



Advancing Country Towns
Resilient Services Project:

Mallee Track Volunteer Services Review

February 2014



Acknowledgements

The *Mallee Track Volunteer Services Review* was a project funded by the (then) Department of Planning and Community Development – now the Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure - through the Advancing Country Towns initiative.



Mildura Rural City Council

The project was auspiced by the Mildura Rural City Council and supported in its formative stages by Project Manager Steven Vallance, and subsequently by Cassey Gloster during the project's implementation phase. The level of support and validity provided by these local Project Managers cannot be understated.

The Mallee Track ACT project was guided by a Strategic Steering Group and their leadership of the project across the government, business and community sectors was greatly appreciated. Strategic Steering Group members included:

- Mike Mooney, DPCD Strategic Project Manager, RDV
- Martin Hawson, MRCC General manager, Community and Culture
- Mark Jenkins, MRCC Manager, Community Futures
- John Senior, CEO MTHCS
- Lois O'Callaghan, MTHCS
- Win Scott, CEO SuniTAFE
- Anne Mansell, Mildura Development Corporation CEO
- Principal, Ouyen Secondary College
- Matt Holland, DEEWR Regional Education Skills Jobs Coordinator
- Michael Oerlemans, DHS Deputy Regional Director
- Mark Wilson, Chair Ouyen Inc
- DPCD representative, Melbourne

The Community Reference Group provided strong links to the relevant communities along the Track and helped ensure community knowledge informed the ACT project. Community Reference Group members included:

- Lois O'Callaghan, MTHCS
- Sonia Mock, MTHCS
- Kylie Armstrong, Murrayville Inc
- Trevor Wyatt, Murrayville Local Government
- Ian Stacey, Ouyen Inc

- 
- Jenny Heaslip, Ouyen Inc
 - Melinda Lynch, Underbool Progress Group
 - Nicole Magnisalis, Underbool Progress Group
 - Mick Pole, Walpeup & District Development Committee
 - Jean Cooke, Walpeup & District Development Committee

The development of this report has been informed by a strong consultation process. The researchers particularly wish to acknowledge the time, wisdom and experience generously given by the individuals, groups and organisations along the Mallee Track. Their challenges and successes at the coal face of volunteerism, coupled with their strategic understanding of the broader policy context, helped ensure this report was both informed by theory and grounded in experience. We hope we have done justice to the stories shared by:

Emergency Services

- Ouyen CFA
- Ouyen SES
- Ambulance Victoria – Ouyen
- Walpeup CFA
- Murrayville CFA
- Murrayville SES
- Ambulance Victoria – Murrayville

Health and Wellbeing Providers

- Mallee Track Health and Community Services
- Ouyen Inc.
- Walpeup and District Development Committee
- Underbool Progress Association
- Murrayville Inc.
- Ouyen Lions Club

“Those who can, do. Those who can do more, volunteer”

Author Unknown





Contents

Acknowledgements	1
Contents	3
Executive Summary	11
Introduction	12
Background – Mallee Track Advancing Country Towns Initiative	13
Methodology.....	16
The Mallee Track Community Profile	19
Literature Review	50
Volunteering – A Definition	50
Volunteering – The Value.....	51
Volunteering – Changing Patterns	51
Volunteering – Motivations	55
Volunteering – Barriers.....	56
Volunteering – the International Experience	71
Policy Direction	72
Volunteering - Federal	72
Volunteering - State	73
Volunteering – Local	77
Earlier Local Research	86
Mapping of Volunteer Reliant Mallee Track Service Organisations	89



Community Consultation: Themed Findings from Emergency Services Volunteers	94
Community Consultations: Themed Findings from Health and Wellbeing Volunteers	114
Strategic Observations, Recommendations & Opportunities	126
Strategic Observation One: Changing Patterns of Volunteerism	126
Strategic Observation Two: Changing Volunteer Demographic	128
Strategic Observation Three: Training and Regulation Burden	129
Strategic Observation 1: Changing Patterns of Volunteerism	132
Time Poverty	132
Winter Drought	139
Grey Nomads	140
Strategic Observation 2: The Changing Volunteer Demographic	146
New Residents	146
Targeting Younger Generations “X, Y and Z”	152
Older People	158
Strategic Observation 3: The Training and Regulation Burden	163
Advocacy	163
Opportunities to address training obligations	171
Streamlining for Episodic Volunteers	176
Conclusion	181
References	184
Appendix A: Community Consultation Questions	189
Appendix B: Volunteer Data Collection Templates	193
Appendix C: Micro-volunteering Opportunities	195
Appendix D: Generational Matrix	196



Executive Summary

The Mallee Track Volunteer Services Review was a project of the *Advancing Country Towns* (ACT) initiative, a four year Victorian State Government program which aimed to improve outcomes in targeted regional communities. The Mallee Track ACT Project involved the communities of Ouyen, Walpeup, Underbool and Murrayville, an area with a combined population of approximately 2,250 people. Ouyen, the most eastern community along the Mallee Track, is located 105km south of Mildura and 440 kilometres north-west of Melbourne.



The objective of the project was to enhance volunteer recruitment and development in order to support the long-term goal of establishing broader, more resilient services across the Mallee Track. Essentially, the project aimed to “strengthen the community by making it easier and more attractive for people to volunteer” in anticipation it would assist in maintaining current levels of volunteer service delivery to prevent further decline in the towns.

Research for the project sought to understand the impact of the ageing and declining Mallee Track population on the service delivery capacity of essential direct services who relied on volunteers for part or all of their workforce. This included services provided by volunteer groups such as emergency services (CFA, SES, Ambulance Victoria) together with health and community services (such as Meals on Wheels, friendly visiting, volunteer driving).

“This community would not continue without volunteers”



Census data confirmed that people in towns and communities along the Mallee Track are already working longer hours than the state and national average¹ and volunteer at twice the rate². It also revealed the low local house and land values jeopardise the ability of the ageing and low income populations to relocate to more highly serviced communities due to the more expensive housing prices in these centres. The number of households without a registered vehicle is lower than state and national averages, and the implications of not having a vehicle in a town with limited services has the potential to increase vulnerability.

"(We all) have so many other expectations and time commitments – fitting it all in is really hard sometimes"

For the purposes of the research, interviews were held with the leaders of Emergency Services units and with coordinators or group representatives of the range of health and wellbeing services, as well as local progress associations, along the Mallee Track.

The interviews with emergency services personnel provided deep insight about their volunteer experience. All interviewees believed that what they did 'made a difference' and that if they didn't volunteer the community would suffer: this was an important ongoing incentive. Whilst there were some differing experiences between towns and between the emergency services themselves, the consistency of responses around a number of themes was noticeable, namely:

"(Newcomers) have a high expectation that things will be provided for them in the community, but don't want to join in to help make it happen!"

- the impact of the **time** commitments required
- the prevalence of **multiple roles** as volunteers
- the level of **support** received from respective state bodies
- the nature and availability of **training** provided
- the prevalence of **episodic and micro-volunteering**
- the **role of newcomers** to the community
- **generational changes** in volunteering
- **culture and leadership** within groups
- the degree of **regulation and compliance**
- the time, effort and difficulty in **recruitment** of new volunteers
- the issues associated with **retention** of existing volunteers.

1 Between 53-60% of the working population worked more than 40 hrs/wk compared to only 44.9% of the Victorian population and 45.3% of the national population. The longest hours were in Murrayville. ABS 2011 Census.

2 Between 37-48% of the Mallee Track population volunteer 'through an organisation or group' compared to an average of almost 18% at the state and national levels. ABS 2011 Census.



Likewise, interviews with health and wellbeing providers revealed a deep level of service commitment based on both compassion for their fellow community members and a dedication to their local town. Again, a consistent range of themes were identified:

- an emerging preference for **micro-volunteering**
- concerns about **ageing / declining volunteer numbers**
- being driven by a sense of **obligation and expectation**
- the effect of the **winter drought** of volunteers
- the impact of the **training and regulation burden**
- the varied success of **recruitment strategies**
- the feeling there is **never enough** volunteers
- the importance of **starting early** for a life of volunteering
- to find a volunteer you need to **ask a busy person**
- the contribution made by **employer enabled volunteers**
- the **community co-contribution** provided by volunteering
- the extent of **hidden volunteering** in communities
- the challenges of **burnout and succession planning**
- the **perceived role of new residents**
- the **experience of new residents**.

International research confirmed that local volunteering experiences along the Mallee Track are mirrored throughout regional areas in the developed world, with a range of factors influencing people's willingness and capacity to volunteer. These factors include:

- The perception of **time** as constraining factor
- The **lack of information** about what volunteering entails
- The unacknowledged prevalence of **social anxiety**
- The extent to which **perceptions** can influence behaviour and involvement
- The changing **patterns** of volunteering
- The influence of **generational change** on volunteering

"Doing lots of (volunteer) jobs is just the reality of small towns – it's how we keep the services going"

"Many newcomers found it difficult to know where to go and what to do. In some places a newsletter or local paper contained advertising and information but often this was vague or too general to allow the newcomer to know what sort of commitment might be needed."

(Paull, 2009, p 11)



The Mallee Track Volunteer Services Review combined the emerging trends in global volunteerism with the experiences from groups along the Track to form three core strategic observations:

1. The **Changing Patterns of Volunteerism** corroborate that people no longer volunteer in the same way or with the same expectations they did fifty, twenty or even ten years ago.
2. The **Changing Volunteer Demographic** not only confirms the makeup of our communities has changed, but that the differences between generations and between 'existing' and 'new' residents has also expanded, particularly regarding their interpretation of volunteering.
3. Meanwhile the increasing **Training and Regulation Burden**, whilst emphasising safety and quality, has also added considerable barriers and disincentives to volunteering.

Overall, the research found that the well documented concerns relating to ageing and declining populations in small towns are very real: stories along the Mallee Track confirm that without significant change the viability of current volunteer services will be diminished. At the same time, local consultations have revealed a willingness to explore alternatives to traditional approaches to volunteering and a growing interest in new ways of engaging volunteers.

With a purposeful emphasis on locally applicable and relevant ideas, the report therefore used the three themes to generate 9 broad recommendations with 24 subsequent opportunities for implementation at the local level as follows:

"Some of our main volunteers swing between delivering meals on wheels and having their meals delivered, they are so borderline""

"Winter is a really difficult time as baby boomers are holidaying. (They) are the perfect volunteers most of time, retired so have time and still able. But about 8-9 of our volunteers 'head off' caravanning for several months over winter and we are always short. As a result we increasingly need more standby volunteers"

Between January and April is when we typically get things done. In winter (April to September) older people are away travelling and younger people are busy with cropping / sporting groups"



CHANGING PATTERNS OF VOLUNTEERISM

CHANGING VOLUNTEER DEMOGRAPHIC

TRAINING AND REGULATION BURDEN

**-1-
Time Poor
Population**

(1.1) Micro-volunteering
(1.2) e-volunteering
(1.3) Organisational flexibility

**-2-
Winter
Drought**

(2.1) Awareness raising
(1.1) Micro-volunteering
(3.2) Engage Grey Nomads
(7.1) Enable volunteers under 18yrs
(7.4) Reduce duplication of checks

**-3-
Grey
Nomads**

(3.1) Increase awareness of the Grey Nomad opportunity
(3.2) Develop a localised GN engagement strategy

**-4-
New
Residents**

(4.1) New Residents information resources
(4.2) Thinking like a volunteer
(4.3) Taster volunteering
(4.4) Research into the volunteering culture of new residents

**-5-
Gen
X, Y & Z**

(5.1) Increase on-line presence
(5.2) Embrace social media
(5.3) Create welcoming organisational cultures

**-6-
Older
People**

(6.1) Volunteering in Place
(6.2) Active retirees
(1.1) Micro-volunteering

**-7-
Advocacy**

(7.1) Enable volunteers under 18yrs
(7.2) Address funding disparity between ES
(7.3) Simplify compliance info
(7.4) Reduce duplication of regulatory checks

**-8-
Training
Obligations**

(8.1) Increase Accessibility of Governance Training
(8.2) Emergency Services Pilot
(8.3) Expand opportunities for shared training

**-9-
Streamlining
for
Volunteers**

(9.1) Mallee Track Volunteer Database
(7.4) Reduce duplication of regulatory checks
(9.2) Information sharing partnerships



The range of opportunities identified in the report include many that can be actioned immediately by local groups within existing resources. Some are practical and task oriented, others will entail collaboration and cooperation between groups, while still others entail advocacy and cultural change.

Like many initiatives seeking lasting and sustainable change, the injection of a coordinating and supporting resource to guide implementation would generate more rapid and consistent results. A potential next step in realising the recommendations of this report, therefore, would be to secure the services of a paid volunteer support role, to work in a coordinated manner with all the groups and organisations along the Track as they progress volunteering opportunities of most relevance to them. A logical second step should such a resource be secured, would be to action Opportunity 8.1, the development of a centralised Mallee Track Volunteer Database, which in itself would be an enabler of numerous other identified opportunities.

Concurrent with the Mallee Track Resilient Volunteer Services Review, the emergency services sector at a statewide level is developing strategies for enhancing volunteer recruitment, increasing local unit/group resilience and creating a more joined-up service system. The outcomes of this project align with these statewide expectations, creating opportunities for synergy between the macro and micro levels during respective implementation phases, as well as the prospect of locating pilot projects along the Mallee Track – an emergency services community now ripe for change.

For volunteers within the health and wellbeing sector, there is an increasing understanding within federal and state government departmental initiatives that recognition of the role of volunteers and the level of support provided, should be tailored to local needs. This has the potential to generate interest in and potential grant funds for initiatives actioned by groups along the Mallee Track, particularly those that have synergies with departmental objectives for increased service coordination and organisational collaboration.

Importantly for the Mallee Track, at the municipal level the Mildura Rural City Council and the Advancing Country Towns Steering Committee are attuned to exploring ways of continuing to advance the outcomes of the project. In that sense, this report has the potential to be a living document, informed by continued strategic activity at the broader statewide level and actively interpreted

"I always volunteer, it is the best way to get involved and meet people when you are new to a community. I still get that 'old families' attitude"

"(The worst volunteering experience) come with groups that are stuck in their old ways and from those groups that just signed people up then forget them or did not pay attention to their specific needs as a volunteer. The 'old boys club' has been a problem...."





by groups and organisations at the regional and local level as they seek to harness opportunities for improving volunteerism along the Track.

This research has identified a dynamic, engaged and committed volunteering community that is passionate about ensuring a viable future for volunteer service delivery along the Mallee Track. The opportunities identified in this report, if implemented, may well put the Mallee Track at the forefront of 21st century volunteer practices and provide example to other regional towns seeking to maintain sustainable volunteer services.





Introduction

The importance of volunteering for the strength and wellbeing of communities is well known, the prevalence of volunteering in rural and regional Australia comparative to their urban counterparts is proven in the ABS Census data. In these rural and regional areas, in particular, a range of community safety, health and wellbeing services could not be provided without the significant contribution of volunteer activity. The value and importance of volunteering is therefore inextricably linked to the sustainability of small towns both in their ability to meet the needs of current residents together with attracting new residents.

At the same time, demographic changes and shifts in the pattern of volunteering have led to a growing recognition that traditional approaches to volunteerism are failing to generate the number of volunteers required to meet service need. Indeed, with an ageing population overall, and declining numbers in rural towns, projections indicate there is likely to be both an increase in the demand for volunteer led services and a decrease in the supply of volunteers available.

In regional Victoria, where a higher rate of volunteering is already falling on the shoulders of a smaller population base, how do we ask busy people to do even more? People in towns and communities along the Mallee Track – Ouyen, Walpeup, Underbool and Murrayville – are already working longer hours than the state and national average³ and volunteer at twice the rate⁴.

Essentially, given that the capacity of those who are currently volunteering is already stretched, the imperative to *do volunteering differently* has never been stronger. The need to understand the changing patterns of volunteerism, the motivations and barriers to volunteering and ways of actively engaging with communities regarding a volunteering cultural shift, is vital if we are to successfully bolster and sustain volunteer services in rural towns.

This research drew on the significant volunteering expertise of those along the Mallee Track to explore perceived barriers and challenges to volunteering as well as their examples of successful recruitment and retention strategies. These were compared with international research in volunteer sustainability to generate opportunities for potential implementation at the local level.

In the short term it is anticipated the research will go some way to *“make it easier and more attractive for people to volunteer”* and provide the longer term benefit of *“more responsive and joined up services operating across the Mallee Track”*⁵.

3 Between 53-60% of the working population worked more than 40 hrs/wk compared to only 44.9% of the Victorian population and 45.3% of the national population. The longest hours were in Murrayville. ABS 2011 Census.

4 Between 37-48% of the Mallee Track population volunteer 'through an organisation or group' compared to an average of almost 18% at the state and national levels. ABS 2011 Census.



Background – Mallee Track Advancing Country Towns Initiative

Advancing Country Towns (ACT) is a four year Victorian State Government Initiative sponsored by the (then) Department of Planning and Community Development which commenced in 2011. The Advancing Country Towns Program committed \$9.4 million to place based initiatives that aim to bring together the resources of all three tiers of government with local business, community organisations, residents and philanthropic organisations to address a range of complex and inter-related issues experienced in a place. Broadly the ACT objectives aim to:

- Improve investment and service coordination and integration to more efficiently meet identified local priorities,
- Improve access to education, skills and training and employment,
- Identify economic development opportunities,
- Increase the capacity of regional communities to participate in decision-making and priority-setting activities.

Nine regional and rural locations across Victoria, identified as experiencing disproportionate levels of entrenched and complex disadvantage whilst also having opportunities for growth and prosperity, were selected as the ACT Program project sites. The Mallee Track is one of these nine project sites and represents one of five ACT projects which engage groups of towns. Specifically the Mallee Track ACT Program involves Ouyen, Walpeup, Underbool, Cowangie and Murrayville, an area with a combined population of approximately 2,250 people. The remaining four projects involve individual 'townships' (including the nearby town of Robinvale).

The Mallee Track ACT project is auspiced by the Mildura Rural City Council (MRCC) and delivered by a Project Manager (initially Steven Vallance and currently Cassey Gloster, critically both of whom are Mallee Track 'locals'). The Mallee Track ACT project is guided by a Strategic Steering Group formed to provide leadership across government, business and communities to achieve the outcomes of the ACT project. Strategic Steering Group members include:

- Mike Mooney, DPCD Strategic Project Manager, RDV
- Martin Hawson, MRCC General manager, Community and Culture
- Mark Jenkins, MRCC Manager, Community Futures
- John Senior, CEO MTHCS
- Lois O'Callaghan, MTHCS

5 Benefits and outputs as identified by the Advancing Country Towns Steering and Reference Groups as part of *Recommendation 1: Volunteer recruitment, support and development*.



- Win Scott, CEO SuniTAFE
- Anne Mansell, Mildura Development Corporation CEO
- Principal, Ouyen Secondary College
- Matt Holland, DEEWR Regional Education Skills Jobs Coordinator
- Michael Oerlemans, DHS Deputy Regional Director
- Mark Wilson, Chair Ouyen Inc
- DPCD representative, Melbourne

A Community Reference Group provides strong networks in the relevant communities ensuring community knowledge informs the ACT project. Community Reference Group members include:

- Lois O'Callaghan, MTHCS
- Sonia Mock, MTHCS
- Kylie Armstrong, Murrayville Inc
- Trevor Wyatt, Murrayville Local Government
- Ian Stacey, Ouyen Inc
- Jenny Heaslip, Ouyen Inc
- Melinda Lynch, Underbool Progress Group
- Nicole Magnisalis, Underbool Progress Group
- Mick Pole, Walpeup & District Development Committee
- Jean Cooke, Walpeup & District Development Committee

Drawing on the findings of three Investment Management workshops the (then) Project Manager Steve Vallance, Strategic Steering Group and Community Reference Group made four recommendations regarding the development of initiatives that would deliver the outputs and outcomes required to meet the strategic objectives of the ACT Mallee Track Project. These recommendations were:

Recommendation 1: Volunteer recruitment, support and development

Recommendation 2: Developing regional enterprises

Recommendation 3: Revitalisation of the MRS as a training facility

Recommendation 4: Year 12 or equivalent retention.



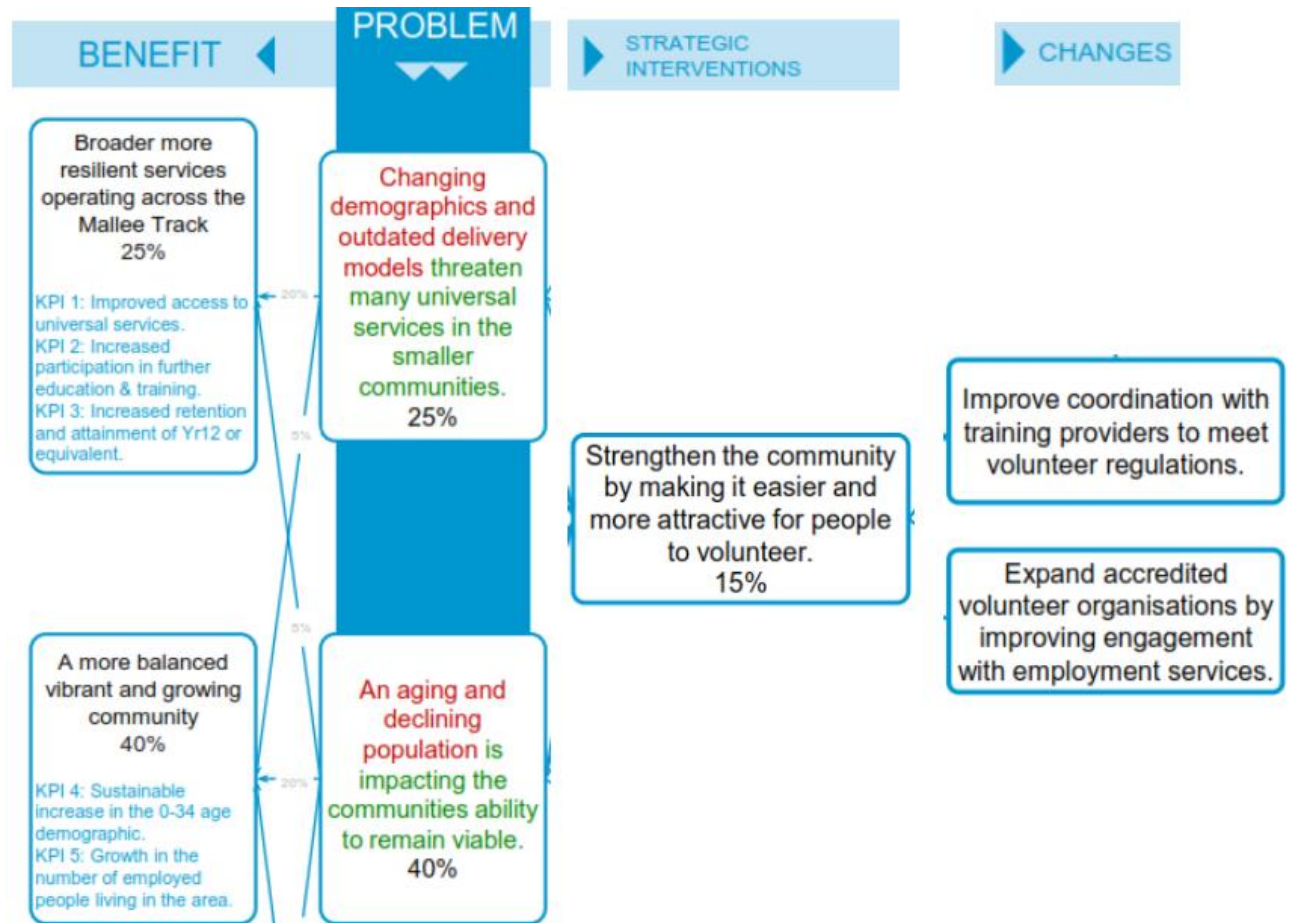
Also through this process the long term outcomes (Benefits) of the Mallee Track ACT project were identified as:

- **Broader more responsive and joined up services operating across the Mallee Track,**
- Balanced vibrant growing community
- Sustainable growth in the local economy.

Within these there were a number of short or medium term outputs (Strategic Interventions). Those specific to supporting the delivery of the long term outcome – 'broader more responsive joined up services' – included:

- Improve participation and retention in education through better use of blended learning,
- Improve the flexibility and responsiveness of services by better collaboration and planning amongst service providers,
- **Strengthen the community by making it easier and more attractive for people to volunteer.**

Together these address the ILM identified 'problem' of "changing demographics and outdated delivery models threaten many universal services in the smaller communities" and "An ageing and declining population is impacting on the community's ability to remain viable". Each component of the ILM as relevant to the Resilient Services research is shown in the diagram right.





Research Methodology & Research Participants

The Advancing Country Towns - Mallee Track Resilient Volunteer Service research sought to understand the impact of the ageing and declining Mallee Track population on the service delivery capacity of essential direct services who relied on volunteers for part or all of their workforce.

The research sought to include services provided by volunteer groups along the Mallee Track such as emergency services together with health and community services. These direct services offer safety or support in times of disasters (Country Fire Authority, State Emergency Services, Ambulance Victoria, Red Cross⁶), the ability to keep older people in their own homes for longer (Meals on Wheels, friendly visiting, volunteer driving services) and other services that contribute to people's health and wellbeing. Importantly the emphasis was on emergency, health and well-being services that utilise, in some measure, volunteers in their service delivery.

Members of the Progress Groups of each Mallee Track community were also engaged, their key role in advocacy and position of knowledge across the breadth of major (and often minor) community areas of concern secured their place as 'local authorities' on community well-being and areas of strength and threat.

Mildura Rural City Council's Risk and Emergency Management Coordinator was also interviewed to ascertain a regional, multi-service view of volunteering in the emergency services sector⁷. Similarly Mildura Rural City Council Community Development staff were seminal in informing municipality wide volunteering pressures and concerns.

With critical support from the ACT Project Manager, initially Steve Vallance and for the most part Cassey Gloster, key community groups and contacts along the Mallee Track were identified and contacted. The support of Mildura Rural City Council's Engagement Development Officer and Community Development Coordinator was also important. Early emails from these staff members to their extensive Mallee Track e-networks ensured the project was introduced to the community through respected sources, laying the foundation for contact from researchers.

⁶ Red Cross do not have a local team along the Track, and preferred that consultation be undertaken with staff from Melbourne

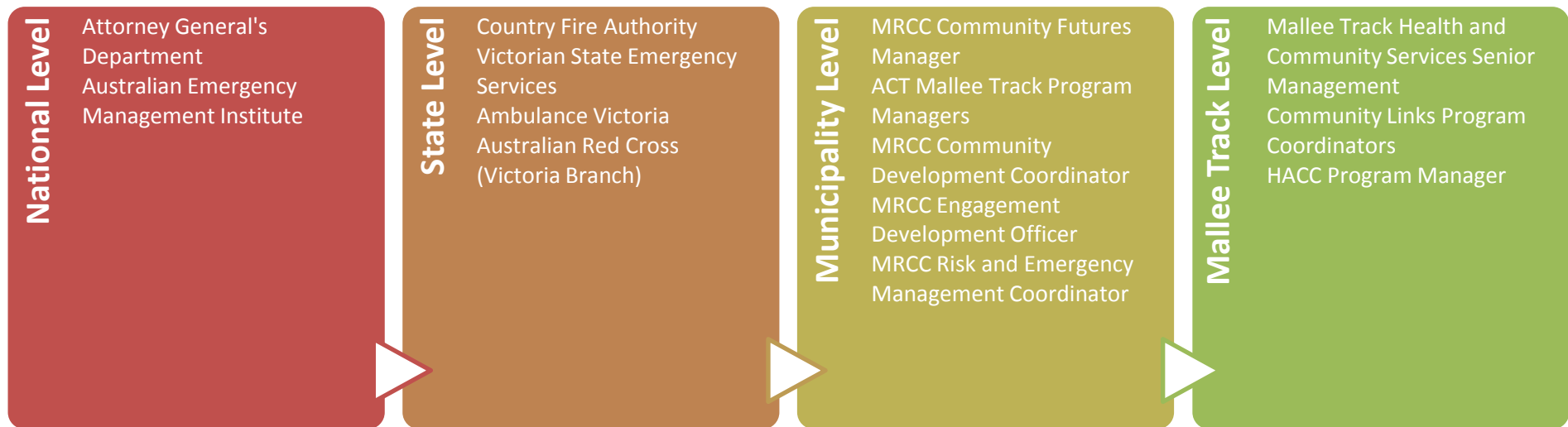
⁷ At the time of the research MRCC was recruiting for new Community Emergency Liaison Officers in towns across the region. Given these roles were not yet operational, they were not within the scope of this project. However their likely positive impact on the volunteering emergency services sector in the future would be worth exploring.

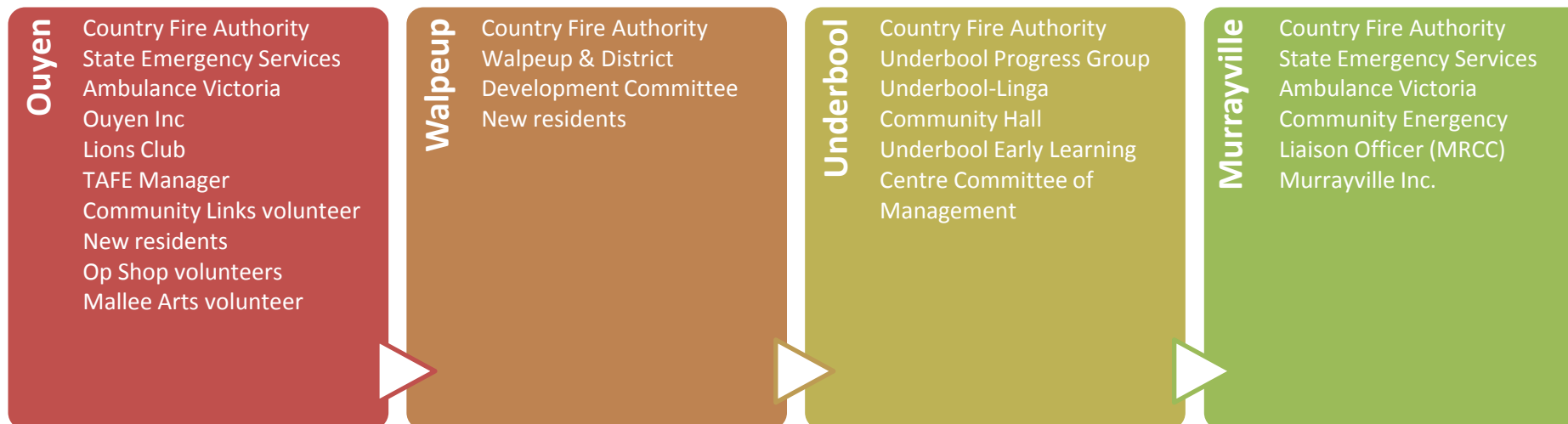


Over the course of the project, through in-person and phone interviews, small discussion groups and email dialogues the following groups and organisations shared their volunteering stories. A guided conversation method was used, whereby a conversation between the individual or group with the researcher(s) was framed by a series of pre-established questions with the pace and direction set by the individual or group themselves. See Appendix A for a copy of these guiding questions.

Whilst the focus of the research was on groups providing direct service delivery, numerous groups were also reached inadvertently through the process of interviewing targeted groups. For example a small discussion group with three members of a Progress Association revealed these members also volunteered for the local preschool committee, memorial hall committee of management and an arts group. The concerns and challenges, strengths and opportunities of all these groups were heard through the course of the conversation.

The researchers also heard from local government representatives and senior regional staff in the CFA, SES and Ambulance Victoria were advised of the research and invited to comment. The organisations represented through the research are detailed in the tables below.





Following the drafting of the final report, and as a means of ensuring both accuracy and the local validity of the research, the researchers presented the research findings and recommendations to two workshops, one held in Underbool on the 19th February 2014 and a second held in Ouyen on the 20th February 2014. Volunteers from both the emergency services and health, wellbeing and community advocacy sectors were in attendance and had an opportunity to explore the relevance and potential application of the findings for their respective groups and the volunteering communities in general along the Track.

Experiences shared by community members at these workshops provided additional, rich, subjective detail for the report that was congruent with the information received as a result of the earlier interview process. Overall, the workshops confirmed the findings of the research and the emerging recommendations had saliency for groups along the Mallee Track. Feedback from the workshops was subsequently incorporated into the final report.



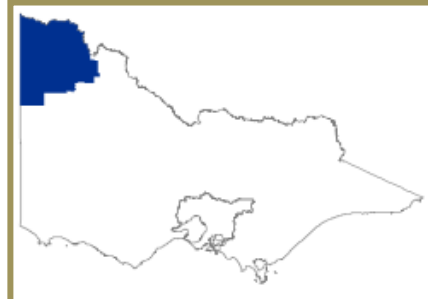
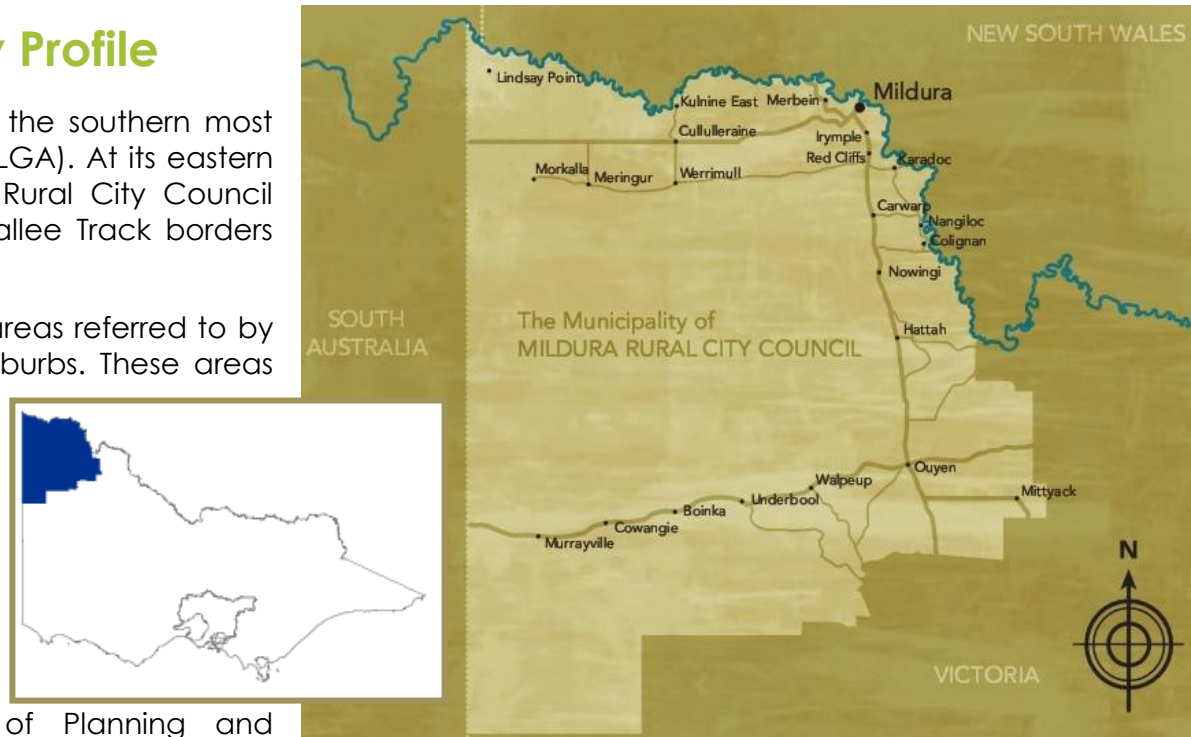
The Mallee Track Community Profile

The region recognised as the Mallee Track is the southern most area of the Mildura Local Government Area (LGA). At its eastern corner the Mallee Track joins the Swan Hill Rural City Council municipality and at its western corner the Mallee Track borders South Australia.

The Mallee Track is formed from four specific areas referred to by the Australian Bureau of Statistics as State Suburbs. These areas are Ouyen, Walpeup, Underbool and Murrayville. A series of townships extend along the Mallee Track, from Ouyen in the east towards Walpeup, Underbool, Boinka, Cowangie and finally Murrayville to the west.

Census data drawn together, analysed and presented in documents such as the Department of Transport, Planning & Local Infrastructure (previously the Department of Planning and Community Development) 'Towns in Time' (2011), 'Victoria in Future' (20112), 'Regional Victoria Trends and Prospects' (2010) and 'Change and disadvantage in the Loddon Mallee Region' (2011) are collated here to present a demographic platform for understanding the pressures exerted by population change on volunteers and volunteer reliant services along the Mallee Track.

In summary these documents present a geographic area experiencing population decline and ageing, socio-economic disadvantage, industry restructure and declining terms of trade and classifications of either 'remote' or 'moderately accessible' (as defined by the Accessibility and Remoteness Index of Australia). Taken together recent research demonstrates the varying impacts of these factors on community capacity to maintain resilient volunteer-based essential community services.

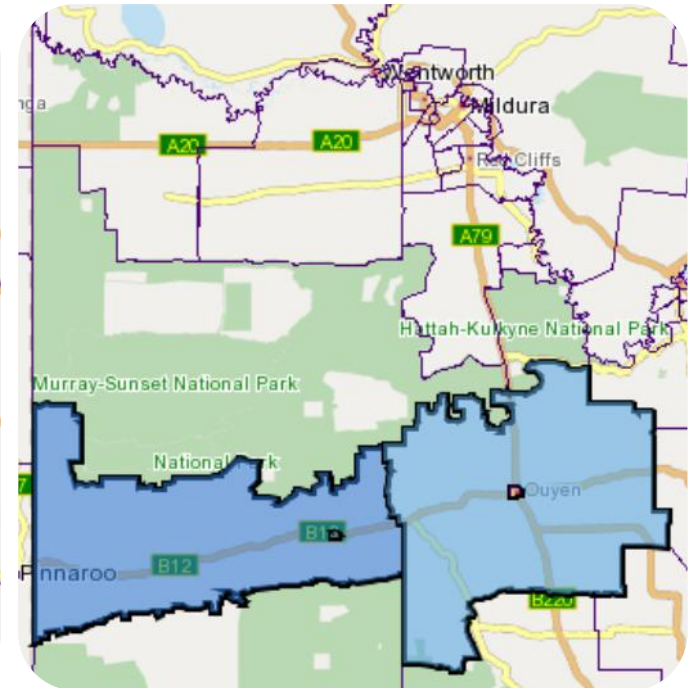
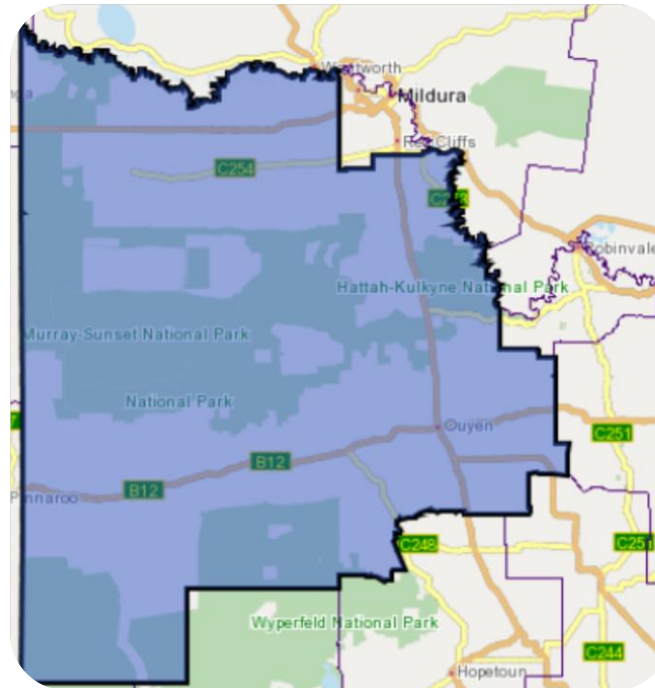




Census Maps

The map shown right represents Mildura LGA Part B, the largest portion (in geographical terms) of the Mildura LGA.

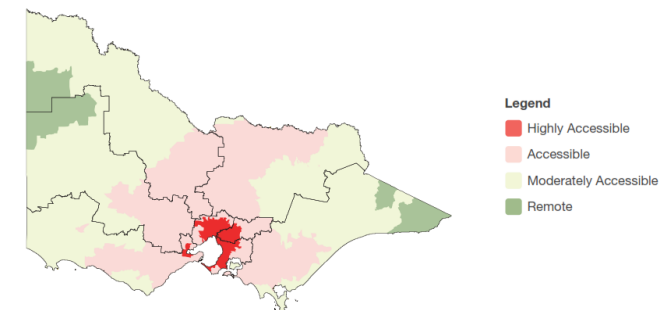
The map far right represents the Mallee Track. The long, left (blue shaded) area of this map is the Murrayville State Suburb (SS), the small black square within the Murrayville area is the Underbool State Suburb. The Walpeup State Suburb is the large blue portion on the right of the map which surrounds the much smaller Ouyen SS (white section).



The town of **Ouyen**, with a population of 1,082, is a service centre for the larger surrounding areas referred to as **Walpeup** (which sits as a doughnut around Ouyen) and the Mallee Track (which stretches west to the South Australian boarder). Ouyen is considered a 'moderately accessible' community with road distances to Mildura (100kms), Bendigo (300kms) and Melbourne (440kms) rendering access to services not available locally challenging.

The **Walpeup** population was recorded as 416 in the 2011 Census and covers an area of 3,305 square kms. The 2011 Census indicates a population of 202 (median age 46 years) for **Underbool** and surrounds and 548 (median age 48 years) for **Murrayville** and surrounds.

Figure 13. Accessibility of areas in Victoria – The Accessibility and Remoteness Index of Australia, 2006 (DHS 2009a)





Population & Population Change

POPULATION (2011)	Ouyen	Walpeup	Underbool	Murrayville	Mildura Part B	Mildura LGA	Victoria	Australia
Population – Entire	1,082	416	202	548	3,451	50,979	5,354,042	21,507,717
Population - Males	552 (51.0%)	224 (53.8%)	107 (53.0%)	289 (52.7%)	53.1%	49.0%	49.2%	49.4%
Population – Females	530 (49.0%)	192 (46.2%)	95 (47.0%)	259 (47.3%)	46.9%	51.0%	50.8%	50.6%
Population - ATSI persons	0.7%	1.4%	0.0%	0.5%	1.3%	3.6%	0.7%	2.5%

<http://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/censushome.nsf/home/quickstats>

The **Ouyen**, **Walpeup**, **Underbool**, **Murrayville State Suburbs** and **Mildura Part B** all exhibited larger rates of male population than was recorded at the LGA, state and national levels. The Indigenous population rates in **Ouyen** (0.7%), **Walpeup SS** (1.4%), **Underbool** (0.0%), **Murrayville** (0.5%) **State Suburbs** and **Mildura Part B** (1.3%) were below the LGA (3.6%) and national (2.5%) rates.

Population Levels and Change, Ouyen & Surrounding Localities, Former Shire of Walpeup 1981-2001

Locality	Population Level (Number of Residents)					Total Change in Period (Percentage)			
	1981	1986	1991	1996	2001	1981-91	1986-96	1991-2001	Overall 1981-2001
Ouyen	1527	1503	1337	1251	1157	-12.44%	-16.77%	-13.46%	-24.23%
Walpeup	133	126	126	112	117	-5.26%	-11.11%	-7.14%	-12.03%
Underbool	274	276	268	233	227	-2.19%	-15.58%	-15.3%	-17.15%
Murrayville	313	296	304	236	233	-2.88%	-20.27%	-23.36%	-25.56%

Source *Towns in Time* database.

All Mallee Track communities exhibited a trend of declining population over the 20 year period from 1981 – 2001. The largest declines were seen in the communities of Murrayville (-25.56%) and Ouyen (-24.23%) with the least amount of decline occurring in the community of Walpeup (-12.03%). Importantly between the 2006 and 2011 Census the Ouyen town population recorded a gain of 62 people and a positive 'population change' (of 1.1%) for the first time in 30 years.



In the 2011 Census, there were 1,082 people in the **Ouyen** (State Suburb) of these 51.0% were male and 49.0% were female. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people made up 0.7% of the population. There has been a slight relative growth in the Indigenous population in Ouyen from 0.4% in 2006 to 0.7% in 2011. The median age of the Ouyen population had increased from 45 years in 2006 to 48 years in 2011, confirming community perceptions that the population is ageing.

Ouyen State Suburb			
Median age of persons	48	Median mortgage repayment (\$/monthly)	780
Median total personal income (\$/weekly)	445	Median rent (\$/weekly)	110
Median total family income (\$/weekly)	1,164	Average number of persons per bedroom	1.1
Median total household income (\$/weekly)	795	Average household size	2.2

Summary Data Ouyen TOWNSHIP	1981	1986	1991	1996	2001	2006	2011
Total population*	1,527	1,503	1,337	1,251	1,157	1,068	1,130
Male: Female ratio*	103.9	102.8	94.3	104.7	99.8	97.8	111.6
Visitors on Census night*	64	122	78	91	93	77	128
Population in non-private dwellings*	99	88	63	93	79	81	114
Occupied Private Dwellings	452	499	476	470	463	444	461
Unoccupied Private Dwellings	42	56	58	72	75	101	97
Population at same address 5 years ago	777	799	754	724	700	638	712
*Includes local, interstate and overseas visitors.							

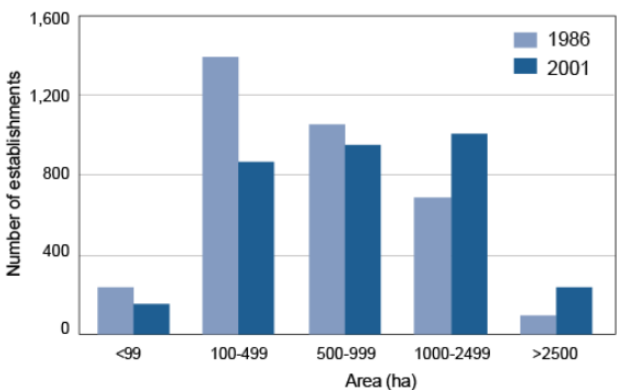
Note: Township data, as reported through the 'Towns in Time' resource, does not capture the loss of population experienced from the farming sector as the movement away of farming families and farm employees and their families who reside on farms are not recorded in town data. The table below (McKenzie & Frieden, 2010) captures Victorian data related to increasing farm size and decreasing farm numbers.

Population Change	1981-91	1991-2001	2001-06	2006-11*
Net change	-190	-180	-89	62
Average annual change	-1.3%	-1.4%	-1.6%	1.1%

* significantly the Ouyen township increased from 3.43 sq.km in the 2006 Census to 5.60 sq.km in the 2011 Census. See the map below for an image of these changes.



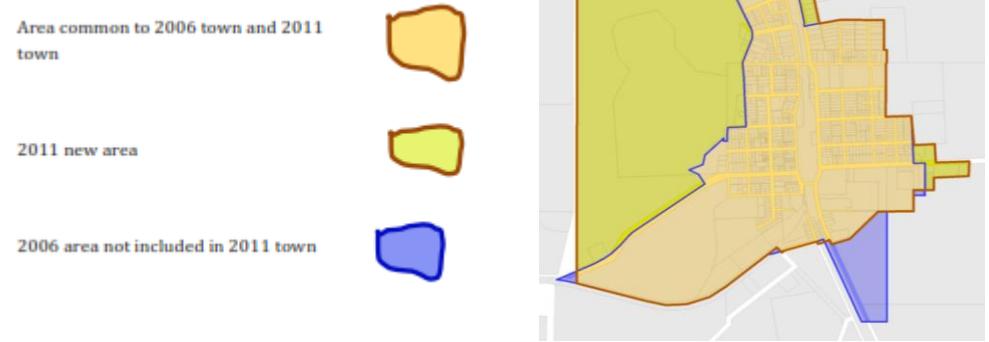
Figure 22: Number of Victorian grain-producing farms by area 1986 to 2001



Source: Barr 2005, p. 5



Significantly the population change recorded for the Ouyen township over the past 30 years reveals a trend of an increasingly ageing population within a declining population in real terms. For example in 1981 72 members of the Ouyen population (5%) were aged 75 yrs and over. By 2001 this had increased to 140 community members and 12% of the population and 158 community members and 15% of the population in 2011. By contrast the 18-24 year population and the 25-34 year population had decreased from 11% and 15% of the population (respectively) in 1981 to 7% and 9% of the population (respectively) in 2011 (for more detail see the table below).



Age structure	1981	1986	1991	1996	2001	2006	2011
	Number %	Number %	Number %	Number %	Number %	Number %	Number %
0-4	143 9%	115 8%	115 9%	96 8%	60 5%	53 5%	67 6%
5-17	382 25%	334 22%	253 19%	232 19%	211 18%	194 18%	161 14%
18-24	168 11%	145 10%	96 7%	72 6%	61 5%	59 6%	80 7%
25-34	229 15%	233 15%	188 14%	165 13%	110 9%	84 8%	101 9%
35-44	173 11%	201 13%	192 14%	181 15%	167 14%	129 12%	131 12%
45-54	152 10%	129 9%	134 10%	171 14%	175 15%	142 13%	159 14%
55-64	113 7%	138 9%	140 10%	107 9%	108 9%	143 13%	173 15%
65-74	95 6%	104 7%	107 8%	110 9%	125 11%	112 10%	100 9%
75+	72 5%	105 7%	112 8%	115 9%	140 12%	153 14%	158 14%
TOTAL	1,527 100%	1,503 100%	1,337 100%	1,248 100%	1,157 100%	1,068 100%	1,130 100%

Source: Ouyen Towns in Time 2011, Spatial Analysis & Research, A Branch of the Department of Transport, Planning & Local Infrastructure.

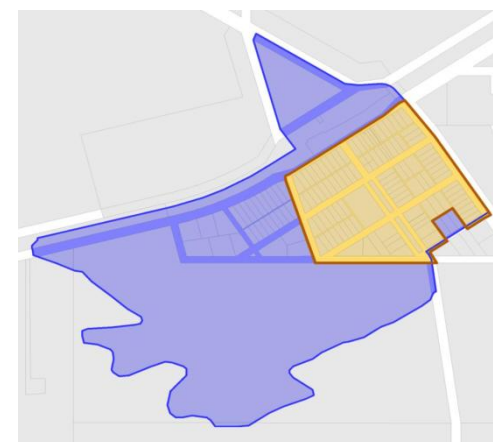


In the 2011 Census, there were 416 people in **Walpeup** (State Suburb) of these 53.8% were male and 46.2% were female. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people made up 1.4% of the population.

Walpeup State Suburb			
Median age of persons	45	Median mortgage repayment (\$/monthly)	867
Median total personal income (\$/weekly)	512	Median rent (\$/weekly)	100
Median total family income (\$/weekly)	1,116	Average number of persons per bedroom	1.1
Median total household income (\$/weekly)	987	Average household size	2.6

Summary data Walpeup TOWNSHIP	1981	1986	1991	1996	2001	2006	2011
Total population (enumerated)	133	126	126	112	117	103	76
Male: Female ratio*	129	107	100	100	95	129	
Visitors on Census night	6	0	3	3	9	6	
Population in non-private dwellings	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Occupied Private Dwellings							
Unoccupied private dwellings	6	7	7	9	7	11	
All private dwellings	50	50	53	51	53	57	55

In the 2006 Census the Walpeup (township) represented a larger geographical area (1.5 sq.km) than was the case in 2011 (0.37 sq.km) so accurate comparisons cannot be drawn between the 2006 and 2011 population figures in this research. However in the 25 years up to and including 2006 there was consistent population decline in the Walpeup township with the number of unoccupied private dwellings increasing to reflect this.





In the 2011 Census, there were 202 people in **Underbool** (State Suburb) of these 53.0% were male and 47.0% were female. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people made up 0.0% of the population. The Underbool State Suburb has experienced a decline in population since the 2006 Census when it recorded a population of 217 people (50% male, 50% female). There has been a complete loss ATSI population from Underbool with 1.4% of the population identifying as ATSI in 2006 to no community members identifying as ATSI in 2011. During this time the median age of the Underbool population increased from 42 years to 46 years.

Underbool State Suburb			
Median age of persons	46	Median mortgage repayment (\$/monthly)	450
Median total personal income (\$/weekly)	490	Median rent (\$/weekly)	375
Median total family income (\$/weekly)	1,078	Average number of persons per bedroom	1.1
Median total household income (\$/weekly)	933	Average household size	2.3

Summary data Underbool TOWNSHIP	1981	1986	1991	1996	2001	2006	2011
Total population (enumerated)	274	276	268	233	227	211	196
Male: Female ratio*	109	93	108	112	110	101	106
Visitors on Census night	17	8	3	8	3	6	4
Population in non-private dwellings	4	0	0	3	0	5	0
Occupied Private Dwellings	84	92	98	88	88	90	84
Unoccupied private dwellings	5	5	0	13	15	10	17

Data sourced from the Underbool Towns in Time 2011 resource shows a loss of almost 100 community members from the township of Underbool from 1981 – 2011, down from 274 to 196 people. Importantly during the Census collection times of 2006 and 2011 the Underbool town boundary increased in size from 0.73 sq.km to 1.72 sq.km (as shown in the map and key to the right) whilst population continued to decline.

Legend:

- 2006 Town boundary
- 2011 Town boundary
- Area common to 2006 town and 2011 town
- 2011 new area
- 2006 area not included in 2011 town





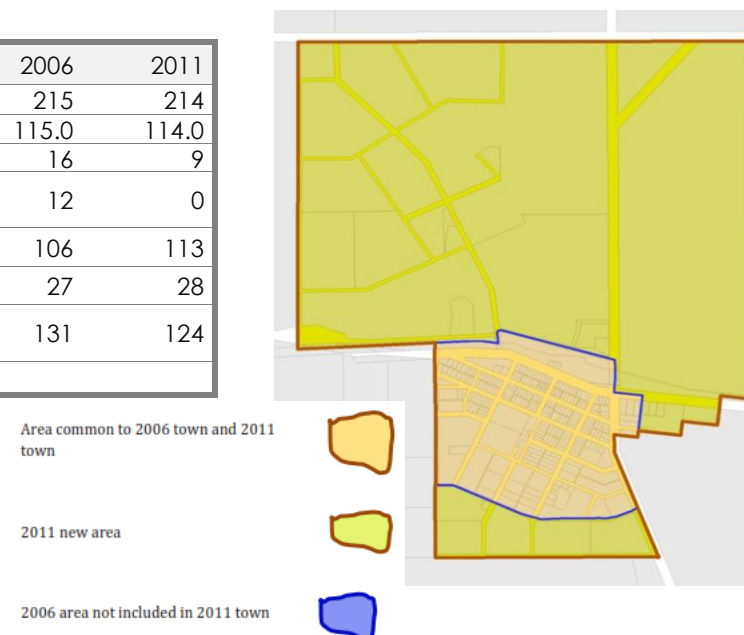
In the 2011 Census, there were 548 people in **Murrayville** (State Suburb) of these 52.7% were male and 47.3% were female. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people made up 0.5% of the population. The Murrayville State Suburb has experienced an increase in population since the 2006 Census when it recorded a population of 444 people (51% male, 49% female). The Indigenous population has increased from no members of the Murrayville community identifying as Indigenous or TSI in 2006 to 0.5% of Murrayville community members identifying as ATSI in 2011. The median age of the Murrayville population had increased from 47 years in 2006 to 48 years in 2011.

Murrayville			
Median age of persons	48	Median mortgage repayment (\$/monthly)	867
Median total personal income (\$/weekly)	484	Median rent (\$/weekly)	36
Median total family income (\$/weekly)	1,146	Average number of persons per bedroom	1.0
Median total household income (\$/weekly)	856	Average household size	2.1

Summary data	1981	1986	1991	1996	2001	2006	2011
Total population	313	296	304	236	233	215	214
Male: Female ratio*	112.9	107.0	98.7	101.7	99.1	115.0	114.0
Visitors on Census night*	33	9	15	11	6	16	9
Population in non-private dwellings*	21	13	4	7	3	12	0
Occupied private dwellings	101	111	113	108	108	106	113
Unoccupied private dwellings	9	9	14	18	19	27	28
Population living same address 5 years ago	166	183	183	153	157	131	124

*Includes local, interstate and overseas visitors.

Data sourced from the Murrayville Towns in Time 2011 resource shows a loss of almost 100 community members from the township of Murrayville from 1981 – 2011, down from 313 to 214 people. Importantly during the Census collection times of 2006 and 2011 the Underbool town boundary increased in size from 1.13 sq.km to 6.78 sq.km as shown in the map and key to the right.





AGE	Ouyen	Walpeup	Underbool	Murrayville	Mildura Part B	Mildura LGA	Victoria	Australia
Prop of residents aged 0 - 4	5.9% (64)	5.0% (21)	1.5% (3)	5.7% (31)	5.5%	6.6%	6.4%	6.6%
Prop of residents aged 5 - 9	5.5% (60)	7.2% (30)	5.5% (11)	4.2% (23)	6.0%	6.6%	6.1%	6.3%
Prop of residents aged 10 - 14	5.5% (60)	9.6% (40)	9.5% (19)	6.0% (33)	7.4%	7.7%	6.1%	6.4%
Prop of residents aged 15 - 19	5.8% (63)	8.2% (34)	5.0% (10)	4.4% (24)	6.2%	7.2%	6.5%	6.5%
Prop of residents aged 20 - 24	3.8% (41)	3.6% (15)	1.5% (3)	3.6% (20)	3.2%	5.6%	7.0%	6.8%
Prop of residents aged 25 - 29	3.6% (39)	2.2% (9)	1.5% (3)	4.7% (26)	3.6%	5.4%	7.3%	7.0%
Prop of residents aged 30 - 34	4.5% (49)	5.8% (24)	3.5% (7)	3.5% (19)	4.9%	5.5%	7.0%	6.8%
Prop of residents aged 35 - 39	4.9% (53)	5.0% (21)	10.0% (20)	2.9% (16)	5.2%	6.2%	7.2%	7.1%
Prop of residents aged 40 - 44	5.3% (57)	4.8% (20)	5.0% (10)	6.2% (34)	6.1%	6.9%	7.3%	7.2%
Prop of residents aged 45 - 49	7.8% (84)	7.5% (31)	9.0% (18)	8.8% (48)	7.6%	6.8%	7.0%	7.0%
Prop of residents aged 50 - 54	6.2% (67)	9.6% (40)	7.0% (14)	11.9% (65)	8.9%	7.2%	6.6%	6.7%
Prop of residents aged 55 - 59	8.1% (88)	7.0% (29)	10.0% (20)	9.5% (52)	8.7%	6.1%	5.9%	6.0%
Prop of residents aged 60 - 64	7.9% (85)	9.1% (38)	6.5% (13)	6.0% (33)	7.9%	6.0%	5.5%	5.6%
Prop of residents aged 65 - 69	5.7% (62)	7.0% (29)	4.5% (9)	5.7% (31)	5.6%	4.5%	4.2%	4.3%
Prop of residents aged 70 - 74	3.8% (41)	4.1% (17)	10.0% (20)	4.9% (27)	3.7%	3.8%	3.3%	3.3%
Prop of residents aged 75 - 79	5.7% (62)	1.7% (7)	6.5% (13)	4.0% (22)	3.5%	3.1%	2.6%	2.5%
Prop of residents aged 80 - 84	4.8% (52)	1.9% (8)	2.5% (5)	5.8% (32)	3.4%	2.5%	2.1%	2.0%
Prop of res aged 85 yrs & over	5.1% (55)	0.7% (3)	1.5% (3)	2.2% (12)	2.5%	2.2%	2.0%	1.9%
Median Age (years)	48	45	46	48	45	39	37	37

<http://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/censushome.nsf/home/quickstats>

Whilst each of the Mallee Track State Suburbs of Ouyen, Walpeup, Underbool and Murrayville display the largely universal trend of inland rural communities of a below state and national average proportion of 20-34 year olds and an above the state and national proportion of community members aged 55 years and over there are also some less usual population demographics. For example Walpeup has a higher 5-9, 10-14 and 15-19 year old population than not only any other community along the Mallee Track but also relative to the Mildura LGA and state and national proportions. Similarly Underbool has a higher proportion of 35-39

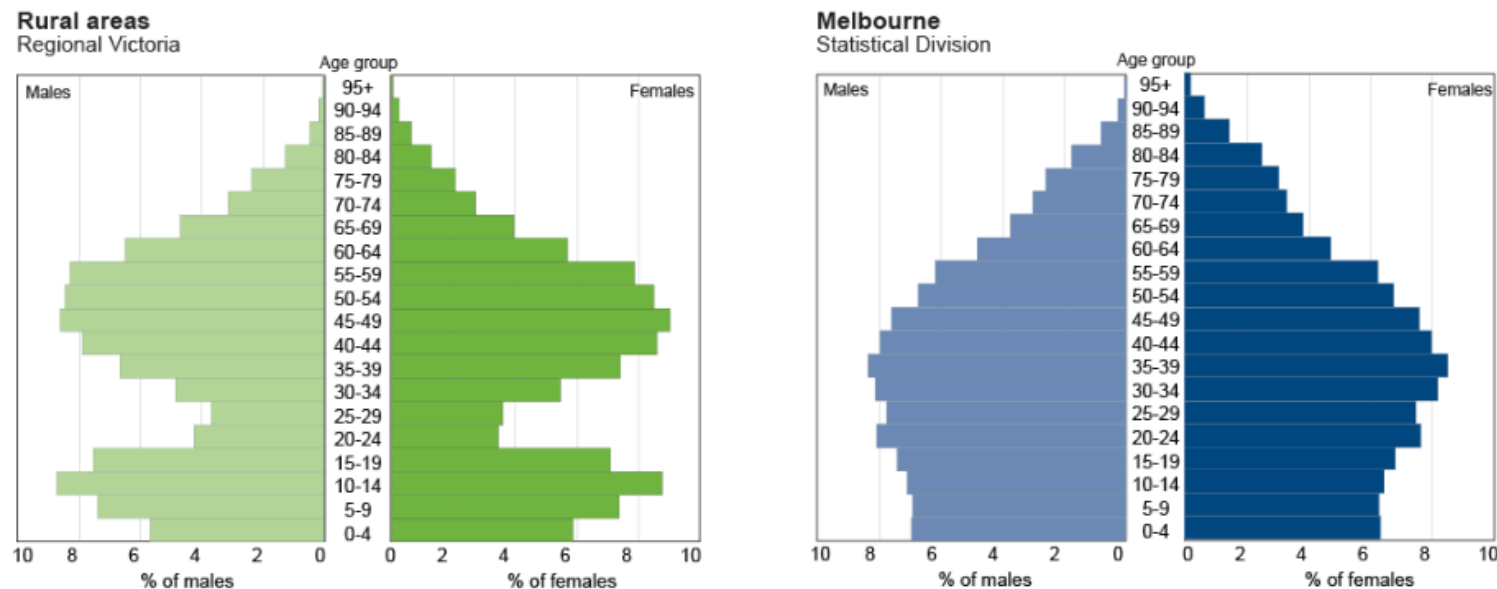


and 45-49 year olds and a lower proportion of residents aged 75 years and over than any other community along the Mallee Track and relative to the Mildura LGA and state and national populations.

The median age of each of the Mallee Track communities was above that witnessed at the LGA, state and national levels. For Ouyen and Murrayville it was 11 years above the state and national median – a reflection of aged care facilities in these communities drawing older residents from neighbouring communities such as Walpeup and Underbool. Volunteering Australia research reveals that people aged 45-54 years reported the highest rate of volunteering (<http://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/research-and-advocacy/the-latest-picture-of-volunteering-in-australia/>).

According to McKenzie and Frieden (2010) there are stark and enduring differences between age structures in rural areas and large urban areas (noting there is a continuum of change as town size increases as shown in figure 12 below). Rural areas in Victoria are characterised by large gaps in the young adult age groups with net outmigration a critical factor creating this pattern. Its implications for the future are important as these young adult groups represent a large reproductive potential which is lost to rural populations. In some area this is further exacerbated by the relatively low ratio of females to males in the population. While proportions of children seem relatively high, many of these are likely to move to larger centres in their teenage and early adult years.

Figure 12: Age structure by settlement size, Victoria 2006





People characteristics - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

	Ouyen	Walpeup	Underbool	Murrayville	Mildura Part B	Mildura LGA	Victoria	Australia
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	7	5	0	6	45	1,837	37,990	548,368
Male	7 (100%)	0	0	3 (50.0%)	24 (53.3%)	843 (45.9%)	49.2%	49.3%
Female	0	5 (100%)	0	3 (50.0%)	21 (46.7%)	994 (54.1%)	50.8%	50.7%
Median age	65yrs	16yrs	0yrs	53yrs	24yrs	18yrs	22yrs	21yrs

INDIGENOUS STATUS BY AGE	Ouyen	Walpeup	Underbool	Murrayville	Mildura Part B (44)	Mildura LGA (1,837)	Victoria (37,990)	Australia (548,371)
Prop of residents aged 0 - 4					11.4% (5)	15.6% (286)	12.3%	12.3%
Prop of residents aged 5 - 9					18.2% (8)	15.1% (277)	11.3%	11.8%
Prop of residents aged 10 - 14					9.1% (4)	12.3% (226)	11.6%	11.8%
Prop of residents aged 15 - 19					0	10.1% (185)	10.7%	10.8%
Prop of residents aged 20 - 24	Data	Data	Data	Data	13.6% (6)	9.3% (170)	8.8%	8.5%
Prop of residents aged 25 - 29	Not	Not	Not	Not	0	6.4% (117)	6.7%	7.0%
Prop of residents aged 30 - 34	Available	Available	Available	Available	6.8% (3)	5.3% (98)	5.9%	6.0%
Prop of residents aged 35 - 39					18.2% (8)	5.0% (92)	6.1%	6.2%
Prop of residents aged 40 - 44					6.8% (3)	6.1% (112)	6.3%	6.1%
Prop of residents aged 45 - 49					0	4.4% (81)	5.4%	5.3%
Prop of residents aged 50 - 54					9.1% (4)	3.8% (69)	4.4%	4.4%
Prop of residents aged 55 - 59					6.8% (3)	2.3% (42)	3.6%	3.4%
Prop of residents aged 60 - 64					0	2.3% (42)	2.8%	2.5%
Prop of residents aged 65 yrs & over					0	2.2% (40)	4.3%	3.8%

Developed from Indigenous Community Profiles, sourced

<http://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/censushome.nsf/home/communityprofiles?opendocument&navpos=230>

With the exception of Walpeup the Mallee Track exhibits a very high median age for the Indigenous population, this is a characteristic unusual to the rest of the Mildura LGA, for example the Statistical Area Level 2 of Red Cliffs has a median Indigenous age of 13 years.



People characteristics – Cultural & Linguistic Diversity

COUNTRY OF BIRTH	Ouyen Township	Walpeup	Underbool	Murrayville	Mildura Part B	Mildura LGA	Victoria	Australia
Country of Birth – Australia	89.0%	94.4%	95.0%	93.5%	89.3%	84.0%	68.6%	69.8%
Country of Birth – England	1.1% (12)	-	2.0% (4)	1.3% (7)	1.2% (41)	1.5%	3.2%	4.2%
Country of Birth – Italy	-	-	-	0.5% (3)	0.2% (6)	1.4%	1.4%	0.9%
Country of Birth – New Zealand	0.8% (9)	1.0% (4)	1.5% (3)	-	1.0% (34)	0.9%	1.5%	2.2%
Country of Birth – India	0.7% (8)	-	-	-	0.6% (21)	0.5%	2.1%	1.4%
Country of Birth – Nigeria	0.5% (5)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Country of Birth – Philippines	-	1.2% (5)	-	-	0.1% (3)	0.3%	0.7%	0.8%
Country of Birth – Canada	-	1.0% (4)	-	-	0.1% (3)	0.04%	0.1%	0.2%
Country of Birth – China (excludes SARs & Taiwan)	0.4% (4)	-	-	-	0.2% (7)	0.1%	1.8%	1.5%
Country of Birth – Ireland	-	-	1.5% (3)	-	0.2% (6)	0.1%	0.3%	0.3%
Country of Birth - Germany	-	-	-	0.5% (3)	0.2% (6)	0.3%	0.5%	0.5%
Country of Births - Netherlands	-	-	-	0.5% (3)	0.2% (6)	0.2%	0.4%	0.4%

<http://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/censushome.nsf/home/quickstats>

Whilst the Ouyen and Walpeup communities showed some cultural diversity the population was largely Australian born, 89.0% for Ouyen and 94.4% for Walpeup compared to a national rate of 69.8%.

In Underbool (State Suburbs) 95.0% of people were born in Australia. The only other responses for country of birth were England 2.0%, Ireland 1.5% and New Zealand 1.5%.

In Murrayville (State Suburbs) 93.5% of people were born in Australia. The only other responses for country of birth were England 1.3%, Germany 0.5%, Italy 0.5% and Netherlands 0.5%.



BIRTHPLACE OF PARENTS, STATED RESPONSES	Ouyen	Walpeup	Underbool	Murrayville	Mildura Part B	Mildura LGA	Victoria	Australia
Both parents born overseas	7.1%	4.9%	4.6%	5.5%	7.7%	15.8%	38.1%	34.3%
Father only born overseas	3.2%	2.4%	2.0%	3.2%	3.3%	5.1%	6.9%	7.0%
Mother only born overseas	2.7%	4.4%	2.0%	3.2%	3.1%	3.0%	4.6%	4.9%
Both parents born in Australia	87.0%	88.3%	91.4%	88.0%	86.0%	76.1%	50.4%	53.7%

<http://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/censushome.nsf/home/quickstats>

In the Ouyen community 87.0% of residents had both parents born in Australia compared to 88.3% for Walpeup and 53.7% at the national level. In Underbool (State Suburbs), 91.4% of people had both parents born in Australia and 4.6% of people had both parents born overseas. In Murrayville (State Suburbs), 88.0% of people had both parents born in Australia and 5.5% of people had both parents born overseas.

LANGUAGE SPOKEN AT HOME	Ouyen	Walpeup	Underbool	Murrayville	Mildura Part B	Mildura LGA	Victoria	Australia
English only spoken at home	93.0%	97.8%	98.5%	96.5%	93.7%	86.2%	72.4%	76.8%
Households where two or more languages are spoken	3.8%	3.8%	-	-	4.3%	11.1%	25.7%	20.4%
Italian	0.3% (3)	-	-	-	0.2% (6)	2.3%	2.3%	1.4%
Punjabi	0.6% (7)	-	-	-	0.4% (15)	0.2%	0.6%	0.3%
German	0.3% (3)	0.7% (3)	-	-	0.3% (11)	0.1%	0.4%	0.4%

<http://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/censushome.nsf/home/quickstats>

Reflecting rates for 'country of birth' and 'birthplace of parents' 93.0% of home in Ouyen and 97.8% of homes in Walpeup spoke 'English only' compared to 72.4% in Victoria and 76.8% nationally. In Underbool (State Suburb) 98.5% of people only spoke English at home and in the Murrayville (State Suburb) 96.5% of people only spoke English at home. There were no other responses for language spoken at home.



People characteristics – Marital Status

MARITAL STATUS (Population aged 15 years and over)	Ouyen	Walpeup	Underbool	Murrayville	Mildura Part B	Mildura LGA	Victoria	Australia
Married	52.9%	60.6%	59.5%	62.1%	57.6%	49.2%	49.1%	48.7%
Never married	25.9%	26.8%	25.0%	22.4%	25.6%	31.8%	34.7%	34.3%
Separated	2.7%	2.5%	4.2%	2.4%	2.8%	3.5%	2.9%	3.0%
Divorced	6.3%	4.6%	6.5%	5.6%	6.5%	8.7%	7.8%	8.4%
Widowed	12.2%	5.5%	4.8%	7.5%	7.5%	6.9%	5.6%	5.5%

<http://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/censushome.nsf/home/quickstats>

The communities of Ouyen, Walpeup, Underbool and Murrayville had higher rates of 'married' residents than the national average (48.7%), this was especially the case for Walpeup (60.6% and Murrayville 62.1%). Underbool displayed a higher rate of separation (4.2%) than the state and national averages (2.9% and 3.0% respectively) by contrast Ouyen, Walpeup and Murrayville were all under the State and national rates of separation.

Divorce rates in Walpeup were almost half the national average (4.6% compared to 8.4%). Demonstrating the older population and higher availability of aged care in the Ouyen community 12.2% of the Ouyen population was widowed, the highest of any of the Mallee Track communities, and more than twice the state and national rates. Drawing on these figures the proportion of the aged population living alone in Ouyen further emphasised the need for comprehensive and sustained aged care and HACC services.



People characteristics – Employment & Income

EMPLOYMENT*	Ouyen	Walpeup	Underbool	Murrayville	Mildura Part B	Mildura LGA	Victoria	Australia
Worked full-time	59.2%	61.0%	59.6%	61.2%	61.8%	57.5%	59.2%	59.7%
Worked part-time	27.7%	28.3%	28.7%	23.6%	25.8%	29.8%	29.6%	28.7%
Away from work	9.0%	9.0%	8.5%	12.4%	8.3%	6.2%	5.8%	5.9%
Unemployed	4.2%	1.8%	3.2%	2.8%	4.1%	6.6%	5.4%	5.6%
Total in labour force	480	223	94	322	1,755	22,982	2,675,476	10,658,460

* People who reported being in the labour force, aged 15 years and over

The Mallee Track as a whole demonstrated significantly lower rates of unemployment than was seen at the state and national levels at the time of the 2011 Census, Walpeup was especially low, recording only 1.8% of their population as unemployed. Whilst similar or slightly higher proportions of the Mallee Track population worked full-time, they were slightly less likely to work part-time than was the case at the state and national level. Research by Volunteering Australia found that employed people (whether full time [38%] or part time [44%]) had a higher volunteering rate than those who were unemployed or not in the labour force (<http://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/research-and-advocacy/the-latest-picture-of-volunteering-in-australia/>).

EMPLOYMENT – Hours Worked*	Ouyen	Walpeup	Underbool	Murrayville	Mildura Part B	Mildura LGA	Victoria	Australia
1-15 hours per week	11.0%	10.9%	13.0%	12.2%	9.8%	11.2%	11.4%	10.8%
16-24 hours per week	9.5%	10.9%	9.8%	7.7%	9.8%	9.4%	9.7%	9.4%
25-34 hours per week	7.9%	10.5%	4.3%	4.5%	7.4%	11.2%	10.1%	10.2%
35-39 hours per week	9.3%	5.5%	8.7%	5.1%	8.3%	17.6%	17.6%	18.0%
40 hours or more per week	53.3%	55.5%	56.5%	59.6%	56.0%	43.9%	44.9%	45.3%

* People who reported being in the labour force, aged 15 years and over

The most noticeable feature of the 'hours worked' by Mallee Track residents was that they were significantly longer. Between 53-60% of the working population worked more than 40 hours per week compared to only 44.9% of the Victorian population and 45.3% of the national population working these same hours. The longest hours were worked in Murrayville where 59.6% of the population more than 40 hours per week.



Median AGE by Employment Status*	Ouyen	Walpeup	Underbool	Murrayville	Mildura Part B	Mildura LGA	Victoria	Australia
Employed full-time	45yrs	49yrs	53yrs	50yrs	49yrs	43yrs	40yrs	40yrs
Employed part-time	51yrs	52yrs	44yrs	52yrs	47yrs	41yrs	40yrs	40yrs

* People who reported being in the labour force, aged 15 years and over

In addition to working longer hours the median age of employment was also consistently higher along the Mallee Track than was the case at the state and national levels. The full-time employed working age ranged from 45 years in Ouyen up to 53 years in Underbool compared to state and national averages of 40 years. The part-time employed working age ranged from 44 years in Underbool up to 52 years in Walpeup and Murrayville again compared to state and national averages of 40 years.

The older full-time and part-time workforce age coupled with consistently longer working hours indicates a population already potentially 'overcommitted' in paid employment before volunteer commitments are considered. The older working profile also suggests the 'pool' of retired but well and active community members ideally suited to volunteering is reduced.

OCCUPATION*	Ouyen	Walpeup	Underbool	Murrayville	Mildura Part B	Mildura LGA	Victoria	Australia
Managers	21.4%	52.3%	47.8%	61.0%	41.8%	15.5%	13.2%	12.9%
Labourers	14.1%	6.8%	12.0%	6.1%	14.3%	12.9%	9.0%	9.4%
Professionals	13.9%	12.6%	12.0%	6.8%	9.4%	15.4%	22.3%	21.3%
Technicians and Trades Workers	12.4%	5.0%	3.3%	4.8%	7.4%	13.9%	13.9%	14.2%
Machinery Operators And Drivers	11.3%	4.1%	8.7%	4.5%	7.4%	7.2%	6.1%	6.6%
Clerical and Administrative Workers	9.5%	4.1%	6.5%	6.8%	6.8%	11.8%	14.4%	14.7%
Community and Personal Service Workers	9.3%	7.2%	6.5%	5.2%	6.2%	9.9%	9.3%	9.7%
Sales Workers	7.5%	5.0%	-	2.9%	4.3%	11.2%	9.7%	9.4%

* Employed people aged 15 years and over. The significantly higher number of Managers would reflect farm owners.



INDUSTRY of Employment*	Ouyen	Walpeup	Underbool	Murrayville	Mildura Part B	Mildura LGA	Victoria	Australia
Sheep, Beef Cattle and Grain Farming	11.7%	53.8%	48.9%	53.2%	30.3%	-	0.9%	1.2%
Allied Health Services	8.8%	6.3%	-	-	4.2%	-	1.4%	1.3%
School Education	6.0%	5.4%	10.9%	6.5%	5.1%	6.0%	4.4%	4.6%
Local Government Administration	4.2%	-	-	-	-	-	1.4%	1.4%
Accommodation	3.5%	-	-	-	-	-	0.9%	1.2%
Other Social Assistance Services	-	3.2%	-	-	-	-	1.3%	1.3%
Professional and Scientific Equipment Manufacturing	-	1.8%	-	-	0.8%	-	0.2%	0.2%
Motor Vehicle Retailing	-	-	6.5%	-	-	-	0.5%	0.5%
Parks and Gardens Operations	-	-	5.4%	-	-	-	0.1%	0.1%
Agricultural Product Wholesaling	-	-	4.3%	-	-	-	0.2%	0.2%
Depository Financial Intermediation	-	-	-	3.2%	-	-	1.7%	1.5%
Mushroom and Vegetable Growing	-	-	-	2.9%	-	-	0.1%	0.2%
Warehousing and Storage Services	-	-	-	2.3%	-	-	0.3%	0.2%
Fruit and Tree Nut Growing	-	-	-	-	10.3%	6.2%	0.2%	0.2%
Supermarket and Grocery Stores	-	-	-	-	1.7%	3.4%	2.4%	2.3%
Cafes, Restaurants and Takeaway Food Services	-	-	-	-	-	4.1%	4.2%	4.1%
Hospitals	-	-	-	-	-	3.0%	3.9%	3.6%

* Employed people aged 15 years and over

Of the employed people in Ouyen (State Suburbs), 11.7% worked in Sheep, Beef Cattle and Grain Farming. Other major industries of employment included Allied Health Services 8.8%, School Education 6.0%, Local Government Administration 4.2% and Accommodation 3.5%.



Of the employed people in Walpeup (State Suburbs), 53.8% worked in Sheep, Beef Cattle and Grain Farming. Other major industries of employment included Allied Health Services 6.3%, School Education 5.4%, Other Social Assistance Services 3.2% and Professional and Scientific Equipment Manufacturing 1.8%.

Of the employed people in Underbool (State Suburbs), 48.9% worked in Sheep, Beef Cattle and Grain Farming. Other major industries of employment included School Education 10.9%, Motor Vehicle Retailing 6.5%, Parks and Gardens Operations 5.4% and Agricultural Product Wholesaling 4.3%.

Of the employed people in Murrayville (State Suburbs), 53.2% worked in Sheep, Beef Cattle and Grain Farming. Other major industries of employment included School Education 6.5%, Depository Financial Intermediation 3.2%, Mushroom and Vegetable Growing 2.9% and Warehousing and Storage Services 2.3%.

INCOME (people aged 15yrs and over)	Ouyen	Walpeup	Underbool	Murrayville	Mildura Part B	Mildura LGA	Victoria	Australia
Median Individual Income (\$/week)	\$445	\$512	\$490	\$484	\$483	\$463	\$561	\$577
Median Family Income (\$/week)	\$1,164	\$1,116	\$1,078	\$1,146	\$1,141	\$1,092	\$1,460	\$1,481
Median Household Income (\$/week)	\$795	\$987	\$933	\$856	\$884	\$878	\$1,216	\$1,234
Household income less than \$600 gross/wk	37.1%	22.0%	25.3%	35.1%	33.1%	33.3%	23.8%	23.7%
Household income more than \$3,000 gross/wk	4.0%	9.1%	9.3%	5.4%	4.7%	3.8%	10.4%	11.2%

<http://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/censushome.nsf/home/quickstats>

Whilst the Walpeup and Underbool State Suburbs showed an income profile similar to that seen at the state and national levels in terms of household incomes less than \$600 or more than \$3,000 per week this was not the case for Ouyen and Murrayville. In the Ouyen community 37.1% of the population had a 'household income of less than \$600 gross per week' and in Murrayville 35.1% of the population had a 'household income of less than \$600 gross per week' compared to only 23.7% nationally. Similarly in both Ouyen and Murrayville only 4.0% and 5.4% of the population had household income above \$3,000 per week compared to 11.2% nationally.

Across the individual and household median income ranges Ouyen incomes were lower than incomes witnessed at any other level, including amongst their Mallee Track State Suburb counterparts as well as at the LGA, state and national levels.



People characteristics – Unpaid work & Volunteering

2011 UNPAID WORK*	Ouyen	Walpeup	Underbool	Murrayville	Mildura Part B	Mildura LGA	Victoria	Australia
Did unpaid domestic work (last week)	67.1%	77.2%	71.3%	71.5%	70.0%	66.9%	69.3%	70.0%
Cared for child/children (last two weeks)	23.3%	29.0%	30.1%	26.4%	26.4%	28.1%	27.3%	27.8%
Provided unpaid assistance to a person with a disability (last two weeks)	13.9%	15.5%	12.5%	13.4%	12.8%	12.2%	11.3%	10.9%
Did voluntary work through an organisation or group (last 12 months)	37.2%	48.0%	47.9%	47.7%	36.8%	20.2%	17.7%	17.8%

2006 UNPAID WORK*	Ouyen	Walpeup	Underbool	Murrayville	Mildura Part B	Mildura LGA	Victoria	Australia
Did voluntary work through an organisation or group (last 12 months)	41.2%	44.2%	42.1%	49.1%	36.7%	20.2%	17.9%	17.9%

* People aged 15 years and over

Census data confirms broader research and anecdotal observations that the rate of volunteering is significantly higher in rural communities. Compared to an average of almost 18% of the state and national population who volunteer 'through an organisation or group' between 37% and 48% of the Mallee Track population volunteer. Research would further indicate that many of these volunteers give their time and effort to more than one group.

Comparison of volunteering rates between the 2006 and 2011 Census reveals some slight changes to volunteering rates between the communities with the rate of volunteering in both Ouyen and Murrayville decreasing whilst the same time period saw an increase in volunteering in Walpeup and Underbool. Local advice would indicate that the occurrence of Centenaries in Walpeup and Underbool in the last 5 years would explain this rise with both communities coordinating a series of additional 'events' over the course of the Centenary year.



Household & Family Composition

HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION - OCCUPIED PRIVATE DWELLINGS	Ouyen	Walpeup	Underbool	Murrayville	Mildura Part B	Mildura LGA	Victoria	Australia
Family household	63.0%	74.7%	77.1%	65.1%	67.0%	68.9%	71.2%	71.5%
Lone person household	35.3%	23.4%	22.9%	33.2%	31.0%	28.5%	24.5%	24.3%
Group household	1.7%	1.9%	0.0%	1.7%	2.0%	2.6%	4.2%	4.1%

<http://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/censushome.nsf/home/quickstats>

Ouyen and Murrayville demonstrated higher rates of 'lone households' (35.5% and 33.2% respectively) than was the case at the state (24.5%) and national (24.3%) levels. Each Mallee Track community had less than half the rate of 'group households' (a reflection of a relatively low young adult population) than witnessed at the state and national level. Walpeup and Underbool had higher levels of 'family households' (74.7% and 77.1% respectively) than all other recorded areas, for Ouyen and Murrayville there were lower numbers of family households than occurring at the state and national levels.

FAMILY COMPOSITION	Ouyen	Walpeup	Underbool	Murrayville	Mildura Part B	Mildura LGA	Victoria	Australia
Couple families without children	48.5%	40.5%	52.3%	59.4%	47.8%	40.1%	36.7%	37.8%
Couple families with children	39.6%	46.3%	38.5%	32.9%	41.2%	40.4%	46.0%	44.6%
One parent families	11.9%	10.7%	4.6%	7.7%	9.7%	18.2%	15.5%	15.9%
Other families	0.0%	2.5%	4.6%	0.0%	1.3%	1.2%	1.8%	1.7%

<http://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/censushome.nsf/home/quickstats>

All Mallee Track communities had higher numbers of 'couple families without children' than was the case at the state and national levels, a reflection of the ageing population where adult children have left home. This was especially the case for Murrayville. All Mallee Track communities also displayed lower and significantly lower (in Underbool's case) rates of 'one parent families' than evident at the state and national levels.



SINGLE (OR LONE) PARENTS	Ouyen	Walpeup	Underbool	Murrayville	Mildura Part B	Mildura LGA	Victoria	Australia
Male	28.6%	30.0%	0.0%	40.0%	30.6%	17.9%	17.2%	17.6%
Female	71.4%	70.0%	100.0%	60.0%	69.4%	82.1%	82.8%	82.4%

Where one parents families did occur they were characterised by significantly higher rates of being male led (in the case of Ouyen [28.6%], Walpeup [30%] and Murrayville [40%]) compared to the state (17.2%) and national (17.6%) levels.

FAMILY COMPOSITION INDIGENOUS STATUS OF HOUSEHOLD	Ouyen	Walpeup	Underbool	Murrayville	Mildura Part B	Mildura LGA	Victoria	Australia
Total family households					20	619	14,161	168,621
Couple families without children	Data	Data	Data	Data	40.0% (8)	13.6% (84)	20.9%	18.6%
Couple families with children	Not	Not	Not	Not	60.0% (12)	32.5% (201)	37.3%	38.6%
One parent families	Available	Available	Available	Available	0	46.8% (290)	35.4%	33.4%
Other families					0	2.6% (16)	2.4%	2.6%
Multiple family households					0	4.5% (28)	4.0%	6.9%

Developed from Indigenous Community Profiles, sourced

<http://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/censushome.nsf/home/communityprofiles?opendocument&navpos=230>



Dwelling Characteristics

DWELLING CHARACTERISTICS - OCCUPIED PRIVATE DWELLINGS	Ouyen	Walpeup	Underbool	Murrayville	Mildura Part B	Mildura LGA	Victoria	Australia
Median rent (\$/weekly)	\$110	\$100	\$375*	\$36	\$80	\$170	\$277	\$285
Households where rent payments are less than 30% of household income	94.2%	100.0%	96.2%	100.0%	96.8%	90.3%	90.9%	89.6%
Households where rent payments are 30%, or greater, of household income	5.8%	0.0%	3.8%	0.0%	3.2%	9.7%	9.1%	10.4%
Median housing loan repayment (\$/monthly)	\$780	\$867	\$450	\$867	\$828	\$1,268	\$1,700	\$1,800
Households where mortgage payments are less than 30% of household income	98.0%	96.5%	100.0%	100.0%	97.5%	92.9%	89.9%	90.1%
Households where mortgage payments are 30%, or greater, of household income	2.0%	3.5%	0.0%	0.0%	2.5%	7.1%	10.1%	9.9%
Average number of bedrooms per dwelling	3.0	3.3	3.2	3.2	3.1	3.0	3.0	3.1
Average number of people per household	2.2	2.6	2.3	2.1	2.3	2.5	2.6	2.6

<http://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/censushome.nsf/home/quickstats>

* Note Census data recorded the Murrayville median rent as \$375, this appears counter-intuitive and is refuted by locals.

Whilst income levels along the Mallee Track were below state and national levels, and considerably so for Ouyen so to were some measures of income stress such as rent: income and mortgage: income ratios.

No Walpeup or Murrayville households paid a rent 30% or more than household income and only 3.8% of Underbool households and 5.8% of Ouyen households paid rent which was '30% or greater than household income' compared to national levels of 10.4%. Similarly no Underbool or Murrayville households paid mortgages '30% or greater than household income' and only 2% of Ouyen households and 3.5% of Walpeup households paid mortgages '30% or greater than household income' compared to 9.9% nationally.



DWELLING CHARACTERISTICS – PRIVATE DWELLINGS (Includes Visitor only and other not classifiable households)	Ouyen	Walpeup	Underbool	Murrayville	Mildura Part B	Mildura LGA	Victoria	Australia
Total occupied private dwellings (and % of ALL private dwellings this represents)	423 (81.0%)	158 (73.5%)	81 (81.8%)	241 (75.5%)	1,356 (79.9%)	19,250 (89.3%)	1,944,690 (88.7%)	7,760,322 (89.3%)
Separate house (as % of occupied private dwellings)	95.7%	98.1%	100.0%	96.2%	93.6%	85.3%	76.9%	75.6%
Semi-detached, row or terrace house, townhouse etc	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	5.2%	9.6%	9.9%
Flat, unit or apartment	2.8%	0.0%	0.0%	1.3%	2.4%	7.7%	12.9%	13.6%
Other dwellings	1.4%	1.9%	0.0%	2.5%	3.8%	1.8%	0.6%	0.9%

<http://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/censushome.nsf/home/quickstats>

All Mallee Track communities exhibited lower home occupancy rates than seen at the state and national levels. Similarly Mallee Track residents are more likely to live in 'separate houses' (95% - 100%) than their national counterparts (75.6%). No Mallee Track residents live in 'semi-detached, row or terrace houses' and very few live in a 'flat, unit or apartment'. Nationally 23.5% of the population live in these two dwelling types combined.

TENURE TYPE – OCCUPIED PRIVATE DWELLINGS	Ouyen	Walpeup	Underbool	Murrayville	Mildura Part B	Mildura LGA	Victoria	Australia
Fully owned	52.7%	67.7%	75.0%	66.9%	52.4%	32.7%	34.2%	32.1%
Owned with a mortgage	20.8%	13.9%	11.9%	12.7%	18.7%	33.2%	35.9%	34.9%
Rented (includes rent-free)	22.7%	12.0%	6.0%	14.0%	24.0%	29.7%	26.5%	29.6%
Other tenure type	0.7%	1.9%	3.6%	2.1%	1.4%	0.8%	0.8%	0.9%
Not stated	3.1%	4.4%	3.6%	4.2%	3.5%	3.7%	2.7%	2.5%

<http://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/censushome.nsf/home/quickstats>

All Mallee Track communities have significantly higher rates of full home ownership (ranging from 52% at Ouyen to a high of 75% at Underbool) than at the national level (32.1%). Rates of home purchase and rentals are lower.



LANDLORD TYPE - OCCUPIED PRIVATE DWELLINGS BEING RENTED (including rent free accommodation)	Ouyen (97)	Walpeup (19)	Underbool	Murrayville	Mildura Part B (325)	Mildura LGA (5,708)	Victoria	Australia
Real estate agent	36.1%	15.8%	0.0%	0.0%	13.5%	51.5%	61.4%	54.3%
State or Territory housing authority	7.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	4.3%	14.7%	10.6%	13.7%
Person not in same household	27.8%	47.4%	100.0%	48.5%	33.8%	21.5%	20.9%	22.7%
Housing co-operative/community/church group	6.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.2%	2.6%	1.7%	2.2%
Other landlord type	16.5%	15.8%	0.0%	33.3%	32.9%	6.3%	3.2%	4.9%
Landlord type not stated	6.2%	21.0%	0.0%	18.2%	13.2%	3.3%	2.2%	2.2%

Developed from Basic Community Profiles, sourced

<http://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/censushome.nsf/home/communityprofiles?opendocument&navpos=230>

Lower than state (10.6%) and national (13.7%) rates of 'state or territory housing authority' dwellings exist in Ouyen (7.2%) and no 'state or territory housing authority' dwellings were available in the remaining Mallee Track communities. Higher rates of 'other landlord type' occur in Ouyen (16.5%), Walpeup (15.8%) and Murrayville (33.3%) than at the state and national levels and 'landlord type not stated' occur more frequently in Ouyen (6.2%), Walpeup (21.0%) and Murrayville (18.2%) than nationally (2.2%). Almost three times the national average (2.2%) of 'housing co-operative, community, church group, housing exists in Ouyen (6.2%). Almost half (47.4%) of homes rented in the Walpeup SS are rented from a 'person not in same household' and in Underbool 100% of rented properties are rented from a 'person not in same household' compared to 22.7% nationally.

NUMBER OF REGISTERED MOTOR VEHICLES (per household)	Ouyen	Walpeup	Underbool	Murrayville	Mildura Part B	Mildura LGA	Victoria	Australia
None	7.4%	3.8%	3.7%	1.3%	4.5%	8.3%	8.4%	8.6%
1 motor vehicle	37.3%	19.7%	23.5%	23.8%	28.1%	33.8%	34.7%	35.8%
2 motor vehicles	31.1%	24.8%	46.9%	32.2%	32.8%	36.3%	37.0%	36.1%
3 or more vehicles	20.9%	49.0%	25.9%	38.9%	30.9%	17.3%	16.8%	16.5%
Number of motor vehicles not stated	3.3%	2.5%	0.0%	3.8%	3.7%	4.4%	3.0%	3.0%

<http://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/censushome.nsf/home/quickstats>



Despite its geographical isolation 7.4% of households in the Ouyen State Suburb are without a registered motor vehicle. This would indicate a heavy reliance on friends, family and the MTHCS Community Driving Service by some members of the community for their basic health and well-being needs.

EDUCATION TYPE (OF THOSE PEOPLE ATTENDING AN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION)	Ouyen	Walpeup	Underbool	Murrayville	Mildura Part B	Mildura LGA	Victoria	Australia
Pre-school	7.8%	6.8%	11.9%	7.7%	6.8%	6.0%	5.6%	5.1%
Primary - Government	28.0%	31.4%	23.7%	33.1%	29.3%	20.8%	16.8%	18.2%
Primary - Catholic	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.6%	5.1%	5.8%	5.5%
Primary - Other Non Government	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.4%	2.3%	2.8%	3.3%
Secondary - Government	24.9%	31.4%	27.1%	23.8%	24.9%	19.3%	12.0%	11.9%
Secondary - Catholic	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.0%	4.3%	5.1%	4.7%
Secondary - Other Non Government	1.2%	6.8%	0.0%	2.3%	1.1%	1.4%	4.3%	3.9%
Technical or further education institution	6.6%	4.2%	0.0%	2.3%	4.7%	7.8%	7.3%	7.3%
University or tertiary institution	4.7%	2.5%	0.0%	3.8%	4.2%	5.2%	15.2%	14.3%
Other	0.0%	3.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.9%	2.1%	3.1%	2.5%
Not Stated	26.8%	13.6%	37.3%	26.9%	25.0%	25.9%	22.0%	23.2%
Total persons attending an educational institution	23.8% of the pop.	28.4% of the pop.	29.6%	23.6%	26.9% of the pop.	29.9% of the pop.	30.2% of the pop.	30.2% of the pop.

<http://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/censushome.nsf/home/quickstats>

The key observation regarding education institution attendance is the lower levels of adult education occurring along the Mallee Track, and particularly in Underbool, than is the case at state and national levels. Significantly at the time of the 2011 Census no Underbool community members were taking part in Technical or Tertiary education. The highest rates of adult education (along the Mallee Track) were occurring in Ouyen.



Disadvantage

Understanding Disadvantage

Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) provides summary measures derived from the Census to gauge different aspects of socio-economic conditions by geographic area. Within SEIFA the ABS has developed four indexes to allow ranking of regions and areas, providing a method of determining the level of social and economic well-being in each region. Each of these indexes summarises different aspects of the socio-economic conditions of people living in an area and each is based upon a different set of social and economic information from the Census. The indexes are:

- Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage (IRSD)
- Index of Relative Socio-Economic Advantage and Disadvantage (IRSAD)
- Index of Economic Resources (IER)
- Index of Education and Occupation (IEO).

The first of these, the IRSD, is one of the most commonly used SEIFA measures. The IRSD focuses primarily on disadvantage, and is derived from Census variables, including low income, low educational attainment, unemployment and dwellings without motor vehicles.

Care must be taken interpreting SEIFA and IRSD data. Each Victorian LGA is scored comparative to all other Victorian LGAs (a total of 79). A lower **score** indicates that an area is relatively disadvantaged compared to an area with a higher score (scores should only be used in distributive analysis, for example a Victorian LGA score cannot be compared to a NSW LGA score).

All areas are then ordered from the lowest to highest score and the area with the lowest score is given a **rank** of 1, the area with the second lowest score is given a rank of 2 and so on, up to the area with the highest score which is given the highest rank. Areas are then allocated to **deciles**. Again ordered from lowest to highest score, the lowest 10% of areas (i.e. the most disadvantaged) are given a decile number of 1 and so on, up to the highest 10% of areas which are given a decile number of 10. This means that areas are divided up into ten groups, depending on their score. Areas are also ordered into **percentiles** where the lowest 1% of areas (i.e. the most disadvantaged) is given a percentile number of 1 and so on, up to the highest 1% of areas which are given a percentile number of 100. This means that areas are divided up into one hundred groups, depending on their score (note some reports, such as the School Entrant Health Questionnaire [SEHQ]; use **quintiles** where the lowest fifth of scores are represented as quintile 1 and so on up to the highest fifth).



However LGA rankings do not accurately capture the variation of disadvantage at the community level. Of the State Suburbs in Victoria ranked from their IRSD score, within the Mildura LGA the Merbein State Suburb was the most disadvantaged (with a SEIFA score of 882 and a decile of 1) and the Cabarita State Suburb was the least disadvantaged (with a SEIFA score of 1073 and a decile of 9). To further delineate between disadvantage and advantage within State Suburbs the Australian Bureau of Statistics uses **minimum and maximum scores for the Statistical Areas (SA1s)** within a State Suburb. These scores indicate the range of scores for SA1s that make up each State Suburb, SLA and LGA. Where there is only one SA1 (with a SEIFA score) within the area indicated, the minimum and maximum will be equal.

In the tables presented below one final figure needs explanation, **% Usual Resident Population without a SA1 level score**, indicates the proportion of the area's population that were usual residents of an 'excluded' SA1 on Census Night. Areas with a high proportion of usual residents without a SA1 level score may have a SEIFA score that is not representative of its entire usual resident population (this is not the case for any Mildura LGA data presented in this report). Please all tables presented in the following section reflect the March 2013 release of 2011 Census SEIFA data.

However, the measurement of disadvantage is only one element of the complexity of disadvantage and, as Pope (2011) reveals in her recent report 'Change and disadvantage in the Loddon Mallee Region', "disadvantage is likely to look different in different localities". This is principally because different economic and demographic changes are occurring in different places in Loddon Mallee and, as a result, in some communities disadvantage will be characterised by an aging population, in others by a working population that is precariously employed and in others still by a diverse group of welfare recipients. Pope (2011) adds that all changing communities in Loddon Mallee, whether disadvantaged or not, will need to restructure their services to meet their changing needs.

'Change and disadvantage in the Loddon Mallee Region' focuses on the approximately 10% of the population that face multiple social and economic problems that impact significantly on their wellbeing. This population is defined as people 'experiencing a combination of material deprivation, economic precariousness, labour market disadvantage, poor health, inadequate housing and exclusion from social, educational and civic life'. Disadvantage of this kind has been shown to be geographically concentrated, for example, the report *Dropping off the Edge* (Vinson 2007) showed that particular localities in Australia have the highest levels of disadvantage in terms of low incomes, housing stress, detachment from the economy (fewer employed, lower involvement in education, early school leaving), poorer service access (limited computer and internet access) and increased social problems (physical and mental disabilities, long prison admissions, child maltreatment). Within his report Vinson (2007)



identified the Mallee Track communities as falling to varying degrees into the 'Disadvantaged' and 'Degree of Disadvantage' categories.

In keeping with Vinson's (2007) geographical differentiation of varying degrees of disadvantage research also confirms that not all population groups in Australia experience disadvantage equally. The Australian Government's comprehensive Compendium of Social Inclusion Indicators (2009) found the groups that experience higher levels of disadvantage in Australia across a range of indicators were:

- aged persons;
- public housing renters;
- Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders;
- single parent families; and
- people with non-English speaking backgrounds.

An Australian study of deprivation additionally found significant disadvantage in:

- the unemployed;
- private renters; and
- people with a disability (Saunders & Wong 2009).



Disadvantage in the Mildura LGA

Between the 2006 and 2011 Census periods considerable change has occurred to the levels of disadvantage within the Mildura LGA. Based on 2006 Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage (IRSD) figures the Mildura LGA was the 12th most disadvantaged LGA of 79 LGAs in Victoria with a **decile of 2** and a **percentile of 15**. By 2011 the Census data revealed a LGA with increasing levels of disadvantage. Recently released SEIFA data noted Mildura LGA as the fifth most disadvantaged LGA with a **decile of 1** and a **percentile of 5** based on the SEIFA measure of Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage. Applying the Index of Relative Socio-Economic Advantage and Disadvantage (IRSAD) the Mildura LGA would rank as the third most disadvantaged LGA in Victoria, falling in the highest 10% of disadvantaged LGAs (compared to ranking as the 17th most disadvantaged LGA for this measure, and sitting in the highest 30% of disadvantaged LGAs, in the 2006 SEIFA data). The relevant 2011 Census figures are underlined in the tables below.

Socio-economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA), Local Government Area 2011											
2011 Local Government Area Name (LGA)	Score	Ranking within Australia			Ranking within Victoria				Minimum score for SA1s in area	Maximum score for SA1s in area	% of usual resident pop. without an SA1 score
		Rank	Decile	Percentile	State	Rank	Decile	Percentile			
Index of Relative Socio-economic Advantage and Disadvantage (IRSAD)											
Mildura (RC)	924	117	3	21	Victoria	<u>3</u>	<u>1</u>	NA	569	1093	0%
Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage (IRSD)											
Mildura (RC)	935	124	3	22	Victoria	<u>5</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	624	1129	0%
Index of Economic Resources (IER)											
Mildura (RC)	941	101	2	18	Victoria	5	1	7	624	1129	0%
Index of Education and Occupation (IEO)											
Mildura (RC)	930	159	3	29	Victoria	6	1	8	716	1106	0%

<http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/2033.0.55.0012011?OpenDocument> (accessed 01/05/13)



According to 2006 Census data the **Mildura Part B (SLA)** had an Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage (IRSD) **score of 991**, a **rank 85** (was the 85th most disadvantaged SLA out of the 204 SLAs in Victoria), a **decile of 5** (was in the fifth highest decile of disadvantage) and a **percentile of 42** (was in the most 42% of disadvantaged SLAs). By 2011 Mildura Part B (SLA) had a slightly worsening Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage (IRSD), presenting a **score of 988**, a **rank 82** (was the 82nd most disadvantaged SLA out of the 204 SLAs in Victoria), a **decile of 4** (was in the fourth decile of disadvantage) and a **percentile of 40** (was in the most 40% of disadvantaged SLAs). Part B of the Mildura LGA encompasses the communities of Werrimull and Meringur to the West, Nangiloc to the South East and Ouyen and the Mallee Track communities to the South and South West.

The Mallee Track incorporates a number of State Suburbs, of these the rural townships of **Ouyen** and **Murrayville** are formed by one or more SA1s. It is as a result of this merging of State Suburbs (and SA1s) that disparity between the minimum and maximum SA1 IRSD scores exist. It is critical to recognise that within any area 'pockets' of disadvantage and advantage exist.

According to Census SEIFA figures across the Mallee Track the least disadvantaged communities were **Walpeup** and **Murrayville** (both of which sat in the 7th decile of disadvantage). By contrast the community of **Ouyen** experienced the highest levels of disadvantage and sat in the 2nd decile of disadvantage – the most disadvantaged 20% of State Suburbs in Victoria.

2011 State Suburb (Code)	Index of Relative Socio-economic Adv. & Disadv.		Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage		Index of Economic Resources		Index of Education and Occupation		Usual Resident Pop.	Min score for SA1s in area (IRSD only)	Max score for SA1s in area (IRSD only)	% of usual res. pop. without SA1 score (IRSD only)
	Score	Decile Aust (Vic)	Score	Decile Aust (Vic)	Score	Decile Aust (Vic)	Score	Decile Aust (Vic)				
Ouyen (21061)	942	3 (2)	961	3 (2)	956	3 (2)	935	3 (2)	1086	954	965	0%
Walpeup (21408)	1031	7 (7)	1036	7 (7)	1045	7 (7)	1059	9 (8)	415	1036	1036	0%
Underbool (21386)	979	5 (4)	991	5 (4)	1038	7 (6)	992	6 (5)	200	991	991	0%
Murrayville (20962)	1025	7 (7)	1042	7 (7)	1036	7 (6)	1044	8 (8)	555	981	1084	0%



In Summary

The Mallee Track communities of Ouyen, Walpeup, Underbool and Murrayville are small and rurally isolated communities characterised by declining and ageing populations and variable incomes and measures of disadvantage. Significantly the ABS Census reveals higher median ages and consequently higher median working ages for all Mallee Track communities, higher rates of full time employment and longer median weekly working hours than witnessed at state and national levels were also significance features of the Mallee Track.

Despite these characteristics the Census also recorded higher rates of volunteering along the Mallee Track. Compared to an average of almost 18% of the state and national population who volunteer 'through an organisation or group' between 37% and 48% of the Mallee Track population volunteer. Comparison of volunteering rates between the 2006 and 2011 Census reveals some slight changes to volunteering rates between the communities with the rate of volunteering in both Ouyen and Murrayville decreasing whilst the same time period saw an increase in volunteering in Walpeup and Underbool.

Whilst the Mallee Track communities did not show indicators of income stress, as calculated by percentage of income paid as rent, incomes in the Mallee Track communities of Ouyen and Murrayville were lower than state and national averages (the Walpeup and Underbool State Suburbs showed an income profile similar to that seen at the state and national levels). Significantly low local house and land values jeopardised the ability of the ageing and low incomes population to relocate to higher serviced communities due to the more expensive housing prices in these centres. Also, while the number of households without a registered vehicle is lower than state and national averages, the implications of not having a vehicle in a town with limited services has the potential to increase vulnerability.

In sum the demographic profile of the Mallee Track communities reveals a population particularly vulnerable to service loss due to the financial constraints of moving and significant distances to regional centres combined with a potentially over-committed volunteering population which is both declining and ageing.





Literature Review

A literature review of previous research relating to both general and emergency services volunteering in rural areas was undertaken to provide a deeper understanding of the issues experienced along the Mallee Track. The review specifically focussed on incentives and barriers to volunteering, where possible within a rural setting, and with an understanding of the changing patterns of volunteering in recent years. This provides a useful context within which to identify the key issues and themes critical to the project.

Volunteering – a definition

For the purposes of this project we have chosen to use the definition of volunteering adopted by the United Nations (2001) which suggests volunteering:

- Is not to be undertaken primarily for financial gain
- Is undertaken of one's own free will; and
- Brings benefit to a third party as well as to those who volunteer.

This is consistent with the definition used by the Australian Bureau of Statistics when undertaking their surveys of volunteer activity as well as in harmony with the international research conducted in the field of volunteering.

The (then) Victorian Department of Planning and Community Development (2012), applied the useful, further distinction between *organised (formal)* and *unorganised (informal)* volunteering developed by the Households Research Unit at the University of Melbourne in which:

- **Organised/Formal volunteering** is defined as unpaid assistance in the form of time, service or skills willingly given by an individual through an organisation or group. In this sense, the volunteering is indirect as it is mediated through that organisation or group and tends to be organised; and
- **Unorganised/Informal** volunteering is defined as the informal, unpaid help and care that occurs within the personal networks of family, friends, neighbours and acquaintances. In this sense, the volunteering is direct and includes regular, spontaneous and sporadic assistance.



This literature review focuses solely on organised (formal) volunteering as it is of most direct relevance to the maintenance of resilient services along the Mallee Track. This focus does not in any way intend to diminish the importance of informal volunteering in small rural communities.

Volunteering – the Value

There is broad recognition in Australia and internationally about the importance of volunteering for the strength and wellbeing of communities (Flick, Bittman and Doyle, 2002), and more recently of the economic contribution of volunteer labour. Research undertaken by the University of Melbourne, for example, demonstrated the economic value of volunteering to Victoria has grown by over 130% in 15 years (DPCD, 2012). This research calculated that people living in regional Victoria contributed approximately \$2 billion to their communities just through organised volunteering, equating to approximately \$1,890 per adult.

As this recognition of the value and importance of volunteering underpinned the impetus for the Resilient Services Project there is no need to reiterate it here. Of more relevance is the growing recognition that the reliance on volunteerism is likely to increase in the context of the ageing population, declining numbers in rural towns and the rationalisation and centralisation of publicly provided services (Orpin, 2009). This emphasises the need to comprehend the changing patterns of volunteerism, as well as understand the motivations and barriers to volunteering, in order to explore ways of bolstering and sustaining volunteering in rural towns.

Volunteering – Changing Patterns

The Australian House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family, Community, Housing and Youth (2008) detailed a number of significant changes in the pattern of volunteering as identified through the ABS Voluntary Work Survey. Whilst the overall number of people volunteering increased, a noticeable decline was observed in the number of regular, high time commitment volunteer involvements. In essence, those people who were volunteering were contributing significantly less hours, with the number of volunteers contributing less than 20 hours per year increasing from 28% in 2000 to 36% in 2006⁸.

Representations to the Standing Committee provided anecdotal confirmation of the ABS data, with volunteer reliant organisations reporting an increased difficulty sustaining ongoing engagement of volunteers, with younger recruits particularly staying for only a short time and older recruits having restricted availability due to other commitments.

⁸ Comparison with the ABS 2010 Voluntary Work Survey is not possible, as unlike earlier surveys it did not collect information on the hours of organised voluntary work.





In the development of its National Volunteering Strategy, the (then) Australian Government sought feedback from the volunteering community (FaHCSIA, 2010) and identified a number of emerging trends regarding the increasingly diverse range of ways people are preferring to volunteer. Community submissions highlighted people want to volunteer with a range of organisations, and participate in more episodic and project based volunteering as opposed to regular volunteering requiring an ongoing commitment. There was an increasing expectation to be able to combine travel or work with volunteering, which was consistent with the notable increase in corporate volunteering opportunities. The opportunity to contribute via online volunteering is currently less realisable along the Mallee Track, and was identified as a potential area of growth. In light of these trends, the Government's Consultation Report, and subsequent Strategy referenced later, forecast the need for volunteer reliant organisations to develop suitably flexible opportunities for participation as well as continuing to cater for the more traditional forms of volunteer activity.

Consistent with the increase in attractiveness of short term and once off volunteering is an emerging international trend known as *micro-volunteering* – a concept whereby volunteers can be involved in simple, quick and no/low commitment online actions that benefit a not-for-profit cause or organisation. Mike Bright, founder of one of the primary micro-volunteering sites in Europe, suggests Australia is much slower to take up this emerging activity than the rest of the world but suggests this will change as it is one of the fastest growing trends in the international volunteering arena (Bright, 2012). As such a relatively new concept research on the topic is still scant, however a recently published paper suggests micro-volunteering provides opportunities for participation in four broad areas: campaigning and communicating; fundraising; research and data; and practical help (Browne, Jochum and Paylor, 2013). They suggest micro-volunteering opportunities can be undertaken both online and offline, and that the range of opportunities can reflect the diversity of volunteering as a whole.

They suggest there are eight characteristics of micro-volunteering that, taken together, distinguish it from more traditional forms of volunteering:

1. Duration - it involves small increments of time

For some, micro-volunteering seemed restricted to very small, almost tiny actions that could be completed in minutes or even seconds. However, in most cases people included examples that required longer, perhaps a couple of hours or half a day, but rarely more than a full day.

2. Access – it is easy to get started and do

An individual should be able to identify the micro-volunteering opportunity and start without having to go through a complicated recruitment process or initial training.

3. Immediacy – it is quick to start and complete, and requires minimal planning

Because micro-volunteering is accessible, if an individual wants to micro-volunteer they can begin straight away or almost





immediately.

4. Convenience – individuals decide when and where

With micro-volunteering the volunteer has control over their participation. An individual can choose the action that suits them best and decide when it is most convenient for them to do it. In some cases this might mean micro-volunteering while commuting to work, or from home.

5. Level of formality – no formal agreement between the organisation and the volunteer is needed

Micro-volunteering generally does not require a formal agreement between the organisation and the volunteer specifying the role and time commitment expected of the volunteer.

6. Frequency – it can be a one-off or repeated

There is no commitment on behalf of the volunteer to complete the action more than once, so their involvement can be just a one-off. However, that is not necessarily the case and some micro-volunteering opportunities can be repeated. If it is repeated it does not need to be at regular intervals, so people are able to 'dip in and out'.

7. Activity – it involves discrete actions

Micro-volunteering generally involves very specific and well-defined actions that have a beginning and an end. The focus is on individual tasks rather than roles.

8. Location – it can be online or offline

Micro-volunteering involves actions that can be completed online or offline, onsite or offsite. Very short actions are more likely to be online.

Browne, et al, researched a number of organisations that were actively using micro-volunteering to test four key claims made about the practice.

1. It provides convenient and flexible opportunities that fit into people's lives
2. It engages with a wide range of people
3. It involves a large number of people
4. It provides a gateway to more sustained and long-term volunteering (p 8).

The first three claims were definitely substantiated, as long as groups were able to address the range of unique challenges presented by micro-volunteering. They did not, however, find that micro-volunteering in and of itself encouraged progression to more long term volunteering. Instead, they noted that it encouraged retention of existing volunteers who may otherwise have left volunteering due to decreased mobility or ability. Their findings are presented in the following table (Browne, et al. 2013, 62-63):



Claim	Evidence
1. <i>Micro-volunteering provides convenient and flexible opportunities that fit into people's lives</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a huge diversity of micro-volunteering opportunities available from which people choose to complete according to when, where and how they want to participate. • People easily start micro-volunteering and dip in and out according to their availability. • Micro-volunteering opportunities which are done remotely and online are found to be particularly flexible and convenient.
2. <i>Micro-volunteering can engage with a wide range of people</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Micro-volunteering can appeal to people who think „traditional“ volunteering is not for them because they consider themselves too busy or unable to make an open-ended commitment to an organisation. • Online micro-volunteering opportunities tend to be attractive to younger people. • Micro-volunteering opportunities can be particularly appropriate for people with a disability or an illness, who are housebound or who cannot commit to a long-term, regular activity or carry out time-intensive tasks.
3. <i>Micro-volunteering can involve a large number of people</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Micro-volunteering draws in people who might not otherwise volunteer (see claims 1 and 2) but also helps retain existing volunteers (see claim 4). • Micro-volunteering opportunities that are based online and are promoted through social media can involve large numbers in a relatively short space of time, if people think they are easy to complete and meaningful.
4. <i>Micro-volunteering can provide a gateway to more sustained and long-term volunteering</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We found no conclusive evidence to back the idea that people would start their volunteering journey by micro-volunteering then go on to regular, long-term volunteering. • However, there were plenty of examples to show that micro-volunteering allowed existing volunteers, who could no longer be as active as they had been, to stay involved.



The researchers stressed the importance of overcoming the challenges associated with micro-volunteering in order to maximise its success. The informality and increased flexibility inherent in micro-volunteering mean that particular attention must be paid to the tasks designated as suitable: they need to be once off rather than regular, discretionary regarding when they are done, require minimal or no training or supervision and someone with the passion and interest to pursue establishing micro-volunteering as a legitimate practice within the group or organisation.

Research into the applicability of micro-volunteering to rural Australia, particularly in those areas such as the Mallee Track where more traditional models of volunteering are deep-rooted and internet connection is less reliable, is yet to be undertaken.

Volunteering – Motivations

Significant research has been undertaken on what motivates people to volunteer, revealing a wide range of reasons encompassing altruistic, self-serving and peer influenced motives. Dolnicar and Randle (2007) suggest altruistic motivations are the traditional reasons for given for volunteering as these are considered socially acceptable. Certainly the opportunity to contribute to local community, help others and do something worthwhile can be strong motivating factors. Importantly, the researchers also stress that other motivating factors can and will be at play, including the need for some level of personal satisfaction. This may take the form of social connection with others, opportunity for work experience, career networking opportunities or feelings of local significance. Other, more self-serving motivations can include volunteering because of someone they know in the organisation, such as their child (eg kindergarten committee involvement). Peer influenced motives can be particularly strong in rural areas, where participation in local service clubs, the emergency sector or local sporting committees is considered part of the community culture.

"Positive interpersonal relationships with supervisors, recognition, and group cohesion all appear to contribute to greater satisfaction and intention to remain committed to the agency in the longer term. As these are among the few benefits that emergency service volunteers receive, agencies should seek to maximise their impact and presence in the interest of retaining a qualified and experienced volunteer workforce"

(Rice and Fallon, 2011, p22)

Dolnicar and Randle go on to suggest the range of individual motivations can provide volunteer based organisations with the ability to tailor their recruitment messages directly to the potential volunteer's underpinning motivation. Time-poor volunteer groups who construct a "one size fits all" approach to advertising, approaching or encouraging volunteerism, often overlook such tailoring of recruitment approaches. A potential volunteer seeking opportunities for personal work experience, for example, will



have different hopes and expectations than one exploring volunteer opportunities as a way of giving back to their local community.

In the emergency services sector, research suggests that concern for community safety and opportunity for skill development are strong motivators for volunteering (altruism and self serving categories respectively) with the development of personal relationships and social networks as important subsequent benefits valued by volunteers (McLennan and Birch, 2008). In 2011 Rice and Fallon interviewed 2,036 emergency service personnel to ascertain their motivation for joining and their reasons for staying. In this study, retention was again positively linked to interpersonal factors and opportunities for social/community connection:

To ensure volunteers are not only recruited but also retained over time, engagement processes must take into account changing motivations and ensure associated intrinsic rewards continue to outweigh any actual or perceived costs involved.

Volunteering – Barriers

Valuable research is now emerging regarding those who *do not* volunteer, with a particular emphasis on the barriers experienced by potential volunteer populations. This has particular saliency in rural areas.

Time

Research across the board highlights a *lack of available time* as the most consistently reported impediment to volunteering (FaHCSIA, 2010; Henderson, 2012; Points of Light Foundation, 2005). A valuable study of rural wheat-belt towns by Volunteering Western Australia (Paull, 2009) identified that groups tended to want volunteers able to give regular commitments to weekly or monthly meetings/training. This was a significant barrier for a number of people, including those with seasonal cropping commitments, small businesses and families with “fly in fly out” members. Respondents also expressed concern about the inflexibility of rostering, allocation duties and training requirements, stating they made little if any allowance for other commitments. This same research identified that outlying people may have previously been willing to drive into town multiple times for local commitments, but increasing time pressure and cost of petrol had reduced this capacity.

Information

A lack of awareness of volunteering opportunities is also a consistent response in the research literature relating to potential volunteering communities (FaHCSIA, 2010, Paull, 2009). An availability of sufficiently

“Many newcomers found it difficult to know where to go and what to do. In some places a newsletter or local paper contained advertising and information but often this was vague or too general to allow the newcomer to know what sort of commitment might be needed.”
(Paull, 2009, p 11)





detailed knowledge that could promote informed decision making is notably lacking according to many potential volunteers. This suggests that whilst opportunities themselves may be widely known through general “volunteers wanted” notices or comments, these do not provide the information needed about times, skills and other expectations of involvement.

New arrivals to communities, in particular, advised they found it difficult to find out about opportunities without committing themselves to a particular group or role before they were ready. This was accompanied by worry they would end up taking on more work than they really wanted if they indicated interest (Paull, 2009).

Social Anxiety and Community Cliques

Researchers in the United States have identified that “social anxiety” is a significant and often overlooked barrier to volunteering, and suggest that the majority of people considering joining a new group or activity will experience some level of initial anxiety. Handy and Cnaan (2007) suggest organisations seeking to recruit should create a personal environment in which potentially anxious recruits will feel safe and accepted. They propose that by removing the fear of negative judgement from strangers, new recruits may be more likely to become long-term and consistent volunteers.



Importantly, Handy and Cnaan suggest this goes much further than the initial contact, however personally tailored. Citing the Sydney Olympic Games, they note the Olympic Committee found 20 000 of their 76 655 volunteer recruits withdrew after their initial day of reporting. The importance of continuing to allay social anxiety fears through regular personal contact and encouragement was highlighted.

Paull's interviews with newcomers in the West Australian wheat-belt communities revealed interesting and quite sensitive results (2009). Whilst respondents indicated they would find it easier to volunteer if someone from the group or organisation went with them, they also stated that knowing there were other newcomers there would make an even bigger difference. They suggest that newcomers facing the prospect of entering what is perceived to be a closed group can experience a high level of social anxiety.

The perception of closed groups or cliques as a barrier provoking both social anxiety and frustration was quite prevalent in Paull's research (2009) and is supported internationally by the Points of Light Foundation (Shrestha and Cihlar 2004). Newcomers reported noticing that the same people seemed to be present in many local community meetings, that they dominated discussion and



automatically had their ideas valued and actioned. They went on to describe feelings of initial intimidation by these “cliques”, which could later translate to more negative feelings of frustration and exclusion when their new ideas went unheard. Paull suggested one respondent captured the experience of many in her statement: *“they want your labour but not your ideas”* (p 12). In this same report, it was revealed that longer term residents in the local community held a parallel view that newcomers were unwilling to involve themselves in local volunteer work.

Research into engaging community members from lower socio-economic backgrounds in rural towns in America also highlighted the barrier presented by the combination of social anxiety, preconceived ideas and existing community ‘cliques’. Strestha and Cihlar (2004) describe a twofold effect whereby the community held negative perceptions of people on low-incomes, seeing them as poor candidates for volunteering, while at the same time low-income people were inhibited from volunteering by fear of ridicule and worry they had nothing to offer. Whilst some people on lower incomes were considered the “working poor” in America, some were also under-employed, able to secure only part time jobs, or unemployed. This suggests that while they may be financially poor, they are time rich; presenting opportunities to tap into such a resource for volunteering.

Retiring Populations

The impact of volunteering age as a potential barrier has also been extensively investigated. Our ageing population has the potential to increase demands on volunteer health, welfare and community services. The cohort now moving into frailer older age also comes from a population profile generally brought up with the value of volunteering: as their health and capacity diminishes this is also reducing the number of traditional volunteers available. Conversely, the increasing number of retired or semi-retired community members, and people generally active in their retiring years, suggests there is a rising number of people with the valuable resources of both time and experience that could be tapped for volunteering. In Australia, Warburton, Paynter and Petriwskyi (2007) explored the barriers to volunteering in the over-50’s population. Major barriers included negative preconceptions about volunteer work, anxiety about experiencing ageism and concerns (and/or disillusionment) with the increasing bureaucracy and regulations relating to volunteerism. The researchers identified that these barriers are usually unintentionally constructed, and can be put up by both volunteering organisations and the potential volunteers themselves.

An increasing number of retirees are making themselves absent from their home community for a substantial part of the year while they take the opportunity to travel. Commonly referred to as “grey nomads”, they are over 50 years of age, and move around Australia by caravan, motorhome, campervan or converted bus for at least three months, but often for several years. They are not part of any commercial tourist event. While it is difficult to establish accurate numbers, the Bureau of Tourism Research estimates that in a single year Australian retirees undertake approximately 200,000 caravan trips of more than six weeks duration.





Research into recognising, capturing and utilising the 'grey nomad' workforce has grown over the past five years, with a critical joint research piece by University of Western Sydney, University of Technology Sydney and Volunteering Australia, *Grey Nomad Volunteers: New partnerships between grey nomads and rural towns in Australia*, released in 2010. This seminal document builds on earlier research by Onyx and Leonard (2005) which undertook an ethnographic study of Grey Nomads in outback Australia. This earlier research provided rich background data on the demographics, motivations, finances, health, social networks and future plans of Grey Nomads and led the researchers to conclude that the appropriate engagement of Grey Nomads through planned volunteer programs could make significant contributions to rural communities.



The ensuing research, *Grey Nomad Volunteers*, found that collectively the large population of Grey Nomads form a potentially substantial resource of economic, human and social capital to the rural communities through which they pass. In essence to capture this resource towns should look to provide low cost camp sites and aim to engage Grey Nomads in activities suited to their diverse skills and fitness levels, which will in turn enable them to access local knowledge and experience.

The research revealed that Grey Nomads would try to experience all that an area had to offer before moving on, extending their stay if there were activities of interest (the most frequently mentioned of which included: local history, life style, industries, environment and natural features). Grey Nomads also highly valued the information provided by locals and enjoyed community events, such as fairs and barbecue fund-raisers. An important factor was also the Grey Nomads' desire for freedom with most disliking 'organised resorts'.

The *Grey Nomad Volunteers* research involved several research 'stages' occurring over a period of two years. The first stage (which built on the Grey Nomads Ethnography work of Onyx and Leonard, 2005) involved a survey of Grey Nomads in relation to their attitudes and motivations towards volunteer work in rural towns. The second stage involved 'testing' the survey results in six rural towns. Effectively through the case studies the researchers worked with the local government and members of these communities to design and implement Grey Nomad volunteer projects. The third stage of the research involved the researchers re-visiting the case study communities after 12 months to review and evaluate these projects.

Significantly, for the Mallee Track research, the case study communities exhibited largely similar characteristics to those communities along the Mallee Track. The six towns were all small towns with populations ranging from 700-4000, located on or near popular tourist routes and one to two hundred kilometres from a major rural centre. In five cases the population had declined



markedly in the last 20 years but, at the time of the research, was considered stable. These five towns were heavily reliant on the primary industries of cattle and grain crops and, at the time of study, were facing difficulties from drought and downturns in world commodity prices. The sixth town was a mining community.

The first stage of the Onyx et al (2010) research, the survey of Grey Nomads, covered three topics: Grey Nomads' interests, the practicalities of volunteering and Grey Nomad demographics.

1. 'Interests and Motivations' included the Grey Nomads' general interests (noted to be landmarks, environment, meeting the locals, shopping, festivals, industries or sport), their motivations for volunteering (meeting the locals, using their skills, helping the towns, learning something new) and their reactions to specific types of volunteer projects.
2. 'Practicalities of Volunteering' involved issues such as the intensity of commitment required (all day or a few hours per day), costs (reimbursement of out of pocket expenses), and the best methods to learn about volunteer opportunities.
3. 'Demographics', covered basic demographic data such as gender, age, education, rural/ urban residence, ethnicity, health and volunteering experience. Costs could also be considered a demographic as it gives an indication of disposable income.

Most pertinent to the Mallee Track research were the following findings regarding 'Interests and Motivations':

Grey Nomads' Travel Interests (Percentage Interested or Very Interested)

1. Talk to local people 84%
2. Visit historical landmarks 75%
3. Shop for local crafts or produce 68%
4. Attend a festival (e.g. music or produce) 64%
5. Learn about the local environment 63%
6. Learn about local industries 62%
7. Attend a local sporting event 26%

Grey Nomads' Motivations for Volunteering (Percentage for whom the motivation was important or very important)

1. Getting to know some of the locals 77%
2. Learning something new 72%
3. Using your skills 69%
4. Helping the local town and its surrounds 67%



Interest in Type of Voluntary Project (Percentage Interested or Very Interested)

1. Assist an historical preservation project 49%
2. Talk to primary school children about life where you come from 49%
3. Assist local Aboriginal community project 45%
4. Teach a short course in their area of expertise (e.g. computing) 42%
5. Assist a local land-care project 40%
6. Assist an historical society/family history project 39%
7. Develop a local recreation area 39%
8. Help set up a cultural event 36%
9. Renovate a community building 35%
10. Fund raise for a local project 32%

Most pertinent to the Mallee Track research were the following findings regarding 'Practicalities of Volunteering':

Respondents were asked if they would prefer more extended or intensive time commitments. The response varied: while 53% would prefer working a few hours over an extended period (e.g. Working 2 hours a day over two weeks), about a third (34%) would prefer working a lot of hours over a shorter period (e.g. Working 7 hours a day over three days) and 13% showed no particular preference. This suggests that programs will be more attractive if there is some flexibility.

Respondents were asked how important it is for out-of-pocket expenses to be covered. For most, minor costs were not a problem. However for 30% of the sample, it was considered essential that any volunteering be cost free, as they could not carry additional costs. This distribution is a fair reflection of the limited disposable incomes of Grey Nomads found in previous research (Onyx & Leonard, 2005a). Clearly, a town has an advantage if their project has at least some volunteering opportunities with no cost to the volunteers.

Respondents were also asked what is the best way to contact them (multiple responses were allowed). Most commonly cited was a local information centre (59%), followed by word of mouth (49%) and signs placed at local camping grounds (44%). Other less used sources of information were local newspapers (33%) and volunteering web-sites (26%).

Most pertinent to the Mallee Track research were the following findings regarding 'Demographics of Volunteers Undertaking Survey':



Interest in volunteering was associated with Grey Nomads aged in their 50s, with higher levels of education, at least some experience of volunteering, a lack of concern with costs being covered, and good or excellent health. It was those with some volunteering experience (rather than a fair amount or a great deal) who had the highest levels of interest in volunteering. In particular, higher levels of education were strongly related to feeling positive about 'Talking to local children', 'Teaching a short course' and 'Aboriginal projects'. Those who had volunteered as a Grey Nomad previously were more likely to want to meet the townspeople.

There were no demographic differences in use of local information centre or signs placed at local camping grounds as information sources. There were, however, demographic differences in the other forms of contact with Grey Nomads. Word of mouth was favoured by those aged in their 50s rather than their 60s and not favoured by those from metropolitan areas. The local newspaper was favoured by respondents from rural areas and country towns and those with lower levels of education. A volunteering web-site was favoured by those with a completed secondary or university education but not favoured by those aged over 70 years. These results once again demonstrate the need for a diversity of approaches.

Whilst the research purposefully identified projects for volunteer activity rather than ongoing service provision, the potential for using grey nomads in such a context has potential (as casual Meals on Wheels providers for example).

During **Stage 2 of the research** the researchers worked in partnership with Volunteering Australia to support each case study town develop a Grey Nomad volunteer program. The table (right) offers a contextual summation of the six case study communities. Ultimately the project was successful in

Table: Contextual Differences among the Towns

Attributes	Winton	Barcaldine	Bingara	Kimba	Barmedman	Roxby Downs
Location	Western QLD	Central QLD	Tablelands, NSW	Eyre Peninsula SA	Central NSW	Central SA
Economic base	Cattle, tourism	Cattle, tourism	Grazing	Grain crops	Grain, grazing, metal recycling	Mining
Tourist focus	Commercial, good services, information centre	Commercial, good services, information centre	Natural attractions, Basic services, information centre	Natural attractions, Poor services	History, ambiance but few services	Information Centre, attractions, no accommodation
Local government	Inconsistent	Supportive	Pro-active	Supportive	Supportive but based elsewhere	Controlled by SA gov't
Coordination across town	Factionalised	Only through council	Council based	Some good examples	divisions	Gov't officials not effective
External resources	Some groups have excellent access	Some good examples	Excellent for education	Emphasis on self-sufficiency	Not able to access – except for pool	Wealthy mining company gives some support
Bonding social capital	High but Factionalised	High	High	High	Low	Low
Social entrepreneurship	2-3 highly effective people, 1 nationally recognised	Some good projects	National award for education	A few good projects - State award for 1 leader	Low – except for pool group	Low



demonstrating that Grey Nomads can be valued volunteers for rural towns and by the time of the final research evaluation (12 months on from the establishment of the case studies) the program was well advanced in Barcaldine and demonstrated varying levels of success or otherwise in the remaining five communities.

In terms of this success the researchers noted the complex co-dependency between social capital and human capital and specifically the role of leadership within human capital. For example: whilst it is often assumed that social capital is a catalyst for disseminating human capital (that human capital is in fact “dead capital” if it is not put into circulation with the aid of social capital networks) in small rural communities particularly there is the problem of accessing the necessary skills and knowledge (human capital) in order to mobilise social capital. In the case study communities the necessary management skills required to mobilise social capital and “therefore successfully organise a project such as a Grey Nomad volunteer project appeared to be missing”.

This suggests that with local commitment, a considered strategy and a nominated leadership, there is the potential to access the availability of a “vast army” of volunteers who have the time, skills and willingness to offer services to rural towns. There is, however, diversity amongst the Grey Nomads in their interest and ability to volunteer. As such volunteer recruitment and retention programs need to recognise the particular interests of university graduates on the one hand and the limitations of those aged over seventy with health difficulties on the other. Nevertheless, given the apparent eagerness of many or most Grey Nomads to use volunteer opportunities to extend their knowledge and learn more about local towns, there is considerable opportunity for communities along the Mallee Track to engage this population as temporary volunteers.

Younger Generations

Barriers faced by young people to volunteering, particularly from the cohort known as “Gen Y”, were explored by Volunteering Tasmania (Adams, 2009). Whilst the primary assumptions at the commencement of the research were that young people would be disinterested in a range of traditional volunteering opportunities and that volunteering per se did not appeal, these were not substantiated by the young people interviewed. Indeed, the research suggested young people were keen to become involved and gain a wide range of experiences but were discouraged by lack of information about opportunities and benefits of volunteering, poor communication from volunteering agencies (especially information tailored for an older audience) and organisational cultures that are not youth inclusive or welcoming. Wajs-Chaczko (2008), in exploring the implications of Gen Y in the emergency management sector, highlighted their technological awareness and comfort with instant, global communication creates the potential for dynamic input at the volunteer, staff and management level. Literature will soon turn to exploring the implications of the new generation, Gen Z, as it is now coming of age in terms of volunteering and working.





Generational Difference

Whilst generational differences have been apparent for many years, this is becoming more noticeable with the advent of new technologies that drive communication and interaction. Indeed, emerging research is indicating that with the range of generations now potentially available for volunteering, there is an increasing need for the volunteer sector to respond differently to the various needs of each generation or risk alienating them. These differences will form a formidable barrier to recruitment and retention if left unaddressed.

In terms of the study of generations and socialisation, a generation is defined as an “identifiable group that shares birth years, age location, and significant events at critical development states” (Kupperschmidt, 2000, p66). Each generation will have a unique outlook on what constitutes respectful communication, how organisations should work, the nature of authority, the preferred pace of change and a range of other views that will influence their motivations and interactions. The different generations are summarised as follows:



The “Silent” (or Civic) Generation

Born 1925 - 1946

This generation is made up of the children of the Great Depression and World War II. They are characterised by their strong traditional views, most notably family, religion and culture (Smith 2012). Their core values include loyalty, respect for authority and hard work, dedication and team work. They grew up expecting a career for life if they gave their loyalty and commitment to an organisation.

Baby Boomers

Born 1946 – 1964

This generation grew up in a time of great economic growth and national prosperity (Smith 2012). Their lives were influenced by the emergence of social movements including civil rights and feminism, and a world that for the first time publicly questioned participation in national conflict (eg the Vietnam War). They value youth, health, material wealth and remaining active into older age. They are driven, thrive on challenge and have worked competitively to progress their careers. Corporate downsizing was a significant shock to the worldview of many who had given loyalty to their company.



Generation X

Born 1964 - 1980

Gen X'ers are the product of hard working, competitive and ambitious Baby Boomer parents and as children were adept at readying themselves for school and being autonomous at an early age (Smith 2012). They were strongly influenced by the rising separation and divorce rate, political events such as the fall of the Berlin Wall and the advent of AIDS. They saw the effect of corporate downsizing on their parents and as a result are wary of devoting all their time and energy to work. They are the first generation to grow up understanding they will have several careers in their lifetime. They value flexibility, work/life balance and are not afraid of change. This is the first generation to embrace the computer and the internet so are not afraid of technology.

Generation Y (sometimes called "The Millenials")

Born 1980 - 1995

This generation has always known technology and has most easily made the progression as technology updates: they are rarely 'unplugged' from their technological Ethernet (Adams 2009). They have grown up accepting difference and diversity, with body piercings, bold hair choices and individual clothing styles as their norm. They expect to be accepted for who they are, not what they look like. They are the first generation to genuinely accept difference at a cultural, sexual and expressionist level and are often puzzled by the views of earlier generations that they perceive to be sexist, racist or homophobic. They value rapid communication and access to information 24/7. They are organised, confident and outcome oriented. They give respect to people when they see a contribution has been made and talent exhibited rather than by virtue of a person's position. They have little regard for patience, seeing it more as a way to be left behind if you don't keep up.

Generation Z

Born 1995 - 2009

As Renfro (2012) outlines, this generation has never known a time without the internet and global, instant telecommunication. They have grown up as 'gamers', constantly online, communicating with their friends who are often spread globally. They can be perceived as having poor interpersonal skills by other generations as they are more comfortable with technological communication – but with their peers the short, minimalist communication is easily accepted. They have grown up with the threat of global warming and terrorism and so have a sometimes pessimistic view of the world, and yet still retain hope that they can change it. They value flexibility and diversity, and with the highest IQ of any generation to date, require intellectual stimulation and challenge. This generation is starting to enter the workforce now, and their influence on working patterns and organisational structures will be interesting to watch.



A more detailed outline of the different generations and their defining key characteristics is contained in Appendix D: Generational Matrix.

Importantly, the different characteristics of each generation greatly influence their interest in and motivation for volunteering, the type of tasks they prefer, how they like to engage and be engaged, and how they prefer to be acknowledged for their effort. Most traditional volunteering models have been built upon the preferences of the Silent Generation, and as these volunteers start to move into the frail aged category and cease volunteering the structure of many volunteer organisations will need to change in order to attract Baby Boomers and the Generations X, Y and Z. Baby Boomers, for example, are now retired or retiring from the workforce but retain very busy lifestyles, balancing their care for elderly parents, exercising for fitness and hobbies with new endeavours to stimulate their mind. They may have more time to consider volunteering than ever before, but it will need to accommodate their busy lifestyle, recognise their skills and education level and be personally rewarding (Kalita, 2014).

Generations X, Y and Z also have particular expectations of the volunteering experience, including an anticipation that organisations will accommodate change, make the most of technology and be comfortable with new ideas and challenges to authority. Time poverty is a key issue for these generations and the capacity to volunteer at times and for a duration dictated by them will often make the difference between participation and disinterest. Highly flexible models of volunteering will most suit these groups, particularly Generations Y and Z.

Volunteering Queensland (2013) has collated some valuable research in the exploration of recruitment and recognition practices for different generations (excluding Generation Z). They consider it vital to consider the type of marketing approach used with each generation, in order to actively engage their specific motivation and preference for communication. Similarly, they emphasise that tailoring recognition and reward programs to appeal to each generation, rather than adopting a “one size fits all” approach is pivotal in keeping volunteers engaged. (They also stress the importance of remembering that even within a generation, volunteers are still individuals with their own preferences.) This is summarised in the table below:



Generation	Recruiting Practices	Preferred Recognition and Reward Practices
<i>Silent Generation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruit through established networks such as churches, clubs and senior organisations Advertise through newspapers, community announcements & radio (national & local) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual rewards including certificates, plaques, or badges, honour board Group rewards including morning teas or social get togethers Important to use smile & personal greeting Willing to wait for rewards Recognise through greater responsibility in role (e.g. coordinator, training presenter)
<i>Baby Boomers</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruit through established networks such as churches, clubs, organisations Provide a flexible approach Recruit through magazines, flyers or radio Some recruitment through websites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognise individuality through newspaper or newsletter article Reward with greater autonomy and responsibility Give opportunities to generate own volunteer roles after a specified time
<i>Gen X</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use web technology - 24/7 availability Promote the work/life balance Highlight benefits such as flexibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use rewards that help with work/life balance (e.g. massages, tickets to show, pot plant) Rewards that could help with career advancement or returning to the workforce Personalised approach including card, mug, or letter of appreciation
<i>Gen Y</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilise web based technology - advertise online through your own site & other sites 24/7 Use social networking sites such as Facebook SMS your recruitment opportunity Promote the pathway to employment Highlight the experience gained benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilise individual and group rewards Reference or item on resume Offer arm bands, t-shirts and other tokens that Gen Y can wear Reward with concert tickets, gift certificates or reimbursement of costs Immediacy of rewards and recognition is paramount Volunteer of the month awards

(Volunteering Queensland, 2013)



New Residents

Research by Paull (2009) notes many areas across the West Australian wheatbelt have experienced population decline (particularly of the younger population) in combination with some communities experiencing an influx of newcomers. As a result of these 'dual' population changes there is also increasing pressures on community organisations to sustain volunteering in order to provide local services. "Emergency services such as the Bushfire Brigades and the St John Ambulance Service rely on increasingly diminishing numbers of volunteers, while at the same time having to cope with increasing levels of regulation and control. Services to the sick and elderly experience greater demands as the population ages, but they too are increasingly unable to meet those demands".

Through this research Paull (2009) observed anecdotally that newcomers to town were said to be "less and less willing to involve themselves in volunteer work and community organisations". Paull added that it was the view of those involved in community development in the Wheatbelt region that in order to ensure the growth of strong, healthy communities "newly arrived residents in these towns can and need to be enticed into volunteering, and encouraged to stay, thus enhancing the community's capacity to deliver volunteer emergency services and other desired community activities".

Importantly, for the purposes of Paull's 2009 research, newcomers were classified as having relocated to the town in the last five years. However the research also acknowledged comments that even longer term residents, such as those moving to a community 15 and 20 years prior, might still be considered to be 'newcomers'. This concept of not being a 'local' after many years also resonated with the concept of local 'cliques'. Through her research Paull (2009) revealed that for new residents to these wheatbelt towns a 'cliquey' community was one where, amongst other characteristics, "there was a group which seemed to be present in many of the community groups, dominated meetings and gatherings, and led to newcomers feeling like outsiders" with newcomers reporting "feeling intimidated by this group".

Paull (2009) also referred to 'special cases' which lead to segregation in the community and influenced how the volunteer community operated. One such 'special case' was new residents attracted by State Housing Authority (SHA) rental properties. Whilst the Mallee Track communities have very low SHA home availability extremely cheap housing prices equates to (and is often lower than) reduced rent rates offered through SHA. Participants in Paull's research workshops and focus groups commented that these new residents "don't have experience of volunteering, or of joining community groups and would not seek such activities, but might be willing if the approach was made and possibilities opened up to them".



A second 'special case' was that of the 'commuting' resident who, together with the fly in fly out worker, does not live in the community in a permanent sense but rather travels in as required for work. Commuting and fly in fly out workers affect the resilience of community organisations from two different perspectives – participation and workload. They are at once both less inclined to volunteer; because their irregular presence in the community makes it more difficult for them to commit to training, meetings and rosters; and yet at times they add to the need for services (e.g. ambulance service in the event of illness or accident).

Within the Mallee Track Resilient Volunteer Services research New Residents were an important focus with discussions noting concurrently both the difficulty in engaging new residents and the significant and invaluable contribution they are making to various volunteer reliant community services where they have been engaged.

Barriers in the Emergency Services Arena

In rural Australia, the emergency services infrastructure relies on its backbone of volunteer staff. Research over recent decades confirms volunteer numbers in the emergency services have been declining.

Judy Esmond's seminal work in 2009, commissioned by the Attorney-General's Department through Emergency Management Australia, identified a range of barriers and issues in the attraction, support and retention of emergency management volunteers. She undertook extensive interviews with members of the Australian Emergency Management Volunteer Forum and highlighted five major areas of challenge needing to be addressed to ensure volunteer growth in the sector.

The five challenges were:

1. **Time** – long-serving volunteers are now moving on and being replaced with 'time sensitive' volunteers who are balancing competing priorities and struggle to attend all meetings and training.
2. **Training** – the increased expectation for training in a risk averse environment is important, but becomes a barrier for people who are time poor, don't necessarily see the relevance or become frustrated with delivery modes.
3. **Cost** – the current economic climate, rising fuel prices and increasing out of pocket costs can be a real barrier for volunteers, with re-imbursement processes not necessarily equitable.
4. **Recognition** – traditional forms of long service do not necessarily meet the recognition and acknowledgment needs of newer volunteers. Methods that ensure members feel valued are essential to volunteer retention.
5. **People** – culture within units can serve as a barrier if not actively addressed through effective, modern leadership, encouragement of welcoming attitudes and a targeted strategy to increase diversity and ensure members are embracing of difference.





These findings supported the earlier research of Birch and McLennan (2006), who surveyed the grain-belt communities in central and western New South Wales in an effort to understand the decline of volunteerism in the NSW Bushfire Service. "Time" was cited as the most common barrier to participating in the Service, with "work, business, farming or family" commitments taking precedence and forming barriers in their own right. Many respondents (40%) were concerned they would be unable to prioritise the needs of their own family, friends and neighbours in the event of a fire if they were attending fires on behalf of the Service. Other barriers identified included a lack of child care (23%), concern for their own safety (40%) and worry about loss of income should they receive injury (36%). From a financial perspective, 27% indicated financial constraints prevented them from joining, with 18% concerned about personal expenses that may be incurred, such as petrol for travelling to meetings and training. Linked to this, 26% believed their employer would be unsupportive. About a third of all respondents indicated a general disinterest in volunteering.



Interestingly, 41% of respondents said they could not leave their work, business or farm, while at the same time, a similar number of respondents indicated they wouldn't hesitate to leave their commitments in the event of a large fire, essentially becoming spontaneous volunteers. This was accompanied by comments suggesting that joining the Service was therefore unnecessary. Previous research undertaken by Red Cross (2010) regarding spontaneous volunteers in the event of an emergency, indicates this presents additional risk to both volunteers and the community: spontaneous volunteers are unlikely to be aware of the latest safety precautions, may not be trained in equipment use and can be potentially unresponsive to the vital chain of command in an emergency setting. This is supported by research undertaken by Local Logic Place and JandA Consulting in this field (2012).

With such a high level of importance placed on the experience of camaraderie and social connection, it is important to note that ongoing conflict and dysfunction within the emergency services volunteering setting can soon weaken motivation and lead to withdrawal and resignation (Baxter-Tomkins & Wallace, 2009). More detailed exploration of the reasons for discontinuing with emergency services involvement revealed discontent with group activities, conflict between members and disillusionment or disagreement with strategic direction accounted for a quarter of all resignations (McLennan, Birch, Cowlshaw and Hayes, 2009).

Coupled with the range of barriers to volunteering in the emergency services sector is the driving force of social change. This is influencing communities across the board, with time constraints pressuring individuals to look to their own needs rather than more broadly at their community. Parkin (2008) highlights that emergency services must respond with a more practical approach to volunteering – enabling volunteers to transfer skills across a range of disciplines and in a number of contexts for example, in an attempt to respond to increased population movement.



Volunteering – the International Experience

Whilst international understandings and experiences of 'rural' and 'regional' can differ significantly from those in Australia, findings from research into volunteerism mirrors that undertaken here. Lack of time is consistently identified as a major barrier to volunteer participation. The Scottish Government Household Survey conducted in 2008 (cited in Paull 2009) enquired about the primary reasons respondents gave up volunteering. Whilst time was consistently listed as a barrier, respondents also identified lack of public or other transport and a limited understanding of what volunteering involved. Interestingly, respondents' lack of awareness of the nature of volunteering contributed to their belief they did not have the time to volunteer (suggesting they thought it would take more time than it actually did).

Similar research in the United States confirms perceptions of the amount of time required for volunteering as the primary barrier for potential new recruits, with the practical concerns of lack of child care, transport and existing family commitments also cited. Rural residents of towns with low or declining socio-economic profiles were interviewed by the Points of Light Foundation (2005) and the lack of free time and information about volunteering were the primary impediments. In addition, many were unsure if they had sufficient talent or skill that would be considered useful. Provision of local, positive leadership was noted as a factor promoting volunteer activity, particularly through the engendering of trust and the development of relationships. Specific towns in their US study with profiles parallel to those of the Mallee Track, highlighted the role of gatekeepers in small communities; people who can promote insight into local culture for newcomers and ease their acceptance in the community.

Summary

There is a plethora of research available in relation to volunteering and this concise survey of the literature is therefore not comprehensive. It does allow for the emergence of key themes that are relevant to the Resilient Volunteer Services research project and, as later detailed, confirms that local experiences along the Mallee Track are mirrored throughout regional areas in the developed world. These factors include:

- The perception of **time** as constraining factor
- The **lack of information** about what volunteering entails
- The unacknowledged prevalence of **social anxiety**
- The extent to which **perceptions** can influence behaviour and involvement
- The changing **patterns** of volunteering
- The influence of **generational change** on volunteering



Policy Direction

Volunteering - Federal

Australia's National Volunteering Strategy (NVS) was developed in 2011 by the (then) Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, marking the 10th anniversary of the International Year of Volunteering. The NVS aims to encourage volunteering across Australia, intending that over the next decade volunteerism will gain increased recognition and respect. The ten year plan acknowledges traditional forms and avenues of volunteering, while at the same time recognising that new forms of volunteering are emerging and evolving. The document contains six focus areas:

1. Responding to trends in volunteering – including engaging a broad age range of volunteers and encouraging workplace volunteering
2. Harnessing technology – including volunteer matching and leveraging online tools
3. Better regulation and risk management – including improving access to information and simplifying regulation
4. Strengthening management and training – including improving the quality of volunteer management and the costs associated with volunteering
5. Strengthen relationships and advocacy – including building relationships between organisations and sectors
6. Recognising and valuing volunteering – including recognising the value and measurement of volunteering.

At the time of writing this report, the (then) newly elected Federal Government was not able to comment about the status of the Strategy.

Emergency Services Volunteering – Federal

In 2011 the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) adopted the National Strategy for Disaster Resilience which was designed to provide high-level guidance on disaster management to all tiers of government, as well as the business and non-government sectors. The Strategy emphasises that emergency management is a shared responsibility for individuals, households, businesses and communities, as well as for governments. The document recognised that volunteers are often at the forefront of emergency arrangements and that strengthening volunteerism in this sector was crucial for the achievement of its broader aims.

One of its priority actions was to review eleven actions outlined in the *National Action Plan for the Attraction, Support and Retention of Emergency Management Volunteers* (NEMVAP, 2009), previously commissioned by the Attorney-General's



Department. In 2012 the *National Emergency Management Volunteer Action Plan* (NEMVAP, 2012) was developed which revised and updated the 2009 Plan, providing a number of recommended actions to more speedily progress implementation. These included addressing jurisdictional issues pertaining to training provision; competency demonstration requirements including transportability; flexible learning options; provision of leadership training; employer recognition and support; promotion of the role of volunteers; increasing diversity of volunteers; and the minimisation of non-operational activities expected of volunteers.

Volunteering - State

There is no current State Government strategy or policy pertaining to volunteering in Victoria.

The previous strategy, "Victoria's Volunteering Strategy" developed in 2009 by the preceding government, recognised the changing landscape of volunteering, sought to increase the viability of volunteering organisations and generally raise the profile of volunteering, as well as provide the means for easy access to information about suitable volunteering opportunities.


It was under this Strategy that Victoria's Volunteering Portal was developed, providing an online community and information resource for Victorian volunteers and volunteering organisations. This includes opportunities for registering and seeking volunteering opportunities, including spontaneous volunteering in the event of an emergency. The current State Government continues to support the Portal through the Office of the Community Sector as well as administer a number of small grants aimed at maintaining the viability of volunteering organisations (including emergency services groups).

Emergency Services Volunteering - State

Volunteer strategy and policy within the emergency services sector continues to undergo significant change following the release of the Government's *Victorian Emergency Management Reform White Paper* in 2012. The Paper is underpinned by an all-hazards, all-agencies approach that emphasises interoperability and use of all available skills to maximum effect.

The paper acknowledges local requirements must be taken into account, including an understanding of the pressures on volunteers from other commitments including employment. The White Paper suggests a lifecycle approach to understanding volunteering, that can allow for streamlined volunteering throughout the sector. A plethora of strategies are incorporated in this comprehensive Paper. Strategies particularly pertaining to volunteer recruitment, retention and training are designed to:

- a) Strengthen Victoria's culture of volunteerism and community service

- 
- b) Recognise, value, respect and promote the contribution of volunteers to the well-being and safety of the Victorian public
 - c) Increase recruitment and retention of volunteers, including those from diverse backgrounds
 - d) Minimise barriers to volunteering in the emergency management sector
 - e) Equip volunteers with an all-hazard capability, acknowledging that not all volunteers wish to have responsibilities in relation to all-hazards
 - f) Develop policy and organisational arrangements that encourage, maintain and strengthen the capacity of volunteers across the sector
 - g) Develop a more holistic volunteer life cycle with the ability to volunteer across the sector and identified volunteer career paths
 - h) Consult and engage with volunteers and their representative bodies on matters which affect them, and
 - i) Acknowledge and respect the contribution that employers make in the way they support volunteerism in the emergency management sector in Victoria (p. 36)

The White Paper included recognition of the need for a system-wide, competency based training regime, although its emphasis was on joint and multi-agency exercising rather than an exploration of ways to develop common competency based training units. The Paper therefore recommended the development of a Victorian Training Strategy that:

- a) Details the competencies required of emergency workers, and training available to meet these competencies
- b) Includes a competency gap analysis incorporating a focus on building planning, risk management and community engagement skills
- c) Uses a range of training delivery modes
- d) Takes advantage of economies of scale and interoperability opportunities
- e) Includes combined exercise and simulation-based training for workers from all organisations in the system, and
- f) Clarifies the responsibilities of agencies in relation to participation, implementation and evaluation.

The State Fire and Emergency Services Training Framework was subsequently formally released in 2013 by the Fire Services Commissioner and details how Victoria's fire and emergency services will work collaboratively with the community, Government and business. It outlines many of the issues relevant to recruiting, training and retaining emergency volunteers along the Mallee Track and will be the guiding document for services over coming years as they seek to address a range of volunteering barriers. Currently focusing on fire and emergency services, it is anticipated future revisions will include other key agencies, including Ambulance Victoria.



From a governance perspective, the State Government has recently confirmed the establishment of two new bodies as a result of the changes to the State's emergency management arrangements. The *State Crisis and Resilience Council* is now the peak emergency management advisory body responsible for policy and strategy across the emergency management arena. *Emergency Management Victoria* (EMV) is now the overarching body for emergency management in the State. When announcing the new arrangements the Minister for Police and Emergency Services and Minister for Bushfire Response, Kim Wells, said the underpinning legislation was designed to ensure volunteer capacity and capability was strengthened and maintained:

At an individual service level, the three major response agencies (CFA, SES and Ambulance Victoria) have a range of initiatives to explore how they can better support volunteers and increase volunteer recruitment and retention.

CFA

In 2011 the State Government undertook an independent inquiry into the effects of arrangements on CFA volunteers (known as the "Jones Inquiry"), resulting in a Government supported *Implementation Action Plan* in 2012. Six themes were identified for action:

1. Culture and leadership to empower and support volunteerism
2. Recruitment, retention, recognition and utilisation of volunteers
3. Strengthening the volunteer based and integrated service delivery model
4. Improved support for brigades and communities
5. Training development
6. Training delivery and assessment

A number of actions associated with these themes have direct relevance to the outcomes sought by the Resilient Services Research Project including: the development of a leadership strategy; action to address the gap between the newly articulated preferred and existing organisational culture; ways to streamline volunteer recruitment; identification of core vs non-core training; development of flexible learning options; development of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) processes; implementation of a learning centred approach that recognises previous skills; and exploring ways to deliver training in alternative locations to maximise participation.

A number of actions have been progressed while others have been delayed due to operational priorities.





SES

The SES has developed its *Volunteer Learning and Development Strategy 2013–15*, which will inform its approach to training and assessment, in line with the State Government's White Paper change agenda. The Strategy emphasises the value of emerging technologies in strengthening participation and building volunteer skill levels, as well as ensuring a unified approach with other emergency services to enhance inter-operability (Barry, 2013).

The Strategy outlines four primary goals, with associated business activities to deliver outcomes:

1. Provide learning pathways that support workforce development in core operational and nonoperational skills, including community education and engagement skills
2. Expand participation and access for members through targeted e-learning approaches and innovative face to face approaches
3. Enhance quality management systems for learning and development to maintain Registered Training Organisation Status (RTO) status and improve the quality and timeliness of learning and development activities
4. Contribute to achieving a unified approach to learning & development across Victoria's fire and emergency services (Barry, 2013, p. 5)

Ambulance Victoria

In April 2013 Ambulance Victoria (AV) released its draft Strategic Plan 2013 – 16 for comment. As openly acknowledged in the draft Plan AV has been experiencing considerable pressures through increasing workloads, continued activities associated with the merger of the three (previous) ambulance services and extended wait times at hospitals (Ambulance Victoria, 2013). As an organisation that combines both significant numbers of paid operational staff as well as volunteers (in a ratio of approximately 3:1), the draft Plan understandably makes considerable reference to the development of their paid workforce.

The draft Plan contains one action oriented reference to volunteers, contained within *Strategic Direction 3: Partner with key stakeholders to deliver improved health outcomes, enhanced community safety and resilience*, namely to:

- enhance our volunteer and first responder services throughout the community and increase their numbers within AV (Ambulance Victoria, 2013, p. 22)



Volunteering – Local

Municipal Level Volunteers Policy & Practice Background

Mildura Rural City Council recognises and values the role of volunteers throughout the municipality as critical to service and amenity provision. The following pages are a brief summation of Council's policy and practice platform in recognising and supporting volunteers in the delivery of these key community services and amenities. Where applicable the policies and practices of other Mallee Track specific organisations are also included, most notably those of Mallee Track Health and Community Services.

At the Municipal level several documents are core to policy and practice in supporting volunteers, these include:

- Mildura Rural City Council Community Wellbeing Survey Report (2010),
- Mildura Rural City Council Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan 2009-2013,
- Mildura Rural City Council Annual Report 2011-2012,
- The Mildura Social and Economic Impact of Drought Study,
- Mildura Rural City Council Volunteer Policy (OP083),
- Mildura Rural City Council Community Engagement Model 2013-2014, and
- Mildura Rural City Council Plan 2013 to 2017.

At the Mallee Track level these documents include:

- Mallee Track Health and Community Services Report of Operations 2012-2013, and
- Advancing Country Towns Program, Mallee Track Project: Project Charter 2012 (Version 1.5).

At the individual community level these documents include:

- Murrayville Community Plan (2007),
- Underbool Community Plan (2007),
- Walpeup Community Plan (2007),
- Ouyen Community Plan (2008), and
- Walpeup Health and Well-being Plan (2010).
- Ouyen Inc Business and Strategic Plan 2011-2015.



Municipal Level

At the municipal wide level several Mildura Rural City Council documents inform the policy and practice of recognising, valuing and supporting volunteers. Within the Mildura Rural City Council organisational structure the support of volunteer groups registered with Council rests in the Executive Service of 'Community' (which sits alongside Corporate Services and Development Services). The organisational structure of Community Services specific to volunteering is shown right.



The following documents are key guiding documents in informing the policy of recognising, valuing and supporting volunteers within Mildura Rural City Council. The practical and tangible provisions Mildura Rural City Council provides to its volunteers are not fully captured in these documents however. Staff such as Community Development Officers, and specifically Jeff Burr for the Mallee Track, and the Engagement Development Officer Max Gaynor were highly valued and regarded along the Mallee Track. Their presence in these communities, which can otherwise feel largely bereft of services or government agency involvement, is significant. To further facilitate this role Council has created two specific Liaison structures - the volunteer Community Emergency Liaison Officer (CELO) and the Mallee Track Advisory / Liaison individual or group within specific Mallee Track communities.

At an overarching level the **Mildura Rural City Council Annual Report (2011-2012)** informs municipal residents on a range of Key Result Areas, two of which specifically make reference to volunteering. Key Result Area 1.2 Community Development notes the following results to be achieved (within these volunteering is listed as a Strategic Outcome Measure):

- A community with equitable access to facilities, services and activities,
- A community where all people are valued and can be active participants in community life, and
- A community where people are actively involved in shaping the community to meet its own needs.

Key Result Area 1.3 Community Health and Well-being also lists volunteering as a Strategic Outcome Measure as a consequence of the achieved result:

- A community where everybody feels valued, connected and people have opportunities to reach their potential.



The *Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan 2009-2013* also emphasises the importance of volunteering and achievements by volunteers to the LGA community. The Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan draws on the 2006 and 2008 Mildura Social Indicators reports together with the Drought Study to inform, amongst other factors, the role of volunteering in not only the individual volunteers personal wellbeing but also in their philanthropic contribution to the broader community's wellbeing. The 2008 Social Indicators Report notes that volunteering is significantly higher in the region (Mildura LGA) than in Melbourne and is significantly higher again in the more rural localities (such as the Mallee Track) of the LGA than in the more built up areas (such as Mildura Central).

Community forums undertaken in 2009 for the process of researching the MRCC Council Plan identified several key themes relevant to community health and wellbeing, with encouraging and supporting volunteers noted as one of these. Broader Strategic Analysis undertaken for the Health and Wellbeing Plan, which included the review of State and regional priorities, identified core needs which must be addressed in a manner that eliminates or at least mitigates their impact on community health and wellbeing. A matrix of these core needs is identified in the diagram right, with those particularly pertaining to the Mallee Track communities capacity for resilient volunteer services highlighted.

In this Health and Wellbeing Plan, two **Key Focus Areas** in particular spoke to resilient volunteer services through influencing positive health and wellbeing outcomes. The first Key Focus Area: Active Participation aims to encourage "increased participation in recreation, the arts and community activities including volunteering". Specifically this Key Focus Area suggested Mildura Rural City Council "support and promote volunteering through grants programs, recognition programs and the provision of relevant information" and "foster partnerships with community organisations".

Core Needs	
The core needs that have been distilled from the various inputs are as follows: -	
<p><i>Addressing the impacts of changing demographics – i.e.: -</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increased population - Ageing population - Post teenage trough - Changing family and household structure - Increasing ethnic diversity 	<p><i>Addressing the impacts of safety issues – i.e.: -</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Childhood accidents and farm accidents - Communicable disease control - Blood borne viruses/sexually transmissible infections - Family violence - Harm from tobacco, alcohol and other drugs - Food security
<p><i>Addressing the impacts of chronic diseases – i.e.: -</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mental health - Obesity/diabetes - Cardiovascular diseases - Cancer 	<p><i>Addressing the impacts of drought and climate change - i.e.: -</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Economic impacts – increased unemployment, reduced income - Social and health impacts - Environmental effects – water supply - Heatwave response
<p><i>Addressing the impacts of health inequities – i.e.: -</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Limited or inadequate services, - Socio-economic and physical isolation - CALD, indigenous related issues - Community disengagement 	



A second Key Focus Area: Community Strengthening aims to encourage “an increased involvement and partnership amongst community members to achieve health and wellbeing outcomes”.

The updated **Community Health and Wellbeing Plan 2013-2017** completed by Mildura Rural City Council in partnership with the (then) Northern Mallee Primary Care Partnership does not make specific references to volunteers as was the case with its predecessor.

The **Mildura Rural City Council Community Wellbeing Survey Report** (2010) builds on the 2008 study of the same name which established benchmark measures of the overall wellbeing of Mildura as a functioning community. The 2010 report created the opportunity to begin charting alterations, positive or negative, in the community’s standing with respect to four clusters of attributes, based on the work of Professor Tony Vinson, that in combination help sustain effective community functioning. These attributes are:

1. The substance and style of decision making,
2. Resource generation and effective allocation,
3. The integration of people, groups and community organisations, and
4. The maintenance of direction, energy and motivation.

The third and fourth of these: the integration of people, groups and community organisations; and the maintenance of direction, energy and motivation aligns closely to the recruitment and retention of volunteers to ensure long term resilient volunteer reliant community services.

The **Mildura Social and Economic Impact of Drought Study** was undertaken in response to the prolonged period of drought and reduced water allocations experienced by the Mildura LGA during the 2000's, the ramifications of which were formally recognised as impacting on public health and wellbeing. The report classified impacts according to those with an economic or social basis and developed programs for action by the MRCC. One social impact noted concerns within a range of Mildura LGA communities, and notably the smaller rural towns, of the breakdown of community and social structures as a result of eroded farm viability, some of the consequences of which included reduced volunteering and business philanthropy.

The **Mildura Rural City Council Volunteer Policy** (OP083) aims to provide clear guidelines to staff within the organisation with regard to management of Council Volunteers; with Council recognising that; whilst it is not a volunteer based organisation it has responsibility and role in providing the opportunity for volunteers to contribute to the community and in doing so offer a supportive



and safe environment. Within this Policy a Volunteer is defined as *'a person who freely chooses to perform a role or undertake an activity of their own free will, without coercion, for no financial payment to provide a benefit to the community and is a Mildura Rural City Council designated volunteer position'*.

Mallee Track Level

At the Mallee Track level several documents inform the policy and practice of recognising, valuing and supporting volunteers.

The ***Mallee Track Health and Community Services Report of Operations 2012-2013*** outlines the achievements of the service over the preceding 12 months. The Mallee Track Health and Community Services was established in 1997 as a Multi Purpose Service (MPS) following the merger of Ouyen District Hospital and the Murrayville Bush Nursing Clinic. In addition to the existing services at Ouyen and Murrayville, Service Centres were established in Patchewollock and Underbool. In 2011 Sea Lake & District Hospital Service (SL&DHS) merged with MTHCS expanding its boundaries to include Nandaly, Culgoa, Berriwillock, Woomelang and Ultima.

The MTHCS currently provides: acute medical and urgent care, Community/District Nursing, High and Low level residential aged care, Long day care and vacation care, kindergarten cluster management and a broad range of allied health services. Volunteers work in a wide range of roles within MTHCS and within numerous community and residential based programs and as such form a critical arm of program delivery, effectively enabling the provision of a wide range of programs that otherwise may not be possible.

MTHCS recognises volunteers as highly valuable members of their service and as such ensure they are provided with support and training relevant to the role they are doing along with opportunities for skill sharing and networking. Within MTHCS the Community Link Coordinator maintains contact with volunteers, encouraging them to report back any concerns or issues about either the role or more generally. All volunteers have an orientation at commencement to ensure the volunteer is matched to the correct role and understands this role and the relevant health and safety aspects.

The MTHCS Report of Operations reiterates this valuing of volunteers: "Service delivery to our expanded population along with our expanded catchment would not be able to be sustained at the levels of excellence and continuous improvement to which we aspire without the generous support and assistance our volunteers provide; special thanks for your continued commitment to our communities..... Capital expenditure continues to reflect the additional operational scope and this continues to be supported with fundraising and volunteer contributions".

The Mallee Track Health and Community Services Volunteer Coordination program (Community Link) receives funding through Home and Community Care (HACC). Through the Volunteer Co-ordination Program MTHCS has over 200 people registered as





volunteers who provide support for a range of services including: friendly visiting; volunteer driving; activity programs, delivered meals, neighbourhood house programs and much more.

The Community Link Co-ordinator audits the Volunteer Coordination Program according to the Community Care Common Standards and volunteers are supported practically through inductions, role matching and active opportunities to provide comment and feedback regarding their volunteering role and management. An annual Volunteer Appreciation Night is held, the most recent of which saw 100 MTCHS volunteers enjoy an evening themed “Thanks a Million”.

The *Advancing Country Towns Program, Mallee Track Project: Project Charter 2012* (Version 1.5) is one of the principal guiding documents for the Mallee Track ACT Program. Within the Project Charter it was noted that the Mallee Track communities “are strongly connected by their geographical isolation with each community fielding an active community advisory group with community plans developed in 2007/08”. The Project Charter also noted a high level of collaboration and partnership between Mildura Rural City Council, Mallee Track Health and Community Services, Ouyen Inc and training and service providers. Taken together these comments demonstrate the availability of both bonding and bridging social capital within, and extending from, the Mallee Track communities.

However the Project Charter also recognised that disadvantage within the Mallee Track communities was exacerbated by economic, environmental and demographic changes including:

- Decreasing job opportunities, particularly for unskilled workers
- Declining and ageing population
- Decrease in family farming and an increase in large scale agriculture
- Limited access to specialist or social support services and sporting activities due to isolation
- The impact of the drought in a marginal dryland environment.

In responding to this disadvantage the Charter identified three long term outcomes, defined as *Benefits*, of the Mallee Track ACT project. These ‘benefits’ were for:

- Broader more responsive and joined up services operating across the Mallee Track,
- Balanced vibrant growing community, and
- Sustainable growth in the local economy.



The *Benefit* of 'broader more responsive and joined up services operating across the Mallee Track' was to be achieved in active response to the Investment Logic Map *Problem* of "changing demographics and outdated delivery models threaten[ing] many universal services in the smaller communities".

Within this *Benefit* (broader more responsive joined up services) a number of short or medium term outputs *Strategic Interventions* were also identified:

- Improve participation and retention in education through better use of blended learning,
- Improve the flexibility and responsiveness of services by better collaboration and planning amongst service providers, and
- Strengthen the community by making it easier and more attractive for people to volunteer.

The third of these (strengthen the community by making it easier and more attractive to volunteer) required two identified changes:

1. Improve coordination with training providers to meet volunteer regulations (which draws on research from across the Mallee Track demonstrating that people are reluctant to volunteer because they feel they are not equipped with the skills required or have the confidence to contribute to an organisation),
2. Expand accredited volunteer organisations by improving engagement with employment services.

The Project Charter also recognised a role for working with employers across the region to gain their support for employees to be involved in volunteer activities.

Drawing on the findings of three Investment Management workshops the ACT Project Manager (then Steve Vallance), Strategic Steering Group and Community Reference Group made four recommendations regarding the development of initiatives that would deliver the outputs and outcomes required to meet the *Strategic Interventions* of the ACT Mallee Track Project. The first of these recommendations was for 'Volunteer recruitment, support and development' and recognised that the role played by volunteers in rural communities is a vital component in the vitality and sustainability of a broad range of services provided and the communities themselves and further that the "impact of volunteering extends beyond the primary function involved in the volunteer role... into the community in many ways". Ultimately it was agreed that delivery of this initiative be to both existing volunteers and emerging or new volunteers identified by the communities and organisations involved.

At the time of writing the Project Charter the ACT Project Manager believed ACT could support by:

1. Working with volunteer organisations to develop a recruitment program that focuses on using existing members as the driving force for recruiting new members,



2. Supporting activities that demonstrate the benefits of volunteer support for the individual, the organisation and the communities in which they currently live,
3. Develop a training package that will support volunteer skill development that may result in an increase in the employability of those not currently in the workforce,
4. Training and skills development in leadership, personal development, procedures, networking, structures and the legalities of the range of boards and organisations in the area. This could be in the form of formal or informal training events delivered by an RTO with links to the area (note discussion did commence with SuniTAFE regarding this but a cost per student for delivery of the training was not identified).

Community Level

At the community level several documents inform the policy and practice of recognising and supporting volunteers. Most notably two of the four the **Community Plans** undertaken along the Mallee Track during 2007 and 2008 by Neil Noelker Consulting make reference to the importance of volunteers.

Whilst the Community Plans for the Underbool and Walpeup communities do not mention volunteers, the 2007 Murrayville Community Plan, in Priority 8 (of nine Priorities), referenced the need for an Annual Festival with a noted benefit to the community of “a greater appreciation of the work of community groups and volunteers”.

In the 2008 Ouyen Community Plan several references were made to volunteers. There was also recognition of the contribution made by ‘Social Entrepreneurs’ in the community who are predominately volunteers. “The community would not be in its present strong position without the selfless contribution by the many volunteers in the Ouyen community..... One of the challenges identified at the Futures Forum was the understanding that for the community to embrace the opportunities identified, to make ‘Ouyen, a Town Of Choice’ is that support for the community is needed. To expect the social entrepreneurs to continually drive this on a voluntary basis will be unsustainable”. The Plan further noted that the “community would not be in its present strong position without the selfless contribution by the many volunteers in the Ouyen community”.

The Ouyen Community Plan identified the community as having volunteers committed to the Country Fire Authority and the State Emergency Services, adding that “like many other volunteer organisations, a larger base of volunteers would make these vital services more sustainable”. The Plan also noted “Ouyen has a staffed Ambulance station with two ambulances available, this





service is supported by a number of volunteer ambulance officers, who are committed to ongoing training and service to the community".

An additional document, the **Walpeup Health and Wellbeing Plan** (2010), was researched and written by Erin Williams with support from the Mallee Health Care Network (MHCN) in response to the closure of the Mallee Research Station in 2009. At the time of the closure a community member approached the MHCN with concerns for the health and wellbeing of the Walpeup community – “the drawn out struggle to keep the MRS open and the immediate and ongoing effects of its closure left Walpeup and its residents in need of support and a focussed direction to secure a positive future”. The development of the Walpeup Health and Wellbeing Plan (WHWP) was further informed by the earlier Walpeup Community Plan (2007).

It was the aim of the WHWP to “help strengthen Walpeup and enhance health and wellbeing so that present and future challenges can be met and opportunities can be embraced”. In doing so the WHWP involved identifying and “acting on citizen's concerns... and making plans to manage negative impacts of events which concern citizens of the future”. Of the six key issues identified the first of which was of ‘volunteer fatigue’.

In relation to the issue of volunteer fatigue it was noted:

“The researcher found that some volunteers are fatigued due to stress and high demands on their time from multiple groups and committees. This is significant for Walpeup's small population as there are few people who share a large workload. Volunteers sometimes feel obliged to remain in committee and board positions or may resign without a successor for their role. Volunteers are often active in more than one role which can be stressful and time consuming. The researcher found that this leaves people with less family time and this may contribute to family stress. Volunteer groups have formed a social support network in Walpeup that helps to combat social and economic stressors but it seems that volunteering itself may be difficult to maintain. Community capacity building initiatives may assist the Walpeup community in attracting new citizen volunteers to be involved in community groups. If every citizen of Walpeup felt able and welcome to be involved in volunteer roles then some of the pressure and workload on fatigued volunteers may be alleviated and community connectedness would be increased.”

The WHWP responded to the six key issues with a series of strategies and actions. The strategy of forming the Walpeup and District Development Committee UMBRELLA GROUP was the response to volunteer fatigue. The aim of the umbrella group would be to:

“coordinate the efforts and share the talents of individuals and the groups they work with in Walpeup.... [and would] involve incorporating all community groups into one auspice group so that these groups have a place in the Walpeup and District Development Committee (WDDC)”. Adding that the umbrella group would be a “convenient way for government and non-government bodies to keep informed about the status of Walpeup's groups and the community as a whole, and for the community to share ideas, resources and coordinate future activities”.



Earlier Local Research

Earlier research conducted along the Mallee Track and broader Mallee region revealed themes and observations around volunteer reliant services which were common to the ACT Initiative Mallee Track Resilient Volunteer Services research. These key pieces of research and principal commonalities are outlined below.

A critical longitudinal study of the Ouyen community commenced in 1988 when Ouyen was selected as one of six towns in the *Study of Small Towns in Victoria* undertaken by John Henshall. These six communities were revisited in 2005 in the *Towns in Time Project* undertaken by members of the Victorian Universities Regional Research Network (VURRN). The VURRN members were joined by the author of the original study, John Henshall, and were supported by staff from the (then) departments of Sustainability and Environment and Victorian Communities in order to understand how the State Government's community capacity building initiatives had impacted these communities. Dr Robyn Eversole of RMIT's Centre for Regional and Rural Development undertook the Ouyen case study.

In the 1988 *Study of Small Towns in Victoria* Ouyen was selected as an example of a town with a dry-farm rural base. In 2005 Eversole noted "As for the town of Ouyen itself, a preliminary look at the population numbers since the 1980s would suggest a town in decline – it is a town which has lost nearly a quarter of its population in a period of twenty years. Yet a visit to the town itself paints a different, more complex picture. Ouyen, like the family farm sector which sustains it, has survived. In the past two decades, it has lost some important resources, and gained others. Many gains have been due to the efforts of the district's residents (both long-term residents and newcomers), however there are serious concerns about the limits to which the local volunteer workforce can be pushed, and the real limits of community members' influence over policy decisions that affect them deeply".

During the 2005 case study one resident was quoted as saying "If you don't have drivers that are prepared to write funding submissions...the funding doesn't get there". This, and other comments like it, led Eversole (2005) to conclude that "for Ouyen, the efforts of many community members have meant that the town has been able to tap into government support for key programs and infrastructure. However, this has come at the cost of considerable volunteer effort, drawing continually on the time and energy resources of a small pool of local volunteers".

During the 2005 research Eversole noted several important challenges facing the town's organisations, including:



Volunteer workload and time issues: Community activities “rely very heavily on volunteer input from the community” yet “the majority of people are now working”. The result is that “those busy people are now busier.” A single night in Ouyen may see several meetings scheduled concurrently. Increased need for paid work, high levels of expectations on volunteers, smaller populations to draw from, and the demands of travel (particularly for those living outside Ouyen itself) all contribute to time and workload pressures.

External regulatory burdens on volunteers and volunteer organisations: Regulatory requirements imposed by government, characterised as “red tape”, can have debilitating effects on community organisations. This has diminished the ability of local groups to run catering stalls, for instance, while the planned introduction of mandatory police checks currently threatens organisations’ ability to attract and afford volunteer labour. In a town where “everyone knows everyone” the informal involvement of locals (e.g. in junior sport) is likely to be severely curtailed by such regulations. In addition, there are also issues around the current funding requirements for community organisations to access government funds. These place a large grant writing and administrative/ reporting burden on local volunteers, adding to the workload and time issues identified above.

Survival and succession issues: Some community organisations have closed, others have amalgamated, others have elderly volunteers who continue to maintain important services for the community, but who will not be able to continue to do so indefinitely. In particular Eversole (2005) noted that service and community support organisations seem to be taking a backseat to sporting organisations in many cases, leaving the former with a very small volunteer base. This raises the question of whether the community will continue to have access to these services in future.

A further observation through the *Towns in Time* research which has particular relevance to the ACT Mallee Track Resilient Volunteers Services research relates to new residents to the Ouyen community. Eversole (2005) noted that whilst Ouyen was attractive to retirees and had good services and schools, it had difficulty attracting and integrating new residents concluding that “opportunities for community involvement are limited in range..... and newcomers – particularly low-income newcomers – appear to be marginalised and largely outside community life”.

A more recent report by Pope (2011) on behalf of the (then) Department of Planning and Community Development into change and disadvantage in the Loddon Mallee Region is also relevant to the ACT Mallee Track Resilient Volunteer Services research. *Change and disadvantage in the Loddon Mallee Region* found that whilst many towns and populations had adapted, and will continue to adapt, to the economic and demographic changes occurring in the region others may be left behind by change. Pope concluded that three major changes should be kept in mind as background to discussion about disadvantage in Loddon Mallee communities. Whilst all are pertinent to the Mallee Track Resilient Services research the second two particularly spoke to the increasing need for volunteers against the changing demographic profile.



1. The first change was economic restructure that results in decreased economic opportunities for some residents.
2. The second change was shifting population compositions that result in the need for services and business to restructure. Pope (2011) believed this would affect both towns in growth and decline. "Towns that are growing may experience pressure on their existing services or have a need for new or different services. Towns in decline may have difficulty keeping their services and facilities viable (schools, health services, sporting clubs, etc). This may mean residents have to travel for services and this may become an increasing problem as they age or if they have transport limitations. The issue of service access is of particular importance to disadvantaged people who are more likely to have a greater range of service needs due to worse physical and mental health, lower assets and incomes, etc".

These 'service access' concerns were compounded by the need to attract staff to run services. Pope (2011) noted that "some areas in regional Victoria have trouble attracting skilled workers because of lower incomes, lack of premium housing or low perceived amenity in particular areas". This problem is likely to be exacerbated by the out migration of young people leaving fewer people to replace retiring workers and to work in areas of increasing demand as the population ages (such as health care).
3. The third change was rising house prices that result in some populations becoming concentrated in low service areas. Pope believed three groups would be affected. (A) residents who move into low service areas from high amenity areas as house prices rise, (B) existing residents in low service areas who are unable to move to more expensive serviced localities when their need for services increases (for example, as they age, become disabled, or need to access the labour market), (C) welfare recipients or underfunded retirees who move into low service areas because of the cheaper housing. The *Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI)* recorded a net of 9,500 welfare recipients moved to regional Victoria for the housing in 2000 alone (AHURI 2005).



Mapping of Volunteer Reliant Mallee Track Service Organisations

Importantly the research revealed that a comprehensive listing of volunteer reliant service organisations along the Mallee Track was not available. Drawing on the research finding that a consistent barrier to engaging new community residents in volunteer roles was the lack of information and detail available around volunteering opportunities, the development of such a list was considered an important foundation strategy of the Resilient Volunteer Services research. This barrier, insufficient information regarding volunteer opportunities, was also identified amongst younger community members, existing community members not already engaged in volunteer activities and new residents to the Mallee Track.

The mapping of volunteer reliant service organisations provides a critical starting point from which to build a volunteer recruitment and information resource. Appendix B: Volunteer Data Collection Templates is dedicated to identifying the key information requested by existing and potential volunteers in considering volunteer opportunities. It is suggested within this recommendation that an important strategy for the longer term recruitment and retention of volunteers along the Mallee Track is that a single organisation takes ownership of developing and maintaining this resource for all community members. As identified in *Opportunities 5.1-5.3* this could have an online presence simplified by utilising existing volunteering websites or some dedicated volunteering pages within the Mildura Rural City Council website.

Based on the parameters of the research this list does not comprehensively include sporting groups, farming, environment and industry related groups (such as Landcare or Probus), parent committees for schools and kindergartens, church groups, hospital auxiliaries etc. It instead focuses on emergency management services and health, wellbeing and development/advocacy groups and organisations who rely wholly or somewhat on volunteers in the delivery of their direct community services. The research recognises however that the inclusion of all volunteer reliant groups in any community resource would be critical.



Ouyen





Walpeup





Underbool





Murrayville

Emergency Services

Country Fire
Authority
Ambulance Victoria
Community
Emergency Liaison
Officer (CELO,
MRCC)

Health, Wellbeing & Advocacy

Murrayville Inc.
MRCC Liaison
Representative
Caravan Park
Management
Committee
Hospital Committee
MTHCS Community Links
delivering:
Meals on Wheels
Friendly Visiting
Planned Activity Groups
Transport Services

Recreation & Sporting

Murrayville Football &
Netball Club
Recreation Reserve
Committee of
Management
Golf Club
Tennis Club
Cricket Club
Basketball Club
Bowls Club
Swimming Pool
Committee of
Management

Other

Country Women's Assoc.
Tourism Group
Church Groups
Neighbourhood House
Senior Citizens
School Parent
Committee
Landcare
Victorian Farmers
Federation
Murrayville Early Learning
Centre Committee of
Mgt
Solar System Group
Astronomy Club



Community Consultation: Themed Findings from Emergency Services Volunteers

"I like to go where I can make a difference."

EMS Volunteer

Interviews were held with the leaders of Emergency Services units along the Mallee Track⁹, Mildura Rural City Council and the Australian Red Cross¹⁰.

The interviews provided deep insight about the volunteer experience of emergency services providers along the Mallee Track. All interviewees believed that what they did made a difference and that if they didn't volunteer the community would suffer: this was an important ongoing incentive.

Whilst there were some differing experiences between towns and between the emergency services themselves, the consistency of responses around a number of themes was noticeable, namely:

- the impact of the **time** commitments required
- the prevalence of **multiple roles** as volunteers
- the level of **support** received from respective state bodies
- the nature and availability of **training** provided
- the prevalence of **episodic and micro-volunteering**
- the **role of newcomers** to the community
- **generational changes** in volunteering
- **culture and leadership** within groups
- the degree of **regulation and compliance**

⁹ Or a local volunteer if the leader was unavailable or could not be reached

¹⁰ Red Cross does not have a team based along the Mallee Track, but does have a team in Mildura that covers the area and includes one local member from Walpeup.



- the time, effort and difficulty in **recruitment** of new volunteers
- the issues associated with **retention** of existing volunteers.

Time

Emergency services groups require a commitment to ongoing meetings and regular training as well as an availability for actual incidents. A number of respondents commented that it was a significant commitment to maintain over a long period of time, particularly when members were juggling other commitments such as family, work and other civic activities.

"People in the community see how much time it takes, all the meetings.... they get put off joining because they don't have that amount of time"

"(We all) have so many other expectations and time commitments – fitting it all in is really hard sometimes"
EMS Volunteers

Whilst those in leadership roles being interviewed recognised the importance of regular training and meetings, they also acknowledged the time impost on members and understood why many choose not to attend meetings and some struggle to maintain their levels of training. Importantly, a number of respondents commented that the local community was aware of the time commitment required and perceived this as a disincentive to joining. The amount of time required for initial training, particularly if travel (and in some instances away from home stays) is involved, was also raised by interviewees as a barrier for prospective members.

Multiple roles

As was expected, and consistent with the research into volunteering in rural areas, the respondents reported that both they and most of their members volunteered in other roles within the community; local hall committees, service clubs, sports committees and community services such as Meals on Wheels. One volunteer commented that the more roles taken on, the more it became difficult to "do justice" to them: she saw many people in the community "stretched too thin" as they tried to remain active in numerous capacities. This same volunteer went on to say this contributed to people being members of many groups but not being active in most of them. This made it appear there were often more volunteers than was the case.

"Everyone in our group wears multiple hats. I see people attend (incidents) in multiple capacities. Someone might go out to a fire as a CFA attender, then go back to get a truck for an SES response."

"Doing lots of (volunteer) jobs is just the reality of small towns – it's how we keep the services going"
EMS Volunteers



Of significant interest was the number of respondents who advised both they and their members were also volunteers with another emergency service. Whilst a quantitative analysis was not undertaken, information gleaned from the interviews suggests the prevalence of cross-volunteerism increases with geographical distance: the further west along the Mallee Track the greater the incidence of volunteers being involved in two or even all three emergency services. By Murrayville, “half the Ambulance Victoria volunteers are also in the CFA or SES” (CFA Group Captain) and “all eight SES active members are also accredited with the CFA” (SES Controller).

A number of volunteers also suggested that even if people weren't formally members of other emergency services, they needed to have a greater understanding of the day to day practices of those services than their counterparts from more built up rural areas. This included understanding where equipment was located on service trucks so they could assist other services at an incident. In Walpeup, examples were cited where the CFA was asked by Ambulance Victoria to be first on scene for coronary incidents given they have (and are trained to use) a defibrillator on their truck.

It was suggested this dual role might increase in the future as emergency services become more and more stretched. Three of the volunteer leaders interviewed acknowledged there may come a time when services may need to be formally combined, at least in some of the rural towns, or risk losing services completely. Whilst they acknowledged this was not on the reform agenda at the state level, they recognised that for the smaller towns in particular, sustaining both an SES and a CFA was becoming increasingly difficult and a combined service may be the way forward in the long term. It was suggested that given services are trying to attract volunteers from the same limited pool, and that indeed many volunteers are already members of both services, it would have practical advantages at the local level. The success of combining such services overseas (for example in many states in America) was cited, despite the difficult change process it had entailed at the time. One of the volunteers exploring this idea stated that any combination would need to take into account individual abilities and capacities, noting that some of his CFA members have said multiple times they would not be able to attend the scene of a motor vehicle crash in a rescue capacity for example.

Support

Volunteers referred to support in two ways:

1. the level of **attention paid and acknowledgement given** to local groups by respective state bodies (from both regional and state levels)
2. the **amount of resources** provided to their service by the respective state body



Attention paid and acknowledgement given:

The level of support provided to groups on the ground was perceived to be quite different, more so between services than between towns. The volunteers talked about the importance of tangible connection with their respective state body: this was very much linked to the willingness of regional or Melbourne based paid staff to visit rural locations. The CFA was frequently praised by volunteers for their readiness to attend local events and provide face-to-face support on a reasonably regular basis. Similarly the SES received considerable comment about their ability to provide support from a regional level on an as-needs basis:

Amount of resources:

The discrepancy between funding and resources was raised by more than half the volunteers, with the higher level of funding provided for CFA resources from the State Government seen as a sore point for some. Whilst local fundraising is essential for all services, there was a perception that the CFA had greater access to funds for equipment, that it was easier for them to be requisitioned and that more grant opportunities were available. This was particularly commented upon by volunteers who had experience of shared facilities, shared training or who were involved in dual roles (volunteering with more than one service). This general sense of inequity has considerable implications when exploring the potential for increased collaboration.

Training

Both the initial training needed for accreditation and the subsequent training required as an ongoing member was the subject of considerable discussion with all respondents. Comments fell into five categories:


"The (SES) Volunteer Support Officer in Swan Hill is fantastic. (He) helps with submissions for us, is willing to come down for BBQ's and to see the members. This means a lot to the local volunteers, helps them feel recognised and supported."

"Some services are better than others at recognising volunteers. The CFA is really good – they come out and acknowledge the people on the ground... but (Ambulance Victoria) is really not good at this, instead they are very city-centric, never coming out to rural areas. No-one has been up since Melbourne took over control."

EMS Volunteers

"The CFA are well resourced, with new sheds going up everywhere, new equipment grants always available. The SES have to fundraise locally for their gear, apply to Council for grants for buildings and vehicles."

"Essentially local ratepayers support their local SES through rates to Council, whilst the CFA and Ambulance Victoria get much more State support."

- 
1. the amount of time, travel and access to initial training
 2. the lack of recognition of prior learning and experience
 3. the ability to access ongoing training as and when required
 4. the increasing amount of training required
 5. the discreet nature of training between services

Time, travel and access to initial training:

The amount and type of training required to achieve initial accreditation with each service varies considerably, as does the means to access it. With each town having relatively small units they are generally required to fit in with their respective regional headquarters' schedule. Opportunities to attend are therefore dependent on vacancies in the regional training. SES, for example, take twenty participants for their General Rescue training from across the region. *"If it gets full, our new members will need to wait another five or six months and hope to get on the next course,"* (SES volunteer). *"That's not great if you've just recruited someone to come on board – with that delay its hard to keep the momentum going."* Similarly, now that Red Cross have centralised their operations¹¹ training of new volunteers would necessitate a minimum of 8 new recruits to justify running their 6 hour training program. However, they advised in areas identified as having "identified gaps" they could deliver training with as little as 3, and they are seeking volunteer trainers at the regional level to ensure a more localised response.

Being located regionally, this can also be difficult for some prospective members to access, either due to the excessive travel requirements or ability to be away from family, business, farming or other work commitments for extended periods of time. Whilst state bodies and regional headquarters try and arrange times that are accessible for people who work usual business hours, eg weekends, this doesn't always fit with rural farming communities who have more seasonal commitments, such as cropping and harvesting, or whose community calendar is often focused around sporting fixtures such as football and netball¹².

"The distance volunteers need to travel for courses is too much, especially if it involves staying away from home and they have (other) commitments."

"If training away coincides with the cropping or harvesting it just isn't an option."

"The amount of training required scares people off."

"(New volunteers) used to be able to train on the job, now they have to do 6 weekends straight in a row (and do this elsewhere, Robinvale is the nearest)."

EMS Volunteers

¹¹ Following a restructure in July 2013, Coordinators in regional areas were made redundant and resources centralised to capital cities.

¹² Whilst sport, especially football and netball, is a major social connection and source of community pride for many rural and regional communities, for smaller towns if one player is absent this can often jeopardise their ability to field a team on the day. Willingness to "miss a match" is therefore often minimal.



Similarly the amount of initial training required was suspected of being a deterrent for some prospective volunteers, as well as difficult to manage for people interested but with other responsibilities. The *Certificate II in Emergency Medical Services First Response* course required by Ambulance Victoria, for example, is understandably comprehensive and takes in 80 hours of class time (plus driving and branch induction).

There was some recognition that with persistent advocacy there was opportunity to have some initial training provided locally by some of the emergency services. Regional SES had indicated, for example, they would be willing to bring a trainer to one of the local towns, should the local group be able to generate enough new members. Most recently the CFA conducted training for a number of new recruits along the Mallee Track, as between the towns they were able to generate sufficient interest from new volunteers.

Recognition of Prior Learning:

The lack of recognition of prior learning (RPL) and experience was a major focus for all volunteers interviewed.

As Registered Training Organisations (RTO's) all three emergency service organisations are required to offer RPL as part of their accreditation as training organisations. However, interviews with the volunteer leaders suggest RPL is never offered and rarely granted when sought. This has been recognised by the services and is likely to be addressed as they bring about strategic changes to their training provision.

"They are mostly farmers – so are familiar with engines, pumps so don't need to have certificates and training to confirm they can do this. And it is frustrating for them."

"People get frustrated that there is no recognition for prior learning and experience. Especially farmers who are used to handling equipment and machinery."

"Courses such as truck driving and 4 wheel driving – would be useful to allow a local person to RPL these skills, see them demonstrate it and sign off. If they had this authority, it would allay some of the frustration of farmers having to do a course for something they do every day on the farm."

EMS Volunteers

In the meantime, it is clearly the basis for considerable frustration all along the Mallee Track. Local respondents recognised the need to ensure competence, safety and minimum standards – and queried why these could not be maintained whilst recognising the on-farm experience of many of their existing and potential volunteers. It was acknowledged that extensive experience using farm equipment did not necessarily mean that person was using it safely. However the ability to have their knowledge, skill and safety awareness practically assessed at the local



level seemed to be something the hierarchy of all three organisations were reluctant to explore. This was understood to be a point of considerable tension between rural groups and state organisations, with the former having to respond to understandably frustrated farmers / potential volunteers who felt patronised and the latter needing to demonstrate minimum standards to ensure volunteer and community safety as well as service effectiveness.

The ability to RPL across services was also seen as limited, resulting in similar frustrations. Individual stories told of First Aid (Level II) obtained with one service not being recognised by another; of being required to undertake whole training units regardless of large sections being covered in training from other services; of the repetition of safety training across services presumably because each service wanted to “sign off that it had been done properly”.

“It was a huge battle to get the CFA to recognise that the training I got from (Ambulance Victoria) actually gave me first aid experience much higher than level II. They wanted me to go and do the First Aid course just because I didn't have the same piece of paper.”

EMS Volunteer

Whilst there was interest in streamlining some of the training so that volunteers who belong to more than one service could minimise repetition, there was also considerable recognition that the way training is currently structured could preclude this. Units and modules are designed around individual service needs, with very practical application to service specific procedures and equipment. Whilst there was potential for more universal application that could incorporate needs of more than one service, it would “probably mean they'd have to start again with designing the training” and “people would still have to know their own service specific stuff like how to use the equipment and where it is stored on the trucks”.

Ability to access ongoing training:

A number of barriers were identified that made it difficult for existing volunteers to access the continued training they need to maintain accreditation and increase their skill base.

“We had people ready to train for Basic Wildfire but CFA said they wouldn't allow it as they already had 'too many' trained up in this area already.”

EMS Volunteer

Resource constraints at the state and regional level were consistently highlighted as a concern. Objective evaluation based on local risk assessments within each service determine the range and level of training required. They also determine the ideal number of volunteers with those accredited levels of training for individual units. This can be difficult for small units to maintain motivation when they have volunteers keen to undertake additional training, but their respective state body deems they have sufficient volunteers trained in that area already.



The ability to take the time away from existing commitments to meet training requirements was also noted as a significant barrier, particularly for specific units of training that may be held over a number of days. When this training is held regionally (generally in Bendigo or Swan Hill) this increases the difficulty both in terms of travel time and the potential need to be away from home and work. For volunteers in the farming industry their capacity to leave on-farm commitments is highly dependent on the season: cropping and harvesting times, for example, severely restrict the capacity to be away.

Some units are trying to advocate for selected accredited training to be held locally. They suggest some modules would lend itself to this very well, and indeed be advantageous to hold locally, such as Advanced Truck Driving, where members could gain experience on their own vehicles on local territory.

There was general support for the range of training offered by each service and an understanding of the resource restrictions and need to cater for the whole of the state. However there were a number of comments suggesting more flexibility could assist with volunteer recruitment and retention: *"they have a list of what is on offer and expect everyone to fit in with this"*.

Amount of training:

The increase in regulation and compliance (discussed later) has also led to an increase in training requirements as emergency services providers seek to ensure all volunteers can perform their tasks safely and to the appropriate standards. Whilst there was an understanding of this context, there was also concern expressed about people's capacity. It was noted that many volunteers struggle to attend local unit training events, never mind additional modules to upgrade their skills. It was also noted that the depth and extent of training seems to have increased, including that provided at the local level.

"If you are running a farm you don't have a 9-5 job that you can just leave for a couple of days and then pick up when you're done."

"It's a difficult commitment to keep up with the training, especially if you have to travel out to Bendigo or Swan Hill. This is not possible for some of the volunteers."

EMS Volunteers

"We used to be given a sheet of paper with updates at our meetings. Now we are given a folder that has 10-12 chapters"

"Training used to be very practical ... they would train us how to respond to someone in anaphylactic shock. Now they think we need to know all the biology and history and causes as well. It's too much."

"They expect us to know as much as the paid staff now. That's just not fair. They need to remember we are still volunteers."

EMS Volunteers



Episodic and Micro-volunteering

Episodic volunteering in the emergency services sector has a slightly different focus than that of more general volunteering. It tends to be characterised by those volunteers who are “on the books” and will attend an incident, but do not attend regular meetings or training. This type of episodic volunteering was of particular concern to volunteer leaders as it raised questions about the currency of volunteer knowledge and skills. They suggested that those ‘episodic’ volunteers generally held out of date information about radio communications, procedure changes and other ‘behind the scenes’ knowledge that helped ensure incidents could be managed smoothly. Whilst some advocated that those volunteers who did not keep up with training and attend meetings should be formally removed from volunteering, others expressed concern that if requirements to attend a minimum number of meetings and training events were more stringent they would lose capacity to actually respond to incidents. (Note: this issue was more prevalent in some services than others.)

“We’ve got about 70 volunteers on the books, but we would only see about 10 regularly when there is a fire call and not even those are all active around the station.”

“They’ll turn out for a fire, but they won’t turn out to train!”

EMS Volunteers

Volunteer leaders from all emergency services acknowledged they promoted volunteering as a full member activity, not necessarily making reference to the potential for micro-volunteering opportunities that may be available. In the course of the discussion, one CFA respondent recognised there were probably numerous opportunities for volunteers who might only be able to donate their time in an infrequent, time-limited or irregular capacity such as cleaning equipment or administration activities. This could be consistent with the general community view of emergency service volunteering, that sees it as an “all or nothing” endeavour, and one that requires a high level of commitment to regular meetings.

Role of Newcomers

All those interviewed commented on the number of new arrivals to towns that seem to have been attracted by lower house prices. Like many rural towns, existing residents were keen to see new arrivals show interest in participating in community life. They recognised that for those people moving to the Track from metropolitan or even larger regional towns, there may be a reduced understanding of the importance played by volunteer organisations in maintaining rural services.



The number of new residents moving to the area presented a challenge in some towns. Whilst they wanted to engage with the new arrivals and explore their potential interest in volunteering, existing volunteers were often unsure how to make the overture, or even to find out who the new residents are and how they can be contacted. Volunteer leaders anticipated that new residents interested in volunteering would seek out opportunities should they be interested in participating.

A noticeable difference was perceived in Walpeup, where newcomers were actively pursued as an opportunity and a way of reinvigorating the local CFA. There was general agreement that people moving to the town were doing so because of the more affordable property and that if they were retired, semi-retired or seeking work that this often meant they had time on their hands that could be used for volunteering. A number of new arrivals had been successfully recruited into the CFA and were making a considerable difference. The Group Captain himself identified as a proud “blow in” who has actively sought out newer members of the community. He advocated strongly that locals need to make the first move in approaching newcomers and *“really encourage them to join and welcome them when they do”*. He advised that a number of people told him they hadn't volunteered when they moved to the area because *“nobody asked”*.

“We don't do anything to approach the new residents. We don't even know who they are. Years ago if someone new came to town we would know. Now I wouldn't even know a third of the people who live here.”

“(Newcomers) have a high expectation that things will be provided for them in the community, but don't want to join in to help make it happen!”

EMS Volunteers

“This community has benefited above and beyond expectations from (newcomers') involvement”

EMS Volunteers



One newcomer to Walpeup commented that until she had been approached by the local Group Captain she had never considered joining the CFA or any other emergency service, despite growing up in rural areas with a father and brothers that had all been members of their local brigade. She identified that the individual, personalised approach made her feel welcome, that she had skills to offer and that it was something within her capabilities.

"Every new person that comes to town (the Group Captain) goes to see them, introduces himself and makes them welcome, and talks about the CFA. He said to me "just come over and listen in" with no pressure, so I didn't feel obligated. When I was there I just got interested, and it was like I could try the next step if I wanted. And by then I really did."

New Resident

Generational changes

The generational difference in views on volunteering indicated in the literature were in evidence during our consultations. Numerous respondents commented about how the local infrastructure had been developed by the existing and previous generations through fundraising, hard work and commitment over time. They compared this with 'younger generations' who tend to take this for granted, are less willing to put in the time required to achieve long term community goals and assume services will continue to be provided. These volunteers tended to be of an age that had grown up with the traditional model of volunteerism, which included long term commitment, attendance at meetings and adherence to an established structure and hierarchy. Red Cross identified that this older, retired cohort was considered ideal for volunteer recruitment as they bring the experience required, are generally still fit, active and mobile. They acknowledged that in metropolitan areas they have undertaken specific recruitment campaigns aimed at younger people, such as their "summer surge" initiative, to increase representation by younger generations. However this is resource intensive and unable to be rolled out in regional and rural areas.

Overall, interviewees reported concern about the general ageing of the current volunteer pool, the changes resulting from shifts in property holdings and some disappointment about the lower numbers of new recruits coming from the younger age bracket. At the same time they had an understanding of the multiple demands being made on people with families in their 20's, 30's and 40's and the impact this had on their capacity to volunteer.



Ageing of existing volunteers

Whilst a quantitative survey of volunteer ages was not undertaken, interviewees consistently reported the majority of their volunteers were around 40 years or older, with many of their longer standing members in their 60's and 70's, particularly in the CFA and SES. Given the physically demanding nature of the active emergency services roles this was understandably of considerable concern to the volunteer leaders. Whilst there are a number of other opportunities for volunteering that require less physical strength, coordination and stamina there were comments suggesting that transitioning from an active role to a back up role was difficult for older volunteers, with many preferring to leave or drift away from the service.

"We used to have 7 or 8 volunteers based in Underbool so we had a trailer based out there to enable quicker response to incidents out that way. Now they've all retired, as they were in their 60's and 70's, so now no-one is out there... the trailer's been removed."

EMS Volunteer

Change in property holdings

Most interviewees commented on the impact of changing property holdings on local community populations and culture. The amalgamation of properties into substantially larger holdings, whilst ensuring agricultural enterprise remains viable, has significantly reduced the number of farming families in the area.

Of those families remaining, adult children often pursue careers in areas other than agriculture necessitating moving away from the area for education or employment or both. In the past a good proportion of these adult children would likely have remained locally, been part of succession planning for the family farms, and followed their parents' (usually fathers') steps in becoming an emergency services volunteer.

"Single holdings now go up to 30 000 acres and this would have previously accommodated dozens of families."

"Even when the old farmhouses are still liveable and rented out the families in them don't have the same investment in the community as it feels temporary for them."

EMS Volunteers

Increasing demands on families

Interviewees frequently commented on the high time demands placed on parents with children still at home. Adults in this age range (20's to 40's) are often prime targets for volunteer recruitment attempts across the board: they are establishing (or have already established)

"In the past my three sons probably would have joined the CFA, but none of my kids live locally now. They couldn't do their careers locally even if they wanted to – there just isn't the work."

EMS Volunteer



roots in the community; they bring the maturity of adulthood; they have the means to travel the district; and they are generally strong, fit and healthy. This also means they are in demand by numerous volunteer organisations and committees including school and kindergarten committees, environment and progress groups, service and sporting clubs. Local sporting commitments were cited as being particularly exacting, requiring time for participation (training, matches, travelling) as well as administration (committee membership, fundraising).

Young people in volunteering

All interviewees commented on the lack of young volunteers “coming through the ranks” of emergency services. One interviewee recalled that at one time everyone was registered with the CFA when they turned 16 so that if there was a fire “everybody went and that way they were on the books.” Whilst he understood that such a practice would not be acceptable now due to more explicit training, health and safety requirements, he commented that it did cement the expectation of voluntary commitment from an early age as well as provide a pathway into emergency volunteering.

Junior brigades (where they existed) had been a popular and valuable means for early recruitment of volunteers, with the opportunity for local young people to learn valuable skills, participate in competitions and develop the confidence to move into active adult roles as they matured. Unfortunately the declining population and changing patterns of volunteering have resulted in a significantly reduced number of junior brigades, with some no longer becoming viable, and others folding due to the large amount of organisation required compared to the very small numbers that would ultimately go on to volunteer.

One volunteer leader, for example, was actively involved in leading and organising the Juniors for about 15 years. This commitment included a meeting once per week, preparation for the meeting and attendance at competitions (in addition to his substantive volunteer commitments as an active member of the service). Following an analysis of the outcomes, he discovered approximately 95% of junior participants didn't progress to become members, as they either moved away from the area or just stopped attending meetings over time. He advised this applies to the latest group of young people who have undertaken juniors' training, with none of them attending meetings or incidents.

“We used to get the fire brigade sports and have juniors do that as an introduction to the CFA ...it was an exciting way of getting them involved, but it was hard to sustain and costly. We have some juniors coming through but less than in previous years as there aren't so many (young people) in the community any more. We may have to consider combining Juniors with (the next town).”

EMS Volunteer



Those groups that had successfully recruited one or two young people acknowledged the difficulty in doing so, and how infrequently it happens. They attributed this to a number of reasons: the increased mobility of young people and their need (and sometimes preference) to travel away for educational and recreational purposes; the different opportunities for connection through social media; and a preference for time-limited, experiential involvement rather than ongoing commitment. One interviewee also suggested the adherence to structure and both formal and informal hierarchy within the emergency services sector could be “at odds” with the emerging generations’ preference for flatter structures and more peer based, egalitarian opportunities for connection that allow for instant participation. This is congruent with the emerging research into volunteer patterns for generations “x”, “y” and the now emerging “z”.

“With the average age of our volunteers increasing, having someone (X)’s age come along is a rarity now.”

EMS Volunteer

(Discussing the recent recruitment of young person, X)

One SES volunteer leader identified the particular sensitivities involved in recruiting the younger age bracket that experienced the deaths of their peers in the Cardross road fatalities in 2006. Young people across the region were significantly affected by the event and the interviewee suggested many were still noticeably traumatised. Recruiting for emergency services in this context is difficult.

Consistent with the research into changing generational views on volunteering, most volunteer leaders have witnessed the different expectations and interpretation of volunteering between generations. They noted that emergency service volunteering in rural areas was still very much grounded in traditional approaches to volunteerism, characterised by:

“getting things (in the community) done through fundraising, hard work and commitment over time”

“long term commitment, attendance at meetings”

“focusing on what’s good for the community, not just what’s good for you”

“turning up regularly, thinking about (volunteering) as a priority”; and

“respect for how things are done around here”.

“If you look around, all these buildings...this infrastructure, was built by us and by previous generations. It took hard work and lots of time. The younger generation tends to take this for granted. (They) don’t understand the time that’s required to achieve long term community goals.”

“Some of the older volunteers are in their 70’s. They like to make the decisions, and do things their way. That puts some young people off.”

“(Young people) are a really mobile generation, so they go to where things are interesting, where the work is. They don’t have the same sense of ‘roots’ as previous generations.”

EMS Volunteers



Whilst this approach had worked for past generations, and indeed, had helped recruit the interviewees themselves into the services, they acknowledged it was failing to hold traction with current and emerging generations. There was an understanding that the level of commitment required was often too much for people in their 30's and 40's ("Gen X") who associated joining the CFA in particular with large time commitments, endless fundraising and lots of meetings. The newer generations ("Gen Y" and "Gen Z") were seen as having a lower sense of obligation, being too geographically mobile to commit, and preferring pragmatic, on-the-job learning rather than the formalised training required.

Of two specific examples where groups had successfully recruited a younger volunteer, both were described as being unique, with different interests than their peers. One had been recruited early and was being mentored as part of a succession planning process. The other was a newcomer to one of the towns who, unlike his friends, was not interested in sport but was open to being involved with something local. In both these instances, recruitment and retention seemed to focus on personal contact, regular mentoring and consistent encouragement.

"(He) is in his mid 20's now and has come up through the ranks. He is keen and committed. But his mates aren't interested."

EMS Volunteers

Culture and Leadership

Differences in culture and leadership appeared more apparent from group to group, understandably linked to the local volunteers involved, the style of the local leader and the age/gender mix of the particular group rather than by the type of emergency service or the town they were based in.

Friendship and support

A strong sense of a collegial culture emerged from the interviews, highlighting the important role volunteering plays in strengthening friendships, increasing social connection and providing shared purpose through meaningful activity. Examples of the more social connection side of emergency services volunteering included hosting dinners or BBQ's, working bees, developing localised group shirts (to foster pride and belonging) and some of the incidental and informal connections through shared travel and training.

"My friendships in the (service) mean a lot to me. The see and experience things that others don't, that my other friends don't understand."

"It's not all just about the work. We'll have a BBQ together and combine it with a meeting. People like to get together and have a chance to catch up."

EMS Volunteers



Most interviewees made reference to the special connection that is formed between volunteers who have seen and experienced traumatic incidents: they carry an awareness that their families and other friends haven't been exposed to such events and don't necessarily understand the impact. Several commented volunteers could talk about things with other volunteers that they wouldn't be able to discuss outside the service.

One interviewee stated the strong friendship bonds between volunteers could be problematic at times: *"Your mates don't always take you seriously when you are trying to get them to follow procedures or be safe. I always keep trying to make the point, but in the end it's sometimes too hard."*

Leadership

CFA, SES and Ambulance Victoria have all experienced significant organisational, structural and leadership changes in their varied histories, with more major change currently being undertaken following the implementation of recommendations contained in the State Government's White Paper. This is reflected in the feedback from interviewees, who all acknowledged that like many organisations, the change agenda was appealing and long overdue for some members, while others were more cautious and concerned.

The increasing emphasis on modern leadership practice was a prime example of this. Several interviewees alluded to the move away from tenure as a basis for promotion toward the recognition of more inclusive and collaborative leadership styles. This has been embraced by some: *"I give information but also invite ideas from those on the team. You can't always be directive"*. At the same time they recognise a small number of longer standing members are wary of this: *"They're more used to calling the shots and just saying how it's going to be. They've worked hard and given many years of service.... and (are) probably just used to doing it their way."*

"Listening to people is the most important thing. He models that really well"

"I still see too much of the directive stuff. It doesn't give people a chance to rise to the occasion."

EMS Volunteers

"He has a very short fuse. I know some volunteers have left because of this. He really knows his stuff and is the kind of person you want to be on the scene (of an emergency). But he really doesn't deal with people well."

"Some (groups) are really closed – they like who they like."

EMS Volunteer



There was an acknowledgement that some members were very good at emergency response and had a wealth of experience in equipment use, planning incidents and organising logistics, and yet may not have had an opportunity to develop the 'softer' skills of people management. The leadership and team building courses now available to service volunteers (including the locally developed and highly respected *Canoe Images* teams work program) were highly valued as a way of supporting potential and current leaders to develop those skills. Some comments were made about the need for services at the regional and state level to follow through with action if leaders aren't embracing a more inclusive style: *"Sometimes the (service) keeps people on because they are short of volunteers and have already invested so much, even when they still don't have the (people) skills."; "Some people ... they are just waiting for them to retire because that's easier than trying to get them to change."*

The low number of women in some groups was mentioned by a number of interviewees, and was put down to a number of factors, one practical one being the time commitments of raising a family. Some groups identified they had purposefully ensured their meeting space was able to accommodate one or two children, so members without child care alternatives could attend. Two interviewees suggested the emergency services sector has been trying to address its "blokey" culture for some time, and that newer methods of leadership and inclusion were starting to address this.

Regulation and compliance

Consistent throughout the interview process was concern about the increasing amount of paperwork relating to regulation and compliance processes. For the most part, all interviewees understood the need for improved safety and outcomes that was driving the process. However the direct benefit to local groups of some administrative activities was not always clear.

In the last ten years in particular, volunteer leaders have noticed the administrative requirements expanding. Leaders interviewed advised this was noticed by general volunteers who then express reluctance to take on more senior roles as they see the amount of paperwork required. This has significant implications for succession planning. Some volunteer leaders said they are able to delegate some of the tasks to other group members, but are generally careful of doing so. They recognise most

"The whole thing is run more like a business now. I feel like a manager rather than a volunteer."

"The paperwork is huge and time consuming. It seems like every little thing needs six pieces of paper."

"More and more is being put on volunteers. More paperwork especially that doesn't always have a clear benefit. Or at least it may have an identified benefit to people in Melbourne but doesn't seem to do much at the local level."

"There's always some form to fill out or questionnaire to do. And this is for all of (the services). They forget a lot of us don't just volunteer with one place, so we get it from all of them!"

EMS Volunteers



people join the service/s to be active volunteers, not do lots of paperwork, and so don't want to over-burden them or discourage them to the extent they stop volunteering. For those who volunteer their time across multiple services, the administration and regulation requirements become particularly burdensome. Interviewees reported frustration with multiple forms and processes, different interpretations of policy and varied procedures.

Recruitment

All services reported difficulty recruiting new members and stressed how much time it can take to engage a potential new volunteer, encourage them to join, ensure they persist through the training and finally become active in the service. They were also aware they were competing for volunteer time with the range of sporting, service and community groups that also need volunteers.

Groups had attempted a range of recruitment strategies over the years. Most had tried hosting information sessions to attract interest, incorporating a social element such as a BBQ or morning tea. All reported minimal success using this strategy: the sessions took time to organise and promote, and the resulting attendance was usually disappointing, with one, two or even no community members turning up.

Volunteer leaders reported more success using a direct, targeted approach to individual potential volunteers. For the most part this included leveraging on existing relationships and friendships. It also included specific targeting of people who are already known to be of a "volunteering nature", in other words they are already volunteering either with another emergency service or with a community group.

One interviewee stressed the importance of demonstrating the more interesting aspects of volunteering in the emergency sector. For this reason he was organising demonstrations for a group of potential volunteers so they could see the equipment in action and develop a sense of what was involved in the role. He saw his role as nurturing their interest over a few months to bring them to the point of enrolling. Of a group of 3 or 4 he is hopeful that half will end up joining.

"We've had open days but no-one came."

"If all people think about volunteering is that you have to go to lots of meetings they won't come. You have to make it interesting."

"It takes time to get new people to join. They don't start out really interested, you have to work at that. Keep talking to them."

"You're best just trying them one to one. If they're half keen my job is to support their interest, keep them excited so they follow through and enrol."

"Guys are usually members of the (local) footy and cricket club and this takes priority for them. I know of another town (not along the Track) and the CFA had more than 23 volunteers join up when the local footy club closed!"

EMS Volunteers





Two interviewees said it would be useful to have some concise recruitment material. At the moment they did not have anything that summarised what was involved and that was what people really wanted to know: *“all of the promotional stuff is very broad. It just says contact your local (group). People want more information before they commit to even doing that much.”*¹³

Some volunteer leaders were familiar with the ‘welcome packs’ available in some of the towns, but were unsure if their emergency service had any information about volunteering in them. They thought they might pursue this as an opportunity in the future.

Retention

Retention was an important issue for all interviewees, especially given the difficulty recruiting new volunteers. Several raised the fine line of retaining interest through new training opportunities whilst at the same time not overwhelming volunteers with high training demands. They tended to prefer organising local training opportunities where possible, as it provided valuable skills/knowledge acquisition, team building and a chance for social connection. It also limited expectation of travel and time away from home or farm.

The ability for volunteers to be active and respond to incidents was also raised as a contributor to retention. There was an acknowledgement that the different services had different numbers of incidents requiring a response, just because of the nature of the emergencies. Training, attending meetings and mock exercises could only go so far: volunteers needed incidents to feel they were making a difference and putting their skills into practice.

“One important thing with retention is to keep them active. It sounds horrible but they need to have the opportunity to respond to incidents.”

“It’s good activity that keeps people involved.”

“We have a couch and a TV so (a child) can stay there during training. Being flexible about things like this enables families to participate.”

“Our kids practically grew up in the (emergency service) shed!”

EMS Volunteers

¹³ Note: for the purposes of this project, the researchers looked online at all three emergency services provider websites for information about volunteering. All of them had information about the importance of volunteering, how it makes a difference at the local level and contact numbers so people could find out more. None of them had specific information about the training involved, what is expected of a volunteer or what skills/experience (if any) were required. This is the type of information potential volunteers tend to seek. Not all potential volunteers are prepared to progress their enquiry at this stage as they believe it may prematurely commit them to joining.



Increasing flexibility for meetings and training was also identified as a key factor in retaining volunteers. Where possible, groups organised meeting times and training opportunities around the other commitments of members. For some, this meant having meetings for a full day once per month, for others weekly meetings of shorter duration.

Emergency Services Identified Strategies

During the interviews respondents were asked to indicate strategies which might assist in creating resilient volunteer emergency services. The following ideas were mentioned:

- The ability to have training available locally,
- Recognising existing skills and experience,
- More detailed promotional resources with which to market their local unit,
- Knowing where to start with recruiting new residents,
- Changing the culture of some groups and units so they are more welcoming,
- Having statewide bodies recognise the demands on volunteers who belong to multiple services.

For the most part, these suggestions reflect the strategic direction of the emergency services organisations to create a more joined-up and inclusive sector. These ideas have been incorporated into the recommendations section of this report.



Community Consultations: Themed Findings from Health and Wellbeing Volunteers

“Some of our main volunteers swing between delivering meals on wheels and having their meals delivered they are so border line”
Volunteer Coordinator

Micro-volunteering

A new form of volunteer is emerging. They are committed, community minded people who willingly give their time to causes they believe in **for discreet time and task limited roles**. These volunteers are not members of a committee, are disinclined to attend meetings or be prepared to take on office bearer roles and responsibilities and they are, according to both national literature and the Mallee Track Resilient Volunteer Services research, an increasingly common figure in the volunteer landscape.

The rise of ‘micro-volunteering’ was amongst the most consistent theme of all interviews undertaken with health, wellbeing and development based volunteer groups. As a consequence organisations relying on volunteers for service delivery were increasingly recognising this preference and developing strategies to support it. A volunteer coordinator at one heavily volunteer-reliant organisation commented of people on their volunteer database “we tell them - you can say no as many times as you like so long as you don’t mind if we keep on asking you [because when the time is right they’ll say ‘yes’]”.

[a lot of community members] “like to help but don’t want to be committed, people don’t want to sign up to be members, attend meetings and organise things but will cook the BBQ all day if you ask them” Lions member
“People are not on the committee but are always happy to help with specific things” Progress Group Member
“people will help but they don’t want to come to another meeting, they don’t want the responsibility” Progress Group Member
“I’ve never had anyone refuse me when I ask them to do a job, on a given day at a given time” Progress Group Member
“I wish the community would take responsibility and share the workload” Community Group Member
“People who have lived in Ouyen all their life may be put off by volunteering because they have seen their parents volunteer and believe from this that ‘if you volunteer you do it forever’ so people see volunteering as a huge and long term commitment” Volunteer Coordinator



Micro-volunteering also faced some challenges, the most significant of which was where regulations required significant volunteer induction and where detailed registration processes were in place. In these circumstances, short-term and micro-volunteers required a time investment which may not necessarily be 'reimbursed' through their subsequent efforts of volunteering.

Ageing and declining volunteers numbers

True to the original concern identified in the Mallee Track ACT Program Charter (and many times over in research on volunteering in rural communities) comments made throughout interviews regarding the volunteer population reflected the rural community population – it was both ageing and declining. Several communities along the Mallee Track noted that CFA and SES "numbers are dropping" and that when it "comes to volunteering" "there are just enough people to go around" and "older people have to do everything".

Obligation and Expectation

Throughout interviews volunteers mentioned their sense of obligation to their community in volunteering to ensure the provision of important services. Some mentioned feeling this as a community expectation. Critically feeling 'expected' or 'obliged' to volunteer, as opposed to volunteering of your own volition has important ramifications for volunteer burnout with research demonstrating that 'obligation' is decreasingly a factor in why younger generations will volunteer.

The winter drought

A number of volunteer groups, together with organisations who rely on volunteers for a component of service delivery, spoke of the loss of volunteers from the community during the winter months or the loss of available time from some volunteers who remained in the community during the winter

"Some of our main volunteers swing between delivering meals on wheels and having their meals delivered they are so border line" Volunteer Coordinator
"Population decline is having a big impact" Progress Group Member
"..... Regular 7 on the committee all over 60 years. Young families are flat out with sport, school committees etc but everyone pitches in at events" Progress Group Member

"You don't resign because you don't like to let the other members down" Community Group Member
"It seems easier to get volunteers in the smaller Mallee Track communities because people 'feel guilty' in smaller communities if they are not volunteering" Volunteer Coordinator
"[volunteering] it's cultural. An expectation they will make up for the shortcomings of living in a small town" Volunteer Coordinator

"Winter is a really difficult time as baby boomers are holidaying. Baby boomers are the perfect volunteers most of the time, retired so have time and still able. But about 8-9 of our volunteers 'head off' caravanning for several months over winter and we are always short. As a result we increasingly need more stand by volunteers" Volunteer Coordinator
"Between January and April is when we typically get things done. In winter (April – September) older people are away travelling and younger people are busy with cropping / sporting groups" Progress Group Member
"Community members are much more mobile than they used to be and there is so much more opportunity for people to do things 'on retirement' that membership drops" Group Member



months. Firstly, whilst 'well' retirees were noted by some as the 'ideal' volunteer in that they were able bodied and time rich it was also noted that many of these retirees also travel during the winter months as 'grey nomads' leaving groups and organisations without otherwise highly committed volunteers. Secondly, and in a similar vein, several volunteer groups noted that winter months mean many community members who are otherwise actively involved in their group (or at least available for assistance) become either consumed with cropping programs (in the case of farming families) and / or sporting commitments to football and netball clubs.

Regulation and Training Burden

Within the health, wellbeing and development based organisations and groups along the Mallee Track who were reliant on volunteers for an element of service delivery, Progress Groups cited the least regulation and training specific burden. At the other end of the scale volunteer reliant services such as those provided by the MTHCS experienced considerable 'regulation and training' pressures as did, although to a lesser degree, groups such as the Lions Club and Parent Committees for Kindergartens and schools.

"All the extra regulations are putting people off becoming a member of Lions" Lions Club Member

"Initially when the Police Checks came in people were offended and there were some people who withdrew from their volunteer responsibilities because of this. Community Links has now simplified the process for volunteers so regulations like the Police Check are less confronting for volunteers" Volunteer Coordinator

The MTHCS noted volunteer training (including for 'short term' volunteers) as necessitating all or some combination of:

- Safe food handling
- First Aid
- Event specific training (ie around how an event might run, who is able to attend etc)
- Manual Handling (which is delivered 'in house' with the support of the MTHCS OT and staff from the Country Care Service / Equipment stockist in Mildura).

"The training and competencies of volunteers is becoming a big part of the HACC / Aged Care auditing process" Volunteer Coordinator

It was additionally noted that in HACC funded programs, according to the new 'common care standards' each new volunteer will require two referees to support their application to become a volunteer. Whilst for a local person these "referees" can be Community Links staff members so the process can be 'ticked off' quickly, this may become a limiting factor for new community members who are not known to Community Links staff.



At the overarching organisational level the MTHCS Senior Management Team expressed concern regarding the amount of time needed for the recruitment and processing of volunteers. "We need to treat [volunteers] as paid staff in terms of police checks, referee checks, interviews etc and this is time consuming and a huge administrative burden on staff".

The Ouyen Lions Club noted several regulations as impacting on their organisation:

- Food Safety Licences
- Health Department licence (paid annually to MRCC)
- Registration of each specific cooking event through online portal and
- The future requirement that Lions members have current Working with Children Checks if they are to support the 'Lions Youth' program.

Parent Committees for schools and kindergartens also noted concerns regarding increasing training and regulation requirements. Beyond the time impost, increasing regulation and training expectations were noted as impeding previously successful fundraising opportunities such as cake stalls.

These expectations were considered especially challenging for Kindergarten Committees because the committee tended to change every year as children move through the service annually (for example attending four year old kindergarten for one year ahead of commencing formal schooling).

Local Progress Groups indicated being the least impacted of the community groups interviewed in terms of regulation expectations. However the increasing expectation that these groups be the 'mouthpiece' of their community and play greater advocacy and 'funds management' roles meant developing skills in the arenas of governance, facilitation, grant writing, auditing and reporting, together with complimentary skills such as computer and internet literacy, were highly sought after. Several groups mentioned accessing this training through MADEC and SuniAFE.

"All this requires training on the internet and literacy and this is off putting for many community members, especially older members" Progress Group

"As a community we need training in computer skills, internet research, cut and paste etc. this should occur at the MRS bringing a trainer from Mildura to run training at night" Progress Group

"There are no regs or training expectations that put people off joining Murrayville Inc. but recruitment is always a challenge" Progress Group

"for the Kinder Committee to have a cake stall we have to pay \$130 for a permit, there is even paperwork if we want to have a stall selling fresh produce from people's trees / gardens" Parent Group

"it would be great if Council or someone could develop a booklet which outlined the regulations and paperwork required for different things, so if you wanted to run a cake stall you need this, this and this..." Parent Group

"the Progress Group started as a discussion group some years ago, then when groups needed to become incorporated to receive funding council assisted with this process..... the downfall was we didn't really understand the process or what this meant for how the group operated" Progress Group member



Recruitment Strategies

There was a general consensus amongst the groups and organisations interviewed that open invitation information sessions (morning teas, supers and the like) were not successful recruitment strategies. The likely explanation was that when people do attend they invariably feel committed to joining the group so attendance is limited to those very few who are looking to join the group regardless.

Groups largely agreed their most successful strategy in recruiting new members is through word of mouth and by personal approach to the identified individual. This personal approach also extended to retention of the new member. Larger organisations mentioned holding their own volunteer data bases.

Other recruitment techniques mentioned included advertising in local newspapers / newsletters and school newsletters and through the promotion of successful local volunteers such as those that have won regional and state level awards. An Ouyen specific strategy was the 'Ouyen Pack' which was mentioned as "useful in letting people know about volunteering opportunities". The Ouyen Pack was available through Ouyen schools, MTHCS, Neighbourhood House etc.

An important retention strategy recognised by the MTHCS is its annual appreciation event for volunteers, an evening function providing a meal and opportunity for volunteers to get together, reflect and share their experiences of the past year. MTHCS doesn't have trouble retaining volunteers, and advise they have not had any complaints. People are always happy to 'help if they can' but people are busy.

There was consensus that it was difficult to recruit young people and 'young' families into health, wellbeing and development focussed organisations and groups. It was recognised by most that "young families have different pressures and responsibilities – are busy with school and football / netball fundraising".

"We do have information sessions but no one comes" Lions Club

"Information morning teas are not very successful"
Volunteer Coordinator

"We do get the occasional new to community member joining Lions, often they were a member of Lions in their previous community and join as a way to meet people in their new town. As good practice an existing Lions member usually takes new members to their first meeting or any activity they are involved with. This is about the group actively keeping them involved and engaged in the early stages of their membership" Lions Club

"In terms of recruitment each year MTHCS get about 1 or 2 new volunteers and about the same number drop out"
Volunteer Coordinator

"Recruitment is always a challenge, aged people don't want to go out at night to a meeting" Progress Group



Never Enough

All organisations and groups interviewed indicated they would welcome more volunteers. With one interviewee noting that “Apex folded in Ouyen because it couldn’t get any members”. However of the health, wellbeing and development focussed groups interviewed the MTHCS Community Links program presented as most in need of additional volunteers. The Community Links program specifically mentioned requiring an additional five more community transport ‘drivers’ to do one trip each per fortnight and an additional five more Meals on Wheels volunteers. This was despite having more than 150 volunteers ‘on the books’.

Starting Early

Whilst there was some consensus that it was difficult to attract young people and young families to volunteering in the health, wellbeing and development arenas the need for an early foundation in volunteering was also raised. There was agreement that early exposure to volunteering role models in the home and community (critically where the volunteering workload was perceived as at a healthy level) and personal opportunities for safe and guided volunteering as a young person were important in creating a volunteering ‘personality’. As discussed earlier some community members were reluctant to volunteer having seen their parent’s efforts as an all-consuming and lifelong commitment.

“An early start in volunteering is critical, changes to HACC regulations have prevented under 18yrs volunteers [and] is jeopardising longer-term commitment to volunteering by preventing an early foundation in volunteering” Volunteer Coordinator

Senior Management at MTHCS identified the Home and Community Care regulation’s age restriction as a major concern. “With the new aged care standards we cannot have volunteers under the age of 18 years, this prohibits younger volunteers including those doing school based apprenticeships..... which have been particularly successful in the past and is no longer an avenue for introducing aged care as a career option for young people. Nursing also used to have a number of young people coming in to visit the elderly, which was of great value, and now this is no longer allowed”.

“We never have enough volunteers, especially with the driving program, getting people to appointments” Volunteer Coordinator
“to find a driver for 1 trip can be ½ a days work” Volunteer Coordinator
“Volunteering is always the same people in our community” Group Member



Ask a busy person.....

Throughout all interviews respondents mentioned how members of 'their' group were also a member of other community groups – “most Lions members also volunteer elsewhere in the community, Probus for example”.

Employer enabled volunteers

A number of interviewees recognised the contribution local employers made to enabling people to volunteer by allowing them to undertake these roles during their hours of employment. For example MTHCS acknowledged that “many local businesses will release staff during work to undertake roles such as Meals on Wheels”. Similarly it was also recognised that some volunteer roles were not feasible for people who worked, again using Meals on Wheels as an example, it was noted that “maybe Meals on Wheels should move to being delivered Tuesday – Saturday so it cuts out a work day for people and they may be more freed up to volunteer – everyone works so it’s harder to find volunteers”.

Some volunteer reliant organisations were exploring the possibility with Iluka of miners being released for volunteering roles (many of whom have an expectation within their employment contracts to volunteer within their communities).

Community Co-contribution

The MTHCS noted its unofficial motto as ‘local services provided by locals’ adding that “the community co-contribution to MTHCS is hugely significant if you measured volunteer hours as you would paid staff hours”. This reliance on volunteers for elements of health and wellbeing service provision was most obvious during volunteer shortages which necessitate volunteer roles be filled by paid staff. Occasionally MTHCS have needed to refuse service because there were no volunteers available to assist. Other groups involved in health, wellbeing and developmental service provision along the Mallee Track made similar observations.

“this community would not continue without volunteers”
Progress Group Member
“everything is built through fundraising.... the pool” Progress
Group Member



The largest single volunteer reliant organisation along the Mallee Track, Mallee Track Health and Community Services, raised the risk of changes to current funding channels and frameworks, commenting that “If voluntary participation was costed into outputs then it would be clear that the MTHCS model would be the most logical place for investment as community contribution is huge”.

Hidden Volunteering

Through the research it was noted that people generally ‘do what they do’ in their community and for fellow community members without necessarily recognising it as volunteering, for example the neighbour who delivers groceries. One interviewee commented – “whatever the rate of volunteering ... that is recorded in the Census data it would be more because a lot of what people do they do not even consider to be volunteering..... people don’t even see themselves as volunteers – it’s just what you do in small communities”. This canny observation speaks to the distinction drawn in the earlier literature review between informal and formal volunteering, demonstrating that the already high volunteering rates in rural areas would in fact be higher than formally recognised.

Community Identified Strategies

During the interviews respondents were asked to indicate strategies which might assist in creating resilient volunteer reliant services. The following ideas were mentioned:

- A comprehensive list of volunteer groups and their key contacts within any of the Mallee Track communities,
- Techniques for putting people in touch with groups,
- Clearly advertised opportunities to volunteer including details about the time and duration required and specifics of the role,
- Structures to help with resource (human and physical) sharing between organisations and groups,
- Training and information sessions to be delivered locally,
- Simplified regulation and registration processes.

Taken together these suggestions indicate a widespread volunteer community interest in infrastructure to support volunteer recruitment and registration. These specific needs are developed in the recommendations section of this report and overarchingly in the ‘service mapping’ framework which is outlined both in the body of this report and in the appendices.

“A few years ago the PCP developed a central repository for volunteer opportunities in the area but it wasn’t sustained due to lack of ongoing resourcing” Volunteer Coordinator



Burnout & Succession Planning

The constant search for more members and the associated training, registration and regulation was having an impact on volunteers along the Mallee Track. Most groups mentioned 'burnout' and challenges with succession planning were openly discussed. In those communities recently hosting Centenary celebrations (Walpeup and Underbool) the issue of burnout appeared more prevalent. Certainly Census figures highlighted in the community profile section of this report would confirm that the rate of volunteering increased in Underbool and Walpeup between the 2006 and 2011 Census periods despite declining population – a reflection of the fact that both communities were coordinating a series of additional 'events' over the course of the Centenary year (2011).

"People are feeling burnt out in Underbool, the ideas and the money are there it's just motivating the people now, there are just enough people to go around"

Progress Group Member

In terms of succession planning, one interviewee noted that "many community members worry about who will do the volunteer roles next" and as a consequence feelings of obligation and responsibility hold people (particularly the Silent Generation) in volunteer roles beyond their desire to do so. Other groups were more active in their approach to succession planning. "The workload of [our group] fluctuates but there is a good group synergy, we have a succession plan in place. I am training someone up to replace me on the group, they might not even realise this is happening. Some people do not know how to do this, how to mentor".



The Perceived Role of New Residents

Through the interview process, responses in relation to new community members varied along a continuum of highly positive to more negative, strongly reflecting broader literature and research undertaken at the national and international levels. It seems how people new to a rural community are valued and included is determined as much by the individual themselves as by the community, its culture and the range of structures which support opportunities for inclusion or maintain norms and behaviours designed to exclude.

At the positive end of the continuum organisations and groups noted new community members “arrive with very clear ideas about their skill set and what and how they want to volunteer” adding that “newcomers don’t have the same cultural understanding of volunteering [as locals] so aren’t as turned off” by the fear that it will be for life which appears to be a barrier for some locals. Another organisation commented that “If you come to town new and try to play sport etc you will fit in and then you get a committee job straight up”.

Mallee Track Health and Community Services maintains that some of their success in recruiting newcomers as volunteers is because almost all people invariably access their service (for health related needs) and are exposed to their volunteering opportunities. The Community Links Coordinators noted that “New community members have been some of our best volunteers”.

Most interviewed also commented on the number of new arrivals that had been attracted by lower house prices with some observations about new residents suggesting they are predominantly seen by the existing and established population in a somewhat negative light. Perceptions of the new arrivals were that they were generally not interested in being involved in the local community and had little understanding of what living in a rural setting means in terms of shared responsibility and participation. There was some expectation that new residents had a responsibility to “get out of their house and join things” if they wanted to really ‘belong’ to the community and that the onus rested on them to seek out volunteer opportunities.

“New community members have been some of our best volunteers at MTHCS” Volunteer Coordinator
“There are inactive community members, they’re not locals” Progress Group Member
“the town is losing its community ethos” Progress Group Member
“sometimes now you go to the shop and you see someone you don’t know and you think they’re a traveller but they actually live here now – you don’t always know your neighbour anymore” Progress Group Member
“I’ve gone through the little local phone book and I don’t recognise all the names now” Progress Group Member
“not everyone knows everyone now – it breaks things up a little bit, you know they’re about but there’s no joining in” Progress Group Member
“There are cheap houses here so people come here but they are not part of the community” Progress Group Member



The Experience of New Residents

The experiences of new residents recorded during the course of the Mallee Track Resilient Volunteer Services research yielded considerable internal consistency, with some small variations.

Significantly the new residents who informed the research were active volunteers along the Mallee Track so are in no way representative of those new residents who are not volunteering or engaged in the communities to which they have recently arrived. This is an important recognition in appreciating the limitations of the experiences noted here.

Of those interviewed it was noted they arrived to the Mallee Track with a history of volunteering and were more likely to have moved from another rural area as opposed to metropolitan Australia. Taken together these factors appeared to be the most significant precursor to taking up a volunteering role in a new community.

New residents also noted experiencing barriers and specifically exclusion, mostly from specific individuals as opposed to groups. It was also recorded on a number of occasions that Walpeup was a particularly welcoming community. It was speculated that the Walpeup Mallee Research Station (MRS) and the high incidence of new community members as a result of the MRS had created a culture of welcoming and accepting new residents within the Walpeup community. It is significant to recognise that new residents to the MRS would have invariably been well educated and employed, further to this a number of MRS employees went onto marry locals and remain in the community, bringing with them the experience of being 'new' and empathy for other new residents.

When asked 'how they find volunteer groups' a key response was through personal referral. This relies on having or forming a relationship with someone with sound local knowledge and would be a highly limiting factor in gaining volunteer knowledge for certain populations within the Mallee Track communities.

New residents who now volunteer reported both positive and negative experiences in their attempts to engage with volunteer organisations but agreed that it was important for 'organisations to do well' the following:

"I always volunteer, it is the best way to get involved and meet people when you are new to a community. I still get that occasional 'old families' attitude"

New resident & volunteer.

"[the worst volunteering experience] come with groups that are stuck in their old ways and from those groups that just signed people up then forget them or did not pay attention to their specific needs as a volunteer. The 'old boys club' has been a problem"

New resident & volunteer.



- Be flexible and receptive to the individual needs of volunteers,
- Give good advance notice when tasks are required,
- Welcome new members, provide chances for them to socialise and meet other volunteers, and
- Listen to new volunteers, valuing their input in the same way they value long term members,

One new resident noted specifically that regulations such as Police Checks were frustrating because of the need to have them redone for each new group or organisation “you have an interest in volunteering with”, commenting that this was not the case in the State they had relocated from and concluding “everything is more complicated in Victoria”.



Strategic Observations, Recommendations & Opportunities

Based on the Mallee Track Resilient Volunteer Services research findings and corresponding international, national and local literature, a series of three core strategic observations yielded nine broad recommendations and 24 opportunities for the enhanced resiliency of volunteer reliant services along the Mallee Track.

Significantly these recommendations and opportunities apply broadly to both emergency services and health, wellbeing and advocacy based services relying on volunteers in their service delivery. This highlights the commonality of experience across the volunteering sectors. Where recommendations and opportunities pertain specifically to either the emergency services or the health, wellbeing and advocacy services this has been noted.

These strategic observations, recommendations and opportunities are detailed below and shown diagrammatically on the following page. It should be noted that some opportunities are pertinent to more than one recommendation: for this reason they are listed under each relevant area.

Strategic Observation One: Changing Patterns of Volunteerism

Recommendation 1: Organisations consider exploring alternative methods of volunteering to enable people who are time poor to participate according to their availability.

Opportunity 1.1: Organisations explore options for micro-volunteering: short, discrete and easy to undertake tasks that will attract potentially time-poor volunteers.

Opportunity 1.2: Organisations consider whether some of their meetings and activities could be undertaken as an E-Club to minimise the face-to-face time commitments of existing and potential volunteers.

Opportunity 1.3: Organisations explore ways they can be more flexible in their requirements of volunteers, including meeting structures, volunteer roles and volunteer requirements.



Recommendation 2: Organisations experiencing the Winter Drought undertake a media campaign in the lead up to winter explaining their likely volunteer shortfall and inviting people to assist for the short term.

Opportunity 2.1: Organisations conduct awareness raising campaigns within their local communities and along the Mallee Track in the lead up to winter to increase understanding of volunteer shortfalls and promote short-term volunteering opportunities.

Opportunity 1.1: Organisations explore options for micro-volunteering: short, discrete and easy to undertake tasks that will attract potentially time-poor volunteers.

Opportunity 3.2: The ACT Initiative coordinate an alliance between key local stakeholders and state and national organisations to establish a localised Grey Nomads Volunteering strategy

Opportunity 7.1: HACC funded services advocate to the State Government for reconsideration of the recent state level provision (in the Victorian HACC Program Manual) limiting involvement by volunteers under 18 years in the aged care sector.

Opportunity 7.4: Organisations with volunteers be encouraged to review their police check requirements in line with the relevant and applicable legislation/standards to minimise the need for volunteers to complete multiple applications.

Recommendation 3: Mallee Track communities are supported in recognising the potential of, and developing and implementing strategies for, the engagement of Grey Nomad volunteers traversing the Mallee Track.

Opportunity 3.1: The ACT Initiative draw on State and National knowledge and resources to develop and distribute a localised awareness raising campaign to volunteer groups to highlight the value of engaging Grey Nomads.

Opportunity 3.2: The ACT Initiative coordinate an alliance between key local stakeholders and state and national organisations to establish a localised Grey Nomads Volunteering strategy.



Strategic Observation Two: Changing Volunteer Demographic

Recommendation 4: Mallee Track communities are supported in developing more comprehensive information resources and support structures for New Residents to encourage their volunteering along the Mallee Track and minimise their exclusion.

Opportunity 4.1: Develop, or where they already exist, update the volunteering component of 'New Residents' information resources and guides to include key information regarding volunteering organisations, roles and opportunities. Ensure the dissemination of these resources are available not only in various locations but also in a range of formats.

Opportunity 4.2: Create opportunities for local organisations to build their knowledge of volunteer needs and motivations through distributing resources such as those available through state and national volunteering sites.

Opportunity 4.3: Organisations be encouraged to hold 'taster' events with follow up 'buddy' arrangements to introduce people to the volunteer experience.

Opportunity 4.4: Applications be made for the undertaking of research to explore the specific needs of New Residents as potential volunteers with a particular focus on harder to reach community members.

Recommendation 5: Organisations be supported to develop recruitment and retention approaches that take into account the different expectations of emerging generations (notably Generations "X", "Y" and "Z").

Opportunity 5.1.1: Local groups and organisations consider nominating a single, existing volunteer website to promote local volunteering and agree to keep the site up to date with local volunteer openings.

Opportunity 5.1.2: Mildura Rural City Council consider establishing a volunteering page within their existing website with links to the nominated volunteer portal as well as local groups and organisations that have a web presence.

Opportunity 5.1.3: Local groups and organisations consider developing more detailed, localised websites that provide specific information in multi-media formats.

Opportunity 5.2: Local groups and organisations reflect on the benefits of a social media presence to promote their volunteer activities.

Opportunity 5.3: Local groups and organisations explore their organisational culture to identify opportunities for creating an approach that appeals to the Generations X, Y and Z.



Recommendation 6: Organisations be supported to develop volunteer recruitment and retention approaches that appeal to older generations capabilities and interests (tailored to the Silent Generation and Baby Boomers).

Opportunity 6.1: Organisations explore ways they can encourage “Volunteering in Place” by focusing on the capacities of older volunteers as they transition from older age to frail age, including adjustments to volunteer roles and locations according to varying degrees of ability.

Opportunity 6.2: Organisations explore ways to appeal to active retirees that meet their need for meaningful engagement, respect for experience and busy lifestyles.

Opportunity 1.1: Organisations explore options for micro-volunteering: short, discrete and easy to undertake tasks that will attract potentially time-poor volunteers.

Strategic Observation Three: Training and Regulation Burden

Recommendation 7: Organisations support the advocacy efforts of peak volunteering and emergency management bodies to streamline compliance and reduce the regulation burden.

Opportunity 7.1: HACC funded services advocate to the State Government for reconsideration of the recent state level provision (in the Victorian HACC Program Manual) limiting involvement by volunteers under 18 years in the aged care sector.

Opportunity 7.2: Local groups and units advocate to the State Government for increased parity of funding and consistent resourcing across all three emergency response service groups.

Opportunity 7.3: Mildura Rural City Council work in partnership with volunteer group representatives to redevelop their existing webpages to provide a more user friendly guide to permits and applications for volunteer groups undertaking fundraising events.

Opportunity 7.4: Organisations with volunteers be encouraged to review their police check requirements in line with the relevant and applicable legislation/standards to minimise the need for volunteers to complete multiple applications.



Recommendation 8: Organisations be supported to tailor the availability and accessibility of training to balance regulatory obligations with volunteer requirements and preferences.

Opportunity 8.1: Mildura Rural City Council consider organising a governance workshop for local committee members along the Track to assist them in understanding and maintaining their constitutional roles and responsibilities.

Opportunity 8.2: Mildura Rural City Council contact the Fire Services Commissioner's office to explore the potential for communities along the Mallee Track to pilot initiatives emerging from the State Fire and Emergency Services Training Framework (2013).

Opportunity 8.3: Volunteer groups along the Mallee Track consider collating training events and activities into a Training Calendar to promote a shared approach to training opportunities. Consideration also be given to securing a student placement project to allow such a Calendar to include training events identified through needs analysis.

Recommendation 9: The ACT Initiative and Mildura Rural City Council work in partnership with the responsible authorities to research and develop alternate pathways for volunteers such that they minimise duplication of volunteer registration and data collection.

Opportunity 9.1: Council and the community consider applying for project funds to establish a centralised Mallee Track database to confidentially capture information needed for recruiting volunteers

Opportunity 7.4: Organisations with volunteers be encouraged to review their police check requirements in line with the relevant and applicable legislation/standards to minimise the need for volunteers to complete multiple applications.

Opportunity 9.2: Colleague organisations consider establishing information sharing agreements to minimise the need for duplicate regulatory checks and training certifications.



CHANGING PATTERNS OF VOLUNTEERISM

**-1-
Time Poor Population**

(1.1) Micro-volunteering
(1.2) e-volunteering
(1.3) Organisational flexibility

**-2-
Winter Drought**

(2.1) Awareness raising
(1.1) Micro-volunteering
(3.2) Engage Grey Nomads
(7.1) Enable volunteers under 18yrs
(7.4) Reduce duplication of checks

**-3-
Grey Nomads**

(3.1) Increase awareness of the Grey Nomad opportunity
(3.2) Develop a localised GN engagement strategy

CHANGING VOLUNTEER DEMOGRAPHIC

**-4-
New Residents**

(4.1) New Residents information resources
(4.2) Thinking like a volunteer
(4.3) Taster volunteering
(4.4) Research into the volunteering culture of new residents

**-5-
Gen X, Y & Z**

(5.1) Increase on-line presence
(5.2) Embrace social media
(5.3) Create welcoming organisational cultures

**-6-
Older People**

(6.1) Volunteering in Place
(6.2) Active retirees
(1.1) Micro-volunteering

TRAINING AND REGULATION BURDEN

**-7-
Advocacy**

(7.1) Enable volunteers under 18yrs
(7.2) Address funding disparity between ES
(7.3) Simplify compliance info
(7.4) Reduce duplication of regulatory checks

**-8-
Training Obligations**

(8.1) Increase Accessibility of Governance Training
(8.2) Emergency Services Pilot
(8.3) Expand opportunities for shared training

**-9-
Streamlining for Volunteers**

(9.1) Mallee Track Volunteer Database
(7.4) Reduce duplication of regulatory checks
(9.2) Information sharing partnerships



Strategic Observation 1: Changing Patterns of Volunteerism

The Mallee Track Resilient Services research highlighted how patterns of volunteering have changed significantly in the last two decades, and how these trends are likely to continue. With many volunteer organisations relying on more traditional volunteering structures, there is a risk their sustainability will be compromised unless they take into account these new volunteer preferences.

There are three key patterns to be considered in ensuring Mallee Track volunteer services are able to move to the forefront of volunteer practice in the 21st Century. These include addressing the issue of **time poverty** for potential volunteers who have multiple commitments, exploring ways to combat the volunteer shortfall during the “**winter drought**” and accessing the potential of the **Grey Nomads** for episodic or once-off volunteering.

Time Poverty

In the Australian Government's background consultation for their National Volunteering Strategy (2010), the majority of respondents (86.8 per cent) indicated that “a busy life and competing priorities” were the central reasons people didn't volunteer. The Mallee Track Resilient Services consultations with local volunteers mirrored this research, with people increasingly identifying as “time poor”, feeling mounting pressures and demands for their time. As a precious commodity time has become a currency in itself, with people actively talking about their “lack of time” and “limited hours in the day”.

The lingering perception that volunteer work requires long-term commitment that eats into people's available time is a real and significant barrier to people's participation. In this era of time poverty people will weigh their perceived return on investment before donating their time and energy. With this trend likely to continue, groups and organisations along the Mallee Track wishing to attract and retain volunteers will need to find ways to change both what they ask people to do and how they ask them to do it.

People generally still wish to contribute to their local community, particularly in regional areas, and addressing their major barrier of time is a key way to enable them to do this. This includes exploring smaller, easier, more flexible and discrete options for volunteering together with the methods via which people give their time and effort.

No.1

Recommendation:

Organisations consider exploring alternative methods of volunteering to enable people who are time poor to participate according to their availability.

Opportunities to expand the ways people who are time poor can volunteer include:



- 1.1 Developing opportunities for micro-volunteering
- 1.2 Exploring the potential for e-clubs and e-contributions
- 1.3 Increasing organisational flexibility

Developing opportunities for Micro-Volunteering



The landscape of volunteering has changed considerably in America and Europe with the advent of micro-volunteering and this concept is just starting to take hold in Australia. Micro-volunteering is characterised by tasks that tend to be discrete, once-off, require small increments of time and are easy to do with minimal planning.

The use of the internet and social media as instantaneous communication tools is a useful enabler of micro-volunteering. The interest in micro-volunteering is therefore likely to grow in Australia in line with our uptake of online technology. In rural areas this is likely to parallel the rollout of the National Broadband Network (NBN). Whilst these mobile technologies favour on-line micro-volunteering, it should be noted that there are considerable opportunities for micro-volunteering in an off-line context. This has particular saliency for the towns along the Mallee Track that have less reliable internet coverage, and so micro-volunteering should not be dismissed for technological reasons.

There are numerous tasks associated with any volunteering group that are potentially suitable for micro-volunteering. Whilst the tendency for volunteering groups and organisations is to promote or be known by their core volunteer work (eg delivering meals on wheels, fire-fighting, first aid) most groups still have a plethora of background, promotional, support and administrative tasks that could be broken down into small “bite size” chunks suitable for micro-volunteering. By reducing the size of the task and increasing the flexibility by which it can be undertaken, volunteer groups can access the small (but not insignificant) amounts of free time that potential volunteers along the Track may be in a position to provide.

The first step for groups and organisations along the Mallee Track would be to explore the applicability of micro-volunteering to their activities. Appendix C provides some key questions that can assist in this area. For those organisations that believe micro-volunteering has potential, the next step would be to brainstorm the range of possible tasks that could be suitable. The table below cites examples of micro-volunteering opportunities from Browne's (et al, 2013) research. Whilst not all may be relevant for groups and organisations along the Mallee Track they do illustrate the wide range of options available.



	Campaigning and communication	Fundraising	Research and data	Practical help
Completed offline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signing a petition • Taking part in a flashmob • Giving a talk to raise awareness • Preparing a video • Sending cards • Staffing a stall at a fair or expo 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking part in a street collection • Running at a sponsored race • Placing a collection box in a local shop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completing a questionnaire • Providing a case study 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sorting out recycling • Taking part in a tree planting event or site clean up • Painting a pop-up shop • Baking a cake for a community event • Collecting goods from people's homes • Knitting a hat for a premature baby
Completed online	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing a Facebook page or website • Signing a petition • Liking a Facebook page • Providing feedback on marketing materials • Writing a blog post • Taking part in a webinar or online discussion • Tweeting a message 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crowdfunding • Online sponsorship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completing a questionnaire • Providing a case study • Contributing content to Wikipedia, Council info websites or other electronic sites • Crowdsourcing recommendations • Donating photos 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting up a Facebook event • Graphic design of a logo or webpage

Opportunity 1.1:

Organisations explore options for micro-volunteering: short, discrete and easy to undertake tasks that will attract potentially time-poor volunteers.



Exploring the potential for e-clubs and e-contributions

E-clubs are another emerging phenomenon associated with the increasing uptake of internet-based and mobile technologies. The majority of e-clubs are associated with promotional and recreational activities, such as restaurants, golf clubs and gaming. However their popularity is growing in other sectors, including volunteering. Leading the way, somewhat unexpectedly, is the service club Rotary. The first Rotary e-club, Rotary E-Club One, commenced in January 2002 in Colorado USA. Rotary E-Club One maintains they are *“just like any traditional Rotary club. The only difference is that members meet on-line to coordinate service projects and enjoy fellowship with like minded Rotarians”* (Clancy, Wilson and Hamilton, 2014).

Within Australia e-Clubs have been the preserve of capital city based Rotary Districts most notably Melbourne and Sydney. However more recently interest has been expressed by more rurally based Rotary Districts. One such District, District 9790¹⁴, has plans to develop an e-Club by April 2014. Currently this District consists of 61 Clubs and approximately 1800 members. Like many e-Clubs part of the emphasis for forming is remaining connected with members who are either absent from the District (such as travelling Grey Nomads) or unable to attend meetings for other reasons.

Rotary e-clubs follow the same policies as all Rotary clubs. The key difference is that an e-club conducts its weekly meeting on the club's website. Rather than being physically present at an appointed day and time, members may attend meetings at any time and any day of the week. E-club members use webinars, videoconferencing, message boards, instant messaging, or tools like Skype and Google Hangout to communicate. For example, a club member might post content online for that week's meeting, then other members join the discussion throughout the week. Some e-Club members also meet in person at service projects, social activities or the Rotary International Convention.

From a technological perspective e-Clubs require:

- A dedicated website
- Online meeting software to host a meeting (such as Citrix Online)
- Private sections of the website that protect members' online personal data and only members can access
- Online financial transaction systems for dues payments from members, contributions, and remittances



¹⁴ encompassing central Victoria and the lower part of central New South Wales, extending north to Deniliquin, across to Holbrook, Corryong and south to Melbourne's northern suburbs from Heidelberg to Eltham in the east and Sunbury in the west



E-clubs may not be the answer in and of themselves to the time constraints of existing and potential volunteers. They may, however, provide a viable alternative for those groups and organisations who struggle to recruit members onto committees or to encourage volunteers to attend meetings. As an adjunct to existing, face-to-face activities, an E-Club option could be a valuable time-saver for existing volunteers, as well as a relief for potential volunteers who may be discouraged by the time and distance needed for more traditional meetings.

A potential step to test the viability of E-clubs for local groups would be to start actively encouraging “E-contributions”: establishing a moderating forum, discussing and developing the progress of a project on-line, enabling people to contribute to up-coming meetings via a private Facebook page.

Based on the Rotarian experience, groups who will most benefit from its use will be those whose volunteers:

- have a busy schedule
- need a flexible meeting time
- live in multiple places during the year (eg Grey Nomads)
- travel frequently or conversely have limited mobility
- have family, carer or other commitments
- have an understanding of or willingness to embrace on-line technologies.

If taken in conjunction with the later recommendation (see Younger Volunteers section) to increase their on-line presence, groups along the Mallee Track could become some of the first in the State, if not Australia, to proactively use this technology to increase volunteer involvement and sustainability.

Opportunity 1.2:

Organisations consider whether some of their meetings and activities could be undertaken as an E-Club to minimise the face-to-face time commitments of existing and potential volunteers.

Resources that may be of assistance:

Clancy, P., Wilson, B. and Hamilton, D. (2014), Issues in the establishment of a satellite e-club in district 9790 (<http://www.rotary9790.org.au/clubs/stoz/southernmitchell/ftp/eclubestablishment.pdf> accessed 30/01/14)

What You Need to Know about Rotary E-Clubs (<https://www.rotary.org/en/document/648> accessed 30/01/14)



Increasing organisational flexibility

Developing greater flexibility in the type and nature of volunteering opportunities emerged as a key challenge in responding to a changing volunteering landscape.

*"Flexibility is the key and having an understanding that volunteering today is very different from volunteering 20 years ago."
(Individual Volunteer)*

Volunteering organisations are increasingly noticing the difficulty of existing or potential volunteers to undertake tasks as they have traditionally been performed. This can range from an inability or unwillingness to attend a minimum number of meetings per year, to a reluctance for people to nominate for key roles on volunteer committees. Along with the trend towards short-term volunteering, young people, baby boomers, people with family commitments and those of working age are decreasingly interested in formal activities that are not directly related to the delivery of volunteer services.



People increasingly believe that volunteering opportunities need to take into account the pressures and opportunities of the modern world by offering greater flexibility. The Australian Government's research (2010) indicated nearly half of the people consulted wanted to participate in a range of different short-term volunteering opportunities, while a similar number of respondents indicated that they would like to volunteer on a regular basis for the same organisation. This reflects the need to offer newer, more flexible options alongside more traditional forms of long-term volunteering.

For this reason, rather than relying solely on traditional meetings, roles and activity formats, volunteering groups and organisations will increasingly need to develop new ways of engaging their volunteers and encouraging participation, whilst remaining flexible to appeal to a diverse volunteer population.

Such flexibility might include:

- options to job-share a difficult-to-fill committee role
- dividing large committee roles into smaller, more manageable roles (eg have a Minutes Secretary and a Correspondence Secretary)
- creating new roles such as WebMaster or Facebook Moderator
- relaxing regulations, where possible, that require attendance at a minimum number of meetings



- reviewing meeting procedures to make them shorter, more participatory, more relevant
- being prepared to change meeting times, dates, locations and length to suit members
- exploring the role technology might play in minimising meeting time commitments (consider people joining via Skype, teleconference)
- exploring whether some of the administrative or meeting tasks can be done using a private Facebook group
- keeping people informed through electronic means (email, Facebook, Twitter) not just through hard-copy minutes and newsletters
- reviewing whether meetings are even required (and if they are being clear about their purpose)
- exploring what tasks can be undertaken without requiring formal training
- changes to volunteer rostering to allow for individual preference
- offering child care or elder care where this is a barrier to participation
- allowing volunteers to share a task or role rather than take sole responsibility
- opportunities for volunteers to complete tasks in their own timeframe rather than at a designated time

Clearly this is not an exhaustive list, and not all options will be suitable for every group. The willingness of volunteer organisations to tackle any insistence for doing things “because that’s how they’ve always been done” is increasingly likely to be proportional to their ability to attract and retain a diverse volunteer pool. Organisational flexibility will be needed to meet the challenges of time poor volunteers.

Opportunity 1.3:

Organisations explore ways they can be more flexible in their requirements of volunteers, including meeting structures, volunteer roles and volunteer requirements



Winter Drought

Whilst the Mallee Track Resilient Services research identified a shortage of volunteers across all areas and groups, a particular shortage was routinely experienced during the winter months. This shortage was a response to several factors: the increased work pressure felt by farming families during the cropping season, the heightened volunteering workload felt by individuals and families involved in winter sports such as football and netball which necessitated their 'stepping back' from other volunteer roles and lastly the tendency for more able retirees to travel away during the cooler months, effectively becoming 'Grey Nomads'.

The 'winter drought' created specific issues for different groups and organisations and, as such, their responses varied. Some Progress Associations along the Mallee Track had made the decision to suspend their group's activities during the winter months rather than continue efforts without the volunteer numbers required. However volunteer reliant organisations such as Mallee Track Health and Community Services offered year-round services so could not 'step back' from service delivery. Such organisations were heavily impacted by the loss of volunteers during winter months.



To date the 'winter drought' phenomenon has not been documented in volunteer literature, however it is effectively a time limited shortfall in volunteer requirements and as such various strategies noted in this report are particularly pertinent. These strategies include:

- Encouraging infrastructure which supports micro-volunteering (Recommendation 1, Opportunity 1.1),
- Improved community-wide information and promotion regarding volunteer roles and specific organisational needs (so community members can identify when specific volunteer 'droughts' are occurring in their local communities) (Recommendation 2, Opportunity 2.1),
- Streamlining of training and regulation requirements making it easier for people to volunteer for short periods (Recommendation 7, Opportunity 7.4),
- Establishing infrastructure and networks which engage Grey Nomads passing through the Mallee Track during the winter months (Recommendation 3, Opportunity 3.1, 3.2), and
- Advocacy to reinstate opportunities for young people under 18 years to volunteer within HACC services such as Meals on Wheels (Recommendation 7, Opportunity 7.1).



Formally naming the difficulties experienced during the Winter Drought and running local media campaigns in the lead up to this time could be undertaken to recruit volunteers specifically for this period. In combination with the associated strategies indicated above, this could entice volunteers who would ordinarily be reluctant to offer their services through fear of ongoing commitment or expectations.

No.2

Recommendation:

Increase awareness of the Mallee Track Winter Drought with the aim of facilitating uptake of short term volunteering to meet the Winter shortfall.

Opportunity 2.1:

Organisations experiencing the Winter Drought undertake a media campaign in the lead up to winter explaining their likely volunteer shortfall and inviting people to assist for the short term.

Grey Nomads

Importantly for Ouyen and the Mallee Track communities their location along significant roadways also makes them well-placed to capitalise on at least one of those 'factors' to which they locally attribute their 'winter drought' volunteer shortages, Grey Nomads (GN).

As documented in the literature, **'Grey Nomads'** can be defined as people aged over 50 years who adopt an extended period of travel independently within their own country.

Exploration of the research into patterns of volunteering by Grey Nomads suggests they have particular interests and whilst they are not subject to social pressure from towns to volunteer they do exhibit a desire to meet the townspeople and experience the local 'heart' of these communities. As a relatively large population, the Grey Nomads form a potentially substantial resource of economic, human and social capital to the rural communities through which they pass.

There is, however, diversity amongst the Grey Nomads in their interest and ability to volunteer which must be recognised in volunteer recruitment and retention programs. For example the grouping 'Grey Nomad' masks the differences between an active 'baby boomer' versus the limitations experienced by those aged over seventy with health difficulties. Nevertheless, given the



apparent eagerness of many or most Grey Nomads to use volunteer opportunities to extend their knowledge and learn more about local towns, there is considerable opportunity for communities along the Mallee Track to engage this population as temporary volunteers.

To capture the time, skills and energies of Grey Nomads towns along the Mallee Track could promote the provision of low cost camp sites and opportunities to experience the 'real heart' of the community. Similarly groups and organisations should aim to engage Grey Nomads in activities suited to their diverse preferences, skills and fitness levels.

No.3

Recommendation:

Mallee Track communities are supported in recognising the potential of, and developing and implementing strategies for the engagement of, Grey Nomad volunteers traversing the Mallee Track.

Opportunities to increase the engagement of Grey Nomad Volunteers include:

3.1 Increasing local awareness about the Grey Nomad opportunity

3.2 Developing a strategy to engage Grey Nomads

Local awareness raising campaign

The engagement of passing 'Grey Nomads' in local volunteering roles and events is a relatively recent strategy to be employed by rural communities seeking additional volunteer hours. For this reason the ACT Mallee Track Resilient Volunteer Services research found it to be a largely unconsidered opportunity by groups and organisations along the Track. As is the case for most new ideas and approaches



BARCADDINE GREY NOMAD VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

Located in central west Queensland, the Barcaldine Regional Council townships of Alpha, Aramac, Barcaldine, Jericho and Muttaborra with a population of 3,500 people, lies within the Galilee Basin on the Matilda and Capricorn Highways.

It is estimated as many as 400,000 tourists visit outback Queensland each year of which a majority visit the Barcaldine Regional Council region during their travels. 70% of visitors are Grey Nomads, with a large number of regulars who stay for two or three months in the region.

The Barcaldine Regional Council Grey Nomad Volunteer Program aims to tap into this pool of largely retirees who visit the region each year.

The program is funded through the Queensland Government's Blueprint for the Bush initiative.

The visiting Grey Nomad Volunteers provide community groups with access to a range of skills not often available within our communities.

The program benefits the community by encouraging the Grey Nomads to stay longer, meet local people and become part of the community.

Volunteers are asked to fill in an application form nominating the skills that they would like to share with our communities. Their skills are then matched with the skills required to complete a community group project registered with the program.

Previously Grey Nomad Volunteers have helped out at the Barcaldine State School, Church's, Senior Citizens Club, Hospital, Library, Kindergarten, Golf Club, Cemetery, Museum, Central West Aboriginal Corporation, Arts Council, Girl Guides and assisted with other community events.

If your community is interested in starting a Grey Nomad Volunteer Program, the Barcaldine Regional Council can provide you with a free copy of the Road Map document on how the program was developed. **For more information contact the program coordinator on below contact details.**

**For further information contact, Grey Nomad Program Coordinator,
Douglas Stewart douglass@barcaldinerc.qld.gov.au**





time and effort needs to be committed to awareness raising and promotion before such opportunities can be fully understood, appropriately considered and actively adopted. A localised promotion and education campaign highlighting to Mallee Track communities the valuable 'human resources' traversing the Track, particularly during the winter months when many groups are experiencing their largest volunteer shortfall, is a critical first step in creating receptiveness to engaging Grey Nomads as volunteers.

Onyx, et. al. (2010) outlined several such strategies for engaging local towns and communities including:

- Printing positive stories about Grey Nomads and their social contributions in local newspapers and council newsletters (as demonstrated on the Barcaldine Regional Council website (above),
- Providing information for townspeople about Grey Nomads, who they are and why they travel, together with their needs and wishes,
- Developing low-key informal community events (outside of volunteering opportunities) where visiting Grey Nomads and locals can meet; this could perhaps be through existing community organisations such as invitations to the local arts group, men's shed, church or bowling club.

Opportunity 3.1:

The ACT Initiative draw on State and National knowledge and resources to develop and distribute a localised awareness raising campaign to volunteer groups to highlight the value of engaging Grey Nomads.

Develop a Mallee Track strategy for engaging Grey Nomad Volunteers

Once awareness of the benefits of engaging Grey Nomads in local volunteering roles has been raised and receptiveness to implementing this opportunity locally has developed, the process of attracting and engaging Grey Nomads should commence. If there is agreement that this process be undertaken at a 'Track' wide level (as opposed to independently by individual groups and organisations) such a strategy might entail:

Distributing information to local groups outlining the needs and preferences of Grey Nomads in volunteering 'en route' so groups can commence making informed decisions about where Grey Nomad volunteers might contribute to their organisation or to the Mallee Track community more broadly. Early research would indicate Grey Nomad Volunteers seek:

- Opportunities which allow them to meet and socialise with local people
- Work which is meaningful and important to the community
- Projects that benefit the town generally rather than a small group



- Specific liaison person(s) to work with and the provision of appropriate equipment
- Projects which offer the opportunity to maintain or improve local low and no-cost campsites
- Flexibility to the volunteering role
- Opportunities to select from several possible volunteer projects offered by a variety of community groups, with some ongoing and others short term
- Accommodation that is low or no cost. Research indicates that the ideal Grey Nomad camp is cheap, safe and quiet and has a pleasant natural aspect with space and trees and a place to gather for “happy hour”. Many Grey Nomads are self-contained but for stays of over a week they will need a dump point (to dispose of toilet waste) and water within a reasonable distance (not necessarily at the campsite). Accommodation options might include: adapting the local showground or race course, subsidising costs for staying at existing caravan parks or free camping areas beyond the town limits. Existing free and low cost camping areas in the area are already receiving favourable reviews in the Caravaner's Forums (eg the Underbool Rest Stop and Walpeup's low cost campsites). Given travellers focus on provision of clean amenities, presence of shade, mobile reception and the friendliness of local community members, where these facilities are already in existence information about them could be collated for promotional purposes.

Establishing infrastructure to support an engagement strategy including:

- Forming a working group to coordinate the strategy development, commencing with the calling for Expressions of Interest from organisations considering engaging Grey Nomads as volunteers
- Identifying the auspicing body if a 'Track wide' project is preferred (in previous communities this has tended to be local government). If organisations have identified individual projects then this responsibility rests with the organisation themselves
- Creating a simple policy and procedures manual for the process and practice of engaging Grey Nomad volunteers. This will provide a central reference point for answering questions but also provide resources for planning and information for new staff or committee members
- Developing a Grey Nomad volunteer registration process which will gather background information about the volunteer whilst providing them with details about projects, regulation requirements and insurance etc
- Identifying a local registration point, a physical location where Grey Nomads can present and inquire as to opportunities, is critical. Ideally this location is conspicuous, accessible most of the time and welcoming and supportive of the Grey Nomad volunteer program. This may be a





Visitor Information Centre but petrol stations, pubs, cafes and caravan parks are other possible locations that have been used with success

- Developing Volunteer Information packs which might include such items as a welcome and thank-you letter, information about the town, a town map, accommodation information (dump point, water etc), any existing brochures about the group they will be working with, an information sheet about the Grey Nomads as volunteers project in the town and committee contact details (where a Track wide project is undertaken), information about the specific project and information about the specific task for which they have volunteered.

Engaging Grey Nomad Volunteers. Strategies might include:

- Signs and flyers directing Grey Nomads to the registration point distributed to the types of places Grey Nomads are likely to frequent, all tourist activities and outlets, petrol stations, pubs, cafes and caravan parks. Local newspapers and newsletters are also read by Grey Nomads and local radio is likely to be interested in any stories
- Regional recruitment – flyers and signs can be distributed to other Visitor information centres in the region – and along Grey Nomad routes
- National recruitment – Go Volunteer is a national website run by Volunteering Australia where you can post volunteer opportunities. Council web-sites can also be used to distribute information. Some Grey Nomad specific sites and resources are listed below and should be actively utilised in the promotion and recruitment campaign
- All promotional material should have an email and telephone contact – contact with Grey Nomads ahead of time can assist with planning the projects.

Opportunity 3.2:

The ACT Initiative coordinate an alliance between key local stakeholders and state and national organisations to establish a localised Grey Nomads Volunteering strategy.

Online Resources and Grey Nomad specific sites:

<http://thegreynomads.com.au/classifieds/volunteering/>

Website advertising volunteering opportunities through their 'classifieds / volunteering' tab, also has a fortnightly e-newsletter magazine - **The Grey Nomad Times** with 5,000-plus subscribers and a Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/thegreynomads>



<http://www.greynomadsaustralia.com.au/index>

Website targeting Grey Nomads which advertises volunteering opportunities through the 'Classifieds / opportunities' tab also includes newsletter and Facebook links.

<http://greynomadclub.com.au/>

A dedicated Grey Nomad advertising website which includes a link to 'Nomad Employment'

<http://www.cmca.net.au/>

Campervan & Motorhome Club of Australia (CMCA) offers a website for all people travelling. The CMCA website has a link 'Members Information / Volunteering' tab which allows members to view volunteering opportunities across Australia.

<http://greynomadproject.jimdo.com/project-information/>

Details the **Barcaldine Grey Nomad Volunteers project** outlining both completed projects and upcoming volunteer opportunities within the municipality's communities.

<http://lionsonoz.nsw.lions.org.au/>

Australian Lionsonoz was set up to cater for those Lions who have become "Grey Nomads". It gives wandering Lions the opportunity to stay in touch with like minded Lions and to attend Club meetings on the Internet. Members are entitled and encouraged to attend Lions meetings or projects in the towns they visit.

http://www.uws.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/145969/GREY_NOMAD_VOLUNTEERS_report_19_JAN_10.pdf

Grey Nomad Volunteers: New partnerships between grey nomads and rural towns in Australia (key research report)



Strategic Observation 2: The Changing Volunteer Demographic

The changing nature of rural populations across Australia, and in smaller towns such as those along the Mallee Track in particular, has a significant influence on the nature and number of potential volunteers. Property prices in metropolitan areas and larger regional cities are influencing a small but noticeable number of people to relocate to smaller rural towns where property and rent is more affordable. These **New Residents** form a potential pool of new volunteers in communities that are otherwise tending to decline in population.

At the same time, the age profile of communities is changing. Younger generations are moving into life stages where they could consider volunteering, should the conditions be welcoming for them. **Targeting Younger Generations X, Y and Z** will be important in coming years to enable succession planning and replacement of older volunteers as they move on. Meanwhile **Older People** who are moving into retirement and have time available for voluntary contribution, ie the Baby Boomers, and those who are in the Silent Generation who are becoming older and increasingly frail, have considerable skills to offer local volunteer groups and need to be retained in the volunteer pool as long as possible.

New Residents

Research by Eversole (2005) noted "Ouyen also has had in-migration of families and individuals..... The hypothesis of many locals interviewed was that many have been attracted by inexpensive housing and/or the lack of work opportunities (for those who do not wish to work). These 'itinerate' populations are not in general well accepted by longer-term local residents. While criticised for their lack of involvement in the community, it is questionable how many opportunities for involvement would be open to these newcomers, particularly if they do not fit easily into the local community culture dominated by involvement in sport. We thus see apparent marginalisation of certain newcomer families, and which may further encourage newcomers to leave."

Certainly both national and international research references the challenges faced by communities in engaging newer community members into volunteering and community life more generally. Interestingly the themes around barriers to 'newcomer' engagement and strategies for addressing these show considerable consistency at both the national and global level, and following the Mallee Track Resilient Volunteer Services research, the same can be said for the local level.



The ABS 2010 Report on Voluntary Work in Australia reflects this, noting volunteering rates were lower in homes recording the following characteristics:

- Highest year of school completed being Year 9 or below
- Reporting fair or poor self-assessed health
- Being in a household where the main source of income was a government pension, benefit or allowance
- Not having completed a non-school qualification
- Having a disability or long-term health condition <http://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/research-and-advocacy/the-latest-picture-of-volunteering-in-australia/>

A key Australian research effort into the engagement of new residents into volunteering was conducted by Paull (2009) in Western Australian wheatbelt towns. In hearing from newcomers regarding barriers to volunteering Paull (2009) noted these included time, petrol costs, distance from town, lack of flexibility within the volunteer role and volunteer organisation, limited information about volunteering opportunities and social anxiety. There was also discussion of not wanting to take on too much, not having a clear indication of time commitments, being uncertain about what might be involved, and a feeling about the “closed shop” experienced in some organisations.

The Mallee Track Resilient Services research findings reflect these observations not only for newcomers but for longer term and lifelong residents also. Particularly significant for newcomers, as identified in Paull's (2009) research also, was limited information about the volunteering role and group and social anxiety and related feelings of being included. Recommendations relating to these two findings are outlined below. Recommendations related to role and organisational flexibility are addressed in the section pertaining to Micro-volunteering.



Recommendation:

Mallee Track communities are supported in developing more comprehensive information resources and support structures for New Residents to encourage their volunteering along the Mallee Track and minimise their exclusion.

Opportunities to increase the information and supports available to New Residents seeking to volunteer include:

- 4.1 Developing and distributing volunteering information resources and guides to 'New Residents'
- 4.2 'Thinking like a volunteer' developing resources to assist local organisations to understand the volunteering needs of new residents
- 4.3 Entry level and 'faster' volunteering opportunities for new residents
- 4.4 Research into the volunteering culture of new residents

New Residents' information resources and guides

Paull's (2009) research revealed that newcomers were interested to find out about volunteering opportunities without committing themselves to one place, group or role by doing so. This reflected the concerns of not only new residents along the Mallee Track but also longer term and life residents. Essentially, without feeling obligated to commit they wanted a means of seeking the information they required, including further detail about:

- The reason for the need for volunteers and purpose of the group or organisation,
- Explanation of specific roles and tasks within the group – such that people think 'I can do that',
- An understanding of who volunteers and how they do so,
- Clear information about time commitments required and any 'out-of-pocket' expenses.

"Volunteers wanted" for the local museum was insufficient to allow a person with only a few hours to spare a month to decide to phone up. The local council in this location had changed their advertising to include more detailed job descriptions and details of time commitments, with more successful outcomes. Paull (2009)

Having this information readily available, for example, in New Residents' Guides, would not only potentially ignite their interest in volunteering, but give them the detailed information they need to make an informed decision about progressing their interest further. Consultations along the Track indicated that some volunteer groups were aware there had been 'New Residents' Packs in some towns, but lacked awareness regarding their content and whether volunteer information was included.



Importantly, effort spent gathering and collating more detailed information from volunteer groups and organisations along the Mallee Track for inclusion in New Residents Guides would support the implementation of several broader recommendations pertaining to the 'distribution' of information such as the increased availability of information online for younger generations. Information resources should not be limited to paper-based and electronic dissemination, rural communities around Australia have successfully implemented strategies such as 'new to town' monthly meetings which all new residents are encouraged to attend and local groups and organisations are invited as 'guest speakers' and offered the opportunity to present their volunteer work and roles.

Attention also needs to be given to strategies beyond those which reach only new ratepayers (such as mail-outs with rate notices) but disregard a further cohort of new residents in 'renters'. Paull's research found "new rental tenants continued to be excluded and 'information' poor" despite the various strategies often enacted to engage new residents. This accidental 'exclusion' typifies the experience of vulnerable individuals and families who relocate for more affordable housing. Ensuring New Residents packs are accessible across a range of services including rental property managers, food outlets, health and employment services and welfare agencies is important in rectifying this.

Opportunity 4.1:

Develop, or where they already exist, update the volunteering component of 'New Residents' information resources and guides to include key information regarding volunteering organisations, roles and opportunities. Ensure the dissemination of these resources are available not only in various locations but also in a range of formats.

Links to international resources, and especially those developed in Canada are listed below:

<http://volunteer.ca/content/building-blocks-engaging-newcomer-volunteers>

<http://volunteer.ca/content/building-blocks-newcomers-volunteering-newcomer%E2%80%99s-guide-volunteering>

http://www.saskatoon.ca/DEPARTMENTS/Community%20Services/Communitydevelopment/Documents/volunteer_handbook.pdf





Thinking like a volunteer

Ensuring a volunteer understands what you require of them is only half the task, organisations must also ask themselves 'what does a volunteer require from us as an organisation?' As highlighted in the 'Time Poverty' recommendations and opportunities section, volunteers are increasingly strategic about where they 'spend' their available volunteering time. With this in mind successful volunteer reliant organisations are paying close attention to the needs and motivations of would-be volunteers and 'speaking' to these both in the promotional and informational literature they provide them and in their day-to-day actions.

To support local organisations in attracting volunteering the Corowa Shire, for example, posted the following advice regarding volunteer needs and motivations on their 'Volunteering in Corowa Shire' webpage:

- List 'what's in it for the volunteer' - it may be a reference, something to add to their CV, training, meeting new people, personal satisfaction, helping a cause they believe in or learning new skills - spell it out so they know what they can get out of helping your organisation
- If you have benefits or particulars to your organisation that provide an added benefit to a volunteer, list these in all promotional material, examples include: reimbursements for travel expenses, monthly get-togethers for staff and volunteers, free meal with evening meetings, access to specific resources from 'parent' websites or resources typically limited to paid 'members'
- Think creatively about volunteer roles - divide tasks into 'projects' and think about which tasks could be done by a team of volunteers, this will particularly appeal to volunteers looking for shorter or limited commitment roles
- Make it easy for people to get involved by minimising screening/induction process
- Make your job descriptions sound interesting - Don't start a gardening position description with "Weeding" start it with "Enjoy the Outdoors!"
- Involve current volunteers in evaluating processes and programs to facilitate ongoing improvement
- Pay attention to the appreciation and recognition of volunteers, publicising this will demonstrate to would-be volunteers that your organisation values their volunteers
- Demonstrate to would-be volunteers how current volunteers have ownership/responsibility of particular projects including leadership/decision-making opportunities if desired
- Encourage would-be volunteers to develop their roles in areas that are of particular interest to them, bringing new skills and ideas to the organisation
- Demonstrate how they will be included as part of your team – ensuring opportunities to meet all members and feel welcome and valued (http://www.corowa.nsw.gov.au/news/images/Attracting_Volunteers.pdf accessed 11/01/2014)



Opportunity 4.2:

Create opportunities for local organisations to build their knowledge of volunteer needs and motivations through distributing resources such as those available through state and national volunteering sites.

Entry level and 'taster' volunteering opportunities

Barriers to volunteering experienced by vulnerable and disadvantaged new residents occur both at the supply and demand side. In terms of 'supply' side new residents themselves may doubt their skill or ability to volunteer, be too unwell or consumed with life issues to even consider volunteering an option or may perceive or experience exclusion. On the 'demand' side community groups and organisations may not consider new residents as potential volunteers, know how to reach or attract them, or, in worst case scenarios not consider their skills and input as valuable or required.

In all these circumstances entry level or 'taster' (sometimes called 'come and try') volunteering opportunities are a critical first step. Any organisation can take a lead role in demonstrating to the broader community the valuable human asset new residents bring to a rural community. This can be done by recruiting a new resident as a member, holding an information event specifically aimed at new residents or personally approaching a new resident to invite their involvement. Importantly respect and persistence with this process is the key to success, with Paull's (2009) research noting that many new residents find not only the first 'meeting' or 'event' difficult but also the second and third. Again the research and literature relating to engaging harder to reach community members in services has credence in this field. Utilising a 'buddy system' in partnership with taster events would allow for personalised follow up of potential volunteers in a way that may address their social anxiety.

Taster events allow new residents to feel valued and that they have something to offer. They help build confidence and, particularly for vulnerable or disadvantaged residents, assist them to recognise their own latent skills and knowledge. At the same time, the experience can demonstrate to local organisations that all some new residents need is a little encouragement.

Opportunities offered as 'tasters' also go some way to address new residents wariness of early commitment. A pressure-free environment is purposefully created, where people are free to ask questions, get to know the group and be free to choose whether or not they continue on to become a volunteer. Conversely, it also gives organisations the opportunity to see if the new resident would be a suitable fit for the volunteer role.

Opportunity 4.3:

Organisations be encouraged to hold 'taster' events with follow up 'buddy' arrangements to introduce people to the volunteer experience.



Researching the specific needs of harder to reach community members

The challenge of all research is in hearing from those members of a community who are least likely to engage in the range of services, opportunities and activities available in any given area. Whilst the Mallee Track Resilient Volunteer Services research did hear the stories of newer residents to the Mallee Track these were those individuals and families already engaged in volunteering in some manner. These interviews shed light on why some new residents volunteer and which elements of the volunteering process either encouraged or discouraged their volunteering efforts. However the most significant commonality between these new resident volunteers was their background in volunteering which carried forward from their earlier 'home' communities. For all intents these people were volunteers who moved, not people who moved then sought to volunteer.

Limited information exists in the 'volunteering literature' as to how to engage new residents who have no volunteering background, and are potentially vulnerable and disadvantaged community members, into volunteering roles. Whilst research and literature around the engagement of vulnerable and disadvantaged families into services carries some opportunities for extension to volunteer engagement, volunteer specific research is required. There is currently a paucity of such knowledge within the international and national research scene, such that funding to conduct a study at the Mallee Track level, with potential for resonance in all rural Australian communities would likely be positively considered.

Opportunity 4.4:

Applications be made to undertake research exploring the specific needs of New Residents as potential volunteers with a particular focus on harder to reach community members.

Targeting Younger Generations "X, Y and Z"

As identified in the international literature, if supply of volunteers is to catch up with demand, then approaches to volunteering need to be transformed in response to the changing volunteer expectations of different generations. Traditional volunteering has been the mainstay of volunteer programs for more than 50 years. Characterised by constancy, predictability and longevity, volunteer practices are tailored around the organisation's needs, and are generally based on the experiences and approaches of those who have traditionally been in the role. This has predominantly been the "silent" (sometimes called "civic") and more recently "baby boomer" generations.





The newer “X”, “Y” and “Z” generations tend to be engaged by different volunteer practices. The ability for organisations to expand their recruiting and retention approaches to include these generational cohorts would provide the opportunity to diversify the volunteer base and potentially increase its sustainability over time.

No.5

Recommendation:

Organisations be supported to develop recruitment and retention approaches that take into account the different expectations of emerging generations (notably Generations “X”, “Y” and “Z”)

Opportunities to respond to the different expectations of emerging generations include:

5.1 Increasing on-line presence

5.1.1 a single volunteer portal

5.1.2 a volunteering webpage at MRCC

5.1.3 more detailed local websites

5.2 Embracing social media

5.3 Creating welcoming organisational cultures

Increasing On-Line Presence

Different generations seek new information and explore local opportunities in very different ways. Traditionally, promotion of volunteer activities happens through word of mouth, hard copy fliers and pamphlets, morning teas or open days. Once a person indicates interest, a personalised relationship develops where more detailed information is provided. Consultations along the Mallee Track indicated a heavy reliance on such methods, providing mixed results in recruiting older age groups. In contrast to this, more recent generations use electronic search methods as their primary and preferred method of gathering information.

Throughout the research internet searching for volunteer opportunities in the Mallee Track area produced very limited results. Both for younger generations and prospective residents in the area, the ability to access a central portal of potential volunteering opportunities would be invaluable.

Establishment and maintenance of dedicated and localised volunteer websites or electronic databases can be resource intensive for the auspicing or responsible agency (a previous version developed and maintained by the Northern Mallee Community Partnership in conjunction with SunAssist Mildura had been discontinued, likely for this reason). There are existing volunteer websites that could serve as a local portal, such as the state-based “Volunteering Victoria” (volunteeringvictoria.org.au) – an initiative of



Volunteering Victoria) and the Australia wide “Go Volunteer” (govolunteer.com.au – an initiative of Volunteering Australia). The obvious advantage of these existing sites is that the ‘infrastructure’ already exists, so development and maintenance is less labour intensive and also they are well known and more likely utilised by groups external to the Mallee Track communities, such as Grey Nomads. Using an existing volunteer website as a primary promotional portal would entail:

- Securing agreement between progress/township associations and local volunteer groups/organisations to nominate and promote one preferred portal for all volunteer activities and vacancies (this need not exclude individual groups also listing on other sites);
- Individual volunteer groups and organisations undertaking responsibility to provide the nominated site with sufficient detail of local activities and keep the entry updated with local volunteer opportunities as they arise;
- Using the link to and logo for the nominated portal on all promotional material and local websites to encourage community awareness that this is the initial, electronic “go to” point for information about volunteering along the Track.

Opportunity 5.1.1:

Local groups and organisations consider nominating a single, existing volunteer website to promote local volunteering and agree to keep the site up to date with local volunteer openings

In addition to these State and National level websites, and given that local councils are often a first point of call for people exploring volunteer openings, Mildura Rural City Council would have a prime opportunity to leverage from a nominated volunteer portal by developing a volunteering page on their existing website. Such a page could have a link to the nominated volunteer portal, as well as the websites of local groups and organisations with volunteer opportunities. This would clearly have benefits for the whole of the Council region, beyond the communities of the Mallee Track. Colac Otway Shire Council, for example, has a “Volunteering in the Colac Otway Shire” page within its web site map. This page lists Council policies and directions in volunteering as well as providing links to a range of websites¹⁵. It is an economical and viable means of identifying a primary electronic portal for volunteering while leaving local groups with the autonomy and responsibility to generate their own information.

¹⁵ The Colac Otway website provides links to a large range of volunteering options, including generic and statewide opportunities. This could be somewhat confusing and overwhelming for someone wanting to do a localised search. Hence our recommendation that a Mallee Track initiative include the main (nominated) volunteering website link as well as local groups.



Opportunity 5.1.2:

Mildura Rural City Council consider establishing a volunteering page within their existing website with links to the nominated volunteer portal as well as local groups and organisations that have a web presence

Opportunities for on-line promotion as a volunteer recruitment tool could also be considered by local groups and organisations themselves. Some groups along the Track already have a web presence with reference to volunteering and contact points for more information (eg Mallee Track Health and Community Services). Others are part of a state-wide organisation or peak body that maintains a website encouraging volunteers to contact their local group (eg CFA). At the community level 'town' websites such as those existing for Ouyen and Underbool which provide details of community groups also offer a useful online presence.

There is considerable opportunity to expand on the amount of localised information available to cater for the younger generations' preference for finding the specific information they need electronically. Generations "X", "Y" and "Z" can be easily discouraged if they are provided with limited on-line information or are advised to make direct contact with someone to find out the information they are seeking. They prefer to find out a range of information before deciding whether to make personal contact, including the nature of volunteer tasks, how many hours might be required, what training would be needed, whether an ongoing commitment is required, if there are meetings to attend and the 'culture' and 'mix' of the staff or volunteers with whom they would be involved. Use of multimedia (photos, embedded videos, YouTube links) is also more likely to engage younger generations than text alone.



There is an opportunity for existing local sites with volunteer references to provide more detailed information about what volunteering entails and to increase their capacity to use multimedia promotion. Engaging young people to assist with this in itself provides a valuable opportunity for recruitment. A group that does not, for example, have the expertise to develop a video and link it to YouTube, could benefit from harnessing the skills of a volunteer young person to assist.

It is suggested groups and organisations that rely on their state-wide body for on-line enquiries consider establishing their own web presence. This would enable potential volunteers to find out the detail they need as well as provide opportunities for local groups to promote activities, training events, acknowledge volunteers etc. There are numerous CFA brigades, for example, that have their own localised website and use it as a tool both for community awareness and fundraising as well as volunteer information and recruiting. Again, recruiting volunteer young people to assist with simple webpage construction could be a valuable opportunity for engagement in and of itself.



The advantage of a detailed, localised webpage is that it can also be used for once-off or periodic micro-volunteering opportunities. This would engage those people who are unable to commit to long term or consistent volunteering but would still be interested in contributing their time and skills on occasion. (See Recommendation 1 for more detail on micro-volunteering.)

Opportunity 5.1.3:

Local groups and organisations consider developing more detailed, localised websites that provide specific information in multi-media formats.

Embracing Social Media

The use of social media as an effective medium of communication and engagement with volunteers is still relatively new and is emerging as an immediate, fun and effective way of communicating with both existing members and potential volunteers. For younger generations, traditional communication by letter, phone call or newsletter has been replaced by Facebook groups, Twitter feeds, Snap Chat communication and You Tube.

The volunteering sector outside youth specific organisations has been wary of embracing the opportunities offered by social media, and indeed it is an arena that has a varying degree of suitability for different volunteering groups and organisations. It may be viable for some local volunteer groups to consider establishing their own Facebook page, for example, whilst for others it may be more beneficial for members to post about volunteer activity in their personal networks. Groups and organisations with a large informal as well as formal network, and numerous potential opportunities for micro-volunteering, could benefit from a Facebook, Twitter or Snap Chat presence to promote an immediate and short lived volunteering opportunity. Other groups may not benefit at all from a social media presence.

The changing nature of social media and the large number of potential social media platforms does mean it is a realm that should be entered with clear thought to purpose and audience, as well as its relationship to the group's overarching communication strategies. The role of social media in engaging younger volunteers, however, should not be underestimated or dismissed through lack of familiarity. Generations "Y" and "Z" in particular have grown up with social media, use it as their primary mode of communication and are comfortable with its evolving nature and accelerated use.

Opportunity 5.2:

Local groups and organisations reflect on the benefits of a social media presence to promote their volunteer activities.



Creating Welcoming Organisational Cultures

At the risk of over-simplification, different generations have distinctive communication styles, role expectations, learning preferences, interpretations of commitment, desires for acknowledgement and acceptance of change.

Groups and organisations along the Track that are characterised by authority through hierarchy, acknowledgement for years of service and formal meeting structures would benefit from exploring where they can be more flexible to include the preferences of younger generations. This would increase their attractiveness to Generations X, Y and Z, enhance communication between generations and foster a more inclusive volunteering approach generally. Key questions to consider include:

- Are we fast and efficient or seen as slow and methodical?
- Do we embrace new technology or view it with wariness?
- Are we able to replace any meetings and committees with telephone conferencing or electronic communication?
- Do we encourage the sharing of ideas or rely on orders and directives?
- Are there opportunities to do things differently from how they've been done previously?
- Does our training offer personal benefits to volunteers, eg an aid to their career, multiple skill acquisition, personal development?
- Does our learning environment, orientation and induction recognise previous experience and alternative ideas?
- Do we allow people to come up with their own ideas for contribution or are we directive about how to do things?
- To what extent do we do things because "it's how its always been done"?
- Do we recognise contribution in many ways, both public and private, or do we only acknowledge years of service?
- Do we clearly link tasks and activities to the benefits of the bigger picture, or do we believe volunteers only need to understand their task at hand?
- Is there a sense of all members being considered equal, regardless of previous experience, age or expertise?
- How welcoming are we of diversity (race, ethnicity, gender, education level, sexuality, disability)?



Different groups will have flexibility in different areas. Emergency Services groups, for example, rely on the hierarchy of the command and control structure in the event of an incident. However their commitment to more inclusive leadership training and



efforts to dismantle their perception as “boys clubs” have gone a long way to enhance their appeal to younger generations. Likewise, groups that must abide by service standards and associated procedures, such as those volunteering within the Home and Community Care (HACC) environment, still have the capacity to include training approaches that are flexible and offer personal development and job-seeking benefits.

Volunteering Queensland have information sheets to assist groups develop recruitment, retention and acknowledgement practices that are inclusive of different generations (<http://www.volqld.org.au/web/index.php/resources/menu/resource-central> - under “intergenerational volunteering” section).

Opportunity 5.3:

Local groups and organisations explore their organisational culture to identify opportunities for creating an approach that appeals to the Generations X, Y and Z.

Older People

Traditional volunteer organisations have structures and approaches that were generally founded on the experiences and worldview of the Silent Generation (or even their forebears, the G.I. generation, who were born just after the turn of the century). With a strong emphasis on hierarchy, authority, delegation, loyalty and longevity many of these organisations have needed to review their approach as generational views shifted.



As previously outlined, marketing to Generations X, Y and Z in an endeavour to recruit and retain them as volunteers requires a tailored approach, that takes into account their comfort with technology, appreciation for fast paced change and shorter commitment abilities. Similarly, recruiting and retaining older volunteers requires a cognisance of their preferences, experiences and expectations.

Older volunteers can be separated into two quite distinct groups. The first of these, the Silent Generation (born 1925 – 1946) have a strong and distinct civic focus, a high degree of loyalty and sense of duty, and a desire for stability and retention of traditional values. As a volunteer demographic they are likely to have volunteered for the majority of their life, both formally and informally within their community. Those born early in the Silent Generation are now moving into the category of frail aged and becoming users of volunteer services rather than providers. This was noticeable in the Mallee Track Resilient Services consultations, where



from one week to the next some volunteers are of an age where they vacillate between being active volunteers (eg delivering meals on wheels) and needing to receive the service (eg have meals delivered). Those born later in the Silent Generation are now predominantly fully retired and whilst generally still active, may have some health and mobility issues emerging.

The second distinct group of older volunteers is the Baby Boomers (born 1946 – 1964). This age group has been the one to significantly change the western world's view of ageing. They see retirement as a launching point for the next stage of life rather than the end of their activity and contribution. They have both a strong work ethic, associated with commitment and loyalty, and a capacity to see the lighter side of life, the need for self nurturing and relaxing. They see time as something precious, and as they move into their retirement years tend to be quite choosy about how they spend their time. They may no longer be full time in the workforce, but they have competing priorities with new hobbies, travel, enjoying grandchildren, often caring for their own elderly parents at the same time as exploring new possibilities, eg starting a business, returning to university or changing climates. They value their health and are purposely maintaining their fitness to ensure an active older age. (Further information about the characteristics of the Silent Generation and Baby Boomers can be found in Appendix D: Generational Matrix.)

Clearly volunteer recruitment and retention needs to take into account the generational differences between these two groups of older people.

No.6

Recommendation:

Organisations be supported to develop volunteer recruitment and retention approaches that appeal to older generations capabilities and interests (tailored to the Silent Generation and Baby Boomers)

Opportunities to ensure volunteering opportunities appeal to and are relevant for older people include:

6.1 Allowing for “volunteering in place”

6.2 Offer creative and engaging volunteering opportunities

Exploring opportunities identified elsewhere in this Paper, such as promoting micro-volunteering opportunities (1.1) and streamlining procedures for episodic volunteers (Recommendation 8) to meet the needs of time poor retirees

Allowing for “volunteering in place”

Social policy and direction regarding ageing has changed significantly in recent years, partly to reflect the increasing number of people entering ‘old age’ and ‘frail age’ and partly as a result of advances in gerontology. Essentially, people now live longer without the easy ability to enter aged care facilities and as a result need to explore how to remain living at home. “Ageing in Place” has been the approach to supporting older people as they transition from independence to supported accommodation,



with a strong emphasis on supporting abilities that remain. Victoria's Active Service Model, for example, encourages staff and volunteers in the Home and Community Care setting to refrain from doing tasks of which the older person may still be capable, even when it takes longer to support them to do it themselves than it would to do it for them.

This Ageing in Place approach can be extended to the volunteer context. As a generation that gives life-long loyalty, the Silent Generation will be keen to continue their volunteering activity as long as they are able. If they are no longer able to undertake the core volunteer work of a group or agency, encouraging them to take on other tasks for which they have capacity will enable them to remain an active volunteer. Many older emergency services volunteers, for example, have given decades of service to local units and are now entering a time when they are no longer able to respond to incidents. However, their capacity to undertake administrative tasks, share their knowledge with new recruits, participate in fundraising events etc. may not have diminished, and research indicates such ongoing and active engagement is highly positive to wellbeing and longevity.

Maintaining a flexible approach to volunteers as they move into older and then frailer age is paramount. This includes the recognition that they may be unavailable for short periods of time due to mobility restrictions or ill health. Ensuring they know they are welcome to return after these absences, and maintaining contact with them during these periods can go a long way to ensuring their continued loyalty and contribution during periods of health and wellbeing.

Note: for some groups and organisations, the ability to cater for "volunteering in place" may be limited by insurance policies, some of which do not cover volunteers over the age of 80. In such circumstances it would be prudent to transition existing volunteers considered "over age" into other volunteering opportunities with alternative groups to ensure their sense of value is maintained.

Opportunity 6.1:

Organisations explore ways they can encourage "Volunteering in Place" by focusing on the capacities of older volunteers as they transition from older age to frail age, including adjustments to volunteer roles and locations according to varying degrees of ability.

Offer creative and engaging volunteer opportunities

Whilst the Silent Generation tends to volunteer in older age as the continuance of a life-long commitment, the Baby Boomers are interested in retaining their volunteer activities or finding new ones as a way of meeting new people, staying active and learning

*"Boomers are knowledgeable about social issues, may have strong opinions, and may be experienced social activists. Develop volunteer opportunities that take advantage of their passions and their know-how. No envelope stuffing please."
(Fritz, 2014)*



something new (Qld Govt, 2014). Many bring significant experience and training or educational qualifications and are keen to seek the challenge and stimulation they received from being in the workforce. Others will be pleased to leave the “daily grind” and demand of fulltime work behind, and will be hoping volunteering provides social connection rather than intellectual challenge. For this reason, offering a range of creative and engaging volunteer opportunities is important. Those seeking challenge will not appreciate repetitive and menial work, and may consider themselves under-valued. Instead ensure there is something that uses their expertise to the fullest. For those seeking social connection, they will welcome even repetitive and mundane tasks (such as sorting donated clothes, washing equipment) if it means they can do so as part of a team and not on their own (Kendrick, 2011).

Fritz (2014) captures this approach in her “Top 8 Tips for Working with Baby Boomer Volunteers”, suggesting that organisations must learn about the needs of Baby Boomers so they can create an environment appealing to this “huge and lively” generation:

1. Respect Their Schedules

Boomers are time-stretched. Give them flexible opportunities that include short-term timelines with clear start and finish dates. Consider family volunteering opportunities so that volunteers do not have to choose between volunteering and being with their families. Older boomers will enjoy volunteering alongside their grandchildren.

2. Treat Them as Colleagues

Don't be alarmed when boomer volunteers resist authority, talk back, or question how things are being done. The ultimate anti-authoritarians, baby boomers do not like to be told what to do. Ask them; don't tell them. Make every step of the volunteer process a participatory one. Take advantage of their intelligence, experience, and education.

3. Develop Opportunities That Really Matter

Offer meaningful and challenging volunteer opportunities. Develop volunteer opportunities that take advantage of their interest and experience. Involve them in decision making and goal setting.

4. Remember That Volunteering Is Optional

Remember that boomers don't have to volunteer. Their parents in the Silent Generation may have volunteered because it was what was expected, but boomers are the ultimate consumers and see volunteering as a way to get their own needs met as well as providing service to others. Let them articulate what they need; they won't be shy. They may be looking for recognition, friendship, the opportunity to be creative, to be in charge of something, to relax, to learn new skills, or set an example for their grandchildren.

5. Make Sure Your Organisation is Organised and Professional

Baby boomers will not tolerate disorganisation or unprofessionalism of any kind. They have been working all of their lives, often in responsible positions, so they know what works and what doesn't in organisations. Be clear, be organised, and don't make boomer



volunteers have to go to multiple sources for answers to their questions. Assign someone as their go-to person for queries and ideas. Boomers will not like it if they get a different person every time they call or ask for assistance.

6. Train with Relevance

Provide training that is relevant, meaningful, and well-presented. This generation is already highly credentialed and is not looking for more certifications. They want education that will help them develop their full potential, not training that is all about regulations and control. Use adult learning models. Treat volunteers as colleagues, not students. Use discussion, not lectures. Make lessons experiential, not book-based.

7. Reach Boomers through Their Peers

Appeal to Baby Boomers through their peers. They are much more likely to respond to messages from their peers than celebrities or authority figures. Recruitment materials should focus on other Boomer volunteers with lots of stories and testimonials.

8. Recruit Boomers at Work

Since many Boomers are still working, at least part time until they ease into retirement, try recruiting them where they work. Many employers have programs for their staff, allowing them to use organisational time to volunteer for in some areas (eg many will release workers for emergency response matters). Note, in rural areas such as the Mallee Track, “work” may be interpreted as the farming and agricultural networks: capturing the Boomers that may be on farm and starting to hand over management to their adult children will require targeted efforts such as farming newsletter and presentations to existing groups such as Landcare and the VFF.

Word of mouth is one of the strongest recruiting tools for this generation. Baby Boomers will communicate widely with their large networks about their volunteering experience. Those volunteer groups and organisations that are able to offer creative and engaging volunteer opportunities, a vibrant and welcoming volunteer atmosphere and the flexibility to fit in with the Baby Boomer busy lifestyle will be highly recommended in Boomer networks and help with the attraction of new recruits (FACS, 2007).

Opportunity 6.2:

Organisations explore ways to appeal to active retirees that meet their need for meaningful engagement, respect for experience and busy lifestyles.

Additional resources include:

<http://www.cic.ca/50plus/Agency%20Guide%20EN.pdf>

[http://www.getvolunteering.ca/pdf/Fact%20Sheet Baby%20Boomer ENG final design.pdf](http://www.getvolunteering.ca/pdf/Fact%20Sheet%20Baby%20Boomer%20ENG%20final%20design.pdf)

<http://www.getvolunteering.ca/pdf/RetirementPlanningModule.pdf>



Strategic Observation 3: The Training and Regulation Burden

Strategies for minimising the impact of the training and regulation burden recognise that increasing training and regulation expectations have a cumulative effect with the impacts identified in volunteer demographics and the patterns of volunteering. For example, supporting an individual's preference for episodic volunteering works counter to the time and effort expended by an organisation in registering and training this volunteer. Similarly the burden of training and regulation on volunteer groups with a declining and ageing membership not only adds perceived 'unnecessary' workload but introduces technology based reporting and accounting systems which may be highly challenging for some members. Specifically these strategies will suggest: potential areas for **advocacy** that can minimise the burden of regulation; avenues for **streamlining registration and training of episodic volunteers**; and opportunities to **overcome training duplication**

Advocacy

Regulatory and administrative requirements are established by various levels of government and organisational leadership bodies to oversee volunteer work practices; to protect volunteers, volunteer organisations and community members from risk; and to promote the delivery of a quality service. In the health and wellbeing sector this has included the need to protect vulnerable and disadvantaged clients from harm and exploitation, and the general community from illness through food poisoning and from injury through structural faults. In the emergency services sector regulatory and administrative requirements have focused on protection of volunteers who may be entering life threatening situations, and has been understandably influenced by the tragic toll of emergency incidents in recent years. Whilst the intentions are admirable, such requirements can be cumbersome, time consuming and costly for volunteer groups, particularly where the increasing emphasis on a "no risk" approach is not seen by local groups to return benefits proportional to the compliance efforts required.

Reducing this regulatory burden at the local level is difficult as it is primarily driven by policy at the Federal and State levels (with much implementation and monitoring at Local Government level). Consultation with volunteer groups by a range of researchers¹⁶ has consistently led to recommendations aimed at reducing the red tape and duplication associated with regulation. Peak bodies and forums such as Volunteering Victoria, Volunteering Australia and the Australian Emergency Management Volunteer Forum continually seek opportunity for advocacy in this area and provide a valuable medium for taking local issues into the State and Federal arena.

¹⁶ Including the consultation process conducted by the Australian Government in 2010 to inform the development of the National Volunteering Strategy.



No.7

Recommendation:

Organisations support the advocacy efforts of peak volunteering and emergency management bodies to streamline compliance and reduce the regulation burden.

Some action has already been taken by both the Federal and State governments in response to such pressure. In June 2013, for example, the Victorian Government removed the requirement for groups running sausage sizzles, fairs and other fundraising activities to apply for a Places of Public Entertainment (POPE) occupancy permit, as long as there were less than 5 000 people attending. In August 2013 they advised local government that Council established special committees managing smaller entities such as local halls, recreation facilities and reserves could exempt committee members from submitting private interest returns. In the raft of reforms emerging from the Government's White Paper on Emergency Management Reform, many are designed to reduce regulatory duplication or incongruence in the sector.

At the Federal level the previous Labor Government established the Australian Charities and Not for Profit Commission (ACNC) in December 2012 in part to address the duplication and red tape involved for such groups. The current Coalition Government has advised it will dismantle the ACNC for the same reason. As these changes continue to roll out, advocacy at the Federal level will assist in ensuring that the regulatory burden for volunteer driven groups and organisations is adequately addressed.

Opportunities for continued advocacy that are consistent with the needs identified along the Mallee Track include:

- 7.1 Reinstating volunteers under 18yrs in the aged care sector
- 7.2 Addressing the funding disparity between the 3 emergency services groups
- 7.3 Simplifying and streamlining fundraising event compliance information
- 7.4 Recognising 'Police Checks' between organisations for a period of up to 3 years, rather than each organisation requiring a Police Check from new volunteers.



Reinstating volunteers under 18 years in the aged care sector

The Mallee Track Resilient Volunteer Services research revealed several cases where Home and Community Care (HACC) regulation worked counterproductively to community needs by disallowing the use of volunteers and work placement students under the age of 18 years into the HACC funded setting and specifically through the Mallee Track Health and Community Services (MTHCS) Community Links volunteer program. This regulation was counterproductive along the Mallee Track at several levels:

- **Reducing the available volunteer workforce.** Traditionally the MTHCS had utilised local high school students as short term volunteers in the Meals on Wheels program (typically over the period of a school term). This timing was highly strategic and allowed the MTHCS to fill the shortfall in volunteers experienced during the winter months and at other peak periods throughout the year. This formalised relationship with the school also led to other benefits and partnerships.
- **Limiting career exposure.** The HACC program provided local students with opportunities for work placements in the aged and disabilities care sector, an important early exposure in allowing young people to make informed career choices. It was speculated throughout the research that the loss of this opportunity was related to lower numbers of young people pursuing aged and disability care careers.
- **Negating an opportunity for an early foundation in volunteering.** Throughout the research a number of organisations noted the importance of young people gaining early positive exposure to volunteering roles for later and longer term volunteering involvement. The Australian Bureau of Statistics 2010 General Social Survey confirms this noting that 43% of adult volunteers had undertaken some voluntary work as a child compared to 27% of adult non-volunteers (<http://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/research-and-advocacy/the-latest-picture-of-volunteering-in-australia/>). Prior to the 2011 Community Care Common Standards (CCCS) regulation changes HACC programs, such as Meals on Wheels, had allowed local youth the opportunity for this exposure in a safe and monitored environment.

The Home and Community Care (HACC) Program is Victoria's principal source of funding for services that support frail aged people, younger people with disabilities, and carers. In Victoria the program provides funding to approximately 470 agencies to support nearly 300,000 frail older people and people with disabilities (<http://www.health.vic.gov.au/hacc>).

On the 1st March 2011 the *Community Care Common Standards (CCCS)* replaced the *HACC National Service Standards* across Australia. The CCCS are part of an ongoing process of reform by the Australian Government and State and Territory Governments that has been underway since 2005 to develop and streamline arrangements in community care.



There are three standards:

- Effective Management
- Appropriate Access and Service Delivery and
- Service User Rights and Responsibilities
(<http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publicising.nsf/Content/ageing-commcare-qualrep-standards.htm>).

The parameters of the *Community Care Common Standards Guide* regarding **Standard 1: EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT, Expected Outcome 1.7: Human Resource Management** is shown right.

Responding to these reforms in June 2012 the Victoria Department of Health produced the *Victorian Home and Community Care Quality Review Resource*. Within this document **Standard 1: EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT, Expected Outcome 1.7: Human Resource Management** stated:

..... *Practices and processes that support human resource management include:*

Processes to ensure that all employees, volunteers and vocational students are aged 18 years and over.

Significantly other States' interpretation of the National Standards (such as for Western Australia) did not apply the 'under 18' ruling as was applied in the 2012 Victorian interpretation. The Victorian interpretation of the National guidelines dramatically curtailed the ability of the MTHCS HACC programs to deliver key services to aged and vulnerable community members living along the Mallee Track.

EO 1.7: HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

The service provider manages human resources to ensure that adequate numbers of appropriately skilled and trained staff/volunteers are available for the safe delivery of care and services to service users.



Practices and processes

Human resource management is the provision of support to management, staff and volunteers to ensure that the goals of the organisation are being met and that service users are being provided with appropriate and quality service. Practices and processes that support human resource management include:

- Identifying required staff/volunteers' skills and competence to ensure that there are adequate staff/volunteer numbers to meet funding requirements and to provide quality services that meet the assessed needs of service users
- Recruiting staff and volunteers (where used) with the appropriate skills, competence and qualifications
- Providing training and development opportunities for staff and volunteers to ensure appropriate skills and competence. This could include:
 - An induction or orientation program
 - Ongoing training based on the needs of the organisation and the individual
 - Orientation and training to address any special or specific needs of service users
- Staff/volunteer leave and emergency backup staffing arrangements to ensure that appropriately qualified staff/volunteers are always available to provide the required services
- Strategies to promote and encourage staff/volunteer retention
- Monitoring and feedback processes for brokered/subcontracted staff
- Documented policies and procedures for these practices and processes.



Perhaps due to response from communities and services that the regulations pertaining to the engagement of volunteers and employees under the age of 18 years was limiting, the 2013 Victorian Home and Community Care program manual noted some loosening of the regulation. Page 38 of the *Victorian HACC program manual Part 1: Overview and program management* under 'Employee and Related Requirements' noted of students under 18 years of age:

- *Where a HACC funded organisation has school students on a school community services placement it is preferable (our emphasis) that this placement takes place in a communal setting, such as a planned activity group.*
- *Primary and secondary school students are not permitted to undertake a school community services placement that includes visits to the home of a person using HACC services. School students must not be left alone with a person using HACC services and must be supervised at all times.*
- *Consideration should be given to the ability of each student to cope with the placement. A Police Record Check is not required however the school and parents or guardian must ensure that only suitable students undertake a placement. (http://www.health.vic.gov.au/hacc/prog_manual/downloads/part1_chapter5.pdf accessed 30/01/2014).*

However, even with these reforms, the current HACC regulations continue to limit the effective engagement of volunteers aged under 18 years in HACC funded services. For example, whilst the newly allowed participation in group activities, such as the Planned Activity Groups, provides some insight into work and volunteering in this field, the opportunity to engage in the multitude of volunteer opportunities (eg Meals on Wheels, social connection activities, daily tasks) provides the breadth of rewarding experiences that are likely to most engage young people in the field. If reinstated, this first step for young people on the volunteering or career pathway could assist with the considerable demand to be placed on aged care services as our population ages.

Opportunity 7.1:

HACC funded services advocate to the State Government for reconsideration of the recent state level provision (in the Victorian HACC Program Manual) limiting involvement by volunteers under 18 years in the aged care sector.



Addressing the funding disparity between the three emergency services groups

The three emergency response services already work closely with each other when responding to incidents and are engaging in progressively more cross-training activities. In the smaller towns along the Track in particular, volunteers belong to more than one service, and in some instances, services have temporarily shared facilities. This increasingly 'joined-up' approach at the local level reflects expectation and policy direction emerging at the state and national levels and will continue to be actively encouraged.

However, the historically varied funding arrangements for each service has led to different approaches and opportunities for securing equipment and operational funds. This is noticed, if not always commented upon, at the local level and has at times lead to a sense of unfairness or inequity that was certainly expressed in our local consultations. Minor equipment that is damaged may be easily replaced through a requisition process by one service, while another may need to undertake additional fundraising. High levels of local professionalism and collegiality has ensured no serious ill-will has emerged to date: but inequitable funding bases coupled with an expectation of increasingly collaborative practice has the potential to fracture productive relationships and lead to perceptions of some services being considered the "poor cousin".

As a case in point, SES units across the state have traditionally been poorly funded in comparison to other services, due to an historical cost sharing arrangement between State and Local Governments. The Output Price Review undertaken by the Victorian SES in 2006/7 highlighted that State Government funds to units were minimal, were not indexed for CPI or other increases for many years, and that In many areas local government paid "over and above the minimum subsidy including the provision of cash, fuel, insurance and maintenance" whilst others were unable to contribute more than the minimum requirement (Barry, 2008). Whilst there have been shifts in funding since that time, SES remains reliant on local government for financial assistance with infrastructure and other costs to a much greater extent than any other service.

Opportunity 7.2:

Local groups and units advocate to the State Government for increased parity of funding and consistent resourcing across all three emergency response service groups.



Simplifying and streamlining fundraising event compliance information

Fundraising using traditional methods such as sausage sizzles, stalls, fairs etc is still a mainstay for many small volunteer reliant groups. For these same groups, traversing the myriad of approvals and permits required can be daunting and, in some instances, quite expensive. Whilst many of the compliance requirements originate with various departments of the State Government, it is local government who is usually required to administer them.



Whilst volunteers along the Track indicated individual Mildura Rural City Council staff were extremely helpful in guiding groups through the paperwork required, there was no central place for information or checklist/flowchart easily available for those first getting involved in fundraising, or for groups venturing into other areas of fundraising. Information available on the various Departmental websites was confusing, incomplete or referred groups to external links (such as the Department of Health) that then created their own navigation difficulties. There was no central point to check whether additional permits might be required, for example if liquor was to sold or a street closure involved. Essentially, a considerable amount of “pre-knowledge” was required before attempting to navigate for the right information. This barrier was heightened in groups which experienced regular committee turn-over such as pre-school committees where parents would frequently only be engaged for the 12 months their child was utilising the service.

There is an opportunity to design a section of the Council webpage to be a more centralised repository of information capable of guiding enquirers through the process. Some Council websites, such as the City of Port Phillip for example, have easy to navigate links to answer key questions about permits and regulations. Some resources are also available at a State Government level, such as their Not For Profit Compliance Support website, which has a checklist for the common regulatory and compliance requirements that groups may need to consider when planning events.

LINKS

City of Port Phillip, <http://www.portphillip.vic.gov.au/volunteers.htm>

Not For Profit Compliance Support Centre, <http://www.nfpcompliance.vic.gov.au/>

Opportunity 7.3:

Mildura Rural City Council work in partnership with volunteer group representatives to redevelop their existing webpages to provide a more user friendly guide to permits and applications for volunteer groups undertaking fundraising events.



Reducing duplication of required police (criminal history) checks

Many groups and organisations requiring criminal history clearance have a historical preference (or organisational policy) requiring new volunteers to submit to or provide a current police check, with “currency” defined as three or six months. This paperwork can be frustrating for potential volunteers, who may have previous police checks held with other organisations, as well as for the recruiting agency who has to arrange the paperwork and then wait for the result to be processed. Volunteers registering with numerous organisations become frustrated when required to complete the same paperwork multiple times for different groups, or in some instances for the same organisation when moving districts.

For the most part, legislation and standards requiring police checks indicate that a currency of three years or less is acceptable and that the original Police Check be sighted, not necessarily held on the premises. This suggests some local groups and organisations have the capacity to update their own policy in line with such legislation and standards. Whilst some groups will continue to require every new volunteer to undertake a new police check due to statewide organisational policy, pertinent legislation or standards compliance – those that have flexibility are encouraged to use it and review their policy accordingly.

In instances where organisations are not required to hold an original on site, the opportunity for information sharing emerges. In such an instance the determining officer has the capacity to formally sight the original and sign a duplicate attesting to this fact (with the signed copy then stored). This requires an understanding between groups and organisations that confirms their willingness to share information, as well as formal permission from the potential volunteer.

It is important to note, that the recruiting organisation would always retain the right to determine the suitability of the results of the criminal history check, should disclosable outcomes be identified. Outcomes of concern to one organisation may not be of concern to another – and each group and organisation needs to retain their autonomy in this area.

Encouraging local volunteer driven groups and organisations to review their police check requirements in line with the associated legislation and/or standards, and to be willing to allow originals held on record to be sighted by other organisations and groups (with the volunteer’s permission) would reduce the sense of frustration expressed by a number of volunteers. Whilst the establishment of such processes initially incurs a bureaucratic burden on the organisations concerned, it provides the opportunity to reduce a significant hurdle in the eyes of potential volunteers.

The researchers note that organisations will need to carefully examine this opportunity and its applicability to their policies and processes. It is not suggested that it will be an easy task, and duty of care to the community, organisation, clients and the volunteers needs to be taken into account. It is suggested, however, that if such an arrangement is possible, it is most likely to



succeed initially in small rural towns such as those along the Mallee Track, where there is already a history of shared activity and mutual trust between organisations.

Opportunity 7.4:

Organisations with volunteers be encouraged to review their police check requirements in line with the relevant and applicable legislation/standards to minimise the need for volunteers to complete multiple applications and consider information sharing protocols to streamline same.

Opportunities to address training obligations

Effective volunteering is reliant on having appropriately skilled and experienced volunteers. Training assists volunteers, volunteer groups and organisations to comply with relevant legislation and regulations, as well as ensuring quality delivery of service. The range of training needs for volunteers is just as diverse as their various roles, levels of skill and experience. Some volunteer tasks and positions require orientation with minimal or optional training, whilst others require extensive training with formal certification.

The ACT Mallee Track Resilient Volunteer Services research indicated training requirements and experiences across volunteer groups and organisations along the Mallee Track varied significantly. Some small, incorporated groups, for example, identified the need for additional training, in aspects of governance in particular. Other groups, most noticeably those in the emergency services sector, expressed frustration at the amount of training duplication that was involved, the associated lack of recognition of prior learning, and that it sometimes entailed considerable travel outside the area.

Balancing training requirements with the capacity and needs of potential volunteers is therefore pivotal in encouraging more people to volunteer. In some instances this could involve organising more easily accessible training for groups along the Track (including training that is delivered both locally and online), whilst in others it could entail streamlining the need for participation in training through recognition of prior learning and experience.

No 8

Recommendation:

Organisations be supported to tailor the availability and accessibility of training to balance regulatory obligations with volunteer requirements and preferences.

Opportunities to tailor training more closely to the needs of both organisations and potential volunteers along the Track include:



- 8.1 Increasing accessibility of governance training
- 8.2 Reducing training duplication in the emergency services sector
- 8.3 Expanding opportunities for shared training

Increasing accessibility of governance training

Over the past two decades, there has been a rise in the expectations of local committees to comply with good governance and meet compliance demands. Like groups and organisations across the State, members of local committees along the Mallee Track vary greatly with their experience in these areas, with members newer to the committee role understandably relying on the support and mentorship of more experienced members. Whilst such peer support is vital in assisting committee members to develop their skills, hone their experience and forge a strong leadership bond, it doesn't replace the need for informed training in the area to ensure members keep abreast of legislative and regulatory requirements.

A number of volunteers identified that their committees had limited exposure to managing constitutional questions and issues, as for ease of transition they had adopted the “model” rules when the laws relating to incorporated associations changed in late 2012. Whilst this saved them the time and expense of drafting their own rules, it meant they did not necessarily have a working knowledge of how the model rules applied in practice to their particular committee. It was not until issues or questions arose that gaps in knowledge and experience were revealed, and committee members identified a need for training and development in this area.



Whilst subsidised training in this area is occasionally available, it is often geographically challenging to attend. Likewise it is cost prohibitive to organise dedicated training for individual committees. Given there are a number of committees along the Track who have indicated interest in governance and committee constitution training, there is an opportunity to consider bringing such training to the Track for access by interested groups. A number of options for training delivery are available, with agencies such as the Rural Financial Counselling Service having previously run free or subsidised workshops, and the *Australian Institute of Community Practice and Governance* (the training arm of Our Community) providing tailored, accredited training designed specifically for volunteers on community groups.

Opportunity 8.1:

Mildura Rural City Council consider organising a governance workshop for local committee members along the Track to assist them in understanding and maintaining their constitutional roles and responsibilities.



Reducing training duplication in the emergency services sector

Expectations of volunteer-led organisations to ensure their volunteers are delivering safe, quality services has increased significantly in recent years, leading to considerable training requirements in some areas. Understandably, this is most noted in the emergency services sector, with each of the three response organisations requiring new volunteers to undertake certified core training and assessment before commencing their duties.

As has been formally acknowledged by state-wide governing bodies in this area (CFA, SES, Ambulance Victoria) each organisation has a history of developing training within its own silo structure and without sufficient reference to other services in the sector. This has led to a noted lack of recognition of prior learning (RPL) despite all three organisations being Registered Training Organisations with the associated responsibility to incorporate RPL into their training arrangements. Hence potential volunteers with experience in other emergency services organisations may need to undertake training as if they were a novice in the subject matter and/or repeat training already undertaken elsewhere. The ability to address these training concerns is not within the control of local groups and brigades, and instead lies with their respective governing bodies.



The constraining nature of current training approaches and their frustrating impact on the volunteers involved, has been formally noted by organisations within the sector and is now being addressed in each organisation's most recent strategic plan. A more unified approach to training that recognises cross-sector experience and encourages shared training has been laid down in the *State Fire and Emergency Services Training Framework* (2013). This plan will not replace the individual training requirements of each service for particular hazard response and safe use of their own equipment, but does commit the participating organisations to common need identification, joint planning and investment and increased collaboration in training delivery. The plan specifically commits to increased recognition of prior learning, where possible the delivery of unified training and more flexible modes of training delivery to minimise travel time and disruption, particularly for regional volunteers.

The Framework currently includes the CFA and SES (as well as the Metropolitan Fire Brigade and the Department of Environment and Primary Industries) and will move to include Ambulance Victoria in future updates. Oversight and carriage



of the Framework rests with the Fire Services Commissioner. Through the research process communication with the Commissioner's office has revealed their potential interest in the outcomes of this project. The researchers consequently suggested that the Mallee Track would be a prime testing ground for a pilot project to help progress the Framework given:

- The already documented concerns of groups and brigades along the track
- The goodwill and collegiality that already exists between services in the area
- The high number of volunteers who are (or have been) members more than one service and therefore have cross-organisational experience
- The transferability of pilot project outcomes to other regional communities, given the Mallee Track experiences mirror those found in rural communities across the State
- The strong commitment to enhancing emergency management volunteer sustainability from Mildura Rural City Council and the Advancing Country Towns Steering Committee
- The capacity to leverage on the work already undertaken in the community as a result of this project.

The Commissioner's office indicated an openness to exploring the Mallee Track as a potential site for piloting strategies that would advance the State Training Framework, and encourages contact from Council and/or the Advancing Country Towns Steering Committee to explore how this might be progressed.

Opportunity 8.2:

Mildura Rural City Council contact the Fire Services Commissioner's office to explore the potential for communities along the Mallee Track to pilot initiatives emerging from the State Fire and Emergency Services Training Framework (2013)





Expanding opportunities for shared training

Volunteer groups and organisations along the Mallee Track already collaborate on a number of shared training opportunities. Those that require volunteers to have First Aid Training, for example, organise a local provider to deliver this training to volunteers from multiple groups when there is sufficient demand. Emergency services groups and brigades will invite members of other services as guest speakers to promote cross-service information flow, and shared exercise training has increased considerably over recent years. In most instances, this has been done in an ad hoc fashion and is dependant on the interests and capacity of the particular volunteer group concerned.

Given the number of shared training related needs across volunteer groups there is an opportunity to explore sharing information about training events in a more coordinated manner, such as the development of a Mallee Track Volunteer Training Calendar. This could be considered at two levels, depending on interest and resources available:

1. Regular collation of existing training events or opportunities already organised by groups along the Mallee Track for their own members, but who would be willing for volunteers from elsewhere to attend
2. Proactive engagement of volunteer groups to ascertain their unmet training needs, with the view to determining if there is sufficient critical mass to organise such training for the Mallee Track.

The first could be undertaken by an existing and willing volunteer group on behalf of other groups along the Track, or by an individual volunteer supported by an existing group or by Council. The onus on volunteer groups along the Track would be to provide information about their existing training or information sharing activities that would be open to other volunteers, whether any cost is involved and to whom registration/enquiries should be directed. If collation was undertaken quarterly or half yearly, and distribution completed electronically, the resources other than volunteer time would be minimal.

The second level involves considerably more time commitment, with a needs analysis, results collation, exploring of options and negotiation of training units lending itself more to a project approach. To ensure it remains within the resources of local groups and organisations it could be undertaken as a once-off project for a student placement.

Opportunity 8.3:

Volunteer groups along the Mallee Track consider collating training events and activities into a Training Calendar to promote a shared approach to training opportunities. Consideration also be given to securing a student placement project to allow such a Calendar to include training events identified through needs analysis.



Streamlining for Volunteers

Throughout the ACT Mallee Track Resilient Volunteer Services research all consulted groups and organisations noted the need for additional volunteers or volunteer hours. Additionally, groups were observing a preference from would-be volunteers for task and time limited roles – micro-volunteering. One group chair's telling comment reflected the broader sentiment along the Mallee Track: *"I can ask anyone, to do anything, on any given day, and they will. But ask them to come to our meeting each month – no way"*.

This changing pattern of how people prefer to volunteer, together with the well documented rise in registration, training and regulation required of volunteer organisations, has lead to a double bind in volunteer recruitment. In some instances the hours invested in registering and training a would-be volunteer and completing necessary regulatory processes (such as Working With Children and Police Checks) do not reflect to potential 'return-hours' yielded by a volunteer looking to volunteer in a time limited manner. Quite simply the 'people-hours' in recruiting and processing a volunteer are not 'repaid' to an individual organisation. Both the Mallee Track Resilient Volunteer Services research together with the international and national literature identified this as a significant and growing barrier to volunteer recruitment and directly counter to recommendations proposed in this report and the 'best practice' suggested at broader levels.

Indeed recruitment of potential longer term volunteers can also be stymied by the lengthy recruitment processes required by some groups and organisations. Given many potential volunteers are already wearing other volunteer "hats" in their local community, they have often already undergone similar recruitment processes elsewhere. Whilst each organisation will always have its own unique recruitment aspects, a significant portion of the data collection is repetitive and frustrating for volunteers. Sharing common data between organisations, with the permission of volunteers, provides a valuable opportunity to address what is often seen, and experienced, as bureaucratic red tape.

Importantly, if the 'people hours' invested by a single organisation in volunteer recruitment, training and regulatory requirements could be 'shared' across other organisations along the Mallee Track then the 'return hours' gains could be significantly multiplied for each recruited volunteer. Additionally the risk of frustrating potential volunteers with registration and training expectations which ultimately become a barrier to volunteering would be greatly minimised.

No.9

Recommendation:

The ACT Initiative and Mildura Rural City Council work in partnership with the responsible authorities to research and develop alternate pathways for volunteers such that they streamline volunteer registration and data collection.



Opportunities to streamline the registration and training of volunteers include:

- 9.1 Creating a volunteer database central to the Mallee Track to capture detailed 'volunteer role' information and the relevant character 'checks' and needs of volunteers
- 9.2 Develop information sharing partnerships between like and colleague organisations

The Mallee Track Volunteer Database

Increasingly organisations and communities are recognising the need to simplify the volunteering process, a direct response to an increasingly complex and regulated volunteer environment. Throughout the preceding recommendations and opportunities are suggestions for efforts to simplify the task of volunteering, including opportunities for coordinated and shared training and the reduction of unnecessary duplication of regulatory checks. Whilst each documented opportunity can exist as a standalone effort or strategy implemented by an individual group the most significant gains for volunteer reliant organisations along the Mallee Track will come from an 'all services, all strategies' approach – most thoroughly enacted through a dedicated centralised volunteer database.

Research by Paull (2009) found that "the efforts of governments on all levels can boost a culture of volunteering..... that the efforts of governments need to be aimed at supporting the organisations themselves and providing assistance for sharing of ideas and services [and] Specialist support should be offered by Volunteering WA to whoever is undertaking the role of facilitating volunteering in each town or region, but there is a need for increased personnel located in the town or region itself to undertake a support role for volunteers and organisations to help them explore and develop the ideas and options available to them".

A centralised volunteer database would support potential volunteers in accessing information about volunteer organisations, including aims, roles and projects, necessary training and regulatory requirements and key dates including high-need times (a need expressed by both new and existing residents of the Mallee Track). A centralised volunteer database would also support volunteer reliant organisation in capturing detailed contact and needs information about each volunteer registering with them; the registration process would also detail which compliance 'checks' were available for the individual and when they fall due for renewal. A final component of the database could record areas and organisations in which the individual has an interest in conducting micro-volunteering / volunteering and their available hours. In the 'useful links' section below two examples of cloud based volunteer management software are noted, many more exist and time and consideration should be invested in identifying the most appropriate 'database' for the Mallee Track.





The establishment of a centralised volunteer database within a dedicated organisation along the Mallee Track is the most significant, single service delivery framework modification recommendation made in relation to volunteer reliant services within this report. The researchers recognise this requires an organisation make a significant time commitment both in the initial establishment of the database and its upkeep and maintenance. Such a database was established several years ago at the municipality level by the Northern Mallee Community Partnership in conjunction with Sunassist. The redevelopment of such a database at the Mallee Track level may be an initiative of Mildura Rural City Council and the Track community which could be financed through a volunteer grant (which periodically become available through the State Government).

The use of centralised volunteer databases is already emerging in the emergency recovery arena to assist a community in deploying volunteers quickly in the event of an incident. It is understood such an endeavour is being explored by Mildura Rural City Council, and there is significant opportunity to leverage on this work.

Opportunity 9.1:

Council and the community consider applying for project funds to establish a centralised Mallee Track database to confidentially capture information needed for recruiting volunteers

USEFUL LINKS:


The Get Volunteering website, Canada features useful resources and practical examples of volunteering. Importantly the website also provides links to the on-ground 'volunteer centres' and offer volunteer matching opportunities <http://getvolunteering.ca/>

There are also dedicated volunteer management 'software' options now available including Australian based sites such as Volunteer Squared <http://www.volunteer2.com.au/?gclid=Ci78nfjr47wCFUpqpQodFGsAWg>

Volunteer Squared specialises in software to help you engage volunteers effectively and efficiently.

***Our Volunteer Impact software is for managing volunteers** in nonprofits, school districts and government agencies. Our clients range in size from 40 volunteers to 300,000. Volunteer Impact can help you:*

- *Recruit volunteers through your website, Facebook, Twitter or other social media sites*
- *Streamline the application process and reduce the time you spend doing data entry*
- *Track volunteer skills, qualifications and trainings*
- *Create schedules and scheduling rules that engage volunteers in the process while keeping you in control*
- *Schedule groups of volunteers and the right number of placements will be filled in the system!*

- 
- Record volunteer hours and report on them through customisable views
 - Track and celebrate volunteer outputs or achievements
 - Keep your volunteers up to date through personalised and targeted bulk email, phone lists or mail
 - Generate reports to guide management decision making and to tell your volunteer engagement story

Our Community Hub software is for volunteer centers and other volunteer matching organisations. Whether you want a virtual volunteer opportunities portal or an entire community approach to volunteer engagement, and whether you are one community or a collection of many, Community Hub can be configured to meet different needs.

- Participating nonprofits can add their own volunteer opportunities
- Volunteers can search in a variety of ways that meet their preferences
- Community Hub can help you raise the bar on volunteer management across the entire community

And US sites:

<http://www.volunteerhub.com/tour/volunteer-management/volunteer-database/>

<http://www.yourvolunteers.com/>

If you manage your volunteers with a spreadsheet, a paper calendar or with just a big stack of paper, **YourVolunteers can save you countless hours.** Most systems just allow you to enter tasks where you'll need volunteers, and then volunteers select these from a list. What if you have to do the assigning? How will you know who's available and who might be interested? The YourVolunteers system helps you to find the right people quickly and without having to go through a big stack of paper.

Volunteer Managers

Our hosted online scheduling system allows you as a volunteer manager to know the real-time status of volunteer assignments and it helps you to select the perfect people for a task (conflicts are prevented). You'll be able to give your volunteers a good idea of what they'll be doing, who they'll contact, and they'll always have a place to view their schedules as they change. Best of all, **you'll save a lot of time** since many of the volunteers will input their own information and select their tasks online. Our setup is easy, everything is securely hosted for you, and you can be up in running in minutes.

Volunteers

Our system allows you as a volunteer to input your own contact information, select your availability and interest areas, and then choose from a list of tasks that match. No scheduling conflicts, no wondering where you're supposed to be, and your contact information is kept securely using high-level data encryption and SSL pages.



Develop information sharing partnerships between 'like' and 'colleague' organisations

Whilst the possibility of a centralised volunteer database is researched and, if found to be viable, established for the Mallee Track organisations can commence information sharing at a smaller scale. Organisations such as the SES, Ambulance Victoria and CFA or sporting committees such as football, netball and tennis clubs increasingly require similar or identical training and regulatory checks. To avoid frustrating members and overburdening office bearers responsible for managing recruitment and registration, “like” organisations could consider establishing information sharing agreements. Partnering to share essential information, training event planning and necessary regulatory checks such as Police Checks would be ideal. Subjective information from numerous volunteers indicates they would be willing to sign their consent to such information sharing in the interests of what they see as “common sense” to reduce frustration and duplication. Securing permission from volunteers would ensure compliance with State and Federal Privacy Laws as well as ensure the Mallee Track services retained their reputation as respectful volunteer agencies.

Opportunity 9.2:

Colleague organisations consider establishing information sharing agreements to minimise the need for duplicate regulator checks and training certifications.



Conclusion

The Mallee Track Resilient Volunteer Services Review provides a valuable snapshot of both the issues faced by volunteer driven services in rural Victoria and the opportunities presented by emerging trends in volunteerism at the global level.

Our research found that the well documented concerns relating to ageing and declining populations in small towns are very real: stories along the Mallee Track confirm that without significant change the viability of current volunteer services will be diminished and in some cases significantly jeopardised. At the same time, local consultations have revealed a willingness to explore alternatives to traditional approaches to volunteering and a growing interest in new ways of engaging volunteers.

This report therefore captures the rich picture of international and local volunteering trends, along with the emergent opportunities, within three core strategic observations:

Changing
Patterns of
Volunteerism

Changing
Volunteer
Demographic

The Training
and Regulation
Burden

The **Changing Patterns of Volunteerism** corroborate that people no longer volunteer in the same way or with the same expectations they did fifty, twenty or even ten years ago. The **Changing Volunteer Demographic** not only confirms the makeup of our communities has changed, but that the differences between generations and between 'existing' and 'new' residents has also expanded, particularly regarding their interpretation of volunteering. Meanwhile the increasing **Training and Regulation Burden**, whilst emphasising safety and quality, has also added considerable barriers and disincentives to volunteering.

With a purposeful emphasis on locally applicable and relevant ideas, the report used these themes to generate 9 broad recommendations with 24 subsequent opportunities for implementation at the local level. Many of these opportunities have an emphasis on practical recruitment and retention approaches, such as tailoring marketing for specific generational interests, developing projects to attract grey nomads, or promoting micro-volunteering tasks for people who are time poor.



Other opportunities draw on the need for collaboration and coordination between volunteer driven organisations, including the delivery of a shared Training Calendar, advocacy to locate emergency services training pilot projects along the Track, and the development of a centralised volunteer database for local groups. This latter opportunity provides a valuable foundation upon which many of the other opportunities identified in the report could be built, and would be a constructive starting point for implementation of this report's findings.

A range of other opportunities, whilst having practical application, will also require volunteer driven groups to consciously reflect on their group culture and the extent to which it attracts or discourages interest from potential volunteers. Those groups and organisations most strongly associated with traditional structures of volunteering, such as organisational hierarchy, life-long commitment, formal meetings and regular attendance, will have the most to gain from exploring ways they can incorporate modern leadership approaches, technological advances and more flexible structures in attracting volunteers from the 'baby boomer' and Gen X,Y and Z age cohorts.

Whilst many of the opportunities identified in this report are able to be actioned immediately by local groups within existing resources, sustainable change along the whole of the Mallee Track would be more easily generated with the assistance of coordinated local resources. Our research identified that whilst there is a growing interest in exploring alternative ways of engaging and retaining volunteers, there is a parallel need for local groups and organisations to have access to guidance, leadership and practical support to help make it happen. A potential next step in realising the recommendations of this report, therefore, would be to secure the services of a paid volunteer support role, to work in a coordinated manner with all the groups and organisations along the Track as they progress volunteering opportunities of most relevance to them.

The timing of the Mallee Track Volunteer Services Review is opportune. For the emergency services volunteers there are numerous strategic changes already underway aimed at promoting a more joined up, shared and flexible approach to encouraging increased volunteer recruitment and improved service resiliency. For volunteers within the health and wellbeing sector, there is an increasing understanding within federal and state government departmental initiatives that recognition of the role of volunteers and the level of support provided, should be tailored to local needs, with 'place-based' strategies such as the Advancing Country Towns Initiative a key example of this. Importantly for the Mallee Track, at the municipal level the Mildura Rural City Council and the Advancing Country Towns Steering Committee are keen to explore ways of continuing to advance the outcomes of the project. In that sense, this report has the potential to be a living document, informed by continued strategic activity at the broader level and actively interpreted by groups and organisations at the local level as they seek to harness opportunities for improving volunteerism along the Track.



The consultations undertaken as a component of this research are evidence of a dynamic, engaged and committed volunteering community that is passionate about ensuring a viable future for volunteer service delivery along the Mallee Track. The issues they face are not unique and are replicated in small towns all across regional Australia. The opportunities identified in this report, if implemented, may well put the Mallee Track at the forefront of 21st century volunteer practices and provide example to other regional towns seeking to maintain sustainable volunteer services.



References

- Adams, N. (2009), *GYV: Generation Y Volunteer*, Hobart: Volunteering Tasmania
- Australian Red Cross, 2010. '*Spontaneous Volunteer Management Resource Kit: Helping to manage spontaneous volunteers in emergencies*', Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Canberra.
- Australian Social Inclusion Board. (2009), *A compendium of social inclusion indicators: How's Australia faring?* Australian Government.
- Barry, M. (2013), *White Paper: Overview, Impacts and Opportunities for SES*, Regional Visits PowerPoint Presentation, Feb/March 2013, SES.
- Barry, M. (2008), *Victorian SES Unit Cost Review* (Accessed via <http://www.ses.org.au/156.html?4> 4 Feb 2014)
- Baxter-Tomkins, T., & Wallace, M. (2009), *Recruitment and retention of volunteers in emergency services*. Australian Journal on Volunteering, Vol. 14, pp. 1–11.
- Bright, M. *The Rise or Not of Micro-Volunteering*, Pro-Bono Australia News Tuesday November 12 2012, (online) <http://www.probonoaustralia.com.au/news/2012/11/rise-or-not-micro-volunteering>,
- Browne, J., Jochum, V., and Paylor, J. (2013), *The value of giving a little time: Understanding the potential of micro-volunteering*, November 2013, Institute for Volunteering Research, UK
- Clancy, P., Wilson, B., and Hamilton, D. (2014), *Issues in the Establishment of a Satellite E-Club in District 9790*.
- Cordingley, S. & Bates, K. (2006), *Strengthening and sustaining volunteering in Australia*. Volunteering Australia Inc.
- CFA Jones Inquiry: *Implementation Action Plan*, Oct 2012, Executive Director Operational Training and Volunteerism, CFA, Victoria.
- Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA), (2010), *National Volunteering Strategy Consultation Report*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.



Department of Planning and Community Development, (2012), *The Economic Value of Volunteering in Victoria*, Victorian Government

Department of Planning and Community Development, (2005), *Regional Matters: an atlas of Regional Victoria 2005*, Department of Sustainability and Environment, Victorian Government

Dolnicar, S. and Randle, M. (2007), *What motivates which volunteers? Psychographic heterogeneity among Volunteers in Australia*, *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organisations*, 18(2), 135-155.

Eversole, R. (2005), *Towns in Time – Ouyen*. Centre for Regional and Rural Development: RMIT University.

Fire Services Commissioner Victoria, (May 2013), *State Fire and Emergency Services Training Framework*.

Flick, M., Bittman, M., and Doyle, J. (2002), *The community's most valuable [hidden] asset - Volunteering in Australia*. Report prepared for the Department of Family and Community Services. Social Policy Research Centre, NSW

Fritz, J. *Top 8 Tips for Working With Baby Boomer Volunteers*. About.com Nonprofit charitable orgs website. (Accessed 2 Feb 2014) <http://nonprofit.about.com/od/volunteers/tp/boomertips.htm>

Govt of South Aust, Dpt for Families and Communities, (July 2007), *Engaging Older Volunteers Project*. Research report.

GreyNomads, *Volunteering*, (online) <http://thegreynomads.com.au/classifieds/volunteering/> (Accessed 20 November 2013)

Handy, F. & Cnaan, R.A. (2007), *The role of social anxiety in volunteering*. *Nonprofit Management and Leadership*, 18(1), 41–58.

Hientz, M. & Speevak Sladowski, P. (2012), *Building Blocks for Newcomers: A Guide on Volunteering*. Volunteer Canada.

House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family, Community, Housing and Youth & Ellis, Annette 2008, *The value of volunteering: a discussion paper on volunteering in the community and welfare sector*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra

Insync Surveys, (2010), *Mildura Rural City Council Community Wellbeing Survey Report*, Mildura Rural City Council.

Kalita, J., *How to Keep Boomer Volunteers Coming Back*. About.com Nonprofit charitable Orgs <http://nonprofit.about.com/od/volunteers/a/bbretention.htm> (Accessed 17 January 2014)

Kendrick, S., *Recruiting Boomers, Gen-Xers, and Millennials*. September 17, 2011 (Accessed 2 Feb 2014). <http://www.volunteerhub.com/blog/recruiting-boomers-gen-xers-and-millennials/>



Kupperschmidt, B. (2000), *Multigeneration employees: Strategies for effective management*. Health Care Manager, 19(1), 65-76.

Local Logic Place and JandA Consulting, (2012), *Managing Volunteers in Emergencies: An integrated strategy to assist Gannawarra Shire in the coordination of volunteers in the event of an emergency*, Gannawarra Shire Council.

Lord, J. (2006), *On the road again: Next stop for the grey nomads and volunteering research project*. Australian Journal on Volunteering 21(1) 67-69.

Mallee Track Health and Community Services, (2013), *Report of Operations 2012-2013*. MTHCS.

M & P Henderson & Associates Pty Ltd (2012), *Contemporary practices and research in volunteering: A Literature Review*, Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services, Queensland.

McKenzie, F. & Frieden, J. (2010), *Regional Victoria Trends and Prospects*. Spatial Analysis and Research Branch, Strategic Policy, Research and Forecasting Division.

McLennan, J. (2008), *Issues Facing Australian Volunteer-Based Emergency Services Organisations: 2008 – 2010. A report prepared for Emergency Management Australia (EMA) as a response to a request by the Ministerial Council for Police and Emergency Management*. La Trobe University.

McLennan, J. & Birch, A. (2008), *Why would you do it? Age and motivation to become a fire service volunteer*. The Australian and New Zealand Journal of Organisation Psychology, Vol. 1, pp. 7–11.

Mildura Rural City Council, (2009), *Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan 2009-2013*.

Mildura Rural City Council, (2012), *Mildura Rural City Council Annual Report 2011-2012*.

Mildura Rural City Council, (2013), *Mildura Rural City Council Plan 2013 to 2017*.

Mildura Rural City Council & Northern Mallee Primary Care Partnership, (2013), *Community Health and Wellbeing Plan 2013-2017*.

Noelker Consulting, (2007), *Murrayville Community Plan*. Mildura Rural City Council.

Noelker Consulting, (2007a), *Underbool Community Plan*. Mildura Rural City Council.

Noelker Consulting, (2007b), *Walpeup Community Plan*. Mildura Rural City Council.

Noelker Consulting, (2008), *Ouyen Community Plan*. Mildura Rural City Council.



Onyx, J., Leonard, R., Hayward-Brown, H. and Maher, A. (2010), *Grey Nomad Volunteers: New partnerships between grey nomads and rural towns in Australia*, Social Justice Social Change Research (University of Western Sydney), Cosmopolitan Civil Societies Research Centre (University of Technology Sydney) and Volunteering Australia.

Orpin, P., Stirling, CM., and Kilpatrick, SI. (2009), *Volunteering as Community*, 10th National Rural Health Conference Proceedings: Rural Health, the place to be, 17-20 May 2009, Cairns, pp. 1-7.

Ouyen Inc, (2011), *Ouyen Inc Business and Strategic Plan 2011-2015*.

Parkin, D. (2008), *Future challenges for volunteer based emergency services*. The Australian Journal of Emergency Management, Vol. 23 No. 2, May 2008

Paull, M. (2009), *Barriers to volunteering by newcomers in Wheatbelt towns in Western Australia: Better Connections Wheatbelt Volunteering*. A joint project of Volunteering WA and Edith Cowan University.

Points of Light Foundation, (2005), *Connecting rural communities: Volunteering and Neighboring* <https://www.nationalserviceresources.gov/files/m3245-connecting-rural-communities.pdf> (Accessed August 2013)

Pope, J. (2011), *Change and disadvantage in the Loddon Mallee Region, Victoria*. Policy and Strategy, Department of Planning and Community Development (DPCD).

Qld Government Fact Sheet. *V is for Volunteering: Engaging Older Volunteers*. (Accessed 4 Feb 2014) <http://www.communities.qld.gov.au/resources/communityservices/volunteering/documents/fact-sheet-engaging-older-volunteers.pdf>

Renfro, A. *Meet Generation Z*, Getting Smart, December 5, 2012. <http://gettingsmart.com/2012/12/meet-generation-z/> (Accessed 2 Feb 2014)

Shrestha, B. and Cihlar, C. (2004), *Volunteering in Under-Resourced Rural Communities. Final Report, Points of Light Foundation and Volunteer Center National Network, USA*.

Smith, R. *Overview of the Generations - Generation Y, Generation X, Boomers and Veterans (Part 4)* [weknownext.com http://www.weknownext.com/blog/overview-of-the-generations-generation-y-generation-x-boomers-and-veterans](http://www.weknownext.com/blog/overview-of-the-generations-generation-y-generation-x-boomers-and-veterans) (Accessed on April 25, 2012).

Speevak Sladowski, P. & Hientz, P. (2012), *Building Blocks for Newcomers: A Guide for Organisations*. Volunteer Canada.



State Emergency Service, (2013), *Volunteer Learning and Development Strategy 2012-15*, 2013.

United Nations, (2001), *Measuring Volunteering: A Practical Toolkit*, A Joint Project Of Independent Sector and United Nations Volunteers, UN: Germany

Vallance, S. (May 2012), *Advancing Country Towns Program, Mallee Track Project: Project Charter*. Department of Community Development and Planning (Version 1.5).

Vinson, T. (2007), *Dropping off the Edge: the distribution of disadvantage in Australia*. A report to Jesuit Social Services and Catholic Social Services Australia.

Victorian Government, (Dec 2012), *Victorian Emergency Management Reform White Paper*, Melbourne, Victoria.

Volunteering Queensland 2013, Generational Matrix Tool.

<http://www.volunteeringqld.org.au/web/documents/Generational%20Matrix.pdf> (accessed 17 December 2013)

Wajs-Chaczko, E. *Gen Y and emergency management: How do we engage generation Y in the emergency management sector?* The Australian Journal of Emergency Management, Vol. 23 No. 3, August 2008

Warburton, J., Paynter, J. & Petriwskyj, A. (2007), *Volunteering as a productive aging activity: Incentives and barriers to volunteering by Australian seniors*. Journal of Applied Gerontology 26 (4) 333-354.

Wells, K. (2013), *Emergency Management Reforms Enter Parliament*, media release, Victorian Liberal Party, Melbourne, 16 October 2013, accessed 20 November 2013, http://www.kimwells.com.au/show_article.php?item=583

Williams, C. (2003), *Developing community involvement: Contrasting local and regional participatory cultures in Britain and their implications on policy*. Regional Studies, 37 (5) 531-541.



Appendix A: Community Consultation Questions

Consultation with Emergency Services

1. Organisation and Name/Position of person being interviewed:
2. How many active volunteers across the service (in the Mallee Track area as a whole and attached to each unit?)
3. How does this compare to the actual capacity of volunteers in a given event? (eg are there seasonal or employment reasons some volunteers are unavailable at times)
4. What is the demographic profile of your volunteers? (age, gender)
5. Does the current model for volunteering in your service continue to 'best serve' your community? If you had a magic wand, what elements of this model would you keep and what would you change?
6. Are you able to maintain 'at least' current levels of service response into the future – short term / longer term? What are the risks for your service and what are its strengths?
7. Where would the response need to come from should your service ever to be lost?
8. Presuming (like most services!) you are in need of more volunteers, how many would you ideally like to have?
9. What ways do you currently try to recruit new volunteers? Do you have a succession plan to assist with achieving this?
10. Which ways are the most successful? And the least?
11. Do you have any specific strategies for recruiting new members of the community?
12. In terms of the compliance or regulatory requirements for volunteer recruitment – is there anything that you think could be done away with, or changed or streamlined? What is your volunteer induction protocol?



13. Do you currently do any joint recruitment with the other services?
14. What are your thoughts about undertaking joint recruitment? (good and bad)
15. To what extent is retention of existing volunteers an issue for you?
16. In what ways do you actively try and retain volunteers?
17. What are the minimum hours of training required to become an accredited volunteer with the service?
18. If they were coming from a different emergency volunteer service as an accredited volunteer how many additional hours would be required?
19. Do you formally recognise training done by other emergency services as a form of 'RPL' for your volunteers? What would they be given credit for? (is there a system, or does it need to be done individually?)
20. How many of your current volunteers are also volunteers with other emergency services? (if you know)
21. Do you currently do any joint training with the other services?
22. What modules or types of training do you think could be suited to doing collaboratively across services?
23. Are there any other intra or inter agency strategies you can identify which could be enacted to increase the resilience of emergency services across the Mallee Track communities (strategies which might increase volunteer role / time efficiencies, streamline recruitment and training, recompense volunteers in some way to encourage retention)?

Contact Details:

Angie Laussel
Janda Consulting
P 0488 432 165
E angie@jandaconsulting.com.au





Consultation with Broader 'Volunteer Reliant' Services - Health, Wellbeing and Development

1. Organisation name?
2. Discreet / specific services within your organisation which rely on a volunteer workforce?
3. The actual 'service' delivered and to whom? Number of people supported?
4. How many active volunteers for this / each service?
5. How does the need / demand for the service compare to the actual capacity of your volunteers?
6. What is the demographic profile of your volunteers? (age, gender)
7. Does this model of service delivery continue to 'best serve' your clients? What elements of this model would you keep and what would you change?
8. Are you able to maintain 'at least' current levels of service delivery – short term / longer term? What are the risks for your service and what are its strengths?
9. Does any other similar service exist in your community / along the Mallee Track which might reasonable take the place of your service were it to be 'lost'?
10. Presuming (like most services!) you are in need of more volunteers, how many would you ideally like to have?
11. What ways do you currently try to recruit new volunteers? Do you have a succession plan to assist with achieving this?
12. Which ways are the most successful? And the least?



13. In terms of the compliance or regulatory requirements for volunteer recruitment – is there anything that you think could be done away with, or changed or streamlined? Do you have a volunteer induction protocol?
14. Do you currently do any joint recruitment with the other services?
15. What are your thoughts about undertaking joint recruitment? (good and bad)
16. To what extent is retention of existing volunteers an issue for you?
17. In what ways do you actively try and retain volunteers?
18. Is there a minimum level of training required to become an accredited volunteer with the service? Is there a preferred level of training required?
19. Do you formally recognise training done by other services as a form of 'RPL' for your volunteers? What would they be given credit for? (is there a system, or does it need to be done individually?)
20. Do you currently do any joint training with the other services?
21. What modules or types of training do you think could be suited to doing collaboratively across services which would be of use to your service?
22. Are there any other intra or inter agency strategies you can identify which could be enacted to increase the resilience of services reliant on volunteers across the Mallee Track communities (strategies which might increase volunteer role / time efficiencies, streamline recruitment and training, recompense volunteers in some way to encourage retention)?

Contact Details:

Rachael Williams
Local Logic Place
P 0416 201 643
E rachael@locallogicplace.com.au



Appendix B: Volunteer Data Collection Templates

Service Mapping Template

Group Name	Group's Aims & Vision Statement	Key Contacts (chair, secretary, web address if available)	Meeting schedule (When, where, duration)	Volunteer roles	Membership or involvement process (where applicable)	Levels of commitment available		
	Aims Vision	Name Ph / Fax Email www.		List all available roles including officer bearer roles together with task specific roles	Necessary training Necessary regulations / registrations Membership fee	<input type="checkbox"/> Office bearer <input type="checkbox"/> Member of committee <input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing role, limited tasks <input type="checkbox"/> Single event only <input type="checkbox"/> Single task only <input type="checkbox"/> Internet based roles		





Volunteer Registration Template

Name	Contact Details	Current registrations / licences	Current training certificates	Current volunteering roles	Volunteering areas of interest (include checklist)	Level of commitment sought	Other	
	DOB Ph / Fax Email	<input type="checkbox"/> Police Check <input type="checkbox"/> WWCC (expires?) <input type="checkbox"/> Drivers Licence (include name of organisation holding copy of original)	<input type="checkbox"/> First Aid <input type="checkbox"/> Safe Food Handling <input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/> Health <input type="checkbox"/> Wellbeing <input type="checkbox"/> Emergency Services <input type="checkbox"/> Sporting <input type="checkbox"/> Arts <input type="checkbox"/> Beautification <input type="checkbox"/> Advocacy <input type="checkbox"/> Environment <input type="checkbox"/> Other Please list	<input type="checkbox"/> Office bearer <input type="checkbox"/> Member of committee <input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing role, limited tasks <input type="checkbox"/> Occasional involvement <input type="checkbox"/> Single event only <input type="checkbox"/> Single task only <input type="checkbox"/> Other Please list		



Appendix C: Micro-volunteering Opportunities

Is micro-volunteering appropriate for your group or organisation?

Does your group or organisation...	Is micro-volunteering appropriate for your group or organisation?
...want to involve volunteers across a wide geographic area?	Yes – micro-volunteering has the potential to involve volunteers in any area, even internationally
...have opportunities that can be delivered in shorter periods of time?	Yes – this is a defining feature of micro-volunteering
...need volunteers in face-to-face roles that take place at a set, regular time?	No – some micro-volunteering opportunities happen face-to-face but they tend to be delivered remotely and are often one-off. Importantly, micro-volunteering opportunities do not involve regularity.
...have opportunities that can be broken down into smaller tasks?	Yes – the cumulative impact of lots of smaller tasks can be significant
...need to have volunteers working directly and on their own with vulnerable people and children?	No – although existing volunteers who have been vetted could micro-volunteer
...want to increase the range of opportunities for volunteers?	Yes – micro-volunteering can increase the volunteering offer for organisations and give people more choice when getting involved
... have limited time or money to invest in this?	No – micro-volunteering is given freely but like other forms of volunteering needs support and coordination from paid staff or other volunteers, especially in its start-up phase



Appendix D: Generational Matrix

	Silent Generation Born 1925-1946	Baby Boomers Born 1946-1964	Generation X Born 1964-1980	Generation Y Born 1980-1995	Generation Z Born 1995-2009-
Value	Hard work	Loyalty	Work-life balance	Innovation and change	Knowledge and diversity
Views on Authority	Respect authority, and will rarely challenge it, even though it may frustrate them.	Willing to challenge the status quo. Some concern for how this is done. Desire accountability.	Tendency to mistrust authority, cynical of authority and large organisations. Authority is self and peers. Expect accountability.	Authority is irrelevant. Question frequently, WHY? Demonstrate respect after they are treated with respect. Demand accountability.	Authority is fluid and dependant on relevance and currency. With IQ scores higher than previous generations they will respect authority if combined with knowledge.
Autonomy	Conforms and plays by rules; limited if any questioning of the rules. Can live with limited choice.	Personal freedom and self expression are important. Want choices. Many are used to authority.	Choice is expected. Highly self-reliant.	Demand choice; and ability to mix a range of choices. However, keen to seek insight from those they see as respected.	The most autonomous generation to date, they connect to people through technology rather than face to face.
Organisation preference	Generally have faith in and support mainstream organisations. Support Australian causes, and children/poverty in overseas countries. Give time and money.	Support organisations they can trust. Interest in diversity/inequality issues. May be juggling time and money and are interested in alternative ways of contributing. Shifting lifestyle choices with impending retirement.	More global interests, humanitarian and social justice causes. Interested in innovation and pragmatism, and less interested in mainstream organisations.	Open to joining lesser known organisations, and need reasons to support an organisation. Interested in joining communities they can relate to and be creative and expressive. Want convenience and speedy process.	They will want to join organisations that are flexible, willing to allow their creativity free reign. As the most entrepreneurial generation to date many will work for themselves, or contract to multiple companies at one time.



	Silent Generation Born 1925-1946	Baby Boomers Born 1946-1964	Generation X Born 1964-1980	Generation Y Born 1980-1995	Generation Z Born 1995-2009-
Identity	Proud of achievements; honour and integrity valued. Interest in family and community.	Have a general sense of optimism. Have both a serious/hardworking side and frivolous/indulgent side. Desire personal happiness and internal fulfilment.	Cynical yet pragmatic. Perceive themselves to be different from other generations especially parents.	Questioning but fun-loving; value experiences and variety. Thrive on change, need for visibility and making a personal mark	Pessimistic about global issues whilst still holding hope things can be different. They do not place high value on interpersonal skills and so can be seen as withdrawn or abrupt.
Sense of obligation	Outward face to other matters, support for community activities, external focus.	Obligation and responsibility to self, personal development and self esteem; nurturing important.	Detached from self absorption of both Boomers and Gen Y; but interested in doing things that work for them and align with their values. Get on with it and get over it.	Concern for communities that they identify with (physical and virtual). Still young enough to not feel a strong sense of obligation.	Due to the constant stream of global information in which they immerse themselves, they have a strong sense of social and global justice, though it is still forming given their youth.
Technology	Generally wary of technology; tentatively embracing it and safer if people are involved. Some opt out as being 'too old'.	Difficulty adapting to constantly changing technology. Recognise the value of technology, but need good support and are constantly in learning mode.	Technology savvy, adapt rapidly to change when it brings convenience. Boundaries blurred between actual and virtual experience.	Live with and through technology. Use it to expand personal experiences. Rely on the immediacy of technology and 24/7 access to information.	Technologically savvy, they have not experienced a time before the internet, Facebook, instant communication and fast streaming information. They are the masters of multi-tasking.
View of others	Prejudge Boomers as self-orientated	See Silent Generation as limited in views and experiences. Often perceive Gen X'ers as negative, but interact well with energetic Y's.	See Boomers as inflexible to change. Respect the lessons to be learned from Silent Generation, but less patient with the 'cut through' approach of Y's.	Respect Boomers, providing they live up to expectations.	Most in common with Gen Y, and connect well with Boomers. Starting to mythologise the Silent Generation.



	Silent Generation Born 1925-1946	Baby Boomers Born 1946-1964	Generation X Born 1964-1980	Generation Y Born 1980-1995	Generation Z Born 1995-2009-
Time	Patience for quality outcomes, and see patience as having its own reward. Willing to delay gratification. Feel they have time.	Time is precious, highly valued and in short supply. Seek quick outcomes or milestones. Tend to be impatient when don't know if progress is being made.	Time is highly valued, and convenience is priority. Innovative shortcuts and efficiency are important, attracted to pragmatic approaches.	Live in the moment. Expect speed and fast turnarounds. Live in the 24/7 world of multi-tasking and get impatient if things take too long.	Like Gen Y, this generation expects everything at lightening speed. This includes feedback and they will be impatient with waiting.
Work	High degree of loyalty; duty before pleasure. Will maintain dedication to a job once they take it on, limited adaptability.	Known for overworking to climb corporate ladder. Increasing need for personal satisfaction. Troubled by rapid change and likely to change career. Loyalty to work questioned: is the company loyal to me?	'Work to live' attitude. Open to contracts, and want clear expectations from employers. Feel responsible for own satisfaction, and likely to change careers. Don't expect loyalty.	Work in fits and starts; and have no loyalty. Tend to ask why would I want to be loyal? Demand clear expectations to ensure productivity. Have several career changes.	Loyal to concepts and ideals rather than organisations, they are flexible in their nature and expect flexibility from their workplace. They have grown up with gaming and expect learning and work to be fun.
Family	Desire stability. Preservation of family and community values to be respected.	Fragmented families through separation/divorce and re-defining of family. Both parents working and struggle to keep family together.	Single parent, blended family, sole living are popular options. Alternatively, full-time parenting (that they feel they missed out on) are options. Change and choice are they key words to these families.	Grown children returning home between experiences; family structures changeable. Often benefited from more time with their parents than their Gen X big brothers and sisters and as such close parental ties exist.	They are likely to stay at home longer. They have been brought up to have strong self esteem as a result of their Gen X and Gen Y parents who have wanted to provide stimulating and positive parenting experiences.



	Silent Generation Born 1925-1946	Baby Boomers Born 1946-1964	Generation X Born 1964-1980	Generation Y Born 1980-1995	Generation Z Born 1995-2009
Learning	Need a learning environment that is structured and stress free. Require full orientation and motivated to learn when it is for the good of the organisation.	Need a learning environment that is interactive. Respond well to brainstorming and group discussions.	Prefer self directed life-long learning. Focus on real life and informal learning, combine learning and entertainment. Rely heavily on internet and are big 'scanners' of information.	Respond well to learning environments which combine personal challenge, teamwork, technology and visually appealing materials. Appreciate group work and interaction.	Expect learning to be driven through technology. They have a short attention span, perhaps as a result of their tendency to multitask, and need information to be delivered in rapid, short bursts if it is to be understood.

Adapted from Volunteering Queensland (2013) Renfro (2012).