

FOREIGN AFFAIRS, DEFENCE AND TRADE REFERENCES COMMITTEE
National Volunteer Incentive Scheme (Climate Army)

Questions on Notice

Public hearing, Monday, 29th September 2025

Sydney NSW

Learnt Group

- Mr Geoffery Evans
- Mr Gerard Manion

Question 1

Hansard page reference: 18

Senator Henderson, Senator Collins asked the following question:

CHAIR: On notice, I'd be most grateful if could you provide some more information about the success of the program.

Senator COLLINS: But also what they're actually doing. It would be helpful to know whether there's a big trend towards a particular type of volunteering.

Response:

The Beyond Bond program at Bond University is a compulsory, degree-wide professional development initiative embedded within all undergraduate programs. It is designed to prepare students for a successful transition to the workforce by engaging them in a range of academic, professional, and extracurricular activities—including volunteering—as a mandatory curriculum component.



Program History

Beyond Bond was established to address the growing need for employability skills and attributes among university graduates. Since its approval in 2015, the program has been

a central part of the student experience at Bond University, ensuring all undergraduates develop the skills needed to sustain work and learning across their careers. Activities in the program are either identified by the university's Career Development Centre or proposed by students and reviewed for relevance and benefit.

Structure and Operation

Students must participate in activities spanning volunteering, work placements, community engagement, resume and interview training, and other professional development opportunities. These are tracked and evidenced within a professional portfolio, and reflective practice is encouraged throughout. The program adapts to suit the backgrounds and aspirations of each student and offers Recognition of Prior Learning for previous relevant experiences.

A notable feature was the integration of volunteering, supported in part by initiatives such as the "Volunteer Green Card" system, which verified and tracked students' volunteer hours and participation across approved programs. This approach ensured that volunteer engagements contributed meaningfully to degree requirements and were directly tied to learning outcomes.

Volunteering Outcomes

The volunteering aspects of Beyond Bond have resulted in:

- Active community engagement, with students participating in diverse volunteer roles—from aged care and legal clinics to environmental projects.
- Personal and professional growth, with students gaining employability skills, stronger self-awareness, and a sense of civic responsibility.
- The development of lifelong skills, including teamwork, leadership, communication, and time management, as evidenced in alumni testimonials and annual program reviews.
- Recognition of program completion on academic records and specific Beyond Bond transcripts, formally demonstrating these achievements to future employers.

Bond University reports that students highly value the transformation that comes with engagement in structured volunteering, highlighting not just enhanced employability, but also increased maturity and a deeper appreciation for community service.

Integration and Mandate

The program is **not optional**—it is fully embedded and mandatory for all undergraduates, representing a semester-long (and often, degree-long) progression of experiential learning. It complements the core curriculum, ensuring that graduates

leave Bond with more than academic knowledge; they also possess significant real-world experience in service and employability contexts.

In essence, the Beyond Bond program exemplifies an innovative approach to higher education, blending formal study with evidence-based experiential learning and sustained volunteerism, producing graduates prepared to thrive in multiple, evolving career contexts.

To apply for a Volunteer Green Card through Bond University, students follow these steps:

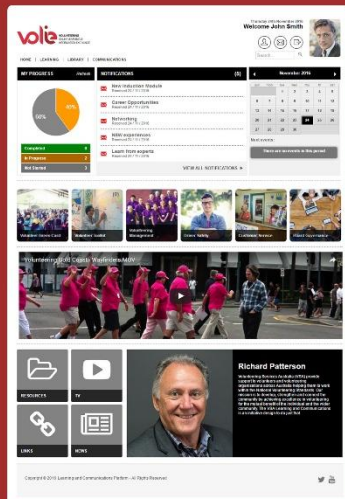
1. Register for an online Volunteer Green Card account.
2. After registering, an online account number will be issued. Email the account number along with your date of birth to the relevant Bond University faculty or compliance contact.
3. The university will use this number to link your Green Card application to Bond through the Organisation Portal. This linking ensures the application fee is waived for students and volunteers.
4. Once linked, an email confirmation will be received from Green Card Services. You can then return to your Green Card Services account and complete the application, selecting the “student placement” or “volunteer” category as appropriate.
5. Upon approval, submit a copy of your Green Card confirmation to your faculty placement portal or faculty contact.
6. If you already hold a valid Green Card, email a copy of your card and proof of identity to the compliance contact to have your card linked to Bond, ensuring eligibility for placements.

Students cannot commence regulated volunteering or placements until the valid Green Card is issued and officially linked to Bond University.

Eligible volunteering activities for Bond University’s Beyond Bond program include community volunteering (such as charity work, food banks, **and environmental clean-ups**), clinical placements, skills-based volunteering (including online non-profit projects), aged care and health support, law immersion programs (domestic and international), on-campus volunteering (supporting campus events and student services), and service projects with approved local or international organisations.

VSA ONLINE LEARNING & INFORMATION EXCHANGE

VOLIE (VSA Online Learning & Information Exchange) is the platform that you access to complete the online learning component of the Green Card program. The platform also provides other useful resources that will help you get the most out of your volunteering experience.



BEYOND BOND

Beyond Bond is a practical, activity-based program that extends across the duration of all undergraduate degrees. Administered by the Career Development Centre as a mandatory degree requirement, it ensures that all Bond students engage in various extra-curricular activities that complement their academic studies.



VOLUNTEERING SERVICES AUSTRALIA

Volunteering Services Australia (VSA) provide support to volunteers and volunteering organisations across Australia helping them to work within the National Volunteering Standards. VSA works to connect volunteers and organisations together providing a referral that focuses on aligning the interests, values and skills of volunteers with the needs of organisations.



NEED MORE INFO?

Bond University
Career Development Centre

Level 1, Accommodation Centre, Building 9
Phone: (07) 5595 3388
Email: cdc@bond.edu.au

DISCOVER YOURSELF



LEARN A LOT ABOUT YOURSELF WHILE STEPPING OUTSIDE YOUR COMFORT ZONE AND DISCOVERING STRENGTHS YOU NEVER KNEW YOU HAD.

OUTCOMES

The reported outcomes of Bond University's Beyond Bond program, particularly regarding volunteering, reflect significant success in enhancing employability and personal development among students. The program has empowered students to build professional portfolios showcasing skills such as leadership, global awareness, teamwork, and civic responsibility, which are highly valued by employers.

Student satisfaction surveys and internal evaluations consistently show positive feedback about the program's impact on readiness for employment and career transition. Alumni report increased confidence and maturity gained through practical volunteering and community engagement experiences embedded within Beyond Bond.

There is a noticeable trend toward volunteering activities that provide professional and skills-based engagement, such as clinical placements for health students, legal clinics, international service projects, and online skills volunteering. These experiences offer tangible benefits aligned with students' career aspirations while contributing meaningfully to communities.

INTRODUCING THE VOLUNTEERING GREEN CARD...

Build your social contacts, confidence and employability skills while helping transform lives in your community.

The Volunteering Green Card is the fast, fun and interesting way to gain new skills, experience and social contacts while earning Beyond Bond credit points towards your undergraduate degree.

The program consists of three online learning modules covering the fundamentals of volunteering followed by a volunteering working experience program organised and certified by Volunteering Services Australia.

BENEFITS OF VOLUNTEERING

When you volunteer you will not only discover the joy of helping others within your community, but will also personally benefit in many other ways.

PROGRAM OUTLINE

- ✓ Interactive three-part 40 minute online learning program
- ✓ Assessment aligned to Certificate II in Active Volunteering
- ✓ Minimum of 20 hours of coordinated volunteering work experience through VSA
- ✓ Access to support resources from the VSA Learning & Communications Platform
- ✓ Receive a 'Certificate of Attainment' endorsed by VSA and Bond University

Let's Get Volunteering

MODULE 1: GETTING READY TO VOLUNTEER

- What is Volunteering?
- Benefits of Volunteering
- Your Rights and Responsibilities As A Volunteer
- Rights And Responsibilities Of Organisations

MODULE 2: LET'S GET VOLUNTEERING

- Important Policies And Procedures
- Organisational Structures
- Boundaries Of Your Role
- Volunteering Agencies

MODULE 3: BEING A GREAT VOLUNTEER

- Getting Work Done
- Working In A Team
- Time Management
- Communication Skills
- Getting Feedback On Your Work

HELP TRANSFORM LIVES

Help build your community and feel good in making a real difference by contributing to programs that transform lives.

LEARN FROM EXPERTS

By working alongside experts in various fields you will gain new skills and contacts to pursue your passion.

SUPERCHARGE EXISTING SKILLS

Volunteering also offers a way to re-connect with the working world after a break, and an opportunity to supercharge your existing talents. The requirements for volunteering can be linked to your passions and interests, rather than work experience.

NEW EXPERIENCES

Volunteering exposes you to a variety of skill sets and experiences that are transferable to the paid workforce.

NETWORKING

When volunteering you will most often work with people from all walks of life with different experiences, interests and life stories. Connecting with people who share your passion for a cause or social issue creates a path to developing strong relationships with others.

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

By building your confidence in your own abilities you will positively shape the way you approach job-hunting in the future.

In summary:

- Outcomes include enhanced employability attributes and career readiness.
- Volunteering integrates practical, real-world experiences linked to academic disciplines.
- A trend toward professional skill-building and international/community service volunteering is evident.

These results underscore Beyond Bond as an effective model for embedding volunteering into undergraduate education with measurable benefits for students and communities alike.

The measured outcomes from Beyond Bond volunteering activities show significant positive personal, professional, civic, and international impacts on participants. A detailed longitudinal study highlights the following key findings:

- **Personal Outcomes (40%):** Many volunteers reported improvements in life satisfaction, personal confidence, and new relationships formed during their volunteer experience. Overcoming challenges and experiencing different lifestyles were major contributing factors.
- **Professional Outcomes (26%):** Participants gained enhanced professional confidence, soft skills, clearer career direction, and experience in novel roles through stretch assignments. This contributed strongly to career progression and professional capabilities.
- **International Outcomes (26%):** Volunteers developed broader worldviews, global mindsets, cross-cultural skills, and stronger relationships with host-country nationals, supporting global literacy and international engagement.
- **Civic Outcomes (8%):** Engagement in civic participation improved with better understanding of international development and a more positive attitude towards volunteering and community service.

These impacts were achieved through immersive, skills-based volunteer assignments involving unfamiliar contexts that promoted personal growth and global connections. The Beyond Bond program's volunteering component has thus fostered comprehensive development across multiple life domains in students, strongly aligning with its career readiness and civic engagement goals.

This structured volunteering experience is transformative for many students, combining practical work, cultural immersion, and reflective learning to support employability and social responsibility.



FOREIGN AFFAIRS, DEFENCE AND TRADE REFERENCES COMMITTEE
National Volunteer Incentive Scheme (Climate Army)

Questions on Notice

Public hearing, Monday, 29th September 2025

Sydney NSW

Learnt Group

- Mr Geoffery Evans
- Mr Gerard Manion

Question 1

Hansard page reference: 20

Senator Lambie asked the following question:

Senator LAMBIE: Okay. You were trialling that, weren't you?

Response:

Australian Resilience Corps – Learnt Group

1. Present the project's background

Australia faces a new and profound challenge in the form of increasingly severe and frequent extreme weather events. From devastating bushfires that have ravaged vast landscapes to unprecedented floods that have submerged entire communities, the nation has historically been forced into a cycle of reactive disaster response. This model, while essential in the immediate aftermath of a crisis, fails to address the underlying need for proactive preparedness.

Recognising this critical gap, the Minderoo Foundation sought a paradigm shift. Their goal was to move beyond simply responding to disasters and instead cultivate a nationwide culture of resilience and readiness. To achieve this ambitious vision, they partnered with the Learnt team to conceptualise and launch the Australian Resilience Corps (The Corps), a transformative, nationwide training initiative.

The Corps was born from a powerful idea: to diminish the devastating impact of extreme weather by empowering communities to prepare for it. The initiative was

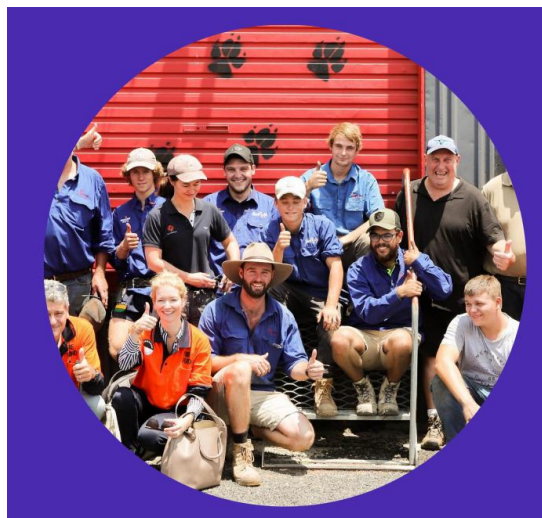
designed as a vital connector, serving as a conduit between everyday Australians, forward-thinking corporations, and local partner organisations.

Its core mission was twofold:

- To cultivate a national volunteering culture
- To link individuals with resilience-building activities in their local communities.

This strategic approach was designed to strengthen communities against future disasters during the crucial "off-season"—the period between major weather events when preparedness activities are most effective.

The challenge in bringing this vision to life was immense. It required a comprehensive, enterprise-wide project to effectively mobilise a large-scale volunteer force of community members, engage corporate partners, and provide the necessary training and coordination. This was compounded by systemic issues in the volunteering sector, including an aging population, a documented lack of effective training for many of the nation's volunteers, and the geographical isolation that makes traditional face-to-face training difficult.



Furthermore, a lack of standardised qualifications made it difficult for volunteer organisations to demonstrate compliance with the National Standards for Volunteer Involvement, often leading to increased administrative and insurance costs. This training project was not just about imparting knowledge; it was about creating a movement and instilling a sense of national ownership over the shared responsibility of resilience while simultaneously addressing foundational challenges in volunteer management.

2. Explain the project's plan

To transform the visionary concept of the Australian Resilience Corps into a tangible reality, Learnt became an integral extension of the founding team.

Together, we developed a comprehensive blueprint for this training project, a strategic plan that addressed the multifaceted challenges of a national initiative. The core of this plan was a blended approach, leveraging both cutting-edge digital infrastructure and invaluable on-the-ground support.

The blueprint's first key element was the **Digital Platform Development**. This involved creating a user-friendly, centralised website connected to a dedicated Learning & Communications Platform (LCP) to serve as the project's operational hub.

This platform, designed as the first phase of a broader strategy based around Learnt's **Volunteer Greencard**, was meticulously designed to handle every aspect of the volunteer journey, from initial registration and event management to providing access to a comprehensive library of resources. This digital ecosystem was the backbone of the entire initiative, ensuring scalability and accessibility for participants across the country and positioning it as the foundation for managing an individual's lifelong learning and skill development in the volunteering space.

The second crucial component was the development of a targeted training curriculum.

Recognising that effective resilience-building requires practical, context-specific skills, the plan called for a comprehensive learning curriculum. This was no off-the-shelf solution; it was a collaborative effort with industry experts to create bespoke learning modules. The content was designed to be adaptable to various local contexts and demographics, ensuring that participants were equipped with relevant knowledge and skills to fortify their own communities. The modules included a blend of online learning resources for self-paced study and materials for in-person training, directly addressing the tyranny of distance by making high-quality, standardised training accessible nationwide.

Building on the digital foundation and curriculum, the plan's third element focused on **nationwide in-person events management**. The project introduced "**musters**"—nationwide, in-person events where volunteers would gather in at-risk communities.

The plan was to use Learnt's robust digital events solution in the LCP to seamlessly manage all logistical aspects, from participant registration and communication to on-the-ground support across multiple locations. This element was designed to bring online learning to life, providing a hands-on, community-focused training experience.

The fourth key part of the plan was the deployment of **on-the-ground support**. Learnt committed to having dedicated personnel across Australia to provide invaluable, hands-on support for training the first 5,000 active community members and representatives from corporate partners. This was a deliberate decision to ensure

effective knowledge transfer and practical skill development, going beyond a purely digital-only model. Finally, the plan included **ongoing customer success support** to ensure a positive learning experience, addressing queries and providing technical assistance to all volunteers and corporate partners. The strategic blueprint was a holistic approach, fusing digital innovation with human-centric support to create a scalable and impactful training project.

3. Describe the project's implementation

The implementation of the Australian Resilience Corps was a testament to meticulous planning and dedicated execution, seamlessly bringing Learnts' and The Corps' blueprint to life. The project was rolled out in a phased approach, beginning with the launch of the central digital platform.

The user-friendly website was not just a portal for information; it was the engine that powered the entire initiative. Within months of its launch, the platform successfully created a robust database of over 5,000 active community members across Australia. This rapid mobilisation demonstrated the project's clear value proposition and the nation's appetite for a proactive approach to disaster preparedness.

A cornerstone of the implementation was the execution of the targeted training curriculum. A **blended learning** approach was adopted, combining online modules with hands-on, in-person "musters." The online learning modules were made accessible to all registered volunteers, providing them with foundational knowledge and skills in their own time. The effectiveness of this component was extraordinary, evidenced by a remarkable **98% completion rate** among volunteers who needed to become resilience-registered with The Corps. This metric speaks volumes about the quality and relevance of the content and directly addressed the "Volunteer Greencard" objective of providing a certification pathway that ensures volunteers are well-trained and compliant with the National Standards for Volunteer Involvement.

The physical component of the implementation was equally impressive. Learnt's robust digital events solution was used to manage the nationwide in-person muster events. These gatherings were strategically facilitated in **50 locations across Australia**, in communities identified as being at risk. At these events, volunteers would gather during the off-season to participate in tangible preparedness activities. This hands-on, practical application of their online learning was crucial. To ensure the success of these musters, dedicated Learnt teams were deployed across the country. This support was critical for providing in-person training and guidance to both community members and representatives from major corporate partners, including NRMA, IAG, and Australia Post. The active participation of these corporations was a powerful endorsement of the project's value and a key achievement of the implementation phase.

The implementation was not just about the launch; it was about the continuous support. The project included an ongoing customer success model, ensuring that volunteers and corporate partners received technical and logistical assistance as they navigated the training and events. This comprehensive implementation, from the digital launch to the in-person support, effectively equipped a significant volunteer force and successfully fortified communities.

4. Review the project's effectiveness

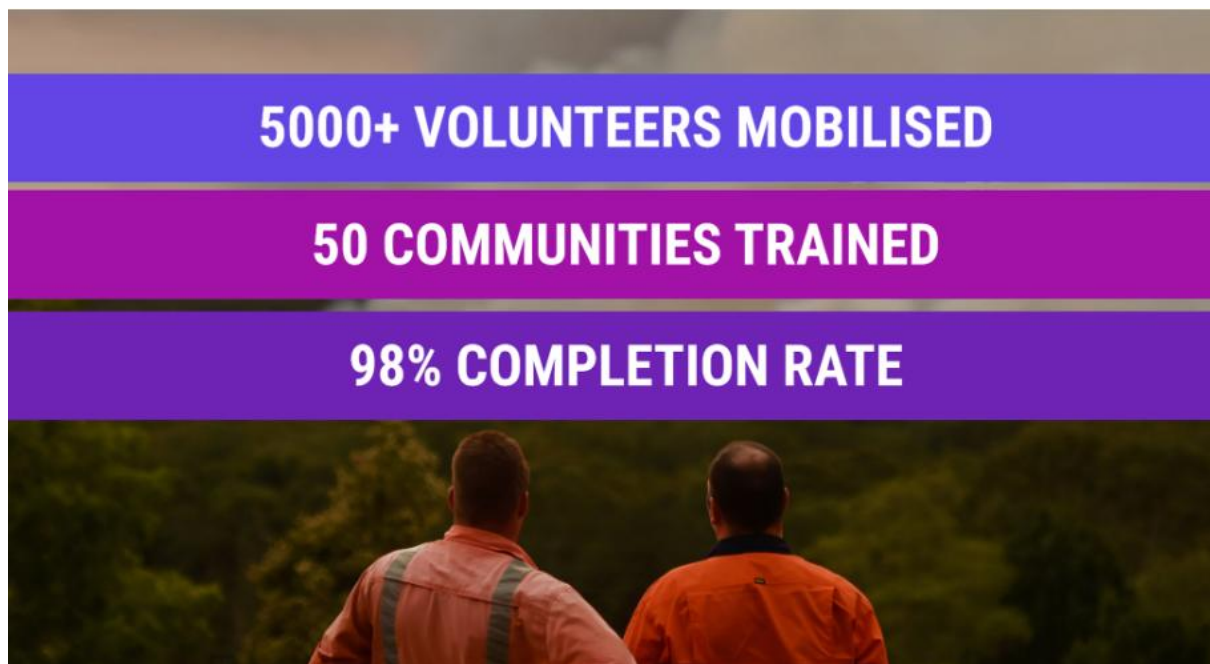
The Australian Resilience Corps training project proved to be profoundly effective, delivering significant and measurable outcomes that directly address its core mission. The project's success is quantifiable, beginning with the mobilisation of a large-scale volunteer force. It created a database of over **5,000 active community members** across Australia. This substantial number of dedicated volunteers represents a significant and ready force, empowered with the skills to make a real difference in their local communities. The project also successfully facilitated training in 50 separate locations for on-the-ground muster events, demonstrating its national reach and ability to connect with at-risk communities.

The project's effectiveness is perhaps best measured by its success in meeting the diverse needs of its target audience, as defined by the "**Volunteer Greencard**" framework. The high completion rate of 98% confirms that volunteers felt the training was valuable, helping them to feel **confident and safe** in their roles. For younger volunteers, the project offered a clear pathway to gaining valuable volunteer experience and tangible skills, while for mature volunteers, it provided a meaningful opportunity to "**give back**".

For Not-for-Profits and other volunteer-involving organisations, the project addressed key needs by **attracting quality volunteers** who were already engaged and trained, **thereby reducing the burden of administration** and training costs. The project's ability to standardise training and skills provided a measurable indicator of compliance, which in turn addresses the critical need of insurance companies to **reduce their risk exposure**. The active participation of major corporate partners such as NRMA, IAG, and Australia Post also speaks to the project's effectiveness, as it helped these companies **increase employee participation** in their volunteer programs and strengthen their "**employer of choice**" recognition.

Beyond the initial outcomes, the project yielded valuable key learnings that will inform future resilience-building initiatives. The partnership between Learnt and Minderoo

underscored the immense power of collaboration between organisations with learning expertise.



It showed that a user-centric design approach was crucial for attracting and retaining a diverse range of participants. Most importantly, the project proved that its model is scalable, meaning it can be adapted and expanded to reach even more communities across Australia. The project's effectiveness lies not only in its immediate results but also in its potential to serve as a blueprint for future large-scale, enterprise-level training projects aimed at tackling national challenges.

The Australian Resilience Corps and Learnt have successfully laid the foundation for a nationwide culture of preparedness, empowering communities to proactively prepare for and mitigate the devastating impacts of future disasters