



Hello Volunteers and Friends,

Welcome to 2015 I hope you have had a fantastic start to the year as we are in full swing now and it looks like it is building up to be another exciting year. There is already so much happening in the volunteering space which is amazing given the current funding crisis we are all undergoing as the government continues to withdraw funding from the sector. We all just keep soldiering on because we understand how important the work we do is, so well done to you all and lets hope for finer weather in the future.

This weekend brings the **Keep Australia Beautiful** campaign around again so we can get out and make our environment a more beautiful place to be. We are so privileged to live in such a beautiful and safe part of the world that we all need to make efforts to keep it looking beautiful and healthy for all to enjoy. If everyone picks up just one piece of rubbish we will see an enormous difference in our environment. I hope to see you out and about on **March the 1st**.

Harmony day is just around the corner and is shaping up to be a fantastic day to celebrate the diversity of our community and enjoy the many influences the variety of cultures have in our community. We will be celebrating **Harmony Day** with a picnic on **Saturday March 21st** 12pm to 4pm at The Close opposite St Patrick's Primary School. You can bring your own picnic or try the food of other cultures from the vendors. There will be activities, music and lots more to join in and have fun for all the family. This is a free event and one not to be missed so don't forget to put it in your calendar.

There are so many other events and happening around the region I hope to see some of you out and about enjoying the many and varied things on offer.

Happy volunteering,

Linda Phillis

Volunteer Skillsbank Coordinator

Number of Aussies on Newstart at Record High

The number of Australians on welfare payments is increasing with the number of people on Newstart for more than 12 months at its highest level ever. Figures released by the Department of Social Services (DSS) show that at the end of 2014, 527,318 had been receiving the Newstart Allowance for at least one year, an increase of almost 13 per cent on the previous year. The total number of people on any kind of Newstart Allowance or Youth Allowance increased 827,039 to 858,373, a jump of 3.8 per cent. The total number of job seekers increased by 3.6 per cent overall from 406 703 to 421 245. Despite the increase in demand for Newstart, Australia's peak welfare body, the Australian Council of Social Services (ACOSS), called for the amount that eligible people receive to be increased. "It is disturbing that some of the harshest social security measures in last year's Budget targeted working-age payments, especially the proposed six month wait for unemployment payments for many people up to 29 years of age, when the major drivers of growth in Budget expenditures lie

elsewhere," ACOSS said in its 2015 Budget recommendation. "The main purpose of income support for unemployed people is to share the risk of unemployment between each individual and Government. The removal of income support for up to six months each year from unemployed young people would undermine that purpose. "We are not aware of any other wealthy country that has responded to rising youth unemployment in this way. "A fairer and more productive approach is to keep young people engaged with education, training and the labour market and support them in their transition to paid employment through income support and effective employment and training programs." ACOSS argued that an increase of \$51 per week in Newstart payments should be introduced at a cost of \$1.3 billion from 2016 to 2017. "The real value of Allowance payments has not increased since the early 1990s, and these payments were excluded from the \$32 per week in pensions announced in 2009," ACOSS said. "The Henry Report on the tax-transfer system recommended that the single rate of Allow-

ance payments be benchmarked to two-thirds of the partnered rate, as was implemented for single pensioners in 2009. "This would currently require a \$51 per week rise in the single rate of Newstart Allowance, which should also extend to other Allowances such as Austudy and Abstudy payments and the Youth Allowance for those aged over 17 years living away from their parents. Payments for sole parents on Newstart Allowance should also increase accordingly. "As the Henry Report noted, there is room to increase these payments without significantly weakening work incentives. A single adult on Newstart Allowance who obtains a fulltime job at the minimum wage would more than double their disposable income. "This payment increase would have a substantial and immediate effect on reducing poverty, including among sole parent families affected by last year's payment cuts (which would be fully restored for the poorest of those families by a combination of the Newstart Allowance and Family Tax Benefit increases proposed here)."



Accessibility For All – Have Your Say

Access issues affect all of us at some time in our lives. Do you or someone you care for have a disability or aged related condition? Are you a parent using a pram or are you experiencing a temporary injury? Perhaps English is your second language. Chances are that you experience barriers to access and inclusion on a daily basis.

The Rural City of Wangaratta is committed to ensuring that people of all abilities are able to fully participate in their community and is

currently reviewing its Community Access and Inclusion Plan for the next three years. Being able to access services, buildings, information and events is central to this.

Throughout March 2015, members of the community can share their thoughts on how to make our municipality a more inclusive and accessible place for everyone who lives or visits here. By completing an *Accessibility For All* survey you will be providing Council with valuable information to improve ac-

cess and inclusion in our community as well as the chance to go into a draw to win a double pass to one of Wangaratta Performing Arts Centre's Season shows.

Have your say by completing the online survey (<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/X3F8S7M>).

Contact Louise Minogue via email at l.minogue@wangaratta.vic.gov.au or phone on 5722 0720 to have a hardcopy version of the survey mailed out to you or to discuss

WSN-ROW CLEAN UP AUSTRALIA DAY EVENT EVENT TO BE HELD SUNDAY 1st MARCH REGISTRATION AT BATCHELORS GREEN from 8am.



This year we will be cleaning from Batchelors Green downstream to the Junction of the One and Three Mile Creeks. There is a lot of area to clean up so we will need a lot of volunteers on the day.

Come along and help clean up our local waterways by removing litter that comes from the stormwater system. Due to recent rain the litter has accumulated in a few areas so it should make the clean-up easier.

Many hands make light work and when we work together it is also a fun way to clean our waterways so Native fish can survive.

Prizes awarded for your efforts – fishing rods, WISCA/YMCA swim passes & food vouchers from Chicken Time and Willie's Fish & Chips, and a FREE bar-b-que for all volunteers.

For further information or to help with registration desk & BBQ, call Di Farmer 0439020448 or email di-ane.farmer@bigpond.com



Is your Club a Healthy Club?

'Club Help' Forum on Governance

Monday 16 March 2015 Tuesday 17 March 2015
 The Centre, Moyhu Bowling Club,
 Chisholm Street Wangaratta 3 Byrne St, Moyhu
 6.30pm – 8:30pm

Planned workshop

Volunteer Management for you Club.

Workshop in Bright on April 20th

Workshop in Beechworth April 15th

Good governance supports growth and development in your club and reduces the risks! These sessions are a great way to see how your club is going and will provide a great start to planning for gradual improvement.

For further information including venue information please see contact listed below

RSVP to Kim Sutherland

The Centre-North East Regional Sports Assembly
 by Monday 9 March 2015
 Phone: 03 5721 0252
 or email: kimsutherland@thecentre.vic.edu.au

Share your news!

We would really like to hear from anyone who has something to share, such as coming events, milestones, helpful hints, a recipe or good news to share with the rest of the volunteering community. Just let us know at the Skillsbank Office and we will print it.



Volunteer Skillsbank

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The Centre

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