Australia. Research conducted by Volunteering Australia found that voluntary work fell from 36% in late 2019 to 24.2% in April 2021 (Volunteering Australia 2021).

Research completed by Volunteering Australia in 2021 has also shown that despite COVID-19 restrictions lifting, volunteering is not 'snapping back'. The following challenges were captured:

- Volunteering had not fully recovered with 72% of respondents indicating that their programs were partially or not operational.
- Four out of ten organisations had low confidence that they could increase their volunteer number to pre-COVID levels.
- Demand for services had increased and more volunteers were needed.

This COVID-19 specific research has highlighted the need for:

- ongoing support and new resources to safely re-open volunteer programs
- re-engagement and recruitment of new volunteers
- support for the health and wellbeing of volunteers
- the volunteering sector to partner and work together; and
- government planning and leadership.



## 4 POLICY CONTEXT

### 4.1 National Standards for Volunteer Involvement

The National Standards for Volunteer Involvement were developed by Volunteering Australia in 2015 and provide a framework for volunteerism that is focused on:



The eight National Volunteer Standards are:

1. Leadership and management
2. Commitment to volunteer involvement
3. Volunteer roles
4. Recruitment and selection
5. Support and development
6. Workplace safety and wellbeing
7. Volunteer recognition
8. Quality management and continuous improvement

These eight best practice standards have informed the development of the key strategies within this Volunteer Strategy.

### 4.2 Volunteering principles

The principles of volunteering were developed by Volunteering Australia following national consultation undertaken with a wide range of stakeholders. These principles underpin the Volunteer Strategy:

- volunteering benefits the community and the volunteer
- volunteer work is unpaid
- volunteering is always a matter of choice
- volunteering is not compulsorily undertaken to receive pensions or government allowances
- volunteering is a legitimate way in which citizens can participate in the activities of their community
- volunteering is a vehicle for individuals or groups to address human, environmental and social needs
- volunteering is an activity performed in the not-for-profit sector only

- volunteering is not a substitute for paid work
- volunteers do not replace paid workers nor constitute a threat to the job security of paid workers
- volunteering respects the rights, dignity and culture of others
- volunteering promotes human rights and equality.

## 5 VOLUNTEERING IN THE LODDON SHIRE

In 2016, 31.7% of Loddon Shire residents reported performing voluntary work, a higher rate when compared with 24.3% for regional Victoria. Informal person to person volunteering is not captured in this data, so numbers are likely to be even greater.

The Volunteering in Loddon 2022 survey captured the voices of 170 volunteers. It found that:



61% of volunteers who filled in a survey were volunteering for two or more organisations/groups



76% were volunteering to contribute to their community



lack of time (58%), family (46%) and work commitments (43%) were the top three things that prevented people from volunteering



Informal (58%) and project-based volunteering (46%) were the highest preferred ways to volunteer



the under 25 age group was almost twice as likely (58%) to want to volunteer informally compared to other age groups



60% of people who completed a survey were volunteering for a sporting club.

### 5.1 Community based volunteering

There are a wide range of community based volunteer roles within the Loddon Shire, including:

- |                                  |                             |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| - Sporting and recreation groups | - History and heritage      |
| - Emergency services             | - Environmental             |
| - Health services                | - Fundraising               |
| - Community services             | - Schools and kindergartens |
| - Community events               | - Community projects        |
| - Facility and asset management  | - Community planning        |
| - Tourism and development        | - Agriculture and farming   |
| - Cemeteries                     | - Arts and culture          |
| - Returned and Services League   | - Churches                  |
| - Community groups               | - Youth groups              |
| - Service clubs                  | - Library                   |

## 5.2 Council managed volunteer activities

Council supports volunteers across the following programs/ groups that it manages:

- Visitor Information Centre
- Meals on Wheels
- Community Asset Committees
- Committees of Management for Crown Land facilities

## 6 COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

### 6.1 How we consulted

A community engagement plan was developed to guide consultation activities which occurred over a four month period during January 2022-April 2022.

Consultation activities sought to engage residents to better understand the strengths, challenges and opportunities for the future of volunteering in the Loddon Shire.

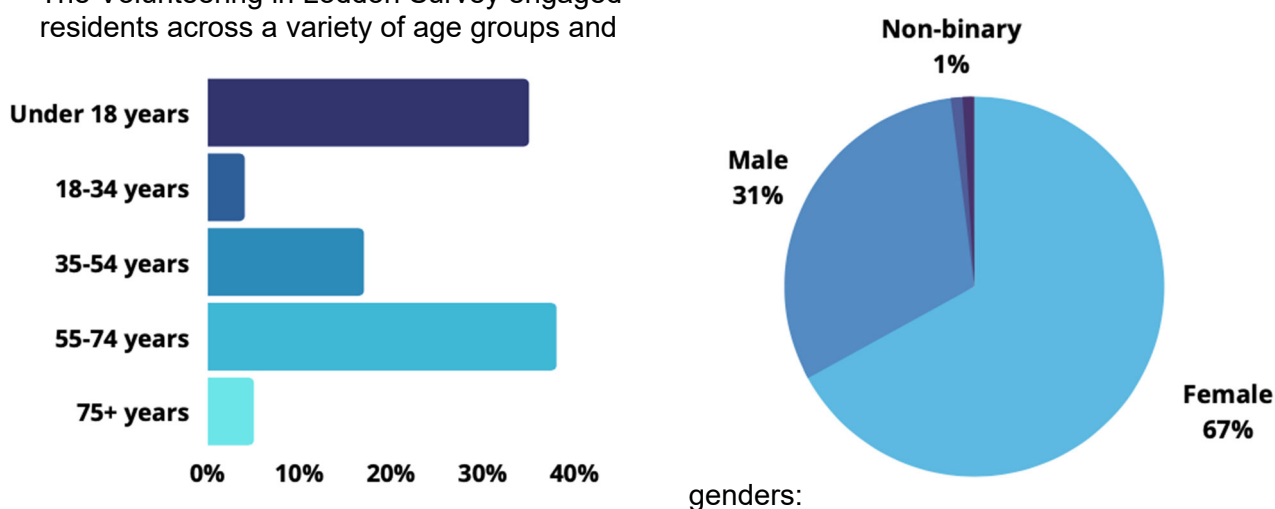
Residents were invited to fill in an online or paper based survey and to participate in focussed discussion groups across the Shire. Council also invited representatives from community groups and organisations to share their thoughts and ideas. Focus groups in secondary schools enabled young people to share their experiences and ideas.

Overall, the community consultation period engaged a total of 301 participants:

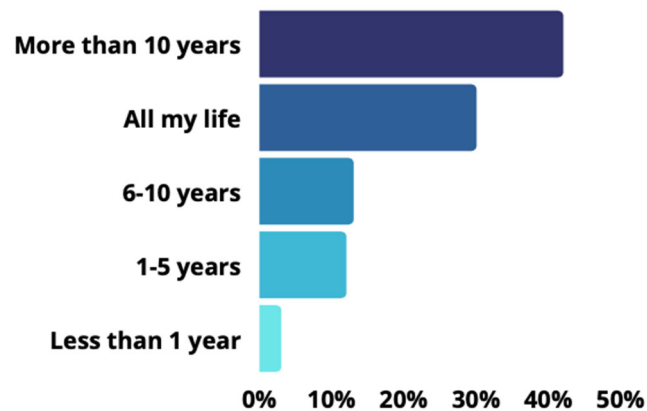
- 170 residents filled in an online or paper based survey
- 36 students took part in focus groups at schools
- 46 volunteers representing a community group took part in a focus group in: Boort, Pyramid Hill, Serpentine, Tarnagulla, Inglewood, Bridgewater, Wedderburn and online
- 9 Council staff, who live locally and volunteer, attended a focus group
- 18 business representatives shared feedback at a business dinner
- 22 Visitor Information Centre volunteers shared feedback at a meeting

### 6.2 Who we heard from

The Volunteering in Loddon Survey engaged residents across a variety of age groups and



The majority of survey respondents lived in the Shire longer term.



The vast majority of volunteers who participated in focus groups were representing their experiences of volunteering with two or more community groups or organisations.

### 6.3 What we heard

The consultation revealed a number of **strengths** of volunteering in the Loddon Shire:

- The commitment and investment of volunteers
- Strengthened community spirit and connection
- Projects are achieved
- The strong economic value of volunteers
- Services and facilities are maintained and grown
- Provides personal growth, learning, teamwork and leadership opportunities
- Sense of satisfaction
- Young people are interested in volunteering

Consultation revealed a number of **current and future barriers/challenges** for the sustainability of volunteering in the Loddon Shire:

- Volunteer burnout
- Time pressures
- Engaging younger volunteers
- Providing current/up to date information about volunteer opportunities
- Engaging new residents
- Red-tape
- Embedding a culture of volunteering
- Leadership, support and communication
- Personalities/egos/exclusive groups
- Adapting to the changing nature of volunteering

## 7 STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

The Volunteer Strategy has four key strategic directions which have been drawn from community consultation, evidence, best practice and the national standards for volunteering.

### 7.1 Strategic direction 1: promote and recruit

Strategic commitment		What we will do	Desired outcomes
1.1	<b>Actively promote volunteering in the Loddon Shire</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Promote the personal and community benefits of volunteering.</li> <li>- Make volunteering opportunities more visible to both new and existing community members.</li> <li>- Actively promote and share volunteer opportunities with young people.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Higher participation in volunteering.</li> <li>- Increase in young volunteers.</li> <li>- Greater community awareness of volunteering benefits and opportunities.</li> </ul>
1.2	<b>Use innovative and leading practices to recruit new volunteers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Offer flexibility and a variety of roles for volunteers to engage in e.g. formal, informal, project based and one off opportunities to volunteer.</li> <li>- Maintain and enhance the volunteer software / Better Impact platform and explore options for including external volunteer involving organisations and groups.</li> <li>- Work together with communities to minimise the barriers and costs of volunteering.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increase in flexible and diverse volunteer roles.</li> </ul>

### 7.2 Strategic direction 2: support and develop

Strategic commitment		What we will do	Desired outcomes
2.1	<b>Build the capacity of volunteers and volunteer supporting organisations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Improve access to training and resources that support volunteers in their roles.</li> <li>- Explore opportunities for youth-led projects that build youth leadership capabilities.</li> <li>- Explore opportunities for the development of 'youth specific volunteer roles' on committees and groups.</li> <li>- Draw on the knowledge and resources of the Bendigo Volunteer Resource Centre.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increased access to training opportunities and resources.</li> <li>- Improved skills and knowledge of volunteers.</li> <li>- Strengthened youth leadership skills.</li> </ul>
2.2	<b>Safe and easy to navigate volunteering</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Examine ways to make volunteering processes easier to navigate for volunteers.</li> <li>- Provide support and guidance to manage COVID and safely re-open volunteer programs.</li> <li>- Advocate for government support and leadership to support the impacts of COVID-19 on volunteering.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Decreased red tape.</li> <li>- COVID-19 safe volunteering.</li> </ul>

### 7.3 Strategic direction 3: recognise, celebrate and value

Strategic commitment		What we will do	Desired outcomes
3.1	<b>Promote the value and benefits of volunteering</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Report annually on key projects supported by volunteers and highlight the value they have contributed.</li> <li>- Highlight the economic and social benefits of volunteering.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Greater community awareness of volunteering benefits.</li> <li>- Increase in media coverage.</li> </ul>
3.2	<b>Recognise and celebrate the contributions of volunteers and volunteer organisations and groups</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Conduct annual volunteer celebration activities during Volunteer Week.</li> <li>- Profile the stories of local volunteers in the media.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Volunteers and volunteer organisations are known and feel appreciated and valued.</li> </ul>

### 7.4 Strategic direction 4: quality and culture

Strategic commitment		What we will do	Desired outcomes
4.1	<b>Partner and collaborate with volunteer supporting organisations and groups</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Work together with key stakeholders to strengthen the culture of volunteerism across the Shire.</li> <li>- Share resources and knowledge.</li> <li>- Identify opportunities for joint efforts on shared goals.</li> <li>- Advocate for resources to meet community needs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Strengthened partnerships to support volunteering.</li> <li>- Increased resources and resource use is maximised.</li> </ul>
4.2	<b>Include volunteers in decisions that affect them</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Engage volunteers and volunteering organisations so their input can shape resources, policies and planning and inform decision making.</li> <li>- Close the loop by providing information to volunteers on the results of their involvement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Volunteer groups and organisations are engaged and informed.</li> </ul>
4.3	<b>Implement best practice standards and advocate for community needs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Be guided by the national Standards for Volunteer Involvement.</li> <li>- Monitor and be responsive to volunteer trends and emerging needs.</li> <li>- Advocate to meet community needs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Volunteer groups and organisations are using the National Standards for Volunteer Involvement to inform their work.</li> <li>- Increased monitoring and awareness of volunteering data and trends.</li> <li>- Increased resources to support volunteering.</li> </ul>

## 8 RISK ANALYSIS

Volunteers undertake unpaid tasks that are integral for the community. Council engages volunteers to support the delivery of a number of its programs, initiatives and community assets. The main risks associated with engaging and managing volunteers are:

- occupational health and safety
- access to sensitive information
- working with vulnerable clients
- working with children
- decrease in volunteer numbers; and
- ageing volunteers.

Council will endeavour to manage these risks through:

- completing background screening for all volunteers including police checks, working with children checks and reference checks
- providing induction and refresher training to volunteers on roles and responsibilities, policies and procedures, occupational health and safety and confidentiality
- activating volunteer software / Better Impact and community partnerships to actively recruit volunteers
- regular promotion of volunteer roles
- celebrating, recognising and raising the profile of volunteering
- offering regular support and supervision to volunteers; and
- ensuring appropriate insurance coverage.

In addition to the risks related to the delivery of programs, there is also a risk that volunteer numbers decrease across the Loddon Shire.

## 9 BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

The Volunteer Strategy has been developed with regard to the existing available resources of Council.

## 10 COSTING AND FUNDING

The strategic direction identified in this strategy will be achieved utilising existing expertise within the organisation and partnering with other stakeholders (internal and external) to share resources and identify opportunities for shared goals.

Ongoing efforts will be required to obtain government funding and leadership to put in place a dedicated support to respond to the ongoing emerging needs of volunteering in Loddon in the future.

## 11 ATTACHMENTS

Volunteering in the Loddon Shire Community Engagement Results Infographic

Loddon Shire Volunteer Strategy Strategic Directions Infographic.



# Volunteering in the Loddon Shire

## Community Engagement Results Summary

Volunteers are the backbone behind communities across the Loddon Shire. We wanted to learn what is most important for a sustainable and vibrant culture of volunteering in the Loddon Shire. Overall, the community engagement heard from 301 people. A summary of what we have heard is included below.



### Who we have heard from so far...



### Volunteering in the future...

#### 170 PEOPLE COMPLETED A SURVEY



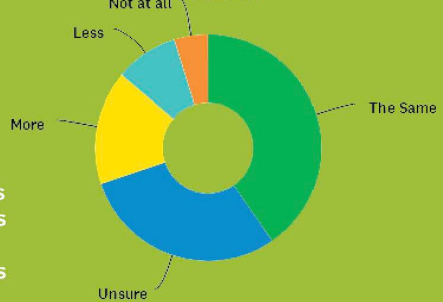
36 students took part in focus groups at schools



#### SURVEY RESPONDENTS

67% were Female  
32% were Male  
1% were non-binary  
1% did not disclose

#### IN 5 YEARS TIMES ARE YOU LIKELY TO BE VOLUNTEERING MORE OR LESS?



55 residents attended a community focus group



40 residents were consulted with at a meeting or dinner



5% were 75 years+  
38% were 55-74 years  
17% were 35-54 years  
2% were 25-34 years  
37% were 18-24 years

### Quick Snapshot

A few standout results from the survey have been shared below...



61% were volunteering for 2 or more groups



Non formal (58%) and project based volunteering (46%) were most popular



76% were volunteering to contribute to their community



The under 25 age group was almost twice as likely to want to volunteer non formally (58%) compared to the other age groups



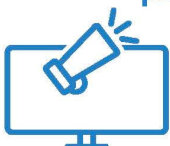
Lack of time (58%), family (46%) and work commitments (43%) were the top 3 things that prevented people from volunteering



60% of people who completed a survey were volunteering for a sporting club

*"I feel I have done plenty of volunteering and should hand it over to the next generation to step up and take control with new ideas and enthusiasm."*

#### Top 3 ideas for attracting more young people into volunteer roles



Advertise volunteer opportunities

#### Top 3 ideas to support a vibrant and sustainable culture of volunteering



Encourage and support volunteer groups



Involve young people in youth focussed events and projects



Advertise and promote opportunities more



Offer more project based and short term volunteering opportunities



Decrease the red tape

Loddon Shire Council recognises that volunteers are the backbone behind communities.

The Loddon Shire Council Volunteer Strategy 2022-2026 captures Council's vision and approach to supporting and growing community volunteering across the Shire. This one page document has been developed as a quick grab summary. The full version of the Volunteer Strategy can be found on Council's website: [www.loddon.vic.gov.au](http://www.loddon.vic.gov.au)

“Who would do the work if volunteers didn't do it?”

(Volunteering in Loddon  
Community Focus Group 2022)

### What is Volunteering?



Volunteering is time willingly given for the common good and without financial gain (Volunteering Australia 2016).

Volunteers provide vital support for the delivery of services, activities, projects, programs and key community assets. Additionally, volunteering builds the capacity of community members and promotes community connectedness, social inclusion and active citizenship.

### Strategic Directions

The Loddon Shire Volunteer Strategy 2022-2026 has four key strategic directions which have been drawn from community consultation, evidence, best practice and the national standards for volunteering.



#### 1. PROMOTE AND RECRUIT

- Actively promote volunteering in the Loddon Shire.
- Use innovative and leading practices to recruit new volunteers.



#### 2. SUPPORT AND DEVELOP

- Build the capacity of volunteers and volunteer supporting organisations.
- Safe and easy to navigate volunteering.



#### 3. RECOGNISE, CELEBRATE AND VALUE

- Promote the value and benefits of volunteering.
- Recognise and celebrate the contributions of volunteers and volunteer organisations and groups.



#### 4. QUALITY AND CULTURE

- Partner and collaborate with volunteer supporting organisations and groups.
- Include volunteers in decisions that affect them.
- Implement best practice standards and advocate for community needs.

“Volunteering makes sure that there are things there for me and for other people in the community.”