



the **centre** for **volunteering**
igniting community spirit

Working 'till 100 – No Room for Volunteering?

Association of Gerontology
9 September 2005



What I'll talk about

- Motivation of older people for Volunteering
- Who volunteers now
- Changing attitudes of older people about volunteering
- A Typology of Older Volunteers
- Barriers to older people volunteering
- Increasing engagement and participation of older people
- Impact on Future Volunteering Patterns

Volunteering is the single institution that encapsulates the values of Australians: caring and sharing, lending a helping hand – indeed mateship



Motivation for Volunteering

Existing older people

- Civic Duty
- Part of moral code
- Desire to see a resurgence of community spirit
- Drilled as children to view giving to the community as a pleasure rather than obligation
- Strong sense of responsibility
- Reciprocity

Baby Boomers

- Guilt of the 'me generation' – giving back to the community
- Opportunity to for new experiences, challenges and stimulation
- Desire to see a resurgence of community spirit
- Renewed sense of purpose in retirement

Who volunteers now

- Elderly people do volunteer and often with a greater time commitment
- Working people tend to volunteer most
- There is an increase in the number of young people volunteering
- Many people volunteer in activities in which their children/family are involved

Changing attitudes about volunteering

Late 20th Century*

- Exploitation – jobs being done by someone who should be paid
- Allowing gov't/organisations to shirk responsibility
- Volunteers are busy-bodies or middle class do-gooders
- Volunteering is something done by unemployed people who cannot get paid work

O
l
y
m
p
i
c

G
a
m
e
s

Recent Baby Boomers*

- Image of typical volunteer
 - Friendly
 - Caring
 - Self-assured
 - Big-hearted
 - Down to Earth
 - Sparkle and Spring
 - Busy
 - Doers; not do-gooders
- NOT driven by government
- Intensely satisfying experience

* NSW Committee on Ageing. A Two Way Street: Older People and Volunteering 1999

* Premier's Forum on Ageing. Research into Older People and Volunteering 2001

A Typology of Older Volunteers

- Nurturers
 - Nearly all women
 - Many CALD
 - Key motivation is emotional connection and self-worth
 - More willing to do whatever tasks are necessary
 - Use exiting skills
- Adventurers
 - More women than men
 - Doing things they haven't done before
 - Key motivation is personal growth
 - Interested in developing their interests and passions into skills
 - Not interested in menial tasks – need challenge

A typology of older volunteers (cont'd)

- Socialisers
 - Either men or women
 - Key motivation is a sense of belonging
 - Volunteering is about social interaction and the group experience
 - If it's not fun they will not continue
- Workers
 - Mostly men
 - Using existing skills in a new setting
 - Key motivation is to gain or maintain self-worth
 - Attain status in by doing tasks that no-one else can do
 - The opportunity to have some control over their volunteering experience is important

Barriers to Volunteering

Personal

- Increasingly busy and complex lives
- Continuing to work
- Caring responsibilities
- Poor health
- All contributes to less time to devote to volunteering

Contextual

- Volunteering as a positive choice offering opportunities for fulfilment
- Not just giving back to the community
- Definitely not a top-down morality-based obligation
- Apathy – you don't know how good it can feel until you try it

Barriers to Volunteering

Systemic

- How to find something that 'grabs'
- Connection between interest and passion and volunteering is missing
- Not sure about how to find the volunteering role to match interests and passion

Organisational

- Not feeling they are making a difference
- Feeling they are being taken for granted
- Expectations not made clear
- Too much red tape
- Internal politics
- Being out of pocket
- Lack of flexibility
- Fear of being sued

Increasing engagement and participation

- Understand motivation and design volunteering roles to meet those needs
 - Flexibility
 - Using or developing skills?
 - Opportunities for one-off or project involvement
 - Opportunities for volunteering away from home/travelling
- Deal with organisational barriers
- Make volunteer referral centre network better known

Impact on Future Volunteering Patterns

- Fewer older people will be volunteering purely for reasons of civic duty
- Volunteering experience must provide fulfilment at a number of levels – roles must be tailored to suit
- ‘Adventurers’ are a key growth segment
- Older volunteers will be time-poor but there will be many more of them
- New approach to volunteering
 - Recruitment to emphasise how volunteering can be personally fulfilling and be targeted to key segments
 - Appropriate systems and structures
 - Recognition of the volunteer contribution