



E4: Regional & rural perspectives

2023 NATIONAL VOLUNTEERING CONFERENCE

DEVELOPING A NATIONAL RURAL VOLUNTEERING ROADMAP

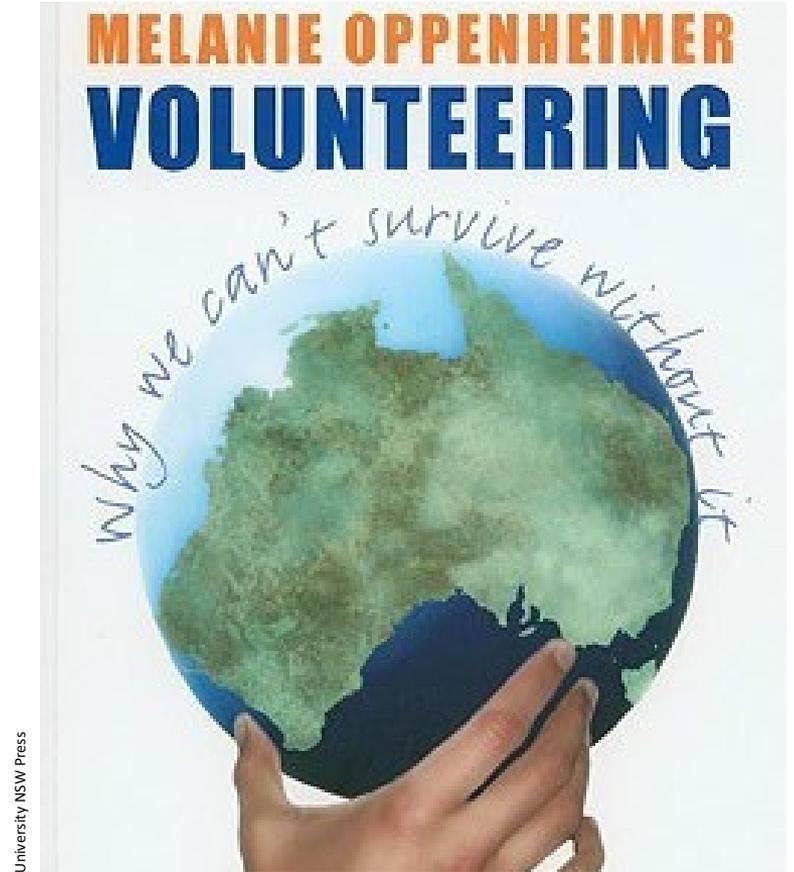
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Historical Analysis: 1970-2022

- 1.Changes over time in rural Australia
- 2.Issues & concerns within volunteering
- 3.Initiatives in volunteering infrastructure



1. Changes over time in rural Australia

- **Changes in the international economy leading to free trade agreements, removal of tariffs**
- **Government policy changed – rise of neo-liberalism – services centralised to larger centres led to closures in small communities**
- **People moved away – children not returning, FIFO – change to community engagement**
- **Disasters – fire, flood, drought, cyclones**
- **Rural revitalisation - in small and mid-sized towns**
- **Arrival of new migrants**
- **Indigenous understandings of volunteering and care for country**
- **Emphasis on tourism, rural arts & festivals**
- **Emphasis on communities creating local solutions**



2. Issues & concerns within volunteering

- Definitions of volunteering
- Formal vs Informal volunteering
- Types of volunteering –
 - Corporate volunteering (who is the volunteer, the business or the employee?)
 - Pathway to employment (are people on benefits coerced to volunteer?)
- Motivation – altruism vs self-benefit? Who works for no pay? Honorariums?
- Barriers to volunteering
- Volunteering as service delivery or advocacy or mentoring.
- Where should volunteers work?

Is volunteering exclusive at times?

(South Australian Volunteering, 34 Edn., Dec-Feb 1993)

Headlines from volunteer centre newsletters 1991-1993

Professional Antipathy Towards Volunteers Justified or Not?
(The Volunteer Issue, Vol. 4 No. 3, 1993, NSW)

What About Short-Term Volunteers?
(The Volunteer Issue, Vol. 2 No. 2, 1991, NSW)

Should Volunteers Replace Retrenched Employees?
(The Volunteer Issue, Vol. 2 No. 3, 1991, NSW)

Unemployed Volunteers
(The Volunteer Issue, Vol. 2 No. 1, 1991, NSW)

The New Image of Volunteering
(The Australian Volunteer, 1991, Qld.)

VOLUNTEERS IN POLICING: A New Option for Volunteers
(The Volunteer Issue, Vol. 4 No. 2, 1993, NSW)

Who Needs Employee Volunteering?
(The Volunteer Issue, Vol. 3 No. 3, 1992, NSW)





Friends of Lillico penguins 2016 The Advocate



Fairy Godmothers, Burnie, 2020 The Advocate

3. Initiatives in volunteering infrastructure

- Development of Volunteer Resource Centres from 1980s
- VRCs unique because they identified & responded to needs of their communities – promoting, recruiting, training, developing resources.
- Funding – mix of federal, state, local governments, philanthropy, businesses.
- 1990-2010 large increase of VRCs. By 2012 there were 114 VRCs around Australia.
- Loss of funding (esp federal & state), withdrawal of volunteering in labour market programs (VWI) has led to closure of VRCs.



Rural volunteering

- Creation of necessary services for the whole community
- Transport costs
- Smaller populations leading to -
 - Less diversity of skills
 - Fewer people to call on
 - Too busy with other commitments
- Limited access to training and management support

Weekly Times 2017 CFA volunteers



Country Kitchens





Grey nomad volunteers, Mayor of Barcaldine, Blaze Aid volunteers



Visiting volunteers

Grey nomads

Over 50 year olds – retired, benefiting from savings, superannuation and good health.

Benefits for rural areas:

- Economic benefit to towns
- Human resource with skills and experience
- Promotion of town/community to wide audience

Benefits for individual volunteers:

- Building social networks
- Use of skills and experience
- Opportunity to feel a part of a community / help out

Blazeaid

Volunteers helping rebuild fencing and rural infrastructure after disasters like fire/flood.

Volunteers must be over age of 12.



Reflections on findings: preliminary ideas

- Lessons from history/continuity & change
- Rural communities have never been static
- Social, environmental, cultural & economic drivers
- Climate change – urban sprawl
- Emergencies – natural & man-made
- Government policies regarding volunteering

Q & A



Australian Red Cross



Country Womens Association, Victoria



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