

# SUPPORTIVE VOLUNTEERING FORUM



October 26, 2007, Geelong, Victoria

## CONTENTS

Summary .....	2
Background.....	2
Who was involved .....	3
Funding.....	4
What happened.....	4
Partnerships formed.....	5
Where to from here .....	5
Comments from participants.....	6
Conclusion .....	6
Appendix 1.....	8
Appendix 2.....	15



## SUMMARY

The main aim of the **Supportive Volunteering Forum** was to explore ways in which organisations can support people with disabilities to engage in everyday life activities such as volunteering.

Page | 2

The Partnerships, Recognising, Advocating, Including, Supporting and Education volunteers (PRAISE) Volunteer Supports Grants project in conjunction with the Geelong Volunteer Resource Centre (GVRC), invited Janette Spencer, Project Manager of Volunteering Western Australia's Enhancing Access Project to share information about their flagship program 'take 2'. The forum was also designed to provide opportunity for interested agencies and individuals to share learning, workshop issues and determine direction of a potential project in the Geelong Region.

## BACKGROUND

One of the outcomes of the PRAISE Volunteers project is to increase interaction and inclusion of people with disabilities into volunteering in the Geelong Region. As part of the PRAISE project research was undertaken into existing supported schemes specifically designed to assist people with disabilities into volunteer-involving organisations, looking at various existing models with the intention of learning from these models and determining a direction for a potential project in Geelong. Due to the diverse range of organisations in the Geelong region that may wish to be involved in such a project along with the need to learn from existing programs in Victoria, it was decided that a forum was required to share information about issues and to develop an action plan for a future direction of a potential project.

The PRAISE project in conjunction with the GVRC, invited Janette Spencer, Project Manager of Volunteering Western Australia's Enhancing Access Project to share information about their flagship program 'take 2'. The forum would also be an opportunity to showcase an existing project from interstate and allow participants the chance to share in the learning from this project. Invitations were

sent to local disability advocacy groups, disability agencies and disability resource and support agencies. Volunteer Resource Centre's throughout Victoria were invited along with volunteer peak body organisations.

## WHO WAS INVOLVED

Page | 3

34 people attended the forum and the audience was made up of a wide range of interested groups and individuals that came from regional, rural and metropolitan areas across Victoria. Representation from the disability support sector, advocacy and advisory groups were present and included Encompass, Focus and PAST. Volunteer-involving organisations were represented by Red Cross, Karingal, Bethany, Barwon Health, Pathways, Epilepsy Foundation, St Laurence and Better Hearing. Volunteer Agencies were represented by Knox Community Volunteers and Knox Council, Warrnambool Community Connections and the South West Volunteer Initiative, Frankston Community Support and Information Centre. Local government was represented by COGG Rural Access, State Government was represented by Department of Planning and Community Development and the Department of Human Services. A representative from Volunteering Australia, the peak body for volunteering in Australia, also attended. Representatives from Deakin University's School of Health and Social Development were unable to attend on the day but expressed interest in a potential project.



Janette Spencer from Volunteering WA's Enhancing Access Project addressing the Forum

## FUNDING

To assist with the costs of running the Forum requests for funding were made to DPCD, Encompass, DHS and COGG. COGG supplied venue and catering requirements. DPCD contributed \$200, Encompass also contributed \$200 and DHS contributed \$600.

## WHAT HAPPENED

Gail Rodgers, GVRC's Manager, opened the forum with a welcome to all attendees followed by a background on the development of the Supportive Volunteering Forum. Alison Duff, Project Officer for PRAISE Volunteers, gave a brief explanation about the PRAISE Volunteer's project and followed up with a summary of issues that may face people with disabilities attempting to enter the volunteer workforce. Janette Spencer then delivered a powerpoint presentation on the development, implementation and evaluation of the Enhancing Access Project and 'take 2'. Janette then lead a workshop activity asking the audience to write down issues that affected them either personally or professionally in relation to people with disabilities volunteering.

The nominated issues were then categorised into five main areas:

- Community Awareness and acceptance of roles that people can play
- Organisational culture – is it supportive of inclusive volunteering
- Personal lack of confidence and knowledge of skills
- Financial cost of volunteering (transport, reimbursement, training)
- Who is responsible? How can we make change to ensure success?

The five areas were then posted on butcher's paper around the room. Attendees were then asked to contribute suggested solutions to these issues. Refer to Appendix 1.

A half hour lunch break was allocated for networking and reflecting. After lunch attendees were given a 'Call to Action' template to be filled out. This process was designed to give attendees that opportunity to apply Forum learning to their own workplace.

Janette distributed resources to attendees that could be used for groups or organisations wishing to set up similar projects. A 'take 2' resource manual was distributed to all attendees in CD format. The CD included Information and Promotional Materials, Support Volunteer Handbook, Organisation Handbook, Volunteer Handbook, Coordinator Guidelines, Volunteer Management Policies, Disability Awareness Training, Disability Awareness Information and Safety Handbook.

An impromptu contribution was made by Helen Bayne from South West Sustaining Volunteering Initiative and by Helen Tinning from Pathways. Helen Bayne spoke briefly about the Supportive Volunteering Pathways Pilot that is being developed in the South West region and expressed her excitement in relation to not only her learning's from the day but her appreciation of the resources that were distributed. Helen also mentioned that these resources would be of enormous assistance to their pilot and would cut the work load of the Pilot's working party. Helen Tinning spoke about the MATES project that aims to match volunteers with people with mental health issues for friendship and social outings and the successful outcomes to date for this project.

#### **PARTNERSHIPS FORMED**

On closing the Forum, Gail Rodgers asked the audience to reflect on the day's proceedings and asked for organisations to express interest in forming a working party to explore the potential for a future project in the Geelong area. Attendees that expressed interest in becoming involved in the working party included: GVRC, DPCD, DHS, Nelson Park School, LeisureNetworks, Encompass, Volunteering Australia, Pathways, COGG, Stroke Support, Focus and Red Cross.

#### **WHERE TO FROM HERE**

A working party consisting of interested parties will meet in November 2007 to discuss potential project ideas.

## COMMENTS FROM PARTICIPANTS

An evaluation sheet (Appendix 2) was handed out to attendees and responses were received from 20 attendees. Responses were overwhelmingly positive from groups that were interested in applying the learning to new, developing and existing projects.

Page | 6

*"I was very impressed with the forum last Friday, and it is terrific to see such work taking place to improve the access for people with a disability."*

### **Leanne Bruce**

"Count Me In" Project Manager & Advocacy Coordinator

### **Focus Individualised Support Services**

*"I just wanted to thank you all for the wonderful forum last Friday ... please add my contact details to any further networking opportunities/information that may arise as I am already spreading the word about the wonderful things talked about at the forum. Keep up the great work!"*

### **Amanda May**

Metro Access Officer

### **Knox City Council**

## CONCLUSION

The Supportive Volunteering Forum provided a timely and appropriate avenue for interested parties to meet and demonstrate their support and interest in the idea of developing a means by which people with disabilities can participate in volunteering. Five key issues emerged that may impact on people with disabilities participating successfully in volunteering. Participants considered these issues and provided valuable suggestions that will be considered in future undertakings. The Forum then concluded that the GVRC along with the PRAISE Project should lead a working party to scope a Geelong specific project that may attract future funding and develop ways that we can support people with

disabilities to engage in everyday life activities such as volunteering. The first working party meeting has been scheduled for December 11, 2007.

## Contribution from Audience

### SUPPORTIVE VOLUNTEERING FORUM

FRIDAY 26 OCTOBER 2007

Janette Spencer led a workshop activity asking the audience to write down issues that affected them either personally or professionally in relation to people with disabilities volunteering. Information contributed included the following:

#### Barriers

- General awareness and understanding
- Fear of people with disabilities
- How to shift culture within organisations
- People focus on the disability not ability
- Terminology use
- Must link interest/skill appropriately
- Organisations need to expand volunteer roles and opportunities
- Organisations have limited resources to support this initiative
- Need referral skills and training
- Need to change the perception of the value of volunteering
- Sustainability of the project – infrastructure
- Many barriers for people with disability – lack of confidence/anxiety/infrastructure within organisation/fatigue
- Financial resources
- Paid work versus volunteering
- Decision making issues
- Reliance on the support volunteer
- Organisation volunteer policy inadequacies/need to plan for inclusion
- Equal opportunity and discrimination issues
- Transport.

The above barriers were then grouped into five main issues

#### 1. Community Awareness and acceptance of roles that people can play

- 2. Organisational culture – is it supportive of inclusive volunteering**
- 3. Personal lack of confidence and knowledge of skills**
- 4. Financial cost of volunteering (transport, reimbursement, training)**
- 5. Who is responsible? How can we make change to ensure success**

Attendees were then asked to contribute possible solutions to these issues, these contributions have been added as bullet points.

- 1. Community Awareness and acceptance of roles that people can play**

- Education
- Visibility of organization
- Awareness - promoting at all times in literature and Marketing publications
- Visibility of those people supported in the community.
- Government & local government programs offered in schools to start at a young age when children are more accepting of differences.
- Disability awareness training on a regular basis and free
- Promotional campaign material
  - Film
  - Stories
  - Posters
  - Media – Newspapers
  - TV Radio etc
  - Website etc
- Positive media coverage
- Use Gordon and Deakin Students as “partner volunteers”
- Including more people with disabilities in training delivery
- Support material
- Education
- Re empower the person with a disability

- Promoting positive success stories of volunteers with a disability to the wider community through advertising forums, etc, films
- Stories of people's experiences
- Need to develop a sensitive way to identify "impairment/disability" at intake of all programs
- Ensuring a safe workplace for volunteers ( ie no bullying)
- Seeing "Volunteering" as valuable real work
- Positive publicity
- Media coverage
- Goodwill stories
- Education through interaction - seeing is believing
- Video footage of volunteer roles
- Successful volunteering stories
- Forum where organizations can tell others their positive stories of how they have worked with people with disabilities
- Sell the 'image' of volunteering
- Media coverage of people's abilities
- Target Radio/Media for promotion of the project
- State level project with regional implementation
- Scope young ambassadors. Use trained school students for talks
- Community awareness through celebration of and exposure of successful volunteering experiences.

## **2. Organisational culture – is it supportive of inclusive volunteering**

- Identify organizations who have an inclusion policy as part of their strategic plans.
- Sign up organizations who are prepared to be involved
- Make sure knowledge in framework is suitable to the person ie. reading not always an option
- Think outside the disability area focus
- Establish partnerships with local organizations on small projects before starting big ones. Build these relationships.

- COGG to take on lead partnership role with GVRC
- PR – Education
- Sponsoring organization to provide training or (at least) information, presentations and ongoing support to company
- Training provided but in an innovative manner so that everyone participates
- Ensuring a safe workplace for volunteers (ie no bullying)
- Establish a Geelong working group to attract funding
- Networking
- Communication Training
- Supportive forums
- Continued information support, reviewing situation
- Pilot at Nelson Park as part of VCAL – transition to employment & community
- National standards for involving volunteers. Buy in from senior management/boards re importance of volunteering
- Ensuring volunteers are part of decision making processes
- Seeing volunteering as valuable real work
- Training of organisations co-ordinator and staff, hold forums, info sessions
- Understanding the essential role of volunteers as a resource

### **3. Personal lack of confidence and knowledge of skills**

- Trained staff at volunteer centre that will empower people and support them to look at skills they have
- Recognition training opportunities
- Being inclusive
- Responsibility of people with a disability to make a change
- Training on skills recognition
- Identifying strengths
- Abilities looking at what you can do not what you can't

- Showcase success stories
- Access case management /intake to provide training courses for self empowerment
- Communication training, assertiveness training
- Personal planning and matching of volunteers to maximize job satisfaction and ensure success
- Buddy system to support them
- Disability organization to provide training to their clients
- Use of disability agencies to promote concept of volunteering with their clientele
- Vic – DHS support and fund training for people with a disability
- Support recognized state training for Advocacy training and volunteer awareness
- Training re expectations of what would be required of them and types of support provided
- Ongoing support for volunteers
- Provide an ‘entrance’ or ‘introduction’ that is warm and welcoming and sincere
- Consider a referral to Psycho social rehabilitation programs for people with a mental illness to assist them to develop or relearn how to lift their self esteem and confidence. Also provide support workers to assist them to find and maintain volunteer work
- Success stories, films in action, talks, where it has occurred
- Focus on including hearing impaired volunteers

#### **4. Financial cost of volunteering (transport, reimbursement, training)**

- Partnerships between agencies
- Company pays for travel of volunteer
- Select organizations outside of the Disabilities field. Educate Private sector to sign up for volunteers
- Access grant for funding
- Corporate sponsorship for set up costs
- Progress seeking government support to not for profits

- Taxation benefits for volunteers
- Springboard for “Big Day Out” Corporate sector
- Provide schools with training information kit to promote student volunteers
- Approach Government re reimbursement of costs
- Ensure sign up of agencies that agree to re-imburse volunteers and provide incentives
- Enhance existing structures rather than fund what’s already been done
- Federal Government to fund volunteers in receipt of Centrelink payments similar to current scheme of the Educational allowance payable to people in DSF registered at a learning institution
- For each City/Council to put money – relevant to volunteer input
- Parking – Volunteers get free parking.

## **5. Who is responsible? How can we make change to ensure success**

- GVRC to co-ordinate working group to attract funding.
- Marketing expertise brought in so referral information is easily accessible in all forms eg. web podcast.
- Everyone is responsible from government to disabled person to promote skills/abilities and positives
- All agencies community at large creating meetings etc networking
- Steering committee overseen by GVRC
- Each GVN member take on an organization to groom as a partner ie. Centrelink, Disability Agency, welfare agency for volunteers and also placement opportunities
- Build on existing infrastructure. “ Don’t reinvent the wheel” use GVRC
- Lead agency
- All disability agencies contacted in the region to get their input
- State level project with regional implementation
- Community – Local Governments –Governments-
- All agencies utilizing volunteers to be contacted in the region to get their input

- Volunteering Australia commit to backing an accredited training course (modules) This could be used by every Volunteer. Resource Centre Australia wide and their staff
- Service 1 Admin fee on a sliding scale. Self sustaining

**Evaluation Form - Results**

**SUPPORTIVE VOLUNTEERING FORUM**

**FRIDAY 26 OCTOBER 2007**

*34 attendees were given evaluation forms*

*20 evaluation forms were submitted at the end of Forum*

**1 Organization**

**How would you rate the way in which the session was organized?**

Please give rating from 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest)

Venue

5 – 70%

4 – 30%

3

2

1

**2 Presenter(s)**

**How did you rate the presenters?**

Please give rating from 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest) Please rate both

**Content**

5 – 70%

4 – 25%

3

2

1

Did Not Answer (DNA) – 5%

### **Presentation**

5 – 70%

4 – 25%

3

2

1

DNA – 5%

### **3 Presentation**

**Did the presenter(s) appear to have a good understanding of the material?**

Please give rating from 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest)

5 – 90%

4 – 10%

3

2

1

**How much opportunity did the presenter give participants to share ideas and experiences?**

Please give rating from 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest)

5 – 90%

4 – 10%

3

2

1

### **4 Session Format**

**Were there any areas not covered which you would like to have included?**

Yes 20%

**Comments**

- How to attract volunteers, funding opportunities available

No – 70%

DNA 10%

**5 Did the session meet your expectations? How might the delivery be improved?**

Yes 90%

**Comments**

- Better than expected – real experience

DNA 10%

**6 What were the most positive aspects of the session?**

**Comments**

- *Networking opportunities (in addition to information presented) with a view to enhancing inclusive volunteer participation*
- *Come away with lots of resources and ideas*
- *Information provided from WA's experience*
- *Learning about 'Take 2' project*
- *Opportunity to network*
- *The commitment to share the knowledge and resources*
- *Processes*
- *Sharing of knowledge*
- *The 'sharing' element and CD. WOW how thoughtful*
- *The commitment to change*
- *Learning form WA's experience*
- *Commitment to partnerships*
- *Resource materials*
- *A very good open and mostly interesting conference*

- *Ideas sharing, commitment, something happening. Finally east using ideas from west instead of overseas*
- *The amount of organisations/groups willing to be involved in a work group*

## **7 Using the Information**

### **Did the session challenge you to adapt your thinking towards people with disabilities becoming involved in volunteering?**

Yes – 60%

#### **Comments**

- *Some good ideas I can use*
- *Our service already exploring this topic – some great ideas*
- *The more I hear of personal stories the more convinced I am of the opportunities out there for PWD to volunteer*
- *From an organisational perspective we are already heavily involved in a similar program*
- *Committed to the concept but good to think beyond the square*
- *Something I have been passionate about for some time*

No – 20%

#### **Comments**

- *Already do it*
- *No, already committed*
- *No, because I have a positive attitude towards all*
- *Keen to do so before*

DNA – 20%

#### **Additional comments**

- *Would have liked to see the DVD and more photos of clients to make presentation a little more interesting*
- *Congratulations and thank you*