

Review of the National Standards for Involving
Volunteers in Not for Profit Organisations
Phase One: Initial Consultation

National Volunteer Skills Centre Project

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Approved By:

Amanda Everton
National Manager
Education & Skills
Volunteering Australia
Suite 2, Level 3,
11 Queens Road
Melbourne 3004

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1 Executive Summary

The *National Standards for Involving Volunteers in Not for Profit Organisations (National Standards)* were endorsed by Volunteering Australia in 1998. They are the only set of standards that 'emphasise the importance of adopting a systems approach to managing volunteers' in Australia (Volunteering Australia 2001, p.7).

Since their publication, Volunteering Australia has welcomed feedback on the applicability and development of the *National Standards*. Phase 1: Initial Consultation, Review of the *National Standards*, is the first stage of the first formal review.

The methodology employed in Phase 1: Initial Consultation consisted of a comparative investigation of internal and local standards; an investigation of accreditation processes under the Standards Australia framework; the development of material to aid promotion and information among stakeholders; the establishment of a Survey Design Panel to drive the online survey; workshops held at a volunteering infrastructure forum; and interstate consultations.

Overall, the current *National Standards* were found to be comprehensive, clear and relevant to organisations involving volunteers. It was found that the *National Standards* would benefit from some refinements and additions rather than from a significant rewrite. Interestingly, respondents highlighted a variety of ways they use the *National Standards*. This flexibility will need further exploration when considering the design of tools supporting implementation processes.

While respondents were supportive of the *National Standards* to measure best practice, their ability to adhere to the eight elements was found to be dependent on the physical and material resource base of the organisation rather than any issue related to sector. Part of the attraction of the *National Standards* is that they are designed to be generic in nature and therefore negate concerns of sector specificity. However, it was noted that there was concern in sectors where compliance with standards already exists, as this was seen as a potential area of duplication and possible confusion.

1.1 Summary of Recommendations

1. Develop focused promotional material with a greater emphasis on other sectors outside the Community/welfare sector that involve large numbers of volunteers e.g. Sport/recreation, Emergency services.
2. Explore in greater depth the use of the term 'implementation' as it relates to the implementation of the *National Standards*. This may include adopting a broader definition to encompass the needs of both resource-poor and well resourced organisations.
3. Develop generic promotional material to support the Volunteering Infrastructure to promote the *National Standards*.
4. Analyse existing standards frameworks in other sectors, as well as legislative requirements (e.g. equal opportunity, OH&S) that organisations must adhere to or comply with, and identify points of commonality in order to extend or enhance current practice without duplication.

5. Commence sourcing of case studies and practical examples to share learnings and communicate the variety of ways in which organisations have implemented the *National Standards*.
6. Align existing Volunteering Australia and other existing good practice resources to each of the *National Standards* to demonstrate the range of support materials available.
7. Investigate the costs involved in publishing the *National Standards* in a range of accessible formats e.g. online, CD etc.
8. Review the language of the *National Standards* to ensure they are in plain English.
9. Explore in greater depth the terminology of 'best practice vs. good practice' within the context of continuous improvement.
10. Develop supporting tools that greater articulate how the *National Standards* support organisations in meeting a changing environment.
11. Undertake further research to investigate the likely take-up of an accreditation model by volunteer involving organisations.
12. Incorporate an accreditation model as an integral component of future review phases of the *National Standards*.
13. Adopt an independent Volunteering Australia accreditation for the *National Standards* as the most appropriate accreditation model.
14. Future stages of the review take into account the learnings of benchmarking of the *National Standards* against other international standards.
15. That the structure of the *National Standards* continues to be relevant and appropriate in today's volunteering environment, and that refinements of content, format and support resources, be further investigated in future review phases.

2 Introduction and Background

2.1 About the National Standards

The *National Standards for Involving Volunteers in Not for Profit Organisations* (the '*National Standards*') were developed and endorsed by Volunteering Australia ('VA') in 1998 after an extensive national consultation process. The development of the *National Standards* followed a Home and Community Care project undertaken by Volunteering Victoria, which focused on the role of volunteers in food services and identified the need to develop best practice standards for the management of volunteers involved in food service delivery. A second edition of the *National Standards* was developed in 2001.

Together with the *Definition and Principles of Volunteering*, and the *Model Code of Practice*, the *National Standards* are considered one of VA's foundation documents setting the benchmark for best practice and providing detailed guidance for organisations involving volunteers. The *National Standards* cover the following aspects of volunteer involvement:

1. Policies and procedures
2. Management responsibilities
3. Recruitment
4. Work and the workplace

5. Training and development
6. Service delivery
7. Documentation and records
8. Continuous Improvement

Though it is not known exactly the extent to which the *National Standards* have been implemented¹ sales have exceeded 20,000. They are highly regarded within the not for profit sector as well as within government and the for profit sector forming an accepted framework for advancing volunteering in Australia. In VA's *National Survey of Volunteering Issues 2008*, 48% (419) of organisational respondents reported that they had implemented the *National Standards*. These organisations ranged in size from small to large (in terms of numbers of volunteers managed), in all states and territories. Highest reportage was in the community/welfare, health and volunteering infrastructure sectors.

2.2 Why review?

It has been a decade since the *National Standards* were first published, and in a climate of change and development in the volunteering sector, it is timely to engage in a review process to evaluate the effectiveness, improve the application and accessibility of the *National Standards*. This is particularly important in terms of emerging trends in volunteering, such as:

- episodic and project volunteering,
- spontaneous volunteering,
- demographic changes and expectations,
- the engagement of volunteers outside the not for profit sector (e.g. direct management of volunteers by government departments and agencies), and
- an increasing focus on the importance of quality management of volunteers – at both an individual manager level and an organisational level.

By testing the *National Standards'* ongoing application and relevance to all organisations and volunteers, the review provides the opportunity to increase future adoption of the *National Standards* across the sectors which involve volunteers having positive impacts for both volunteers and volunteering.

3 The Extent of the Review – Phase 1

The *National Standards* are currently provided in print and are part of a purchased resource pack from VA which includes:

- The National Standards for Involving Volunteers in Not for Profit Organisations
- The Implementation Guide
- The Workbook and Resources Kit

While it is recognised that these three complementary resources are often used as a complete toolkit for implementation or use of the *National Standards*, the extent of the review was confined to the single resource, the *National Standards*. The associated resources (the Implementation Guide and The Workbook and Resources

¹ See section, How the National Standards are being used, for discussion on the issues concerning the term 'implementation' and how they are addressed for the purposes of Phase 1.

Kit) enable the implementation of the *National Standards* therefore their ongoing relevance will be considered in light of the recommendations made in this first phase.

4 Methodology

This phase was carried out in accordance with Volunteering Australia's *Policy Consultation Framework* (accompanying this report). The method comprised a number of steps under four main headings:

4.1 Research:

To understand the *National Standards* where they relate or refer to volunteering and to analyse options for accreditation, Volunteering Australia undertook:

- Investigation of international and local standards for comparative purposes;
- Investigation of the Standards Australia framework in the context of developing an accreditation model.

4.2 Consultation with stakeholders:

Volunteering Australia endeavoured to consult with an array of stakeholders familiar with the implementation of the *National Standards* or who self-identify as potential users, in particular:

- Volunteering infrastructure forum held during VMP Conference 2008
- Affiliated peak bodies. This included face to face meetings, telephone interviews and email correspondence
- Trainers and managers with experience of the implementation of the *National Standards*
- Volunteers

One of the first stages in co-ordinating the review of the *National Standards* was to seek feedback from volunteering infrastructure organisations across Australia (both State Centres and Volunteer Resource Centres) who are considered to have expert working knowledge of the *National Standards* through implementation in their own organisations, as well as supporting the implementation in volunteer involving organisations through training and information services. Input was sought through workshops held at the Volunteer Management Program forum (funded by the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs) and facilitated by VA in December 2008. Representatives of the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs also provided input into the process at this juncture.

Feedback and participant requests made at these workshops resulted in the development of the methodology and support materials.

Volunteering Australia sought to have the most inclusive consultation process by providing an online survey that would be accessible to both metropolitan and rural organisations. The volunteering infrastructure (State Centres and Volunteer Resource Centres) were requested to encourage and engage their members and networks to promote participation in the review process using the supporting resources they suggested. Hard copies of the survey were also developed and

distributed to volunteering infrastructure organisations as well as being available through the VA website.

4.3 Production of supporting documentation and resources:

Volunteering Australia produced resources to contextualise and provide information on the promotion and process of this phase of the Review, including:

- Publication of a background paper;
- Development of resources to facilitate State Centre and Volunteer Resource Centre information sessions on Phase 1; and
- A powerpoint presentation and article for inclusion in their newsletters.

A background paper was prepared for broad circulation across the volunteer sector to provide context and explain the process. A powerpoint presentation was also prepared to enable organisations and networks to have a tool to raise awareness about the *National Standards* and encourage participation in the Review process. A brief newsletter article text was provided for organisations and networks to include in their member communications for example, newsletters and on websites. These resources to support the Review were distributed through the volunteering infrastructure nationally, through Volunteering Australia's monthly e-newsletter, *InVOLve* (distribution over 10,000) and through Volunteering Australia's website.

4.4 Development of survey

In accord with Volunteering Australia's practise of managing web based surveys; the six month time frame for the project; endeavour to include a wide sample, it was decided to hold an online survey that would have stakeholder input. The process included:

- Establishment of a Survey Design Panel, this panel included:
 - researchers on volunteering and/or undertaken research on the implementation of the *National Standards*;
 - members of the volunteering infrastructure;
 - managers of volunteers; and
 - trainers of volunteers.
- Online survey for both people who had implemented the *National Standards* (either fully or in part) and people who had little familiarity with the *National Standards*.
- Provision of copies of the *National Standards* to people who wanted to complete the online survey but had no access.
- Provision of an e-forum for further comment post closure of the online survey.

Expertise was sought from various stakeholders in the development of the online survey tool by establishing a Survey Design Panel. Participants were invited through direct communication with the volunteering infrastructure, through VA's monthly e-newsletter, *InVOLve* (distribution over 10,000) and through VA's website. All states and territories as well as a diversity of sectors were represented. This panel was actively involved with the structure and identification of areas to capture in the survey.

For design purposes the Survey Design Panel considered that most respondents would have experience implementing either the *National Standards* or other good practice volunteer management processes in a volunteer-involving organisation and would also have expertise in volunteering in a particular demographic section of the community. However, it was also thought that some respondents, interested and supportive of best practice in volunteer management but without actual implementation experience may also want to take part in the review and questions were designed to capture reasons of non-use.

The survey was constructed using the online survey tool Survey Monkey and was open from 6 April 2009 until 28 May 2009. The survey was designed to capture:

- Use of the *National Standards*, including but not limited to, implementation
- Continuing relevance of the *National Standards* in relation to emerging trends in volunteering, e.g. episodic, event, spontaneous, etc.
- Relevance of the *National Standards* beyond the definition of formal volunteer, e.g. non-formal volunteering.
- Barriers, enablers to using the *National Standards* – accessibility, language, complexity, structure, etc.
- The *National Standards* in an accreditation framework and the potential impacts on volunteer-involving organisations, volunteers and volunteering.

4.5 Specified Timeframes

The process for development and administration of the survey, with input from the volunteering sector via the Survey Design Panel, was clearly set out in all correspondence and publicity related to the review. This enabled stakeholders to understand and appreciate the various stages. This whole process ran from February until late May 2009.

5 Survey Responses

5.1 Respondent Diversity

The online survey attracted 668 respondents of which 386 (58%) worked through the survey to completion. Though hard copy paper surveys were available as a collection method through the volunteering infrastructure and on Volunteering Australia's website, none were received. An emailed submission was received by the Australasian Fire and Emergency Services Authorities Council (AFAC) providing the collective response of member agencies (e.g., CFA, SES and others) based in metropolitan, regional and remote areas across Australia.

Survey questions, together with quantitative and qualitative data, are outlined in the following sections.

5.2 Demographic information

This elicited information about who completed the survey, their involvement with volunteering, location of involvement, the sector and the spread of representation.

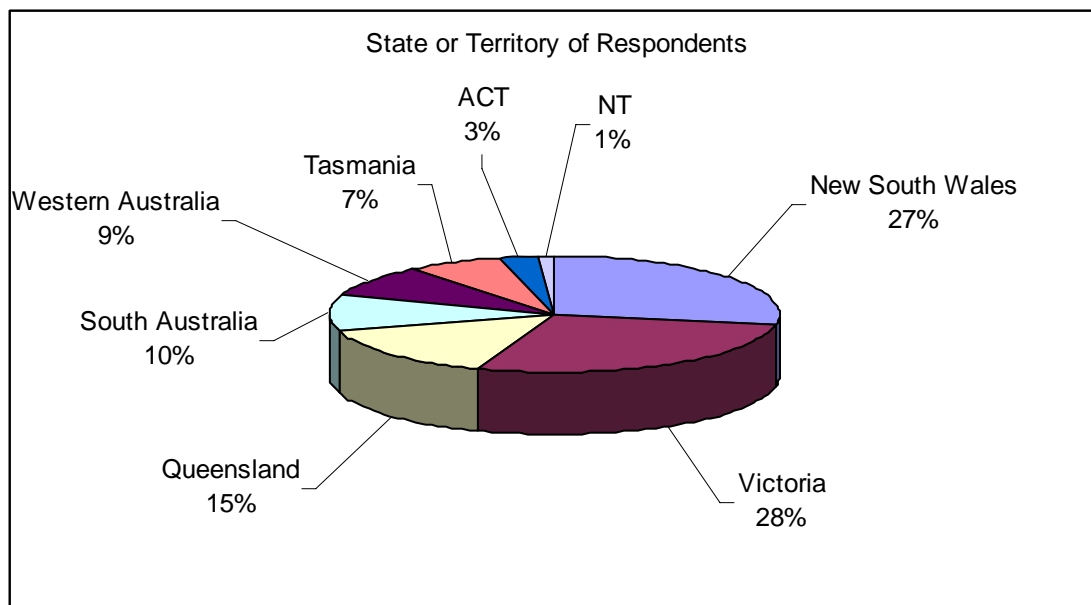
Briefly, the demographic information demonstrated that the majority of respondents were from:

- not for profit organisations in either paid or volunteer roles;
- eastern states and based in metropolitan states;
- community/welfare and health sectors; and
- local and state based organisations.

Table 1: Which of the following best describes you?

Manager / supervisor of volunteers	45% (298)
Volunteer	16% (108)
Employee of not for profit	11% (73)
Board / committee member of a not for profit organisation	10% (64)
Government employee (local, state or federal)	10% (65)
Employee of volunteering infrastructure	5% (31)
Employee of a for profit organisation interested in employee volunteering	3% (19) <i>at least half of these respondents were not from for-profit organisations</i>
Provider of services eg: trainer, consultant	1% (7)

Which state or territory are you based in?



Sixty per cent of respondents identified as metropolitan; 39% rural/regional and one per cent remote.

Table 2: Which sector do you work or volunteer in (please choose best fit)?

Community/welfare	39% (255)
Health	14% (94)
Government (local, state or federal)	9% (56)
Education / training / youth development	8% (54)
Emergency services	7% (46)
Volunteering infrastructure	6% (40)
Arts / culture / heritage	5% (35)
Sport / recreation	5% (30)
Environment / animal welfare	4% (28)
Law / political / justice	1% (9)
Religious	1% (8)
Business / professional / union	1% (5)
Foreign / international	.5% (4)
Other	54 responses

Recommendation 1: Develop focused promotional material with a greater emphasis on other sectors outside the Community/welfare sector that involve large numbers of volunteers e.g. Sport/recreation, Emergency services.

Table 3: Is the organisation you represent?

State (only)	29% (193)
Local (only)	28% (186)
National	19% (122)
Regional (only)	14% (90)
International	11% (69)

Responses for these questions demonstrate a wide geographic spread across Australia that is representative of large, medium and small organisational perspectives with some degree of representation from all sectors involving volunteers.

5.3 Awareness Level of the National Standards

Prior to this survey, did you know of the existence of the National Standards?

Four hundred and sixty one (70%) respondents were aware of the *National Standards* prior to the survey. As it could not be assumed that everyone participating in the survey had knowledge of them it was considered important to gather data about this group of potential users on the relevance of the *National Standards* to their activities.

Thirty per cent (199) of the total respondent group had not been aware of *National Standards* prior to the survey. Of these, 121 said they would be relevant to their organisation or activity while 60 were unsure. One hundred and fifty six (156) are interested in learning more about the *National Standards* and will be provided with information about relevant resources to support their organisations or volunteering activity.

5.4 How and Where the National Standards Are Being Used

At this point of the survey, 466 respondents remained in the survey and 386 provided detailed comment on their experience and opinion of the *National Standards*. Just over half of these respondents (53%) were managers or supervisors of volunteers, a higher percentage rate of the total group that began the survey.

Table 4: How have you used or experienced the National Standards in an organisation or program (please choose as many as apply)? n = 381

As a guideline or checklist to help identify opportunities for improvement	60% (229)
To develop policies and procedures	53% (198)
To teach / inform people about good practice in volunteer management	42% (159)
As an audit tool to benchmark against good practice	39% (145)
As a framework or reference to help in planning a new program	30% (116)
As a tool to establish or improve an employee volunteer program	27% (104)
Only aware that the <i>National Standards</i> exist i.e. no use	22% (83)
To measure and monitor progress	21% (79)
Lobbying for organisational change	12% (45)

Responses indicate the variety of ways that the *National Standards* are being used. At the development stage of the online survey tool, there was discussion among members of the Survey Design Panel regarding the use and understanding of the term 'implementation' in the *National Standards*. It was considered by members of the Survey Design Panel that using the term alone was open to broad interpretation of the variety of uses suspected through anecdotal information.

To seek insight respondents were asked to provide examples to explain their understanding of 'implementation' to assist the Review process. This information will help identify the most appropriate terminology and provide information about the flexible ways organisations make use of the *National Standards*.

Together with the following examples, and as Table 4 demonstrates, the use of the *National Standards* can range from a checklist, to a guide for how to establish a new program. There are clearly varying interpretations of what is meant by 'implementation' and it may be useful to adopt new language in supporting organisations to use the *National Standards* to establish good practice in volunteer management.

The following is a selection of respondent comments (total 120) when asked to provide examples to explain their understanding of 'implementation':

Respondent comments:

Full implementation means that the organisation has achieved best practice in all aspects of volunteer management. We are still working towards that, with some gaps in procedure and evaluation mechanisms.

Generally means putting a standard into practice. In saying full implementation I am saying that we are fully aware of the standards and have implemented them to the

best of our ability, however there will always be room for improvement no doubt (Standard 8 takes care of this) so am not claiming perfection.

I act as a consultant to provide assistance to volunteer-involving organisations in implementing the Standards. I have never encountered an organisation that could be said to have 'fully implemented' the Standards, i.e. that has in place every volunteer management practice referred to in the Standards. In their current form it would be nigh on impossible for almost all volunteer programs to 'fully implement' the Standards.

We meet the standard in some areas, partially in others and not at all in some. We are taking steps to do what is necessary to meet the standard - only then are they fully implemented.

We have policies and procedures in place covering 1)volunteer support role description, 2) we have a recruitment and development package 3) we conduct annual agreements & maintain supervisory contact at least monthly via direct face to face or via telephone 4) on a yearly basis we develop a calendar of volunteer training from volunteers feedback and pending best practice developments 5) we hold monthly volunteer support meetings which includes stipulated terms of reference 6) as coordinator I produce a newsletter at least monthly 7) last year I nominated a volunteer for a prestigious regional award and our organisation acknowledged the efforts (the volunteer won the award) with a special tribute at the annual general meeting. 8) Our volunteers are actively involved with quality improvement activities e.g. we recently review our ... risk assessment documents, a standard documentation tool.

My understanding of 'implementation' is - to put into practice. I used the National Standards as a guide to assist with the establishment of a less complex policies and procedures document.

Putting in place a new recruitment and screening procedure.

I am not aware that the National Standards have been consulted when setting up or developing our program, although it is likely the program is in line with the standards. I will need to check.

We conduct a training program for volunteers, each volunteer has a position description.

We have implemented our Volunteer Information booklet which we didn't have before.

The National Standards have been adopted by the national organisation, but understanding and implementation of these standards has been sketchy in local offices. I have been 'educating' staff and volunteers about the standards and the higher expectations out of adhering to the standards.

Recommendation 2: Explore in greater depth the use of the term 'implementation' as it relates to the implementation of the National Standards. This may include adopting a broader definition to encompass the needs of both resource-poor and well resourced organisations.

Table 5: How did you become aware of the National Standards? n = 344

Volunteering Australia	60% (208)
State Volunteer Centre	16% (56)
An organisation that has used them	10% (36)
Volunteer Resource Centre	8% (27)
A conference	3% (9)
Australian Journal on Volunteering	2% (8)
Other: responses included many of the above, as well as internet searching and government literature, e.g. 'state government policy stated that it was informed by these standards'	48 responses

Responses here and throughout the survey suggested that the *National Standards* require greater promotion:

Many regional / rural organisations are not aware of the National Standards.

So many organisations are not aware of National Standards in any format. So that needs to be addressed first.

There should be a national push to get ALL community, non profit, volunteer organisations to take them on board, more marketing about the standards, if I didn't Google for study reasons, I would never have found them!

Recommendation 3: Develop generic promotional material to support the Volunteering Infrastructure to promote the National Standards.

Table 6: In which sectors have you used or experienced the National Standards (please choose as many as apply)? n = 328

Community/welfare	57% (189)
Health	23% (75)
Volunteering infrastructure	21% (70)
Education / training / youth development	18% (59)
Government (local, state or federal)	17% (54)
Arts / culture / heritage	9% (29)
Environment / animal welfare	8% (27)
Emergency services	7% (24)
Sport / recreation	7% (24)
Religious	3% (10)
Business / professional / union	3% (9)
Foreign / international	2% (7)
Law / political / justice	2% (6)
Other: included some community/welfare, arts, culture	21 responses

These findings are consistent with data that emerged in VA's *National Survey of Volunteering Issues 2008*. The question prompts for respondent's experience of the *National Standards*, which to some degree may correlate with the sector where they are currently working or volunteering.

Table 7: Are you using or aware of other standards that are relevant to volunteering in your organisation, program or work? n = 368

Yes	38% (138)
No	39% (142)
Don't know	24% (88)

An extensive list of standards, principles and governing legislation was provided by respondents (122 entries) including:

- Home and Community Care National Standards
- Community Broadcasting Codes of Practice
- Disability Service Standards
- Emergency Management Act 2006 provisions; State Government policy on management of volunteers
- EQUIP Hospital Accreditation
- LGA Strategic Management Framework
- Lifeline National Standards
- Museums Accreditation, Tourism Accreditation, Local Government Guidelines
- Surf Life Saving Aust has particular policies relating to standards for Surf Rescue and competition
- Community Visitors Scheme guidelines

As discussed later in this report, a further review of standards, principles and governing legislation that intersects with volunteer management will continue to inform the process of review of the *National Standards*.

Recommendation 4: Analyse existing standards frameworks in other sectors, as well as legislative requirements (e.g. equal opportunity, OH&S) that organisations must adhere to or comply with, and identify points of commonality in order to extend or enhance current practice without duplication.

5.5 An Overall Perspective of the National Standards

Table 8: Please indicate the extent to which you agree / disagree with the following statements about the *National Standards* (n = 289)

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree not disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
The <i>National Standards</i> should be the foundation for all volunteer programs	2%	4%	14%	51%	30%
The <i>National Standards</i> are fundamental for protecting the rights of volunteers	1%	3%	14%	54%	27%
All organisations that involve volunteers should be aware of the <i>National Standards</i>	1%	1%	4%	45%	48%

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree not disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Using the <i>National Standards</i> should be optional for organisations that involve volunteers	14%	34%	21%	25%	6%
The <i>National Standards</i> are easy to use	2%	10%	32%	45%	11%
It is necessary to have external support to use the <i>National Standards</i>	3%	25%	34%	30%	8%

More than fifty per cent of responses considered that volunteer programs be based on the *National Standards* while the only question to elicit a 'strongly agree' response concerned greater awareness of the *National Standards*.

Is the layout of the National Standards helpful e.g. the 'intent' followed by the criteria?
n = 284.

The significant majority of respondents (73%) stated that the current layout of the *National Standards* is helpful for their purposes. In particular, the intent section of each standard is valuable in providing the context and theory for understanding the criteria. The layout is considered 'common sense' and comprehensive. Examples of the qualitative data (100 comments):

The National Standards provide a framework for establishing a comprehensive volunteer policy and effective operational procedures. The format of outlining the intent and listing questions and issues is particularly useful.

I just find it useful to read the theoretical rationale followed by how one would assess whether or not the standard is being implemented effectively.

Similar process with our policy & procedure manual.

This is useful as people read things differently so having the intent helps you to put things in context and agree on an interpretation (as a group).

The standards are easy to read, the sections, instructions, language is clear.

The criteria easily enable an organisation to highlight areas that they are doing well and those that need improvement.

Well indexed, easy to follow and in point form. Easy to cross reference to get answers.

As not having a lot of time to do paper work and read standards the layout works well for me.

Knowing the reasons behind the criteria is helpful with working with management to change a volunteer program.

Suggestions on simple ways in which the *National Standards* could be improved included more practical examples, flow charts, hints and extra support options. Particular concern was expressed about potential complexity for small organisations

with limited resources, volunteer managed organisations or those new to volunteer management:

Somewhat complicated, although because of the immensely large and diverse fields of volunteer bodies it has to cover, a 'simplistic language' is probably very difficult to please all areas/groups!

It is easier to understand if you have a background in quality improvement otherwise it could be considered 'bewildering'.

Fine for those with experience. A little difficult for some volunteers.

Workers new to the role may require some support initially.

A few graphs, flow charts, pictures or similar would help to break up the text a little.

The books are too complex and time consuming.

It is bulky and you are put off reading before you start – a one pager 'cheat sheet' at the beginning or a 'if you read nothing else' section would be useful.

The 'how' needs to be very practical with examples, hints, extra support options etc.

How could the format of the National Standards be improved, e.g. language, being provided on disc etc? n = 174

Collectively, respondents were emphatic about a number of key format improvements that would aid their accessibility and potentially increase adoption by volunteer involving organisations were:

- Provide in different formats – retain hard copy but provide e-copy, e.g. CD, DVD, online
- No cost
- Simplify language – less bureaucratic, 'government speak'
- Translations for CALD communities
- In a format for people with visual impairments
- More practical, generic and sector specific examples, best practice case studies, scenarios, templates, visuals, links to practical resources
- Better cross-referencing between some of the standards and linking with relevant legislative/regulatory requirements
- A summary or overview of the standards and an index
- Create a more dynamic tool to support organisations
- Staged or tiered for greater applicability to organisations of different sizes, stages of development, e.g. a set of basic principles for smaller organisations
- Website with links to FAQs, searchable features, and other features as required

Recommendation 5: Commence sourcing of case studies and practical examples to share learnings and communicate the variety of ways in which organisations have implemented the National Standards.

Recommendation 6: Align existing Volunteering Australia and other existing good practice resources to each of the National Standards to demonstrate the range of support materials available.

Recommendation 7: Investigate the costs involved in publishing the National Standards in a range of accessible formats e.g. online, CD etc.

Recommendation 8: Review the language of the National Standards to ensure they are in plain English.

In your opinion, do the National Standards reflect best practice in volunteer management? n = 279

A significant majority of respondents (74%) identified the *National Standards* with best practice in volunteer involvement and management. The commentary from respondents (116) also gave strong support that the *National Standards* are reflective of good, better or best practice in the absence of any other standards that relate specifically to volunteering. However, it was articulated by some that a process of review is an opportunity to assess the *National Standards* against good practice and current thinking in other related fields to ensure continuous improvement of the *National Standards*.

Discussion of 'best practice' led to the question of what is the common understanding of the term and whether there needs to be examination of language being used in other frameworks for example, good practice, better practice, current thinking, and excellence. Indeed, it raises the issue of whether best practice is an aspirational level of performance or a measure against which an organisation may succeed or fail.

Respondent comments:

They are best practice in Australia and provide the benchmark. The language relating to recruitment and performance management may need to be reviewed - I make this comment as it has caused some debate and HR concerns about using it in a volunteer policy leading to industrial issues in my organisation - needing to separate out that volunteers are not staff and do not displace paid staff.

Not in their current format - although most elements of best practice are in there somewhere, there is much that is superfluous. They need to be expressed more simply and with less prescriptive detail in order to be sufficiently flexible and generic.

National Standards do reflect best practice in volunteer management as they provide a comprehensive framework for the building of an affective and sustainable volunteer program. Covering the needs of both volunteers and organisations.

They really made me look at the gaps in our organisations volunteer support and as we have approximately 10,000 volunteers, accessing the National Standards to align to management behaviours was very important, there did not seem a better way to do this than through using the National Standards.

Having been involved with the accreditation process in numerous health care facilities I think it covers all areas Code of Practice / Documentation / Policies and Procedure /

Volunteer & Organisations Rights. They also have quality assurance / auditing of outcomes essential to any well run volunteer program.

I would like to think so. However, processes are changing everyday, and one person's impression of 'best practice' might not be the same as the next person. National Standards should be open to continuous improvement, but not open to different interpretations from individuals.

May not agree with all standards but they form a strong basis for best practices across an ever changing sector which is volunteering.

They represent the wisdom and experience of many people both managers and volunteers and therefore are the best tool available.

From a systems perspective only. Needs peer review for the more important basis of outcomes.

We have been successful with some things from the Standards eg the awareness of the need for policies and procedures is very widespread now. Some things have moved on and changed. We have looked at the Standards and developed our own template which goes beyond them.

Having helped commercial and government organisations gain ISO 9000 accreditation, I believe the National Standards provide a relevant and appropriate framework for developing a 'best practice' approach to volunteer management.

Recommendation 9: Explore in greater depth the terminology of 'best practice vs. good practice' within the context of continuous improvement.

Are there other areas of good or best practice in volunteer management that are not covered by the National Standards? n = 273

Eighteen per cent of respondents believed that there are other areas of good or best practice that are not currently covered by the *National Standards*. Sixty eight per cent answered 'don't know' or chose to reserve their judgement. The survey elicited 71 written responses to this question, providing focus, issues, and management practice that could be considered for inclusion under the *National Standards*:

- Include governance structures; volunteers who do not have operational roles but are on committees and boards
- Employee/corporate volunteering practices and corporate social responsibility
- Management of member interests and donor interests
- Risk
- Volunteer liability
- Minimum recommendations for insurance cover for volunteers
- Identify what is not volunteering, 'students on placement', 'work experience', 'people on community based orders'
- Community engagement focus, civic participation, importance of partnerships
- Could better address diversity and human rights
- More adequate coverage of advances in technology, privacy and confidentiality
- Addressing the needs of different levels of government that engage volunteers (e.g. 'a specific focus on local government')

Importantly, respondents articulated the need for the *National Standards* to be regularly reviewed and updated to keep up with the changing nature of volunteering in economic, environmental and cultural contexts.

In your opinion, can the National Standards be applied across volunteers sectors? n = 278

A majority of respondents (67%) stated that the *National Standards* are or should be adaptable across all sectors that engage/involve volunteers and that they are sufficiently generic and flexible as currently presented. The *National Standards* are seen by some as a human resource tool, which can be applied in establishing effective people management practices and procedures, compliance with legislative requirement and ensuring minimum protection for volunteers regardless of the sector.

As pointed out in earlier comments, improvement to the format of the *National Standards*, sector specific examples and case studies, will support organisations in different sectors to gain a better understanding of the applicability of the *National Standards* to their strategies and operations. Improved communication and promotion of the *National Standards* across different volunteering sectors will heighten awareness and aid accessibility.

For some, the size of an organisation and its resource base can be more of a challenge than diversity across sectors.

Respondent comments:

Again, I think this is difficult to answer if you haven't had experience across all sectors. I am sure that there are volunteers that would feel that these standards are 'over the top' - many just want to get on with the job they volunteer to do, and do function quite well without too many formal policies and guidelines. Conversely, I am sure that there are other organisations that would quickly adopt the standards given the chance. For this reason, I think it would be difficult to apply across all sectors. I think it is critical that volunteer sectors have access to these standards if they need them, but I don't think they should or can be mandated.

I believe that the National Standards can be applied across all volunteer sectors. It doesn't matter where one volunteers, the standards should be the same with the same standard of responsibility towards volunteers.

The National Standards could be applied across all volunteer sectors, but in reality this would not occur, I am a paid volunteer manager but have also been a volunteer in sport and recreation for the past 15 years, every person who is involved such as president or secretary are volunteers and a lot do not have the knowledge or time to set up volunteer programs and follow standards.

Not sure if some organisations would find it difficult to apply although we have been able to adapt any areas that may not have been specific for our organisation.

Some flexibility is needed for certain volunteer sectors with unique requirements, e.g. working in hazardous work environments, being on call 24/7, etc.

There is a fair amount of similarity between volunteer sectors in the basic requirements with additions and/or subtractions depending on the nature of the work. As long as the standards have something for everyone and don't require people to do procedures that are irrelevant to their work they should be valuable.

Some sectors may resist them, due to cultural practices in that particular sector and the informal nature of volunteering e.g. sporting clubs, church groups, however they

remain as best practice and eventually organisations will want to implement them due to insurance and to manage liabilities.

They are generic so there is no need for them to be changed depending on the sector.

All groups have base standards. There should be a flexibility within the national guidelines for each group to apply to their specific situation.

A Volunteer is a volunteer, no matter what area!

All volunteers need a framework the same as employees.

May not be realistic for Local Governments where in many cases there is a large pool of volunteers. Expectations for the implementation of the standards may in some cases be higher than that developed for paid staff - with less resources for this to occur.

Hopefully this survey will deliver some greater awareness of how they have been adopted across different sectors.

One contributor articulated that to be more useful for government emergency service organisations, the *National Standards* would need to acknowledge the legislative framework that underpins government agency work. This submission also pointed out that as currently written, the *Principles of Volunteering* (p. 62 of the *National Standards* and one of VA's foundation documents upon which the *National Standards* are based) excludes Retained Brigades.

Please list up to three emerging issues that present challenges for volunteering. In your opinion, do the National Standards support you in meeting these challenges? n = 246

Respondents to the survey provided detailed commentary on the issues, emerging and existing, that continue to present challenges for volunteering. These form a valuable base for the next phase of the review process. A summary of trends:

- Keeping volunteers engaged and interested (sustainability)
- Lack of funding and resources
- Barriers to the volunteer recruitment process (e.g. police checks)
- Ageing population/ageing profile of volunteers
- Bureaucracy and paperwork
- Costs to volunteers, economic climate
- Attracting and recruiting volunteers
- Short term/periodic/episodic volunteering
- Lack of suitable volunteers
- Time – volunteers lack it; time as a resource; work and family issues
- Youth and volunteering – school aged volunteers, attracting younger volunteers
- Volunteers' changing needs and reasons for volunteering

Twenty-eight per cent (28%) thought that the *National Standards* did help them meet the challenges they identified while 34% disagreed and 38% were unsure. This finding potentially indicates a lack of clarity with the question as a direct connection between compliance with standards of best practice and issues outside the direct control of respondents was not made.

Respondent comments:

*I don't recall any of these issues (**police checks – time and cost, busier lifestyles and cost of fuel**) being addressed in the standards as they represent new trends and are about day to day issues rather than the compliance issues.*

*(**Time, cost and support**) The National Standards cannot control the economic climate, cost or petrol etc. They can only assist organisations to make themselves more available and professional to volunteers.*

Yes, and no. Yes, in that it assists in setting a high standard in the sector and helps display this to the community at large and No, in that it doesn't really insist that paid positions are required to attain standards and does not really cover situations where societal and economic changes impact, sometimes quite rapidly on volunteering.

*(**Fuel costs, keeping volunteers engaged in areas of interest, keeping on top of communication**) It's the lack of paid staff time due to financial restraints that often get in the way.*

*(**performance management & general volunteer management/co-ordination, risk - volunteers not conforming as required to policy, etc**) Somewhat, but the Standards are the ideal and can take a long time to implement. In the interim, there will be volunteer issues as staff & volunteers get used to changes (ie performance management). However, organisations (especially those run mostly by volunteers with minimal staff) usually do not have resources necessary to manage these issues properly.*

*(**sustainability in workers, paid workers' attitude towards volunteers, a hierarchy in organisations that are not well educated in recruiting and managing volunteers**) They are a good benchmark to promote, however challenges still prevail, maybe looking at including volunteering into a legislative act. Management tend to pay more attention to government policies.*

*(**Insurances, personal cost of volunteering, time poor**) The standards encourage the best and fairest way forward.*

*(**Changing needs and reasons volunteers have for volunteering, developing the profession so all volunteers are managed appropriately, cost associated with volunteering for organisation and volunteers**) Yes, although I do think that the standards should include a level of training required for the manager/coordinator etc to undertake this role.*

*(**Risk management (transfer of risk away from government, lack of support to manage/control risks), affordability (cost shifting from governments), availability (both time poor and aging issues)**) Only somewhat. Need better public policy initiatives to deal with these.*

*(**short term volunteering, project volunteering, spontaneous volunteering**) Perhaps the Standards are supporting what appears to be areas of challenge for some organisations (like the short term, or start up organisation responding to an immediate need e.g. initiatives that evolved out of need as a result of the bushfires), but the Standards are not "pitched" to show how they can support these challenges. Some practical examples of how organisations or initiatives can link into the Standards would be useful eg: partnering with another organisation or being auspiced by another that has implemented the Standards etc.*

*(**Aging population, more staying in employment; regional areas losing younger people to larger centres, funding - higher expenses, lower funding levels**) The standards can't influence demographics, but may assist regional bodies to recruit and retain, manage resources (including funding) smarter.*

I feel that the National Standards would help our different brigades if each one run meetings etc under the same procedure and not willy nilly. Make Management accountable for passing information back to members of their brigades and just hanging onto it.

Recommendation 10: Develop supporting tools that greater articulate how the National Standards support organisations in meeting a changing environment.

5.6 The Value of Accreditation and its Relevance to the National Standards

There are a number of reasons as to why organisations that involve volunteers are attracted to the *National Standards*. These include:

- recognition of the value of volunteers in meeting the mission of the organisation;
- providing an environment that facilitates the volunteer's work;
- managing risk; and
- providing evidence of good practice to clients, funding bodies and the community at large.

While standards exist in specific sectors of volunteering, the perception may exist that as they originated in one particular field they are not as relevant to the broad spectrum of volunteering areas. On the other hand, the *National Standards* are designed to be generic in nature and therefore negate concerns of sector specificity.

The discussion about the value of accreditation has grown for a number of reasons such as:

- Risk – this can be risk to the organisation, the volunteer and the client.
- Professionalisation – the growing numbers of managers of volunteers seeking a framework to test the calibre of their program.
- Desire for recognition – organisations know the importance of volunteers to their mission and attainment of goals. Accreditation can be perceived as a demonstration of acknowledgement of that importance.

Alternatively, there are organisations and volunteers who feel that accreditation detracts from the amateur status and the benefits this brings. Through feedback we know that many organisations are 'resource poor' and while they may be able to attract the funds to initially implement the *National Standards* they would not be able to provide continuous improvement. Further some organisations do not feel that they would ever be in a position to implement any standards due to their small size, lack of resources and they feel it would detract from their 'raison d'être'.

Currently there is no formal accreditation for organisations or programs that have used the National Standards. Would you be in favour of formal accreditation for use of the National Standards? n = 271

A significant majority of respondents (64%) said they would be in favour of formal accreditation for use of the *National Standards*. Fifteen percent of respondents said they were not in favour, and 22% did not know.

If yes, what kind of formal accreditation would you support eg: certificate, symbol (tick or seal) etc? n = 186

Many respondent comments were one word responses such as 'symbol', 'certificate' or 'tick'. Many comments showed considered thought about how an accreditation might work, who would administer it, frequency of monitoring, and maintenance of achievement.

For organisations that already have an accreditation process in place under regulatory or other frameworks, accreditation for the *National Standards* is either considered unnecessary or would require integration or alignment with those frameworks, e.g. Home and Community Care (HACC).

Respondent comments:

Only if the industry accreditation process is adapted to use the National Standards. Many sectors have established processes already; look at HACC and HASS - these just need to have the NSVIO in them, not repeat a new process.

There needs to be an avenue for aligning the Volunteering Accreditation to other Accreditation Programs - for example, our venue utilises Tourism Accreditation and is working toward Museums Accreditation so we would not want to have 3 different 'papers', we would ideally want to create ONE lot of policies and procedures (or Accreditation Manual) that covers the necessary criteria of all 3 Accreditation Programs.

Something that is visible and that there is a significant amount of awareness of - across the sector and by volunteers themselves. The system itself would need to have a thorough checking process to validate the organisation's 'compliance' without it being too labour intensive. This presents both challenges and benefits. Might need to be a 'tiered' system. It would need to be supported by a clever marketing campaign. It may be a range of different materials that could be used minimally - like a symbol on websites or promotional literature, and a certificate or poster that should explain what the organisation has been accredited for in detail for volunteers to see.

It would have to be FREE. Many organisations already have other Standards and regulations they must abide, to make another set of mandatory Standards will once again move the focus from delivery of services to administrative compliance. It must only be Best Practice, not mandatory as if is not affordable without compensation to manage mandatory accreditation.

Yes and no. Formal accreditation is good, but it is also very hard for many organisations to achieve this due to lack of resources (staff) or already being accredited in another program. It would be good if any existing formal accreditation process can take these Standards into account and tick for Nat Stds as well as other accreditation stds in one go.

We are an organisation that undergoes ACHS plus various other process for other funding bodies another accreditation process would not be appreciated and in fact may push us not to seek volunteers.

The State Emergency Service already has accreditation certificates through outside organisations.

A formal partnership with the LGA that encourages financial support in order for implementation to continue and ensure that Local Government Managements committees are aware of the many challenges and changing face of volunteering. A symbol or logo to be used by the LGA that acknowledges their support of Volunteer Managers.

One respondent supports bad practice in volunteer management being exposed:

Certificate/Symbol/Promotion of Organisations that are trustworthy and treat volunteers with respect whilst implementing National Standards. Also have a 'Shame Website' for organisations that 'just don't get it'. Why should organisations continue to have staff referred from volunteer resource centres when they are known to disrespect the rights of volunteers and rip off the community???

Accreditation could support 'professionalisation' of the role of managers of volunteers:

Assessment, inspection and accreditation would support the development of a formal quality assurance and so increase the professionalism of this area of work.

Certificate and the ability to use a phrase similar to "VA as the peak body of Volunteering recognises (insert org. name) as having achieved excellence in volunteering.

Also like individual accreditation for responsible administrator/manager - Recognition amongst peers, not sure what form - post nominals (not ideal!) - certificate, Resume recognition. Should not be linked to qualifications, rather experience & implementation of standards.

Some respondents expressed concern about formal accreditation:

I am really against this - it goes against the spirit of a volunteering program. I also assume that my State volunteering centre would be involved in the accreditation process, and I do not have faith in their ability to do this efficiently and fairly - they do not inspire confidence! The beauty of volunteering programs is that they already have a framework available to implement, but they are not limited in their creativity by the kind of bureaucracy that would come through accreditation.

I put 'don't know' as making orgs. get formal accreditation is fraught with problems. Many orgs are composed of volunteers themselves. From time to time they have a high turnover of people and an accreditation process would probably fail to deal with this and also scare off the people in charge with the extra work. Having a voluntary accreditation process which could be updated every 3 years might work - but who would oversee this? It's just another level of bureaucracy.

Importantly, an accreditation system should be visible and meaningful to volunteers:

Something that is visible and that there is a significant amount of awareness of - across the sector and by volunteers themselves. The system itself would need to have a thorough checking process to validate the organisation's 'compliance' without it being too labour intensive. This presents both challenges and benefits. Might need to be a 'tiered' system. It would need to be supported by a clever marketing campaign. It may be a range of different materials that could be used minimally - like a symbol on websites or promotional literature, and a certificate or poster that should explain what the organisation has been accredited for in detail for volunteers to see.

If the National Standards were accredited what would the benefits and challenges be for organisations and programs? n = 206

Respondents were able to identify equal number of benefits and challenges for organisations through the introduction of an accreditation process.

Broadly speaking the benefits articulated (197 responses) could be summarised under the main areas of:

- Aid recruitment and retention of volunteers
- Provide recognition of volunteering, volunteering organisations and managers of volunteers
- Provide consistency in volunteering experiences (protections) between organisations
- Provide for organisational learning, development and growth
- Improve service provision and quality
- Potential to aid resourcing and funding
- Ensure protection for volunteers

Challenges articulated (195 responses) could be summarised as follows:

- Costs
- Needs to be a flexible model
- Resource intensive
- Extra burden
- Keeping the system up with constant change
- Maintaining and monitoring accreditation status
- Training
- Administration, paperwork
- Compliance driven
- Takes focus of 'on the ground work'
- Difficult for volunteer run, small organisations
- Not enough time

Recommendation 11: Undertaken further research to investigate the likely take-up of an accreditation model by volunteer involving organisations.

Recommendation 12: Incorporate an accreditation model as an integral component of future review phases of the National Standards.

6 Review of Options for an Accreditation Model

As part of the review of the *National Standards* Phase 1, Volunteering Australia examined two options for aligning the *National Standards* under the Standards Australia framework and developing a national accreditation process.

Standards Australia is recognised as Australia's peak Standards body. It co-ordinates standardisation activities, develops internationally aligned Australian Standards (registered trade mark) that deliver Net Benefit to Australia, and facilitates the accreditation of other Standards Development Organisations.

When considering accreditation, the two options were to:

1. Examine the prospect of Volunteering Australia applying to the Accreditation Board for Standards Development Organisations (ABSDO) to become a Standards Development Organisation (SDO) under this framework and have the authority to be the accrediting industry body for the *National Standards*.
2. Examine the prospect of Volunteering Australia applying to Standards Australia to have the *National Standards* adopted as industry standards with Standards Australia becoming the accrediting body.

Australian Standards (AS) 'set out specifications and procedures designed to ensure products, services and systems are safe, reliable and consistently perform the way they were intended. They establish a common language which defines quality and safety criteria.' Australian Standards cover a wide range of fields including consumer products and services, construction, various types of engineering, business, information technology and human services and energy. Most relate to things that can be clearly specified in concrete terms.

Standards Australia (2009), have identified seven benefits of developing and implementing standards. To paraphrase, they:

- Protect Australians (e.g. traffic lights, seatbelts and smoke alarms);
- Support innovation (e.g. cutting edge communications technology);
- Boost production and productivity (e.g. drive economies of scale);
- Make businesses competitive (i.e. there is a competitive edge over products that do not comply);
- Link Australia to the world (so products can be made and sold internationally);
- Complement regulation (one-third of Standards form some part of state/federal law, such as building codes); and
- Reward participants (e.g. through increased knowledge, stronger business networks and competitive advantages).

Every project that Standards Australia works on must demonstrate 'net benefit' to the community as a whole. The net benefit test considers:

- Public health and safety;
- Social and community impact;
- Environmental impact;
- Competition; and
- Economic impact.

The findings from this research revealed that neither of these two options are the appropriate mechanism for the development of an accreditation process for the *National Standards*.

It was the view of Standards Australia that the VA *National Standards* are effectively standards for human resource and general management practices in relation to volunteers. If Standards Australia could be convinced of the need for Australian Standards in this area, the VA *National Standards* would need to be written in the context of applying to all human resource practices in Australia – regardless of the paid or unpaid status of workers. The advice from Standards Australia was that this scenario was unlikely.

Therefore, if pursuing the development of an accreditation process for the *National Standards*, Volunteering Australia should consider an independent accreditation

model, setting up its own systems and processes for assessing and/or accrediting organisations in relation to their 'compliance' with or 'adherence' to the *National Standards*. Considerations and decisions would be needed in relation to:

- **Overall aim:** promotion, education, etc.
- **Degree of flexibility required:** recognition of needs of different organisations eg: small, volunteer-run, under-resourced, sectoral differences, etc.
- **Participation:** since the National Standards are not legally binding what incentive will there be for organisations to participate?
- **Frequency of accreditation:** e.g. annually, every three to five years?
- **Steps involved:** how simple or detailed? Self assessment, desk review, site visit and validation
- **Costs and resources:** for participating organisations and the accrediting body.
- **Timeframe:** introduce in one step or involve a number of stages over a defined period?

Existing models of accreditation from a national and international perspective are of assistance in further exploring the development of an accreditation model for the *National Standards*.

Recommendation 13: Adopt an independent Volunteering Australia accreditation for the *National Standards* as the most appropriate accreditation model.

7 Benchmarking the *National Standards* against Other Standards

A further piece of research undertaken as part of the review of the *National Standards* was to benchmark the *National Standards* against identified Standards (national and international) that are relevant or specific to volunteering and also to identify and discuss aspects of the *National Standards* that have regulatory and/or legislative requirements (e.g. OH&S, anti-discrimination/equal opportunity, privacy etc).

The identified models were:

- The Canadian Code for Volunteer Involvement
- Investing in Volunteers - the UK Award Recognising Good Practice in Volunteer Management
- (Draft) Community Care Common Standards

This research was conducted concurrently with the on-line survey. The survey prompted respondents to 'identify other standards that are relevant to volunteering in your organisation, program or work'. Respondents listed many other standards, principles and governing legislation that organisations must be guided by or comply with as part of their operations. It would be of merit to examine an extended range of 'standards' in the proposed development of an accreditation process to determine points of intersection between these frameworks and the *National Standards*. This could serve to strengthen any proposed accreditation process and is consistent with respondent feedback mentioned earlier in this report.

The findings of the benchmarking research identified that apart from being considered 'best practice' in volunteer management, the *National Standards*, in effect, are good, better or best practice in human resource management and compare very favourably with the models against which they were benchmarked.

For each of the models examined, points of comparison with the *National Standards* and an overview of the proposed improvements for consideration were made. Due to a significantly detailed report relating to each of these models, only a summary of recommended improvements has been included:

7.1 The Canadian Code for Volunteer Involvement

The Canadian Code, which also incorporates Standards of Practice, covers the background, values and guiding principles for volunteer involvement (these have some, but not all of the elements covered in VA's *National Standards* Appendices 1 and 2), and organisational standards for volunteer involvement.

Their 12 organisational standards are as follows:

1. Mission-based approach
2. Human resources
3. Program planning and policies
4. Program administration

5. Volunteer assignments
6. Recruitment
7. Screening
8. Orientation and training
9. Supervision
10. Recognition
11. Record management
12. Evaluation.

The Canadian Code is more compact than the *National Standards*, although it has a greater focus on management aspects. Most of the relevant detail is in the Audit Tool, which expands the 12 standards into 61 'elements' that arguably equate to the *National Standards'* criteria. There is, however, considerable duplication in content between the two documents (in particular, it restates all the values, principles and standards).

It appears that the Code and Audit Tool are used internally by organisations, to plan and evaluate their own approaches; there is no indication that an external organisation uses it for assessment and/or accreditation.

The Audit Tool has three main sections:

1. Why does your organisation exist? (which examines the organisational values and guiding principles from the Code and how these connect with volunteering in the organisation).
2. Who does what in your organisation? (which covers the roles that are detailed in Table 1, page 10, in the Code).
3. Involving Volunteers – The Organisational Standards Checklist (which is the self-assessment tool that can either be used for a high level overview or for an in-depth analysis).

There are a number of broad aspects that could be incorporated into the revised National Standards. These include:

- Refinements from the self-assessment section.
- Examining aspects of the 'Additional Audit Sheets' which 'could contribute valuable information to an overall audit' eg: financial value of volunteer contributions and expenses of the program.
- The final section has suggestions for sharing the outcomes of the audit and developing a plan of action.
- Suggestions for specific wording and issues such as: 360 degree stakeholder feedback; understanding who does what in the organisation etc.

7.2 The United Kingdom's Investing in Volunteers (IiV)

This quality award program covers four main areas of volunteer management: planning; recruiting; selecting and matching; and supporting and retaining volunteers. These areas are then divided into the following 10 indicators (and then 55 practices):

1. There is an expressed commitment to the involvement of volunteers, and recognition throughout the organisation that volunteering is a two-way process, which benefits volunteers and the organisation.
2. The organisation commits appropriate resources to working with volunteers such as money, management, staff time and materials.
3. The organisation is open to involving volunteers who reflect the diversity of the local community, in accordance with the organisation's stated aims and operational procedures.
4. The organisation develops appropriate roles of volunteers in line with its aims and objectives, and which are of value to the volunteers and create an environment where they can develop.
5. The organisation is committed to ensuring that, as far as possible, volunteers are protected from physical, financial and emotional harm arising from volunteering.
6. The organisation is committed to using fair, efficient and consistent recruitment procedures for all potential volunteers.
7. The organisation takes a considered approach to taking up references and official checks which is consistent and equitable for all volunteers, bearing in mind the nature of the work.
8. Clear procedures are put into action for introducing new volunteers to the organisation, its work, policies, practices and relevant personnel.
9. Everybody in the organisation is aware of the need to give volunteers recognition.
10. The organisation takes account of the varying support needs of volunteers.

It should be noted that the liV has recently undergone a major revision and consultation process, and the 55 practices have now been reduced to 48. Most of the wording has not changed significantly, so the suggestions are based on the current (not revised) liV.

The liV Awards process involves:

- An introductory information-based workshop;
- A self-assessment against the standards;
- Feedback on the self-assessment;
- The organisation then writes and implements a development plan;
- There is a final assessment visit; and
- A report with recommendations is made to the UK quality assurance panel and the UK volunteering forum for ratification.

The liV product is available online and includes an 'easy step-by-step guide, resource materials and a best practice library full of helpful guides and publications'. After the UK Standards have been revised (following their review), and when any

related resources are developed, Volunteering Australia will make further analyse of this model.

There were many elements of the UK Model that could be considered for incorporation in the revised *National Standards* and will be the focus of the ongoing review process.

7.3 (Draft) Commonwealth Community Care Common Standards, Department of Health and Ageing

For completion by Service Providers funded under Home and Community Care (HACC), Community Aged Care Package (CACP), Extended Aged Care at Home (EACH), Extended Aged Care at Home Dementia (EACHD), National Respite for Carers Program (NCRP)

These are the compulsory national service standards for agencies funded under the above federally funded programs. They include some overall principles that are similar to the *National Standards* in that they allow for flexibility, depending on organisational context, do not set out to be a fully exhaustive list, and embed continuous improvement as one of the core principles (rather than as one of the following seven standards):

1. Efficient and effective management;
2. Access to services;
3. Information and consultation;
4. Coordinated, planned a reliable service delivery;
5. Privacy, dignity, confidentiality and access to personal information;
6. Complaints; and
7. Advocacy.

Each standard has a number of Expected Outcomes (a total of 23), each of which has a number of Performance Criteria (a total of 70). It has a detailed and rigorous 'quality reporting' process that is a requirement at least every three years, or more often if there are problems. The six steps are: self assessment, desk review, a validation site visit, reporting, a quality action plan and follow-up.

There are few specific references to volunteers (only section 1.4, which mentions safety, but not volunteers specifically; and section 1.5, which covers managing human resources so there are adequate numbers of skilled/trained staff/volunteers).

These Standards are still in the development phase. In early 2009 Volunteering Australia was invited by the Federal Department of Health and Ageing to comment. A detailed response with recommendations to strengthen references to volunteers and to consider cross-referencing relevant elements with the *National Standards* was made.

Recommendation 14: Future stages of the review take into account the learnings of benchmarking of the National Standards against other international standards.

8 Conclusion

Overall, the current *National Standards* were found to be comprehensive, clear and relevant to organisations involving volunteers. It was found that the *National Standards* would benefit from some refinements and additions, rather than from a significant rewrite. Interestingly, respondents highlighted a variety of ways they use the *National Standards*. This flexibility will need further exploration when considering the design of tools supporting implementation processes.

Recommendation 15: That the structure of the National Standards continues to be relevant and appropriate in today's volunteering environment, and that refinements of content, format and support resources be further investigated in future review phases.

There is sufficient feedback from the sector to support further investigation of an accreditation model for organisations. An accreditation model would be of benefit to organisations in providing evidence of good practice to clients, volunteers, funding bodies and the community at large. See recommendations 11, 12 and 13 above.

9 References

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