



▶ **Submission to the New Zealand Productivity Commission on
'More Effective Social Services'**

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▶ **Contact Details**

This submission is by a group

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▶ **Background**

Volunteering New Zealand

1. Volunteering New Zealand (VNZ) is the "voice of volunteering" in Aotearoa New Zealand. Our vision is for a New Zealand that promotes, values and supports effective volunteering for the benefit of individuals and communities – and our mission is to promote, support and advocate for volunteering.
2. We are the only national organisation in New Zealand that focuses purely on volunteering. We hold the 'big picture' and are in a position to liaise, work closely with, and advise volunteers, government and business sectors on volunteer-involving

concerns. This helps ensure that volunteering occurs within a positive environment where it is encouraged and fostered.

3. Over the past 13 years, VNZ has raised the profile of volunteer groups, activities, and management. It has promoted volunteering and its value to New Zealand society through advocacy, sharing stories, and producing tools like the Best Practice Guidelines and Competencies for Managers of Volunteers.
4. We have a membership of 60 national and regional member organisations that involve volunteers in their work programmes. We advocate on behalf of these organisations and other groups that are not members, but are aligned to our mission and values.

New Zealand's Voluntary Sector

5. New Zealand has more than 97,000 non-profit organisations, contributing 2.6% to GDP. This increases to 4.9% of GDP when taking into account the volunteer labour contribution and is comparative to the total contribution of the New Zealand construction industry.
6. The most up-to-date data on the volunteer sector state that in New Zealand there are more than 1.2 million volunteers who contribute more than 270 million hours of unpaid labour to the sector. In 2008, 67% of the Community and Voluntary Sector workforce was made up of volunteers; 90% of New Zealand non-profit organisations employ no staff, and rely solely on volunteers¹.

¹ From the *The New Zealand Non-profit Sector in Comparative Perspective*, 2008

► Submission

Context:

The New Zealand Productivity Commission's Draft Report, *More effective social services* ("the Draft Report") addresses a wide range of matters within the social services sector. VNZ's submission does not address every issue raised in the draft report. Rather, focuses on key issues raised in the Draft Report that we consider relevant to volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations who contribute to the wellbeing of individuals and communities of New Zealand.

VNZ has previously submitted on the Productivity Commission's inquiry into *More effective social services*. Concerns about how measuring outcomes and contract models of funding may focus the sector only on specific results.

VNZ will restate the Government Policy on Volunteer 2002² for the purposes of clarity:

- volunteers are found in wide-ranging spheres of activity, including sports, arts, heritage, emergency services, social services, health, education, recreation, human rights, tourism, conservation and the environment
- volunteers offer their time and expertise of their own free will, out of commitment to their community, and to fulfil cultural obligations
- the nature of volunteering varies widely depending on different cultural expectations and the nature of the task
- volunteers give their time unpaid and should have the opportunity to gain benefits in return, such as new skills, and a sense of belonging and achievement
- volunteers should not replace paid workers
- volunteering is an essential element of civil society.

VNZ urges the Commission to honour this Policy by considering it, along with the following considerations during the writing of the Final Report.

² [http://www.dia.govt.nz/diawebsite.nsf/Files/Government-Policy-on-Volunteering/\\$file/Government-Policy-on-Volunteering.pdf](http://www.dia.govt.nz/diawebsite.nsf/Files/Government-Policy-on-Volunteering/$file/Government-Policy-on-Volunteering.pdf)

Issues identified by Volunteering New Zealand.

Chapter Five. Institutional Architecture.

VNZ strongly endorses recommendation 5.2 of the Draft Report:

“The Government should take account of the role and value of volunteers as an important part of social services in drafting new legislation to ensure that volunteers are not crowded out by new regulation. The government should pay particular attention to this issue when finalising the Health and Safety Reform bill.”

In the paper *Organisational Factors Affecting Volunteers*, Studer and Schnurbein (2013) found empirical evidence that bureaucracy affects volunteer retention, by negatively influencing commitment and positively influencing burden³. VNZ has previously submitted to the Transport and Industrial Relations Select Committee in May 2014 on the Health and Safety Reform Bill noting the potential burden this Bill places on solely volunteer run organisations employing staff.

VNZ suggests the Commission recommend that the government takes the role and value of volunteers into account when implementing new or adjusting existing legislation.

Chapter Eight. Data and Analytics.

VNZ agrees with finding 8.1.

“Cost-effectively collecting, sharing and analysing data across the social services system will greatly increase the capacity to design, commission and provide effective services”.

VNZ provisionally agrees with recommendation 8.2.

“Government social services agencies and social service providers should capture information on their clients and services in a consistent way.”

The effective use of data across the Social Services will be of benefit to the whole sector, and make sector intelligence much more effective. While data collection can be completed by volunteer organisations and groups; we note that there are costs associated with such activities. For example, Stirling, Kilpatrick and Orpin (2011) found that the practice of

³ Studer S, Schnurbein G. *Organisational Factors Affecting Volunteers: A Literature Review on Volunteer Coordination. Voluntas.* 2013; Vol 24.

volunteers keeping written records was negatively correlated with retaining volunteers⁴. In another study, Mook, Handy and Quarter (2007) found a wide discrepancy in volunteers' reporting standards, noting the gathering and keeping of such records was expensive⁵.

Andrew Haldane, Chief Economist of the Bank of England, recently addressed similar concerns that the value created by volunteering is rarely well-measured or well-understood. Haldane suggests that there is a systematic under-estimation of the value volunteering provides publicly and privately: "If the value of volunteering remains largely out of sight, it is likely to remain out of mind. The potential economic and societal benefits from volunteering [to the social sector] then risk remaining untapped"⁶.

VNZ therefore encourages the Commission to acknowledge the limited resources and hours available to volunteers. Data collection, while important, should be secondary to the actual work being done by volunteers. One way in which this balance could be achieved is by recommending in the Final Report that the benefits of data collected by volunteers are finely balanced between burden and benefit. Of GDP, Robert Kennedy once said it "measures neither our wit nor our courage, neither our wisdom nor our learning, neither our compassion nor our devotion to our country, it measures everything in short, except that which makes life worthwhile"⁷. We hope the Commission will similarly view the process of capturing information on clients and services.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Volunteering New Zealand strongly supports recommendation 5.2 of the Draft Report. VNZ supports finding 8.1, and provisionally supports recommendation 8.2. It is noted that the aforementioned issues have a degree of interconnection relevant to volunteers and volunteer involving organisations. Specifically, any new regulation or legislation should take into account the role volunteers play in contributing to effective social services in New Zealand. VNZ proposes the Final Report should recognise that new requirements in data collection, and new and amended legislation, while both important and necessary, should not be so onerous as to ever crowd-out volunteers.

VNZ is happy to provide further information and engage in dialogue about these or other issues at the Commission's request.

⁴ Stirling C, Kilpatrick S, Orpin P. A Psychological Contract Perspective to the link between non-profit organisations management practices and volunteer sustainability. *Human Resources Development International*. 2011; Vol 14, Issue 3.

⁵ Mook L, Handy F, Quarter J. Reporting Volunteer Labour at the Organisational Level: A Study of Canadian Nonprofits. *Voluntas*. 2007; Vol 18, Issue 1.

⁶ Haldane, A. In giving, how much do we receive? The Social Value of Volunteering. *Pro Bono Economics Lecture to the Society of Business Economists London*. 9 September 2014.

⁷ Robert F Kennedy, as cited in Haldane, A. In giving, how much do we receive? The Social Value of Volunteering. *Pro Bono Economics Lecture to the Society of Business Economists London*. 9 September 2014.