



Engaging Young Volunteers

February 2015

WHAT WORKS IN TASMANIA

5 key messages for meaningful volunteer roles and effective leadership, drawn from the Engaging Young People in Tasmania Report:

ON CREATING YOUNG WILLING VOLUNTEERS IN MEANINGFUL ROLES

1. CHALLENGES CAN BE OVERCOME

There are youth-specific challenges for volunteering (young people's transient time commitments and lack of confidence and organisations' cultural resistance to working with young people and the lack of adults' skills in positively working with young people); and Tasmanian-specific challenges for volunteering (poor access to public transport and maintaining momentum for volunteers, given the temperate climate and size and scale of the state).

But these can all be overcome with effective leadership and management.

2. YOUTH VOLUNTEERING MAY BUILD A HABIT FOR LIFE

All the young volunteers in this study felt that they had started a lifelong volunteering path, helping to confirm claims that getting the volunteering habit young may help to nurture a sustainable volunteering culture for the state and Australia.

3. YOUNG PEOPLE WITHOUT BOUNDARIES, BUT WITH REQUIREMENTS

Challenging the myth that young people are not interested in commitment, the young people in this study had no boundaries around what they were prepared to do, given some very practical caveats:

- a) they feel able to contribute (and understand their impact on community outcomes);
- b) it's a positive experience (including being of personal interest, offering personal development, they are supported and are meeting people); and
- c) it's a practical fit for them (including offering flexibility and that they can get to it / do it at home)

4. FOCUS ON COMMUNICATION WITH DIGITAL NATIVES

Given that Gens Y and Z have grown up with digital technologies as a core part of how they learn, communicate and reference the world, having a purposeful and targeted digital communication plan referencing websites and social media is a must for recruiting and retaining young volunteers and is a key area for development for Tasmanian volunteer-involving organisations; potentially an ideal volunteer matching opportunity.

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5. LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT A KEY SELLING POINT

The diversity of personal and vocational learning and development opportunities open to young people through volunteering is a key benefit and selling point for youth volunteering and offers the key skills needed for young people's transition from youth to young adulthood, for active citizenship and employability.

IN TERMS OF EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP

Some of the common key elements within all these successful case study organisations included:

1. SEEING YOUNG PEOPLE AS POSSIBILITY

They all saw young people as possibility, not challenge and had purposefully strategically planned to involve them.

2. LISTENING TO YOUNG PEOPLE

They all listened to young people (mainly in informal ways) to understand their challenges, motivations, role asks and perceptions of the organisations to help them plan and provide effectively.

3. LINKS TO YOUNG PEOPLE'S NETWORKS

They all had healthy links with the networks young people use including schools, universities and colleges, peers, families and youth-focussed services.

4. TARGETING RECRUITMENT AND COMMUNITY COACHING

They targeted their recruitment towards young people, using peer ambassadors as a crucial element and were aware of the key skills needed to motivate and support young people effectively through mistakes and through development to create a comfortable culture for their young volunteers.

5. MEASURING SUCCESS THROUGH ENGAGEMENT

They understood that success was not all about retention, but that engagement and helping a young person get the volunteering bug was a win.