



**AN OPEN LETTER TO MINISTER RISHWORTH MP  
Minister for the Department of Social Services  
Australian Federal Government**

The Board of The Hunter Volunteer Centre wants it to be known that our survival, in fact our very existence as a volunteer support entity has come to an end. To be clear, this has not been through any mismanagement or fault by the Board nor of our management. This rests solely on the shoulders of the Federal Government.

We make the educated assumption that the Minister is fully cognisant of how much the volunteer sector actually accomplishes for the Australian community so we see no need to provide this background. However, in the Hunter region alone, we are proud of our record. We are proud of the 42 years we have provided our services. We are proud of the Hunter people who have seen fit to give their time and skills freely. We are proud that we have been able to be the conduit, finding the right people for the right roles. The Hunter Volunteer Centre has been the vehicle by which tens and tens of millions of dollars of labour in our region has been provided at no actual cost, all whilst we operated on a shoe string budget. The return on investment to the federal government by funding The Hunter Volunteer Centre has been nothing short of outstanding. All this will now cease.

Yes, the Morrison government changed the funding arrangements for volunteer centres ensuring a quick death to more than half the centres around Australia but now, nearly all of the remaining centres will close with only the 'chosen' few continuing to exist. The current funding strategy has failed the broader volunteer sector.

What is most perplexing about the funding arrangements is the Albanese government's continuation of those inept arrangements. When governments have changed, it is not uncommon for swift changes to be made by the incoming government to the policies, programs or services of the previous government. One glaring example of this is the rollout of the NBN network when contracts and implementation works had already commenced yet those arrangements were quickly changed to suit the Abbott governments different approach.

We simply do not understand why the Minister has not reversed the volunteer centre funding arrangements or at the very least, issued instruction to those holding the funding, to release funds forthwith to the remaining centres.

The Hunter Volunteer Centre will permanently close its doors on February 15th. 2023

This will be a sad and poignant legacy of the Albanese government.

Board of Management  
Hunter Volunteer Centre Inc