

Inclusive Practice Volunteering

Volunteering and Disability Project 2009/2010



Report
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Volunteering Tasmania has a vision where everyone freely chooses to contribute voluntary time to the community as a natural part of their life and growth.

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Executive Summary

There is a diversity of research that has been done in the area of involving people with disabilities in volunteering. Initial research for this disability project consisted of seeing what was already out there and already being done. The literature has been useful in setting the stage for looking at what are the key gaps. The purpose of this document is discuss and identify the key themes relevant Tasmania's volunteering sector.

Three key themes have been identified around encouraging individuals with a disability within society to volunteer. The themes are:

- Physical accessibility;
- Attitudes and management;
- Support requirements

As part of Volunteering Tasmania's commitment to addressing social inclusion through volunteering, VT is promoting; "Tasmanians of all ages and backgrounds forming diverse and supportive networks where they can develop and express their talents and interests" (Volunteering Tasmania 2008) to contribute to society.

This report is aimed predominately at Volunteer Coordinators/Managers across all sectors of volunteering with the objective of raising awareness around the core issues within the volunteer sector and that collectively we can make a difference. As a sector we can allow all individuals to freely choose to contribute voluntary time to the community as a natural part of their life and growth. This report encourages all organisations to promote diversity at the organisational and community level.

This report promotes best practice within the volunteering sector and encourages all volunteer coordinators/managers to explore these three themes: physical accessibility, attitudes and management and support requirements to ensure an inclusive volunteering environment is promoted.

A series of recommendations are included at the end of this report suggesting ways that Volunteering Tasmania and the volunteering sector can influence these three themes.

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Introduction

Volunteering Tasmania has a vision where everyone freely chooses to contribute voluntary time to the community as a natural part of their life and growth.

Specific objectives of the Volunteering Tasmania Disability Project include:

- Positive recognition of volunteering, its empowering value for individuals and communities, and its role in celebrating difference, enhancing quality of life, and as a vital force for change.
- Ensuring that opportunities in volunteering are easily available for everyone.
- That everyone involved with volunteering is appropriately supported.
- That the principles and ethics of volunteering are adopted and applied throughout Tasmania.

As the state peak body for volunteering, Volunteering Tasmania (VT) has undertaken research and consultation during the second half of 2009 with organisations and individuals. The aim was to consult with two target groups- individuals with disabilities and volunteer involving organisations- to find out about issues relating to the involvement of people with disabilities as volunteers, to identify common barriers to their involvement in volunteering, to capture solutions and suggestions for overcoming those barriers and optimizing the involvement in volunteering of people with a disability.

This report is making recommendations based on the results of the research undertaken. This report provides recommendations based on inclusive practice principles.

VT recognises that there are many types of disabilities. For the purpose of this report when referring to the term disability the following definition will be utilised.

The Tasmanian *Disability Services Act 1992* defines a disability as a person with intellectual, psychiatric, sensory or physical disabilities, as well as individuals with cognitive limitations. It includes people whose disabilities:

- Are permanent or likely to be permanent;
- Result in a substantially reduced capacity of the person for communication, learning or mobility;
- Require continuing support services; and
- May or may not be of a chronic episodic nature.

With this in mind VT aims to produce resources that will support organisations to develop effective volunteer management systems based on the principles of inclusive practice and actively encouraging diversity within the volunteer program, including building an inclusive recruitment strategy for people with a disability and building on the resources for how to find a volunteering role, including website resources available for organisations and individuals to utilise.

This report examines existing literature and research that is already out there and draws on this to inform recommendations for the volunteering sector in the State of Tasmania.

Methodology

The research for this project undertaken in 2009 at the beginning had the aim of looking at breaking down barriers and engaging more diverse people into volunteering. In encouraging an inclusive society we can provide all individuals with the opportunity to be involved in volunteering.

To do this Volunteering Tasmania (VT) undertook six months of consultation and research looking at what is already being done, consulting with individuals and organisations and developing a series of recommendations for the year 2010 and into the future.

In doing this a series of methods were used including:

- Surveys: Two paper and online survey's were developed using a website called 'Survey Monkey', see appendix a. The survey's consisted of ten questions each. One survey was for volunteering organisations and one for individuals with a disability involved in volunteering.
- Workshop: A workshop for organisations was held with the support of the National Disability Coordination Officer Program. Broad overviews of some of the key issues in the sector were explored. Representatives at the workshop were from a variety of sectors within the volunteering field including; education, sport, community welfare, conservation and environment and others.
- Case studies/Interviews: Interviews were conducted with individual volunteers, individual volunteer coordinators and key individuals within the disability and volunteering sectors. A picture about what is current practice in volunteering and the involvement of people with a disability in the sector.

These three different methods were chosen as they provided flexibility, a set framework of questions and opportunities for discussion with the ability to gain qualitative data to support the recommendations.

Limitations of the research included the relatively small sample size and the limited time. For this reason, these findings cannot be generalized to the broader community based on this study alone and can only be used as a guide in implementing the recommendations.

Literature

Contemporary literature on volunteering and disabilities is broad and encompasses a number of areas. The focus of this research project has been limited to the following areas:

- Communicating with people with disabilities
- Involving young people with a disability in volunteering
- Engaging people with disabilities in volunteering
- Opening doors for volunteers with additional support needs
- Overlooking the contribution of people with a disability in the volunteering sector
- Enhancing access
- Disability awareness
- Volunteering Australia's National Standards

Volunteering Tasmania has also examined research undertaken by other State and Territory volunteer peak bodies, informing the recommendations.

Communicating with people with disabilities

Some people feel uncomfortable around people with disabilities. It is not uncommon for people to be unsure of what to do, how to act, what is correct, and what may offend. The Maroondah Council (2000) argues that the best approach to take is to be sensitive, flexible and honest.

The Maroondah Council further suggests that the reason why talking about disabilities can be difficult is because of the terminology that is used and deciding what is and what is not appropriate. It is about being careful not to place negative connotations on what you are trying to say.

The Maroondah Council argues that the most appropriate term to use is 'person with a disability'. Reasoning behind this is because it places the emphasis on the individual and not the disability.

Ultimately, it is important to be respectful, polite, and considerate, offer assistance, communicate effectively and don't hesitate to ask questions. The Maroondah Council suggests, treating all people in the same way you would like to be treated.

Specifically, in relation to supporting a volunteer with a disability it is important to look at the following factors;

- Help the volunteer understand and learn about the organisation
- Describe the formal and informal requirements of the role and encourage other volunteers to make each individual feel welcome
- Be aware and sensitive to each individual's limitations in accordance with the inherent requirements of the role
- If you need to adjust your leadership/supervisory approach, be flexible with this
- Provide suitable encouragement and feedback as you would for any other volunteer, including constructive feedback
- Use language that the individual can understand
- Encourage the individual to look at professional development and training opportunities offered by the organisation's
- Arrange disability awareness training for staff and volunteers

Involving people with a disability in volunteering

Moore and Fishlock (2006; p. 12) argue that people with a disability:

experience exclusion from mainstream opportunities due to environmental, attitudinal and organisational barriers rather than due to the effects of their impairments.

Moore and Fishlock (2006; p. 13) describe inclusive volunteering as "making volunteering accessible for everyone". They suggest that making volunteering more inclusive is important because it is fair and beneficial for your organisation.

By involving a diversity of volunteers, the stereotypes of volunteer work are broken down and the profile of volunteering is improved. Involving previously untapped groups of volunteers can bring new ideas and a breath of fresh air.

Specific benefits to organisations involving people with a disability in volunteering include:

- Additional enthusiasm;
- Access to a wide range of skills and experience;
- A better representation of community demographics within the volunteer program

With respect to the individual volunteer with a disability volunteering can provide an opportunity to:

- To do something worthwhile;
- Demonstrate their capabilities;
- Develop self awareness and confidence;
- Gain work experience;
- Become involved and meet new people;
- Challenge attitudes to disability;
- Have their voice heard;
- Try something new and have fun.

Inclusive volunteering is easiest to achieve if everyone in your organisation has bought into the idea. Inclusive volunteering is part of the wider issue of equal opportunities and diversity within an organisation. Ideally organisations should approach inclusive volunteering as part of an organisation-wide diversity strategy. For an individual member of staff or volunteer trying to develop inclusive volunteering within an organisation, getting buy-in from colleagues is a key to success. Approximately 20% of the working-age population is disabled. If less than 20% of your volunteers are disabled, your organisation should look at setting targets for increasing the numbers of volunteers with a disability (Moore and Fishlock 2006; p. 18).

In developing Volunteer Policies it is important to make sure that there is a statement on equal opportunity and the promotion of diversity. For further information on writing an effective volunteering policy make contact with Volunteering Tasmania.

Other key volunteer management policies to consider in relation to involving a person with a disability are:

- Recruitment policy and procedure;
- Insurance cover;
- Reimbursement policy and procedures;
- Occupational health and safety.

Volunteering Australia's National Standards

Volunteering Australia's National Standards for Volunteer Involvement in Non-for-Profit Organisations (2001) are argued to be a representation of 'best practice' in volunteer management. There are 8 standards:

- Policies and procedures
- Management responsibilities
- Recruitment
- Work and the workplace
- Training and development
- Service delivery
- Documentation and records
- Continuous improvement

Volunteering Australia (2001) points out that an organisation that can demonstrate compliance with the standards is well positioned to manage all volunteers effectively and to meet best practice standards within the volunteer sector.

Moore and Fishlock (2006; p. 23) ask the question; “is your volunteer program attractive to people with a disability?” They suggest considering the following factors:

- Do you offer volunteer roles that would appeal to a variety of people in the community?
- Are there training and development opportunities for volunteers?
- Is your volunteer organisation flexible in respect to the length of time an individual can volunteer with your organisation?
- Do you reward and recognise your volunteers?

Moore and Fishlock (2006; p. 24) also discuss physical accessibility. They argue that making your premises accessible for volunteers with a disability will make it accessible for everyone. Things to consider in respect to physical accessibility are:

- Width of doorways;
- Level access;
- Emergency evacuation procedures;
- Toilets;
- Use of signage;
- Lighting;
- Decoration;
- Transport.

Attitudes play a major part in the effectiveness of an inclusive volunteering strategy, they are equally as important as practical considerations. Moore and Fishlock (2006; p. 29) suggest that negative attitudes often stem from a lack of knowledge and people can feel uncertain and afraid of things that they do not understand. The literature argues that the best way to approach attitudes is through conducting disability awareness training for volunteer coordinators, managers, staff and other volunteers. They emphasise the benefits of utilising trainers with a disability.

Within an organisation this can all come back to effective communication by volunteer coordinators, managers and other volunteers. The crux to effective communication is not making any assumptions about an individual's communication requirements. Moore and Fishlock (2006; p. 30) suggest that "it is good practice to ask all new volunteers about their communication needs and how they would like to keep in touch". Some volunteers may prefer a phone call where as others may prefer written communication. Above all communicate directly with the volunteer.

Engaging people with disabilities in volunteering

It is important to recognise that volunteers with a disability are like any other volunteers. The South Australian Government argues that volunteers with a disability "want to give their time and energy to improve their community".

"Assess your volunteer positions with a focus on the skills you need and what people have to offer- what they can do, rather than what they can't" (Government of South Australia).

The involvement of people with disabilities in volunteering

It could be argued that there is an element of self interest in volunteerism by and individual volunteer. it is not uncommon to see people who are blind involved with sight impairment organizations, or people who have a physical disability involved with organizations running wheelchair sports, or people with intellectual disability (Simpson 2001; p. 71). People volunteer for many reasons and Simpson sees that this could be one reason.

Simpson (2001; p. 71) argues;

that there's no limit to the scope of voluntary involvement of people with a disability as long as there are no barriers, real as in inaccessible work places, or artificial as in attitudes.

Simpson also suggests that "like volunteers without a disability people with a disability can and do utilise volunteerism to get back into the workforce"

Simpson (2001; p. 72) states that;

It is only through positive recognition of the *abilities* of people with a disability that we'll end up with a community which values the social and economic contribution of all paid or unpaid, disabled or unchallenged.

It is important to note that volunteering is for everyone.

Opening doors for volunteers with additional support needs

Volunteering Ireland argues that the benefits for people with a disability to be involved in volunteering consist of the following areas:

- Enhance self esteem and confidence building;
- Positive images: change self image;
- Enabling an individual to feel empowered;
- Role and routine;
- Integration in society;
- Work experience, training and education

By providing a supportive volunteering workplace we are providing a;

'Win-win' situation, it brings benefits to the volunteer-involving organisation and to the volunteer. By opening up the skills, talents and abilities of volunteers with additional support needs, an organization proves itself to be a progressive and successful one (Volunteering Ireland 2004; p. 19).

Volunteering Ireland (Volunteering Ireland 2004; p. 21-25) further suggests that to do this we need to:

- Create commitment;
- Challenge assumptions;

- Communicate correctly

Overlooking the contribution of people with a disability in the volunteering sector

Funnell (2009) discusses the diversity of roles that we all play throughout our lives. From child, mother, brother, student, neighbor, leader, client, patient and many others. Funnell argues that “people who are seen to contribute to the life of the community are clearly valued in our society”.

Funnell (2009) states that “people with a disability can make effective volunteers and gain benefits for themselves if some attention is given” and considerations are made. Considerations may include ensuring:

- Is there an opportunity for an individual to be useful in an area where they have expertise;
- Is there an opportunity for an individual to be more actively involved in the community

Above all it is important to treat people with respect and dignity.

Enhancing access

In 2006 Volunteering Western Australia began the Enhancing Access Project. The aim of the project was to empower communities to look at the barriers to volunteering and develop ways to challenge these barriers. The Enhancing Access Project focused on developing training for individuals with a disability becoming involved in volunteering and disability awareness. Levels of support and challenges were also looked at.

The program had many successes including 602 people attending Disability awareness training. As a result 25 independent volunteers were placed into volunteering positions.

The Enhancing Access Project hopes that by raising awareness in communities people’s eyes have been opened to the abilities and diversity that is out there in all shapes and sizes.

Tasmanian Government Disability Framework for Action 2005-2010

This Framework argues that along “with other Tasmanian’s, people with a disability have a right to enjoy a good quality of life and to reach their maximum potential” (Tasmanian Government 2005; p. 3).

The Frameworks guiding principles consist of:

- Equity;
- Inclusiveness;
- Access;
- Autonomy;
- Recognising and Supporting Diversity;
- Non-discrimination;
- Prioritising Resources.

The Tasmanian Government aims to commit “to achieving a fully inclusive society in which the lives of people with a disability are valued and they are respected as equal members of our community” (Tasmanian Government 2005; p. 7).

Priorities for the Framework include:

- Fostering human rights
- Providing access to high quality services
- Increasing safeguards and advocacy
- Working collaboratively

The Framework provides a whole of government approach to Tasmanian’s with a disability including improving access to volunteering within Tasmania.

Tasmanian Government Social Inclusion Strategy 2009

In 2009 the Tasmanian Government began pursuing a social inclusion agenda to positively affect the lives of Tasmanians who experience deep and persistent social exclusion.

Strategy 6 focuses on volunteering and recognises that volunteering is an essential component of social inclusion and that volunteering opportunities need to be available for all individuals.

Volunteering Tasmania Budget Priority Statement 2008

VT argued that a Tasmanian Volunteering Strategy must comprise seven main, interlocking elements:

- Consistent, concerted messages about the value of volunteering to individuals and communities.
- Protection of the interests of volunteers – ensuring that volunteers are not obliged to ‘pay to volunteer’ and are provided appropriate insurance cover.
- Support to volunteer-involving organisations with recruitment, development and management challenges.
- The development of a statewide network of volunteering ‘access points’ to link prospective volunteers with appropriate volunteering roles.
- A targeted approach to key age-specific cohorts, in recognition of the different interests and capacities of these cohorts.
- A coherent and rigorous approach to collecting and analysing information about volunteering in Tasmania.
- Clear linkages between government initiatives to support volunteering and other major policy development work.

Findings and Discussion

The research findings are presented in three separate sections.

- The first section focuses on the survey responses by organisations
- The second section focuses on survey responses by individual volunteers.
- The third section presents the findings of a workshop for organisations that was conducted on October 6th 2009.

Survey Responses by Organisations

Thirty two organisations across the following sectors participated in the survey:

- Community/Welfare (23 organisation participants);
- Environment/Conservation (5 organisation participants);
- Cultural (2 organisation participants);
- Education (2 organisation participants)

The first question asked, do you currently, or have you previously had people with disabilities involved as volunteers in your organisation. 22 organisations responded with a yes answer and 10 responded with a no answer.

The second question asked the organisation to describe the current or previous volunteer involvement of people with disabilities in their organisation. Respondents indicated that they had involved volunteers in their programs with a wide variety of disabilities – including physical, intellectual and mental disabilities. A range of issues were raised relating to the involvement of volunteers with a disability, these included:

- The importance of appropriately matching volunteers to roles that aligned with their interests and suited their abilities;
- The need to identify the abilities of a potential volunteer, their experience, skills and training in order to match them to an appropriate role. One respondent described recruiting a volunteer with a disability specifically for their technical skills;

- The need to treat volunteers who have a disability with respect – to maintain their independence and treat them in a fair and equitable manner, and also ensuring that management practices, such as the recruitment process, are non-discriminatory.

These responses can already be seen to be echoing some of the issues raised and addressed in the literature reviewed above.

The question to follow looked at the different ways people with a disability are recruited into volunteering. Responses included:

- TV commercials;
- Centrelink referrals;
- Word of mouth;
- Through family and friends;
- Phone book;
- Through schools;
- Through disability service providers;
- General promotions;
- They saw the organisation and made direct contact

The variety of answers demonstrated that there are many pathways and opportunities for all people to become involved in volunteering. However it is important to note that it is about harnessing these opportunities and providing support.

Organisations were asked to describe any barriers that they may have found when involving people with disabilities in their programs, including any solutions that they may have found to overcome these barriers. Responses have been broken down into three categories; physical accessibility, attitudes and management and support requirements.

Physical accessibility barriers included; transport, safe work environment, toileting and medical requirements, administration, accessibility- such as disabled toilets, ensuring equipment is appropriate for use, costs, providing sufficient time and assistance required and having a lack of experience, knowledge and skills, low levels of concentration with some volunteers not being able to undertake training in a group setting, constant supervision for people with certain disabilities, such as intellectual disabilities and decreasing physical abilities.

Attitudes included; having the confidence, having flexibility, differentiating between work and home, dealing with other people's attitudes, appropriate use of language.

Management and support requirements included; having appropriate supports in place, including a suitable support worker to work alongside the volunteer, maintaining support over time, designing appropriate volunteer roles and being able to follow through with the appropriate supervision, sensitive support and monitoring, fitting in with ongoing medical and rehabilitation visits, designing volunteer roles can be time intensive and a challenge, in some situations it can be a challenge to find useful meaningful tasks.

Organisations were asked to then describe the aspects or resources that are available to their organisation to promote the involvement of people with disabilities as volunteers. Responses were grouped into the following areas:

Organisation identified the following recruitment techniques including:

- Interviewing all candidates and offering suitable positions where available;
- Utilise their websites for recruitment;
- Volunteering Tasmania's services are utilised to advertise for volunteers (not specifically for people with a disability);
- Newsletter;
- Word of mouth;
- Media;
- Attempts to include rather than exclude;
- Recruitment by association;
- Some organisations had no resources to enable promotion;
- Ability to participate in other organisation's promotions;
- Holding interviews with individuals prior to commencement as a volunteer to gain a greater understanding of their circumstances.

Organisation's suggested that they provided support to all volunteer's including those with a disability by:

- Offering assistance to provide transport to and from meeting places and share meeting places;

- Accessible entry and toilets that meet the needs of a person with a disability;
- Reward and recognition;
- Breaking down the fear of the unknown;
- Flexibility;
- Physical changes;
- Providing experiential training and education to workers and volunteers;
- Being firm with people and showing that certain things are acceptable;
- Providing good supervision and training;
- Understanding triggers for individuals disabilities, i.e.- epilepsy;
- Provision of an effective support worker;
- Education to workers and volunteers;
- Supportive workplace

Some other specific aspects and resources that organisations have available to promote the involvement of people with disabilities as volunteers varied and consisted of:

- Pamphlets;
- Networks;
- Glenorchy Volunteering Centre;
- Policy;
- Volunteer management plan;
- Community events;
- Tasmanian Polytechnic;
- Day services and group homes;
- Councils;
- Other volunteer service providers;
- Community houses;
- Schools;
- On-line access centres;
- Centrelink;
- Employment agencies

When asked to suggest types of support that organisations would like to see provided to support their efforts to engage people with a disability responses included:

- Some respondents stated that there was no particular support identified;
- Further reward and recognition;

- For staff to be aware of organisations that help people with disabilities find volunteer work;
- Further supportive staff and volunteers to assist and support;
- Support from Volunteering Tasmania;
- Working closely with other volunteer organisations;
- Someone to recruit volunteers with a disability on an organisations behalf;
- Broader support to people with a disability i.e.- transport;
- A formalised mentor/buddy system;
- Access i.e.- wheelchair;
- Education i.e.- promotion and awareness about the disability;
- Support in developing policies and procedures and training procedures;
- Appropriate resources and funding;

Organisations that do not currently have volunteers with a disability involved in their organisation were asked if they would consider having a person with a disability involved as a volunteer within their organisation. Responses included:

- As long as the prospective volunteer could meet the inherent requirements of the volunteer role;

These same organisations were asked to describe any support that could assist them to engage people with a disability. Responses included:

- Knowing an individual's full background;
- Knowing what may make things easier for an individual;
- Provision of a support person;
- Understanding an individual's needs and skills;
- Information about the disability and ways of supporting an individual;
- Flexible arrangements, including a trial period;
- Sufficient staffing;
- Training for staff around disability awareness

Workshop Outcomes

A workshop was coordinated by Peter Middleton from Volunteering Tasmania and Debbie Hindle from the National Disability Coordination Program on October 6th 2009. Eighteen representatives from organisations that support people with a disability from a variety of volunteer sectors attended:

- Community/Welfare
- Sport and Recreation
- Environment and Conservation
- Education

Peter Middleton also coordinated a guest speaker, Eleven Thh (an individual with a disability) to speak about her involvement in volunteering. Eleven spoke about the fact that the word disability can put a person behind the 'eight ball' straight away due to the assumptions that can be made with people thinking about the disability and not a person's ability. Eleven's comments were also reiterated in the literature

For a full outline of the workshop program see Appendix C.

Things to note that came out of the 'introduction of organisations and experience' are grouped into physical accessibility, attitudes and management and support requirements to clearly outline three areas that may need to be addressed within all organisations.

Physical accessibility included: occupational health and safety issues, transport issues.

Attitudes included: issues around anxiety, people become involved in volunteering to build social confidence, a person's ability needs to come first not their disability, there is the misconception that people only volunteer because they cannot get work.

Management and support requirements included: trying to increase participation, sympathetic organisations required, volunteering creates participation in the community, provision of sufficient support and encouragement is vital, people need to be acknowledged and included, it is important to look at all sectors of volunteering, having institutional capability is important.

In groups organisations were then asked to describe any barriers they may have found to engaging people with disabilities in volunteer roles. Responses were as follows:

Physical accessibility include: contacting the 'wrong person' within an organisation, contact person resistance (uncertainty and a non-positive attitude), occupational health and safety, transport

Attitudes included: breaking through the myths around disabilities and only looking at facts, public perception of people with a disability requires more work, expectations from people with a disability that it may lead to paid work, fear of needing extra support, fear from individuals and within organisations

Management and support requirements included: ensuring that there is integrity in the volunteering process, being clear about the difference between work experience and volunteering, providing appropriate support, lack of understanding, insufficient activities to make the volunteer role productive, possible lack of stimulation in the volunteer role, lack of imagination, self help pathways, lack of organisational skills/knowledge/confidence, reluctance by organisation to be educated, time consuming for the organisation, people's perception within an organisation.

Possible solutions to overcoming the barriers mentioned at the workshop included:

Physical accessibility: utilising Volunteering Tasmania's services, including the website to find opportunities and acting as a link and support service.

Attitudes included: make sure volunteers are doing something they are motivated to do, reduce the fear barriers in hosts and volunteers.

Management and support requirements included: an organisation that is able to assist with linking prospective volunteers to the appropriate organisations, finding the right person in an organisation is critical; training and support to volunteer coordinator, organisations being open to abilities; possibly training for volunteers to support volunteers with a disability, information sharing with others when things work well, teach volunteers how to help other volunteers to promote themselves and their abilities, knowing what skills the volunteer has, a positive environment, appropriate

recruitment/selection processes, having staff and volunteers that have knowledge of the organisation, having strong networks, having support on the job for the volunteer.

Representatives from the organisations were further asked what has worked well within their organisations. Responses included:

Recruitment and Communication; matching the volunteer to a suitable role, correctly matching skills, having the appropriate follow up and support, contacting the 'right person', linking people to the right positions, fixing any issues prior to there being a breakdown in communications, having a contact person within a volunteer organisation, having a clear role for a prospective volunteer

Attitudes; having room for growth for the individual, strength or passion of volunteer

Management and support requirements included; using networks within the volunteering sector, good communication between organisation and support people, providing reward and recognition, disability awareness training, providing clear instructions, people within organisations having a positive attitude and life experience

Finally, during the workshop representatives were asked if there is any support which could have been provided which could have made their experience in volunteering easier. The responses included:

- Preparation and appropriate structures in place;
- Physical support such as a mentor/buddy;
- Regular performance review, setting realistic expectations and goals;
- More comprehensive and imaginative list of volunteer positions on the Volunteering Tasmania website (VT) and making sure the list is authentic;
- Put list of volunteer success stories on the VT website

Survey Responses by Individuals

Below is an excerpt from a volunteer with a disability and their experiences in volunteering:

Volunteering for me is filling in the time, interacting with different people, gaining new skills and experiences. I started volunteering in my second year of university after seeing a flyer asking for skills I knew I had. The position was to serve children breakfast at school. Within a week of contacting the organisation I signed up to go to two schools, my police check went through and I started. At this job I made a lot of mistakes (including setting off the school fire alarm!). Many volunteers have come and gone. I've changed days and cut down to one day a week but still the kids get breakfast. So that's a good way to start their day.

Not long after I quit university I needed something to fill in my time. So I asked the organization I was volunteering for, for more volunteer work. They suggested retail would be the best to gain new skills. In this position I have learnt to deal with customers, handle money, the use of a cash register and eftpos machine. I have a team of women that hasn't changed much since my first day. We do have our boring days when we have to entertain ourselves and we leave early. We also have busy days when we are reducing stock and we have to work as a team so every customer is served and happy to return again. We have our regular customers who we recognize and chat to and we have tourist customers from the mainland and overseas. Also it's important to present myself like someone who sells the image of the shop and organisation well, which I think I do.

My most recent volunteer work has been in hospitality. At first my work was limited to clearing dishes and tables. I have since started serving customers, taking their orders, using the cash register and making drinks. A lot of customers are parents and grandparents with children and some students. I have learnt the importance of occupational health and safety as an inspector came and told us how to be hygienic. I can't say volunteering has given me a paid job, that shouldn't be anyone's aim in volunteering. I still want to continue volunteering when I have a full time job. One of my ambitions is to volunteer overseas for more 'noble' reasons than I currently do.

Anonymous Volunteer

In looking at individuals with a disability, a paper and online survey was developed, see appendix b. The survey consisted of ten questions.

Results were formed from the participation of 13 individuals in the survey, consisting of individuals across the following sectors:

- Community/welfare (9 individual respondents)
- Environment/conservation (2 individual respondents)
- Education (9 individual respondents)

Individuals responded to the question; what do you think it means to be a volunteer, answers included:

- To participate and be involved in the community
- To meet new people and make friends
- To meet Centrelink and job network requirements
- To see the pleasure it can give to others
- To learn new skills and strengthen knowledge
- To strengthen confidence, self esteem and communication skills
- To donate services, time and expertise
- Something to do

This showed that there are a number of reasons why people with a disability volunteer with the most common theme being to participate and be involved in the community.

Individuals were also asked if there was anything that made it difficult to volunteer, some of the core responses included:

- Individuals found getting along with people can sometimes be difficult
- Public liability insurance can be an issue, particularly around events.
- Funds- reimbursement of costs can make volunteering difficult

Following on from this, volunteers and those who had not volunteered before were asked; how do you think you would go about becoming a volunteer, responses included:

- Through looking up volunteer positions and organisations on the internet
- Through making contact with Volunteering Tasmania and utilising their services.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In concluding this report the biggest issue arising is the need to continue to work on people's attitudes and perceptions towards the involvement of people with a disability in volunteering. There needs to be a strong focus on looking at an individual's abilities rather than just focusing on the disability.

This report has looked at some of the literature and research that is already out there and has drawn on this to inform recommendations for VT to support organisations.

Three core themes have been evident across the literature and research conducted; issues around physical accessibility, attitudes and management and support requirements. This report argues that for volunteering to be successful for a volunteer with a disability all three need to be considered.

This report suggests that further action needs to be taken to ensure that volunteering is genuinely open to all Tasmanians. A series of recommendations listed below aim to provide tools and resources for doing this.

Recommendations

- The development of a fact sheet on the Volunteering Tasmania website focusing on inclusive practice.
- Inclusive practice workshops to be offered by VT to volunteer coordinators and managers from organisations to promote disability awareness.
- Volunteer success stories of volunteers with a disability promoted and published within various sources such as the VT's eNewsletter and digital media.
- Guidelines and policy templates for inclusive practice in volunteering, with the aim of making rights, responsibilities and expectations clear, to be developed by VT.
- Education of staff for general awareness raising.

- Promotion of the research and participation by VT staff in workshops and/or conferences.
- Ongoing research in the volunteering sector by VT, including reports such as the State of Volunteering Report: Tasmania 2010.
- Recommendation of further investigation into the establishment of an access to volunteering fund/grant/s (similar to that being done in the United Kingdom) to be made available to both individuals and organisations. The fund could look at supporting the organisational costs in involving people with a disability in volunteering and also being open to individual volunteers to fund the cost of a carer or support worker to enable them to undertake their volunteering.

Implementation Stage

Implementation of the project began in February 2010 and will take place throughout 2010 and beyond. Implementation is initially occurring on a state wide basis through Introduction to Volunteering information sessions and Volunteer Coordinator Network Meeting for Volunteer Managers and partnership with organisations to promote best practice inclusive volunteering.

Several partnerships have been developed with key stakeholders both at a state and regional level.

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Strengthen workforce planning by developing disability confidence, 2009- Presented by Department of Education, Employment and Workforce Relations and National Disability Coordination Officer Program, Henry Jones Art Hotel, Hobart.

Disabilities in the Workplace- Best Practice for all, 2009- Presented by The Office of the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner, Mercure Hotel, Hobart.

Appendix A



1. VOLUNTEERING TASMANIA: Disability Survey-Organisations

Volunteering Tasmania is currently undertaking some research, with people with disabilities, service providers who work with people with disabilities and with volunteer organisations.

As an organisation who works with volunteers we would value your input.

If you could take a few minutes to complete the following survey it would be very much appreciated.

If you have any queries at all please do not hesitate to contact me on the details listed below.

Kind regards

Peter Middleton
Community Development Officer (South)
Volunteering Tasmania

Email: PeterM@volunteeringtas.org.au

Phone: 62315550

1. Please provide the following contact details:

Name:

Company:

Address:

City/Town:

**ZIP/Postal
Code:**

**Email
Address:**

**Phone
Number:**

2. Do you currently, or have you previously had people with disabilities involved as volunteers in your organisation?

If you answered NO to this question please answer questions 8 to 10.

If you answered YES please answer questions 2 to 7.

Yes

No

3. Please describe the current or previous volunteer involvement of people with disabilities in your organisation and how were these

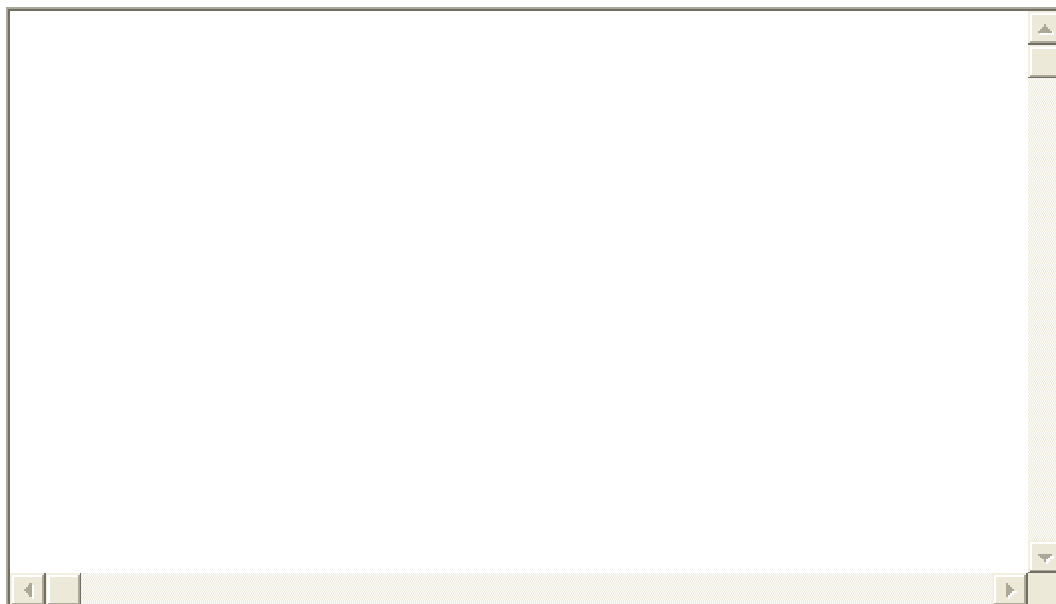
volunteers recruited to your organisation?

4. Describe any barriers you may have found when involving people with disabilities in your program? Including any solutions you may have found to overcome these barriers.

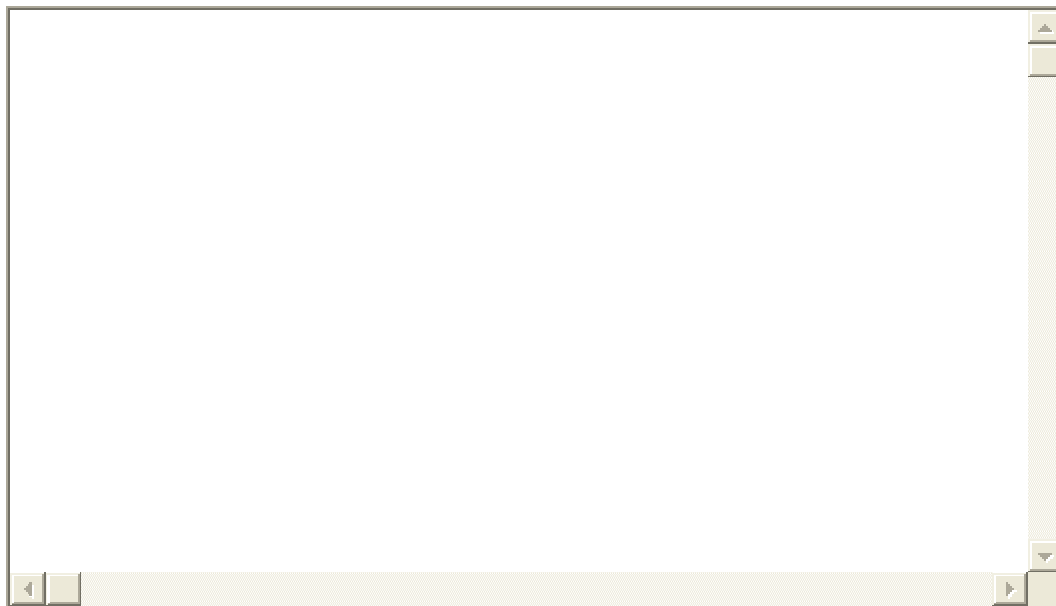
E.g. At recruitment, in designing volunteer roles, with supervision, with the physical environment.

5. What aspects of your organisation, or resources are available to you to promote the involvement of people with disabilities as

volunteers?

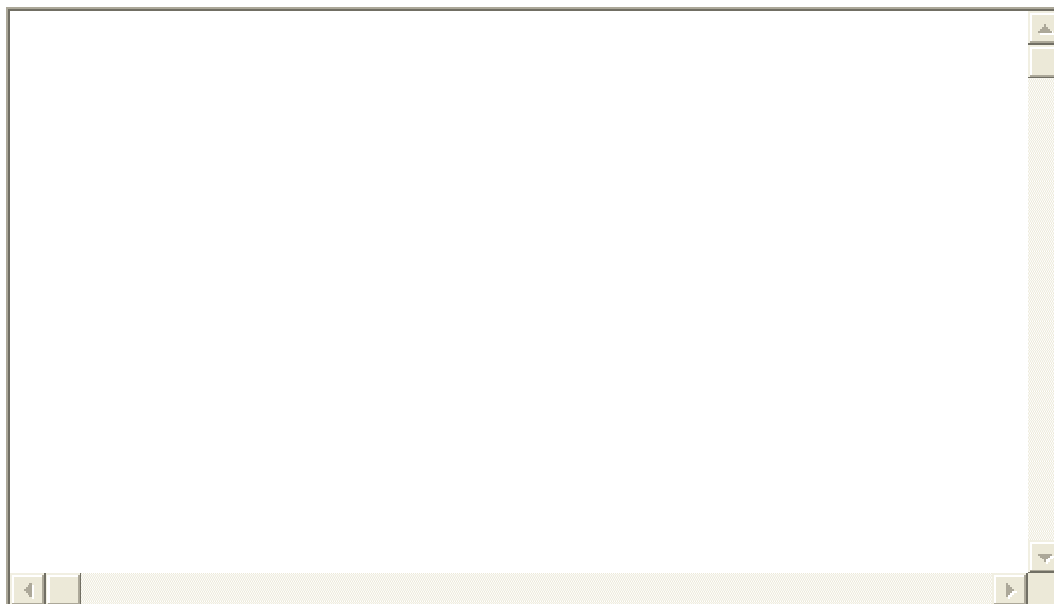
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6. What organisations exist in your community that might be potential partners in supporting your efforts to engage people with disabilities?

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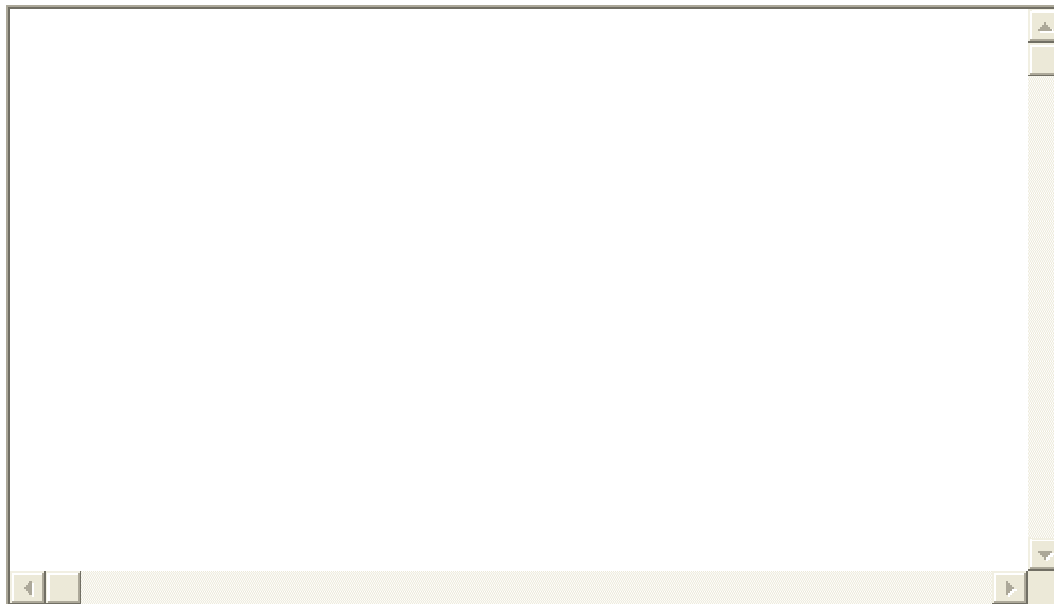
7. What other types of support would you like to see provided to help your organisation to successfully involve people with

disabilities as volunteers?



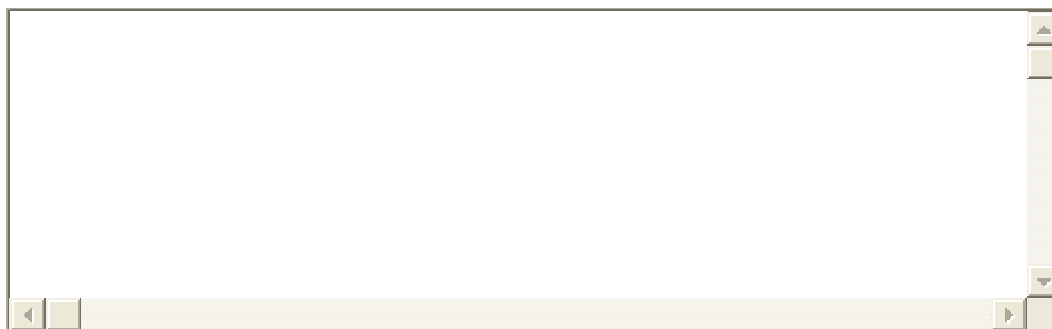
8. The following question is only to be answered by people who replied NO to question 1

Describe any potential barriers you feel you may experience to involving people with disabilities.



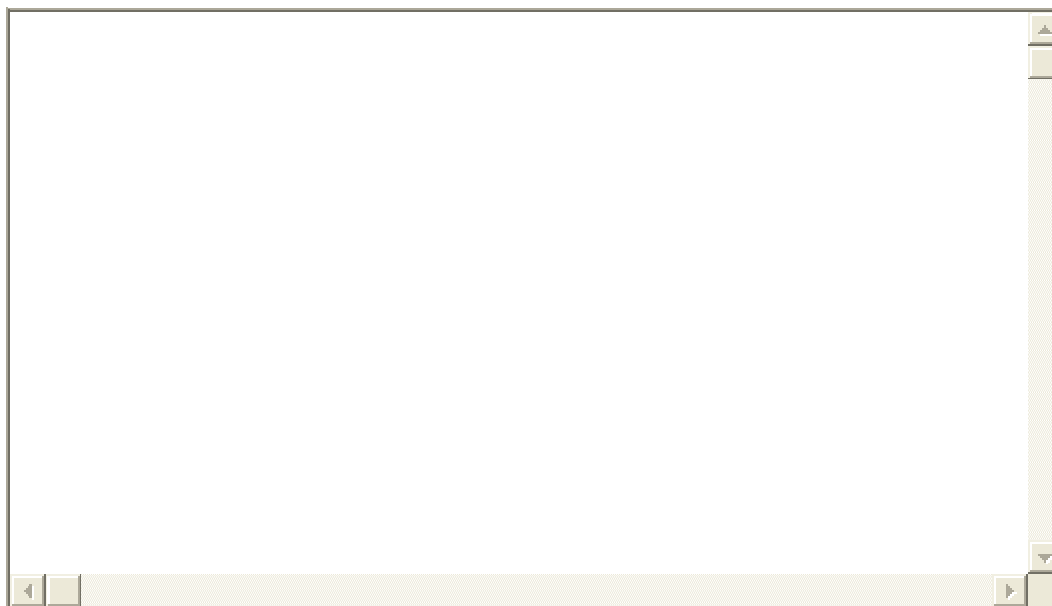
9. The following question is to be answered by people who replied NO to question 1.

Would you consider having people with disabilities involved as volunteers in your organisation?

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10. The following question is only to be answered by people who replied NO to question 1

What support would assist you to engage people with disabilities?

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Appendix B

DISABILITY VOLUNTEERING PACKAGE

Volunteering Tasmania is in the process of designing a training resource for organisations to encourage them to include people with disabilities in their volunteer programs. While we recognize that there are many types of disabilities our aim is to produce a generic training package. Training about specific disabilities can be provided by service providers dealing with specific disabilities.

In order to better understand the needs of the sector we are currently undertaking some research, with people with disabilities, service providers who work with people with disabilities and with volunteer organisations.

As an individual with a disability we would value your input.

If you could take a few minutes to complete the following survey it would be very much appreciated.

If you have any queries at all please do not hesitate to contact me on the details listed below.

Kind regards

Peter Middleton

You can fax, post or email your responses back to me.

Fax: 62344113 or Email: PeterM@volunteeringtas.org.au

Postal Address: 57D Brisbane Street, Hobart, TAS, 7000

Phone: 62315550

Questions for focus group- People with disabilities

What do you think it means to be a volunteer?

Have you ever done any volunteer work?

If so, what type of volunteering work have you done?

Was there anything that was difficult about being a volunteer?

Is there anything that would have made it easier for you to be a volunteer?

If you have never been a volunteer, would you be interested in becoming one? Why?

What sort of things do you think you would like to do as a volunteer?

How do you think you would go about becoming a volunteer?

Is there anything you can think of that would make it easier for you if you did decide to become a volunteer?

Appendix C



Service Providers of people with disabilities

Workshop Questions

2.30 pm Welcome - *Debbie Hindle*, National Disability Coordination Officer Program

Project aims and objectives - *Peter Middleton*, Volunteering Tasmania

Guest Speaker - *Eleven Thh*, experiences in volunteering

INTRODUCTION OF ORGANISATIONS & EXPERIENCE 35 Minutes

Do you currently support people with disabilities who have experience with volunteering?

What types of disabilities did they have?

What types of volunteer roles did they have?

Discussion as a group about volunteering, what has worked and what hasn't worked?

3.05pm

GROUP WORK- 4 Groups

25 Minutes

Delegate a scribe and speaker within each group

Describe any barriers you may have found to engaging people with disabilities in volunteer roles?

What has worked?

Describe any solutions you may have found to overcoming these barriers?

Is there any form of support which could have been provided which would have made their experience better?

3.30pm

10 Minutes for all groups to report back to the whole

3.40pm

IDEAS FOR INDIVIDUALS FOCUS GROUP

15 Minutes

In regards to establishing a focus group for individuals what could work?

- Big group
- Specific disabilities
- Timeframes
- Individual meetings

Who could provide support?

Commitment on the day?

Format of questions to ask?

3.55pm

CLOSE & SUMMARY

5 Minutes

- Summary
- Thankyou
- Next Step



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