Helen & Geoff Handbury Fellowship Program

“Sustainable Volunteerism in Rural Communities” Project

September 2003

Undertaken by

In Conjunction with
This Project would not have been possible without the generous contributions and co-operation of volunteers and agencies in the Hamilton - Southern Grampians region.

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The Helen & Geoff Handbury Fellowship Program

This project was made possible with the support of The Helen & Geoff Handbury Fellowship Program.

The Program was launched in 2002 with the intention of supporting innovative projects from individuals or groups that contribute to the sustainable development of the Southern Grampians Region economically, socially and /or environmentally in partnership with RMIT University.

The RMIT International Community Exchange (RICE) Foundation, a community-university partnership in the Southern Grampians Region has facilitated the Fellowship Program through the generous support of Helen and Geoff Handbury, of Hamilton, Victoria.

It is hoped that the work presented here will contribute to this partnership and to the community of the Southern Grampians region and surrounds.

Further information on the Fellowship Program is available from:

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training and retaining volunteer resources.

The process of undertaking research and preparing a report is just the beginning. The Project has unearthed issues that need to be addressed to ensure that the voluntary sector in the Hamilton and Southern Grampians region continues to be sustainable over time.

Utilising the combination of expertise from a community organisation - Community Connections (Victoria) Ltd and RMIT University has proved an extremely valuable and productive approach. This process has assisted in building partnerships between the community sector and RMIT University, establishing the foundations for future joint research initiatives.

Community Connections Vic Ltd operates a range of social justice, service and advocacy programs throughout the Barwon South Western Region of Victoria. Many of these programs rely heavily on volunteers. Almost 400 volunteers undertake foster care, paralegal, legal, “opportunity shop”, disability service, community visiting, fundraising, taxation advice and governance work on behalf of Community Connections.

Concern has been expressed by staff working with volunteers and volunteers themselves that a number of issues affect people’s ongoing capacity to volunteer, particularly in smaller rural areas. It was evident that these issues required further investigation in a systematic way, with a focus on practical solutions. A proposal was developed and submitted for consideration under Handbury Fellowship Program, a timely and apt community initiative based in a rural area.

“The Sustainable Volunteerism in Rural Communities Project” was funded through the Helen & Geoff Handbury Fellowship Program in 2002. Community Connections (Victoria) Limited undertook the project with RMIT University acting as research partners.

The project explored the sustainability of volunteerism in the Hamilton and Southern Grampians region as a response to growing community concerns about the reliance on volunteers and the need for co-ordinating the efforts of regional organizations in attracting,
1. SUMMARY

Findings

We found that there is no such person as “a volunteer”. This generic term does not adequately describe the range of the tasks undertaken, the commitment, the reasons why people give of themselves and their time, their motivation to continue or the reasons they can no longer volunteer. These factors are as varied as the individuals involved.

The most common responses volunteers gave for why they would stop volunteering involved incapacity – illness, death, moving, having to care for other family members.

The voluntary sector in the Hamilton and Southern Grampians area is characterised by:

- An ageing group of volunteers;
- Lack of success in attracting young people as volunteers;
- Fewer people prepared to volunteer for ongoing work requiring high levels of personal commitment and
- A growing crisis in smaller organisations that depend on voluntary Committee and Board members.

Issues

Issues arising from the research relating to the sustainability of voluntary effort include:

- The Commonwealth government’s Mutual Obligation Policy may detract from the fundamental motivation and principles of volunteering, through “conscripting” people into community based services. This policy may need to be rethought particularly in rural communities.

- The plight of small communities reliant on completely volunteer organisations this has primarily been caused by the lack of funds to meet increasing needs in rural communities.

- The change in the ethos of volunteering and the effect this may have on the motivation and recruitment of volunteers.

- The “corporatisation” of volunteers and the demarcation between them and paid workers.

- The effects of increased responsibilities; unrealistic and unsustainable expectations of “high need” work being done by volunteers.
• The cost of volunteering to both volunteers and agencies reliant on their input.

• What can be reasonably expected of volunteers, including the demarcation between paid and voluntary work, increased responsibility, training and other requirements, with less personal reward.

• How to develop the “ethos of volunteering” in younger people, as past generations have been inspired to volunteer through circumstance particularly “the war effort”, church affiliations, and as “country neighbours”.

• How to best utilise the limited valuable resources of the voluntary sector in rural communities.

Recommendations

The project has brought together the recommendations of a number of volunteers and agencies posing options for the future.

• The process and report resulting from this project can be used to develop a more comprehensive and integrated response to the needs of volunteers, volunteer agencies and community groups in Hamilton and throughout the Southern Grampians region. This could include the joint resources of Community Connections, RMIT University, experienced volunteers identified through this project and the array of small – medium community agencies throughout the region. An action research approach is required to address the sustainability of volunteering in Hamilton & the Southern Grampians area.

• Approaches to recruit, train and support volunteers need to be individualised. One volunteer organiser offered this observation - “Managing a volunteer committee … the things that keep paid people in line don’t apply … more like political parties than bureaucracies … there are different guidelines for achieving goals…” Assumptions about what volunteers may want or need, can alienate potential or even committed volunteers.

• Larger regional organisations with operations in the Hamilton and Southern Grampians region are duplicating effort in the recruitment, retention, recognition and training of volunteers. We offered 2 options for consideration by volunteers for recruitment. The first was the internet and overwhelmingly, the answer is “NO”.

• The second option canvassed was the establishment of a central pool of volunteers and by contrast to the net, this idea was

How to develop the “ethos of volunteering” in younger people, as past generations have been inspired to volunteer through circumstance particularly “the war effort”, church affiliations, and as “country neighbours”.

Larger regional organisations with operations in the Hamilton and Southern Grampians region are duplicating effort in the recruitment, retention, recognition and training of volunteers.
The concept of a Volunteer Resource Centre – a “one stop shop” for volunteers and volunteer organisations, has been raised in a number of forums throughout the Southern Grampians including the “Learning Communities National Project Audit” undertaken through the Australian National training Authority. The findings of this project support the establishment of a co-operative community volunteer resource centre. Such a centre would:

Assist in the recruitment, retention, training of a range of volunteers – acting as “volunteer gateway” for Hamilton and the Southern Grampians, with the following features:

- gather good, useful and accurate information from prospective volunteers so that good matches are made
- ensure volunteers have absolute, guilt free right to refuse work
- care be taken with choosing who runs it so that volunteers are distributed fairly to all organizations
- Establish a database of volunteers and volunteer positions
- Co-ordinate recruitment drives and media coverage
- Co-ordinate basic generic training and requirements such as police records checks. Generic volunteer training could cover such areas as; principles of volunteering; rights and responsibilities of the agency and the volunteer; role of the volunteer; attitudes and values; duty of care; insurance; confidentiality and the Privacy Act; maintaining your own well – being; working with families and carers.

Establish a relationship with local companies whose employees may volunteer, toward building a corporate - community relationship around volunteerism. As a policy direction the World Bank suggests that employers could be encouraged to provide time off to employees for some sort of community activity and governments could use consultation mechanisms as a way of ‘increasing civic engagement’ (World Bank, 2002, p. 4).

3. Encourage and co-ordinate the involvement of local industry –

One volunteer reported that one local agency with multiple services already ran its own central pool and that it seemed to work very well. It was also thought to be a good idea “because people don’t think past their initial interest” - this would be a way of expanding people’s horizons and thereby their options for volunteer work.
there are significant opportunities in Hamilton and District with industry/private sector groups – particularly those that primarily employ men. A productive partnership arrangement could be fostered between and with these employees and voluntary organisations on a “one-off” or more permanent arrangement.

4. Provide support and practical assistance for smaller community and voluntary organisations and their committees of management. Including developing a “Community Secretariat” to undertake the roles of secretary and treasurer in community organizations; co-ordinate meetings and activities; build skills, confidence and mentoring amongst voluntary organisations.

5. Require the combination of community expertise and resources. For example establish a mentoring arrangement with the Community Legal Centre and other larger organisations particularly around legal, insurance, “duty of care”, financial management and other governance issues and needs.

Develop a strategic plan to ensure ongoing sustainability which may utilise a combination of fee for service activities; in training, human resource development, publications, volunteer recruitment and retention across a number of organisations and agencies on an “as can be afforded” basis, given the cost to individual organisations currently of operating these functions and the cost – benefit analysis of utilising volunteer labour.

Co-ordinate combined co-operative efforts around finding funds including those from the three tiers of government, private and philanthropic sources.

7. Develop a specific all of community approach to encourage young people and families to become involved in community activities; to build the “ethos of volunteering” from a young age. To provide these opportunities so that spending time contributing to the community enhances rather than detracts from “family time”.

8. Undertake a broad based youth and family recruitment drive and measure the effectiveness of a range of strategies in attracting and maintaining younger people and families.

9. Trial the concept of a “community secretariat” with a group of smaller rurally based community organisations over a three year time period. Investigate alternative sustainable structures; including forming an umbrella organisation with separate accounts for each group. Undertake training and skill development; raise self confidence and self esteem of members.

Investigate and develop options for the potential redirection of Commonwealth Government policy in rural communities including the Mutual Obligation policy.
2. PROJECT METHODOLOGY

Organisations were chosen on the basis that their volunteers joined because they wanted to rather than because they had a direct interest eg. Parents and schools or sports people and sporting clubs or special interest groups such as artists, writers or gardeners. This meant that the groups we included were emergency services, welfare and community groups. The constraints of time and funding did not allow us to contact all such groups. We chose groups from a range of town sizes within the Shire of the Southern Grampians with the exception of Merino, which is outside the shire boundary but which relies upon towns within the shire for services such as schools, shopping, welfare and health.

The questionnaire was devised by Laurene Dietrich and Jill Warne with input from Dr June Allan from RMIT University assisting with the methodology. Interviews were primarily undertaken by Laurene.

A separate in depth study was undertaken by Keri Boland into Community Transport in the Southern Grampians.

A literature search was undertaken by Theresa Lynch through RMIT University.

Stage 1 Organisations:

Workers were contacted personally or by phone and asked if they would participate in a survey about sustainable volunteerism. The aims and objectives and the format of the research project were outlined and confidentiality assured.

Workers were asked a series of open ended questions designed to gather demographic data and to explore issues and ideas. Interviews ran from 1 – 1.5 hours.

The answers were written up and returned to them to check the accuracy of the record and to add or retract any comments as necessary. They were also asked to help us with the next stage by contacting some of their volunteers and asking them to answer a second set of questions.

Stage 2 Volunteers:

Volunteers were contacted and they were also asked a set of open ended questions designed to gather demographic data and elicit responses about issues, ideas and values and to compare worker perceptions of volunteerism with those of the volunteers. Interviews ran from 1.5 to 2 hours.

The answers from both stages were collated and are detailed in this report.

The project was based on a personalised approach using willing participants. The importance of maintaining
confidentiality, particularly in rural communities was paramount.

**Stage 3 Community Consultation & Comment**

The project was undertaken as a process, creating positive options that may be practically implemented in this community. The draft report was used as a discussion tool in a public forum held at RMIT University – Hamilton and broadly circulated to participants and interested community members for their feedback.

Working groups on the ways forward including a volunteer resource centre, support for smaller community organizations and investigating possible government sources of support were convened, resulting recommendations have been incorporated into the report.

**The Sample**

There are organisations that utilise volunteers and those who are entirely or substantially operated by volunteers. A cross-section of types and classifications of organisations have been incorporated into the study.

Volunteering Australia classifies organisation types as:
- Arts/Culture/Heritage
- Community Services/Welfare/Health
- Conservation/Environment/Animal Welfare
- Emergency Services/Safety
- Human Rights/Social Justice
- Sports/Recreation

Other

This Project interviewed a cross-section of organisations and agencies drawn from these “types” and included five categories of organisations:

1) organisations with paid workers who train and co-ordinate a large (60+) numbers of volunteers who are critical to the running of these agencies ie. they could not operate without them, their relationship to the organisation borders on unpaid worker status.
   - Country Fire Authority (CFA) the State Emergency Service (SES) Community Connections (Fostercare) Brophy Family and Youth Services

2) organisations with paid workers who train and co-ordinate a small number of volunteers who may or may not be critical to the running of these agencies – they could operate without them but at a reduced capacity, their relationship to the organisation borders on unpaid worker status. Generally speaking, these volunteers work with “things” and with well people.
   - Hamilton library, the Hamilton Visitor Information Centre, Points Arboretum, Blood Bank, Balmoral Community Bus

3) organisations with paid workers who work with a medium number (20-60) of volunteers who enhance the running of these agencies – they may not be able to operate without the volunteers
For various reasons it was not possible to speak to volunteers from all of the agencies included in stage 1 of this report. This report draws on the experience of 40 volunteers from agencies as well as those of the people involved in stage 1 running totally volunteer organisations.

- Mulleraterong, Adult Day Activity Support Service (ADASS) specialist services to the aged, ill or infirm, the Old Courthouse Community House, Western District Health Service (WDHS) Interchange, the Friends Programme, the Dunkeld Visitor Information Centre, Community Transport Program: organisations worked for and previously supported by Current Community Transport Volunteers include; Rotary, Red Cross, RMIT Rice Program – Cancer support, Blood Bank, Children's Hospital, Ansett Museum, Hamilton Football Committee, schools, Western District Health Service (WDHS) Meals on Wheels.

4) organisations which are completely volunteer, including the organisers.

- Progress Associations, Hall committees, the Friends of the Hamilton Botanic Gardens, Red Cross, Anglican Book Fair

5) organisations which do not work with volunteers i.e. they have made a clear decision not to involve volunteers

- Hamilton Art Gallery, Emma House

- if they could, it would definitely be at a reduced capacity – i.e. some programs would have to be cut or scaled down. They are mostly agencies dealing with people with a mental, medical or physical condition, who need assistance.
The project findings incorporate and draw from the work undertaken by Laurene Dietrich, Principal Researcher, Keri Boland’s investigation of Community Transport and “Sustainable Volunteerism in Rural Communities: Literature Review” undertaken by Theresa Lynch. All contributions appear in full as attachments to this report.

Ageing & other Demographic Considerations:

3.1. Age & Gender of Volunteers

Those volunteers interviewed:

<table>
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<th>Gender</th>
<th>30 - 40 years</th>
<th>41-50 years</th>
<th>51 - 60 years</th>
<th>61-70 years</th>
<th>71 - 80 years</th>
<th>81+ years</th>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The 26 agencies interviewed have approximately 740 volunteer workers. Of these 740 people, many are involved in more than one type of volunteer work, 511 are women and 229 are men. The men are most heavily represented in the CFA and SES - 116 men to 15 women. The CFA auxiliary however (in charge of catering, fund raising, etc) has 25 women and no men. Because Foster Care has families as volunteers, this provided another source of male volunteers but it is the women who do most of the work.

In the welfare areas we investigated, the bulk of volunteer labour was female. This labour was also elderly - mostly retired people. The main reasons given for volunteers leaving was infirmity, death (from old age) and lifestyle changes. Return to paid employment, moving away (usually to a retirement centre, closer to family,) also featured. Again the SES and CFA had a different demographic - the average age being younger than most other services. A 45 year old volunteer was considered a young volunteer. The most common age group was 60 - 80, but there were still people volunteering into their 90’s.

We tried to get a comparative picture of numbers and ages of volunteers between 2000 and now but this proved to be difficult for several reasons but the major ones were:

- staff turnover in the time frame
- lack of records especially in the past - current records seem to be in better order than past ones in most organisations

Men generally are more likely to volunteer where there are equipment based activities involved for example in the SES, the CFA, volunteering as drivers and/or recording the news for those with vision disability.
Over half of the volunteers involved in this project were aged over 60 years. The primary reason given by volunteers (around 40%) for ceasing voluntary activity was because of ill health, old age and/or death. Younger volunteers are more involved in “action” volunteering for example the State Emergency Service SES) and the Country Fire Authority CFA).

The most frequently reported voluntary activities by the ABS study (1996, p. 6) were fundraising, management, teaching and administration. The ABS report also indicates a gender division in the type of work that men and women do. For example, women were more likely to be involved in the preparation and serving of food whereas the men were involved in activities such as repairs, maintenance, gardening and coaching and refereeing (ABS, 1996, p. 6).

On an average day, 19 per cent of the Australian population over 15 years of age do some voluntary work whether that be formal or informal (ACOSS, 1996, p. 29). Women are reported as doing higher levels of both formal and informal work than men (ACOSS, 1996, p. 29). The only category of formal voluntary work where men outnumber women is the ‘supporting sports activities’, which includes activities such as “judging, scoring, ground marking and preparation, canteen services and committee work” (ACOSS, 1996, p. 29)

Over half of the volunteers involved in this project were aged over 60 years. The primary reason given by volunteers (around 40%) for ceasing voluntary activity was because of ill health, old age and/or death. There were instances given where the aged care “volunteer” crossed over to become the “patient”. This is not unusual particularly in smaller communities.

“Older people and people with disabilities form a significant part of the Southern Grampians Shire community. An estimated 2,350 people aged 70 years live in the Shire in 2001 – 13.8% of the population. 3,150 people with disabilities, including some of these older people, live there, comprising 18.5% or one in five people among the community.

In 2011, it is expected that there will be a higher proportion of older people in the community; over 2,620 people aged over 60, with 630 of them being aged over 85 years. The number of people with disabilities could rise to 3,600, with almost 1,800 of them being aged over 75 years”. Southern Grampians Shire Council Aged & Disability Strategy, 2002.

“A common problem of long-time volunteer associations, particularly auxiliaries, friends groups and other membership-type support organisations, is that members have “aged in place”. Though they may have started their volunteer careers in middle age, after long service members are now well into their senior years. The Southern Grampians Shire Council
Non church child based activities (kindergarten, school, Cubs, Brownies) 6

General community work 5

Work related to the war effort 4

Door knock appeals 3

Welfare activities 3

Working bees 3

Sport 1

St Johns 1

CFA 1

Archaeological dig 1

An SES volunteer described his path to volunteer work as “having had several bites to the cherry”. This consisted of an abseiling experience as a young teenager followed by work experience followed by a Public Relations encounter which prompted him to join as an adult.

Only 2 people claimed to have done no volunteering until later in life - one at the age of 34 and another after they retired in their 60’s. For the rest of the volunteers there was an even spread of the age they commenced volunteering between the ages of 10 - 24 in the following areas.

Church activities - especially Sunday School teaching 9

Older volunteers also often report becoming involved at a young age, with volunteering then becoming part of their lifestyle (Noble & Johnson, 2000, p. 157). This gives further reason and motivation for organisations to think about new ways of marketing to attract young volunteers, as there is evidence to suggest that once committed to the ideology of voluntary activity, people will continue to contribute voluntarily throughout their life.

Age may also be an issue where “old” style structures pose a barrier to the recruitment and retention of young people who may be seeking a different “volunteer experience” and/or who may be motivated by different principles.

First Experience of Volunteering

Volunteers found this question difficult to answer - not only because they had to think back, but because there were questions about defining “volunteerism”. The comment was often made that “things that people did back then” were not really called volunteerism - rather they were things that people just did for their communities. This included working bees to build the local pool or set up the tennis courts or because of the lack of services as we know them, looking after people with disabilities, suffering trauma, illness, age and infirmity. Often these people were members of one’s family but sometimes they were not.

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Age, life stage, parental and family commitments and dominant status of the individual, influenced patterns of volunteering (ABS, 2000, p 3; Flick, Bittman & Doyle, 2001, p. 17). Most volunteers are aged between 35 to 64 years (Soupourmas & Ironmonger, 2001, xi). However higher levels of volunteering are evidenced in the 35-44 age group (ABS 2000, p. 3). The ABS (2000, p. 3) suggests that people in this age bracket ‘are more likely to be married with children’. Therefore, their higher levels of volunteering are more often reflecting their levels of family commitment (ABS 2000, p 3). As will be detailed later, one of the most frequently reported forms of volunteering is that which is done for children (ACOSS 1996, p. 29).

Engaging Young People

Whilst “many organisations in the human services areas said they needed more male and/or younger volunteers...there were not a lot of ideas about solving these problems”. Further that “attempts to involve young people through school programs were not successful in the long term because so many people leave the district for work and further education”.

This is a short - term view, as not every young person leaves the district permanently, there are constant waves of young people through education and there is a link between those who volunteer in their youth and those who maintain a commitment to volunteering throughout their life.

There are volunteer programs operating at Monivae College and Hamilton College. The Program at Monivae incorporates all year levels as part of the curriculum and involves students in a range of activities on a monthly basis, although not all students opt for a community service type role; visiting schools, aged care facilities and hospitals for example.

Agencies involved in this study did not usually talk about student programs as a means of involving young people. However there were 3 notable exceptions to this trend.

1. One agency reported that they had tried secondary school based training and it didn’t work. The main problems seemed to be that the necessary training and paperwork wasn’t worth the return and that the students were not enthusiastic about being there.

2. Another agency had a reasonable deal of success in involving young people but was disappointed that they lost them when they moved away for tertiary education or work, usually never to return. Although this organisation can see no immediate positive outcomes, this could be seen as a short - term view, as not every young person leaves the district permanently, there are constant waves of young people through education and there is a link between those who volunteer in their youth and those who maintain a commitment to volunteering throughout their life.
permanently, there are constant waves of young people through education and there is a link between those who volunteer in their youth and those who maintain a commitment to volunteering throughout their life.

3. One group had made a clear decision to target primary schools with an interesting and innovative education program with one of it’s aims being to involve younger volunteers – in this case the parents of the children. However, later volunteer involvement of the primary school children may also be an unplanned for benefits further down the track.

Another comment worth noting here was a volunteer who had been involved in church based volunteer work since their young teenage years. As the children left home this volunteer dropped out of volunteer work altogether but has recently returned to non-church volunteer work:

“I think I was suffering from a kind of ‘church burnout’. It was difficult to say no because that was seen as a less than desirable commitment to your faith - Now I’m working outside the church - there’s not so much pressure in the general community ... easier to avoid feeling used ... feel you can say no, maintain some control ...”

This indicates a commitment to volunteer work where control can be exercised by the volunteer. Maybe young people are more able or willing to exercise this type of control from a younger age.

In talking with volunteers in our project the following interesting comments were also made:

“There are generational problems with meetings. Older members view them as social outings whilst younger members are impatient to achieve, move on, and be focused. People who are on multiple committees are faced with problems associated with time constraints and management”.

CFA members thought it was worth highlighting the family orientation of the service. It seems that the CFA organises family based functions in recognition of the support that volunteers get from their families and because of the hours they spend away from them.

Broader research shows there is evidence of a decline in the numbers of rural young people, who are shifting to urban locations for better opportunities (Regional Women’s Advisory Council, 2003, p. 3). This declining number of rural youth has had an impact on the vitality and economic well being of communities (Regional Women’s Advisory Council, 2003, p. 3). It is also noted in the Federal government
Evidence indicates that young people were likely to identify with a particular issue or cause, giving rise to their involvement in voluntary work. Students were primarily motivated by the satisfaction of helping others, assistance in their career or further employment prospects, the chance to make a difference and dedication to a cause.

Evidence indicates that young people were discouraged from participating in rural areas because of the prevalence of economic and social barriers making them 'feel negative about their communities'.

In 2000 a total of 162 first and second year social work and psychology Curtin University students were surveyed on their participation in volunteering. Nearly 70% of the students had been involved in some form of volunteering at some stage in their lives. Students were primarily motivated by the satisfaction of helping others, assistance in their career or further employment prospects, the chance to make a difference and dedication to a cause.

The main factors identified as preventing continued volunteer work included: lack of time because of study, work or family commitments. These were similar to the drawbacks to volunteering identified, including conflict with other commitments and that volunteering could be very time consuming; the unreliability of other people, unappreciative people and being taken advantage of by other people.

This study concluded that “short-term, focused and time-limited voluntary work must be offered to attract students back to and into volunteering. Long – term commitment and time-consuming voluntary work would clearly not attract the majority of students”. (Esmond, J.).

There is an opening to provide short term, focused volunteer opportunities...
for students in Secondary School programs that are matched better to the students’ interests, possible career directions and commitments than has been offered previously. A co-coordinated co-operative program may, on a regular and ongoing basis, provide students with an interest in and commitment to environmental sustainability, community service, working with children and families.

To be successful appropriate youth centered training would need to be provided along with the removal of structural barriers precluding the involvement of young people. These include restructuring meeting requirements, membership requirements and developing new ways to recruit and retain the participation of younger members.

Strategies would need to look at organisations where young people and families now congregate or create such places to provide opportunities to learn from early involvement in volunteering.

An extended volunteer program for young people might include:

- provision of short term, focused volunteer opportunities for students in primary and secondary schools
- Programs that are matched better to the students’ interests, possible career directions and commitments

than has been offered previously. These may include environmental sustainability, farming, information services, physical pursuits, as well as the more usual community based services, working with children, families and the elderly and frail.

- removal of structural barriers precluding the involvement of young people, including restructured meeting and membership requirements
- developing new ways to recruit and retain the participation of younger members
- A long-sighted and open-minded approach to developing a volunteer ethos in young people.

Usual or Most Recent Occupations of Volunteers

Farmers 10
Admin/office workers 6
Teachers 4
Labouring jobs 3
Sales 3
Nurses 4
Ministers 3

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To be successful appropriate youth centered training would need to be provided along with the removal of structural barriers precluding the involvement of young people.
However, professionals are also more likely to donate money, which can be important to the financial stability of welfare and community organisations.

Gardener 1
Bus driver 1
Management 1
Ambulance driver 1
Welfare worker 1

Some farmers were still farming (albeit at a reduced capacity) whilst most professional people were retired.

Further research currently being undertaken by Bittman (2003) suggests that although professionals may be more likely to volunteer they do so for shorter periods of time, as compared to people in occupations of manual labour (which could include farming) who volunteer for longer periods of time. However, professionals are also more likely to donate money, which can be important to the financial stability of welfare and community organisations.
4. THE ETHOS AND FUTURE OF VOLUNTEERING

A central consideration in undertaking this project was to understand the factors that impact on the motivation to volunteer and the capacity to maintain voluntary community activity. Organisations which utilise volunteers, voluntary agencies and volunteers themselves were asked a series of questions to unearth these indicators.

Everyone interviewed for this project derives some kind of personal benefit from their volunteer work - as someone said “I'm not a martyr - if I weren't get anything from it I wouldn't be doing it...” Benefits included many personal answers but the most often stated ones were:

- Social benefits - networking: 23
- Learning: 15
  - including new practical skills
- Satisfaction/sense of achievement: 11
- Enjoyment: 8
- Sense of belonging to something important/community spirit: 8
- Helping others: 7
- Energising, prevents boredom: 7
- Improved self esteem and confidence: 7
- Putting back - reciprocal giving to the community: 6
- Other: 15
- TOTAL: 70

**Reasons why people don’t volunteer**

According to those people who do currently volunteer the barriers to volunteering include:

- Lack of time: 27
- Not interested, apathetic, unmotivated: 21
- Lack of confidence, fear of the unknown: 14
- Selfish: 12
- No money to be made from it: 12
- No feeling of community: 8
- Can’t afford it: 6
- Worried about responsibility and litigation: 5
- Fear of being trapped “until they die”: 3

Other reasons included: personality conflicts, not liking people, lack of role models, undervaluing volunteers, don’t feel welcome and peer pressure. Several people struggled to find positive ways of saying that they thought people were selfish or too concerned with material possessions to spend time volunteering. Some withdrew this kind of comment. Others were very forthright.

“Volunteering is very much part of the glue which makes society work” (Phipps 2001, p. 6)
3. Enhancement function: volunteering may allow people to engage in psychological development and enhance their self-esteem;

4. Career function: people may volunteer to gain experiences that will benefit their careers;

5. Social function: volunteering may help people ‘fit in’ and get along with social groups they value;

6. Protective function: volunteering may help people cope with inner anxieties and conflicts. (Zappala, 2000, p. 2).

Other Australian research supports the view of Zappala that altruism is not the only motive for undertaking volunteer work as the reasons for volunteering are as diverse as the people who volunteer (Soupourmas & Ironmonger, 2002; Volunteering Australia, 2002; Flick, Bittman & Doyle, 2002). Although studies indicate that altruism is a key motivating factor people are also motivated by self-interest.
Sustainability

Responses from people in small communities to questions about why they volunteer were usually about lifestyle and survival of the community. They don’t talk about “social capital” or an interest in regenerating increased activity and support for building stronger community activity or understanding the demise of social civility and community networks.

Basically it all comes down to survival, numbers, reciprocity, common goals and community spirit.

- “There are 3 people left to do what 30 people did in the past … You constantly feel in a small community that you are fighting a losing battle … you feel you’re doing your bit to keep the community together … sharing abilities, repaying kindnesses … it’s a good feeling keeping other people’s blood, sweat and tears going – I don’t feel obligated – it’s a reciprocal thing.”

- “If a small town doesn’t come together, it won’t survive. When town organisations die, so does part of the town and its’ history.”

- “Our community’s strength is in the people who live here and if we don’t care, it won’t be here … small communities don’t look for accolades … in fact if it happened too much you’d lose volunteers. It’s probably different in the city.”

According to Driscoll (1999, p. 29) farmers feel as though they have borne not only the burdens of economic loss, but also the burdens of ‘environmental denigration and a loss of social networks, friends and neighbours’.

Research undertaken by Townsend, Hallebone and Mahoney (2002, p. 3) suggests that the contracting out of government services to voluntary organisations has posed a danger in undermining the relationships between service providers and volunteers. Trust, which is an important part of social networking, making people more able to work together, is potentially threatened under these new arrangements of increased competition, therefore making voluntary work not as attractive. It is argued that economic restructuring has demoralised some people who feel they are working longer and harder and have less time available for family and voluntary activity (Regional Women’s Advisory Council, 2003, p. 1).

In Australia the government responded to the global recession of the 1980’s and 1990’s by embracing the ideology of economic rationalism. With the application and delivery of health and welfare services shifting to commercial and market solutions, governments determined that non-for-profit organisations were better suited to deliver some welfare services.

As Oppenheimer (2000, p. 16) states there was an ‘explosion of contracting out key areas of social welfare to both

“If a small town doesn’t come together, it won’t survive. When town organisations die, so does part of the town and its’ history.”

“Our community’s strength is in the people who live here and if we don’t care, it won’t be here … small communities don’t look for accolades … in fact if it happened too much you’d lose volunteers. It’s probably different in the city.”
It is argued that not all benefited equally from these changes and that the combined effect of structural trends and changes to government intervention worked against rural and regional Australia.

There are other ongoing roles such as foster care particularly for young people with high needs that appear to be unsustainable, with people more likely to volunteer for short term rewarding or career related tasks that do not require a “lifetime commitment”.

There are other ongoing roles such as foster care particularly for young people with high needs that appear to be unsustainable, with people more likely to volunteer for short term rewarding or career related tasks that do not require a “lifetime commitment”.

People in rural communities volunteer more than those in urban areas, giving rise to a legitimate concern about the future capacity of rural Australians to continue to give in an environment of growing disadvantages and an expectation from government that they will fill the void of vacated state and federal government services.

The ideological shift of welfare reform to mutual obligation has also impacted negatively on the voluntary sector. The **Voluntary Work Initiative** is an example of government reform in welfare that obliges the unemployed benefit recipient to some form of voluntary activity. It is said to be both exploiting the unemployed and misunderstanding the nature and motivations of volunteering (Oppenheimer, 2000; Flick, Bittman & Doyle 2002, p. 4).

Eva Cox (2000, p. 142) argues that it demeans and devalues volunteerism and suggests that policy makers misunderstand the ethic of giving time and the skills required in volunteering. However, organisations such as Volunteering Australia have been advocating to introduce changes to ensure that people are not directed to do voluntary work and that the scheme does not undermine the image of volunteers and volunteering.

Statistics in the health arena also suggest rural Victorians are ‘wearing’ the burden of contribution to the sustainability of communities. For example, ‘over half of the hospital support/fundraising/auxiliary groups were based in the country’ (Soupourmas & Ironmonger, 2001, p. 45).
Volunteers in rural Victoria felt that voluntary activity was expected in the community and saw them as filling a gap for the lack of available support services (Flick, Bittman & Doyle, 2002, p. 52).

**Changes over time**

Overwhelmingly people believe that volunteering has changed over time:

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not in a position to tell</td>
<td>3</td>
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</table>

Of those who thought there were changes, this is what they said about them:

Insurance, litigation, etc. has led to more formalisation, accountability, etc. 21
Increased stress because agencies expect more/too much 12
No longer enough volunteers to go round 7
Agencies less welcoming/respectful of volunteers 4

A few people interpreted this as personal rather than general and made the following comments:

“... increased commitment means it’s a lifestyle change…”
“... has changed from my own personal self interest to community interest ...”
“I now know where help is most needed.”

“... there's not so much pressure now that I’m doing general community work [rather than church volunteer work].”

There were 2 sides to this - benefits to the community and benefits to individuals volunteering. The first is best summed up in the comments we received through asking people to complete the following sentence –

“If it weren’t for volunteers ...”

The most succinct of these were along the vein of “... we’d be buggered” or “we’d be stuffed”.

Other comments included:

“... we’d be in deep trouble - up a creek without a paddle - especially rural communities which are spread a lot thinner.”

“... most community groups would be non-existent. Society as we know it would be non-existent. Volunteers hold the whole thing up…”

“... a lot of organisations would fold and there’d be a lot of sad people not being cared for…”

“... there’d be a lot of unhappy, forgotten, lonely, lost people…”

Research undertaken in Victoria indicates that ‘regional Victoria has a larger number of organisations relying on volunteers and a higher participation rate of volunteers than metropolitan Melbourne (Soupourmas, Ironmonger,
that negatively affect the capacity of volunteers to continue in these roles. The issue of demarcation was first raised by workers in the organisations we surveyed. They were concerned that there was a fine line between paid work and work done by volunteers, which was integral to the organisation and which could have been done by a paid worker (albeit a part-time or trainee position). Where these concerns existed, workers had insisted on very clearly defined demarcation lines. These were rigorously enforced so that there was no encroachment on paid workers jobs, which might eventually lead to loss of jobs or at least loss of hours. They also wondered if there might be a “thin edge of the wedge” mentality where management used more volunteers for other and newly proposed projects, based upon the success of the current ones.

Volunteers also clearly saw this as an area of concern – the concerns being exploitation of volunteers and diminished job creation prospects in a region where job opportunities are low. Their responses reflect this:

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<tr>
<td>OK for not-for-profit organisations</td>
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<tr>
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There are also issues in what can reasonably be expected from volunteers when it comes to the duties performed.

2001, p. xi.) Although regional Victorians were only 28 per cent of the total Victorian population, about 45 per cent of community services were based outside metropolitan Melbourne (Sourpourmas & Ironmonger, 2002, p. 42).

Only 4 people said they had no issues with the volunteer work they do. The most often stated issues were:

Juggling time, tiredness and other commitments 16

Over formalisation, increased responsibilities/liabilities 11

Issues related to specific agencies 8

Problems associated with head office being located outside the area 7

Other 11

There are also issues in what can reasonably be expected from volunteers when it comes to the duties performed. Aged care, care for significantly incapacitated people, ongoing care and support of children – such as foster care may not be sustainable in the face of the increasing demands on people’s time from their own responsibilities to their families of origin and creation. There have been significant changes in the make up of families as well as reforms in government policies and programs...
Workers were also concerned about the effects of “corporatisation” – and not only of organisations with headquarters outside the region. Most worked hard to overcome/balance/compensate for it, often believing that management undervalued their volunteer workers. They also commented in some cases that they thought of themselves as volunteers because of the unpaid hours they worked which were not acknowledged by management.

- “…need to quarantine volunteers from bureaucracy…”
- “To sustain volunteers, you need to piss off bureaucracy.”
- “Volunteers make the strongest contributions where they are...”
"Volunteers make the strongest contributions where they are empowered and their commitment is matched by that of the organisation."

- "Recognition [of volunteers] needs to be commensurate with the contribution being made – for example, cuts in finances for thanks are no recompense for the value in dollars of the time contributed by volunteers."
- "Volunteer thankyous ... are usually held in Warrnambool so our volunteers don't attend...”
- "...staff also work unpaid overtime which amounts to volunteer work – 3 people times half a day a week on average is 624 hours a year at least...”
- "There was supposed to be a review of the volunteer program but this hasn’t happened...”

The thing that kept people volunteering in these situations was a commitment to the local people they were working with, loyalty to the paid workers in the area and a sense that no matter what the unseen authorities said or did, it was still the people on the ground that understood the local situation – and therefore they would hang on.

The structures of the CFA and the SES allow local groups more ownership of their situations but both workers and volunteers remarked at the amount of paperwork, training, etc. which has been recently introduced. Volunteer coordinators find it difficult to find the time to stay on top of all the paperwork and were strong in their suggestion that a paid secretariat was becoming an essential tool to survival. They were not the only ones to suggest that a paid shared treasurer or secretary be appointed to work for and with local volunteer organisations.

Other barriers to volunteering identified in the literature include: ‘reimbursement of expenses, lack of adequate support, supervision, training, insurance, and problems with transport, tensions between volunteers and paid staff and uncertainty about insurance cover’ (Flick, Bittman & Doyle 2002, p. 18).

The cost of volunteering and uncertainty surrounding litigation were identified as especially concerning for rural and regional areas (Flick, Bittman & Doyle, 2002, p iv). For example, the travelling required in a rural region could be costly for a volunteer who has to use their car to either transport themselves or others. Also there is a lack of information about what activities are insured, who has the responsibility for insurance cover and how claims can be made (Flick, Bittman & Doyle, 2002, p. 72). All these factors can act as barriers or deterrents for either commencing or continuing as a volunteer (Flick, Bittman & Doyle, 2002, p. 72).

There was also a sense that some agencies and all levels of government – Federal to local – were happy to place more and more responsibilities in the hands of volunteers. Participants gave the following examples:

- "The powers that be judge the success of a project by the
forced to leave because of ill-health (Esmond, 2001, p. 31).

The literature and this research provides evidence that people continue to value the voluntary experience. People want new experiences, to learn new skills and to care for others and their community. Organisations need to think about ways of involving people, which matches their interest and desire for new skills and experiences. People need to have choices in what they do and to feel that they are valued and their efforts recognised and rewarded. Organisations also need to be flexible to accommodate the personal and professional commitments of the volunteer.

A key challenge is to recognise the value and interest of young people who demonstrate and aspire to support a particular issue or cause. Importantly organisations need to be welcoming of all community members and to create practices and relationships that are inclusive. Volunteers also need to be provided with opportunities to undertake worthwhile activities. These strategies are important to the future of volunteering in rural communities.

In her study Driscoll (1999, p. 83) reported that many volunteers reported their involvement as more work-like with little fun, stimulations and/or challenges indicating a level of vulnerability in the structures and practices that have developed these networks of volunteers.

Research undertaken by Townsend, Hallebone & Mahoney (2002, p. 5) suggests that the economic redevelopment of rural regions, including the privatisation, regionalisation and rationalisation of government funded services 'may have prompted individuals to focus on their own current and future financial stability at the expense of community involvement', leading to a diminished pool of available volunteers.

Other barriers identified for rural communities were distance, isolation, lack of support and smaller numbers of potential volunteers to attract and recruit (Esmond, 2001, p. 31). Out of a sense of duty and sometimes ‘guilt’ some volunteers will undertake a number of responsibilities to ensure services are retained (Esmond, 2001, p. 31). This can lead to ‘burn out’ for some who are forced to leave because of ill-health (Esmond, 2001, p. 31).

“Local government approached us to set up ... now they just throw [an inadequate amount of money] at us and expect us to do the rest ... we don’t have a local councillor anymore so we don’t see anyone...”
5. RECRUITING AND KEEPING VOLUNTEERS

Recruitment

In every case recruitment is thought to be best done by word of mouth.

- “The best advocates for a service are those who enjoy what they’re doing...”
- “We’re trying to get men to recruit men...”
- “…members headhunt and actively recruit suitable people...”
- “If we need extra volunteers...I just ask people...”
- “Best way is word of mouth...often through friends.”

In most cases people said that although they made use of the papers, this was not an effective means of finding recruits. The exceptions to this were:

- “…placing an ad in the situations vacant section of the paper usually brings 10 or so volunteers...”
- “You need to give people 4 bites before they come in [to volunteer] so we keep a high visibility and have photos of people that other people will recognise [in the local paper]...”
- In one instance placement of a humorous ad had achieved good results.
- “Running courses to attract volunteers is not the answer – increasing interest is the way to go”.

Formalised recruitment procedures were thought to be “off-putting” to some people. A common response to this was to play down or ignore formal organisational procedures – this was also a strategy for keeping volunteers:

- “…need to quarantine volunteers from bureaucracy...”
- “To sustain volunteers, you need to piss off bureaucracy.”
- “Police checks sometimes put people off...”
- Some organisations have intake times once or twice a year but “if you don’t get them involved straight away, when they call...you lose them.”
- “We don’t gather information from volunteers because they don’t like paperwork, police checks, etc. so we don’t over document – it’s not needed in this area...”

For other organisations, formalised recruitment procedures are essential – usually because people’s lives are at stake:

- “We make no apologies for our procedures...we cannot put [clients] already at risk at further risk...”

Other forms of recruitment (besides word of mouth) include:
- all media forms
- local or specific organisation newsletters
- street stalls and attendance at places like field days and “Sheepvention”
• ensuring that the organisation’s raison d’être is still as is was/useful/relevant
• public speaking
• through activities organised by the agency/committee
• on an “as needed” basis i.e. recruiting specific people (sometimes with particular skills, expertise or knowledge) for specific jobs

In voluntary organisations where there is a hierarchy, the most senior positions were most difficult to fill “...more responsibility is off putting...” “...the person who does the roster because it’s such a headache...”

“Some areas have less (or more) difficulty than others in recruiting volunteers.” The degree of difficulty seems to be directly related to the degree of disability of the people volunteers work with. Workers believe that this is about social aspects of the job i.e. if there is little or no response from the person the volunteer is relating with, it will be harder to find and keep volunteers.

Keeping Volunteers

Volunteers and the organisations interviewed reflected on the best methods to retain people in a voluntary capacity, they observed:

“No exploitation...don’t keep asking and asking...”

“Personal thank yous.” “...saying ‘thank you’ to people...”

“...educating paid workers so they don’t cause burnout in volunteers, informally monitoring those situations, stepping in if needed...”

“Treat people with respect and value their time.”

“Be aware of things outside the workplace that impinge upon the volunteer’s sustainability and ‘reliability’...”

“Training is done in consultation with volunteers [based on their stated needs]”

“...individual Christmas cards for all volunteers...”

“...volunteer support groups – these need to be truly supported...”

“...provide appropriate work with regard to availability, interests, skills, confidence, etc.”

“Peer support for stress related problems.”

Some of the larger organisations for example the CFA provide administration and other forms of support from paid workers.

“Make it enjoyable...”

“Flexibility – to take account of seasonal events like shearing...”
There was also a belief that volunteers gained their own personal rewards from the work they do and that this was a form of personal and sustaining support and recognition.

**Making volunteering easier**

Volunteers and organizations were asked what would make volunteering easier, a selection of responses follows:

- Payment/reimbursement of costs
- Everyone pulling their weight/more volunteers
- Limits to the liability laws
- Involving volunteers at all levels including planning, finding solutions, etc.
- Support from the agency
- Approaching people personally
- Respect for volunteers
- Employing a shared community treasurer and secretary
- Cut back on meetings
- Incorporate volunteering into school education
- Volunteers mentoring other volunteers
- Getting appropriate feedback from the agencies

“... encouragement - people need to be approached in a way that makes them feel needed and wanted ... keeping involvement low key and travel into it at their own pace - no use pressing people into it ...”

“People are no longer automatically welcomed. There’s more emphasis on training, suitability, liability, etc. We’ve become a blaming society rather than a
Whilst incapacity was the most consuming reason for leaving volunteering, there were some cautionary volunteer observations about agencies use and recruitment of volunteers – for example:

- “... short stints of work for volunteers so they aren’t overwhelmed ...”
- “Don’t keep asking volunteers to do more and more ... they burn out ...”
- “Maybe need to spend some money on a good motivational speaker like Kevin Sheedy...”
- “People don’t want to attend meetings - I know they’re important in terms of setting direction, etc ... but they need to be made interesting...” ...
- “Recognise that more people need to volunteer. If everyone gave 1 hour, that would accumulate into something huge - people can see the need - they just need to be convinced to do something about it. [Agencies] could target 10 people to do half an hours work each ... the whole parcel has to be made attractive. People need to live it, enjoy it and do the best they can.”
- “People are no longer automatically welcomed. There’s more emphasis on training, suitability, liability, etc. We’ve become a blaming society rather than a caring one – it’s frightened volunteers away. You’re more likely to hear bad stories than good ones ...”

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“Recognise that more people need to volunteer. If everyone gave 1 hour, that would accumulate into something huge - people can see the need - they just need to be convinced to do something about it.
story about volunteering than a good one.”

Other research indicates that volunteers who have opportunities to be involved in the decision making processes and strategic directions of an organisation are more satisfied with their experience (Flick, Bittman & Doyle, 2002, p. 24.) For some volunteers they need to be able to identify their contributions as fitting into the big picture, i.e. the mission or vision of the organisation (Epsom, 2003, p. 19). Therefore, managers need to be more responsive and attentive to the needs and aspirations of their volunteers and provide opportunities to celebrate and reward their voluntary efforts.

Epsom (2002, p. 19), also suggests agencies need to adopt a ‘youthful message’ in their recruitment strategy if they are to attract the potential pool of volunteers, popularly known as the ‘Baby Boomers’ (people born between 1946 and 1963). It is this particular group which is seen as having a significant propensity to ‘swell the volunteering market’ (Epsom, 2002, 10) needs of volunteers and to protect organisations from potential litigation. In the context of sustaining long term volunteering efforts it is important to balance the needs of the organisation and the volunteer to ensure that reasons for volunteering are not lost in the process of education and training (Epsom, 2002, p. 22)

The literature suggests that organisations need to ‘get their house in order’ as it is unlikely given the demands and busy lives of volunteers, i.e. time, travel and family and work commitments, that a volunteer will want to stay in an organisation where they do not feel valued, respected or satisfied (Noble, 2000, p. 158; Epsom, 2002, p. 17). Nor are they likely to stay in a team of ‘tired and apathetic workers’ (Noble, 2000, p. 159).

Therefore it is important for organisations to find ways to support and recognise the unique contribution of each volunteer. It is essential for community organisations to find new ways for volunteering to prosper.

The New South Wales government Rural and Support Strategy (www.communitybuilders.nsw.gov.au/builder/volunteering, 2002) cites training as a priority for volunteering support for both volunteer-involving and volunteer support organisations. Epsom (2002, p. 22) suggests the reasons for the increasing push for training is possibly fuelled by the need to professionalise voluntary efforts, the
Community leaders identified lack of confidence as a factor in the way that organisations ran in small communities. On the one hand people thought to have intellectual ability were expected to run meetings, write reports, funding submissions and keep up with the reading. On the other hand it was thought that people underestimated their own capabilities or didn’t value them realistically (or both in some cases).

Purely volunteer organisations interviewed are struggling to find people to take on positions of responsibility or even to find committee members...

- “In 2001 we went without [a secretary]; in 2002 we have one under duress (aka the treasurer).”
- “People are not willing to come on the committee but are still willing to help.”
- “It’s always difficult to find [committee] members, especially executive positions if people decide to leave them, but people currently in those positions are happy (in the main) to be in them...”
- “leading role/executive positions are most difficult to fill – people prefer to help, to be told what to do...”
- “...everyone’s had a turn at filling these positions...guess we’ll have to go round again...”

Committee structures are falling down because people are reluctant to take on the commitment and responsibility required in the longer term with the additional onus of legal responsibility. There is a need to explore workable options including merging smaller community organisations or forming co-operatives where the “management business” can be undertaken in concert,

6. "COMMITTEEMENT"

- “people are put off by the paperwork...”

Workers comments about filling positions and committees reflected similar sentiments.

- volunteers are recruited any way they can be - “short of riding down the street naked on a white horse...”
- In organisations where there is a hierarchy, the most senior positions were most difficult to fill “...more responsibility is off putting...”
- “...the person who does the roster because it’s such a headache...”
- “Some areas have less (or more) difficulty than others in recruiting volunteers.” The degree of difficulty seems to be directly related to the degree of disability of the people volunteers work with. Workers believe that this is about social aspects of the job i.e. if there is little or no response from the person the volunteer is relating with, it will be harder to find and keep volunteers.

A Committee is a cul-de-sac down which ideas are lured and then quietly strangled”. Sir Barnett Cocks (1907).
"The idea of volunteerism needs to change – for example, group structures need to be more informal and more ‘active’. Old structures are not workable. Everything is left to the office bearers; therefore it’s difficult to get people to do those jobs”.

We have to start thinking smarter at developing strategies for volunteering.

rather than a series of separate meetings. Forming collectives of smaller community organisations and/or of those organisations that are totally volunteer such as the CWA.

"Governments of all levels and persuasions create more non profit organisations and voluntary boards and councils than any other source. Incorporation legislation requires a voluntary Board/Committee to be established where funds are disbursed for community use or where community participation and involvement in decision - making is required.

There is an assumption that people to fill voluntary Board/Committee positions are easily found – and when found, are well equipped with the necessary skills and spare time to do the job well... (Finding these people) is in itself quite a challenge for city and suburban organisations. Consider the task for country towns where people are generally fewer and such people considerably harder to find! In many communities, there is usually a small band of heavily involved people working on a large number of Boards and Committees. “The Committee Member’s Handbook” Jean Roberts, 1991.

Solutions raised by voluntary organisations included...

“...drag them in by their forelocks and feed them peppermints…”

"At the annual meeting this year we have decided not to feel pressured into filling these positions; we will be looking at finding a different solution (changing our constitution if necessary).” Incorporation demands a certain structure in terms of office bearers so changing constitutions to a collective type of organisation need not be an easy thing to do.

Reviewing the activities and achievements of the group to see if a new direction is warranted – “the women’s committee folded 5 years ago...the men made most of the decisions...no need for 2 committees…”

Systems of mentoring in difficult positions or positions with responsibility – “We have succession planning...grooming...sort of an apprenticeship to build confidence before taking on the positions. It’s encouraged [by the organisation]. I think it works here…”

"The idea of volunteerism needs to change – for example, group structures need to be more informal and more ‘active’. Old structures are not workable. Everything is left to the office bearers; therefore it’s difficult to get people to do those jobs”.

One solution posited was the employment in consultation with volunteer organisations of shared, paid treasurer/bookkeepers, secretariats and community liaison/development workers.

Epsom (2002, p. 27) argues that we have to start thinking smarter at
developing strategies for volunteering. She has made a number of suggestions, which are worthy of consideration. These include:

“Family volunteering, enabling tasks for all members of a family, so that families do not have to choose between spending time with their families or spending time volunteering.

On-line volunteering offers the opportunity for volunteers to perform the work at either their home or work

Employee volunteering, whereby employers provide paid release time for employees to volunteer’ (Epsom, 2002)

A specific recommendation for rural communities is the idea that they can pool their resources ‘to provide a smaller but more effective number of services’ (Epsom, 2002, p. 33). This strategy would help to overcome the problem of diminishing numbers of potential volunteers and the potential over duplication of services (Epsom, 2002, p. 33).
7. PAYMENT AND MONEY ISSUES

Volunteers were hard pressed to quantify their costs – both in terms of money and time, but in some cases, the financial cost of volunteering is becoming prohibitive – particularly in purely volunteer groups and especially amongst organisers for example those who occupy office bearer positions such as president or secretary. In the first stage of the project we heard:

- “... it was OK when I was earning money but now I'm on a fixed income, it’s becoming more difficult…”
- “The shire gives us $200 a year but it isn’t enough ... you can use their facilities [photocopier, etc] but that means you have to drive to town ... I try to incorporate it into my trips to town ... that doesn’t always work.”
- “If you volunteer with a number of organisations and each one has a Christmas party ... it costs a lot of money ... you have to drive there ...you often have to pay for a meal – that never used to happen - and then you are asked to bring a gift often ... It all adds up – especially at [that] time of the year.”
- “Meetings held during the day [by organisations with paid workers who work 9 – 5] exclude those involved as volunteers who have paid work to attend to or eats away at working time and is not efficient. Volunteer groups need a paid person to do liaising who can be there during business hours.”

In the second stage of the project, only 4 people identified the cost of volunteering as an issue but it was talked about consistently in other parts of the survey. For example when people were asked directly if volunteers should be reimbursed for expenses, all but 4 participants said yes adding comments such as:

- “If costs were covered, more people would be inclined to take office - especially those on a fixed income...”
- “... needs to happen so as not to exclude people.”
- “… right to the last cent!”

Costs were likely to be more of a problem for those in volunteer organisations and especially for:

- those in office - often people were in multiple positions of office (and therefore multiple costs) and/or had not noticed the cost when in paid work but found it difficult when going on to a pension or fixed income
- those who had to travel distances - especially if this happened on a frequent basis
- community groups in small towns/areas - “[reimbursement] puts more costs back onto the community...”
- working people who lost paid work time volunteering - this applied not only to emergency services volunteers
Should Firefighters be paid?

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</tr>
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<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reimbursement for lost wages</td>
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</table>

People who said “no” reasoned that:

“They shouldn’t do it if it’s not financially viable for them...”

People who said “yes” reasoned:

“...DNRE workers are paid...

“They should be paid the earth. They put their lives on the line. But they won’t be [paid] because it’s an accepted way of life in the country.”

“They can be giving up to 2 or 3 weeks of their time to protect homes and lives. They put their own lives out on a limb. They do lots of training. They deserve compensation.”

In response to the question “who should pay for the firefighters wages?” the following answers were given:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Payment</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special tax or levy on every person/household</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A scheme like the one in place for jurors</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
All those interviewed mentioned the possibility of having to pay volunteers in the future.

"Foster carers deserve every penny they get."

"I know they do it for love but it’s a responsibility - fostering wouldn’t always be enjoyable – there’s a lot of problems they have to cope with."

Should Foster Carers be paid?

- Unequivocal yes: 9
- Paid a minimum amount/retainer: 8
- Unequivocal no: 3
- Realistic and adequate reimbursement: 12
- Should automatically get full family supplement payment: 3

One foster carer reported that the availability of essential support services was of primary importance as most such services involved at least 2 hours travel.

Concern was expressed by a quarter of the participants about the motivation of carers whose primary focus would be the money rather than the children and their families. This did not necessarily mean that they thought payment was a bad thing – “If they were paid, screening would need to spot on.”

Comments around payment of foster carers were as follows:

“[fostercarers] should be paid as much as it costs because it’s really a hard thing to do - really you can’t pay people too much to take care of those kids - if someone doesn’t do it early in their lives they’ll be an even bigger mess later and that will cost the whole community ...”

“Foster carers deserve every penny they get.”

“I know they do it for love but it’s a responsibility - fostering wouldn’t always be enjoyable – there’s a lot of problems they have to cope with.”

All those interviewed mentioned the possibility of having to pay volunteers in the future – the reasons for this varied:

- increased responsibility expected of volunteers
- increased expertise and therefore increased training levels expected of volunteers
- difficulty finding suitable volunteers and keeping them – volunteers are often lost to paid employment

Paying volunteers would allow organisations to exercise more control over the volunteer workforce in terms of standards, training requirements and the like.

Workers on the ground felt that the organisations they work for need to be prepared to spend some money on formal acknowledgement of the work done by volunteers eg. an end of year party to say “thank you” but often no funding is forthcoming – in some instances workers pay for this kind of acknowledgement themselves.
To ensure that voluntary work does not “cost” the volunteer in terms of their health, well being and/or financially. This may be about how volunteers are supported and trained but also about how volunteers are reimbursed for their “Costs”, at what level and whether there are other ways of “rewarding” or recompensing volunteers.

Realistic reimbursements of costs to volunteers need to be paid in order not to prevent volunteers from lower socio-economic groups participating – especially in regard to positions of responsibility. Other incentives also need to be considered for example giving voluntary work a value that could then be listed as a tax deduction – this could assist in broadening the potential pool of volunteers.

It is reported that finding the real monetary value of volunteering is complex. According to the ABS (2002, p. 6) it is difficult to accurately do the arithmetic to measure the hours worked by the average volunteer as most volunteers work relatively few hours while a minority work substantial hours. However, despite this their statistical data states that the ‘median hours of voluntary work per week was 1.4 hours, with the women doing slightly more than men per year (74 as compared to 64) and the median hours increasing steadily with age (ABS, 2000, p. 6).

More significantly the ABS report (2002, p. 3) states that in the year 2000 volunteers contributed 704.1 million hours of voluntary work, this representing an increase on the 1995 figure which totalled 512 million hours. In terms of economic value Flick, Bittman & Doyle (2002, p. 35) suggest that the best current estimate of the value of volunteering in Australia is $41 billion annually.

The Victorian government (Soupourmas & Ironmonger, 2001, p. xii) who undertook further investigations into volunteering in Victoria concluded that ‘in the year 2000, Victorians donated 8 million hours to health organisations, 35 million hours to education, training and youth development organisations and 46 million hours to community and welfare organisations’. The report also estimated the economic value of volunteering in Victoria as worth $10 billion dollars (Soupourmas, Ironmonger, 2001, p. x).
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Australian Institute of Family Studies.  

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*The Role of Volunteerism in Maintaining Emergency Services in Small Rural Communities.*  5th National Rural Health Conference.  National Rural Health Alliance.  
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http://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/D3110122.NSF/ 4a255efef08309e44a255efef00061e57/ 6cd8b1f3f270566aca25699f0015a02a!OpenDocument

Discussion Papers - Measuring Social Capital current
collections and future directions


www.abs.gov.au-websitedbs-c311215.nsf-20564c23f3183fdaca25672100813ef1- 6256a9b6352b3b2fca256c22007ef573-$FILE-ATT43L2Y-F


communitybuilders.nsw Rural and Regional Communities Working Together in Strengthening Rural Communities


communitybuilders.nsw Be a Community Builder Broken Hill Mural Acknowledges its Volunteers


communitybuilders.nsw Be a Community Builder Giving Time


communitybuilders.nsw Be a Community Builder Finding and keeping Volunteers


communitybuilders.nsw Be a Community Builder - Volunteering


http://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/ agenda/index.shtml

Volunteering Australia National Agenda

http://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/ about/mission.shtml

Volunteering Australia About Us
communitybuilders.nsw Be a Community Builder Empowering Grass-Roots Groups to Strengthen Communities

http://www.iave.org/kelly/aboutiave.htm
About IAVE

http://www.ivr.org.uk/vahs1.htm
Voluntary Action History Society Paper - Spirit of friendly rivalry

http://www.cpn.org/
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http://www.ibe.unesco.org/
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Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

http://www.oecd.org/pdf/M00023000/M00023798.pdf

http://www.oecd.org/pdf/M00021000/M00021936.pdf

http://www.worldbank.org/
The World Bank Group

Social Capital for Development - Home Page - from PovertyNet

Rural Development and Social Capital
USEFUL INFORMATION FOR VOLUNTEERS AND VOLUNTEER ORGANISATIONS

TAX

Tax Basics for Non-profit organizations (NAT 7966)

This publication:

Provides an overview of tax obligations and concessions.

Helps identify which taxes effect your organization including fringe benefits tax, goods and services tax (GST) and pay as you go.

Explains where you can find more detailed information

Income Tax Guide for Non profit Organisations (NAT 7967)

Work out if your organisation is exempt from income tax, explains the endorsement process for charities, and provides information about income tax for non-profit organizations that are not exempt. This new publication combines significant information from the publication Charity pack and Club Pack which were produced in 2000. It also updates these publications to include legislative changes and to advise you of proposed changes to the law.

Gift Pack for Deductible Gift Recipients & Donors (NAT 3132)

Explains who can receive tax deductible gifts and the types of gifts that are tax deductible, as well as explaining how donors can claim tax deductions for their gifts.

This publication is an update of the Gift pack guide produced in 2000. It includes information on the types of tax deductible gifts donors can make and lists new categories of deductible gift recipients that have been legislated since 2000.

To obtain printed copies of these publications:

Phone 1300 720 092 and quote the NAT number (for example NAT 7967 for Income Tax Guide for Non profit Organisations).

Or write to the Australian Tax Office at GPO Box 9935 in your nearest capital city.

Volunteer Protection Legislation

In October 2002 the Wrongs and Other Acts (Public Liability Insurance Reform) Act 2002 was passed. This act was part of the Government’s response to problems in the insurance sector and included provisions to protect volunteers from personal liability.

The provisions seek to strike a reasonable balance between the need to protect volunteers and the interests of those who suffer injury. This balance is achieved by providing that a volunteer cannot be held personally liable to pay compensation for anything done or not done, in good faith by the volunteer while providing a service within the scope of community work organized by
The legislation makes it clear that the protection offered by this legislation will not apply to a volunteer who knew or ought to have known that at the relevant time he or she was acting:

- Outside the scope of the community work organised by the community organization;
- Contrary to instructions given by the community organization;
- Contrary to instructions given by the community organization in relation to the provision of the service.

The protection will also not apply:

- Where the volunteer’s ability to carry out the work properly was significantly impaired by drugs or alcohol; and in respect of any claim to recover damages for defamation.


Further information regarding the operation of these provisions can be obtained by contacting the Legal policy Division of the Department of Justice on (03) 9651 0731.

**Resources & References:**

Manitoba Voluntary Sector Initiative Secretariat on Voluntary Sector Sustainability
WWW: http://www.voluntarysector.mb.ca
WEBSITES

Community Consultation & Development:

“Supporting Local Solutions to Local Challenges” a Community Dialogue Toolkit developed by the Canadian Rural Partnership.
http://www.rural.gc.ca/dialogue/tool/index_e.phtml/

A Community Consultation toolkit has been developed by Victor Mutch of the Western Valley Development Authority in Nova Scotia.
http://www.wvda.com/cctk/index.html

Volunteerism Resources:

Australia — wide volunteer recruitment website:
http://www.govolunteer.com.au

NSW Government website on community building has many excellent resources for and information on volunteering and new initiatives both in Australia and overseas. There are also some useful practical resources and “toolkits” available.


UK

www.3rdsectorunion.org.uk

Scottish Voluntary Sector:
www.ncvo-vol.org.uk

National Database of Voluntary research Ireland: www.heanet.ie/volsec

International: The International Society for Third-sector Research: www.jhu.edu/~istr/about/
HELEN & GEOFF HANDBURY FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

“SUSTAINABLE VOLUNTEERISM IN RURAL COMMUNITIES” PROJECT

Undertaken by Community Connections (Victoria) Ltd & RMIT University

Research Report by Laurene Dietrich
Principal Researcher

Edited by Jill Warne Project co-ordinator

September 2003
Summary Of Findings

The voluntary sector in welfare areas in the Hamilton and Southern Grampians regions is characterised by:

- an ageing group of volunteers,
- lack of success in attracting young people and men
- fewer people prepared to volunteer for ongoing work requiring high levels of personal commitment and
- a growing crisis in smaller organisations that are dependent on voluntary Committee and Board members.

In our research we were interested to find out what motivated people to volunteer and what sustained them in their efforts. We asked questions to find out if volunteerism was learned, if it was fulfilling, generational or followed patterns.

As expected we found that there is no such person as a “volunteer”. This generic term does not adequately cover the tasks undertaken, the commitment, the reasons why people give of themselves and their time, their motivation to continue or the reasons they can no longer volunteer. They are as varied as the individuals involved.

What motivates people to be a volunteer is not really clear. Volunteering was described many times in terms of “lifestyle”. “When it’s been part of your life it’s something you can’t just drop off unless there’s some kind of huge event ... it’s life giving.” It was clear that those who volunteer will usually do so all their lives in one way or another from the time they are first involved:

- People who had moved had sought out places to volunteer in their new place of residence.
- Individual patterns of volunteering changed over time - the most notable change being the involvement in child centered volunteering such as kindergartens, schools, sporting and interest groups, returning to other volunteer work after families are reared.
- The most common responses people gave for why they would stop volunteering were all about incapacity — illness, death, moving, having to care for other family members. Agency workers confirmed this with their responses to the question.

Approaches to recruit, train and support volunteers need to be individualised. One volunteer organiser offered this observation - “Managing a volunteer committee ... the things that keep paid people in line don’t apply ... more like political parties than bureaucracies ...there are different guidelines for achieving goals...” Assumptions about what volunteers may want or need, can alienate potential or even committed volunteers.

Larger regional organisations with operations in the Hamilton and Southern
Grampians region are duplicating effort in the recruitment, retention, recognition and training of volunteers. We offered 2 options for consideration by volunteers for recruitment. The first was the internet and overwhelmingly, the answer is “NO”.

The second option was the establishment of a central pool of volunteers and by contrast to the net, this idea was better received. One volunteer reported that one local agency with multiple services already ran a central pool of volunteers and that it seemed to work very well. It was also thought to be a good idea “because people don’t think past their initial interest” - this would be a way of expanding people’s horizons and thereby their options for volunteer work.

**Research Methodology**

The research sought information from both workers in organisations and volunteers themselves in order to understand the factors influencing volunteerism in Hamilton & District. Organisations were chosen where volunteers joined because they wanted to rather than as a result of a direct self-interest for example parents volunteering in schools, sports people participating in sporting clubs or special interest groups like artists, writers or gardeners supporting a group activity; or through the Mutual obligation Policy.

This meant the groups we interviewed included emergency services, welfare and community groups. The constraints of time and funding did not allow us to contact all volunteer groups. We chose groups from a range of town sizes within the Shire of the Southern Grampians with the exception of Merino, which is outside the Shire boundary but which relies upon towns within the Shire for services such as schools, shopping, welfare and health.

A literature search was undertaken by Theresa Lynch through RMIT University to provide a broader perspective and context for the responses to the survey.

The research undertaken was informed by the ethical considerations required by Universities, with formal consent obtained from all those involved in the project and plain language statements provided.

Face to face research was undertaken in 2 stages:

**Stage 1:**

Workers were contacted personally or by phone and asked if they would participate in a survey about sustainable volunteerism. The aims, objectives and the format of the research project were outlined and confidentiality assured. Workers were asked a series of questions designed to gather demographic data and to explore issues and ideas. Interviews ran from 1 to 1.5 hours.
The answers were typed up and returned to the person interviewed to check the accuracy of the record and to add or retract any comments they saw necessary. They were also asked to help us with the next stage by contacting some of their volunteers and asking them whether they would like to be involved.

**Stage 2:**

Volunteers were contacted and asked a set of questions designed to gather demographic data and elicit responses about issues, ideas and values and to compare worker perceptions of volunteerism with those of the volunteers. Interviews ran from 1.5 – 2 hours.
1. Organisations

The 26 organisations from which participants were drawn fell roughly into 5 categories:

1)organisations with paid workers who train and co-ordinate large (60+) numbers of volunteers who are critical to the running of these agencies i.e. they could not operate without them, their relationship to the organisation borders on unpaid worker status.

- Country Fire Authority (CFA) the State Emergency Service (SES)
- Community Connections (Fostercare) Brophy Family and Youth Services

2)organisations with paid workers who train and co-ordinate a small number of volunteers who may or may not be critical to the running of these agencies – they could operate without them but at a reduced capacity, their relationship to the organisation borders on unpaid worker status. Generally speaking, these volunteers work with “things” and with well people.

- Hamilton Library, the Hamilton Visitor Information Centre, Points Arboretum, Blood

3)organisations with paid workers who work with a medium number (20-60) of volunteers who enhance the running of these agencies – they may not be able to operate without the volunteers – if they could, it would definitely be at a reduced capacity – i.e. some programs would have to be cut or scaled down. They are mostly agencies dealing with people with a mental, medical or physical condition, who need assistance.

- Mulleraterong, Adult Day Activity Support Services (ADASS) specialist services to the aged, ill or infirm, the Old Courthouse Community House, Western District Health Service (WDHS)
- Community Connections (Interchange, the Friends Program)
- the Dunkeld Visitor Information Centre

4)organisations which are completely volunteer-based, including the organisers.

- Progress Associations, Hall committees, the Friends of the Hamilton Botanic Gardens, Red Cross, Anglican Book Fair
5) **organisations which do not work with volunteers;** those who have made a clear decision not to involve volunteers.

- **Hamilton Art Gallery, Emma House**

Because of the decision not to include groups where volunteers had a “direct” interest eg. schools, sporting organisations, etc. we had 2 main types of organisations in our survey:

- Emergency services - eg. SES, CFA
- Community/welfare services - eg. ADASS, Interchange, etc.

The organisations were located in the following regional towns:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Town</th>
<th>Count</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Byaduk</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamilton</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casterton</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coleraine</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merino</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dunkeld</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balmoral</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bainbridge</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Many of the Hamilton organisations had their headquarters in Hamilton with branches or individual volunteers in smaller towns throughout the region eg. CFA, SES, Fostercare.
Women are more likely to volunteer in the human services areas – anything from ADASS and “Mulleraterong” to information services.

Findings

Common Ground...

Between all Organisations Interviewed:

✓ volunteers are insured

✓ men generally are more likely to volunteer where there are equipment based activities involved eg. SES, CFA, as drivers, recording news.

✓ women are more likely to volunteer in the human services areas – anything from ADASS and “Mulleraterong” to information services

✓ younger volunteers are more involved in “action” volunteering eg. SES, CFA.

✓ the main reasons people leave volunteer work are those associated with lifestyle changes – eg. aging, illness, return to paid employment, leaving the district, family and other responsibilities

✓ it was unusual for a volunteer to be under the age of 35, most were over the age of 45

✓ word of mouth was the best form of recruitment

✓ articles in the paper were not a good way of recruiting new volunteers

✓ feedback from volunteers is mostly done informally most often verbally via a worker who supports the volunteer with the work they are doing

✓ the need for volunteers to have a prerequisite background knowledge was minimal or nonexistent – training where needed is provided in accessible ways with regard to the volunteers time constraints, abilities, etc.

Between Agencies with paid workers who train and co-ordinate a large numbers of volunteers:

✓ these organisations employ people to work with volunteers i.e. working with volunteers is part of at least one person’s job description – this can vary from a paid volunteer co-ordinator position to individual workers having responsibility for aspects of volunteer involvement eg. training, support, recruitment, etc.

✓ because the agencies involved understand that they could not operate without their volunteers there are solid policies about things like provision of compulsory training at no cost to volunteers, insurance, police

it was unusual for a volunteer to be under the age of 35, most were over the age of 45
checks, reimbursement of costs, etc.

✓ all mentioned the possibility of having to pay volunteers in the future – the reasons for this varied:
  ▪ increased responsibility expected of volunteers
  ▪ increased expertise and therefore increased training levels expected of volunteers
  ▪ difficulty finding suitable volunteers and keeping them – volunteers are often lost to paid employment
  ▪ paying volunteers would allow organisations to exercise more control over the volunteer workforce in terms of standards, training requirements, etc.

✓ training is usually specialised

✓ volunteers are on call at all times

Between agencies with paid workers and small numbers of trained volunteers:

✓ the volunteers in these agencies are stable i.e. There is no high turn over of numbers

✓ volunteers attend very regularly eg. same day and time every week

✓ there are often waiting lists for this volunteer work

✓ workers on the ground have little or no time allocated in their job descriptions to co-ordinate, support or supervise volunteers

✓ workers on the ground are extremely committed to and appreciative of the volunteers they work with which is an attitude they don’t always feel is present at senior management levels

✓ workers on the ground feel that the organisations they work for need to be prepared to spend some money on formal acknowledgement of the work done by volunteers eg. an end of year party to say “thank you” but often no funding is forthcoming – in some instances workers pay for this kind of acknowledgement themselves

Between agencies with paid volunteer co-ordinators & significant numbers of volunteers:

✓ most of these volunteers are women

✓ most are elderly or old

✓ many (but not all) of the induction and reporting procedures are informal

✓ organisers believe that part of the motivation for volunteer involvement in these organisations is social
most stress that people who are “needy” (emotionally, psychologically, financially, socially) themselves are unsuitable as volunteers

**Between completely volunteer organisations:**

- getting harder to fill committee positions – mostly they are filled to prevent collapse of the organisation
- people are still interested in providing practical support and assistance eg. for working bees, but don’t want to attend meetings or take on positions of responsibility
- costs to committee members are generally born with good will but are becoming an issue
- insurance cover is available sometimes through the voluntary organisation or sometimes through an umbrella organisation

Agencies which have decided not to involve volunteers:

The main reasons for making a decision not to involve volunteers are:

- the amount of time it takes to train, support and organise volunteers
- measure the above against return and it’s not viable
- specialised work requires high levels of training which also makes volunteer labour unviable
- people who are trained often get paid work and leave

**Personal Skills and Qualities**

Organisations and agencies sought volunteers with the following characteristics – the number represents the number of times each characteristic was cited as being important:

- commitment/reliability 11
- suitable to the job – practical skills 11
- be good with people/caring 11
- availability/time 11
- be good communicators 10
- punctuality 7
- understand confidentiality and the need for it 6
- willingness to learn 5
- sense of ownership of the service/interest in the area 4
- common sense 4
- not themselves needy 3
honesty 3  
leadership skills/confidence 3  
tenacity 2  
personable/well presented 2  
flexibility 2  
team player 1  
ability to work well under pressure 1  
patience 1  
appropriate age 1  
physical fitness 1  
respect for those they are working with 1  
able to uphold standards 1  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trait</th>
<th>Score</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Honesty</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leadership skills/confidence</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tenacity</td>
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<td>Able to uphold standards</td>
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94

- Whilst it seems from the responses to this question that agencies and organisations require skilled volunteers, many agencies stated that there was no mandatory requirement for people to be skilled coming into the program because they provided training. Other organisations said that skilled volunteers were a “bonus” and others – especially volunteer organisations would call upon specifically trained people within their community eg. a plumber or electrician, to help out with specific projects.

- The people who suggested leadership skills are important are from totally volunteer organisations – their comments are worth noting:

  “Some confidence building exercises would spread the written/verbal work across the group more evenly…”
  “A lot of people think they have no skills, but they do.”
  “There’s a lot of responsibility and some levels of skill/confidence required to interpret government policy/papers, apply for funding, write reports, etc.”

- Some of the qualities cited less frequently eg. physical fitness were peculiar requirements of specific services such as the CFA or SES.

**Recruitment**

All the workers interviewed thought recruitment was best done by word of mouth.

- “The best advocates for a service are those who enjoy what they’re doing…”
- “We’re trying to get men to recruit men…”
- “…members headhunt and actively recruit suitable people…”
Some organisations have intake times once or twice a year but “if you don’t get them involved straight away, when they call...you lose them.”

- “If we need extra volunteers...I just ask people...”
- “Best way is word of mouth...often through friends.”

In most cases people said that although they made use of the papers, this was not an effective means of finding recruits. The exceptions to this were:

- “…placing an ad in the situations vacant section of the paper usually brings 10 or so volunteers...”
- “You need to give people 4 bites before they come in [to volunteer] so we keep a high visibility and have photos of people that other people will recognise [in the local paper]...”
- In one instance placement of a humorous ad had achieved good results.

Formalised recruitment procedures were thought to be “off-putting” to some people. A common response to this was to play down or ignore formal organisational procedures – this was also a strategy for keeping volunteers:

- “…need to quarantine volunteers from bureaucracy...”
- “To sustain volunteers, you need to piss off bureaucracy.”
- “Police checks sometimes put people off...”
- Some organisations have intake times once or twice a year but “if you don’t get them involved straight away, when they call...you lose them.”

- “We don’t gather information from volunteers because they don’t like paperwork, police checks, etc. so we don’t over document – it’s not needed in this area...”

For other organisations, formalised recruitment procedures are essential – usually because people’s lives are at stake:

- “We make no apologies for our procedures...we cannot put [clients] already at risk at further risk...”

Other forms of recruitment (besides word of mouth) include:

- all media forms
- local or specific organisation newsletters
- street stalls and attendance at places like field days and “Sheepvention”
- ensuring that the organisation’s raison d’etre is relevant
- public speaking
- through activities organised by the agency/committee
- on an “as needed” basis i.e. recruiting specific people (sometimes with particular skills, expertise or knowledge) for specific jobs

Many organisations in the human services areas said they needed more male and/or younger volunteers. There were not a lot of ideas about solving these problems:
However there were 3 notable exceptions to this trend.

1. One agency reported that they had tried secondary school based training and it didn’t work. The main problems seemed to be that the necessary training and paperwork wasn’t worth the return and that the students were not enthusiastic about being there.

2. Another agency had reasonable success in involving young people but were disappointed that they lost them when they moved away for tertiary education or work, usually never to return. Although this organisation can see no immediate positive outcomes, this could be seen as a short-term view, as not every young person leaves the district permanently, there are constant waves of young people through education and there is a link between those who volunteer in their youth and those who maintain a commitment to volunteering throughout their life.

3. One group had made a clear decision to target primary schools with an interesting and innovative education program with one aim being to involve younger volunteers – in this case the parents of the children. However, later volunteer involvement of the primary school children may also be an unplanned for benefit further down the track.

Another comment worth noting here was a volunteer who had been involved in church based volunteer work since their young teenage years. As the

Workers generally accepted that people had little spare time eg. younger women often have both family and work commitments. “People who are on multiple committees are faced with problems associated with time constraints and management.”

Attempts to involve young people through school programs were not successful in the long term because so many young people leave the district for work and further education.

One agency was having some small success recruiting men by word of mouth through the men already involved in their programs.

Another hoped to have success in recruiting younger people through new directions and programs in conjunction with parents at schools.

“Meetings held during the day exclude those...who have paid work to attend to...(we) need a paid person to do liaison who can be there during work time.” This comment from a purely volunteer group organiser.

Engaging Young People:

Agencies involved in this study did not usually talk about student programs as a means of involving young people.
children left home this volunteer dropped out of volunteer work altogether but has recently returned to non-church volunteer work:

“I think I was suffering from a kind of ‘church burnout’. It was difficult to say no because that was seen as a less than desirable commitment to your faith - Now I’m working outside the church - there’s not so much pressure in the general community ... easier to avoid feeling used ... feel you can say no, maintain some control ...”

This indicates a commitment to volunteer work where control can be exercised by the volunteer. Maybe young people are more able or willing to exercise this type of control from a younger age.

In talking with volunteers in our project the following interesting comments were also made:

- “…there are generational problems with meetings. Older members view them as social outings whilst younger members are impatient to achieve, move on, and be focussed”.
- CFA members thought it was worth highlighting the family orientation of the service. It seems that the CFA organises family based functions in recognition of the support that volunteers get from their families and because of the hours they spend away from them.
- An SES volunteer described his path to volunteer work as “having had several bites to the cherry”. This consisted of an abseiling experience as a young teenager followed by work experience followed by a PR encounter which prompted him to join as an adult.

### Filling Positions

Purely volunteer organisations interviewed are struggling to find people to take on positions of responsibility or even to find committee members...

- “In 2001 we went without [a secretary], in 2002 we have one under duress (aka the treasurer).”
- “People are not willing to come on the committee but are still willing to help…”
- “It’s always difficult to find [committee] members, especially executive positions if people decide to leave them, but people currently in those positions are happy (in the main) to be in them…”
- “leading role/executive positions are most difficult to fill – people
“At the annual meeting this year we have decided not to feel pressured into filling these positions; we will be looking at finding a different solution (changing our constitution if necessary).” Incorporation demands a certain structure in terms of office bearers so changing constitutions to a collective type of organisation need not be an easy thing to do.

Worker’s comments about filling positions and committees reflected similar sentiments.

- volunteers are recruited any way they can be - “short of riding down the street naked on a white horse…”
- In organisations where there is a hierarchy, the most senior positions were most difficult to fill “...more responsibility is off putting…”
- (recruiting) “...a person who does the roster because it’s such a headache…”
- “Some areas have less (or more) difficulty than others in recruiting volunteers.” The degree of difficulty seems to be directly related to the degree of disability of the people volunteers work with. Workers believe that this is about social aspects of the job i.e. if there is little or no response from the person the volunteer is relating with, it will be harder to find and keep volunteers.

Possible Solutions...

- “...drag them in by their forelocks and feed them peppermints…”
- “People are not willing to come on the committee but are still willing to help…”

Volunteers are recruited any way they can be - “short of riding down the street naked on a white horse…”

Joining Up

In organisations with paid workers, most joining up procedures involve an induction process of some kind. They vary from the very informal to the very formal – most falling into the informal
In the case of totally volunteer organisations “induction” is much more hands on – people are usually thrown straight into the organisation – although volunteers and workers involved in recruitment stated that they needed to be careful not to frighten new people away by expecting too much too soon.

“To Weed or not to Weed...”

Because all groups have at least minimum selection criteria it is implied (and occasionally clearly stated) that some people are not suitable volunteer material. However, people were backwards in coming forwards when it came to dealing with this problem, which it appears does not happen often. Common and telling responses included:

- “…use the most competent people and fill in with others... [knowing that if people are not regularly called upon, they will eventually “drop off the books”]...”
- “It’s difficult to get rid of a volunteer without poisoning the pool [so we tend not to do it at all]...”
- Many thought that their systems built in the opportunity for prospective volunteers to “self select in or out” at any time (and hopefully this screened people out who were unsuitable)...
- “We might suggest that they try working in a different area of the [organisation]...” (OK if the organisation is large enough to

category. Typically the process goes as follows:

An enquiry is made or someone is asked to volunteer their services – in the case of the CFA or the SES, enquiries made to the central office are referred to the appropriate local volunteer brigade which then handles the enquiry at a local level.

Basic information is given at time of enquiry and a time is made for the prospective volunteer to visit the organisation.

At the time of the visit volunteers are informally assessed as to their suitability.

Most volunteers are then given a tour of the area in which they would be working, verbally given more detailed information, written information where it exists and is used.

Volunteers are told about confidentiality and privacy laws and invited to come back at a time where they can see what they will be required to do and can join in to assess for themselves their suitability.

If the trial visit is satisfactory, the volunteer is (usually) asked to fill out a police check form and told that they will be contacted when the form is returned.

They begin volunteer work – usually with a “buddy” (often another volunteer, occasionally a worker).
have a diverse number of areas in which to work...)

There were only one or two groups who seemed prepared to bite the bullet on this one. They clearly state that there is an assessment process for volunteers. Their process includes self-assessment but also assessment by a panel of skilled workers and peers. Most organisations did not see the need for such a process.

Tasks

Volunteers perform a range of tasks from the unskilled to the highly skilled, including:

- pricing, cash sales, book keeping and financial record keeping
- submission writing
- education
- administrative tasks – typing, photocopying, record keeping, photocopying, faxing, filing, etc.
- all manner of skills associated with caring for people – conversing, volunteer driving, taking incapacitated people out, visiting, hair setting, manicures, etc.
- using equipment – trucks, specialised rescue and fire fighting equipment, tape recorders, computers, etc.
- using their trades and professional skills – plumbing, carpentry, nursing, horticulture, accounting, etc.
- PR and media skills
- public speaking
- recruitment
- all manner of people skills
- information retrieval and presentation
- cleaning
- cooking

Training

Training is given either on as needed basis or as a compulsory component of the volunteer’s work load. Whichever way training is delivered, it is paid for by the organisation and was usually listed as a form of support given by the organisation to the volunteers. In organisations where training is done in a more informal needs-based way, it is usually done in a social kind of atmosphere as the volunteers may be intimidated or turned off by formal training.

The SES and CFA have minimum skill requirements. They employ training officers, these workers liaise with the brigades to organise required training. Some of the training is delivered by volunteers within the brigades, some is done by paid workers and some is outsourced to other training bodies eg. St Johns Ambulance, TAFE, etc. In the CFA minimum standards training will be compulsory by the year 2005.

Foster Care already has accreditation for volunteers. Theirs is the most formalised of all the training encountered in this project. It includes accreditation panels, self assessments and specific training sessions. Training schedules are organised to suit the participants.
There is no doubt that volunteer labour is appreciated and highly valued by workers. Many programs would not exist without it. Workers were not always sure that the management shared their appreciation of volunteer’s work.

Valuing Support & Recognition

There is no doubt that volunteer labour is appreciated and highly valued by workers. Many programs would not exist without it. Workers were not always sure that the management shared their appreciation of volunteer’s work.

Value and support came primarily in the forms of training, respect and a “thank you” – especially around Christmas time; some organisations have volunteer support groups. Responses to questions around how best to value recognise and support the work of volunteers included:

- “No exploitation...don’t keep asking and asking...”
- “Personal thank yous.”
- “…educating paid workers so they don’t cause burnout in volunteers, informally monitoring those situations, stepping in if needed...”
- “…saying ‘thank you’ to people...”
- “Treat people with respect and value their time.”
- “Respecting volunteers and their time...”
- Be aware of things outside the workplace that impinge upon the volunteer’s sustainability and ‘reliability’...”
- “Training is done in consultation with volunteers [based on their stated needs]”
- “…individual Christmas cards for all volunteers...”
- “…volunteer support groups – these need to be truly supported...”
- “…provide appropriate work with regard to availability, interests, skills, confidence, etc.”

Most organisations had responded to the “Year of the Volunteer” by issuing certificates and taking advantage of funding availability to provide one off thank you events.

Other forms of support offered by organisations included:

- “Peer support for stress related problems.”
- Some of the large organisations for example the CFA provide administrative and other forms of support from paid workers
- “Make it enjoyable...”
- “Flexibility – to take account of seasonal events like shearing...”
- “One staff member works permanently on support [of volunteers]”
- “Reimbursement of costs incurred.”
- “Volunteers are not given all the rotten jobs...”

There were several concerns expressed about the value (or lack of it) that
Management appeared to place on volunteer labour and several workers noted that workers also contributed to volunteer work through unpaid overtime hours:

✓ “Volunteers make the strongest contributions where they are empowered and their commitment is matched by that of the organisation.”

✓ “Recognition [of volunteers] needs to be commensurate with the contribution being made – there is no recompense for the value in dollars of the time contributed by volunteers.”

✓ “Volunteer “thank yous” … are usually held in Warrnambool so our volunteers don’t attend…”

✓ “…staff also works unpaid overtime which amounts to volunteer work – 3 people times half a day a week on average is 624 hours a year at least…”

✓ “There was supposed to be a review of the volunteer program but this hasn’t happened…”

There was also a belief that a volunteer gained their own personal rewards from the work they do and that this was a form of personal and sustaining support and recognition:

✓ “[Volunteer work] brings its own rewards…for some there’s an adrenaline rush or satisfaction…from the ‘image’ or successfully completing tasks…”

✓ “People are aware that what they do is important…”

✓ “There’s no ‘them and us’ (staff and volunteers…we build camaraderie, go for coffee together…”

Recognition was mainly via a “thank you” but other forms of recognition were practised:

✓ “We regularly include volunteers in nominations for awards…”

✓ “…long service and contribution awards…”

✓ “Parties for significant birthdays…”

✓ “…recognition of achievement in significant operations.”

✓ “[Volunteers] are sent to Government House each year as part of the recognition of the work they do…”

WORDS OF WISDOM ON THE WAY FORWARD…

The following are suggestions from interviewees regarding the way forward in relation to volunteers and volunteer organisations:

“The idea of volunteerism needs to change – for example, group structures need to be more informal and more ‘active’. Old structures are not workable. Everything is left to the office bearers; therefore it’s difficult to get people to do those jobs”.

“Recognition [of volunteers] needs to be commensurate with the contribution being made – there is no recompense for the value in dollars of the time contributed by volunteers.”
“There are generational problems with meetings. Older members view them as social outings whilst younger members are impatient to achieve, move on, and be focussed. People who are on multiple committees are faced with problems associated with time constraints and management”.

“Meetings held during the day [by organisations with paid workers who work 9 – 5] exclude those involved as volunteers who have paid work to attend to or eats away at working time and is not efficient. Volunteer groups need a paid person to do liaising who can be there during business hours”.

“Running courses to attract volunteers is not the answer – increasing interest is the way to go”.

2. Volunteers

For various reasons it was not possible to speak to volunteers from all of the organisations included in the project. This report draws on the experience of 37 volunteers from a cross-section of organisations as well as those of the people involved in running totally volunteer organisations.

Demographics:

1. Age & Gender of Volunteers

The 26 agencies interviewed have approximately 740 volunteer workers. Of these 740 people, many are involved in more than one type of volunteer work, 511 are women and 229 are men. The men are most heavily represented in the CFA and SES - 116 men to 15 women. The CFA auxiliary however (in charge of catering, fund raising, etc) has 25 women and no men. Because Foster Care has families as volunteers, this provided another source of male volunteers but it is the women who do most of the work.

In the welfare areas we investigated, the bulk of volunteer labour was female. This labour was also elderly - mostly retired people. The main reasons given for volunteers leaving was infirmity, death (from old age) and lifestyle changes eg. return to paid employment, moving away (usually to a retirement centre, closer to family, etc.). A 45 year old volunteer was considered a young volunteer. The most common age group was 60 - 80, but there were still people volunteering into their 90’s. The SES and CFA had a different demographic - the average age being younger than most other services.

We tried to get a comparative picture of numbers and ages of volunteers between 2000 and now but this proved to be difficult for several reasons but the major ones were:

- staff turnover in the time frame
- lack of records especially in the past - current records seem to be in better order than past ones in most organisations

Those interviewed:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>30 - 40 years</th>
<th>50 years</th>
<th>51 - 60 years</th>
<th>71 - 80 years</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total:</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Usual or Most Recent Occupations

Farmers 11
Admin/office workers 5
Teachers 4
Labouring jobs 3
Sales 3
Nurses 3
Ministers 3
Gardener 1
Bus driver 1
Management 1
Ambulance driver 1
Welfare worker 1

37

Some farmers were still farming (albeit at a reduced capacity) whilst most professional people were retired.

Communications

Everyone had a telephone. Only 8 people owned a fax and 11 people had an email address. Of the 11 with an email address, 5 claimed that they never used it - it was there for use by other family members, usually a partner.
Most important characteristics for a volunteer

The characteristics volunteers felt were important were also mentioned by agency workers though the order of importance is not the same.

People skills/communication skills 18

Time 10

Willingness/motivation 10

Sense of fun/humour 10

Open mind, respect for people, non-judgemental 10

Love of/interest in people 8

Ability to work in a team 6

Patience/perseverance 6

Positive outlook 5

Sense of self worth/confidence 4

Honesty 4

Willingness to learn 3

Adaptability 3

Thoughtfulness 3

Specific skills 3

Empathy 2

Confidentiality 2

Bossiness 2

Good health 2

Commonsense 2

Organisational skills, sanity, hygiene, imagination/creativity, energy, “a thick skin” and an appropriate value system were other things that people mentioned as important characteristics.

First involvement in volunteering

People found this question difficult to answer - not only because they had to think back, but because there were questions about defining “volunteerism”. The comment was often made that “things that people did back then” were
not really called volunteerism - rather they were things that people just did for their communities eg. working bees to build the local pool or set up the tennis courts or because of the lack of services as we know them, looking after people with disabilities, suffering trauma, illness, age and infirmity. Often these people were members of one’s family but sometimes they were not.

Only 2 people claimed to have done no volunteering until later in life - one at the age of 34 and another after they retired in their 60’s. For the rest there was an even spread from ages 10 - 24 in the following areas.

Church activities - especially Sunday School teaching 9

Non church child based activities (kindergarten, school, Cubs, Brownies, etc.) 6

General community work 5

Work related to the war effort 4

Door knock appeals 3

Welfare activities 3

Working bees 3

Sport 1

St Johns 1

CFA 1

Archaeological dig 1

**Single Event Vs Sustained Volunteering**

These questions were aimed at testing the theory that it is easier to find volunteers for a single event than it is to find volunteers for sustained periods of time. Of the 32 people interviewed, 14 had participated in single event volunteering and the range of this kind of work was staggering - everything from cleanups after fires to door knocks to writing submissions, environmental activities, the arts, health and national events like 40 hour famine. There was even someone who “had to coach the footy team one night and that nearly killed me”.

Reactions to this kind of volunteering experience were mixed and probably depended on the part that people played eg. at the same event people doing 2 hr stints on the gate reported that they felt “out of it” and missed the people contact of their usual volunteer work. For others elsewhere at the same event they reported having “fun”, “feeling moved”, “excitement”, “celebration”, etc. Some saw door knocking as “confrontational and too difficult”. Others thought these one off events
“took you out of your comfort zone” and enjoyed the challenge.

The main differences that people reported between one off and sustained volunteering were that “one off” events had a greater capacity to bring people together thus engendering feelings of “community spirit”, “camaraderie”, “excitement” and “celebration”. They were public rather than private. Other positive differences identified by people included that they “knew the extent of their commitment” and that they could “see immediate outcomes”. For a few there were negative experiences including feeling threatened and isolated.

Nobody reported having a preference for one off volunteering. 12 people reported a preference for sustained volunteering, 9 had no preference and the rest said they didn’t know as they hadn’t experienced both which suggests that 7 people were not interested in trying one off events.

“Learned” Volunteerism

Another theory suggests that people learn volunteerism from their families or by example. I don’t think this theory was either supported or not supported in this study. Certainly some people believe that they did learn it - and indeed several people reported having “inherited” it – “My father did it and the family duty just flowed on”. But there were a number of people who didn’t.

There were many people who had siblings who were not as active as they were and most people reported that their children were not as active either. The reason people gave as to why their children were not as active was that they were too busy with families and work. Many were sure that their children would eventually become involved because of the culture in which they were raised.

It is interesting that the all of those who got their “volunteer grounding” in the church or the war effort did so as teenagers. They also mostly report that it was “expected” of them.

“My mother and grandmother were in the Red Cross and they were knitting socks [for the war effort] and I had to do it too. I was always knitting...”

“I grew up with it”. “It was a type of reciprocal community service. There was no song and dance about it”.

“My mother and grandmother were in the Red Cross and they were knitting socks [for the war effort] and I had to do it too. I was always knitting...”
“I grew up with it”. “It was a type of reciprocal community service. There was no song and dance about it”.

In a situation where many churches are facing smaller and older congregations and the war effort (as people knew it then) is no longer with us, where does this early grounding come from now? Where communities are getting smaller and older, where young people are moving away and families have 2 parents working, etc., where will this grounding come from and who is left to carry on?

**Volunteering and “Community”**

- “There are 3 people left to do what 30 people did in the past ... You constantly feel in a small community that you are fighting a losing battle ... you feel you’re doing your bit to keep the community together ... sharing abilities, repaying kindnesses ... it’s a good feeling keeping other people’s blood, sweat and tears going – I don’t feel obligated – it’s a reciprocal thing.”
- “If a small town doesn’t come together, it won’t survive. When town organisations die, so does part of the town and it’s history.”
- “Our community’s strength is in the people who live here and if we don’t care, it won’t be here ... small communities don’t look for accolades ... in fact if (a fuss) happened too much you’d lose volunteers. It’s probably different in the city.”

The level of personal involvement in the local community was not a question which we asked directly of participants in this research, but it was touched on by answers to other questions. It was stated that some groups of people were not included and were not expected to want to be included. Sometimes these were people whose main reason for living locally was thought to be along the lines that they were looking for cheap housing. They often were given derogatory labels eg. “ferals”. Others were “locals” who had “never been involved” and were “never likely to be – they just don’t do it [volunteering/community involvement].”

Other newcomers did get involved but were sometimes regarded with suspicion. If their hides were thick enough to stand the strain, their “way out ideas” were sometimes ultimately accepted. They were sometimes a source of rejuvenation and revitalisation. “Locals” with different ideas also sometimes need to develop a thick hide
and more than one person referred to “cliques” within a community or town – usually in a negative way.

Newcomers could be set upon by local organisers to join everything. Some welcomed this and others didn’t. Many “locals” recommended caution in this area so as not to overwhelm newcomers and ultimately “put them off” or “drive them away”.

Those involved in the study with high levels of community involvement also identified lack of confidence as a factor in the way that organisations ran in small communities. On the one hand people thought to have intellectual ability were expected to run meetings, write reports, funding submissions, etc. keep up with the reading, etc. On the other hand it was thought that people underestimated their own capabilities or didn’t value them realistically (or both in some cases).

It seems that methods of involving people need to create opportunities for inclusiveness and bolster self esteem. Some people are good at this and do it with ease. Others don’t. It may be the difference between which organisations (and thereby which towns) survive and which ones don’t.

**Changes over time**

Overwhelmingly people believe that volunteering has changed over time:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not in a position to tell</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of those who thought there were changes, this is what they said about them:

- Insurance, litigation, etc. has led to more formalisation, accountability, etc. 21
- Increased stress because agencies expect more/too much 12
- There are no longer enough volunteers to go around 7
- Agencies less welcoming/respectful of volunteers 4

A few people interpreted this as a personal question rather than a general observation about volunteering and made the following comments:

- “... increased commitment means it’s a lifestyle change ...”
- “... has changed from my own personal self interest to community interest ...”
- “I now know where help is most needed.”
- “... there’s not so much pressure now that I’m doing general community work [rather than church volunteer work].”
Benefits of volunteering

There were 2 sides to this - benefits to the community and benefits to the individuals who volunteer. The first is best summed up in the comments we received through asking people to complete the following sentence –

“If it weren’t for volunteers ...”

The most succinct of these were along the vein of “... we’d be buggered” or “we’d be stuffed”.

Other comments included:

“... we’d be in deep trouble - up a creek without a paddle - especially rural communities which are spread a lot thinner.”

“... most community groups would be non-existent. Society as we know it would be non-existent. Volunteers hold the whole thing up...”

“... a lot of organisations would fold and there’d be a lot of sad people not being cared for...”

“... there’d be a lot of unhappy, forgotten, lonely, lost people...”

Everyone interviewed for this project derives some kind of personal benefit from their volunteer work - as someone said “I’m not a martyr - if I didn’t get anything from it I wouldn’t be doing it...”

Benefits included many personal answers but the most often stated ones were:

- Social benefits - networking  23
- Learning - including new practical skills  15
- Satisfaction/sense of achievement  11
- Enjoyment  8
- Sense of belonging to something important/community spirit  8
- Helping others  7
- Energising, prevents boredom  7
- Improved self esteem and confidence  7
- Putting back - reciprocal giving to the community  6
- Other  15

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Issues associated with volunteering

Only 4 people said they had no issues with the volunteer work they do. The most often stated issues were:
had insisted on very clearly defined demarcation lines. These were rigorously enforced so that there was no encroachment on paid workers jobs, which might eventually lead to loss of jobs or at least loss of hours. Workers also wondered if there might be a “thin edge of the wedge” mentality where management used more volunteers for other and newly proposed projects, based upon the success of the current ones.

Volunteers also clearly saw this as an area of concern – the concerns being exploitation of volunteers and diminished job creation prospects in a region where job opportunities are low, their responses reflect this:

Should never use volunteers in paid positions 23

OK to use volunteers in paid positions 1

OK for not-for-profit organisations 4

Unsure 5

“It’s criminal to use volunteers in places where someone could be employed.”

Many people said they would not volunteer for an organisation they thought was abusing the system in this way.

“... shouldn’t take the place of workers - young people need opportunities.”

“It’s criminal in places where someone could be employed.”

“... shouldn’t take the place of workers - young people need opportunities.”

“They should employ people – there’s not enough money going into running

Juggling time, tiredness and other commitments 16

Over formalisation, increased responsibilities/liabilities 11

Issues related to specific agencies 8

Problems associated with head office being located outside the area 7

Other 11

There are also issues in what can reasonably be expected from volunteers when it comes to the duties performed. Aged care, care for significantly incapacitated people, ongoing care and support of children – such as foster care may not be sustainable in the face of the increasing demands on people’s time from their own responsibilities to their families of origin and creation. There have been significant changes in the make up of families as well as reforms in government policies and programs that negatively affect the capacity of volunteers to continue in these roles.

The issue of demarcation was first raised by workers in the organisations we surveyed. They were concerned that there was a fine line between paid work and work done by volunteers, which was integral to the organisation and which could have been done by a paid worker (albeit a part-time or trainee position). Where these concerns existed, workers
places like hospitals and welfare agencies...”

It’s hard to say - some volunteers have a huge responsibility - getting tricky now.”

“... hard to know where to draw the line ...”

Many people said they would not volunteer for an organisation they thought was abusing the system in this way.

For volunteers involved in organisations with headquarters outside the region, there were concerns about lack of meaningful communication, lack of understanding of issues and lack of control and involvement where there once had been local ownership. One volunteer referred to this as the “corporatisation” of organisations. In some cases it had caused people to drop their involvement and in others it produced a kind of siege mentality and a tiredness/lack of enthusiasm. Another group of volunteers were resigned to it.

- “Meetings are always held in Warrnambool or Casterton ... it gets on my goat – they need to rotate...”
- “When they were celebrating the year of the volunteer all the celebrations were in Warrnambool – so we didn’t go...”
- “... don’t care [what management thinks] – we just get on with it.”

- “No. Management [away from here] don’t support us – they seem to think we’re a nuisance mainly...”
- “… [management] are good at using big words and going round in circles but not telling us much – I think they want us to butt out, but we won’t ‘til it’s all sorted...”

Workers were also concerned about the effects of “corporatisation” – and not only of organisations with headquarters outside the region. Most worked hard to overcome/balance/compensate for it, often believing that management undervalued their volunteer workers. They also commented in some cases that they thought of themselves as volunteers because of the unpaid hours they worked which were not acknowledged by management.

- “...need to quarantine volunteers from bureaucracy...”
- “To sustain volunteers, you need to piss off bureaucracy.”
- “Volunteers make the strongest contributions where they are empowered and their commitment is matched by that of the organisation.”
- “Recognition [of volunteers] needs to be commensurate with the contribution being made – for example, cuts in finances for thanks is no recompense for the value in dollars of the time contributed by volunteers.”
“Volunteer thankyous … are usually held in Warrnambool so our volunteers don’t attend...”
“...staff also work unpaid overtime which amounts to volunteer work – 3 people times half a day a week on average is 624 hours a year at least...”
“There was supposed to be a review of the volunteer program but this hasn’t happened...”

The cost of volunteering

Volunteers were hard pressed to quantify their costs – both in terms of money and time, but in some cases, the financial cost of volunteering is becoming prohibitive – particularly in purely volunteer groups and especially amongst organisers for example those who occupy office bearer positions such as president or secretary. In the first stage of the project we heard:

- “... it was OK when I was earning money but now I’m on a fixed income, it’s becoming more difficult...”
- “The shire gives us $200 a year but it isn’t enough ... you can use their facilities [photocopier, etc] but that means you have to drive to town ... I try to incorporate it into my trips to town ... that doesn’t always work.”
- “If you volunteer with a number of organisations and each one has a Christmas party ... it costs...
Working people who lost paid work time volunteering - this applied not only to emergency services volunteers

In the second stage of the project, only 4 people identified the cost of volunteering as an issue but it was talked about consistently in other parts of the survey. For example when people were asked directly if volunteers should be reimbursed for expenses, all but 4 participants said yes adding comments such as:

- “If costs were covered, more people would be inclined to take office - especially those on a fixed income…”
- “… needs to happen so as not to exclude people.”
- “… right to the last cent!”

Costs were likely to be more of a problem for those in volunteer organisations and especially for:

- those in office - often people were in multiple positions of office (and therefore multiple costs) and/or had not noticed the cost when in paid work but found it difficult when going on to a pension or fixed income
- those who had to travel distances - especially if this happened on a frequent basis
- community groups in small towns/areas - “[reimbursement] puts more costs back onto the community…”
- working people who lost paid work time volunteering - this applied not only to emergency services volunteers

Realistic reimbursement of costs to volunteers need to be paid in order not to prevent volunteers from lower socio-economic groups participating – especially in regard to positions of responsibility.

As well as being asked directly about the reimbursement of financial costs to volunteers, participants were asked what they thought about paying firefighters and foster carers. (Nine people made the point that you were either a volunteer or a paid worker – that you can’t be both). Their answers were as follows:

**Should Firefighters be paid?**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Opinion</th>
<th>Number</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unequivocal yes</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unequivocal no</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>3</td>
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</table>
Reimbursement for lost wages

People who said “no” reasoned that:

“They shouldn’t do it if it’s not financially viable for them…”

People who said “yes” reasoned:

“…DNRE workers are paid…

“They should be paid the earth. They put their lives on the line. But they won’t be [paid] because it’s an accepted way of life in the country.”

“They can be giving up to 2 or 3 weeks of their time to protect homes and lives. They put their own lives out on a limb. They do lots of training. They deserve compensation.”

In response to the question “who should pay for the firefighters wages?” the following answers were given:

Government

Special tax or levy on every person/household

A scheme like the one in place for jurors

Other

Don’t know

Payment for Foster Carers

Unequivocal yes

Paid a minimum amount/retainer

Unequivocal no

Realistic and adequate reimbursement

Should automatically get full family supplement payment

One foster carer reported that the availability of essential support services was of primary importance as most such services involved at least 2 hours travel.

Concern was expressed by a quarter of the participants about the motivation of carers whose primary focus would be the money rather than the children and their families. This did not necessarily mean that they thought payment was a bad thing – “If they were paid, screening would need to spot on.”

Comments around payment of foster carers were as follows:

“[fostercarers] should be paid as much as it costs because it’s really a hard thing to do - really you can’t pay people too much to take care of those kids - if someone doesn’t do it early in their lives they’ll be an even bigger mess later and that will cost the whole community …”

“Foster carers deserve every penny they get.”
“I know they do it for love but it’s a responsibility - fostering wouldn’t always be enjoyable – there’s a lot of problems they have to cope with.”

**Making volunteering easier**

A selection of responses follows:

Payment/reimbursement of costs
Everyone pulling their weight/more volunteers
Limits to the liability laws
Involving volunteers at all levels including planning, finding solutions, etc.
Support from the agency
Approaching people personally
Respect for volunteers
Employing a shared community treasurer and secretary
Cut back on meetings
Incorporate volunteering into school education
Volunteers mentoring other volunteers
Getting appropriate feedback from the agencies

“... encouragement - people need to be approached in a way that makes them feel needed and wanted ... keeping involvement low key and travel into it at their own pace - no use pressing people into it ...”

**Stopping volunteering**

Most people were not and had not contemplated stopping their volunteer work. The reasons they gave were in line with the reasons agency workers gave for loss of volunteers.

“**Why do people leave?**”

Ill health - old age

Life changes - changes in family circumstances 19
Death 9
Unbearable working environment 8
If felt the people they worked with were getting nothing from their work 4
Unable to drive 2
Inadequate reimbursement of volunteers 2
Too much training 2
Financial hardship 1
Loss of interest 1

76

Whilst incapacity was the most consuming reason for leaving volunteering, there were some cautionary volunteer observations about agencies use and recruitment of volunteers – for example:

- “... short stints of work for volunteers so they aren’t overwhelmed ...”
- “Don't keep asking volunteers to do more and more ... they burn out ...”
- “Maybe need to spend some money on a good motivational speaker like Kevin Sheedy...”
- “People don't want to attend meetings - I know they're important in terms of setting
direction, etc ... but they need to be made interesting...” ...

- “Recognise that more people need to volunteer. If everyone gave 1 hour, that would accumulate into something huge - people can see the need - they just need to be convinced to do something about it. [Agencies] could target 10 people to do half an hours work each ... the whole parcel has to be made attractive. People need to live it, enjoy it and do the best they can.”

- “People are no longer automatically welcomed. There’s more emphasis on training, suitability, liability, etc. We have become a blaming society rather than a caring society and this has frightened volunteers away – you are more likely to hear a bad story about volunteering than a good one.”

Reasons why people don’t volunteer

According to those people who do currently volunteer the barriers to volunteering include:

Lack of time

27

Not interested, apathetic, unmotivated

21

Lack of confidence, fear of the unknown

14

Selfish

12

No money to be made from it

12

No feeling of community

8

Can’t afford it

6

Worried about responsibility and litigation

5

Fear of being trapped “until they die”

3

108

Other reasons included: personality conflicts, not liking people, lack of role models, undervaluing volunteers, don’t feel welcome and peer pressure. Several people struggled to find positive ways of saying that they thought people were selfish or too concerned with material possessions to spend time volunteering. Some withdrew this kind of comment. Others were very forthright.

“Motivation is far more about satisfaction and personal interest ... If you’re not interested/concerned about your community, you won’t get involved.”

“We are careful when recruiting not to place people in hardship...”

“You need to be prepared to let people do what they (normally) don’t do.”

“A handful of volunteers is worth a paddock full of conscripts – it’s true!”
“You need to love the project...”

“I wouldn’t try to convince someone who wasn’t motivated to join on their own – it would be a waste of time...”

**Ways Forward ?**

**Using the internet for volunteer recruitment**

Overwhelmingly, the answer is “NO”. Only 2 people said they would even think of looking for volunteer work on the internet. Reasons for not using it were as follows:

Hate/don’t like/not interested in computers 13

Computer illiterate 7

Have enough to do/don’t need the net to find volunteer work 9

No access to a computer 5

Prefer a face and a conversation 2

This may be a reflection of the ages of the people interviewed in this survey. Younger people might use the computer as a search tool.

**A central pool of volunteers**

By contrast to the net, the concept of a centralised pool of volunteers, which has been used elsewhere (for example Wimmera Volunteers Inc.) was well received. One volunteer reported that one local agency with multiple services already ran it’s own central pool and that it seemed to work very well. It was also thought to be a good idea “because people don’t think past their initial interest” - this would be a way of expanding people’s horizons and thereby their options for volunteer work.

15 volunteers thought it was a good idea but that they wouldn’t use it because they already had enough voluntary work to keep them going.

3 volunteers thought it was a good idea to have a “one stop shop for volunteers”

2 volunteers thought it was good idea if it wasn’t “over formalised”

9 volunteers didn’t like the idea mostly because they like to choose their own volunteer work and one of these people also raised concerns about privacy

Most volunteers likened it to “an employment agency but for volunteers”. Other comments included the need for the agency to gather good, useful and accurate information from prospective volunteers so that they matched people to jobs well. They also thought that volunteers needed absolute rights to refuse work and that care would need to be taken with choosing who would run it so that volunteers were distributed fairly to all organisations. Some people saw it as a good idea from the other side - ie. as a good way for some organisation in which they were involved to recruit volunteers.
## Organisation aims & activities:
The transportation of people who have difficulties with mobility due to age, disability ill health and the enhancement of their overall access to community and social activities.

## Number of volunteers in 2000:
approx. 13 Community Transport volunteers

**Demographic profile of volunteers in 2000:**

### Age Group: Estimated/Actual Number of Volunteers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15 - 18 years</td>
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**Usual place of residence of volunteers:**

Hamilton — Number of volunteers:......13....

## Number of volunteers in 2002:
27

**Demographic profile: age, gender, place of residence, usual occupation**

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<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
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**Total:**
14
13
27
How has this changed?

The existing volunteers have just aged. Prior to the commencement of community transport there were very few volunteers under the age of 60. More males have also started volunteering than before.

How are volunteers recruited?

It is a policy of the WDHS to place advertisements for volunteers in the Spectator twice yearly. Transport volunteers are also recruited by word of mouth and approached by staff and other volunteers. Partners of existing volunteers are also generally approached to see if they are interested in volunteering as well.

What skills/background/commitment is required of volunteers in your organisation?

Prospective Community Transport Volunteers need to have a current driver’s license and driving skills, interpersonal skills, organisational/time management skills and are also required to be flexible and reliable.

Do you have a person responsible for recruiting, training, supporting and recognising volunteers?

The Western District Health Service employs a Volunteer Coordinator who manages all the Volunteer activities. This position is partly funded out of SouthWest Transport.

Is this a paid position? .....Yes...

How many hours per week? .....22.5....... 

Are there any voluntary positions/duties that are consistently difficult to fill?

Not in the community transport section.

What is the training/induction process provided for volunteers

There is a full orientation process provided by the WDHS which includes an interview, an orientation session which covers rights and responsibilities of both the volunteer and the volunteer organisation, confidentiality, and a driving test with Sue Frost for those who wish to specifically do Community Transport. For those who wish to do escorting there is a morning tea held at the Grange after each induction process where CT volunteers can meet the staff and familiarise themselves with the layout. As volunteers provide a very important service that frees up staff for other duties their induction and familiarisation process is treated very seriously.

These volunteers are also invited to a monthly transport meeting where they have access to guest speakers. Some of the topics covered by the speakers have been on lifting the elderly in and out of cars by a physio and how to deal appropriately with uncomfortable situations by a social worker. Volunteers
are free to choose or suggest what topics/issues they would like covered at the next meeting.

**Do you have insurance that covers volunteers and their activities?**

Yes

**Do you have avenues for volunteers to provide feedback to the organisation?**

Transport Volunteers will generally write any comments that they may have on the daily run sheets. They also have regular meetings and have an opportunity to discuss any issues that may be bothering them and to give constructive criticism. The role of the Volunteer Coordinator is to provide support to volunteers and an open ear at any time.

Is there a formal reporting structure and/or are volunteers incorporated formally into your organisational structure? Please detail There is an official grievance policy in place and all incidents must be officially reported. Volunteers are officially incorporated into the organisational structure of the WDHS and to this effect follow the same reporting structure as paid staff.

**Tasks performed by volunteers currently:**

Volunteers volunteering for Community Transport currently drive the Community Transport vehicle as well as escorting clients to doctor’s appointments, funerals, hairdressers appointments etc. The transportation of ADASS and ASPIRE clients also make up a large part of the Community Transport service. ASPIRE clients are transported weekly to basketball games which has been a very successful partnership between the two services with many benefits for the clients.

Community transport has also been used on a temporary basis by people who are temporarily impaired (ie broken hip) and by people visiting siblings or friends in aged care homes, and other volunteers visiting Palliative Care clients. Clients needing long distance appointments in Melbourne/Ballarat/Geelong are also serviced with particular drivers enjoying long distance appointments and others preferring only to do local driving. The service receives referrals from social workers in regard to transport for younger disadvantaged as well.

**What support and recognition is offered to volunteers?**

There is always someone available to talk whether it be the Volunteer Coordinator or other volunteers and regular community transport meetings and discussions. There is official recognition of service after every five/ten and fifteen years of volunteering and a Xmas party for the volunteers every year.

**Why do volunteers leave?**

Volunteers leave due to death, personal ill health, ill health in a family member, too many other commitments and or
moving town. Some undergo changing attitudes in their willingness to volunteer and may prioritise their time differently than when they commenced volunteering. For example one volunteer commented that she was reluctant to accompany elderly clients to appointments anymore when they had family available to spend this time with them. Her attitude towards volunteering had become negative.

As the whole focus of volunteering is flexibility within reliability many volunteers will ring to say that they are taking a break and will inform you when they are ready to volunteer again. Within a formal structure like the WDHS this is easy to organise and easy to reorganise one volunteers commitments and divide their duties up amongst others.

**How do you know this information?**

It is a policy that volunteers who wish to leave the organisation write a formal letter of resignation that is acknowledged and then filed. If a volunteer passes away family members will generally notify the WDHS and in a small town one generally hears most things anyway! The Volunteer Coordinator is always available to listen to anything that a volunteer may choose to discuss in regard to their role as a volunteer.

**What are your projected needs for volunteers in the coming...**

12 months: maintaining existing volunteer numbers

2 years: recruitment of new volunteers to replace the volunteers who have retired and succumbed to the general age attrition rate.

5 years: service will expand as the community becomes more aware of the existing service and service providers begin to recognise and recommend its usage more.

**What will be the background and skills required of volunteers in the future?**

Transport volunteers will need to be increasingly skilled in a number of areas. As public liability and litigation becomes more and more a focus of our enterprises, volunteers will need to meet stringent requirements and adhere to formal structures.

**Tasks/duties to be undertaken**

Volunteers will continue to drive the community car/cars and buses as well as escort the elderly/impaired to appointments and social events. As the service grows bigger so will the demand on it increase, as people become more aware of what it offers.

**Number of volunteers**

40-50 persons

**Location/s**
COMMUNITY TRANSPORT VOLUNTEER PROFILE

INDIVIDUAL VOLUNTEER PROFILES

Volunteer One:
A sixty-two-year-old female volunteer interviewed had worked for 22 years in a professional occupation employed as a nurse in an aged care facility in Hamilton. After retiring at 60 years she expressed that “retirement is an unknown quantity” and wanted to “keep her hand in” so immediately signed up for Meals on Wheels and then Community Transport. The volunteer knew the then current volunteer coordinator well from their work with volunteers from the aged care facility and rang her directly and applied.

One of the main motivations behind her role volunteering was to keep up her interaction with former elderly clients. Volunteer finds the job very flexible and is not wary or afraid to express her views or make comment if something is not satisfactory. Most of her driving jobs are rostered though she will always do last minute pick-ups if available. She said it is important to maintain your ability to say no.

Says that it is important to keep busy and be useful after retirement and cannot understand people who don’t keep up the interaction and sit at home and do nothing. Volunteer said that costs of volunteering have been minimal as Hamilton Community Transport has a designated car and she would not look upon small costs associated with picking

ORGANISATIONS WORKED FOR AND PREVIOUSLY SUPPORTED BY CURRENT COMMUNITY TRANSPORT VOLUNTEERS

- Rotary
- Red Cross
- RMIT Rice Program –Cancer Support
- Blood Bank
- Children’s Hospital
- Ansett Museum
- Hamilton Football Committee
- Various schools
- Western District Health Service
- Meals on Wheels

AGES/SEX OF VOLUNTEERS INTERVIEWED FROM COMMUNITY TRANSPORT

- F-62 years of age
- F 45 years of age
- M-76 years of age
- M 55 years of age

This was a representative selection of the volunteers currently volunteering for Community Transport.

LOCATION

Three volunteers were residents of Hamilton and one was from near Caramut.
up the car or meals on trips as an issue that would even occur to her.

On longer trips (eg Warrnambool, Geelong) she said that if you were organised you could plan to do things while waiting for clients to finish appointments etc. Volunteer loved volunteering and said that she had met some lovely people and also been able to help some people who were less privileged than her. Enjoyed doing trips such as taking Breast Screen patients down to Warrnambool.

She said that her mother had always volunteered and was still volunteering and doing charity work in her 90’s so she had come from a volunteering background. She hoped that her grown children too would give of their time in this manner. Her volunteering only started upon entering retirement as she had been too busy bringing up children and working beforehand though she had 15-20 years of helping at the school and with fetes and related activities while the children were going through school.

Volunteer was optimistic about the future of volunteering. This “type” of volunteer with a professional background in health care /industry is particularly valuable to have volunteering as they have a wealth of knowledge and experience.

VOLUNTEER 2

55-year-old semi retired self-employed businessman who has worked for Community Transport for 4 years since its inception. Loves driving for Community Transport and says one of the huge benefits is all the wonderful people he meets.

This volunteer is one of the few used for the longer trips to Melbourne, Geelong, Ballarat and Warrnambool as he enjoys long distance driving. One of the only problems that he has encountered has been that there is no reimbursement at all for incidentals encountered on the long day trips and this can become expensive if you are doing a number of them.

He related how a friend of his in Busselton in WA who volunteers for a Community Transport organisation is given $20 a day when he takes people down to Perth for appointments. This is to cover refreshments and other incidentals.

This volunteer takes MS sufferers down to Portland every second week for water aerobics and said that it is one of the highlights as he has become good friends with the clients and even uses the pool and does laps himself! This volunteer had always volunteered whilst his children were at school and for the Hamilton Football Club and Rotary.

He said that he wanted to put something back into the community and that the WDHS were particularly good to him while he was ill and thought it would be a good organisation to volunteer for. He said that he recognised the problems some people had with mobility and how isolating that lack of mobility due to age
or illness could be and wanted to assist in the alleviation of this widespread problem.

**VOLUNTEER 3**

This male volunteer is a 77-year-old male who was employed as a locomotive driver for his whole working career. He did volunteer work at the school while his children were school age as well as various works for the Blood Bank, the Children’s Hospital and in a fundraising capacity for different organisations. When his wife passed away after a long illness he threw himself into volunteer work for the WDHS and was one of the first drivers to register for Hamilton Community Transport.

This volunteer is passionate about Community Transport and the service it provides to the Community as a whole but feels that there is not enough promotion of the service within the community. He believes it could reach and aid more people if more people were aware of it.

One of his suggestions was some sort of shirt or uniform with the Transport logo on it that would be worn by drivers out and about within the community and district. People would then identify the service and it would also serve the two-fold purpose of making it a more cohesive professional looking service.

This volunteer does a lot of community transport hours as well as volunteering in other capacities within the WDHS Volunteer framework. He would keep volunteering and does a large amount of his hours.

**VOLUNTEER 4**

This volunteer is a 45-year-old female who works in the health industry within a professional capacity. She had previously volunteered with the Red Cross and with the RMIT Rice program for cancer support and in sports coaching when younger.

This volunteer thinks of herself as someone within the community contributing to the community. Some of the things that attracted this volunteer to community transport was the fact that she was working in a professional capacity in the development of the service. She feels that most people recruit themselves. They see a need for things to be done in the community – ”if you are a part of the community, you want to see that community prosper”. She feels that you meet some wonderful people and it’s all about working as a team. Her attitude to volunteering is very positive and would keep volunteering. Some of the barriers to volunteering are that many people don’t feel connected to the community and don’t feel part of it. -They don’t have that “sense of community’. She says that you only get out of life what you put into it.

**RECRUITMENT METHODS**

Two out of the four volunteers answered advertisements in the local paper. The
WDHS advertises for volunteers twice yearly. They were then advised as to what areas were available for them to volunteer in and they chose Community Transport. The other two recruited themselves and approached the Volunteer Coordinator.

**INDUCTION**

One volunteer had helped design and develop the induction method, the others were very happy in regard to the way they were inducted formally into the system. After a formal interview and then a generic hospital familiarisation and training day they were then given a drive in the Community Transport vehicle with the Volunteer Coordinator and the South West Transport Coordinator.

One volunteer said that he really appreciated the monthly meetings they had where guest speakers were brought in to talk about varied things like handling wheelchairs. They are for example having a breakfast meeting “A Meeting With the Stars” – the stars being the volunteers in the next month. They love having the interaction with other volunteers and the chance to swap stories.

**BARRIERS TO VOLUNTEERING**

One of the main barriers to volunteering identified was the increasing insurance required for safeguarding any community organisation or event. The large majority of the volunteers in Community Transport are above 60 and...
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This literature review will attempt to capture the essence of volunteering in Australia with a particular focus on rural communities. It has been undertaken to assist in the exploration of issues significant to understanding volunteerism in the Southern Grampians region of Victoria. The review will be used to determine appropriate methods for supporting and maintaining the use of volunteers to provide a more sustained, cohesive and connected rural community. In order to do this, we have to first understand the reasons why people engage in acts of civic goodness, their characteristics, the tasks they undertake, what sustains their involvement in volunteering and their levels of contribution.

An important challenge is to also determine the reasons people withdraw and/or choose not to volunteer. A further aim of this review is to deliberate on the projected involvement and demand for volunteers in Australia, and more specifically rural communities. Finally, we will look at some ‘success stories’ from different parts of rural Victoria.

The review is divided into the following sections:

- Exploring the changing philosophy of Volunteerism
- Policy Context
- Issues of Social Capital and Social Sustainability and Volunteering
- The Demographics of Volunteering in Australia
- Projected Demand for Volunteers

The literature on volunteerism covers a wide range of areas, including the arts, culture, heritage, community services, welfare, health, conservation, environment, animal welfare, emergency services, safety, human rights, social justice, sports and recreation. For the purposes of this review, we will focus our attention on the literature mainly concerned with community and welfare services.
2. EXPLORING THE CHANGING PHILOSOPHY OF VOLUNTEERISM COMPARING RURAL AND URBAN CONTEXTS

"Volunteering is very much part of the glue which makes society work" (Phipps 2001, p. 6)

The practice of giving and helping someone in need is embedded in the history and culture of Australian life. It is understood that volunteers contribute to a wide range of activities and have a significant impact on many facets of society with volunteering now recognised as an important social movement (Soupourmas & Ironmonger, 2002; Volunteering Australia, 2002; Flick, Bittman & Doyle, 2002). The International Year of the Volunteer and the 2000 Sydney Olympics have brought renewed attention to the expansive contribution and importance of volunteerism to the economic and social fabric of Australian life (Soupourmas & Ironmonger, 2002; Volunteering Australia, 2002; Flick, Bittman & Doyle, 2002). Recent developments in welfare reform have also renewed emphasis on the demand for volunteers and ideology informing the ethics of volunteerism.

Linked to the development of the welfare state is the history of voluntary organisations, dependent on the charitable and benevolent endeavour of volunteers, willing to give as part of their civic contribution and duty to the community (Oppenheimer, 2000). According to Beilharz, Considine and Watts (1992, p. 58) the end of the nineteenth century saw a network of voluntary organisations substantially funded by government ‘to carry out a wide range of services delivered to women, children, the aged and families’. This tradition of support from government for the involvement of charitable organisations and voluntary agencies in the provision of welfare continued into the 20th century and remains a feature of contemporary welfare reform, with various governments arguing that some welfare services are best delivered by non-profit organisations (Oppenheimer, 2000, p. 16).

Volunteerism traditionally is seen as an act of altruism where people give to those in less fortunate circumstances. In the context of welfare reform volunteerism can be viewed as a charitable contribution to the poor and needy or as part of a religious based philanthropy that sees caring for the underprivileged and poor as part of one’s duty or obligation as a Christian (Beilharz, Considine & Watts, 1992, pp 58 – 59). The remnants of this early tradition of voluntary work remain an important part of the work of both charitable and voluntary organisations.

In more contemporary times volunteerism is seen as more complex than an act of altruism or benevolence with some definitions linked to notions of social solidarity and a need for social and community involvement (Putnam, 2001; Esmond, 2001). Significantly volunteerism is now considered an important ‘indicator of the social health and connectedness of communities’ (Flick, Bittman & Doyle, 2002, p. 1) (See Section 3)

In exploring the history of volunteerism and its relation to welfare policy, the Voluntary Action History Society in the UK (2002, p. 9) argues that the
voluntary sector has had many advantages over government services, including the opportunity to pioneer new methods of care, explore new areas of need and undertake work in areas that may be considered controversial. The International Association for Volunteer Effort (IAVE) created in 1970, also promotes the positive virtues of volunteering arguing that in a world of continuous change volunteering promotes the human values of community, the ability of individuals to exercise their rights and responsibilities and to make connections across differences (IAVE, 2002, p. 1).
3. THE POLITICAL CONTEXT FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF VOLUNTEERISM

The purpose of this section is to explore the political context, which is currently shaping and reforming volunteerism in Australia. This includes an outline of international policy directions influencing the development of Australian policy and the impact of economic and social reform in rural regions, and a discussion of policies directly impacting on the demand for volunteers.

The collapse of economic growth, the problem of distressed urban areas and rural poverty and dislocation and problems with the lack of effective functioning communities has been of concern to policy makers worldwide including many OECD countries (OECD, 1998: World Bank, 2002). To avoid this cycle of decline governments have sought to implement a range of policy innovations to find appropriate solutions. These international responses to the impact of globalisation and the different policy directions of overseas governments to regenerating distressed communities have helped to shape policies in Australia. They aim to rebuild and sustain communities adversely affected by the decline in social and economic growth, through the encouragement and leadership of volunteers.

In Australia the government responded to the global recession of the 1980’s and 1990’s by embracing the ideology of economic rationalism. With the application and delivery of health and welfare services shifting to commercial and market solutions, governments determined that non-for-profit organisations were better suited to deliver some welfare services. As Oppenheimer (2000, p. 16) states there was an ‘explosion of contracting out key areas of social welfare to both voluntary and private organisations, and the privatisation of services’. State bureaucracies were also directly influenced by discourses on collaboration and integration, early intervention and prevention, and resiliency in the education and community services sectors, confronting both individuals and organisations to change and respond to these needs and priorities. It is argued that not all benefited equally from these changes and that the combined effect of structural trends and changes to government intervention worked against rural and regional Australia (Regional Women’s Advisory Council, 2003).

In more recent years both state and federal government policies have been strongly influenced by the notion that the development of partnerships between schools, human service agencies, churches, businesses, local governments and volunteer organisations is the key to achieving robust and relevant outcomes for young people, their families and the community. This has seeded the development of a range of educational and welfare reform initiatives aimed at building school and community partnerships and reconnecting and strengthening young people and their families.
Significantly this reform is also about improving the well being of individuals and communities and their potential involvement as volunteers in the rebuilding and development of their community. Key parts of this reform to improve the well being of individuals and communities have also been significantly influenced by the discourse on social capital. Volunteering importantly linked to social capital is currently another important part of the social policy agenda of both federal and state governments (Flick, Bittman & Doyle, 2002, p. 1).

The Victorian Government’s current “Community Building Strategy” recognises that there are inequalities of opportunities arising out of rapid social and economic growth and that government services need to be responsive to the needs of communities. Not all communities have benefited from this vast global economic, technological and cultural progress and there are many living in situations of immense poverty and dislocation.

Research undertaken by McClelland (2000), Howe and Cleary (2001) to inform the Victorian government around issues of poverty, social exclusion, inequality and community building all point to the profound and unacceptable experiences of those people living in socially, economic and geographically depressed communities. Their solutions target the strengthening of both communities and individuals to manage their own affairs with the intent of improving their social, economic and environmental circumstances. McClelland (2000) specifically draws attention to the priorities of education and health care. Again this strategy largely depends on the voluntary efforts of both individuals and organisations to commit their time and energies in the development and implementation of community based initiatives.

An Australian Federal government response has been the implementation of the Department of Family & Community Services (FACS) “Stronger Families and Community Strategy” with money available for family support and community building in regional and rural areas. The focus is on early intervention and prevention, and building on the positive aspects of a community, supporting local communities to resolve and deal with their issues. It also encourages the building of partnerships to achieve a more coordinated and integrated approach to service delivery. This strategy utilises some of the rhetoric of a ‘social capital’ approach to reform with emphasis on social coalition, community, informal networks, the pooling of volunteers and the reliance on individuals and families to give strength to community building (Stone, 2000, p. 11).

In the context of rural reform Driscoll (1999, p. 28) argues that policy reform of governments has been responsible for problems in rural communities and more specifically agriculture. The design of this reform has been a shift from subsidy to self-sufficiency,
international free trade as opposed to protection and industry changes to ‘relocate inefficient farmers’ (Driscoll, 1999, p. 28). Farmers, it is reported, are now more concerned with capital investment, farm sizes and employment arrangements that rely less on casual labour (Driscoll, 1999, p. 28). Other studies confirm this position stating that agriculture is the ‘big loser’ in regional and rural Australia, in terms of employment and contribution to gross domestic product (Regional Women’s Advisory Council, 2003, p. 3). Paradoxically globalisation has also influenced important reform for land care and sustainability, influencing the potential involvement of volunteers in the revitalisation and rebuilding of rural communities (Driscoll, 1999).

The removal and reduction of community services, another key way in which Australian governments have responded to the global recession, has had a devastating impact on vulnerable communities. The burden of this response to the global recession by governments in rural communities was the reduction of industries and services, such as banks and hospitals, the privatisation of utilities and the amalgamation of local government services leaving many country people finding life a bit ‘tougher’ and the erosion of community life more tangible. According to Driscoll (1999, p. 29) farmers feel as though they have borne not only the burdens of economic loss, but also the burdens of ‘environmental denigration and a loss of social networks, friends and neighbours’.

Research undertaken by Townsend, Hallebone and Mahoney (2002, p. 3) suggests that the contracting out of government services to voluntary organisations has posed a danger in undermining the relationships between service providers and volunteers. Trust, which is an important part of social networking, making people more able to work together, is potentially threatened under these new arrangements of increased competition, therefore making voluntary work not as attractive. It is argued that economic restructuring has demoralised some people who feel they are working longer and harder and have less time available for family and voluntary activity (Regional Women’s Advisory Council, 2003, p. 1).

As will be shown later, people in rural communities volunteer more than those in urban areas, giving rise to a legitimate concern about the future capacity of rural Australians to continue to give in an environment of growing disadvantages and an expectation from government that they will fill the void of vacated state and federal government services.

There are others who maintain the view that increased attention by governments to rural and regional Australia is an opportunity for positive change to occur. For example, it is argued that the FACS strategy is an example of the acknowledgment by both state and federal governments of the rights and difficulties experienced by rural
The use of volunteers at a number of different levels is also viewed with some suspicion as the use of the voluntary sector and unpaid voluntary labour can be seen as a strategy for government to cut spending (Oppenheimer, 2002, p. 17).

The ideological shift of welfare reform to mutual obligation has also impacted negatively on the voluntary sector. The Voluntary Work Initiative is an example of government reform in welfare that obliges the unemployed benefit recipient to some form of voluntary activity. It is said to be both exploiting the unemployed and misunderstanding the nature and motivations of volunteering (Oppenheimer, 2000; Flick, Bittman & Doyle 2002, p. 4).

Eva Cox (2000, p. 142) argues that it demeans and devalues volunteerism and suggests that policy makers misunderstand the ethic of giving time and the skills required in volunteering. However, organisations such as Volunteering Australia have been advocating to introduce changes to ensure that people are not directed to do voluntary work and that the scheme does not undermine the image of volunteers and volunteering.

Both federal and state governments have incorporated volunteerism into a variety of policy contexts, including aged care, employment, environment, health and community development schemes.
4. ISSUES OF SOCIAL CAPITAL, SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY AND VOLUNTEERING

The discourse on social capital is significant because it informs many key policies affecting welfare reform in Australia and hence, the role and function of volunteers. It is also the focus of many academics and activists interested in regenerating increased activity and support for building stronger community activity, and understanding the demise of social civility and community networks.

The knowledge and views shaping the discourse on social capital are particularly relevant to this study as our attention is drawn to understanding how levels of connectedness, social ties and networks of community engagement are important for increasing the self-esteem of individuals, and their quality of life and the development of strong and bonded communities both economically and socially (Putnam, 2000).

Putnam (2001, p. 19) argues that social capital is closely related to what is understood as “civic virtue” and is “most powerful when embedded in a dense network of reciprocal social relations”. There are various definitions of social capital, which further our understanding of the circumstances under which people can become bonded and communities resilient. Some of these are listed below:

“Social capital ... is the mutual sense of reciprocity and trust which enables groups of people to live and work together successfully. In rich supplies it fosters a thriving, prosperous society” (Smith, 1998, p. 8).

“Social capital is .. understood as networks of social relations characterised by norms of trust and reciprocity. Understood in this way, social capital is a stock, or resource to collective action, which may lead to a broad range of outcomes, of varying social scale” (Stone & Hughes, 2000, p. 10).

“Social relationships, which are characterised by high degrees of mutual trust and reciprocity are argued to sustain better outcomes in the economy, democracy and civil society. These sorts of social relationships are said to be laden with social capital - the norms and networks that enable people to act collectively” (Stones, 2002, p. 2).

“Social capital is the tendency for spontaneous sociability: a capacity to form new associations. ...... Social capital is based on ‘trust’: the willingness to take risks, confident that others (“strangers”) mean no harm and will respond as expected. ......There is a sense of shared ownership in pooled community resources and a greater sense of collective efficacy.” (Flick, Bittman & Doyle, 2002, p. 6).
Central to these definitions are the notions of mutual trust and reciprocity which is argued leads to increased participation in voluntary organisations, voluntary activity and civic engagement leading to a more stable and cohesive society (UN Volunteers, 2003, p. 4).

- The Benefits of Social Capital

The literature discusses how established social relationships work, how mutual respect and reciprocity work in social networks and relationships and why people connect. This is critical for developing strategies for sustaining the use of volunteers in community organisations as it is through the contributions of volunteering that communities can be empowered and individuals develop a sense of community and commitment to work together to solve problems. Flick, Bittman & Doyle (2002, p. 7) also argue that volunteering is a mechanism through which we achieve social inclusion as, people who commit as volunteers are more likely to be connected to other community activities and civic duties.

It is argued that voluntary work also helps to raise the self-esteem and motivation of volunteers and contributes to the stability and cohesion of communities (Soupourmas & Ironmonger, 2001, p 1). Learning and education and the act of caring, all critical components of voluntary activity, are important opportunities for self-development (Regional Women’s Advisory Council, 2003, p. 2; UN Volunteers, 2003 p. 4). It is also through voluntary activity that people demonstrate their engagement as citizens (UN Volunteers, 2003, p. 2).

Voluntary work is also thought to produce more volunteering as it is those who ‘have received help that are more likely to help others’ (Regional Women’s Advisory Council, 2003, p. 3). It is in this context volunteering is thought to be ‘essential to the development of social capital and community building’ as it increases the connectedness between people, and stimulates social capital. (Bradfield Nyland Group, 2002, p. 1; Flick, Bittman & Doyle, 2002, p. 7). This then lends itself to a more favourable climate for the future of volunteering.

The World Bank (2002, p. 4) suggests that ‘when services are delivered through volunteers, there is a social capital benefit, over and above the value of the service delivered’. Positive outcomes and high levels of social capital are reported in areas such as ‘health, education and employment, housing, transport and urban design and crime and community safety’ (www.abs.gov.au, 2002, p. 1). As a policy direction the World Banks suggests that employers could be encouraged to provide time off to employees for some sort of community activity and governments could use consultation mechanisms as a way of ‘increasing civic engagement’ (World Bank, 2002, p. 4).
The benefits to people living in communities with high levels of social capital derive from the experiences of being better connected to neighbours and networks that will be supportive and sympathetic (Flick, Bittman & Doyle, 2002, p. 6). As a result people are less fearful, less anxious, less depressed and have less feelings of inadequacy (Flick, Bittman & Doyle, 2002, p. 6).

Although the literature on this discourse is immense it is also a relatively new area of policy reform and governments are somewhat cautious about its challenges. Therefore, the federal government is interested to measure and research its impact on the lives of families and communities. This is especially important in learning how to capitalise on the potential of social capital, and in the context of this review on volunteers.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics has also commenced a process of consultation to determine the best ways of measuring the impact of social capital, the ABS and has already produced at least two discussion papers to generate further discussion and debate regarding its impact on the well-being of individuals and communities (www.abs.gov.au, 2002 p. 2.)

The literature on social capital describes the importance of connectedness, trust and reciprocity, a sense of collective and community spirit and how the pooling and sharing of resources contribute to the stability and cohesive of a community. It is through the ‘voluntary experience’, i.e. the building of relationships and activities of voluntary work, which develops social capital, that a community benefits.

- **Downside of Social Capital**

The above discussion points to the importance of volunteering to social capital and outlines the benefits and value to communities of people working together to contribute to a more stable and cohesive society. However, research into this discourse is not all positive and in this following section we will review, albeit briefly, some of the ‘downsides’ to social capital.

There is evidence that the benefits of social capital operate better in more prosperous environments as it is hindered by economic disadvantage, poverty and inequality (Stone, 2000, p. 10). Stone (2000, p. 12) argues that factors, which could hinder the potential of self-reliance for individuals and families and subsequent development of social capital include; ‘education, employment, home ownership and socio-economic status of area’. It is also argued that the most marginalised people are least likely to participate in volunteering activities effectively reducing their opportunities for involvement and leading to social exclusion (UN Volunteers, 2003, p. 5).

Government involvement is also thought to be influential in both positive and negative ways with regard to capacity of communities to facilitate the potential of social capital (Stone, 2000, p. 13).
For example, it has been found that people in rural communities can feel disillusioned about the social restructuring that has resulted from new economic management (Regional Women’s Advisory Council, 2003, p. 1).

Although government provides assistance and support for some community initiatives, as discussed in the previous section, economic rationalism, incorporating top-down planning and policy making and the exclusion of community participation’ was thought to be a barrier for communities seeking successful change (Regional Women’s Advisory Council, 2003, p. 4). However, in rural communities if people want things they have to be actively involved in realising their goals, as they do not have the range of choices available to them in the same way as people in metropolitan areas (Driscoll, 1999, p. 8). In rural communities people have to invest their time and energies if they are to reap the benefits of social capital.

Driscoll (1999, p. 8) argues because social capital relies on trust there is the potential for “exclusion and the rejection of new or unfamiliar ideas”. Cox (cited in Driscoll, 1999, p. 8) suggests this can “…turn communities inward, form cliques, resist change and exclude those who criticise”. Research undertaken by the World Bank also supports this notion that individuals can be ‘ridiculed or ousted’ if they do not comply with group norms in community activities (World Bank, 2002, p. 2). Further it is argued ‘traditions can stifle individual growth and creativity’ (World Bank, 2002, p. 3).

Therefore it is critical, in the context of building social capital and encouraging communities to reap the benefits of volunteering that organisations acknowledge the importance of inclusion, and the value of individuals and their varying motivations for voluntary activity.
5. EXPLORING THE DEMOGRAPHICS OF VOLUNTEERING IN AUSTRALIA

In this section we will explore the ‘who, what and why of volunteering’, through a review of the demographics of volunteering in Australia. We will explore more closely the statistics impacting on rural and regional Australia and more specifically Victoria. Before we commence this task we will briefly look at the key studies used to gather this data and some of their methodologies.

The ABS has provided critical information regarding the demographics of volunteers. The results of a ‘Second National Survey of Voluntary Work’ undertaken by the Australian Bureau of Statistics in 2000, reveals a number of details and patterns on who volunteers are, their motivations for volunteering, the types of voluntary activities undertaken and comparisons of demographics according to age and gender (ABS 2000).

Other important work has been undertaken by the Australian Council of Social Services (ACOSS) in 1996, Volunteering Australia and more recently by the Victorian and New South Wales governments. All of these studies have used the data collected by the ABS as a base for their own research and analysis. It is worth noting that all of these studies and government reports, in particular, are quite substantial, involving large numbers of respondents across both metropolitan and rural regions, providing excellent insight into the measurement of voluntary activity, the defining characteristics of those who volunteer and the different meanings of volunteerism. In the NSW government study (2002) 256 volunteer involving organisations provided information through questionnaires and 38 volunteer support agencies responded to a survey conducted for the study.

The Victorian government study (2002) draws its conclusions from its own primary research, 15 case studies, three new surveys undertaken by the ‘Household Research Unit to investigate the social value of volunteering’, in addition to using the ABS reports of 1995 and 2000 and two national Time Use Surveys. The ACOSS Report (1996, p. i) also utilised an extensive methodology, involving focus groups, a seminar, a literature review, interviews and a random postal survey of 305 community service projects from NSW and Victoria. The West Australian government has also provided critical information on the future of volunteering in regional and rural communities, which will be detailed in Section 8.

International bodies, such as the World Bank and the OECD have also made some significant contributions in understanding the needs, motivations and patterns of volunteering in a global context. For this section we will attempt to summarise the consistent themes addressed by all studies and those most relevant to understanding the extent of current community input to social and community services. Importantly we will also address those issues, which help us to understand what would motivate a greater involvement by a
broad cross section of people into the activities of rural communities.

- **Who volunteers?**

Age, life stage, parental and family commitments and dominant status of the individual, influenced patterns of volunteering (ABS, 2000, p 3; Flick, Bittman & Doyle, 2001, p. 17). Most volunteers are aged between 35 to 64 years (Soupourmas & Ironmonger, 2001, xi). However higher levels of volunteering are evidenced in the 35-44 age group (ABS 2000, p. 3). The ABS (2000, p. 3) suggests that people in this age bracket ‘are more likely to be married with children’. Therefore, their higher levels of volunteering are more often reflecting their levels of family commitment (ABS 2000, p 3). As will be detailed later, one of the most frequently reported forms of volunteering is that which is done for children (ACOSS 1996, p. 29).

There has been an increase of over 40 per cent of middle aged (35 – 64 years) people in Victoria contributing voluntary work over the last five years (Soupourmas & Ironmonger, 2001, p. xi). In this same period there was an increase by 34 per cent of young people (18 – 34 year olds) (Soupourmas & Ironmonger, 2001, p. xi). However, this latter figure led to an investigation into the methodology of the 1995 study, with the ABS noting that the figures needed to be used with caution (ABS 2002, pp. 38 – 39).

Most studies also conclude that although women’s participation is slightly higher, regardless of birthplace, family status, labour force status or location there is either not much difference or an almost equal representation of men and women involved in volunteering (ACOSS, 1996, p 29; Volunteering Australia, 2002). The variations are found in the older age groups and categories of full time employment, where the volunteer rates were marginally higher for men than for women (ABS, 2001, p. 3). However, it is argued that volunteering in the welfare sector is a gendered phenomenon (Healy, 1998, p. 74. As will be shown in the next section men are more involved in sporting and recreational events, e.g. umpiring games or attending Rotary meetings as opposed to doing ‘social caring work’ (Healy, 1998, p. 74).

Volunteers generally combine paid work and volunteering. For example, people in paid employment were more likely to volunteer and of those who do, the activities they participate in reflect their types of employment (ABS, 2001, p. 5). However, research by ACOSS (1996, p. 19) indicates that those who are unemployed do more voluntary work than those employed or not involved in the labour force’. This reflects the fact that most of their voluntary contributions are recognised as informal, which as we will see later is excluded in many of the definitions of voluntary work. This is supported by the ABS study (2001 p. 4), which says that on aggregate, the level of volunteering for the unemployed is slightly higher than for people employed
either part time or full time. This suggests that unemployed people are already actively involved in their community (ACOSS, 1996, 19).

Of those employed who volunteer, professionals have the higher rate of participation, closely followed by advanced clerical, sale and services workers and then managers and administrators. Flick et al (2002) say that while the reasons for this phenomenon are unclear they advance a number of explanations. It is suggested that it could be that educated people have altruistic attitudes leading them to voluntary activity, their skills make them more in demand as volunteers and/or they may be placed in more rewarding positions or volunteer roles (Flick, Bittman & Doyle, 2002, p. 17).

Further research currently being undertaken by Bittman (2003) suggests that although professionals may be more likely to volunteer they do so for shorter periods of time, as compared to people in occupations of manual labour (which could include farming) who volunteer for longer periods of time. However, professionals are also more likely to donate money, which can be important to the financial stability of welfare and community organisations.

Research also indicates that regional Victorians ‘tend to maintain and participate in traditional community and service clubs as volunteers’ (Soupourmas & Ironmonger, 2001, p. 43). For example, ‘the majority of community groups such as the Country Women’s Association, Legacy and the RSL, child care services and service clubs, such as Apex, Rotary and Lions were located in regional Victoria’ (Soupourmas & Ironmonger, 2001, p. 43) This would suggest that rural Victorians are contributing significantly to community and welfare based activities. Statistics in the health arena also suggest rural Victorians are ‘wearing’ the burden of contribution to the sustainability of communities. For example, ‘over half of the hospital support/fundraising/auxiliary groups

- **Volunteering in Rural Victoria**

Research undertaken in Victoria indicates that ‘regional Victoria has a larger number of organisations relying on volunteers and a higher participation rate of volunteers than metropolitan Melbourne (Soupourmas, Ironmonger, 2001, p. xi.) Although regional Victorians were only 28 per cent of the total Victorian population, about 45 per cent of community services were based outside metropolitan Melbourne (Soupourmas & Ironmonger, 2002, p. 42). According to Bittman (2003) ‘although government reports talk about rural disadvantage there was no research to indicate that people living in rural communities volunteer less’. However, this view does not negate the significance of limited resources or geographical factors, which are important considerations for both volunteering organisations and volunteers in rural communities.
were based in the country’ (Soupourmas & Ironmonger, 2001, p. 45).

Volunteers in rural Victoria felt that voluntary activity was expected in the community and saw them as filling a gap for the lack of available support services (Flick, Bittman & Doyle, 2002, p. 52). This position suggests that voluntary activity in a rural township is also borne out of necessity. While the motivation in most voluntary work is to ‘get something back’, in a rural community the reasons may be more about survival. Zappala (2000, p. 3) argues that the relative lack of services in rural and regional Australia as compared to capital cities means that people in rural communities may tend to become more involved in voluntary activities.

During this review it has been difficult to obtain actual numbers of young people volunteering in rural sectors. However, there is evidence of a decline in the numbers of rural young people, who are shifting to urban locations for better opportunities (Regional Women’s Advisory Council, 2003, p. 3). This declining number of rural youth has had an impact on the vitality and economic well being of communities (Regional Women’s Advisory Council, 2003, p. 3). It is also noted in the Federal government report into regional and rural communities (Regional Women’s Advisory Council, 2003, p. 1) that young people were discouraged from participating in rural areas because of the prevalence of economic and social barriers making them ‘feel negative about their communities’. Noble (2000, p. 156) argues that we have to question the view that young people are not interested in volunteering, as it is her experience that young people want to have their voices heard and to be exposed to new experiences and have opportunities to develop new skills and insights.

There is other evidence to suggest young people in rural areas were taking an active interest in revitalising their community and that they needed opportunities to create employment and educational opportunities for themselves (Regional Women’s Advisory Council, 2003, p. 2). For example, in the Delatite Shire (Victoria) 80 young people have become involved in community businesses and have ‘set up ‘e-cafes’ and local business support services in Benalla and Mansfield which were opened in 2001 (Regional Women’s Advisory Council, 2003, p. 2).

In the final section we will look at ways in which the vitality of youth can be captured in the voluntary sector.

The evidence suggests that despite the increasing disadvantages experienced by rural people, they still maintained a higher level of voluntary activity than their urban counterparts. In spite of their misgivings about the lack of support from government they continued to contribute to a variety of community activities and services.

- **Why volunteer?**

Throughout this review a number of factors have emerged identifying the
various motivations associated with volunteering. It is recognised that understanding the motivations of volunteers is critical to the future of volunteering. This knowledge is important for the managers of organisations as it impacts on the successful recruitment and retention of volunteers. In this section I will outline the key motivations of volunteering as identified in the literature.

Dr. Gianni Zappala, Research Coordinator for the Smith Family, based in Sydney, who has written several reports on volunteering. Zappala (2000, p. 2) identifies 6 categories of motivation, explaining that it allows 'a wide range of factors to be involved in understanding the complex interrelations of volunteer motivations'. These are listed as follows:

Values function: people may volunteer to express or act on values important to the self;

Understanding function: people may volunteer as they see it as an opportunity to increase their knowledge of the world and develop and practice particular skills;

Enhancement function: volunteering may allow people to engage in psychological development and enhance their self-esteem;

Career function: people may volunteer to gain experiences that will benefit their careers;

Social function: volunteering may help people ‘fit in’ and get along with social groups they value;

Protective function: volunteering may help people cope with inner anxieties and conflicts. (Zappala, 2000, p. 2).

Other Australian research supports the view of Zappala that altruism is not the only motive for undertaking volunteer work as the reasons for volunteering are as diverse as the people who volunteer (Soupourmas & Ironmonger, 2002; Volunteering Australia, 2002; Flick, Bittman & Doyle, 2002). Although studies indicate that altruism is a key motivating factor people are also motivated by self-interest. For example in the ABS study (2001, p. 7) 47% of volunteers acknowledged that benefits to the community were a reason for voluntary work, with 43% reporting personal satisfaction as a reason for their involvement. Younger people were also inclined to report that the learning of new skills and opportunities to either improve or gain work experiences were important considerations (ABS, 2001, p. 7; ACOSS, 1996, p. 48). Whereas, parents are likely to involve themselves in sporting and recreation as either a general interest in their children’s activities or to continue a family tradition (ACOSS, 1996, p. 49).
People are also selective about the type of voluntary work they do and it usually reflects their personal interest in a particular area (ACOSS, 1996, p. 48). However, if the needs for personal satisfaction or benefits are not met people were inclined to move to a new area rather than giving up volunteering altogether (ACOSS, 1996, p. 48 & Esmond, 2001, p. 13). Research indicates that people have their own work and family commitments and time was important to them (ABS, 2001 & Esmond, 2001, p. 14). Therefore, volunteers need to be doing things that accommodated and satisfied them, and did not waste their time (Esmond, 2001, p. 14).

Evidence indicates that young people were likely to identify with a particular issue or cause, giving rise to their involvement in voluntary work (ACOSS, 1996, p. 48). As stated in the previous section, young people relish the idea of being involved in new experiences and having their views heard. Therefore, organisations need to give due consideration to creating pathways that would encourage young people to volunteer in activities that would demonstrate their interest, desire for skills and experiences. Older volunteers also often report becoming involved at a young age, with volunteering then becoming part of their lifestyle (Noble & Johnson, 2000, p. 157). This gives further reason and motivation for organisations to think about new ways of marketing to attract young volunteers, as there is evidence to suggest that once committed to the ideology of voluntary activity, people will continue to contribute voluntarily throughout their life.

Evidence from ACOSS (1996, p. 49) indicates that rural communities were able to ‘foster a cohesive and thriving township’ through the development of special events, such as Australia Day celebrations, combining and expanding their volunteer forces. For example service clubs, such as Apex, Lions and Rotary interviewed for the ACOSS study (1996, p. 48) reported organising activities based on national themes and goals with a ‘strong local focus’. Service clubs in rural regions were also concerned with developing special programs for disadvantaged groups, such as ‘job creation drives’ (ACOSS, 1996, p. 48).

Sport and recreational activities were also critical sites for community gatherings in rural areas for people to come together to play, to talk and share stories (Driscoll, p. 9). For example, regional Victoria has over half of the craft and recreational clubs despite representing only 30 per cent of the population (Soupourmas & Ironmonger, 2001, p. 45). This suggests that sporting and recreational activities play an important part in the lives of rural Victorians. Driscoll (1999, p. 7) in her study into rural communities reports that ‘communities were unequivocal in their belief that sport and recreation made significant contributions to social, economic, environmental and cultural
The spirit and resources of volunteering are thought to be dwindling by some researchers, who are keen to understand this perceived decline in civic engagement.

Flick, Bittman & Doyle (2002, p. 17) also point to other research, which indicates that ‘religious participation is a strong predictor of involvement in voluntary activity’. The ideology of charity and helping others is considered to be associated with a commitment to religious beliefs (Flick, Bittman & Doyle, 2002, p. 17). Therefore in the context of encouraging volunteers, it is important to consider ways that are inclusive and accepting of people from a variety of religious backgrounds and that make their experiences of volunteering relevant to their needs.

- **Why Not? - Including Barriers and What Makes People Stop Volunteering**

The spirit and resources of volunteering are thought to be dwindling by some researchers, who are keen to understand this perceived decline in civic engagement. In this section we will examine the reasons people have reported for not volunteering and look at some of the barriers to volunteering.

Research undertaken by the New South Wales government (2002) suggests that the statistics on volunteerism in their state are not as reassuring as in other parts of Australia. In attempting to understand the vulnerabilities of volunteerism, the report cites research from the UK undertaken to determine the drawbacks of volunteerism. In this UK study volunteers provided comments such as “things could be better organised’, you sometimes get bored or lost interest’, ‘you can’t always cope with the things you are asked to do’, your efforts are not always appreciated’, ‘you find yourself out of pocket’ and ‘the organisation isn’t really going anywhere’ to explain their withdrawal from voluntary activity (Phipps, 2002, p. 7).

Other barriers to volunteering identified in the literature include: ‘reimbursement of expenses, lack of adequate support, supervision, training, insurance, problems with transport, tensions between volunteers and paid staff and uncertainty about insurance cover’ (Flick, Bittman & Doyle, 2002, p. 18). The cost of volunteering and uncertainty surrounding litigation were identified as especially concerning for rural and regional areas (Flick, Bittman & Doyle, 2002, p iv). For example, the travelling required in a rural region could be costly for a volunteer who has to use their car to either transport themselves or others. Also there is a lack of information about what activities are insured, who has the responsibility for insurance cover and how claims can be made (Flick, Bittman & Doyle, 2002, p. 72). All these factors can act as barriers or deterrents for either commencing or continuing as a volunteer (Flick, Bittman & Doyle, 2002, p. 72).

Attention in the literature is also drawn to the ebbing of voluntary activity in rural regions. According to Driscoll (1999, p. 83) “increased pressure upon farmers to work harder, numbers of both parents working and a lack of
commitment, or interest from young people had contributed to a core group of volunteers spread thinly across a number of voluntary activities and services in rural communities. In her study Driscoll (1999, p. 83) reported that many volunteers reported their involvement as more work-like with little fun, stimulations and/or challenges indicating a level of vulnerability in the structures and practices that have developed these networks of volunteers.

Research undertaken by Townsend, Hallebone & Mahoney (2002, p. 5) suggests that the economic redevelopment of rural regions, including the privatisation, regionalisation and rationalisation of government funded services 'may have prompted individuals to focus on their own current and future financial stability at the expense of community involvement', leading to a diminished pool of available volunteers.

Other barriers identified for rural communities were distance, isolation, lack of support and smaller numbers of potential volunteers to attract and recruit (Esmond, 2001, p. 31). Out of a sense of duty and sometimes ‘guilt’ some volunteers will undertake a number of responsibilities to ensure services are retained (Esmond, 2001, p. 31). This can lead to ‘burn out’ for some who are forced to leave because of ill-health (Esmond, 2001, p. 31).

All of the above are very important issues for organisations to consider and strategies need to be developed to ensure that volunteers are supported, valued and not over burdened with work. In the final sections we will outline some strategies that have been identified specifically for rural regions.

- **What Do Volunteers Do?**

In defining the activities of volunteering there is the assumption that there is an agreed interpretation of what voluntary work is. The diverse nature of voluntary work also means that it is not universally understood. According to Flick (2002, p. 9) ‘the difficulty in defining volunteering is that volunteering may mean different things to different people’. Some people may not even recognise their work as voluntary or want to identify themselves as volunteers.

Included in many definitions is the notion of ‘free will’ or ‘free choice’ and that the work is done without any form of remuneration (ABS, 2000, Soupourmas & Ironmonger, 2002. ACOSS (1996, p 5) used the following definition of volunteering in its study:

- “Done of one’s own free will;
- Provides a service to the community;
- Is done without monetary reward, excluding out of pocket expenses”.

ACOSS (1996) distinguishes between formal and informal volunteering work in determining the type and hours of
work performed. Formal volunteer work is defined as volunteering within an organisational context and informal work, including unpaid housework, providing help to friends, neighbours or family as informal volunteer work (ACOSS, 1996, pp 6 – 7).

According to the ACOSS Report (1996, p. 29) the most common type of voluntary work people do is ‘helping able adults’, with ‘looking after other people’s children’ second most frequent, ‘caring for sick adults’ third most frequent and ‘community services for either children or others’ the fourth most frequently conducted type of voluntary work’.

Volunteering Australia (2002) provides the following definition:

“Formal volunteering in Australia is defined as an activity which takes place through not for profit organisations or projects and is undertaken:

- to be of benefit to the community
- of the volunteer’s own free will and without coercion;
- for no financial payment; and
- in designated volunteer positions only”.

Volunteers Australia (2002) has the view that although domestic and other caring work is being done voluntarily it is not always done by choice, as carers are expected to be self-sacrificing. Therefore, the organisation excludes ‘caring work’ from its definition.

Similar to the ACOSS study the ABS makes a distinction between formal and informal voluntary work and excludes informal volunteering that includes care and help to others in the community and family. A volunteer was defined as ‘someone who, in the last 12 months, willingly gave unpaid help, in the form of time, service or skills, through an organisation or group’ (ABS, 2001, p. 3).

The most frequently reported activities by the ABS study (1996, p. 6) were fundraising, management, teaching and administration. The report also indicates a ‘sex-split’ in the type of work that men and women do. For example, women were more likely to be involved in the preparation and serving of food whereas the men were involved in activities such as repairs, maintenance, gardening and coaching and refereeing (ABS, 1996, p. 6)

Not ‘all definitions insist that voluntary work is done by choice and without any form of remuneration’ (Flick, Bittman & Doyle, 2002, p. 9). For example, Soupourmas (2002, p. 11) argues that while some organisations prefer a more narrow and specific definition, a more narrow definition can ignore many activities and tasks that are undertaken by people on a formal and informal basis in their social networks and communities. It is suggested that tasks such as ‘giving advice, looking after other people’s children or an elderly neighbour are crucial to community life and the building of social capital’ (Soupourmas, 2002, p. 11). By
expanding the definition to include caring work we are recognising that giving ‘altruistic help to others has become an increasingly important part of many people’s lives’ Soupourmas (2002, p. 23).

Another tension in the debate concerned with definitions of volunteering is whether ‘mandated voluntary work’ should be included as part of those activities defined as voluntary. Because their actions are not motivated by choice or other altruistic reasons their work is not defined as voluntary. However, it is not helpful to have fixed notions of what constitutes a voluntary action as there are evolving and different needs of individuals, communities and governments. This diversity needs to be seen as a strength ensuring that the varied nature of volunteering is both recognised, valued and supported.

What we know is that volunteers participate across broad spheres of social and public life including, political, economic, sport and recreation, emergency activities, community, welfare, unions, business, environment and overseas assistance (ACOSS 1996, p 5; Soupourmas & Ironmonger, 2001, p 1) The diverse nature of voluntary work means that it can include a variety of activities, transforming the lives of the volunteer and the lives of others (ACOSS, 1996; Soupourmas & Ironmonger, 2002; ABS, 2000).

- **Hours Worked and Economic Contribution of Volunteering.**

In addition to the enormous social benefit that voluntary activity adds to a community there are also very real economic benefits. Governments at present recognise the importance of counting the hours of and monetary value of volunteering. In this section we will outline some of the calculations that have been made on both the hours and economic value of volunteering.

It is reported that finding the real monetary value of volunteering is complex. According to the ABS (2002, p. 6) it is difficult to accurately do the arithmetic to measure the hours worked by the average volunteer as most volunteers work relatively few hours while a minority work substantial hours. However, despite this their statistical data states that the ‘median hours of voluntary work per week was 1.4 hours, with the women doing slightly more than men per year (74 as compared to 64) and the median hours increasing steadily with age (ABS, 2000, p. 6).

More significantly the ABS report (2002, p. 3) states that in the year 2000 volunteers contributed 704.1 million hours of voluntary work, this representing an increase on the 1995 figure which totalled 512 million hours. In terms of economic value Flick, Bittman & Doyle (2002, p. 35) suggest that the best current estimate of volunteering in Australia is $41 billion annually.
The Victorian government (Soupourmas & Ironmonger, 2001, p. xii) who undertook further investigations into volunteering in Victoria concluded that ‘in the year 2000, Victorians donated 8 million hours to health organisations, 35 million hours to education, training and youth development organisations and 46 million hours to community and welfare organisations’. The report also estimated the economic value of volunteering in Victoria as worth $10 billion dollars (Soupourmas, Ironmonger, 2001, p. x).

Although informal volunteering was not the focus of the ACOSS study statistics were nevertheless provided on both informal and formal forms of volunteering. Significant results from this study suggest that on an average day, 19 per cent of the Australian population over 15 years of age do some voluntary work whether that be formal or informal (ACOSS, 1996, p. 29). Women are reported as doing higher levels of both formal and informal work than men (ACOSS, 1996, p. 29). The only category of formal voluntary work where men outnumber women is the ‘supporting sports activities’, which includes activities such as “judging, scoring, ground marking and preparation, canteen services and committee work”(ACOSS, 1996, p. 29).

It could be argued that these figures are an underestimation of the economic benefit of volunteering as the different definitions of volunteering may mean that some forms of voluntary activity are excluded from the analysis. However, despite possible errors in calculations, it is evident that volunteers contribute significantly economically.
In this section we will examine the projected demand for volunteers, as there are a number of current and emerging trends that will impact on the future of volunteering and voluntary activity.

It is argued that the demand for volunteers has been increased by government agencies encouraging the development of not-for-profit organisations that are highly dependent on volunteers for many of their activities (Phipps, 2002, p. 6). As stated in this review both federal and state governments have also incorporated volunteerism into a variety of policy contexts, including aged care, employment, environment, health and community development schemes (Flick, Bittman & Doyle, 2002). Although the emphasis on volunteering in the delivery of state and federal government programs has placed recognition of the values of volunteer effort, it has also increased the demand for volunteer labour (Flick, Bittman & Doyle, 2002, p. 2).

In this current policy context where we have witnessed a shift in ideology in welfare reform to mutual obligation, the requirements to provide more voluntary activity will also generate an expansion in the demand for volunteers (Flick, Bittman & Doyle, 2002, p. 4).

The International Year of the Volunteer in 2001 has also positively contributed to the profile of volunteers. Its emphasis on celebration and recognition for the outstanding contribution to the building of a strong and cohesive Australia has meant that volunteering has now become an important social movement (Flick, Bittman & Doyle, 2002, p. 4). The Sydney Olympics was also a pivotal exercise in the successful use of volunteers. Both of these events would have renewed attention to governments of the social and economic benefit of volunteering. It could subsequently be expected that in some way this positive attention will also increase the demand for both voluntary activity and demand for volunteers.
Throughout this review we have identified that volunteers fulfil an important social and economic function. It was also determined that volunteers need to ‘get something back’ to sustain their voluntary effort (ACOSS, 1996, p. 48; Flick, Bittman & Doyle, 2000; Soupourmas & Ironmonger, 2001). In this section we will look at key themes emerging from the literature for sustaining volunteer involvement.

A major finding of the Federal Government’s research (Regional Women’s Advisory Council, 2003, p. 1) into managing change in regional and rural Australia indicates that feelings have a significant influence on how change is managed. For example, if people feel positive about their community they are more likely to see it as successful, while those who have negative feelings are less likely to become involved in any community activity (Regional Women’s Advisory Council, 2003). In this context, it is determined that people are more likely to volunteer if they feel good about their community, as feeling positive is an important motivating strategy for sustaining volunteers. It is argued that the ‘strategy is simple’ - communities have to start creating conditions that lead to a sense of community, positive feelings and success’ (www.dotars.gov.au/regional, 2003, p. 1)

Further, volunteers are deemed as ‘seeking reciprocal benefits from their experiences’ (Flick, Bittman & Doyle, 2002, p. 21). Feeling satisfied about your role and recognised and appreciated for your voluntary effort is subsequently identified as key motivating factors for the retention of long-term volunteers (Flick, Bittman & Doyle, 2002, p. 19; Epsom, 2002, p. 16). Being challenged and the opportunity and freedom to operate to one’s full potential and develop new skills are also important criteria for volunteer motivation (Flick, Bittman & Doyle, 2002, p. 19; Epsom, 2002, p. 14). Voluntary work therefore needs to be interesting and meaningful for it be a challenging and rewarding experience for volunteers.

Other research indicates that volunteers who have opportunities to be involved in the decision making processes and strategic directions of an organisation are more satisfied with their experience (Flick, Bittman & Doyle, 2002, p. 24.) For some volunteers they need to be able to identify their contributions as fitting into the big picture, i.e. the mission or vision of the organisation (Epsom, 2003, p. 19). Therefore, managers need to be more responsive and attentive to the needs and aspirations of their volunteers and provide opportunities to celebrate and reward their voluntary efforts.

Epsom (2002, p. 19), also suggests agencies need to adopt a ‘youthful message’ in their recruitment strategy if they are to attract the potential pool of volunteers, popularly known as the ‘Baby Boomers’ (people born between 1946 and 1963). It is this particular group which is seen as having a significant propensity to ‘swell the volunteering market’ (Epsom, 2002, 10)
The New South Wales government Rural and Support Strategy (www.communitybuilders.nsw.gov.au/builder/volunteering, 2002) cites training as a priority for volunteering support for both volunteer-involving and volunteer support organisations. Epsom (2002, p. 22) suggests the reasons for the increasing push for training is possibly fuelled by the need to professionalise voluntary efforts, the needs of volunteers and to protect organisations from potential litigation. In the context of sustaining long term volunteering efforts it is important to balance the needs of the organisation and the volunteer to ensure that reasons for volunteering are not lost in the process of education and training (Epsom, 2002, p. 22)

The literature suggests that organisations need to ‘get their house in order’ as it is unlikely given the demands and busy lives of volunteers, i.e. time, travel and family and work commitments, that a volunteer will want to stay in an organisation where they do not feel valued, respected or satisfied (Noble, 2000, p. 158; Epsom, 2002, p. 17). Nor are they likely to stay in a team of ‘tired and apathetic workers’ (Noble, 2000, p. 159). Therefore it is important for organisations to find ways to support and recognise the unique contribution of each volunteer. It is essential for community organisations to find ways for volunteering to prosper.
This project promotes collaborative learning and support for rural communities wanting to determine their own futures.

Similar to the idea of collaborative learning, action research models have also been recommended to harness the interest and motivations of community members (www.dotars.gov.au/regional/rwac/projects/success, 2003). The achievements of the Regional Women’s Advisory Council project investigating the success factors in regional and rural Australia through action research, has led to a recommendation that the study be repeated. It is suggested young people be targeted as they are seen as potential leaders and therefore critical in making positive contributions to their respective communities.

The Small Rural Communities Health Consortium is an example of how volunteers and paid staff can work together to support their communities. The Consortium started in 1998 as a partnership between four local health services (Corryong, Orbost, Tallangatta and Yarram). A part-time worker is employed to facilitate community projects with each service. The project was developed proactively in response to the increased demand upon communities and volunteers that was driven by the removal of much of the long-standing support and infrastructure of economic redevelopment and restructuring. This
project demonstrates important strategies for driving locally based and driven solutions for rural communities.

Volunteering Australia also produces very useful documents to support voluntary organisations in the recruitment and retention of volunteers. Examples, include 'Tips for Involving Volunteers in Your Organisation, Model Codes of Practice and National Standards for Involving Volunteers in Not-For Profit Organisations.'

The Can Do Community Awards are another important strategy for communities to showcase and celebrate their successful community building projects. The Can Do Community initiative is a component of the Commonwealth Government’s Stronger Families and Communities Strategy. The state winner for 2002 was the Rice Program based in the Southern Grampians Community. The program provides opportunities for international students to volunteer in particular areas, such as the wool industry through small farming communities. (www.facs.gov.au/cando/awards 2003)

It demonstrates how through the use of volunteers new relationships and partnerships can be formed to inject both economic and social benefit into the community.

Epsom (2002, p. 27) argues that we have to start thinking smarter at developing strategies for volunteering. She has made a number of suggestions, which are worthy of consideration. These include:

“Family volunteering, enabling tasks for all members of a family, so that families do not have to choose between spending time with their families or spending time volunteering.

On-line volunteering offers the opportunity for volunteers to perform the work at either their home or work

Employee volunteering, whereby employers provide paid release time for employees to volunteer' (Epsom, 2002).

A specific recommendation for rural communities is the idea that they can pool their resources 'to provide a smaller but more effective number of services' (Epsom, 2002, p. 33). This strategy would help to overcome the problem of diminishing numbers of potential volunteers and the potential over duplication of services (Epsom, 2002, p. 33).

This brief look at some successful programs and ideas for different ways to capture and satisfy the interest and needs of volunteers presents an emerging picture that organisations need to be more adept at obliging the unique skills of their volunteers.
9. LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Putnam (2001), although primarily concerned with the malaise of current civic mindedness reminds us that our problems of distrust and concern for civic decay are similar to previous generations and with this knowledge in mind we must feel confident that contemporary problems of reduced civic engagement can be reversed (Putnam, 2001). The 2000 Sydney Olympics and Paralympic Games were excellent examples of the significance of volunteering and provided much optimism in Australia for the future of this important ‘tradition of giving’. It demonstrated not only the benefits of volunteerism but of possible strategies for the successful mobilisation of individuals to connect and contribute to the community.

Further Putnam (2001) alerts us to the growth of social movements such as the Black Rights movement, the Women’s Movement and the Environmental Movement, small groups including self-help and study groups and the growth of the Internet, as important forms of social networks where reciprocity of care occurs amongst members in addition to the promotion of improved social justice for disadvantaged and vulnerable individuals and groups. In this context these types of activity can be considered legitimate forms of civic engagement. They also provide useful examples of how people in contemporary times forge new identities, connect with others and use their skills for the benefit of the wider community.

This review challenges the view that volunteering is a declining activity. The literature provides evidence that people continue to value the voluntary experience. People want new experiences, to learn new skills and to care for others and their community. The review, also importantly reveals a number of strategies to promote sustainable volunteerism. Organisations need to think about ways of involving people, which matches their interest and desire for new skills and experiences. People need to have choices in what they do and to feel that they are valued and their efforts recognised and rewarded. Organisations also need to be flexible to accommodate the personal and professional commitments of the volunteer.

A key challenge is to recognise the value and interest of young people who demonstrate and aspire to support a particular issue or cause. As this literature review identifies volunteering can often mean a lifelong commitment for volunteers. Therefore, it is important for the future of volunteering that organisations can connect with the experiences and needs of young people.

Importantly organisations need to be welcoming of all community members and to create practices and relationships that are inclusive. Volunteers also need to be provided with opportunities to undertake worthwhile activities. These strategies are important to the future of volunteering in rural communities.
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Rural Development and Social Capital

(Footnotes)

1 Michael Bittman provided this information via a phone conversation in February, 2003. The report is currently unavailable to the public, as it is waiting release by the Federal government. However, Bittman gave permission for T Lynch to quote him personally for this research.

2 Michael Bittman provided this information via a phone conversation in February, 2003. The report is currently unavailable to the public, as it is waiting release by the Federal government. However, Bittman gave permission for me to quote him personally for this review.

3 Neil Smith, coordinator of the The Small Rural Communities Health Consortium, provided this information.