MEDIA RELEASE

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EMPLOYERS SUPPORT VOLUNTEER RIGHTS

Minister for Citizenship and Communities Victor Dominello today released a Statement of Principles for employers across NSW to become signatories, to protect the rights of our 2 million volunteers and recognise their invaluable contribution during National Volunteer Week.

Mr Dominello, who has responsibility for volunteering, said 12 high-profile NSW organisations have already agreed to sign the new Statement of Principles for Recognition of Volunteer Rights developed by the NSW Government.

These include; Taronga Conservation Society Australia (Taronga and Western Plains zoos), The Centre for Volunteering, Conservation Volunteers Australia, Special Olympics Australia, St John NSW and YWCA NSW.

“Volunteers are vital to the successful operation of countless organisations across a range of different industries, but as unpaid workers their rights can sometimes be overlooked,” he said.

“By signing the Statement of Principles, organisations send a clear signal to current and potential volunteers that their contributions will be valued and their rights will be respected.

“They should be treated with fairness, respect and dignity and have their rights recognised. That’s why the NSW Government has introduced a statement of seven principles outlining best practice in managing volunteers.”

The principles include that volunteers will be:

- Provided the opportunity to resolve disputes with respect and dignity.
- Offered training and professional development.
- Provided clarity about their roles.
- Involved in the organisation’s decisions that affect them.

“In preparing the report more than 3000 public responses were received and one of the most popular ideas put forward was for the NSW Government to develop and promote a set of principles,” Mr Dominello said.

“The NSW Government values the 2 million volunteers in NSW who contribute more than 240 million hours of voluntary work each year, estimated to be worth $5 billion to our economy. Further, the Government encourages improved management of volunteers to reinforce the sector’s sustainability.”

Mr Dominello encouraged other organisations that benefit from the gift of volunteering to follow this example.
Taronga’s Director and CEO, Cameron Kerr, said: “Our two zoos have a long history of involving volunteers in many aspects of our work, from providing visitor information to conducting observations for our scientific research and animal welfare programs.

“We have always encouraged the respect and recognition of our volunteers whose contribution to our work is critical and now welcome the chance to be a signatory to the Statement of Principles.”

Organisations that would like to sign up to follow the statement can get more information from www.volunteering.nsw.gov.au. A copy of the full Statement of Principles for the Recognition of Volunteer Rights follows.

The Statement of Principles was developed in response to the NSW Government’s Recognition of the Rights of Volunteers report released in March.

Statement of Principles for the Recognition of Volunteer Rights

1. This organisation demonstrates a commitment to best practice in volunteer management and all our people respect and support this commitment.

2. Our volunteers are involved in the life of the organisation and are included in decisions that affect them.

3. This organisation provides volunteers with clarity about their roles and is clear about expectations and policies that impact on their roles.

4. Our volunteers respect the roles of everyone in the organisation.

5. This organisation recognises and celebrates the contribution of volunteers.

6. Our volunteers are provided with training and professional development for their roles.

7. This organisation provides all our people with the opportunity to resolve disputes with respect and dignity.

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