The Hon Victor Dominello MP
Minister for Citizenship and Communities
Minister for Aboriginal Affairs

MEDIA RELEASE

14 May 2012

$4.5 MILLION TO SUPPORT PRICELESS VOLUNTEERS

The opportunity to trade time spent volunteering for services and to have volunteering lead to jobs will encourage more people to join NSW’s 2 million-strong volunteer base, Minister for Citizenship and Communities Victor Dominello announced today at the start of National Volunteer Week 2012 (14 – 20 May).

Mr Dominello said the NSW Government’s first-ever Volunteering Strategy, backed by $4.5 million in funding, is focused on innovative ways to make it easier for people to volunteer.

“Volunteering is certainly about doing good, but it also really adds to our community’s triple bottom line with clear benefits for the economy, society and the environment,” said Mr Dominello.

“Volunteers in NSW contribute more than 240 million hours of voluntary work each year, estimated to be worth a remarkable $5 billion. They make our community a great place and we want even more people to participate.

“Following state-wide consultation last year, the NSW Government has developed a comprehensive suite of initiatives worth more than $4.5 million to promote, recognise and celebrate volunteering.

“For the first time in Australia, two pilot projects in Newcastle and the Central Coast will trial ‘timebanking’, an innovative way to encourage volunteer service within local communities.

“Timebanking allows people to earn time credit by providing a volunteer service to another timebank member – like babysitting, driving or computer lessons – which they can then redeem on a service they need.

“For example, a grandmother could earn credits by volunteering to cook meals for a homeless shelter. She could then spend her time credits by getting another timebank member to help her with household chores.

“We will also do more to recognise the skills developed through volunteering and to help jobseekers use volunteering as a pathway to employment.

“Working with community organisations, local businesses and TAFE NSW, two pilot projects in South West Sydney and Western NSW will look at how practical experience earned through volunteering could count towards formal qualifications.

“I am also delighted to announce a reduction in the cost of the National Criminal History Record Check provided by the NSW Police Force from $52 to $15 for certain volunteers who work with older people.
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“This means that a volunteer in a nursing home or someone who volunteers in multiple services for older people will now be able to access a police check for the same cost as volunteers in disability and home care organisations,” Mr Dominello said.

Other initiatives in the Volunteering Strategy include:

- more than $100,000 funding for the Centre for Volunteering to help ensure the rights of volunteers are better recognised;
- working with the State’s Volunteer Centre Network to provide training for volunteer organisations in governance, leadership and effective programs;
- an increase in funding to $30,000 to help support the NSW Volunteer of the Year Awards to recognise and celebrate volunteers, including in regional areas;
- work to support and increase volunteering by companies and employees in the business sector; and
- a new volunteering website to provide accessible information and resources for the volunteering community.

For more information or to download a copy of the strategy, please visit the website at www.volunteering.nsw.gov.au.