

Research and Development

Possible Futures

changes, volunteering and the not-for-profit sector in Australia

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everyone's family

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Abstract

This paper considers several social, demographic and economic changes so as to suggest how these might affect volunteering in the not-for-profit sector in Australia over the next decades. This consideration could assist not-for-profit organisations adjust to new circumstances arising from these changes. Focussing on aspects of the changing and ageing Australian population that might influence trends in volunteering, the paper highlights salient interests and expectations of the baby boomer generation. The paper also recognises increasing education levels in Australia, canvassing these regarding volunteering trends. It considers implications of changing family and household structures and notes how patterns in gender and youth might also affect volunteering trends in volunteering supply. Highlighting different forms of volunteering, the paper considers adequacy of current definition, noting that culturally diverse groups may volunteer in ways beyond those captured in Bureau of Statistics material. Implications of changes including intensified state interest in volunteering are also noted. The paper concludes with a dual caution noting that although predicting the future is risky, ignoring it could be even riskier.

Introduction

This paper notes several changes and considers how these might affect volunteering, particularly on the supply side, in the not-for-profit sector in Australia over the next decades. By considering implications of relevant social, demographic and economic changes, not-for-profit organisations may be better able to manage, and adjust to, new circumstances influenced by these changes, assessing the revised circumstances so as to optimise volunteer engagement. Changes are occurring at two main levels, at the structural level and in the experience of volunteering. Not-for-profits need to recognise and understand the possible consequences of change, for as Evans and Saxton caution, there is 'a litany of failed organisations that did not adapt to the changing world around them' (Evans and Saxton 2003, p.14). It is likely that structural changes will play a role in shaping the parameters of future volunteering, including who volunteers, along with how and when they volunteer. Accompanying and reacting to these structural changes may be substantive shifts in the very experiences of volunteering as the changing constituency exhibits different characteristics and patterns in their volunteering. Changes on both levels are dynamic and never isolated. Rather, in particular areas they are both influenced by, and influence other areas and other changes. The concluding section discusses implications of changes in volunteering.

Recent research on trends in volunteering

First published in 2000, Robert Putnam's now well-known work *Bowling Alone* drew attention to issues of civic engagement and social capital. Considering trends in volunteering as part of his larger project, Putnam analysed the deterioration of social connectedness and community involvement in the United States. While his work overall gained widespread attention Putnam's finding, that volunteering was one of the few forms of civic engagement not in decline, (Putnam 2000 p. 279) was not subject to particular emphasis. Rather it was the other patterns of decline addressed in *Bowling Alone* that attracted more interest. More recently Wilkinson and Bittman's (2002a, 2002b, 2003) work has addressed volunteering, including the future of volunteering in Australia. These authors, although noting the risk of predicting the future, suggest that both the number of volunteers and the hours they offer are likely to increase in the second decade of this century.

While these studies background this paper, it is analysis by Evans and Saxton (2003) that prompted the considerations below regarding the Australian situation. Although their paper 'Five key trends and their impact on the voluntary sector' largely deals with the United Kingdom, considering how social and demographic changes could affect future developments in volunteering, the central themes are worthy of exploration in the Australian context. The authors warn not-for-profit organisations to seriously consider 'the impact issues could have on clients, on funding, on competition, on staff and above all their own effectiveness' (Evans and Saxton 2003 p. 2). Another ongoing development, particularly relevant to the Australian situation, is the advent of changing models of welfare support. One aspect of the rollback of the state in the past two decades has been governments' decisions to increasingly use third sector organisations to deliver, and partner in, welfare programs (Howard 1999). This is in the same period witnessing reduction in the overall social policy budget for the first time in Australia in the post World War II period (Burchell 2004). For not-for-profits operating in welfare and social enterprise these changes have major implications, including implications around the need for effective use of all resources, including volunteers (Cooper 2004).

Structural changes and volunteering

Increased competition in the not-for-profit sector

Although there has been much debate over the decline of social capital and civic participation in Australia, a recent Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) time survey indicated the percentage of the population that had volunteered in the past twelve months increased to 32 per cent in 2000¹ from 24 per cent in 1995 (ABS 2002b).² While an increase in volunteer numbers may appear as good news for the not-for-profit sector, it should be recognised that

more organisations now welcome volunteers, suggesting the possibility of increased competition for volunteers, including skilled volunteers. In 2003 Philanthropy Australia noted that there were over 700,000 nonprofit organisations in Australia (Philanthropy Australia 2003).³ However these organisations vary greatly in size, in scale and range of activities, and in financial turnover. Activities range from provision of small-scale recreational events to large-scale provision of health and social services (Review of the Law of Negligence Final Report 2002). In 1993-94 there were between 10,000 and 11,000 charitable organisations in Australia receiving government funding, while the number operating without government funding was unknown (ABS 1997). Forward thinking not-for-profit organisations will need to consider competition within the sector when designing strategies to recruit new volunteers. Demographic trends may also influence patterns of volunteering, further altering the supply-demand equation.

Ageing populations and volunteering

One of the demographic changes occurring in Australia is the ageing of the baby boomer generation, sometimes defined as people born between 1946 and 1961.⁴ Many baby boomers are now approaching retirement age and this could have positive implications for non-profits seeking to recruit volunteers (Zappala 2000 p. 2). Yet the abolition of compulsory retirement laws, inadequate superannuation and possible labour shortages as older workers leave paid employment suggests that more people may choose to stay in paid employment for longer (Heartbeat 2001, p. 4; Nixon 2003). These factors cast doubt over the continuance of recent early retirement trends, creating a situation in which a large proportion of the population will be reaching the traditional 'retirement age' and yet many will remain in paid employment, either in a full-time or part-time capacity (Heartbeat 2001 p. 5). Therefore while the ageing of the population could positively affect volunteering as people have more time on leaving the workforce, this is not certain as other socio-economic pressures and changing societal expectations may lead people to continue longer in employment (Zappala 2000 p. 2).

Increasing 'pool' of volunteers?

In Australia in 2000 the 35-44 age group had the highest volunteering rate within the last twelve months, a level of 40 per cent. The 45-54 age group had the second highest volunteer rate, approximately 35 per cent of this age group volunteered. Together, these two age groups cover a large proportion of people born during the 'baby boom' years (ABS 2002c). The volunteer rate is determined by the ABS as the number of volunteers in an age group expressed as a percentage of the total population in the same group. However the volunteer rate does not indicate the frequency and hours spent volunteering, these tend to increase steadily with age up to the mid seventies. People aged between 65-74 spent the most time volunteering, averaging 2.5 hours per week compared with the median 1.4 hours per week (ABS 2002c). The increased hours spent volunteering accompanies the decrease in family and paid work commitments with advancing age (ABS 2002c). This empirical evidence supports Wilkinson and Bittman's (2002a p. 39) prediction that the current supply of people who are willing to volunteer can be expected to increase into the future. Yet although a potentially large supply of volunteers is a positive sign for not-for-profit organisations, further consideration is required to develop effective strategies to recruit and retain future volunteers. Not only is the future different, but future volunteers themselves bring different backgrounds and expectations.

Baby boomers in their 'winding down' years

Recognising the baby boomer generation as a potentially large source of future volunteers the Western Australian Department of Premier and Cabinet commissioned a study to identify motivators and barriers to boomer volunteering (WADPC 2001). The study found that baby boomers see themselves becoming more involved with volunteering in the future. Although the number of potential volunteers is expected to increase it is crucial that non-profit organisations wanting to target the boomer generation begin now. If organisations wait until baby boomers

actually retire before targeting them it may be 'too late,' as many baby boomers are already 'full of ideas' about what they will do in the next stage of their lives (WADPC 2001; Heartbeat, 2001 p.19).⁵ And, given that almost two-thirds of volunteers work for only one organisation at a time, it is imperative that organisations wanting to recruit volunteer baby boomers commence planning immediately (ABS 2002c).⁶

Changing demand for not-for-profits' services

Another major effect of an ageing population is increased demand for aged services, including health care, home and community care, and caring services for people living with disabilities and dementia. The National Aged Care Alliance has noted that since aged care funding is presently not benchmarked or indexed to the real cost of providing care, an inadequate and insecure basis for delivering quality aged care has been created (NACA 2002 p. 4). Although there has been a total increase in aged-care funding in Australia, current indexing arrangements do not adequately cover cost increases. Thus many services, including for example Meals on Wheels, have experienced a 'real term' decline in funding (NACA 2003 p. 33; NCOSS 2001). One area of particular concern is current and projected staff shortages in the aged care sector. As demand for aged services expands this necessitates increased overall salary costs if organisations want to continue providing present, or improved, levels of service. However, if funding is not increased to support the necessary increase in staffing levels, either clients will have to be turned away or the ratio of staff to clients increased (NCOSS 2002). The shortage of aged care places, unduly long waiting lists for residential places, staff shortages and insufficient funding all indicate a continuing crisis in aged care unless funding is increased commensurate with need (NACA 2001). One way that the aged care area may endeavour to address paucity of resources could be by seeking greater engagement from volunteers.

'Grey Power'?

As the population ages and fertility rates decline there will likely be a corresponding shift in funding towards health and aged care. Reallocation could adversely affect not-for-profit organisations who do not work with older people, as they may find funds and support are reoriented to provide for further address of the needs of the ageing population (Evans and Saxton 2003 p.13).⁷ Current staff and funding shortages in services for ageing may lessen as the influence and electoral power of the over-65s increases. Already there have been indications of electoral awareness; the lead up to the 2001 Federal election in Australia the National Aged Care Alliance (2001) campaigned to make aged care a 'major election issue'. While political commentators have noted the significant influence of 'grey votes' in recent federal elections (Kelly 2004). This may be a precursor to older Australians using increasing voting power to lobby for improvements in areas of particular concern. If political parties and governments sufficiently acknowledge the 'grey power' of older Australians and legislate accordingly this could have financial and policy implications for service providers in the not-for-profit sector. An alternative scenario is that organisations dealing with the elderly are further stretched, in spite of changed funding, as they endeavour to meet greater needs of more people without sufficiently commensurate increases in resources.

The 'modern vertical family'

Longer life expectancies and falling fertility rates not only changed the demographic 'shape' of Australia, but also changed the makeup of the modern Australian family and members' availability for volunteering outside the family. Australia's family structure has shifted from a horizontal to a more 'vertical' configuration. Stemming from increased longevity many Australians are, or will be, part of three, four or even five generation families. While extended families 'lengthen' in this fashion, declining fertility rates witness nuclear families 'narrowing' with less children per couple (Evans and Saxton 2003 p. 4; McCallum and Geiselhart 1996 p.104). Salt argues that baby boomers are of the 'pincer' generation, with many squeezed between caring for elderly parents and supporting adult children who in many cases still live at home (Salt 2003). Highlighting these dual pressures on some boomers, the Secretary of the

New South Wales Nurses Association Brett Holmes argued that care facilities for nurses' aging parents, rather than for children of nurses, have become the more pressing. Holmes noted that the average nurse in New South Wales is 45 years old, female and more likely to be concerned about caring for elderly parents rather than childcare. The nurses' call for aged care facilities at work indicates the caring 'squeeze' and dilemma of many baby boomers, particularly women, who may have only a short period of time, if any, between caring 'responsibilities' (Holmes 2003).

Changing female fertility and employment patterns have changed the character of both formal and informal childcare. While most mothers take some form of paid or unpaid maternity leave, 69 per cent of mothers who took leave or ceased working at the time of the birth of their youngest child returned to work within a year of delivery (ABS 1998; HREOC 2002). As a result more people are involved in caring. This caring is not just for immediate family but also for grandparents and, more often, for grandchildren. Whether children receive formal or informal care varies with age. Children aged 1-2 are almost twice as likely to receive informal care over formal care (ABS 2001). Grandparents are the main providers of informal care especially for very young children. Thirty one per cent of children aged between 1-2 being cared for by their grandparents (ABS 2001). The high level of informal care provided by grandparents may function negatively on non-profit organisations looking to recruit volunteers from retirement. If people are spending substantial amounts of time caring for family members they may have less time to volunteer with formal organisations such as not-for-profits.

Women and volunteering

Notwithstanding childcare demands, women are much more likely to volunteer if they have children. Although partnered women had the highest volunteer rate at 45 per cent of that demographic group, 33 per cent of single mothers volunteered compared with 28 per cent of women without children (ABS 2002). Since women's volunteering experiences are strongly tied to family commitments (Hayward-Brown et al. 2003 p. 27), any decline in the number of women having children is likely to impact on their volunteering rates (Zappala 2000 p. 2). This presents a twofold challenge for non-profit organisations wanting to attract more volunteers. One task is to develop effective paths to volunteering for women and men without children. The other is to develop strategies for attracting men and women whose present volunteering is connected with their children, for example, at the children's schools or with their sporting teams, to volunteer for not-for-profit organisations in the future.

Recent research on women and volunteering in New South Wales reveals that pathways to volunteering for women tend to be quite specific and local. Only a small number of women indicated that they became involved in volunteer work through broad appeals campaigns (Hayward-Brown et al. 2003 p. 5). ABS material indicates that most people become involved in volunteering through informal networks; 32 per cent volunteered because they were asked, 29 per cent knew someone already involved while 22 per cent were already involved in the organisation (ABS 2002b). Study by Hayward-Brown et al. (2003 p. 5) evidences the importance of informal networks for attracting volunteers, suggesting that locally targeted and focused strategies are more likely to be successful than generic mass campaigns. Thus not-for-profits could consider establishing, or further developing, links with local community, sport and youth organisations in events, fundraising and other activities. This would have the added benefit, as is also noted further below, of exposing not only parents, but also youth and children, who may be viewed as potential volunteers for the more distant future, to the organisation.

Changing household structures: more people home alone.

There has been a steady increase in the number of lone-person households in Australia. In 1976 lone-person households made up 15.7 per cent of all Australian households, compared with 25.1 per cent of households in 2001 (ABS 1999). While lower marriage rates and an increasing divorce rate have led to more people living alone, the most significant contributing factor is the ageing of the population (ABS 1999). Widowed people, especially older women,

were the demographic slice most likely to live alone. The next mostly likely to constitute lone-person households were divorced or separated people (ABS 1999). These people may find their social networks and related levels of social capital diminished. Previously partnered people living alone might be harder to reach yet may well have both more to offer, and more to gain, from volunteering. The health, well-being and social capital benefits associated with volunteering could be incorporated into recruitment strategy, bearing in mind that people's age and reasons for living alone should also influence the campaign and type of volunteering experience offered.

Education and volunteering

The level of formal education is the strongest predictor of involvement in voluntary groups (Hughes et al. 2002 p. 65). School retention rates have increased since 1989, although they peaked in 1992 during the recession and have declined slightly since then (ABS 2000). However there has been a marked increase in the number of 15-24 year olds participating in higher education courses, from 10.8 per cent in 1989 to 17.6 per cent in 1999. This participation rate is indicated by the proportion of people with a Bachelor degree or higher. This figure almost doubled from 7.9 per cent in 1989 to 15.4 per cent in 1999 (ABS 2000). The trend towards higher levels of education is likely to positively impact on volunteering and is brimming with potential for not-for-profit organisations (Zappala 2000 p 2). ABS analysis reveals that professionals have the highest volunteer participation rate of 46 per cent. This supports Hughes and Black's (2002) argument of a positive correlation between the level of formal education and involvement in a voluntary group. Therefore another reason for not-for-profits to establish strong awareness with youth, school and junior sport groups is that youth, who are increasingly going to be highly educated youth, are likely future volunteers.

Countervailing trends?

Although a more highly educated society appears encouraging for non-profits there are situational aspects that could offset some of the positive implications. More undergraduate university students are now working part-time during their degree studies, this suggests they have less time to volunteer. A 2000 Report commissioned by the Australian Vice Chancellor's Committee found that eight out of ten undergraduate students worked during semester. In addition the overall level of Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS) debt is 9 billion, double the 1999 level.⁸ It is estimated that the total student HECS debt will rise to \$11.5 billion by 2005-06, as each student graduates with a HECS debt between \$11,000 and \$30,000 (RMIT 2003). On average men do not repay their HECS debt until they are in their 40s while it takes women until their 60s to repay their student debt (RMIT 2003). Evans and Saxton (2003), focussing mainly on the United Kingdom, argue that financial pressures associated with higher levels of student debt may have negative impacts on the number of people who are both willing and able to volunteer. In Australia students have noted potential deleterious effects of university reforms, including funding cuts, on levels of student volunteering (Foster-Thorpe 2003).

There are significant gender and related fertility dimensions to increasing levels of educational attainment in Australia which could affect the not-for-profit sector. In 1989 women constituted 49 per cent of higher education students aged 20-24 and 47 per cent of those aged 25-44. By 1999, these proportions had increased to 52 per cent and 55 per cent respectively (ABS 2000). The growing number of women attending tertiary education accompanies increasing numbers of women in the labour market. There is a positive correlation between higher female levels of education and childlessness. The highest proportion of childless women was among those with a bachelor's or higher degree, at 20 per cent. This compares with women who have no post-school qualifications having the lowest level of childlessness at 9 per cent (ABS 2002a). Therefore the positive effects higher levels of education have, and may continue to have on volunteering, could be lessened by the lower fertility rates of women with Bachelor level or higher qualifications. While in the past female volunteering has been strongly linked with family commitments not-for-profit organisations should not assume childless women are

not interested in volunteering. In this context the challenge noted earlier re-presents; organisations need to develop effective pathways to, and of, volunteering for those women and men without offspring.

Women have long been stalwarts of voluntary activity. However increases in female labour force participation rates may reduce the time women have to volunteer. As increasing numbers of women struggle to manage conflicting exigencies of work, home and family life a pattern of reduced voluntary work hours among women in their middle years has emerged (Wesley Mission 2003; Wilkinson and Bittman 2002 p. 42). Perhaps the best way to involve 'time poor' employed mothers and fathers is through employee volunteer programs which, in addition to other strengths, simply make volunteering opportunities far more easily accessible to employees (Zappala 2003b p.11). However Wilkinson and Bittman (2000 p. 18) argue the overall effect of working mothers having less time to volunteer will be relatively small due to substantial rises in volunteering related to the ageing of the Australian population.

Volunteering and Young People

While there has been a major focus on the potential increase in volunteering as baby boomers move into retirement, the roles for younger people in the not-for-profit sector should also be acknowledged. The ABS found a volunteer rate of just under 30 per cent for people aged between 18-24 years (ABS 2002b). Young people further contribute through a number of informal and non-traditional ways (Soupourmas and Ironmonger 2002; Wesley Mission 2003d); thus it may be that the figure for a broader volunteer rate for young people is above that recorded by ABS.

Increases in education levels will have the most direct effects on younger people. Given the positive correlation between education and volunteering this should assist the not-for-profit sector. The social capital generated by volunteering may help build, or further, positive social networks between young people and other parts of the community. Community interconnectedness and social networks have the potential to reduce the incidence of youth suicide, which is high in Australia, especially among young males (Wesley Mission 2003b). Youth volunteering could be a useful tool to improve young people's sense of empowerment, offering capacity to contribute to both their wellbeing and the wellbeing of their communities. Wilkinson and Bittman (2002) argue persuasively that there is more to volunteering 'than a sense of delivering and receiving fair treatment from strangers' and that through volunteering 'volunteers are developing new ways to relate to strangers' (Bittman and Wilkinson 2002b p. 9). Their work thoughtfully recognises volunteering as an activity that is part of, adds to, and broadens, individuals' lived experiences of democracy. Eva Cox has noted the value of belonging to voluntary organisations for fostering social capital and thus helping build and maintain, to use her term, 'A Truly Civil Society' (Cox 1995).

Increased awareness of the preferences of dot.coms, that is generation Y, those born 1976-1991 and generation Z, those born 1991-2006 should assist not-for-profits in attracting their contributions. Over the past decade several studies have centred on young people and volunteering. It is possible that the social, communal aspects of volunteering, communicated effectively, will appeal to younger, more 'tribal' generations such as the 'dot.coms' and 'Z's'. Some analysts have noted the key criteria of new skill development and interesting work for attracting and retaining these cohorts (Vault 2000).

The challenge for communities and not-for-profit organisations is to create meaningful, interesting volunteering opportunities and new domains of action where young people can contribute and develop their unique skills (Soupourmas and Ironmonger 2002; Volunteering SA 2001; Wesley Mission 2003b). Results from research in the United Kingdom suggests that the acronym 'Flexivol' is a useful term encapsulating desirable criteria for young volunteers; it stands for flexibility, legitimacy, ease of access, experience, incentives, variety, organisation and laughs (Institute for Volunteering Research 1997). Recent Australian work suggests that youth will respond positively to volunteering that offers opportunities for growth and development (Volunteering South Australia Inc 2004). A related area where younger people may become more connected with social enterprises is in work experience programs and 'internships' which often form part of secondary or tertiary studies. Further consideration of these programs so as

to target younger volunteers may help not-for-profits build current and future volunteering bases.

Changing experiences of volunteering

A challenge of definition?

The Australian Bureau of Statistics has defined a volunteer as

Someone who willingly gives unpaid help, in the form of time, service or skills, through an organisation or group (ABS 2002b).

This definition ignores the vast amount of informal volunteer work that occurs 'outside the square' particularly within indigenous and culturally and linguistically diverse communities (Kerr et al. 2003 p. 26). While people born in non-English speaking countries have a lower measured volunteer rate, 9 per cent, compared to Australian born people, 21 per cent, or English born, 20 per cent (Wesley Mission 2003c), this reflects the way volunteering is defined and measured. For example Kerr noted that many Aboriginal people said they did not volunteer but 'would always help each other when needed' (Kerr et al. 2003 p 28).

Although such activity may fall outside parameters defined in formal measures of volunteering, evidence indicates huge amounts of informal volunteering in indigenous communities. The Western concept of volunteering which implies some sense of choice and fulfilment may be inappropriate for many indigenous people, who feel if they do not help their people may experience further disadvantage (Kerr et al. 2003 p 27). Similarly Australians from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds may also volunteer in ways obscured by the focus and measurement of volunteering through formal organisation. However there are strong motivations within both indigenous and culturally and linguistically diverse communities to volunteer both outside and within their own communities (Kerr et al. 2003 p 26). As Australia's population becomes more diverse, and as the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders rises, not-for-profits will need to carefully consider how to attract those groups whose volunteering is significant in their community, but not presently well-captured by 'official' statistical definitions and volunteering organisations. Many organisations and particular groups may need to consider extending their ways of working to encompass what Putnam has called 'bridging social capital' (Putnam 2000 pp.22-24; Wilkinson and Bittman 2002b p.19). This could include more partnerships or collaborations in order to offer greater benefits to more people both within, and across, communities.

Why volunteer – the third element?

Cultural mores and backgrounds are key influences in the proclivity of some groups to volunteer, while for others individual expectations and goals are of greater salience. The Western Australian study noted that while in the future baby boomers will have both time and a willingness to volunteer, their voluntary activities will be significantly shaped by their expectations and goals. Many boomers emphasise meaningful, interesting and challenging volunteering opportunities, as they hope to remain productive members of society and continue personal growth (WADPC 2001; Heartbeat 2001 p. 5). Although the baby boomers' sense of reciprocity is believed weaker than that of their parents' generation, the desire to give something back to the community remains a strong motivation for volunteering (Heartbeat 2001 p.17). The vast majority of volunteers and potential volunteers within the boomer generation require a 'third element' or sense of personal fulfilment to consolidate their interest in the volunteering experience (Heartbeat 2001 p. 30). Although personal fulfilment means different things to different people, non-profit organisations may need to be more explicit in canvassing how and why volunteers will find the experience enriching (Heartbeat 2001 p. 31). While most promotional material for volunteering attempts to appeal to people's civic duty, recruitment strategies highlighting the personally fulfilling nature of volunteering may require

development if non-profit organisations want to 'sell' the volunteer experience to baby boomers (WAPDC 2001 p. 27).

The desire for fulfilling and challenging volunteering opportunities is bound up with the boomers' own attitudes towards ageing and retirement. Retirement is being re-conceptualised as a period of 'winding down' rather than 'winding out' (WADPC 2001 p.26; Heartbeat 2001 p.15). Baby boomers who are sensitive about the ageing process would rather think of age as a 'state of mind' as opposed to a 'particular chronological age'. This signals that they will be less prepared to volunteer for organisations offering what they perceive to be traditional or 'boring' activities such as stuffing envelopes (WADPC 2001 p. 25). Therefore not-for-profits wanting to market their volunteering experiences to baby boomers will have to escape the image of being 'tired, boring and uninteresting', by adopting a more youthful message, along with a range of challenging and creative volunteering opportunities (WADPC 2001 p. 26). Many organisations have grown accustomed to volunteers fitting in with anything required of them; a new challenge for non-profits is to effectively tap this potential source of volunteers by offering exciting and appropriate volunteering opportunities (WADPC 2001 p. 22; Heartbeat 2001 p.5).

The new volunteering experience?

In many ways the baby boomers' desire for challenging and interesting volunteering experiences appears to complement current shifts within the not-for-profit sector away from a 'charity' model towards a social enterprise model (Zappala et.al 2001 p. 3). As the baby boomers redefine what ageing and retirement means to their generation, the not-for-profit sector is also in transition. One facet of this transition is increased emphasis on creating diverse and flexible volunteering opportunities. These are required to suit both the changing character of welfare provision in Australia and the changing characteristics of volunteers.

The social enterprise model increasingly adopted by non-profit organisations aims to bring about societal change through an 'entrepreneurial strategy' which includes developing new ventures, policies and skills to address social problems such as disadvantage and poverty (Simons 2000 p.1). The shift towards a 'social enterprise model' encompasses the challenge to 'harness and professionalise' volunteer workers in an effort to 'align volunteers more strategically' with newer, more entrepreneurial approaches (Simons 2001 p.3; Zappala et.al 2001 p.1). There is a drive to attract highly skilled and qualified workers who may not want an ongoing or regular volunteer experience but rather have 'bundles of time' to devote to diverse, project-based volunteering activities (Zappala et.al 2001 p. 6). These characteristics match the needs of the 'baby boomer generation' who, although approaching retirement, may not exit the labour market completely. They are much more highly educated and skilled than their parents' generation, and will seek to engage in travel and other personally fulfilling activities that may prevent them from committing to a regular, ongoing volunteer position (WADPC 2001, p. 25; Heartbeat 2001 p.16). Evans and Saxton (2003 p.12) have noted that many of the changes that not-for-profit organisations should make to attract volunteers are identical for young and older age groups. Many younger and older people share a desire for enriching, but flexible, volunteering opportunities reflecting their higher education levels and busy lifestyles (Evans and Saxton 2003 p.12).

The growth of 'social enterprises' is reflected in community-business partnerships, in which the corporate partner's role has evolved from simple financial philanthropy to contributing human capital resources, most commonly through employee participation (Zappala 2003b p. 7).⁹ Employee volunteering programs are becoming more common, particularly in the United States. Not-for-profit organisations wishing to target younger and older people could investigate ways to develop a program as a way of attracting the highly skilled, but traditionally time-poor volunteer (Zappala et.al 2001 p. 6). Offering baby boomers the chance to volunteer through a work-based employee volunteer program allows them to experience volunteering for a non-profit organisation while still considering their post-employment future.¹⁰ This could prove a

useful way for not-for-profit organisations to target and possibly retain baby boomer volunteers in retirement; work by Zappala (2003) offers some support for the proposition that those who participate in employee volunteer programs may be more likely to volunteer in the future.

Volunteering and social capital

Despite debate over definitions of social capital and its benefits, it has become the dominant framework for interpreting volunteering within Australia (Zappala et.al 2001 p. 2; Wilkinson et.al 2002 p. 33). Of particular relevance to the not-for-profit sector are questions of how social capital is created and the extent to which large public-serving not-for-profits who employ paid staff as well as volunteers are capable of generating social capital (Zappala et.al 2001 p. 2). Social capital is an interactive phenomenon, which facilitates coordination and cooperation between individuals and groups and helps establish trust, reciprocity and social networks (Wesley Mission 2003a). Volunteering has the potential to foster social capital in at least two complementary ways. It provides opportunities for 'active citizenship and social participation' (Wesley Mission 2003a). Also it may prevent, or lessen, social isolation and exclusion in volunteers and the people with whom they interact.

People who have withdrawn from the labour market either by choice through retirement or involuntarily through unemployment are at increased risk of social exclusion. Paid employment is strongly and positively related to social capital. In Australia participation in the labour market has been linked to heightened levels of trust and social networks (Stone 2000). The ties and networks engendered by higher levels of social capital have multiplier effects that can improve health, well-being and even help mitigate socioeconomic disadvantage (Putman 2000 p. 326). Therefore it is important for those no longer in formal employment to maintain, or form new, social networks. One way of preventing social isolation is through volunteering. Volunteers are then able to assist others and draw them into networks of social support and interaction. Although it would involve significant coordination, there are potentials to link 'at risk' groups through volunteering, such as linking older people and the unemployed in mutually beneficial relationships. The Wesley Mission for example, believes that volunteering, by fostering social capital and encouraging linkages across generations, will assist Australia to navigate necessary social and demographic transitions into the next century (Wesley Mission 2003a p. 3).

There is strong evidence to suggest that the 'benefits' of volunteering are reciprocal. This means that social capital generated through volunteering benefits not only those receiving assistance but also the volunteers themselves (Onyx and Warburton. 2003 p. 65). While it is not possible to identify a 'causal' relationship between health and volunteering there is a strong positive correlation between the two among older volunteers. Older people who had high levels of social connectedness and who participated in social activities such as volunteering reduced their risk of institutionalisation and had higher life expectancy, and generally better functional health and well-being (Onyx and Warburton. 2003 p. 67). Respondents with the 'greatest degree of disadvantage' gained the greatest sense of satisfaction out of volunteering, while the 'strongest effects' on health correspond with volunteering in formal organisations with a specific service orientation such as not-for-profits involved in welfare provision (Onyx and Warburton. 2003 pp. 66-68; Merkes 2003 p. 8). Older volunteers generally have more time to commit to volunteering and are more likely to volunteer for community or welfare organisations than other age groups; these patterns are particularly encouraging for community and welfare not-for-profits looking to recruit volunteers (Onyx and Warburton. 2003 p. 65). Thus not-for-profit organisations could consider highlighting the positive effects volunteering has on health and wellbeing in recruitment strategies directed towards attracting older or retired volunteers.

Implications: change and volunteering

Greater diversity

The aspects of volunteering discussed above by no means toll a death knell for volunteering. Volunteering in Australia is a strongly established and longstanding practice, even if insufficiently recognised by historians and others (Oppenheimer 2004). As recent assessments have demonstrated, growth is evident in volunteering and in volunteering potential. Evidence does suggest however, that snapshots of volunteering in the future will be rather different from previous images. The structural changes outlined above may lead to substantive changes in who volunteers, what they will want from volunteering and how they will experience volunteering.

The complementarity between baby boomers' interests in textured, shaped-to-fit volunteering opportunities and the increasing pervasiveness of the social enterprise model for not-for-profits may be one indication that the future is already here. Intersections are evident also between the predicted volunteering requirements of boomers, and those of youth and the more highly educated. Different commonalities, around family, communality and tribalism, cut across younger generations and across culturally diverse backgrounds and indigenous communities. But these denominators do not suggest an emergent, homogenous pattern of volunteering replacing current practice. Rather, it may be that the only homogeneity of future volunteering is in the very diversity that eventuates.

Redefining volunteering

As society changes so do practices, people and policy. Language also adjusts, albeit sometimes in a belated fashion. As the future emerges it may be that the language of definitions, once useful, will also require change. The adequacy of the current ABS definition of a volunteer incorporating stipulation of 'organisation or group' is thrown into question when one considers, for example, the giving of 'time, service or skills' in many indigenous communities. More useful and accurate are differentiations offered by Ironmonger in his work on estimating the value of volunteering. Retaining the elements of 'time, service and skills' featured by ABS Ironmonger includes those 'willingly given', either *formally or informally*, [emphasis added] in his definition of volunteering (Ironmonger 2002). Volunteering, as captured by Ironmonger, is either:

'formally and indirectly through an organisation or group (Organised Volunteering) or informally and directly within the personal networks of family, friends, neighbours and acquaintances (Unorganised Volunteering)' (Ironmonger 2002).

Ironmonger's work may in itself also be another signpost of the future, as he uses the terms above in work prepared for the Government of South Australia on the economic value of volunteering in that state. This report, drawing on his previous work with Soupouras for the Victorian Department of Human Services (Soupourmas and Ironmonger 2002), and that by Mayer (Mayer 2003) also for the Government of South Australia demonstrate recent state interest in volunteering.

Increasing state interest

The exponential growth of interest in volunteering in the 1990s is noted by Oppenheimer (2004) who also features the term 'a moving frontier' to describe the relationship between voluntary action and government in Australia. This 'frontier' may be strengthening and consolidating if the flurry of recent state interest is indicative (see for example: Ironmonger 2002, Mayer 2003, Soupourmas and Ironmonger 2002, WADPC 2001, Zappala 2003a). Mayer's study on the wider economic value of social capital and volunteering in South Australia presents persuasive reasons why state interest in volunteering has increased and may further do so. He makes a strong case arguing the large increases in social and economic value that are likely to flow from 'even modest increases in social capital' (Mayer 2003 p.14). Mayer highlights potentially higher levels of economic growth, reduced mortality and reduced crime levels as key areas able to be influenced by increased social capital. Highlighting volunteering,

Mayer points to the usefulness of social policy that seeks to further trust and civic cooperation and the key role and cost-effectiveness of volunteering in fostering social capital. State interest in volunteering may also be refracted through the development of closer and stronger relationships with not-for-profits, particularly around social welfare and communities, as the sector assumes expanded roles in these areas.

Conclusion: changes, volunteering and the not-for-profit sector in Australia

'Predicting the future is a risky but necessary enterprise' wrote Wilkinson and Bittman in their paper on volunteering and democracy (2002 p. 17). Sketching future volunteering with emphasis on supply side issues, this paper's endeavour, is similarly risky but similarly required. In Australia much responsibility for welfare and social inclusion is increasingly devolved to, and accepted by not-for-profits. Ideally this responsibility should be accompanied by organisational compunction to most effectively meet goals and fulfill their visions. To do this not-for-profits should be cognisant of changes and of possible future trends in volunteering, including those considered above. For as Evans and Saxton (2003 p. 14) correctly observe, 'changes come without deadlines, without fanfare and without (much) publicity'. To predict futures may be risky but to ignore them could be even riskier. Increased awareness may benefit not-for-profits as they strive for maximum achievement and optimal volunteer engagement in the twenty first century.

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¹ For comparability purposes those whose only voluntary work was associated with the Sydney 2000 Olympic and Paralympic Games were excluded from calculations in the survey of voluntary work and therefore did not influence changed levels in the volunteering rate (ABS 2002b). It has been suggested that volunteering opportunities provided by the Olympics would result in a legacy of more volunteers including more experienced volunteers (ABS 2002b). While others have noted that the 'strong and positive culture of volunteering in Australia' contributed to the success of the Sydney games (Wesley Mission 2003e). The ABS survey did not include those who selected voluntary work, rather than study or work under 'mutual obligation' welfare arrangements, in the survey. The issue of whether voluntary work undertaken for fulfilment of mutual obligation requirements should be considered volunteering is beyond the scope of this paper however it is usefully discussed by Frow (2001) and Warburton & McDonald (2002).

² More recent information on volunteering should flow from 'Giving Australia: Research on Philanthropy in Australia', which stems from an initiative of the Prime Minister's Community Business Partnership. The research agenda includes consideration of levels of giving by Australian individuals, families and businesses and their attitudes to giving; it will also highlight aspects of volunteering. A final report is expected by October 2005 (FaCS Research News 2004; Giving Australia: Research on Philanthropy in Australia 2004).

³ According to Philanthropy Australia approximately 380,000 nonprofit organisations are incorporated in some form or another, and approximately 35,000 employ staff. There are close to 20,000 organisations with Deductible Gift Recipient status in Australia, most of these being nonprofit organisations (Philanthropy Australia 2003).

⁴ See for example, Bernard Salt's descriptions (Salt 2001a).

⁵ Volunteer recruitment and retention is also influenced by organisational specific factors. Some organisations such as VIEW Clubs of Australia welcome members of all ages whereas others directly target specific life stages; see for example, the Older Women's Network (Australia) Inc. (Seniors Associations and Sites n.d.; The Smith Family 2004).

⁶ The particular attractions and characteristics of the volunteer organisation will also relate to propensities for multiple volunteering. For example in one survey of members of the not for profit VIEW clubs of Australia 77% of respondents indicated they also performed unpaid work for another community based organisation (Muir 2003).

⁷ For 2004-05 social security and welfare will comprise 43 per cent of Commonwealth expenditure. This is by far the largest allocation followed by health - 18 per cent, defence - 8 per cent and education - 7 per cent (ALGA 2004-05 Federal Budget analysis 2004). Aged Care was one of 8 areas listed in the Budget Papers under significant new expenditure measures 2004-05 to 2007-2008 (2004-05 Budget Overview).

⁸ Unless otherwise stated all dollar figures are in Australian dollars.

⁹ The notion of social enterprise has been used to describe a variety of institutions and organisations world wide, from mutuals and co-operatives, to charities and not for profit organisations to big business with a social conscience (*The Economist* 2002, p.1; OECD 1999, PP.8-11). A particularly useful definition is the one utilised by the Social Enterprise Unit of the Department of Trade and Industry in the United Kingdom: 'Social enterprises are businesses with primarily

social objectives whose surpluses are principally reinvested for that purpose in the business or in the community, rather than being driven by the need to maximise profit for shareholders and owners'. (Social Enterprise Unit, Department of Trade and Industry, 2003).

¹⁰ See Ciara Smyth 2003, 'Next Steps: a report on the Westpac/The Smith Family Pilot' The Smith Family, Sydney for one example of volunteering organised collaboratively by an employer and a not-for-profit organisation.