MEDIA RELEASE

Tuesday, 5 July 2011

GET INVOLVED IN NEWCASTLE VOLUNTEERING FORUM

Hunter community groups and residents are being urged to take part in a forum next month to help develop key strategies to improve local volunteering services and provide input for a state-wide Volunteering Strategy.

Minister for Citizenship and Communities Victor Dominello MP, who has responsibility for the Volunteering portfolio, said registrations are now open for those wanting to attend the Hunter Region Volunteering Forum in Newcastle on 4 August 2011.

“Volunteers make an invaluable contribution to the social fabric of our State,” Minister Dominello said.

“Without them we would not enjoy most of the local level sporting, artistic, cultural and environmental activities that make this State great.

“The aim of the Hunter Region Volunteering Forum is to identify common issues or themes for all community based agencies that utilise the services of volunteers.

“Once they are identified, participants will share ideas on developing key strategies which may be incorporated in local and state volunteering strategies.

“Next month’s forum is also designed to coincide with a state-wide consultation process launched by the NSW Government last week as it develops the first NSW Volunteering Strategy.

“A series of 10 consultations with volunteers and organisations across the State, including Newcastle, will be held over the next two months.

“The Hunter Region Volunteering Forum will include a panel of delegates who possess vast experience managing programs that rely heavily on volunteers.

“During the forum panel members will take questions from attendees on various volunteering topics and discuss innovative solutions.

“There are a number of key challenges currently facing volunteering groups including generational change, participation levels, technology, service delivery and training requirements.

“The O'Farrell Government recognises the importance of this event in delivering future volunteering benefits to the wider Hunter community and that is why we have contributed $1,000 towards the cost of staging the forum.

“The funding will help pay for venue and equipment hire, marketing and advertising.”
The Hon Victor Dominello MP
Minister for Citizenship and Communities
Minister for Aboriginal Affairs

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Tony Ross, from the Hunter Volunteer Centre, said the forum presents the region’s community organisations with the opportunity to come together to improve volunteering in the Hunter and help develop the NSW Volunteering Strategy.

“I welcome this chance to network and share ideas with a panel of speakers with local and international knowledge and experience on issues relating to volunteering,” Mr Ross said.

“The real benefit is the opportunity to develop local strategies, work more collaboratively and increase volunteerism in our sector.

“I would certainly encourage any community organisation to attend the forum and take an active role in the discussions on the day.”

Minister Dominello said volunteering has been recognised by all levels of government as playing a pivotal role in supporting vibrant and sustainable communities.

“Volunteering promotes community participation, life experience, education, employment and social inclusion,” he said.

“Without volunteers, government and community organisations would be unable to deliver services to community groups and vulnerable community members.”

The Newcastle Interagency Group, which comprises government and non-government agencies, is coordinating the Hunter Region Volunteering Forum which will be held at the Fort Scratchley Multi Purpose Centre, Newcastle.

Panel members include:
- Associate Professor Melanie Oppenheimer, University of New England;
- Martin J Cowling, International consultant, People First Total Solutions;
- Lynne Dalton, CEO NSW Centre for Volunteering;
- Sue Atkins, CEO NSW Meals on Wheels Association;
- Rhonda Scruton, CEO Hunter Surf Life Saving Association; and
- Greg Perry, Regional Commander State Emergency Service.

Anyone interested in registering for the Forum can call the Hunter Volunteer Centre on 02 49400077.