

Characteristics of volunteering

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PURPOSE

What is volunteering? What characterises it and sets it apart? To answer this question, Volunteering Tasmania (VT) has consulted with our state volunteering community, our Social Policy Advisory Council and our internal team to develop a set of characteristics that define volunteering. The statement forms one of VT's foundational policy documents and provides guidance to:

- Our state volunteer sector and the wider community on what activities are defined as volunteering;
- Our stakeholders, including policy-makers and researchers, on what activities constitute volunteering in Tasmania; and
- VT in its role as the state peak body for volunteerism in the delivery of services, research projects, and in policy and advocacy work.

DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS

In addition to Volunteering Australia's *Definition and Principles of Volunteering* statement (dated June 2005), VT has developed the following defining characteristics of volunteering.

Volunteering is an activity that can occur in any setting and has the following characteristics:

- It has a direct benefit to the community and the volunteer (whether the benefit is tangible or intangible);
- It is undertaken by choice¹; and
- It is unpaid². However, the volunteer may receive reasonable or appropriate reimbursement for expenses incurred that are associated with the role, and/or may receive a monetary or other incentive/reward³).

1 Choice is defined as an act of selecting or making a decision when faced with two or more possibilities.

2 The definition of a paid employee is set out in the *Fair Work Act 2009* (Cth).

3 A direct monetary or other incentive/reward could include a tangible item such as a movie ticket or an enabling amount of money, for example a living allowance.

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