Agenda Item 9.6

REPORT

Report No. 185/19ccs

TO: **CORPORATE AND COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE – MONDAY 14 OCTOBER 2019**

SUBJECT: **VOLUNTEER RESOURCE CENTRE**

AUTHOR: **MANAGER COMMUNITY AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT – JEANETTE SHEPHERD**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report investigates Council financing a trial pop-up Volunteer Resource Centre in collaboration with Volunteering SA&NT.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That it be a recommendation to Council:

A. **That Council funds a pop-up Volunteer Resource Centre in the CBD, staffed by Volunteering SA&NT, for a trial period of five months, between February and June 2020.**

B. **That Council funds 20 hours per week in wages for Volunteering SA&NT to make their Alice Springs based staff member full time, for the trial period of five months.**

REPORT

1. BACKGROUND

Alice Springs Town Council has not been significantly involved in the volunteer sector, except for in the early 2000s. In 2003, it was identified that local organisations and individuals were experiencing difficulties in recruiting, referring, training, supporting, managing and retaining volunteers. A Volunteer Resource Centre was set up by Alice Springs Town Council. The aim of the Centre was to provide a referral and placement service for volunteers and volunteer organisations in need of support. The Centre also provided general information regarding local organisations, had a community newsletter, and also held volunteer expos. The Volunteer Resource Centre was set up in 2004, but in 2006, Volunteering Australia informed Alice Springs Town Council that it was unable to continue its funding.

Volunteering SA&NT currently has a Regional Coordinator based in Alice Springs. This role provides training and mentoring to volunteer managers and community organisations in the areas of advocacy and policy, networking, reward and recognition (NT Volunteer of the Year Awards and events), conflict resolution between Volunteer Managers and volunteers, and a limited amount of volunteer referrals. This is a 20 hour a week role.

At the 11 June 2019 Corporate and Community Services Committee meeting, Council recommended:

That Council investigates financing a pop-up shop resource centre and work with Volunteering SA&NT (6526 ccs).

2. DISCUSSION

The Manager Community and Cultural Development has met with the following Volunteering SA&NT representatives since June:

- Evelyn O'Loughlin, CEO
- Tracey Fox, Executive Manager SA
- Rachael Bowker, Executive Manager NT

Volunteering SA&NT is very supportive of a potential partnership with Council, and working together to better support volunteering and community organisations in Alice Springs. The Manager Community and Cultural Development and Volunteering SA&NT have discussed how a Volunteer Resource Centre and partnership could look, and recommend:

1) **That Council funds a pop-up Volunteer Resource Centre in the CBD, staffed by Volunteering SA&NT, for a trial period of five months.**

Volunteering SA&NT has most recently been based in a small office at Red Hot Arts, so therefore hasn't been operating as an easily accessible and visible public 'drop-in' space for people to source volunteer information and referrals. A Volunteer Resource Centre based in the CBD would increase the visibility of volunteering in Alice Springs, and provide a more accessible space for people to seek information regarding volunteering opportunities in Alice Springs. This in turn would hopefully encourage increased volunteer numbers for local organisations and community events. It is not uncommon for regional Councils to support the community by operating Volunteer Resource Centres. Melville, Rockingham and Kwinana Councils, for example, all operate Volunteer Resource Centres.

Through an Alice Springs located Volunteer Resource Centre, Volunteering SA&NT would:

- offer volunteering information, training and support to individuals, with a focus on providing individualised referral, placement and support services for people experiencing disadvantage
- provide information, tools, training and resources for volunteer managers
- provide information, tools and resources for volunteer-involving organisations that collaborate with other volunteer-involving organisations to minimise duplication, share best practice, and to ensure consistency of service, including participation in networking arrangements
- promote and give recognition to volunteering within the local community.

It is recommended that a pop-up centre could be trialled from February to June 2020. This would allow Council and Volunteering SA&NT to assess the effectiveness and use of the centre, and fit the trial period within the 2019/20 financial year. Following the trial period it would then be recommended to Council whether or not this initiative should continue in a longer term capacity. Volunteering SA&NT would directly liaise with the Manager Community and Cultural Development.

In terms of Council and Volunteering SA&NT's responsibilities to a pop-up centre, it is proposed that:

- **Alice Springs Town Council** would source a space for a pop-up Volunteer Resource Centre in the CBD (in consultation with Volunteering SA&NT), and fund the rent, marketing of the new pop-up centre, and set up the space ready for use as required (i.e. putting in mobile alarm system if there isn't one, basic fit-outs etc.).
- **Volunteering SA&NT** would be responsible for the day-to-day running of the centre, and provide all the office equipment and furniture, and pay utilities. Volunteering SA&NT would also provide monthly volunteer referral and centre access numbers to Council.

An MOU would be drafted between ASTC and Volunteering SA/NT to ensure both parties are clear on their responsibilities if this initiative were to go ahead.

2) **That Council funds 20 hours per week in wages for Volunteering SA&NT to make their Alice Springs based staff member full time, for a trial period of five months.**

The sole Volunteering SA&NT Alice Springs staff member (Regional Coordinator) currently only works for 20 hours a week. However, if a pop-up Volunteer Resource Centre is funded by Council, it is also recommended that Council funds 20 hours per week to make this role full time. Volunteering SA&NT currently do not have the financial capacity to increase the hours of this position.

Having a full time person staffing the centre would ensure that the space is properly utilised and open to the public during its trial, versus the limited hours of a 20 hour a week position. This is especially the case since the Regional Coordinator would also attend external meetings, visit community organisations etc. as part of their role, so wouldn't solely be located in the Centre. It is proposed that there would be set hours that the Centre would always be open to the public (i.e. 10am-3pm, but to be negotiated with Volunteering SA&NT), and during the other hours the Regional Coordinator would conduct external visits as required.

A full time staff member would also help Council and Volunteering SA&NT properly assess the initiative, and evaluate whether this community outreach program should be continued. As with the proposed Volunteer Resource Centre, this staffing funding would be for a five month trial period.

3. POLICY IMPACTS

A more robust volunteer sector, including increased official Council volunteering opportunities, would potentially have several diverse policy impacts to Council's deliverables by supporting increased community involvement in the below areas:

Alice Springs Town Council Strategic Plan 2018 – 2021:

Objective 1: A dynamic community
1.1: Inclusiveness and support
1.1.1: Develop and enhance programmes, as well as services
1.1.2: Promote community engagement, cohesion and safety
1.1.3: Proactively embrace diversity, ensuring equitable participation opportunities

Objective 2: A great place to live
2.1: Community life, promoting a healthy, vibrant culture

2.1.1: Provide sport, recreation and leisure opportunities, which maximise social capital
2.1.2: Promote active lifestyles for people of all ages

2.3: Enhance life-long learning, library and technology services
2.3.1: Protect and promote local history and heritage
2.3.3: Offer STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering. Arts and Mathematics) training, education and support to establish a local digital culture

Objective 3: Leadership in sustainability
3.2: Reduce Alice Springs' carbon footprint
3.2.1: Educate and enable the community to reduce greenhouse emissions
3.2.2: Educate and enable the community with regard to waste reduction, waste management, water consumption and recycling

3.3: Conserve and protect the Alice Springs environment
3.3.1: Support a healthy, natural living environment

4. FINANCIAL IMPACTS

The proposed budget for a pop-up Volunteer Resource Centre is #771 (Pop-Up Gallery). This proposal is reliant on the carry forward of this budget ($90,414) from the 2018/19 financial year. This carry forward has yet to be confirmed.

It is estimated the cost for funding a pop-up centre, and providing 20 hours a week wages, would cost up to $56,000. However, this amount would vary depending on the location finally decided on, and what works are required to make the space suitable, so it is recommended to carry forward the full amount of $90,414 from budget line #771 for this trial program.

PROPOSED VOLUNTEER RESOURCE CENTRE BUDGET	GST excl.
Lease @ 5 months + four weeks bond*	$ 15,176.00
Fit-Out of space contingency	$ 11,200.00
Regional Coordinator staffing, 20 hours p/w, 5 months, $37.81/h	$ 15,124.00
Advertising and marketing	$ 8,500.00
Contingency (15%)	$ 6,000.00
TOTAL	**$ 56,000.00**

* The rental charges are estimated based on the 2018 pop-up gallery rental costs.

5. SOCIAL IMPACTS

Volunteering is shown to provide positive social benefits to people, including reducing stress, learning new skills, and giving people a sense of belonging. The Alice Springs community would benefit from a more robust volunteer sector, through stronger community organisations and events, and supporting people to be more connected and included in the community.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

Having increased environmental focused volunteers will potentially lead to positive environmental benefits for Alice Springs.

7. PUBLIC RELATIONS

Volunteering can provide positive media opportunity and impact for the municipality, and would help increase the quality and quantity of events and community work conducted in Alice Springs.

8. ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A - Letter of support from Volunteering SA&NT

Jeanette Shepherd
MANAGER COMMUNITY AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

Simon Duke
ACTING DIRECTOR CORPORATE AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

ATTACHMENT A

volunteering sa&nt

4 October 2019

Jeanette Shepherd
Manager Community and Cultural Development
Alice Springs Town Council
PO Box 1071
Alice Springs, NT, 0871

Dear Jeanette,

On behalf of Volunteering SA&NT Inc we would like to formally express our support for working in partnership with the Alice Springs Town Council to trial a pop-up Volunteer Resource Centre in Alice Springs and for taking forward the proposal to Council.

As a not-for-profit organisation, the peak body for volunteering and provider of volunteer support services, Volunteering SA&NT works with individuals, organisations, businesses and communities to lead, advance, grow, promote and celebrate volunteering. Volunteering NT is our brand in the Northern Territory and is a division of Volunteering SA&NT.

Volunteering NT provides an extensive range of services and support including training and helping originations recruit, retain and manage their volunteers.

With volunteering playing such a key role in sustaining healthy and resilient communities, it also contributes significantly to the quality and vibrancy of our society. A pop-up Volunteer Resource Centre in Alice Springs would enable the volunteering sector grow stronger and be more sustainable.

We are pleased for the opportunity to partner with the Alice Springs Town Council and are grateful for the funding the Council are making available to progress the trial.

We look forward to working together to advance volunteering in Alice Springs.

Please don't hesitate to contact me if you require any further information.

Yours sincerely

EVELYN O'LOUGHLIN
Chief Executive Officer

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