E4: Regional & rural perspectives
DEVELOPING A NATIONAL RURAL VOLUNTEERING ROADMAP
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?

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)
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
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
SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS
THANK YOU

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