

# Building a Culture for Encouraging Regional Youth into Volunteering



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**Title Photo:** Volunteers Halbury, provided by Holly Hannaford

## Executive Summary

Volunteering is a core part of any community, and in rural communities volunteering makes a vital contribution to rural and local economies. This project was delivered with funding from the Australian Government through the Building Better Regions Fund and managed by the Legatus Group. This report presents the results of a project that sought to understand the role youth play in volunteering in regional communities. Do they volunteer? What types of volunteering do they do and what motivates and discourages them to do so? Finally, we invited ideas from the community about what they would like to see as future volunteer programs. We used the Goyder, Wakefield and Clare and Gilbert Valleys Councils as the locations for our case studies.

We collected the information for the project by conducting semi structured interviews and we ran two surveys – one for volunteers and the other for youth (who may or may not be volunteers). We interviewed over 30 people, and 49 people answered the broader survey, and 36 the youth survey and were guided by a regional working group managed by The Legatus Group.

### Key findings are:

- It is unanimously agreed that volunteering is a really important part of a community.
- It is unanimously agreed that youth are poorly represented in volunteer activities and that they could be represented more.
- It is not however considered that young people must be involved in volunteering *per se* – most respondents appeared to feel that volunteering in their community was in a healthy state, notwithstanding.
- Statistical analysis showed that while young people have always been less represented in volunteering, the proportion of youth volunteering *per se* has not declined.
- Further, statistical analysis shows that the loss of older volunteers is considerably more expensive than the loss of young volunteer, to local communities, as their voluntary work every year, per volunteer, can be over twice as valuable as the work of the average young volunteer.
- There will be a greater burden on local government to provide increased services due to the decreasing involvement in volunteering of those aged 35 to 54 registered by the ABS.
- Role modelling plays a key role/motivation for why young people volunteer, and feeling part of, and giving back to the community a key motivation for all people.
- Two different models of volunteering emerged:
  - (i) Volunteering is an activity involving participation on committees or doing regular group-based work (e.g. emergency services, Rotary, conservation).
  - (ii) Event based, one off, fun activities that require volunteer effort to expedite.
- The formal model was largely held by older volunteers and based on a construction of volunteering as 'public good' work, whereas the second model was largely ascribed to by young people who see volunteering as more than just work they do that they don't get paid for, but should be fun and exciting.

- Sports activities and clubs across the region, including Star Club are an important focal point for youth volunteer activities, especially within and across families/generations. Across the region over 100 youths are involved in volunteering at a junior coaching or umpiring level with many more assisting their parents on a weekly basis across a wide range of sports. Interestingly many people in the sports sector did not perceive that their involvement in sport was a volunteer activity but a recreational choice.
- There is one view that young people are lazy, disinterested and bored, and another that they are prevented from participating in volunteer activities because they are not heard, do not have a voice and are prevented by gate keepers from joining various groups.
- Older volunteers suggested volunteer projects in the areas of conservation and emergency services while younger ones suggested event-based projects based on fun and excitement to facilitate future volunteering.
- Another key finding is that there is actually a gap in volunteer activity by those who are between the 35 – 50 years old, people who currently are having families and working full time.
- The Youth Advisory Committees (YACs) play a key role in organising youth activities, and although they focus on 12 – 17-year olds, can be used as a focal point by which to embed volunteerism in youth and future activities. Many of the volunteer activities identified as fun and relevant to youth emerged from the YACs.
- The ways in which volunteering is communicated and advocated for in the communities needs to be reformed as many youth seem to be unaware of the diverse opportunities that exist.
- A remodelling of how volunteer groups work to take account of new social media and communication options is needed.
- The loss of older volunteers is considerably more expensive than the loss of young volunteers to local communities: their voluntary work every year, per volunteer, can be over twice as valuable as the work of the average young volunteer.
- What volunteering brings to a community or its needs revision – is it still valuable if it is structured around communal fun events rather than public good activities?

### **Trial Projects**

A range of trial projects were suggested. These include: - (i) creative industry projects such as visual revitalisation programs, (ii) emergency service projects such as a youth governance initiative, (iii) event-based activities such as a 'Day Out', and (iv) conservation programs galvanized around citizen science projects.

### **Key recommendations included:**

- That Councils in the region strengthen and support the Youth Advisory Committees (YACs).
- That support is found to establish a Community Development Officer to develop regional volunteer support for Youth.
- That Legatus convene a series of event- based volunteer activities.
- That Legatus investigate the opportunity to develop programs aimed at supporting the current 35 – 55 demographics to volunteer more.
- That volunteer groups are supported to use social media and communication options.

- That local councils act as a facilitator to (i) support emergency services, (ii) coordinate engagement with schools re volunteer programs and support/enhance existing volunteer activities within sports in the region.

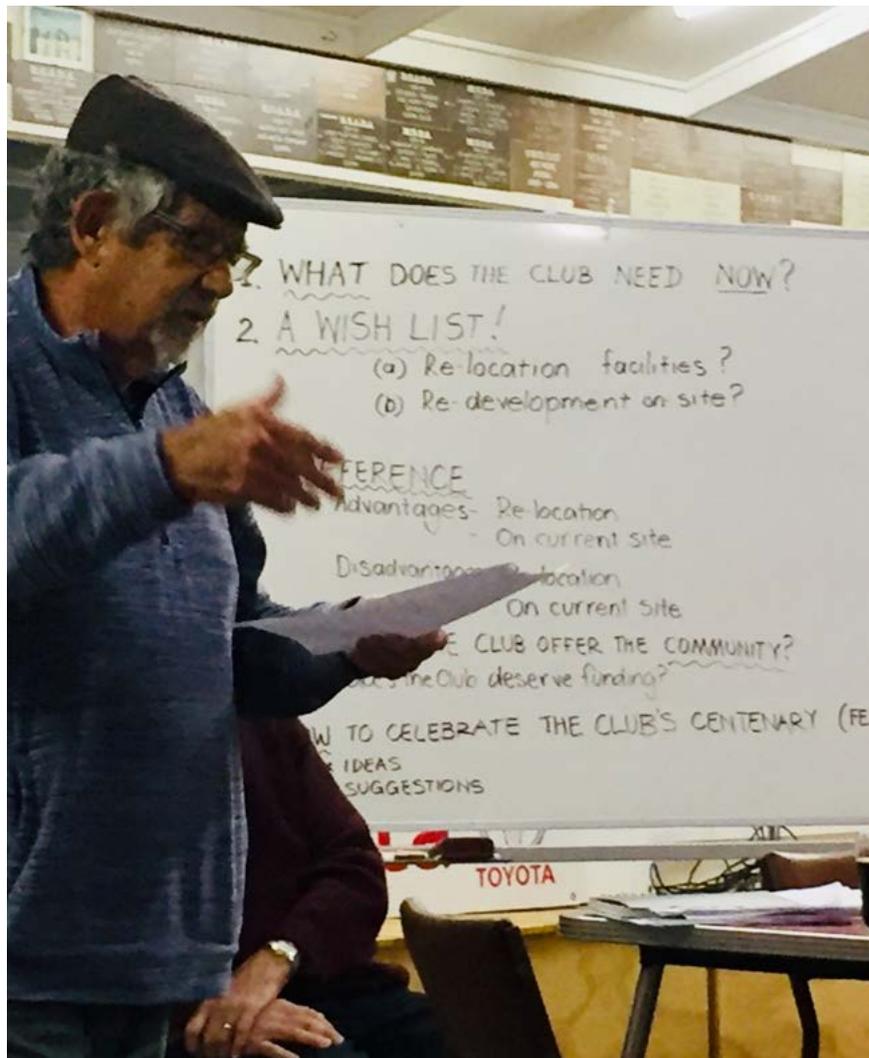


Photo: Samantha Freeman

## Introduction

The Yorke Mid North region of South Australia (SA) has the oldest demographics in Australia and the highest volunteer participation rate in SA. Concerns are held with regards the ability for communities to continue to function effectively due to the ageing of these volunteers and their capacity to continue to deliver. A reduction in volunteering and decrease in social disfunction within many of these communities will lead to an increased pressure on councils to deliver these services. The youth age bracket for this project is looking at 12-24 year olds and SA had fewer people in this age bracket in 2017 than it had even at the beginning of the 1970s.

The Legatus Group CEO has held meetings with Volunteering SA, South Australian Fire and Emergency Services Commission (SAFECOM), Local Government Association of SA, Department Human Services, Commissioner for Children and Young People, Flinders and Adelaide Universities. This has seen strong support for this project and progressing of the findings. This is based on the synergies which were identified at the meetings between this project and the work of the Volunteering Strategy for SA.

It has been confirmed that the project will come under the strategy's umbrella. The strategy is a collaboration of four partners: Volunteering SA & NT, Business SA, Government of SA, and Local Government Association of SA. Key priorities of this partnership are to:

- Strengthen and promote volunteering among young South Australians as a pathway to job ready skills, employment, and lifelong learning, wellbeing and development
- Enhance regional communities through volunteering. The Curriculum of Giving working group could also be a key driver to progress the project through collaboration of key people who may be able to provide necessary resources and effort needed to consult, engage and help get the work done.

The goal of the project was to develop a better understanding of:

- (i) who does volunteer and in what areas;
- (ii) what volunteering needs are;
- (iii) what are the barriers to and opportunities of volunteering for youth; and
- (iv) what areas would interest youth to participate in such activities?

This project focusses on the Regional Council of Goyder, Clare and Gilbert Valleys Council and Wakefield Regional Council communities and will help to develop a series of trial projects.

## Methodology

We adopted a qualitative research approach for this project.

*Data Collection:* We did this in three ways: (i) documentary analysis including analysis of Census data to create baseline profiles, an understanding of the issue via literature, (ii) the conduct of 28 semi structured interviews across key organisation and people in the three council areas and (iii) two surveys, one for youth and another a more general one on youth volunteering.

*Analysis:* Thematic analysis was used to code and categorise the key results from these interviews. Thematic analysis permits the identifying patterned meaning across a data set that provides an answer to the question being investigated (Denzin and Lincoln 2005). It is a flexible method that can be used across methodologies and questions as it assists in understanding people's perceptions, feelings, values and experiences. We took an inductive approach to the analysis in that we let the coding and theme development be indicated by the data, rather than assume anything before beginning.

We conducted the analysis in five stages: (i) familiarisation with the data, (ii) searching for themes, (iii) coding, (iv) reviewing and amending themes, and (v) writing up. While we found that there were additional details

gathered via the interviews, it is significant that the final analysis revealed that the dominant themes are consistent with the results of the AHP survey - in our analysis, while there were obviously variations due to data type, we were able to discern clear consistency around core themes.

*Validity:* similar patterns and consistent findings. In this case, triangulation ensured validity of the data collected. Triangulation is the technique adopted within the social science domain to ensure validation of data via cross verification from two or more sources (Webb *et al.* 1966). It allows for the employment and combination of a number of research methods to investigate the same phenomenon. This creates added confidence in the results (Denzin 1970). We utilised three different forms of triangulation:

(i) *Method triangulation* as we collected data from interviews, literature, policy documents, and the survey.

(ii) *Investigator triangulation*, where more than one investigator collected the results. In this case, our team consisted of five people from three different institutions who collected the data and then reviewed the results and agreed on final findings as presented in this report.

(iii) *Data triangulation* where similar messages and patterns are recorded across different data sources.

The use of multiple means of collecting information also helped offset the difficulties of trying to get people to take the survey, especially when they were busy with fishing and actually going out to work.

We conducted the research until we achieved 'information saturation'. This is the point at which it becomes clear there will be no new information and the researcher can assume with confidence that the research has achieved its goals. It does not mean that all areas of the community/all individuals have been engaged or interviewed but that the point has been reached where no new information is emerging. It is at this point that information collection can cease (Denzin & Lincoln 2005). However, we made sure we obtained information from all representative sectors from each of the three regions including YAC, sports, recreational, church, environment, arts and aged care. In our analysis we additionally ensured that our work was consistent with Guba and Lincoln's (1985) evaluative criteria for establishing trustworthiness in qualitative research. These criteria are as follows:

(i) *Credibility* - confidence in the 'truth' of the findings

(ii) *Transferability* - showing that the findings have applicability in other contexts

(iii) *Dependability* - showing that the findings are consistent and could be repeated

(iv) *Confirmability* - a degree of neutrality or the extent to which the findings of a study are shaped by the respondents and not researcher bias, motivation, or interest.

The report was reviewed by the working group and the findings were to be presented at the March 2020 Yorke and Mid North Regional Forum and the April 2020 Local Government Association of SA April 2020 conference but these were cancelled due to the COVID-19 restrictions.

Overall, the advantage of using multiple techniques meant that we could ensure we documented all the different perspectives around the development of and perspectives around youth volunteering in the region

## Constraints

We encountered a few challenges in this project. One was that we spent quite a lot of time in establishing the project, which took us into Christmas – a 'dead' time for research, due to the holidays. Secondly, we found it extremely difficult to locate 'youth' to speak too, which means we felt we did not get to speak to as many young people as we would have liked. Finally, despite a number of efforts to engage schools, we were not able to actually go to or meet with any school staff. While staff were willing to talk to us, actually setting up meetings became very difficult as staff were under a lot of time pressure. While we gleaned some information about school activity from the Department of Education, we were not able to get further detail before the time period for project completion occurred. Further, we would have required a whole set of clearances to work with young people, which again within time constraints and scope of the project were not possible to obtain.



Photo: Melissa Nursey-Bray

## Review of the literature: volunteering and youth volunteering

In contemporary societies, the voluntary sector has an important place and one that is separate from business, government and public administration. French enlightenment philosopher Alexis de Tocqueville eloquently describes the importance of civil society and voluntary action in his book *Democracy in America* (1835), asserting that voluntary action and voluntary association are a cornerstone of a functioning democratic polity.

How volunteering is defined differs across countries but is often conceptualised as being unpaid work undertaken for the benefit of communities. Wilson (2000) for example, defines volunteering as “any activity in which time is given freely to benefit another person, group, or organization” while the International Labour Organisation (2011, p. 13) refers to voluntary work as “unpaid non-compulsory work; that is, time individuals give without pay to activities performed either through an organization or directly for others outside their own household”. Likewise, Volunteering Australia (2015) defines “volunteering is time willingly given for the common good and without financial gain”. In sum, individuals can be considered as volunteers when they invest time and services for the public benefit without monetary or in-kind payment.

Typically, volunteering is a proactive rather than reactive action (Wilson 2000). Therefore, decisions about whether to engage in volunteering will be related to a number of social, cultural and psychological factors. What motivates people is considered by many disciplines (Wilson and Musick, 1997; Hustinx et al. 2010; Einolf and Chambre 2011; Alonson and Nyanjom, 2016); an economic perspective for examples, casts volunteering ‘unpaid work’ and volunteers as ‘impure altruists’, who undertake activity to develop their human capital (Aadreoni 1990; Hustinx et al. 2010). By contrast, sociological and political sciences tend to see volunteering as an expression of fundamental societal values such as community spirit, altruism, solidarity, social cohesion and democracy (Coleman 1998; Putnam, 2000).

Theoretical classifications of volunteerism are also diverse: Wilson and Musick (1997) classify volunteering into three categories: human, social and cultural capital. For these authors, volunteering requires human capital (e.g. education and work skills) as it is a productive activity; social capital (e.g. social networks) as it is undertaken in groups; and cultural capital (e.g. civic norms and traditions) as it is ethically based. Others (Hustinx et al. 2010; Einolf and Chambre, 2011; Dury et al. 2015) have divided volunteer theories into three types: *social theories* that highlight on context, roles and networks; *individual characteristic* that focuses on values, motivations and traits; and *resources theories* that emphasise on skills and free time.

Social theories emphasise that social context, interpersonal networks and social roles influence decisions in relation to volunteering. Social context refers to a person’s social milieu, which has both direct and indirect impacts on someone’s decision to volunteer (see Einolf and Chambre 2011; Dury et al. 2015) and are influenced by the rules and regulations for engaging people in the management of state affairs and hence less likely to volunteer, whereas people who have dense and diversified networks are more likely to be involved in diverse social activities including volunteering (Putnam, 2000). For this reason, older people are more likely to volunteer than those of younger ones. Social roles are another important determinant of volunteering. Several studies point out that the nature of jobs, level of income, marital and paternal status may encourage or discourage volunteering (Wilson 2000; Dure et al. 2015). Full-time workers, for instance, tend to volunteer less than part-time employees (Wilson 2000), or parents with school-age children may volunteer more than parents with very young children (Einolf and Chambre 2011).

Other theories focus on the individual- their values, personality traits and motivations that predispose volunteering (Einolf and Chambre, 2011). These behavioural factors are important as they influence people’s actions. In particular, individual values are used not only a guide for action but also to set standards for desire, obligation, goals and needs (Williams 1979). For example, altruistic values drive

people to volunteer. Religious values are also a positive predictor of volunteering. Studies (e.g., Wilson and Musick 1997; Butrica et al. 2009; Okun et al. 2014) point out that people who are religious tend to engage more in volunteering activities, and thereby religious organisations can easily attract volunteers. In addition, personality traits such as self-efficacy, introvert/extrovert and resilience are important predictors of volunteering (Einolf and Chambre, 2011).

Motivation is also another important individual characteristic that influences the decision to volunteer. Research shows that people do not volunteer for purely altruistic reasons but that a range of psychological and social rewards also act as a motivator for volunteering (Omoto and Snyder 1995; Clary et al. 1998; Koss and Kingsley 2010; Stukas et al. 2016). More specifically, factors such as learning opportunities, self-development, networking and career enhancement prompt individuals to volunteer (Clary et al. 1998; Mellor et al. 2009). Here, volunteer perceptions *about* voluntary work play an important role. As Randle et al. (2013) suggest, individual perceptions of volunteering organisations influence the decision to join. If the volunteers perceive that they will obtain personal benefits through their participation, they are more likely to engage in volunteering. It is also important to note that initial motivation to volunteer evolves over time (Alam and Campbell, 2017; Kragt and Holtrop, 2019). Therefore, reasons to become a volunteer often differ to why people continue to volunteer.

From an economic perspective, some advocate the notion that individuals who possess more skills and have free time are more likely to engage in volunteering (Wilson and Musick 1997). Research has demonstrated that the level of education and occupational status positively correlates with volunteering (Musick and Wilson 2008; Son and Wilson 2011). Educated people are more likely to volunteer because it enhances their awareness of problems, social connectedness, empathy and boosts self-confidence (Wilson 2000; Oesterle et al. 2004). Others have found that individuals with higher occupational status tend to be volunteer more as they have enhanced social skills (Wilson 2000; Einolf and Chambre 2011). Others, however, have shown that there was no significant relationship between employment status and volunteering (Davies et al. 2018). According to resource perspectives, time is a scarce resource that often appears as a barrier to volunteering (Einolf and Chambre 2011). A study by Hyde and Knowles (2013) on Australian University students found that lack of time was a major reason for not volunteering.

Theoretically, the social, psychological and resource-based causes of volunteering are categorised, but, in practice, such division is nearly impossible as individuals' involvement in volunteer work depends on both altruistic and personal reasons. As Einolf and Chambre (2011, p. 301) observe, these theoretical "categories are closely related and tend to overlap". Therefore, instead of using a specific category of theories, volunteering research often employs multiple theoretical perspectives.

## **Enablers and Barriers of youth volunteering**

Youth volunteering has the potential to offer important services to other youth and adults, as well as to organisations and communities. Youth volunteering, therefore, has received increasing attention in media and policy spaces in both developed and developing contexts, remains a poorly studied subject, little is known what motivates or demotivates young people to volunteer (Oesterle et al. 2004; Marta and Pozzi 2006; Haski-Leventhal et al. 2008). Studying youth volunteering is different to adult volunteering as motivations, benefits and commitments of youth volunteers are distinct from adults.

Like adults, young individuals engage in volunteering for many (altruistic, egoistic and social) reasons (Lancee and Radle 2014; Yamashita et al. 2017) - a range of social and personal factors motivate them to be involved in volunteering. However, youth motivation to volunteer is dissimilar to that of older adults (Tang, 2006). Why is that so? Drawing on a life course perspective, Omoto et al. (2000, p. 182) explain that "as people move through the life course, they attach different meanings to the volunteer role, and that these meanings are directly related to the agendas they pursue through volunteerism". In

other words, due to the changes in life tasks at various stages of life, the reasons for volunteering change. Omoto et al. (2000) found that younger volunteers were largely motivated by the relationship considerations, while older volunteers were inspired by service and societal obligations concerns. Likewise, Haski-Leventhal et al. (2008) show that relationship-oriented factors, such as making new friends and meeting new people, are the most important motivating factors for youth volunteers. A study with Canadian youths, however, found they participated in volunteering primarily for personal reasons: belief in a cause; to use skills and experience, to explore their strengths, and to improve job opportunities (Jones 2000).

In addition to these individual factors, strong connections with family, friends, religious groups and schools facilitate young people to volunteer (Duke et al. 2009). Among these factors, the role of the family is considered vital in inspiring the younger generations to volunteer. Researchers have shown that if parents are involved in volunteering, the children in the family are more likely to volunteer (Perks and Konecny 2015). The strength of family relationships also influences the involvement of younger family members in volunteering. As Muddiman et al. (2019, p. 95) in a case study of South Wales demonstrate, young people who have positive relationships with their parents and grandparents were more likely to be involved in “activities to help other people or the environment”. Beyond the family, schools foster volunteering. Advocates of this notion posit that “fostering volunteering early in life can encourage a lifelong culture of volunteering” (Walsh and Black, 2015). Empirical evidence supports such an assertion; Moorfoot et al. (2015) find that volunteering during adolescence in Australia has positive effects on academic attainments and leads to further involvement in volunteering as they become young adults. Although schools can normalise volunteering in young people’s lives, school-based volunteering programs can also foster exclusion (Walsh and Black, 2015). For instance, schools tend to recognise the contribution of some young people who comply with their imaginary of the good students, but may overlook others who do not fit in the behavioural norms of schools (Walsh 2016). Researchers have also found that schools often do not provide adequate information about volunteering opportunities a factor that impedes participation (Jones et al. 2016; Davies 2018). Thus, the facilitation of youth volunteering through schools remains challenging.

The literature on youth volunteering also has started to shed light on the factors that constrain young people to volunteer (Haski-Leventhal et al. 2016; Davies 2018). Walsh and Black (2015) contend that structural barriers may lead to lower participation of youth in volunteering. One of the commonly cited structural deterrents of volunteering is socio-economic disparity. Young people from low socio-economic backgrounds are less likely to be involved in volunteering (Marzana et al., 2012; Gage and Thapa 2012; Walsh and Black, 2015). The cost of volunteering for youth with low socioeconomic status is much higher than that of the benefits. Factors such as loss of potential income, lack of money, time and access to transport have been found to be important barriers for young people from low socio-economic backgrounds (Walsh and Black, 2015; Davies, 2018). Volunteer groups, in turn, are likely to be overrepresented by the affluent members of the community which may further discourage the less affluent youths to volunteer (Haski-Leventhal et al., 2010).

Another important barrier, noted in numerous studies, arises from the structure and culture of the organisations that facilitate volunteering (Hankinson and Rochester, 2005; Davies, 2018). Overregulation of the voluntary sector and its associated formalities (e.g. public liability insurance, permissions and police checks) to join in a voluntary program often act as barriers to attract young people (Moffatt, 2011). A review of the literature suggests that cultural aspects of non-profit organisations and groups such as ageism, discrimination and disrespect prevent young people from joining in volunteering (Walsh and Black, 2015). Research has found that some volunteer organisations treat young people as ‘unreliable’ volunteers because they may not commit to long-term engagement (Moffatt, 2011). These organisations, therefore, are reluctant to invite young people to volunteer or inform them about available volunteering opportunities. Young people in turn, may find the volunteering organisations are not welcoming (Hankinson and Rochester, 2005). Such a perception of volunteering

and volunteer organisations, often shaped by life course events and social networks, appears to be a barrier to young people's participation (Davies 2018).

Lack of voices of young people in the volunteering program is also a commonly cited barrier. As Holdsworth (2007, p. 7) point out:

Such talk of volunteering and community service has largely ignored the perspectives of young people, particularly about how they see their roles within their communities. When we talk about volunteering, service and community within education, we strangely omit consideration of the voices of young people or their roles as active participants in decision-making about that service. These initiatives remain different ways of doing things to young people, not partnerships with young people.

This suggests that there is a disconnection between the way volunteering is conceptualised in programs and how young people view such programs. Walsh and Black (2015) stress the importance of voices and views of young people to heighten the appeal of volunteering. As a consequence, youth volunteers may bring an innovative perspective and mode of operation to the volunteering programs.

The findings of this project resonate and are consistent with these themes. The next section of the report presents a profile of each of the case study regions, along with a Census based analysis of the importance of volunteering in each region.

## Case Studies: An Introduction

This project investigated youth volunteering in three local governments within the Legatus Group region – Clare and Gilbert Valleys, Wakefield and Goyder Councils. As part of the research we undertook to conduct a demographic analysis of the three council areas, including an assessment of what status volunteering has in each region. We present the results of these analyses below.

### Clare and Gilbert Valleys Council

Traditionally the land of the Ngadjuri people, the Clare Valley and Gilbert Valley have been formed by two rivers, respectively the Hutt River and the Gilbert River. Previously three distinct District Councils, the Clare and Gilbert Valleys Council was formed 1997, and is located between the Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Goyder and Wakefield. Its major towns are Clare, Auburn and Riverton.

As of 2016, about 9,000 inhabit the valleys and the median age is 47: 7 years older than the state median, and 9 years older the national.

Due to the natural predisposition of the region to growing grapes, winemaking is a distinct and key local industry, which started when the first grapes were brought there in the mid nineteenth century and now classifies as the top industry of employment with 6.6% of the local population working in wine (or other alcohol) manufacturing.<sup>1</sup>

This percentage is 8.25 times higher than the state average, and over 66 times the national. Other key sectors of employment included grain growing, primary education, tourism and health.<sup>2</sup>

Data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics demonstrates a pattern of reducing economic security for young people: in 2006, of those 20-24 years old employed, about 3/9 worked part-time and 6/9 worked full-time, while in 2016 4/9 work part-time and 5/9 work full-time.

Furthermore, despite the labour force of those aged 20 to 24 years old is shrinking, the number of unemployed people in this age group alarmingly grew by nearly 50% between 2006 and 2016.

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1

[https://quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census\\_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/LGA41140?open=document](https://quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/LGA41140?open=document)

2

[https://quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census\\_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/LGA41140?open=document](https://quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/LGA41140?open=document)

## Wakefield Regional Council

The traditional owners and custodians of the Wakefield Regional Council region are the Kaurna, Ngadjuri and Narungga people. The crossing point for the Princes Highway and the Adelaide-Port Augusta railway line, the Wakefield Regional Council (WRC) has always been a major South Australian transport hub.

Previously two separate entities: the District Council of Blyth-Snowtown and the District Council of Wakefield Plains, the WRC was established in 1997.

While, its demographic profile is older than state and national levels, the median age in Wakefield is slightly lower than in Clare and Gilbert Valleys at 44 years of age. The region is also more culturally diverse than the Clare and Gilbert Valleys, with a local Pilipino community accounting for 1.9% of the regional council population.

The top employment sector is agriculture, with grain growing accounting for 10.1% of the jobs. The second top industry is road freight transport, which accounts for 3.3% of the employment. As within the Clare and Gilbert Valleys, more and more young people are working part-time, and the percentage of those holding full time jobs is shrinking.

In 2006 the total labour force of those aged between 20 and 24 years was 215 individuals; of those, 135 were employed full-time and 49 part-time. In 2016 the labour force was 261 persons aged 20 to 24, but those employed full time were nearly the same: 146, while those working part-time grew to 76.

While the labour force between 2006 and 2016 grew by 21.4%, the percentage of those employed full-time, relative to the increase in the total labour force, decreased by 10% ca. Those employed part-time instead, also relatively to the changes in the dimensions of the labour force of those aged 20 to 24, grew by over 27%, reflecting a decreasing economic stability for the youngest members of the Wakefield LGA community.

## Goyder Regional Council

The most eastern of the three councils, and the driest, the Goyder Council the traditional owners and custodians are the Ngadjuri Nation. Like the latter two LGAs, Goyder was also formed in 1997. Once a major area for mining, including copper, today agriculture is the key industry, with nearly 22% of the population involved in some kind of agriculture, primarily sheep farming. Mining heritage is a strong tourist attraction for the region and included sites such as the Burra Mine Site, once the largest metal mine in Australia.<sup>3</sup>

The median age is 44, but as in Wakefield, the Goyder region is seeing the percentage of young people working in full-time shrinking accompanied by a relative surge in youth unemployment. In 2006, of those aged 20 to 24, 85 were employed full-time, 13 part-time and 9 unemployed.

In the 2016 census, the unemployed more than doubled to 19 individuals and those employed full-time decreased to 62 individuals, a reduction of 27% compared to 2006. Those aged 20-24 working part-time, instead, increased to 41, a growth of 31.5% in 10 years. This trend also reflects changing employment conditions for young people, and not for the best.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://southaustralia.com/products/clare-valley/attraction/burra-mine-site>

## Statistical Analyses

Another part of our analysis included exploring the extent of volunteer work in each local government region. Tables 1, 2, and 3 below sum up this work. Overall, the value of younger volunteer's work is not only relatively small per capita, but also in absolute terms. Further, in synthesising them, it emerges that overall youth volunteering remains a small proportion of the overall volunteering capacity, but that over the last two Census periods, that proportion has overall seen a slight increase.

### Volunteering Summaries

#### Tables

**Table 1 – Voluntary Work for an Organisation or Group by Age in Goyder: data from 2006 and 2016 Census**

Age range	2006 Census: volunteers	2016 Census: volunteers	Trend
15 – 19	64	62	-
20 – 24	43	56	+
25 – 29	63	49	-
30 – 34	81	50	-
35 – 39	102	77	-
40 – 44	135	89	-
45 – 49	137	113	-
50 – 54	123	102	-
55 – 59	108	123	+
60 – 64	112	131	+
65 – 69	97	124	+
70 – 74	72	93	+
75 – 79	35	59	+
80 – 84	19	36	+

Source: ABS, 2006 Census; ABS, 2016 Census.

**Table 2 – Voluntary Work for an Organisation or Group by Age in Wakefield: data from 2006 and 2016 Census**

Age range	2006 Census: volunteers	2016 Census: volunteers	Trend
15 – 19	100	119	+
20 – 24	62	112	+
25 – 29	84	89	+
30 – 34	125	128	+
35 – 39	170	127	-
40 – 44	206	159	-
45 – 49	210	178	-
50 – 54	206	183	-
55 – 59	167	171	+
60 – 64	145	180	+
65 – 69	103	167	+
70 – 74	76	124	+
75 – 79	58	70	+
80 – 84	46	45	-

**Source:** ABS, 2006 Census; ABS, 2016 Census.

**Table 3 – Voluntary Work for an Organisation or Group by Age in Clare and Gilbert Valleys: data from 2006 and 2016 Census**

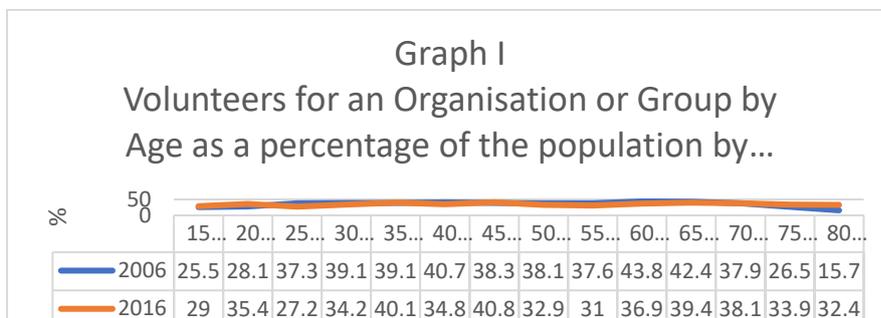
Age range	2006 Census: volunteers	2016 Census: volunteers	Trend
15 – 19	144	162	+
20 – 24	96	103	+
25 – 29	104	127	+
30 – 34	157	160	+
35 – 39	252	177	-
40 – 44	258	237	-
45 – 49	260	275	+
50 – 54	272	245	-
55 – 59	240	225	-
60 – 64	258	293	+
65 – 69	169	265	+
70 – 74	137	226	+
75 – 79	75	130	+
80 – 84	53	62	+

**Source:** ABS, 2006 Census; ABS, 2016 Census.

**Table 4 – Volunteers for an Organisation or Group by Age as a percentage of the population by age group in Goyder: data from 2006 and 2016 Census**

Age range	2006 Census: volunteers	2016 Census: volunteers	Trend
15 - 19	25.5	29	+
20 - 24	28.1	35.4	+
25 - 29	37.3	27.2	-
30 - 34	39.1	34.2	-
35 - 39	39.1	40.1	+
40 - 44	40.7	34.8	-
45 - 49	38.3	40.8	+
50 - 54	38.1	32.9	-
55 - 59	37.6	31	-
60 - 64	43.8	36.9	-
65 - 69	42.4	39.4	-
70 - 74	37.9	38.1	-
75 - 79	26.5	33.9	+
80 - 84	15.7	32.4	+

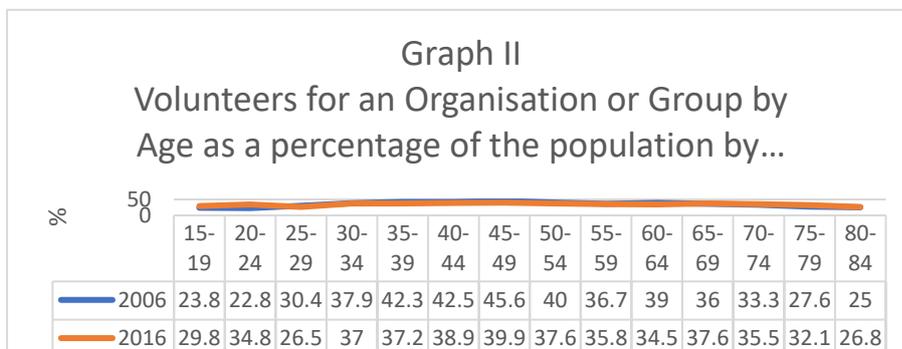
Source: ABS, 2006 Census; ABS, 2016 Census.



**Table 5 – Volunteers for an Organisation or Group by Age as a percentage of the population by age group in Wakefield: data from 2006 and 2016 Census**

Age range	2006 Census: volunteers	2016 Census: volunteers	Trend
15 - 19	23.8	29.8	+
20 - 24	22.8	34.8	+
25 - 29	30.4	26.5	-
30 - 34	37.9	37	-
35 - 39	42.3	37.2	-
40 - 44	42.5	38.9	-
45 - 49	45.6	39.9	-
50 - 54	40	37.6	-
55 - 59	36.7	35.8	-
60 - 64	39	34.5	-
65 - 69	36	37.6	+
70 - 74	33.3	35.5	+
75 - 79	27.6	32.1	+
80 - 84	25	26.8	+

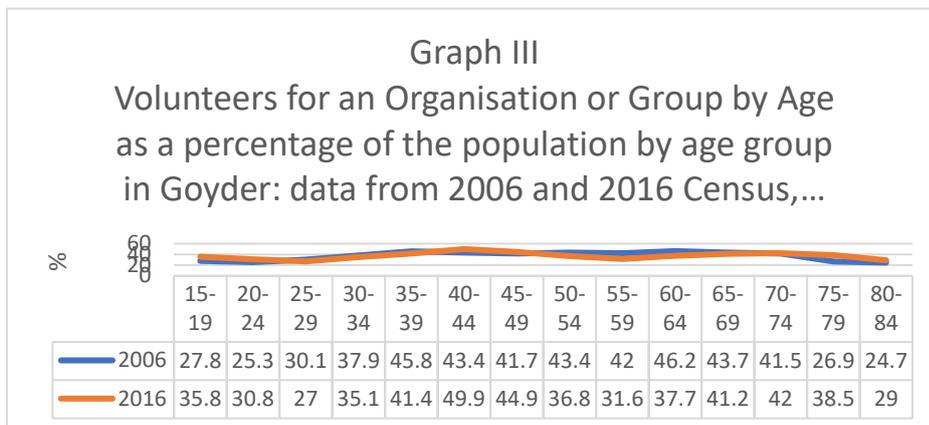
Source: ABS, 2006 Census; ABS, 2016 Census.



**Table 6 – Volunteers for an Organisation or Group by Age as a percentage of the population by age group in Clare and Gilbert Valleys: data from 2006 and 2016 Census**

Age range	2006 Census: volunteers	2016 Census: volunteers	Trend
15 - 19	27.8	35.8	+
20 - 24	25.3	30.8	+
25 - 29	30.1	27	-
30 - 34	37.9	35.1	-
35 - 39	45.8	41.4	-
40 - 44	43.4	49.9	+
45 - 49	41.7	44.9	+
50 - 54	43.4	36.8	-
55 - 59	42	31.6	-
60 - 64	46.2	37.7	-
65 - 69	43.7	41.2	-
70 - 74	41.5	42	+
75 - 79	26.9	38.5	+
80 - 84	24.7	29	+

**Source:** ABS, 2006 Census; ABS, 2016 Census.



**Table 7 - Estimated nominal value of volunteering in 2016 in Goyder, Wakefield and Clare and Gilbert Valleys (in 1997 dollars)**

Age range	Goyder	Wakefield	Clare and Gilbert Valleys	Total
15 - 19	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
20 - 24	81,501	163,003	149,904	394,408
25 - 29	65,931	119,753	170,884	356,568
30 - 34	67,277	172,229	215,286	454,793
35 - 39	115,236	190,064	264,893	570,193
40 - 44	133,195	237,955	354,687	725,836
45 - 49	203,245	320,156	494,623	1,018,025
50 - 54	183,460	329,149	440,664	953,274
55 - 59	265,140	368,609	485,012	1,118,762
60 - 64	282,385	388,010	631,594	1,301,988
65 - 69	328,586	442,532	702,221	1,473,339
70 - 74	246,440	328,586	598,875	1,173,901
75 - 79	156,344	185,492	344,486	686,322
80 - 84	95,396	119,245	164,293	378,934

**Formula:** (13.73 x hours worked by the given volunteer age group on average per capita in 2016 x number of volunteers of the relative age group in the given LGA) = estimated value of volunteering.

**Sources:** no. of hours worked by each volunteer age group on average per capita (*Individuals: Volunteering Overview 2017*); no. of volunteers in each region by age (ABS, 2016 Census).

## RESULTS

### Interview analysis

As noted earlier, we conducted a total of 31 interviews which allowed us to speak to 38 persons of interest, (some interviews were group interviews) all of whom were directly involved in volunteering. The interviews were semi-structured in the sense that while there were a number of topics that we wanted the interviewees to address; such questions and topics were covered in a flexible manner, allowing the conversation to flow.

All interviewees were asked the same set of questions, which included both closed or semi-closed answers (i.e. *How many volunteers work in your organisation?* or *Is it a challenge to recruit young volunteers?*) as well as open answers (i.e. *Why do you think young people (those who are 25 or younger) are less involved in volunteering?*). Interviewees were able to express their feelings and opinions more in-depth.

The majority of interviews were conducted one-on-one, although on occasion we conducted group interviews and interviews with volunteers (who were also occasionally couples). Interviews were conducted via telephone and on-field. Most interviewees have been involved in volunteering in the Clare and Gilbert Valleys LGA; interviews were also conducted with volunteers and other persons of interest based in Wakefield<sup>4</sup> and Goyder. Furthermore, the interviews were also conducted with volunteers in neighbouring LGAs, namely the Port Pirie and Two Wells LGAs. We also interviewed employees in organisations based in Adelaide, including a humanitarian organisation, State Department of Education, Volunteering Australia, and the State Department of Emergency Services. Interviewees were initially located by emailing over 115 volunteering-related groups operating in the Goyder, Wakefield and Clare and Gilbert Valleys LGAs.

### Structure of the interviews

The interviewees were asked to describe their background (i.e. age, family background regarding volunteering, profession/employment status, LGA, etc.) and then describe their experience as volunteers. We also asked for a description of the organisation/group they volunteered for. Key questions included the following:

- How many volunteers worked in their volunteering group.
- What is the age range/average age?
- How many volunteers were 25 or younger.
- What are the challenges facing volunteering groups?

The questions then generally concerned their communities, including their opinion on who the top volunteering groups are in their area and how many young people volunteered in the region.

We asked how people felt about, their concerns for and opinions on volunteering: what they believed motivated and what discouraged volunteers, especially youth. We also explored what motivates young volunteers differs from what motivates older generations. Given that virtually all volunteers claimed that young people do not volunteer as much as other age groups, we wanted to know what factors they believed would motivate young people to volunteer.

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<sup>4</sup> The third volunteer both in Clare and Wakefield.

## Summary of the interviews

### Volunteers' background

The background of the interviewees was very diverse. In fact, while all of them were involved in volunteering directly, the age range spanned from 18 years of age to over 80, with the majority of the interviewees being in their 50s and 60s. The occupations of the interviewees were also very diverse, ranging from full-time professionals working for volunteering organisations to retirees to people employed, but hardly as much as they desired. The gender of the interviewees was evenly distributed.

### Interviewees volunteering groups

The interviewees volunteered in or worked with a number of volunteering groups. The most popular volunteering activity among interviewees was conservation, with eight volunteers working in this field. Three interviewees volunteered in emergency services and two were Rotarians. One volunteered for a history group, one for a religious (Christian) op-shop and one worked for a humanitarian organisation. Two other volunteers were involved in a local bowling club, as well as other less structured volunteering activities, such as weeding the local streets. Of those interviewed, 4 were aged 26 or younger and the most popular activities among the young volunteers were, equally, emergency services (2) and conservation (2).

### Top volunteering groups

Having asked about the top volunteering activity in the local communities of the interviews, we found that Lions/Rotary<sup>5</sup> and disaster response/rescue services<sup>6</sup> (Country Fire Service and State Emergency Services) were the most popular answers. Other popular volunteer areas were health-related volunteering groups, such as the Red Cross, Flying Doctors and Ambulance<sup>7</sup> services. Conservation, food-charity and Apex Clubs were the third most popular response, all three mentioned as one of the top groups twice each. Other responses included sport clubs, Country Women's Association and History/Culture. While sporting clubs were rarely mentioned as a top volunteering activity, the majority of the respondents mentioned sport and sport clubs as part of their community life. Indeed, our research shows that sport is a central and dominant part of community life in the regions, yet was not always considered as a volunteering activity per se. Yet, it is clear that on most Saturday and Sundays the execution of sport programs requires up to 40 people each day to run the rostered programs. We suggest the fact that youth did not perceive their sport activity to be volunteer activity is because (a) their parents were doing the volunteering, (b) they saw their own contribution a recreational rather than voluntary and (c) as there are many sporting (rather than a single umbrella organisation, like the SES) the interviewees may have considered the individual sporting groups too small to be a top volunteering activity.

### Role of Schools in fostering volunteering

As mentioned, a wide range of organisations are involved in volunteer activities in the region. These organisations tend to be formal, and often operate independently. Among these organisations, the schools play a vital role in promoting volunteerism in communities. Schools foster volunteering in two ways (a) by engaging community members including parents to do volunteering for schools; (b) by involving students to volunteer in schools. Interviewees recurrently noted that although engaging

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<sup>5</sup> 1

<sup>6</sup> 4

<sup>7</sup> 3 interviewees.

parents and other members of community in volunteering through schools is a vital strategy to foster volunteering, schools tend to be reluctant to do so. Some schools, however, initiated programs to engage community members including parents in volunteering, they were not successful. Parents, in particular, were reluctant to volunteer as they were “busy with their work”.

Schools within the study region also foster volunteering through school-based programs for their students. The volunteer activities focus to inculcate service learning skills, as well as volunteering ethos, among students. Interviewees expressed their frustration over schools for “not doing enough” in relation to engaging youths in volunteering.

Actual engagement with volunteering, either as an activity or as a part of the SACE program is limited in scope within the Legatus Region. Information from the government department of education shows that Ardrossan Area School has run volunteer programs, and that staff from Clare High School have registered to be part of volunteer sessions run by the Department. Discussions with teachers in the region reflected a high-level interest in progressing volunteering in schools and we suggest this is both an area for one of the trial projects but also future research.

### Perception of the presence of young volunteers

All the interviewees reported there were few young volunteers in their LGAs. The extent of this ‘scarcity’ was also fairly similar: an interviewee from Burra (Goyder) estimated the number of young ( $\leq 25$  y/o) to be “less than 1%”, another volunteer from the Clare and Gilbert Valleys LGA claimed to know no young volunteers (although she said young people are drawn to sports clubs), in Wakefield, two interviewees gave similar responses. Of those who knew of young volunteers, the numbers were also very small. The interviewee who knew of the largest number of current volunteers 25 years old or younger knew only of three; other interviewees reported similar numbers. Speaking with a project officer running a Green Army program in Clare we found (in 2015) that despite the allowance they offered (\$10-16 p/a) they never managed to form groups to the aims they set, of 9 people. The interviewee tried three times to recruit up to 9 young volunteers, managing to recruit only 5, 6 and 7 young persons. Of those, it seems that only two volunteers continued to volunteer once the Green Army program was discontinued.

Key volunteer groups were, according to the volunteers, young people volunteered the most were sports clubs, conservation, emergency services and schools. Only one volunteer mentioned Youth Advisory Committees (YACs).

### Why young people don’t volunteer

**Can’t be bothered:** When asked why young people did not volunteer, interviewees overwhelmingly stated <sup>8</sup> that *they are not motivated/they are not interested*. The following are some indicative responses: “they aren’t interested, they have other things to do”, “they are lazy”, “it’s difficult to motivate young people” “they would rather stay home and play videogames rather than go out and do something”, “community feeling [in young people] is dying out”, “people interested in conservation go to the city”.

**No time:** Another major reason attributed to the relative scarcity of youth volunteering is the view that young people do not have time to volunteer<sup>9</sup>. Lack of time was often associated with job and career commitments and, although mentioned less often and applying only to the ‘older’ young volunteers, forming their own family was identified as another reason detracting time. One young interviewee

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<sup>8</sup> 11 interviewees.

<sup>9</sup> 5 interviewees.

advanced an interesting perspective on lack of time: young people who, theoretically, have time but also have relative economic insecurity tend to have less time available, perhaps due to a mindset which the lack of economic stability establishes.

**Lack of knowledge/communications:** Other explanations the interviewees provided to the scarcity of young volunteers included family education and/or involvement of parents in volunteering,<sup>10</sup> lack of school support in promoting volunteering,<sup>11</sup> lack of awareness of volunteering opportunities (“In Clare many people don’t even know we exist”, lamented an emergency services volunteer) and economic insecurity for young people.

**Economic factors:** Economic insecurity of the parents (compared to previous generations) was also attributed by some volunteers<sup>12</sup> as an explanation why young people do not volunteer. Lack of or insufficient economic incentives (i.e. pay or allowance),<sup>13</sup> ‘lost ownership of their community’ (which also affected older members of the community)<sup>14</sup> and lack of trust of young people abilities and commitment<sup>15</sup> were mentioned by the interviewees as reasons why young people do not volunteer.

**No succession planning:** Many interviewees, primarily those employed in government positions, stated that young people did not volunteer as they were not ‘given space’ to ‘have a voice’. It was asserted that volunteers currently holding various management committee responsibilities, were often reluctant to give those positions up or to do any succession planning as they became proprietorial about their own contributions.

**Training needs:** Related to that issue, some interviews reflected that in an age of governance, policies and occupational health and safety that it was off putting to young people to enter such responsibilities anyway. Some advocated the need to formally invite and then train youth in governance in order to assist them become part of such volunteering positions.

## Motivating Youth Volunteering

However, interviewees suggested a number of solutions to increase youth involvement in volunteering.

**Involve Schools:** Overwhelmingly, involving schools and providing volunteering through their curriculum credits the top solutions the interviewees identified. Many believed that if schools promoted volunteering opportunities that the students would be more motivated.

Offering school credits to students volunteering, as had been done in the past, was another proposed solution.

**Provoke Interest:** Furthermore, many interviewees believed that volunteering opportunities failed to interest young volunteers. Sport, technology and conservation volunteering opportunities were seen as good motivators and, hence, a possible solution. One interviewee claimed however that conservation was not particularly popular among young volunteers in regional South Australia. Giving young people more ‘space’ and responsibility in volunteering groups was identified by multiple volunteers important to encourage their involvement in volunteering.

**Raise awareness:** Another popular solution which the interviewees advanced was improving awareness of local volunteering opportunities. Emergency services interviewees particularly supported this idea: “let the children see the trucks”.

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<sup>10</sup> 8 interviewees

<sup>11</sup> 6 interviewees

<sup>12</sup> 2 interviewees

<sup>13</sup> 3 interviewees

<sup>14</sup> 3 interviewees

<sup>15</sup> 1 interviewees

Advertising and expanding the employability benefits of volunteering was frequently suggested as well (as frequently as increasing the overall awareness of volunteering opportunities). An interviewee emphasised the need to tailor volunteering opportunities around the existing key industries, namely winery and agriculture. Other interviewees supported the expansion of employability benefits out of fear that young people would be otherwise pushed out of their communities by the lack of employment opportunities. A young interviewee claimed to be directly attracted by volunteering by the professional skills development the volunteering activity offered and to have tangibly benefitted from it.

**Role Model volunteering:** Interviewees also identified following their family's example as fundamental in promoting volunteering – role modelling (as shown in the literature review) would help build volunteering overall. Increasing the financial security of young people and assuring financial stability to children since their childhood (and, hence, to their parents) was seen as imperative to tackle the scarcity of young volunteers.

**Other solutions:** Other, less frequent, but nevertheless relevant, solutions the interviewees proposed are: 'to educate the generations backwards' (i.e. begin to promote volunteering in the older age groups and gradually educate the younger generations); 'to normalise' club belonging, (based on the observation that young people lost interest in joining clubs); promote the social opportunities volunteering offers.

## THE SURVEY

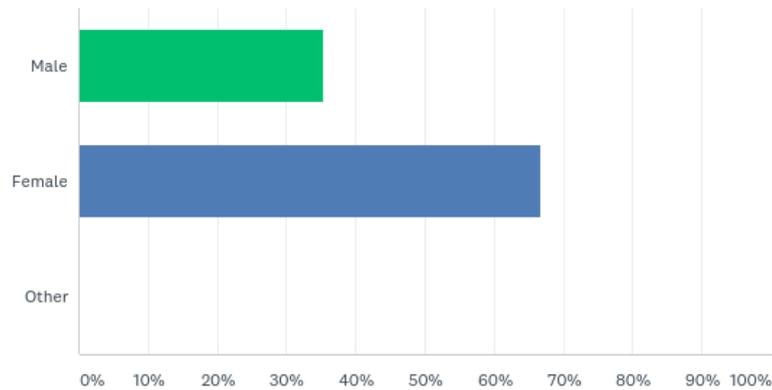
These themes both align with some of the findings in the literature but also resonate with some of the findings of the general survey. In this section we present the results of both surveys.

We conducted this survey in two parts – one which was a general survey that targeted people who were more likely to be part of or run volunteer organisations, as well as be older volunteers. We received 49 responses for this survey. The second survey was targeted at youth and we received responses from both online submissions but also from the YAC groups in each region, who undertook to do hard copy surveys, which we then manually entered; we received 36 of these surveys.

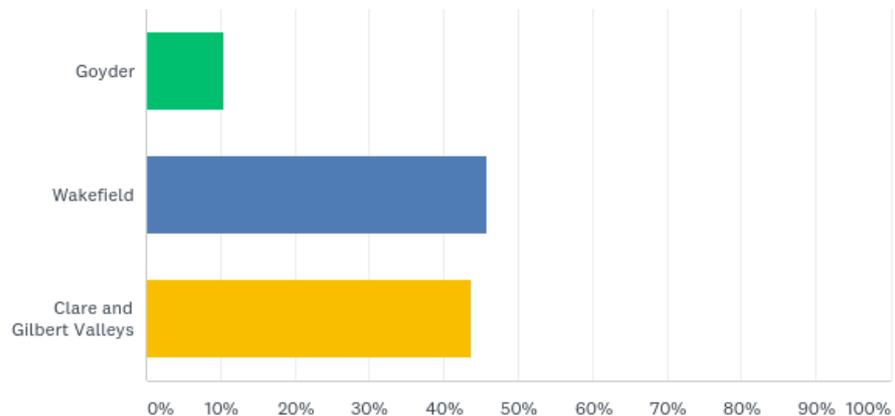
### General Survey

For this survey, more women (65%) as against men (35%) answered the survey and while Wakefield and Clare and Gilbert Valleys were relatively evenly represented, there were fewer respondents from Goyder. In terms of age range, while there was a relative even spread in between 26 – 65 year olds, the majority of respondents identified as 65 years and over and over 70% had spent more than 10 years volunteering.

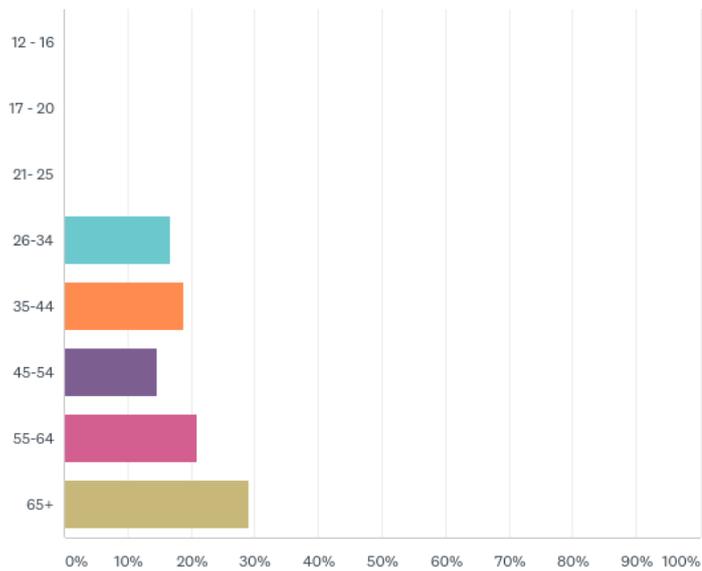
#### Gender distribution



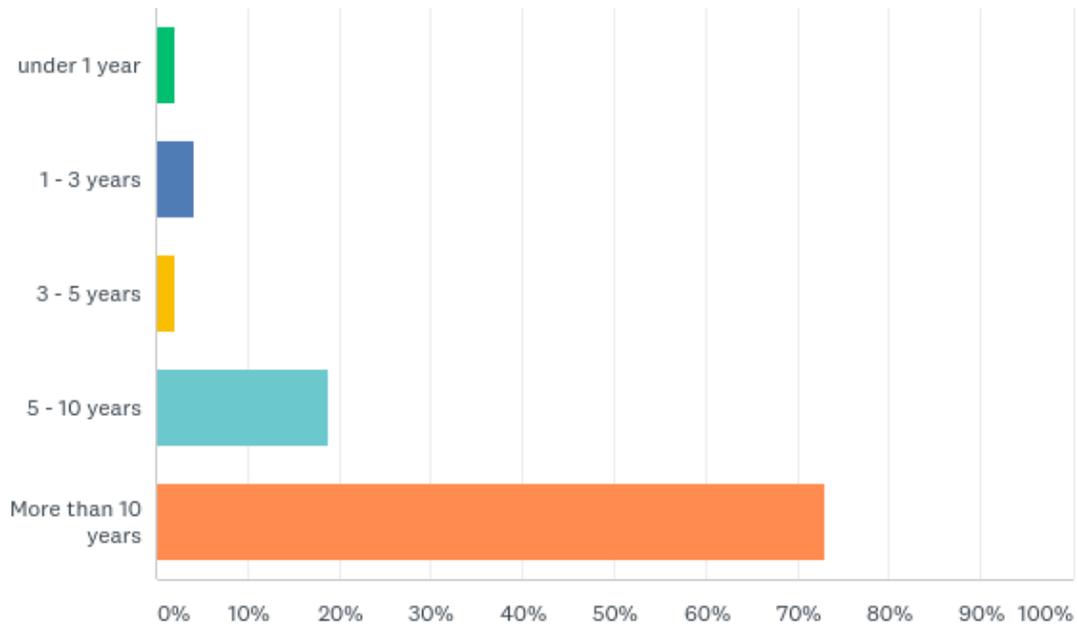
#### Location



## Age range

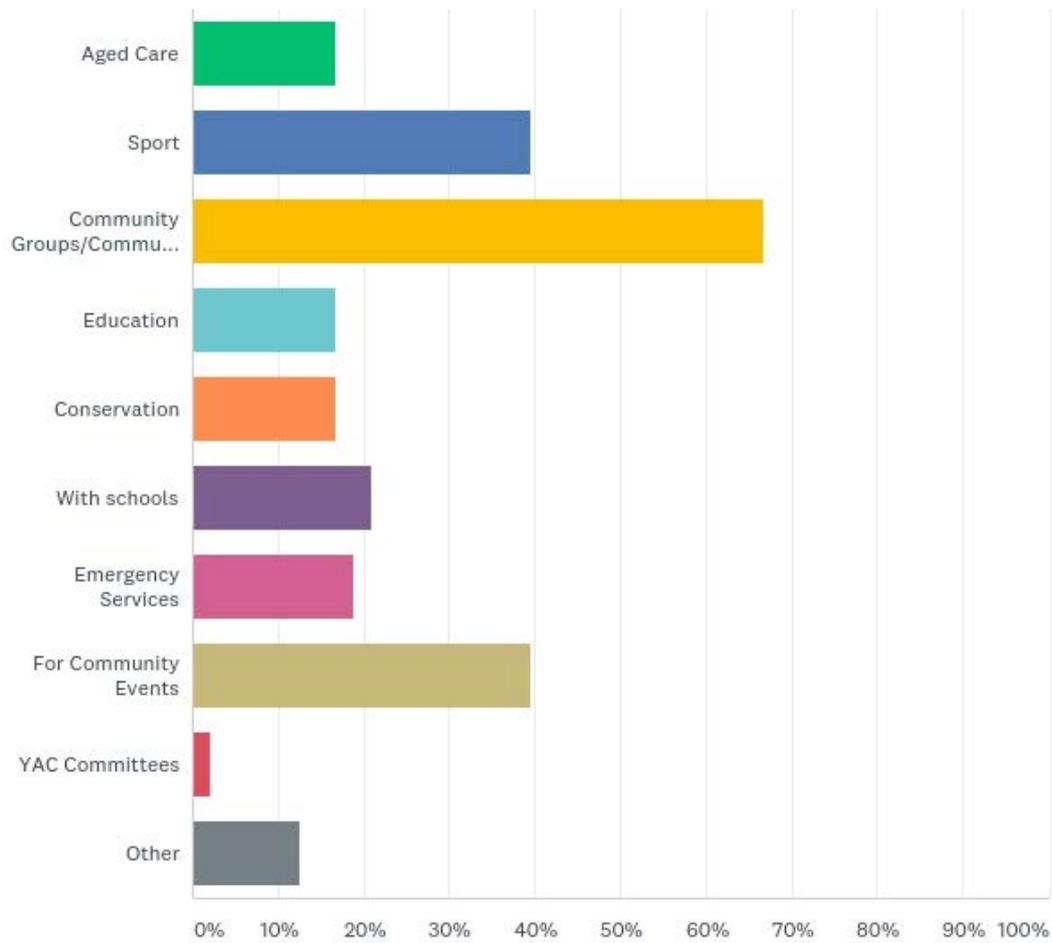


## Time spent volunteering

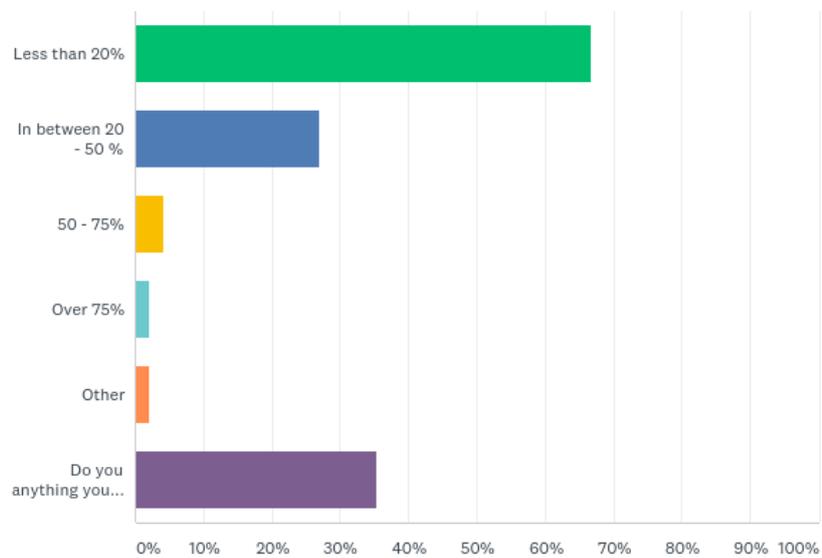


The graph below shows that there is a wide range of areas that people elect to do volunteer work in, but there is a focus on sport, community group work, and community events. However, as the next graph shows, when asked about the extent of youth involvement, it was estimated that the proportion of young people volunteering is less than 20% across the board.

### What areas do you work with volunteers?

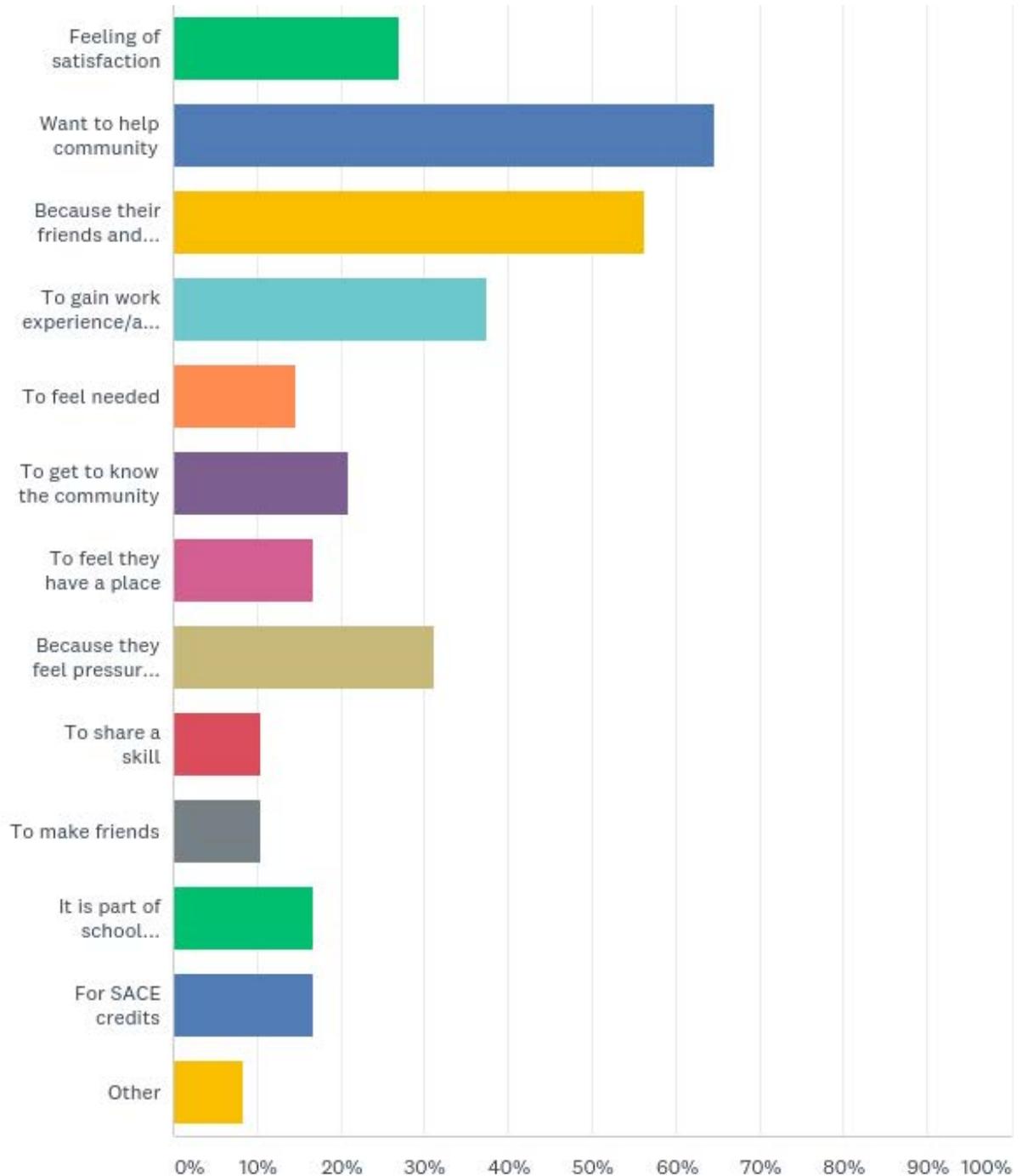


### What proportion do you estimate are young people?



## Why do young people volunteer?

In answering the question - why do people volunteer a range of motivations was suggested, but generally people felt that people volunteered because they wanted to help the community and also, because their friends and families did so. Getting work experience is also a core motivation.



## **ANSWER CHOICES**

Feeling of satisfaction

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Want to help community

---

Because their friends and family volunteer

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To gain work experience/add to the CV

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To feel needed

---

To get to know the community

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To feel they have a place

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Because they feel pressured by family/friends/community to do so

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To share a skill

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To make friends

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It is part of school curriculum to volunteer

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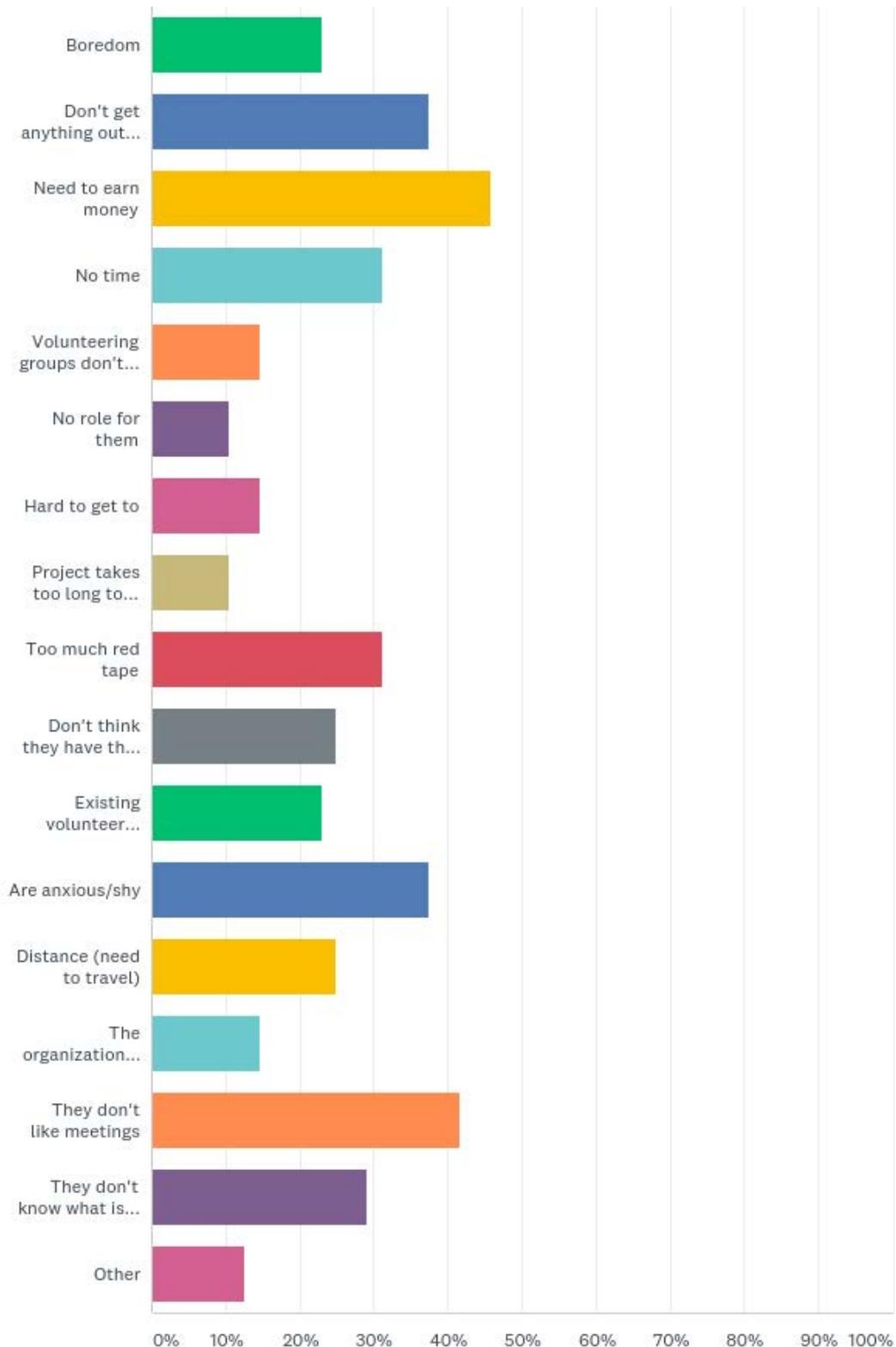
For SACE credits

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Other

## Barriers to Volunteering

Many reasons were nominated for why young people may not choose to volunteer, but chief amongst them was the view that they need to earn money (and therefore had less time). Another clutch of reasons suggests that red tape, meeting governance and lack of clear roles inhibited many young people. Finally, it was perceived many young people did not know what volunteering was, what opportunities existed and how to go about entering the volunteering community. Overall, the sheer diversity of these answers and their relative even spread suggests some confusion about and lack of understanding by older volunteers about what actually motivates young people to volunteer.



### ANSWER CHOICES

Boredom

Don't get anything out of it

Need to earn money

No time

Volunteering groups don't respond to them

No role for them

Hard to get to

Project takes too long to start

Too much red tape

Don't think they have the skills needed

Existing volunteer members don't make space for them

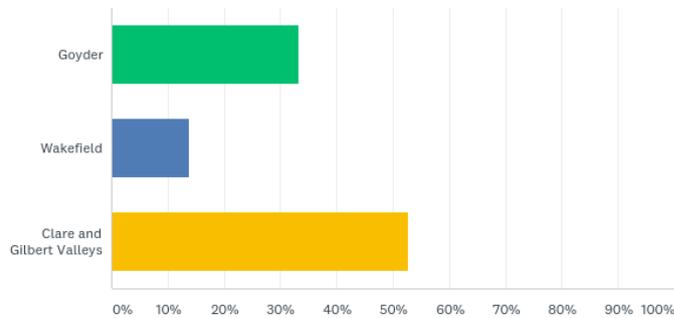
Are anxious/shy

Distance (need to travel)

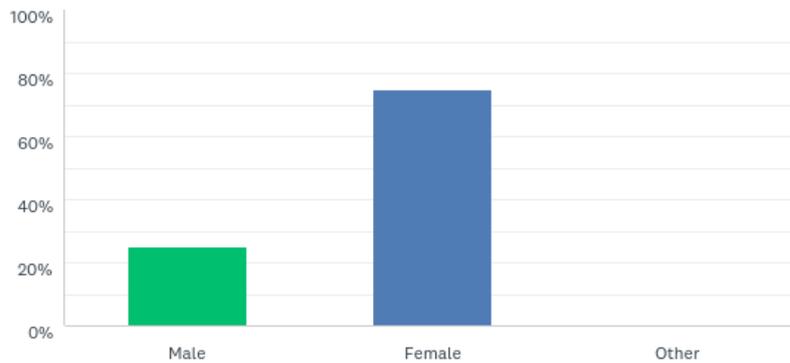
## YOUTH SURVEY

In contrast the youth survey, which was largely answered by youth in between the ages of 12 – 16 and participating in the Youth Advisory Committees, revealed a different picture and perception about volunteering. The survey itself was represented well by Clare and Gilbert Valleys, followed by Goyder and then to a much lesser extent Wakefield. More girls than boys responded.

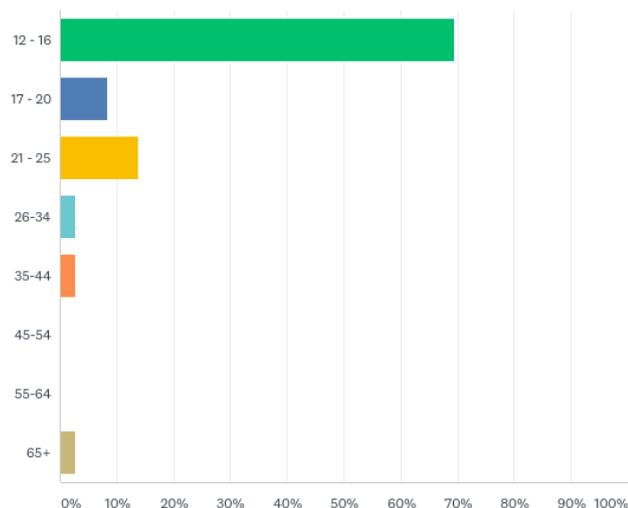
### Location



### Gender

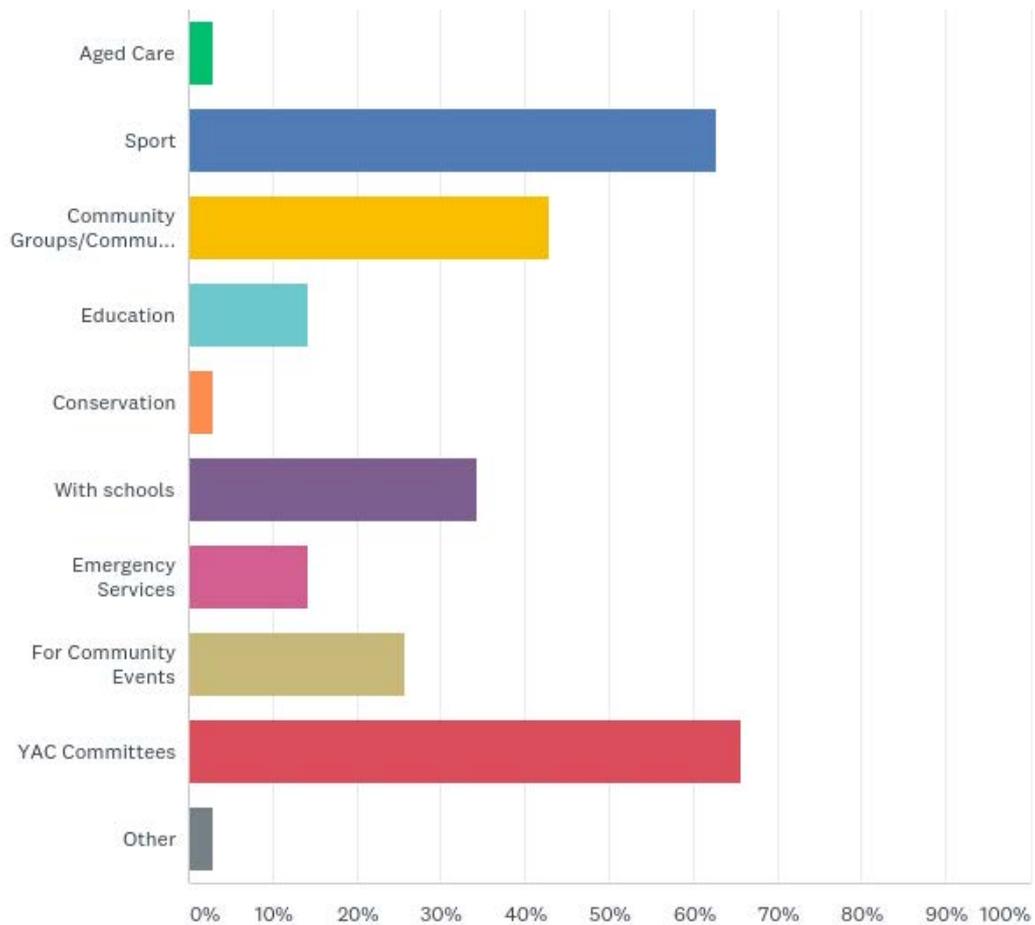


### Age range



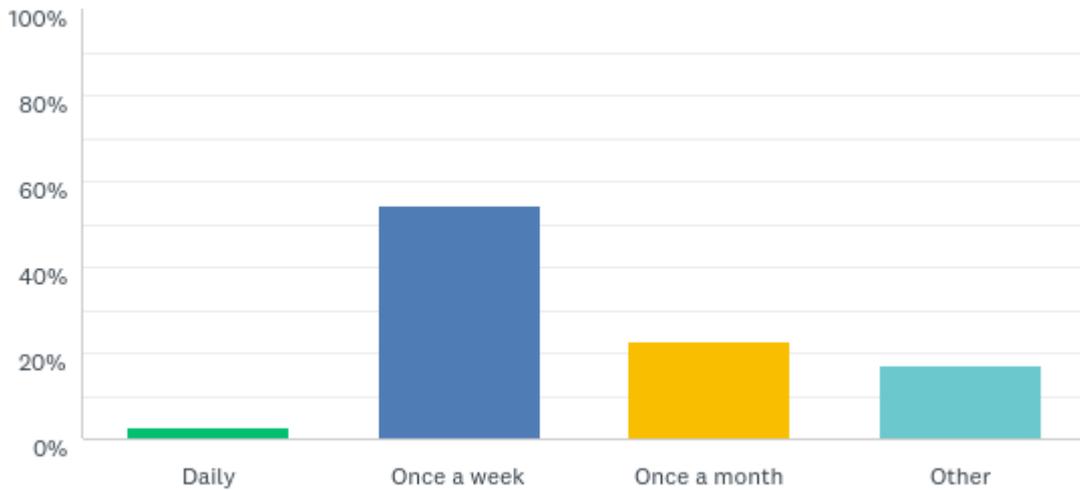
### What area do you volunteer in?

As shown in the graph below, when asked how and where they volunteer, youth identified sport, community groups and the YAC Committees as the core way they volunteer. Some did volunteer work at school, and some did participate in community events and emergency services every now and then. Very few identified conservation or aged care as a focus for their volunteering activity. Most typically undertook weekly volunteer activity – largely constructed as attendance at weekly sports practice sessions.

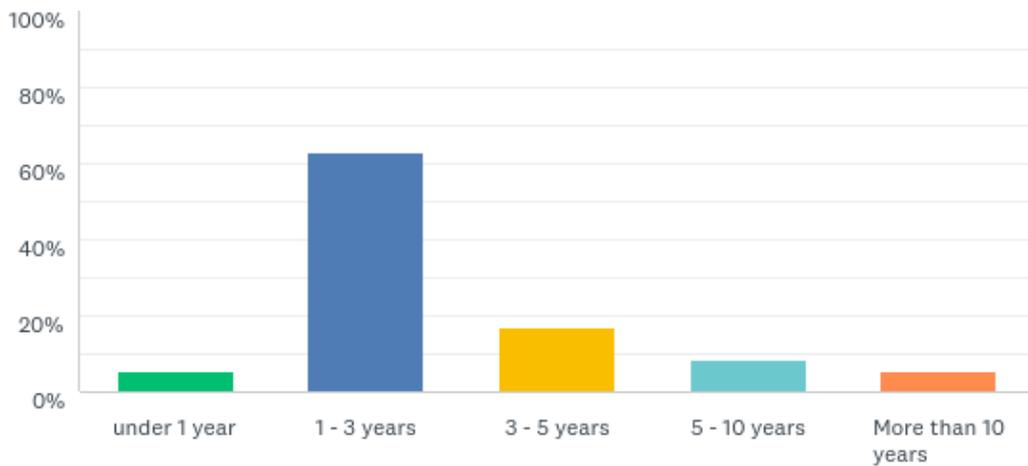


### Time spent volunteering

An interesting contrast to the general survey is the fact that while young people tended to volunteer once a week, they routinely only volunteer for a period of 1 – 3 years, unlike over ten years for the older volunteers. When directly asked in a group interview about this at a YAC meeting in Clare, participants noted that they would be 'gone then' – usually to University or jobs once they finished school.

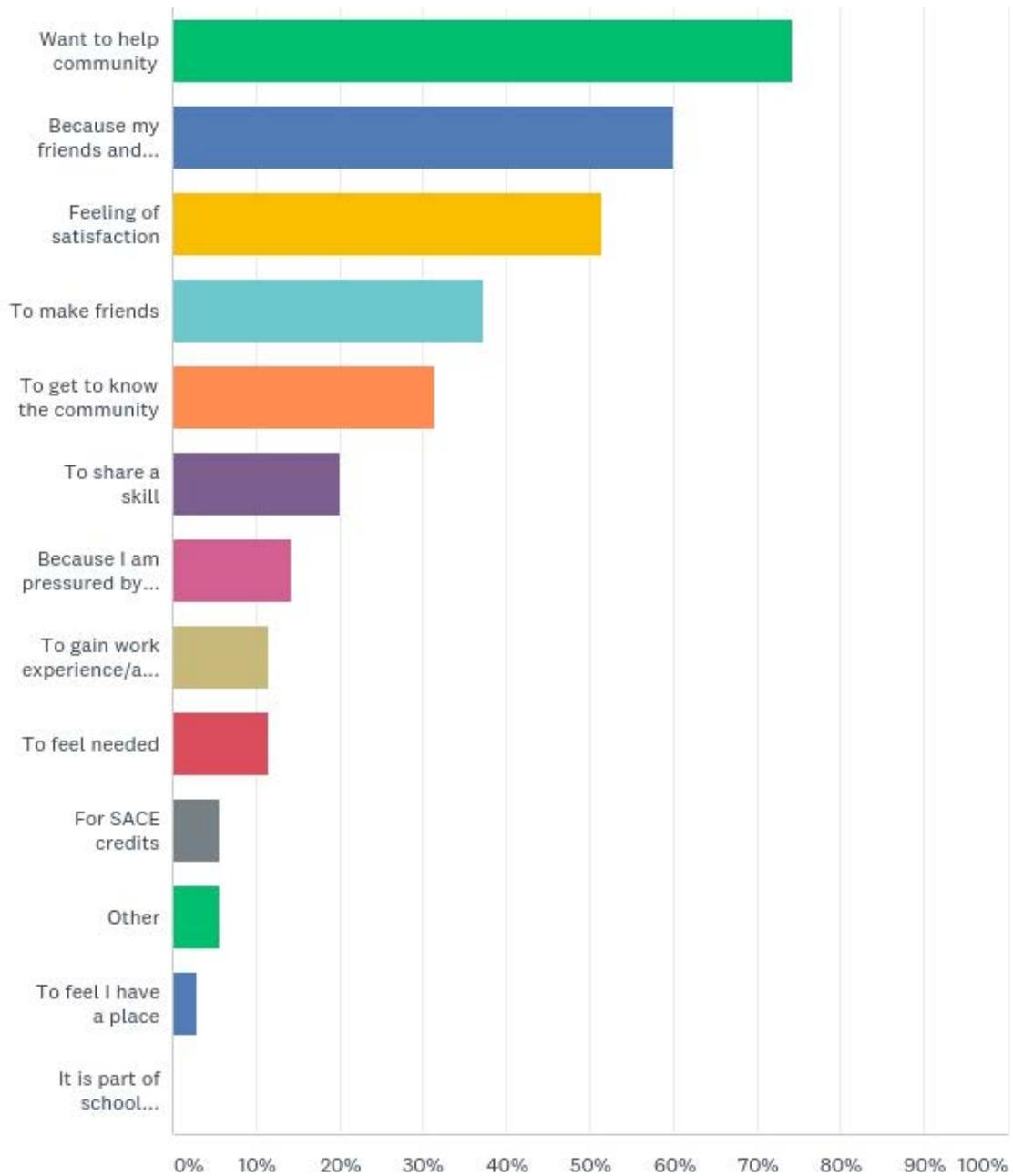


### Time spent in volunteering



## Factors motivating volunteering

In answering the question of what motivates young people to volunteer, it is very clear that wanting to help the community is the key motivation, closely following by the fact it is what their friends and family do. This is similar to the findings in Survey 1, but contrary to some of the views of interviewees, who did not feel young people cared about volunteering or the community. However again role modelling emerges as a key factor.



## ANSWER CHOICES

Feeling of satisfaction

---

Want to help community

---

Because my friends and family volunteer

---

To gain work experience/add to my CV

---

To feel needed

---

To get to know the community

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To feel I have a place

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Because I am pressured by family/friends/community to do so

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To share a skill

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To make friends

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It is part of school curriculum to volunteer

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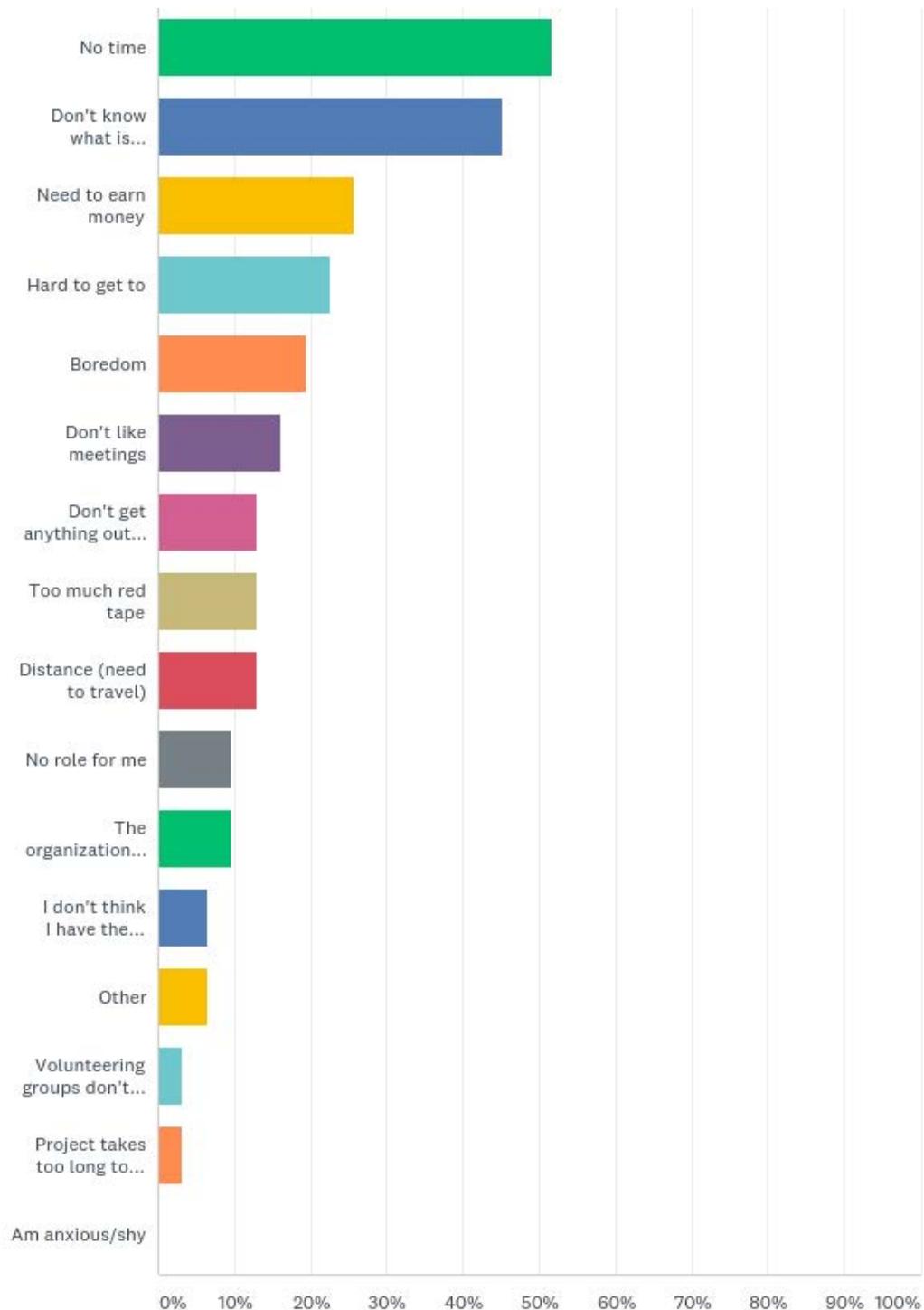
For SACE credits

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Other

## Factors that discourage/are barriers to volunteering

However, youth face a range of barriers that inhibit ongoing volunteer activity. The chief of these is lack of time, and unlike the perceptions revealed in the first survey, this graph shows a clear descending order of issues. Not knowing what volunteer opportunities exist is another key barrier. However, governance and 'red tape' are not really seen to be key issues, nor is the distance or meetings



## ANSWER CHOICES

Boredom

Don't get anything out of it

Need to earn money

No time

Volunteering groups don't respond to me

No role for me

Hard to get to

Project takes too long to start

Too much red tape

I don't think I have the skills needed

Am anxious/shy

Distance (need to travel)

The organization does not take on anyone who is under 18

Don't like meetings

Don't know what is around/available

Other

## Survey Summary

Across the two surveys, it is clear that differences exist between perceptions by older volunteers of younger volunteers, and between perceptions of the motivations and reasons why people volunteer – and what stops them from doing more.

However, it is in analysing the text from the free form answers that further insights are shown. The following boxes provide selected indicative quotes from various respondents across the two surveys that express some of their views about volunteering, youth participation – and ways forward.

First, as Box 1 shows, when asked what volunteering is, the idea of giving time for free is a key fundamental principle that all agreed on.

### Box One A Snapshot of Some of the Definitions of Volunteering

- ✓ Doing something for free
- ✓ Working in kind for the benefit of the community
- ✓ Working on projects for the community, without financial gain
- ✓ Time given to support community
- ✓ Helping my community
- ✓ Giving service without financial gain
- ✓ Working without any expected recognition, no payment but receiving a big smile, meeting new people from those you help and work with.
- ✓ Supporting a business, group or club in your own time
- ✓ Freely giving your time to aid a community organisation
- ✓ spending time working towards greater good for no financial gain
- ✓ Giving your time and experience to your community or others without seeking payment.

Box Two explores in more detail why people feel volunteering is important and why youth should be integrally involved. Again, quotes are indicative of the key themes expressed by different respondents but they vividly reflect different perspectives: from the need to foster generational change, to building community identity.

### Box Two: Comments on Volunteering from the General Survey

#### Why it matters

I think it's very important, especially in a small country town. Money isn't always easy for people but we wouldn't have a lot of things if we didn't have a strong bond with everyone. Everything we do just starts off as an idea, then \*volunteers\* go look at the landscape and do measurements. And it goes on and on. (7)

Important to engage young people to help capture them for life. if they get involved in earlier life, they are probably more likely to volunteer throughout life and understand the benefits that come with it. A great way to meet new people, spend time in a supportive environment and looks good on a CV for when they are looking for work later down the track. Can also create networks and relationships that are important to gaining employment.

Sense of belonging to the community. Service to others without expecting something in return is fundamental to positive mental health. (9)

They represent generational change within organisations. Many organisations are "old heavy". Doesn't mean they're not valuable but they do have a life span (10)

Because they are the volunteers of the future. They need to learn the skills now, otherwise we will be 'stuck' in the future (12)

It really opens up my mindset to not always focus on myself, but to see the joy it brings to others

Communities who support one another are much more resilient than those who don't. Places for people to gather are important. Places that appeal to different age groups are important and so are places that appeal to all. Older members of the community can mentor young volunteers if we can connect them (18)

Without volunteers so many things in our community wouldn't exist - sporting clubs, emergency services, meals on wheels just to name a few. (22)

Instils social identity; generates social capital - networks and contacts that will benefit youth in their job search; creates sense of social belonging and connectedness. Embeds the young person in their community. Adds to the pool of resources available to the community and fosters resilience. Slows down the exodus of youth to the city by creating a local focus/purpose.... (35)

#### **Barriers**

I am concerned that in some areas government rely on volunteers to supply services that they should be providing e.g. maintenance of hospitals- outside, floor coverings etc, in school parent support to struggling students. Where volunteers and paid staff do the same job. (6)

Might be a bit harsh, but some, not all, too lazy & expect others to provide for all their needs. Probably feel a bit intimidated. Never get asked. Dare I say over the last 20 years alcohol & drugs have become more important; i.e. to be of help, you need to be responsible & sober! I see some young volunteers behave in a way that sets a bad example. (21)

there is plenty of opportunity for young people, however traditional roles on many committees i.e. secretary are not favourable to many young people. many organisations fail to understand opportunity in the space for younger generations. (10)

If they feel welcomed and valued when they first volunteer, they come back for more. But if they are made to feel like they have little to contribute they don't come back. (15)

#### **Incentives**

Electronic devices are the addictions now days, but you want to get out. You only know how to socialise through a screen rather than face to face. It gives you the amazing opportunity to meet new people and connect in different ways with the people and community you already know. It doesn't hurt to help others out, and it may include travelling but who cares, you get to see magical places, results and people. (7)

Work Experience. A way that more volunteer opportunities might lead into something more permanent employment wise. (8)

I believe volunteering should be considered an important as I do believe it helps with connectivity of the community. Many businesses would thrive off of volunteers putting a hand up and to help. A few businesses do have that section of their enterprise which is made up of volunteers, and would struggle to continue; for example, Trees For Life. (8)

Kids need to know that if they want things to happen they need to give input as well otherwise it is presumed they are not interested which isn't really so. (25)

#### **Future Programs**

Different workshops about anxiety, depression and suicide. Learning about the people you can talk to and how to approach it properly when you can tell there is something wrong. (7)

The young people in our town desperately want a skate park. It would build volunteering capacity if they were fully involved in the fundraising, design, building, maintenance and running of it (18).

Volunteer development programs in schools to build volunteering into our everyday culture. Schools to recognise the volunteer efforts of students at their school assemblies (18)

Learning a trade such as fixing historic buildings. Stone work, rendering, painting, gardening (26)

The Eudunda Christmas Street Party were looking for teenagers to dress as characters for the parade, I think they struggled. Definitely getting them involved with Christmas Street Parade and War Memorial Events held throughout the year. Encouraging youth to help clean up the towns, the rubbish and the weeds on footpaths are a HIGE problem in Eudunda. (27)

What about considering a collective of youth volunteer skills? Volunteer jobs - getting enough talent to operate as a small team within themselves to do various support for a community, farming out their skills to community groups who need it, with enough flexibility to adjust to needs - of both the volunteer and the organisation. The volunteers could be the minutes secretaries (and learn about committees and their work - while using their school skills of English, maths, computer skills). (43)

Conservation! I feel more projects need to be environment based, whether they would help attract young people to volunteer is another story. I definitely believe young people to gravitate to anything sport related. I guess sport is good way to get the community together. (48)

### **Opinion**

I think young people, like everyone, are time poor, I think fundamentally this is an increasing issue. School, uni, jobs, sport and then volunteering on top can be a bit much. People still need their own time. A lot of these organisations have many old people in them, but if you're not working you have the time to invest in these things. This needs to be appreciated rather than thinking young people are slack. (10)

Many organisations complain there is a lack of young people volunteering. Often organisations do not advertise what they do and how people can get involved. Many service organisations with an ageing population are also 'protective' of the work they do, and when young people try to engage they end up with tedious jobs that are not suited to their needs or skill set. (11)

Volunteering should be done by everyone to help their community grow strong & nothing should be expected in return. (30)

There should some kind of compensation or support for those who volunteer. Governments and communities cannot continue to expect volunteers to continue to work, donate and give hundreds of hours of their time each year with absolutely no support - should at least receive discount fuel so they can get around. No tax benefits are particularly useful as most active volunteers are retired. (32)

Box three provides a contrast to the more general perspectives and while there are some similarities, a stark insight is that volunteering for young people is not necessarily about being on a committee, but can be galvanised around events, must be fun and could be operationalised by social and other forms of media. Another key difference is that when asked about future volunteer projects, the youth resoundingly suggested event based, fun activities whereas the older volunteers suggested more committee work, training and conservation foci.

## Box Three: Comments on Volunteering from the Youth Survey

### Why it matters

Yes. Although sometimes when you have your own family members involved with the community volunteering over the years for more than 1 group you miss out on time with them and your house and yard need many things done to it and your family misses out, mean while there spending all their spare time when they aren't working doing community stuff! And then sometimes the family is relied upon to drop everything and do volunteering. (1)

Yes, and commitment to things and groups are also a huge part.... people these days are not committed to do things if they want their kids to play sport etc.... (3)

I believe volunteering should be considered an important as I do believe it helps with connectivity of the community. Many businesses would thrive off of volunteers putting a hand up and to help. A few businesses do have that section of their enterprise which is made up of volunteers, and would struggle to continue; for example, Trees for Life. (8)

Feeling of belonging, making an impact and being heard by other members (31)

It's something to do when it gets boring (14)

Yes, you get to experience more and you can get more skills (29)

Yes, kills time, it's nice when people are grateful for what we've done, feel part of something (15)

Yes, gives young people the option to build on the skills and learn new skills (33)

Yes, as you are rolling yourself into the community (30)

SACE credits (32)

because my mum makes me (27)

jobs after (22)

### Barriers

Time, due to living an expensive world with rising costs volunteering might not fit into working schedules of more than 1 job. (1)

### Incentives

"Money" (36)

More advertisement (34)

If they didn't feel like they had to fit in so much (30)

Free food and fun (28)

### Future Projects

Painting murals It all depends on location many towns are becoming too small and many younger people these days are too busy with social media! (1)

Just get active in your local community or sports club it all helps (5)

Work Experience. A way that more volunteer opportunities might lead into something more permanent employment wise. (8)

Creating little arcade Event based things like the Battle of the Bands (10)

Building things, like we did the park (11)

Make it exciting, make it relevant to us our interests (17)

Generally, more promotion of positive mental health (30)

### **Opinion**

Volunteering is good but can be inconvenient I did research on it for an assignment / assessment task. It's great for retired people. Difficult for youngsters needing to earn money. Sometimes volunteering can be exclusive too. It can be a topic with much debate. Declining populations and facilities in rural areas and towns can also affect this. Good luck with your survey, hope this was useful and provides an insight and different views (1)

Things that teenagers would enjoy. Outdoor activities and other things. (2)

volunteering is a major part of a community surviving and its always the same ones that do it and help out... how to change the mind set of young ones these days is a huge problem as the incentive to work hard for your money and strive for goals is not instilled in the minds of children these days... volunteering is the start of building resilience in children of the future. (3)

I would suggest short term, something that has a tangible result would be a good place to begin (6)

I do believe more young people need to volunteer, as I have predominantly been working with people over the age of 60 years of age. We cannot just keep expecting the elderly generation to be the majority of work. It is also good to get young people to inter-grate with the elderly and work together and learn off each other. There is a lot we can possibly learn from the elderly, they have knowledge. They are more than willing to share. (8)

Yes. Although sometimes when you have your own family members involved with the community volunteering over the years for more than 1 group you miss out on time with them and your house and yard need many things done to it and your family misses out, mean while there spending all their spare time when they aren't working doing community stuff! And then sometimes the family is relied upon to drop everything and do volunteering. (1)

## KEY FINDINGS

The combination of the documentary and statistical analyses, the interviews and surveys has revealed some interesting - and in some cases – opposing views about volunteering in the Goyder, Wakefield and Clare and Gilbert Valley regions. **They can be summarised as follows:**

- It is unanimously agreed that volunteering is a really important part of a community.
- It is unanimously agreed that youth are poorly represented in volunteer activities and that they could be represented more.
- It is not however considered that young people must be involved in volunteering *per se* – most respondents appeared to feel that volunteering in their community was in a healthy state, notwithstanding.
- Statistical analysis showed that while young people have always been less represented in volunteering, the proportion of youth volunteering *per se* has not declined.
- Further, statistical analysis shows that the loss of older volunteers is considerably more expensive than the loss of young volunteer, to local communities, as their voluntary work every year, per volunteer, can be over twice as valuable as the work of the average young volunteer.
- There will be a greater burden on local government to provide increased services due to the decreasing involvement in volunteering of those aged 35 to 54 registered by the ABS.
- Role modelling plays a key role/motivation for why young people volunteer, and feeling part of, and giving back to the community a key motivation for all people.
- Two different models of volunteering emerged:
  - (iii) Volunteering is an activity involving participation on committees or doing regular group-based work (e.g. emergency services, Rotary, conservation).
  - (iv) Event based, one off, fun activities that require volunteer effort to expedite.
- The formal model was largely held by older volunteers and based on a construction of volunteering as 'public good' work, whereas the second model was largely ascribed to by young people who see volunteering as more than just work they do that they don't get paid for, but should be fun and exciting.
- There is one view that young people are lazy, disinterested and bored, and another that they are prevented from participating in volunteer activities because they are not heard, do not have a voice and are prevented by gate keepers from joining various groups.
- Older volunteers suggested volunteer projects in the areas of conservation and emergency services while younger ones suggested event-based projects based on fun and excitement to facilitate future volunteering.
- Another key finding is that there is actually a gap in volunteer activity by those who are between the 35 – 50 years old, people who currently are having families and working full time.

- The Youth Advisory Committees play a key role in organising youth activities in each Council region, and although they focus on 12 – 17-year olds, can be used as a focal point by which to embed volunteerism in youth and future activities. Many of the volunteer activities identified as fun and relevant to youth emerged from the YACs.
- The ways in which volunteering is communicated and advocated for in the communities needs to be reformed as many youths seem to be unaware of the diverse opportunities that exist.
- A remodelling of how volunteer groups work to take account of new social media and communication options is needed.
- The loss of older volunteers is considerably more expensive than the loss of young volunteers to local communities: their voluntary work every year, per volunteer, can be over twice as valuable as the work of the average young volunteer.
- What volunteering brings to a community or is needs revision – is it still valuable if it is structured around communal fun events rather than public good activities?

### Other relevant studies

Findings from this project also align with ongoing work conducted by SAFECOM who conducted a project called the Emergency Services Business Network. This project was designed to scope the viability of establishing collaborative partnerships between the Emergency Services Sector<sup>16</sup> and the private sector, with a particular focus on small businesses across regional South Australia. The project sought insight about 6 key areas: (i) volunteer recruitment and retention, (ii) employee support, (iii) flexible volunteering, (iv) understanding what corporate social responsibility means for our sector, (v) promoting, and building resilience and (vi) business continuity. After a substantive State-wide period of consultation, this project revealed the following preliminary findings: -

1. Emergency Services responders are predominately volunteering in regional SA
2. Population decline across regional SA is affecting the availability of people to volunteer and thus the number of emergency services volunteers
3. Populations in regional towns are declining due to ageing with people leaving these areas for larger rural centres to ensure access to health and other essential services
4. Youth in regions are leaving to pursue educational and vocational opportunities and often do not return with young families impacting volunteering across sporting, community and emergency services as well as economic growth
5. In response to advancements in technology, rural areas are exhibiting a decline in farming communities as farms expand whilst the number of people required to work them is declining
6. Small Businesses are suffering economic hardships finding it increasingly difficult to support employees as Emergency Services Volunteers, particularly to respond during working hours.

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<sup>16</sup> Emergency Services Sector encompasses Country Fire Service (CFS); State Emergency Services (SES) & South Australia Ambulance Service (SAAS)



Photo: Samantha Freeman

## **Suggested Trial Projects**

In analysing all of the above we suggest the following as a suite of potential trial projects. These ideas encapsulate suggestions from young and older volunteers and those that arose from the consultation with government and other agencies, including Legatus.

### **Creative Industries**

#### **Visual Revitalisation Projects**

Undertaking arts-based activities or volunteering for programs that were seen as fun, exciting and event based was clear in all discussions with young volunteers.

We suggest one trial project that could be established could be based on the idea of the visual revitalisation of rural towns. We suggest choosing 1 or 2 regional towns that would benefit from a 'face lift' in a public area.

A project could then be developed that uses young volunteers to visually improve it. This could be via a mural, some kind of public art, landscaping or other activities. Key to the project would be the fact it would be led by youth volunteers, and that they would be able to visually represent the town 'in their own eyes'.

The use of art to promote revitalisation of local economies is one used world-wide, and in this case lining it to a specific public good activity like volunteering can help build social capital. The small town of Sheffield in Tasmania is a good example – a dying mining town it now hosts an annual international mural competition having re-invented itself by painting 100 murals and turning itself into a tourist destination.

### **Emergency Services**

#### **Youth into Governance**

Emergency services need volunteers now more than ever. Many respondents told us that it was becoming increasingly hard to get young people into activities such as the CFS and other emergency services. In this case, we suggest that the emergency services sector is an ideal one by which to engage slightly older volunteers, those in their twenties and early thirties who at present appear too busy to do this work. They nonetheless as a demographic, represent a bridge between youth and older people. We also heard many people tell us that they needed some succession planning for younger people to come in to help manage and run the governance systems for many organisations that rely on volunteer labour

Hence, we suggest that a project could be established that brings these two needs together and runs training workshops in community governance for people who are time poor but may be able to volunteer their time in /on a committee/ In turn these people could become advocates to lobby younger people to give their time and be trained in actual emergency service delivery.



Photo: Holy Hannaford



Photo: Melissa Nursey-Bray

## Conservation Projects

### Citizen Science

Many volunteers reflected on the need to engage youth more in conservation projects. We suggest that this is therefore another area where a project could be established and trialled.

In particular, picking up on the inclination of young people to favour things that are fun but also that use social media and other virtual means of communication, we suggest that the development of an online citizen science project focussed on conservation would be one interesting way of building youth volunteer effort.

Online citizen science is an emerging area (see Nursey-Bray et al. 2018) and there are many examples of online conservation citizen science projects including REMAP – a virtual marine science program (see <https://www.redmap.org.au/>) as well as many others.

We suggest that a trial project may identify a threatened species or popular location in the Legatus region and then youth volunteers develop a citizen science tool to help protect it. This may be including development of a phone app, it may be a web site and even an ongoing event-based activity collecting information and then uploading it to the preferred virtual media.

### Event based

#### A “Day Out”

Event based activities appeal to young volunteers who are happy to give their time for free, but who prefer also to ‘get something back’.

We suggest that one project that could be trialled is the coordination of an event-based activity. We also suggest this activity could be regional to enable a wide range of young people, and potentially multiple YAC groups to become involved.

Activities such as a “Battle of the Bands” or some kind of parade or pageant emerged as popular suggestion which youth became engaged by.

We suggest that an event that also has a public good component would be a good way to engage youth in volunteering: a “Day Out”.

For example, a parade or event such as a musical event, market or competition could be held in any of the central regional towns, such as Burra, Clare or Port Wakefield, as a fund raiser supporting a community issue. Issues may include raising funds for bushfire recovery and support, mental health activities, aged care, conservation or education.

We also suggest that it may be useful to tie in an event like this to an established ‘Day’ such as World Mental Health Day, or Daffodil day or World Environment Day etc – this would enable the event as trialled to secure a permanent and ongoing presence as it could be run every year – but perhaps rotated across different towns/regions within Legatus boundaries. This would also secure an ongoing volunteering engagement and funds would be raised for a relevant and current public good/issue.



Photo: Samantha Freeman

## DISCUSSION

These findings bring us to a deeper reflection of what volunteering means, and whether indeed, the scarcity of young volunteers truly an issue?

Warburton (2010) writes that in Australia, people volunteer to supplement services that are provided by governments in other contexts. The fact that real and much needed services are, in the Australian society, provided by volunteers, makes volunteering of particular importance to our communities. This suggests that the reported scarcity of young volunteers (compared to the past) is truly an issue for the local communities in the Clare and Gilbert Valleys, Goyder and Wakefield LGAs: if young volunteers provide much needed services and their involvement is decreasing, this will strain local communities and government.

### Lack of youth volunteers is not perceived as a huge problem in practice

However, it appears, both from the interviews, official statistics and the current literature, that while youth volunteering is indeed relatively scarce, the number of young volunteers overall has not decreased over the last two decades. Furthermore, the importance of youth volunteering to their local communities in terms of value generated, both in absolute terms and per capita, is not significant, if compared to older age groups.

Further, while most<sup>17</sup> the interviewees believed that the scarcity of young volunteers was a problem for their community, very few explained how this was, effectively, a problem. On analysis of the interviews it emerges that the reported scarcity of young volunteers to undesirable *per se*, rather than because it was cause of lack of services or because it overburdens other volunteers. None of the interviewees said they were overburdened by their volunteering work, (except one but that was because he had begun working full-time). One group of interviewees vehemently complained about the lack of involvement of youth in volunteering (one interviewee said: “there are some kids with a ‘me me’ attitude: they are self-centred”) yet appeared to take pride in their apparent ‘rarity’ as volunteers and the existence of ‘non-volunteers’ against which they compared themselves.

The same group claimed that committees were made by few ‘doers’ (them) and many ‘complainers’ (those who do not do much, but complain) and claimed that “you only need busy people” (implying those who are not busy are not keen volunteering, also implying to busy themselves) and took further pride in this, perhaps understandably, but this reinforces an interpretation that current older volunteers do not see the lack of volunteers (regardless of the age group) to be a real problem in terms of how well their community was being served.

One interviewee from Goyder, for example, explained that “a few people can do a lot”, when explaining that she didn’t know any young volunteers. The same volunteer, aged 65, asserted that she “did not remember to volunteer when I was young” and that “they [the young people] might be interested [in volunteering] later”. Similarly, when I asked a volunteer from Clare if young people used to volunteer more in the past, she explained that her volunteering group (which currently has two young volunteers) “never had young people volunteering” and that while she said that young people are ‘fitter’ and might be more suitable for certain tasks, their scarcity was not a challenge that concerned her particularly.

In another interview with two volunteers in Clare we were told by them that their main concern was not the scarcity of young volunteers, but rather the fact that the ageing senior volunteers were not being substituted by the ‘new’ seniors. They also explained that the Clare Rotary Club they volunteered for used to have, in the 1970s, around 450 members; a number which was already back then shrinking at a rate of -10% per year: today the Rotary Club has no more than 21 members.

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<sup>17</sup> 16 respondents, circa.

Moreover, the interviewees estimated that their Rotary Club's age range used to be 45 to 55 years of age, whereas now it is 70s (and their youngest member is at least 55 years old). Our findings hence collectively suggest that the problem may not lie in the scarcity of young volunteers, which, furthermore, do not seem to be decreasing, but that the problem lies instead in the fact that the 'young seniors' are not substituting the ageing seniors.

These conclusions are largely supported by data collected by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) last censuses. While, unfortunately, the ABS did not record volunteering statistics in their censuses before 2006, recent available trends indicate that, while young (under 25) volunteers are not as numerous as the older volunteers (hence they are, indeed, scarce), in the last 15 years young volunteers have not decreased, but rather increased slightly in all the three LGAs of interest. However, the number of middle-aged volunteers decreases significantly. Between 2006 and 2016 the number of volunteers aged 20 to 24 increased in the LGAs of Goyder (*table 1*), Wakefield (*table 2*) and Clare and Gilbert Valleys (*table 3*), by as much as 80% (as in Wakefield). The number of volunteers aged 15 to 19 increased in the same time frame in both Wakefield and Clare and Gilbert Valleys, but decreased, however, by 2 individuals in the Goyder LGA. Arguably, this decrease is marginal (especially in the likely, minor impact it had on the community). Of note however is the fact that with the exception of Clare and Gilbert Valleys' 45 to 49 years old volunteer demographic, (who increased by 15 individuals between 2006 and 2016), the number of volunteers aged between 35 and 54 overall decreased in all the three LGAs. Hence, while the number of young volunteers is relatively scarce in comparison to older demographic, it is a misconception that young volunteerism is decreasing.

A study (De Vaus, Gray & Stanton 2003) estimating the national economic value of volunteering in Australia, further reinforces this notion that the scarcity of young volunteers has hardly become challenge and may even suggest that increasing youth volunteering might not be the most effective way to provide services to the local community. In their study, they estimated (based on 1997 figures) that the value of youth (15-24 years old) volunteering in Australia to be the lowest, per capita, of any other age group, accounting for an economic output of \$2,253<sup>18</sup> per annum. This value in fact contrasts with the economic value per capita of those volunteers aged 75 and over, those aged 65-74, those aged 55-64 and those aged 45-54 estimated to be, respectively, \$2,456, \$4,584, \$5,211 and \$3,678 per annum.<sup>19</sup>

Thus, it can be said that, between 2006 and 2016, youth volunteerism is on the rise both nominally and per capita, meaning that not only more young people are volunteering, but also that a higher proportion of them volunteer. This data also shows that the decrease in the number of volunteers aged 35-55 is not exclusively due to population trends, such as ageing, as the participation is shrinking on average per capita among those age groups – this measurement also showed that not only the 35-55 age group volunteerism is shrinking, but that the age group affected by this phenomenon is much larger, spanning from those aged 25 to those aged 69 (it should be noted though that this is only in per capita terms, and that nominally those aged 25-35 and those aged 55-69 are actually on the rise). Further, volunteering rates, per capita, of those aged 70+ are, like for the youth, have been on the rise as well between 2006 and 2016.

This notion is further reinforced by examining youth volunteering as a percentage of the population by relative age group by LGA (graphs I-III and tables 4-6). This measurement shows (and allows us to contrast) volunteering participation per capita, by age group between 2006 and 2016. Youth (15-24) volunteering participation per capita has in fact grown significantly across all three regions: the percentage of people aged 15-19 has grown by 25.2% (the second highest growth rate per capita in the region, after those aged 20-24) in Wakefield, 13.7% in Goyder and 28.8% in Clare and Gilbert Valleys;

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<sup>18</sup> 1997 dollars.

<sup>19</sup> 1997 dollars.

the percentage of those aged 20-24 has grown by 52.6% in Wakefield (the highest growth rate per capita in the region), 26% in Goyder and 21.7% in Clare and Gilbert Valleys.

The rates at which youth volunteering is increasing in the three case study regions are among the highest by age group. On the other hand, volunteering per capita has been decreasing across all the regions, on average, for not only those aged 35-55 (as reflected by nominal values), but a larger age group comprising those aged 25 to those aged 69. With the exception of those aged 40-49, in Clare and Gilbert Valleys and those aged 35-39 and 45-49 in Goyder, which recorded a modest increase (relative to other age groups, as the growth rate of these exceptions is among the lower), all other age groups spanning from 25 to 69 have been decreasing consistently in Goyder, Wakefield and Clare and Gilbert Valleys, including by as much as 27.1% (25-29, Goyder), 24.8% (55-59, Clare and Gilbert Valleys). Older age groups (70+) volunteering rate has been instead, on average, on the rise in all the three regions and significantly: in Goyder, the participation rate of people aged 80-84 in volunteering has grown by 106.4% and in the Clare and Gilbert Valleys the volunteerism rate per capita of those aged 75-79 has grown by 43.1%. This measurement is important because it provides an insight into volunteerism by age group independent from population trends (e.g. ageing, migration-in, migration-out, fertility rate, etc.).

Based on these estimations, it is suggested that the loss of older volunteers is considerably more expensive than the loss of young volunteer, to local communities, as their voluntary work every year, per volunteer, can be over twice as valuable as the work of the average young volunteer. Moreover, the value of younger volunteer's work is not only smaller per capita, but also in absolute terms; an Australian government study (Productivity Commission 2004) on population ageing has found in fact that "ageing generally increases volunteering" and "that this aspect of ageing tended to be overlooked in some negative portrayals of ageing", a notion supported also by other studies (Curnow 2000).

Thus, rather than the scarcity of youth volunteering, which seems natural and, despite some perceptions, appears to be on the rise, what may provide a greater burden on local government to provide increased services is more likely to be the decreasing involvement in volunteering of those aged 35 to 54 registered by the ABS.

A proactive approach encouraging those aged 35 to 54 to volunteer is of more compelling urgency, given the shrinking volunteerism of this age group and the fact that, compared to young volunteers, this age group provides more valuable outcomes per volunteer recruited (as well as a lower losses per volunteer lost).

### **Loss of community autonomy**

The interviews, alongside the current scholarship, may also provide solutions to this phenomenon. A volunteer (75+ and based in Clare), the same who reported that the average age of the Clare Rotaract club grew from 45-55 to around 70 and that the number of Rotarians is shrinking since the 1970s, explained that before the community members used to be involved in many aspects of Clare life – aspects in which all the community was heavily involved in volunteering and was supported, and self-reinforced, by a strong sense of community ownership.

For example, he explained that in the 1960s he and many other members of the Clare community built the local kindergarten - "It's owned by the community, you got that ownership" and "It's not even volunteering, it's caring". He then lamented how this sense of ownership was 'stripped away' from him and other members of the community as the government took control of more activities and services of his community and funding for local started to come outside of the community ("before we had massive fundraising") – meaning they effectively lost the possibility of have any say on a number of local services: "Once the government took control of the hospital, it was impossible to know about it" (the volunteer explained they used to volunteer significantly at the local hospital) and that "governments don't have a very good picture" suggesting a loss of community autonomy over time to make key

decisions in their local communities. This lost sense of ownership is attributed to the decrease of *overall* volunteering: people did not feel they had a role anymore and/or were able to contribute.

### **Corporatisation of Volunteering**

Other interviewees complained about the way that volunteering groups have now become “corporatized” and regulated, posing challenges for volunteers of all age groups, a barrier which is also affecting young volunteers (Moffatt, 2011). For example, volunteers now much report how many hours they have worked, need to make “strategic plans”, draft legal documents (previously not needed) and cut ‘red tape’.

### **Sense of community**

A fading sense of community was reported by an interviewee in Port Pirie as well, who believed this was fading in young people especially and, in turn, decrease their volunteerism. One volunteer was so frustrated by having lost this sense of ownership of his community that he believed the solution was to “cut the money” (i.e. reduce government funding), and that would make the community re-unite to contribute to it, thus restoring the sense of ownership and increase volunteering. While of course such a solution is too radical and hardly what most community members would want, it shows a desire to ‘have their community and control of it back’. This notion that community ownership has an important role in volunteering motivation is supported by the current academic literature. In a study by Ainsworth (2020) it was found that “volunteering behaviour increases the sense of ownership users have over the non-profit” and that this phenomenon is self-reinforcing, meaning that “that sense of ownership has a positive role in fostering positive attitudes towards volunteering and repeat volunteering intentions”. Further, the use of language that fosters ownership increases motivation to volunteer in non-volunteers, and thus might be a valuable resource in recruitment (Ainsworth 2020).

### **The ongoing value of promoting youth volunteering**

Youth volunteering has a number of unique advantages, which while unrelated to the aging local population, provide benefits to communities. One major advantage of youth volunteering is in fact that it is correlated with volunteering later in adulthood (Moorfoot et al. 2015; Brown, Lipsig-Mumme & Zajdow 2003). Studies from the ABS (Walsh & Blank 2015) found only 27% of non-volunteering adults used to be volunteers in their youth, contrasting with a much higher 43% of adult volunteers. This evidence indicates that promoting volunteering can have long term positive impacts on volunteering in other age groups, as the current youth enters, later, into adulthood. In our study, interviewees suggested that families and schools should be involved in promoting youth volunteering. Many volunteers also reported that their children, now adults, still volunteer because they “set the example”, or that they volunteer themselves because their parents used to. These suggestions and reports are supported by a rich scientific scholarship (see Walsh & Blank 2015).

Parental volunteering is also positively correlated with children’s volunteerism (Perks & Konecny 2015). Furthermore, an American study found that “parents can induce formal volunteering by encouraging their teens to volunteer” (Paintsil 2019); meaning that even if the parents are not volunteering themselves, they can still successfully promote volunteering in their children. Moreover, embodiment by the parents of a volunteering model, has been also found to be correlated with prosocial behaviours in children, also once adults, by multiple studies (Stukas, Snyder & Clary 2016) - indicating long term benefits on volunteering involvement from domestic exposure to volunteering in early life.

Schools play a key role in promoting youth volunteering. In a reviewing the literature, Walsh and Black (2015) found at least seven studies (Astin & Sax, 1998; Flanagan et al, 1998; Hart et al., 2007; Haski-

Leventhal et al., 2008; Hill & den Dulk, 2013; Torres, 2003; Verba et al., 1995) which found that schools that promote and emphasise social participation are positively correlated with youth volunteering. Many volunteers in our project, suggested that schools give credits to children who volunteer – indeed the South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE), for high-schoolers, still offers credits for involvement in volunteering. If schools in Goyder, Wakefield and Clare and Gilbert Valleys offered, as part of the SACE curriculum, volunteering opportunities, youth volunteering may increase.

Emergency Services volunteers argued that youth do not know what is around: again, schools can play a central role in promoting information regarding volunteering opportunities, even if not part of the school curriculum. If the youth simply don't know the volunteering opportunities available, information is critically important in recruiting more young volunteers, and schools can be at the frontline of this approach. Schools also offer a further opportunity: studies found that parents' involvement in the education of their children, including through volunteering, is associated with better academic performances in the children (Wang & Fahey 2011; Khajehpour & Ghazvini 2011). Thus, schools may serve a further role: by creating in-school volunteering opportunities for parents, the children may benefit, beyond engaging themselves in volunteering (which *per se* is already correlated with higher academic performance [Moorfoot et al. 2015]), of more engagement with their parents in education and, thus, even higher academic performance.

### **Long term benefits of Youth Volunteering**

Promoting youth volunteering has in fact multiple advantages which go well beyond higher volunteering rates in adulthood and enhanced academic performance. A study conducted in the United States found significant benefits of volunteering for disadvantaged youth: volunteers from disadvantaged backgrounds were nearly 50% more likely to believe that they will “very likely” graduate from college than young people from similar backgrounds who do not volunteer; the study also found that they engage more in their community, being 40% more likely to think that “that they can make some difference or a great deal of difference in their community” from and 100% more likely to discuss politics. This *per se* is a unique positive benefit of promoting volunteering among young people.

Furthermore, volunteering has been found to be offer skills development and enhanced employability opportunities. This matches the recommendation by various interviewees of the need to enhance the employability and skills development opportunities through volunteering - which they believed might be a key motivator. Studies have found that youth involved in volunteering developed personal and social skills including communications, self-esteem and teamwork, as well as specific skills related to the work they did as volunteers (The National Youth Agency 2007).



Photo: Samantha Freeman

## Conclusion

Youth volunteering is perceived in the regions as scarce, compared to the past, and thus a challenge. While statistical data confirms that youth volunteering is indeed scarce, compared to most of the other age groups, our study has shown that statistically this is hardly a challenge, or anything new. In fact, the number of young volunteers has been slightly increasing across all the three LGAs of interest.

However, our study also shows that there is a belief in the community that youth volunteering should be promoted and expanded, especially given the population is ageing. Volunteering is unanimously constructed as being central to a community.

Yet models of volunteering are changing and in the case study regions different models are co-existing. This influences the ways in which volunteer activities are valued is different between older and younger groups.

Volunteering remains an essential part of any community, and youth volunteering an important factor. However, ultimately, this study finds that what is needed is a focus on building volunteering at all levels of the community and where youth are concerned, build event based fun exciting programs, that they will not only attend, but willingly give up their time to implement.

## Recommendations

1. That Councils in the region strengthen and support the Youth Advisory Committees (YACs).
2. That support is found to establish a Community Development Officer to develop regional volunteer support for Youth.
3. That Legatus convene a series of event- based volunteer activities.
4. That Legatus investigate the opportunity to develop programs aimed at supporting the current 35 – 55 demographics to volunteer more.
5. That volunteer groups are supported to use social media and communication options.
6. That local councils act as a facilitator to (i) support emergency services and (ii) coordinate engagement with schools re volunteer programs.

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