

The contribution of volunteers to
community cohesion in Sydney

A project funded by the

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“Disadvantage, poverty and exclusion divide communities. Volunteering unites us.....We believe that active participation in society underpins community well-being and fosters strong, caring, inclusive communities. Volunteers make major economic and social contributions to our society and research indicates that volunteering is good for your health”

Senator the Hon Ursula Stephens
Parliamentary Secretary for Social Inclusion and the Voluntary Sector
Parliamentary Secretary assisting the Prime Minister for Social Inclusion

Project aim:

To discover the contribution of volunteers to community cohesion in Sydney

Project objectives:

To identify and meet key organisations and individuals, that work with volunteers and have an understanding of cohesion with the objectives of:

- building an understanding of volunteer programmes, successes and pitfalls including issues of sustainability
- building an understanding of cohesion issues in Sydney and similarities with the UK experience, in particular Southampton
- identifying volunteer programmes that could work in Southampton, particularly those that bridge cultures including work with the majority community

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Introduction

As well as the many social and welfare related benefits that volunteering provides to the community, its economic value across Australia has been estimated at between A\$31 to A\$42 billion per annum (Volunteering Australia 2005), with over 700,000 not for profit organisations in existence. It has also been estimated that 34% of adult Australians volunteer in not-for-profit organisations, with an average of 56 hours per year, making a total of 713 million volunteering hours (Australian Bureau of Statistics, Voluntary Work, Australia Survey 2006. These figures were released in July 2007).

Formal volunteering in Great Britain is worth about £38 billion per year. The number of registered charities rose from around 120,000 in 1995 to more than 164,000 in 2005; in addition to these registered charities there are hundreds of thousands of small community groups. Half of all people volunteer, formally or informally, at least once a month. The number of people regularly volunteering in England and Wales rose from 18.4 million in 2001 to 20.4 million in 2005.

(www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/third_sector/Research_and_statistics/Key_statistics.aspx).

Volunteering therefore has a significant role to play in building communities and strengthening community cohesion. This report seeks to identify successful initiatives that could be transferred from Sydney to Southampton.

Building an Understanding of Volunteer Programmes in Sydney

There are over 7000 organisations, from large charities to small self-help groups, that currently make up the New South Wales (NSW) non-government human services sector. (This figure does not include all voluntary and community sector organisations, but just those working in the areas of health, community services, ageing, disability, home care etc). Almost A\$1.5 billion is provided every year to such organisations in NSW, both through State and Federal Government funding.

The organisations contacted (See Appendices 1 and 2) carry out a wide range of different programmes involving volunteers. Programmes are run at State and local government level and by voluntary sector, faith, not-for-profit and corporate organisations. (Companies can make a sustainable and productive contribution to their community through forming ongoing relationships with not-for-profit organisations. Corporate volunteering programmes encourage employees to participate in community activities. These programmes tend to be run through the corporate social responsibility (CSR) division of the company). All these programmes contribute to cohesion in various ways – increasing the diversity of volunteers, bringing people together from different backgrounds, improving educational opportunities and providing routes to employment.

To understand the context within which this range of programmes operate, it is useful to understand some of the barriers to volunteering that need to be addressed to maximise the contribution volunteering can make to cohesion. The National Survey of Volunteering Issues 2008 (1), identified a range of issues that create barriers including:

- reimbursing volunteers out of pocket expenses (petrol was cited as the greatest expense). Nearly half (47%) of volunteers surveyed do not receive any reimbursement of their out of pocket expenses; only 13% receive full reimbursement. The 2007 Annual Survey indicated that one in ten volunteers changed their volunteer involvement and up to one quarter more were considering doing so because of the impact of needing to meet their own out of pocket expenses.
- the length of time taken to carry out background checks (both police and working with children checks) and cost of these checks to organisations
- rising cost of insurance cover
- attracting and recruiting suitable volunteers

- lack of capacity (funding and time) to manage and support volunteers including training and skills development
- variations in volunteer numbers as a result of events, seasonal requirements or episodic volunteering. (Reported by 31% of responding organisations). This causes additional management pressures for their host organisations

Volunteering Issues in Sydney

Some of the barriers to volunteering cited in the national survey (1) were also highlighted in the local interviews carried out as part of this project, namely:

- recruiting volunteers
- cost of insurance
- time and cost of background checks
- meeting increased petrol costs of volunteers

The following additional issues were also raised:

- working with three different tiers of government (local, state and federal) is time consuming for organisations
- funding levels for the not-for-profit sector
- securing funding, particularly for core costs and funding levels e.g. the Centre for Volunteering has not had a funding increase for 20 years
- decrease in donations due to the economic downturn
- difficulties in raising funds from the private sector as they are increasingly linking their donations to organisations that their staff volunteer with
- raising the profile of volunteering and refocussing the image of volunteering away from middle class people doing good work for disadvantaged people and more towards personal and career development
- attracting people back into volunteering and breaking down some of the traditional attitudes towards people thinking of volunteers as 'theirs' and signposting them onto other organisations
- making it easier for people to get in and out of the volunteering experience (linked to the increase in episodic volunteering)
- matching the skills and experience of volunteers with appropriate opportunities
- involvement of 'Generation Y' volunteers (people born after 1980, children of the 'baby boomer' generation), who are seeking a different type of volunteering engagement with targets and more responsibility. (It was felt many such volunteers come from working in a corporate environment and they expect a similar working environment within the not-for-profit sector)
- gearing up to prepare for 'baby boomers' in 5 to 10 years time, who will expect to be able to fit voluntary work around their family and leisure commitments
- supporting voluntary organisations to strengthen their management and governance processes
- liability of volunteers – a barrier that prevents individuals from volunteering
- declining numbers of people willing to volunteer to sit on management boards
- diversifying the volunteer pool and tackling silos of volunteering e.g. a lot of Anglo Saxon people volunteering in organisations – trying to get more multi-cultural
- reduced numbers of young people volunteering due to their need to work to meet the increasing costs of their education
- government funding driving programmes and therefore affecting the ethos of organisations and their freedom to deliver

- demonstrating the value of developmental work and generally measuring the impact of projects and programmes
- inflexibility of the sector to be able to respond to the demand for volunteer opportunities from people for whom English is not their first language, despite the skills they may bring (highly skilled people with insufficient English may look to volunteer as a route to paid employment. Their English is not fluent, so many organisations would not consider them)
- more work needing to be done to bring people together across cultures

Many of these issues are also experienced by community and voluntary sector organisations in England. The Commission on the Future of Volunteering is an independent body established by the England Volunteering Development Council to develop a long-term vision for volunteering in England. In January 2008, the Commission released their Manifesto for Change - www.volcolcomm.org.uk. The Manifesto argued for a range of improvements including the need to raise the profile of volunteering, removal of obstacles to volunteering (reducing 'red tape') and an increase in employer supported volunteering. The Manifesto also referred to diversity and volunteering, stating that in their consultation they "encountered mixed views on whether volunteering means the same thing to people from different backgrounds, faiths, cultures and communities". This Manifesto followed a report issued by the Commission in January 2007 (2) that highlighted a range of issues including lack of funding provision for core work, funding only for short term project based work, onerous monitoring of funding and lack of diversity in the volunteering pool.

Southampton – Cohesion Issues, Government and Local Priorities

According to the Mid Year Estimate 2007, produced by the Office of National Statistics, Southampton has a population of around 231,200 people and an ethnically diverse population with 7.63% of the population (at the 2001 census) from a non-white background. (www.southampton.gov.uk). Southampton's demographics have changed significantly over the last ten years or so, with people coming to the city for various reasons including coming from European Union countries to find work and fleeing war or persecution.

In the UK, the independent Commission on Integration and Cohesion produced a number of recommendations for action in its 2007 report "Our Shared Future". Their report emphasizes the need to develop approaches tailored to local areas with a focus on key issues including developing English language skills, citizenship, funding and managing the impact of migration.

The need to manage migration impact was highlighted in a recent Australian report – "Mapping Social Cohesion". This is a report on the first round of a survey of social cohesion in Australia, funded by the Scanlon Foundation, directed by Professor Andrew Markus of Monash University and carried out in 2007. The researchers felt that "challenges for policy include the need to foster increased participation in community life within areas of high immigrant concentration and to further understanding of the immigrant experience, of the difficulties of resettlement in unfamiliar environments and alien cultures, of the personal impact of discriminatory acts and of the contribution that immigrants have made and continue to make to Australian society". The emphasis on the need to manage migration impact is therefore a common issue and challenge for both Australia and the UK, including Southampton. Projects that create opportunities to bring people together from different cultures and backgrounds will therefore help to promote cohesion and reduce tensions inherent in such migration.

In considering new projects in Southampton, the council's local priorities and government targets need to be taken into account.

Southampton City Council has the following six policy priorities:

1. delivering value for money and efficient services, avoiding excessive taxation, ensuring good City governance, and working with neighbouring authorities, partner agencies and with appropriate strategic partnerships such as the Partnership for Urban South Hampshire
2. promoting economic prosperity in the City by improving the City's infrastructure, facilitating business growth and enabling more residents to enjoy rewarding employment
3. raising educational standards and attainment in the City, and promoting greater choice and diversity
4. reducing crime and anti social behaviour and improving the protection of residents from crime
5. minimising and recycling waste, promoting energy initiatives and improving the City's environment
6. improving the wellbeing of all residents and supporting older people especially those with medical, care, social or financial needs

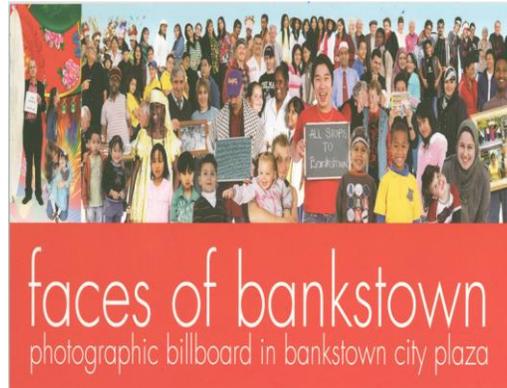
In addition to these local priorities, the council has a range of government targets to meet, including targets on increasing volunteering levels, encouraging a thriving environment for the third sector and improving community cohesion. Any recommendations for Southampton City Council to drive forward will therefore need to take both the government targets and local policy priorities into account.

Volunteer Programmes applicable to Southampton

From the range of projects and programmes (see Appendix 2 for more details) contacted in Sydney there are some initiatives that could clearly make a positive impact on volunteering levels and cohesion in Southampton.

There are a range of corporate volunteering programmes actively involved in making a contribution to the community and voluntary sector in Sydney. The Goodcompany model seems particularly relevant to Southampton with its programme of connecting volunteers and placement opportunities via the internet. Since its inception in 1999, Goodcompany has worked in Melbourne and Sydney and attracted thousands of volunteers, hundreds of community groups, and facilitated more than A\$7 million worth of pro bono services to the community. Another appropriate programme is run by United Way Sydney. They run a Corporate Connect volunteering programme that links companies to community projects. In 2007, they completed 64 Corporate Connect volunteering programs, with almost 1000 people volunteering from our corporate partners completing over 5200 volunteering hours. A survey of 155 corporate volunteers carried out in 2007 found that 99% of them rated their experience as good or excellent and 98% gained a better understanding of the social outcomes the community organisation was trying to achieve. Southampton Voluntary Services is a key voluntary sector umbrella body, which receives significant funding from Southampton City Council. They would be an ideal partner for the council to discuss the possibility of enhancing existing corporate volunteering schemes, learning from the Goodcompany and United Way Sydney programmes. Another local partner could be Business Southampton, an independent organisation that has created a network of City Champions drawn from key local employers. A potential national partner is Business in the Community, a membership organisation that works with its member companies to "improve their positive impact on society" (www.bitc.org.uk).

There were also examples of programmes in Sydney that promoted diversity and had the ethos of bringing people together from different cultures and backgrounds. These include the Bankstown Bites Food Festival (promoted local retailers), the Faces of Bankstown Mural, the Living Library scheme, the Super V Multicultural Volunteers Programme and the Streets Alive project.



Source: Bankstown Youth Development Service

Southampton City Council has run a campaign in the past called Totally Diverse, 100% Southampton, which aimed to promote the benefits of living in a multi-cultural, diverse city. This has some parallels with the Bankstown Mural. Southampton also has an inner city area, with a range of shops and restaurants run by people who have settled in the city from different countries. A food festival, similar to the one held in Bankstown, could effectively promote their businesses to a wider audience. The Bankstown Bites Food Festival attracts more than 20,000 visitors and involves community and voluntary sector organisations alongside local retailers to provide a mix of food stalls, children's activities, dance and music.

Southampton City Council's library service, has, in the past, explored inclusion and diversity issues applicable to its work. Australia's Living Library scheme, which provides an opportunity for people from minority and majority cultures to meet, could contribute both to this aim as well as the cohesion and volunteering targets the council has to meet. Australia's first Living Library project was launched in Lismore in November 2006. This scheme has now spread across Australia. An evaluation of the Lismore scheme showed that 48 readers (60%) and 25 "books" (78%) felt that it achieved its aims of challenging negative stereotypes and building social cohesion through one-to-one conversation (www.livinglibraries.org.au). Other schemes that could be considered in Southampton are the Super V Multicultural Volunteers and Streets Alive Programmes. The Super V Programme is funded by the City of Sydney Council and is a partnership initiative run with other organisations including the voluntary sector. Super V projects bring volunteers together from different backgrounds and include after school projects and a project to provide lunches for local residents. The North Sydney Council runs the Streets Alive programme. This scheme involves local residents in caring for public open space. It has been running for about seven years and is about to expand from one council officer to two. The initial budget for this programme was A\$35,000 and it has now grown to about A\$186,000. The savings to the council of this scheme have been estimated at about A\$35,000 a year in addition to social networking benefits and encouraging community ownership of public land. This scheme could build on the existing work in Southampton, where local residents already help care for green, open space either through one-off events like community clean-ups or ongoing work through setting up organisations to look after specific parks.

Hosting the Olympics in Sydney in 2000 provided a huge boost to the voluntary sector as it raised the profile of volunteering and increased the numbers of people volunteering as the Olympics depended on voluntary effort to run successfully. The 2012 London Olympics presents a similar opportunity for the UK and Southampton.

One of the other key areas of work that has been highlighted in Southampton is the need to improve educational attainment and also increase the number of young people leaving school and progressing either to further education or training schemes. The Beacon Foundation model that links corporate volunteers with young people to support them to prepare for work and the Smith

Family programme that provides volunteer mentors to support young people at key transition stages in their lives are Sydney based projects that could be developed in Southampton. The Beacon No Dole programme aims to address the issue of youth unemployment, as well as improve the school to work transition. Currently 97.4% of No Dole students end up on a positive pathway to further education, employment and training. More than 27,000 disadvantaged children are taking part in The Smith Family's Learning for Life Programmes. These programmes support young people at transition points, such as moving from school to further study or a job. Preliminary research has shown that "the *Learning for Life* program is making the education process more inclusive and participatory for students from financially disadvantaged backgrounds ".
(www.thesmithfamily.com.au)



Smith Family Computer Mentoring Programme
Source: The Smith Family

Another area of interest in Southampton is intergenerational work. Southampton City Council has recently secured European Union funding for an intergenerational project – SIGN - Southampton Intergenerational Network. One of the responsibilities of the Project Coordinator is to gather examples of best practice in intergenerational work to share with a local network of practitioners. The work of the Benevolent Society in creating opportunities for young and older people to volunteer together, and the work of the Bankstown Youth Development Service (BYDS) in training young people to interview older people as part of an oral history project may be models that could be disseminated via this network.



BYDS Oral History Project
Source: Bankstown Youth Development Service

Southampton is one of the local authority areas that has recently received government funding under the Preventing Violent Extremism programme. The thinking is that extremist messages and actions are less likely to find support within cohesive communities. There were two Sydney projects relevant to this area of work – the Affinity Intercultural Foundation and the Muslim Women's

Welfare of Australia. The Affinity Intercultural Foundation has sought to build bridges with majority communities, for example by building links with Christian organisations. In 2007, the Foundation completed over 100 projects. These included opening Muslim homes during Ramadan, a Muslim Youth Conference, a Women of Faith dinner and arranging for Muslims to visit churches during Easter and Christmas. One of the objectives of the Muslim Women's Welfare of Australia is "to assist in the settlement and adjustment of newly arrived Muslim women to Australia". One of the ways the Association has tackled this is by promoting government programmes to its members.

Finally, the issue of measuring impact and value of volunteering programmes was cited as a challenge by most of the organisations contacted. This is also a challenge faced within the council with the increasing emphasis to produce metrics (quantitative measures) to describe work involving communities. Two different measuring systems - results based accounting and logical framework analysis - are used by two organisations in Sydney. It would be worth exploring if these could be used effectively in Southampton.

Recommendations for Southampton City Council to Action

This project has resulted in several recommendations for Southampton City Council to consider taking forward. Any recommendations will need to fall within the council's six policy priorities and have therefore been couched accordingly.

Corporate volunteering and work with the private sector (contributes to Southampton City Council priorities 1, 2 and 6)

- Explore opportunities for development (including virtual volunteering programmes) with Business in the Community, Business Southampton and Southampton Voluntary Services (SVS) with a view to learning from the Goodcompany and United Way models.
- Look into the possibility of working with the West Itchen Community Trust (an inner city organisation) and volunteers to stage a food festival in the St Marys area, similar to Bankstown Bites, to promote the diverse range of local restaurants, retailers and aspects of local culture.

Promoting volunteering (contributes to Southampton City Council priorities 1, 2 and 6)

- Build on the existing Totally Diverse, 100% Southampton campaign with a web based mural similar to the Bankstown project
- Investigate the feasibility of setting up a Living Library project
- Explore the possibilities of setting up a council based volunteering programme similar to Super V
- Identify ways to promote volunteering using the link to the London 2012 Olympics
- Investigate the possibility of establishing a Streets Alive type project, to increase resident involvement with maintaining public open spaces

Education, employment and intergenerational work (contributes to Southampton City Council priorities 3 and 6)

- Assess whether elements of the Beacon Foundation model and the work of The Smith Family can be used to tackle the issue of NEETS (young people not in education, employment or training)
- Assess the relevance of intergenerational projects run by the Benevolent Society and Bankstown Youth Development Service to the Southampton Intergenerational Network Project (SIGN) e.g. creating opportunities for young and older people to volunteer together

Faith based work (contributes to Southampton City Council priority 4)

- Assess the relevance of the work of the Affinity Intercultural Foundation and the Muslim Women's Association to the Prevent (Preventing Violent Extremism) agenda

Measuring impact (contributes to Southampton City Council priority 1)

- Investigate the relevance of logical framework analysis and results based accountability as systems to measure the impact of community-based work delivered by Southampton City Council.

Conclusions and Next Steps

There is a strong tradition of volunteering both in Australia (3) and in the UK.

This project aimed to discover the contribution of volunteers to community cohesion in Sydney and identify successful programmes that could be transferred to Southampton.

With the recession, one of the challenges Southampton faces is an increasing number of people wishing to volunteer and a decreasing number of opportunities available to them. This research has identified a number of initiatives that could be trialled locally and thus create additional volunteering opportunities that would also have a positive impact on cohesion. The recommendations identify projects for further exploration and include those that have harnessed the power of the internet to recruit volunteers, that bring volunteers from different backgrounds together and corporate volunteering schemes. (Few examples were found of projects specifically set up to bridge cultures and create links with majority communities, although it could be argued that some projects will do this by default. This is an area that was cited by a couple of respondents as an opportunity for further development). Suggested projects need to be explored further through discussions with appropriate Southampton City Council officers and partner agencies. All these schemes contribute to community cohesion through developing strong relationships, a recognition of diversity and a sense of belonging. In fact, Australian research (1) highlighted the significant impact volunteering plays in developing a sense of community belonging, a key factor necessary for cohesion.

Although there is no one accepted definition of social inclusion or community cohesion in Australia (see Appendix 3), the Federal Government has developed a set of social inclusion principles and linked their work in this area to industrial relations, demonstrating the importance they place between inclusion initiatives and economic development. The link between volunteering and the economy has been highlighted by Volunteering England, in its Recession Challenge document (4). This refers to the ways in which volunteering can contribute to economic revival. There are therefore common themes between both countries in the understanding of the contribution volunteers can make to community/social inclusion and also to the economy. Common challenges are facing voluntary and community organisations in both countries, for example securing core funding, promotion, measuring the value of the work, perceptions of volunteering in Black and Minority Ethnic communities, reimbursing volunteers expenses and developing the infrastructure necessary to support volunteers effectively. These national issues translate down to a local level, both in Sydney and Southampton. This similarity of challenges lends weight to the idea that programme interventions can be transferred between the two countries.

Having started this report with a quote from an Australian source, it seems appropriate to end it with a quote from an English one:

“Volunteers are vital to the life of our nation, in shaping and delivering local services, in building community cohesion and in driving social change”.

Christopher Spence MBE, Chief Executive, Volunteering England
Strategy for Volunteering Infrastructure 2004–2014 (www.ncvo-vol.org.uk)

Appendix 1 List of Contacts

Face-to-face visits

1. Associate Professor Rosemary Leonard, Director, Research Centre for Social Justice and Social Change, University of Western Sydney and former Chair of the Board of Directors of Australian and New Zealand Third Sector Research
2. Associate Professor Melanie Oppenheimer, School of Humanities and Languages, University of Western Sydney and author of 'Volunteering, why we can't survive without it'
3. Peri O'Shea, Research Program Coordinator, Social Justice and Social Change Research Centre, University of Western Sydney
4. Michael Darcy, Associate Professor, Social Justice and Social Change Research Centre, University of Western Sydney
5. Dr Gabrielle Gwyther, Post Doctoral Research Fellow, University of Western Sydney
6. Associate Professor Meg Smith, School of Social Sciences, University of Western Sydney
7. Susana Bluwol, Mental Health Association New South Wales
8. Bindu Narula Seva International (a voluntary, NGO organisation that applies the voluntary services of local South Asian professionals to support new migrants from South Asia with all settlement and social welfare issues).
9. Graham West, State Minister for Juvenile Justice, Youth and Volunteering
10. Paul Nunnari, Policy Adviser to the Minister for Juvenile Justice, Youth and Volunteering
11. Ian Archer-Wright, Manager, Volunteering Unit, Office of Strategic Operations, Department of Premier and Cabinet, New South Wales Government
12. Tony Wiseheart, Project Director, Volunteering Unit, Office of Strategic Operations, Department of Premier and Cabinet, New South Wales Government
13. Delilah Shinko, Auburn Migrant Resource Centre
14. Patricia Giannotto, Executive Officer, Sheetal Challam, Project Officer, Executive, Community Relations Commission
15. Lisa Hagan, lead facilitator Community Mentor Program and Elise Sernik, Project Officer, Professional Services, Social Ventures Australia
16. Lynne Dalton, Chief Executive Officer, Odessa O'Brien, Volunteer Services Manager and Corporate Volunteering Manager, Geoff Copeland, Manager, School of Volunteer Management, The Centre for Volunteering
17. Jane Kenny, Executive Officer, Sydney Community Foundation
18. Catherine Mahony, Deputy Director, NCOSS (National Council of Social Service of New South Wales)
19. Matthew Salier, Volunteer Engagement Manager, the Smith Family
20. Tim Carroll, Artistic Director, Bankstown Youth Development Project
21. Helen Clark, Senior Project Officer, Volunteers State Library of New South Wales
22. Professor Fagan, Emeritus Professor of Human Geography and Deputy Director, Macquarie University Centre for Research on Social Inclusion
23. Matt Jones, Director, Social Alchemy
24. Mei Yi Leung, Business Support Co-ordinator, Susana Ng, Multicultural Development Officer and Michelle Thomas, Super V Multicultural Program, City of Sydney Council
25. Dr Genevieve Nelson, Research Officer, Social Policy and Research, Jude Teicke, Evaluation Project Officer and Amanda Gruhn, Manager, Volunteer Programs, The Benevolent Society
26. Alan Bates, Manager, Volunteer Services, Wesley Mission Sydney
27. Gary Moore, Director Community Services, Marrickville Council

28. Andrew Coogan, General Manager, Good Company
29. Ralph Forinash, Environmental Levy Coordinator, Gareth Debney, Bushland Manager and Megan Hughes, Bushcare Officer North Sydney Council
30. Gemma Egelston, National Volunteer Coordinator and Fiona Ivits, Communications and Training Coordinator, National Community Services Mission Australia
31. Mehmet Ozalp, Co- Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Affinity Intercultural Foundation
32. Jhan Leach, Manager, Mohamad Osman Fofana and Lynette Tomlinson, volunteers, South Sydney Community Aid Multicultural Neighbourhood Centre
33. Kate Scholl, Volunteer Development Coordinator, Wendy Oxley, Manager, Special Works, Teresa Harm, Manager, Vincentian Social Action Centre and Greg Hogan, Good Works Team Manager
34. Doug Taylor, United Way Sydney

Phone interviews

1. Professor Christine Inglis, Director, Multicultural and Migration Research Centre, University of Sydney
2. Teresa Grove, GE Money
3. Gina Perks, ACE Unit Coordinator, Adult and Community Education, NSW Department of Education and Training
4. Colin Rosenfeld, Community Project Officer, Randwick City Council
5. Rosemary Conn, NSW/ACT State Manager, the Beacon Foundation
6. Bob Richards, Principal Adviser for Projects, Office for Volunteers, Attorney General's Department, Government of South Australia
7. Faten Dana, President Muslim Women's Welfare of Australia

Email interview

1. Lindy Drew, Community Relations Project Officer, Local Government Association of Queensland

Appendix 2 Information about Programmes and Initiatives

State Government

The Adult Continuing Education Unit (ACE) which is part of the New South Wales Department of Education and Training, carried out a pilot project with the State Emergency and Rural Fire Services to increase the diversity of their volunteer pool, which was predominantly white. They used their links with more diverse communities to set up training programmes at local colleges and are working with the Emergency and Fire Services to increase the cultural awareness of their staff. Each programme costs about A\$4,000 and this year they are spending about A\$100,000 to run 14 induction programmes (for volunteers) and 12 cultural awareness programmes (for staff).

The State Library of New South Wales has a team of about 154 volunteers, coordinated by one paid officer. The volunteers supplement the work of paid staff, doing both back office tasks like transcribing World War I diaries (a time intensive task that would never be done by paid workers) and front of house tasks e.g. library tours. The Volunteer Programme offers the community an opportunity to take an active role in supporting and promoting the collections, services and programmes of the State Library.

Community Relations Commission

In New South Wales, principles of multiculturalism are enshrined in legislation – the Community Relations Commission and Principles of Multiculturalism Act 2000 (5). There are only a few states in Australia that have done this so far. The Community Relations Commission (5) in New South Wales is a statutory authority and has been in existence for about 20 years. Part of their function is to monitor how well government departments in NSW are doing in implementing policies and programmes and their impact on cohesion. The main vehicle for implementing the principles of multi culturalism within the public sector in New South Wales is the Ethnic Affairs Priorities Statement (EAPS) programme (5). This appears to be similar to the Equality Standard in the UK as it provides a framework by which to measure an agency's progress and commitment to equalities.

The Community Relations Commission (CRC) has worked over a long period of time to develop strong links with minority ethnic communities so when there is an issue they approach the Commission for support. When there is a crisis point, the CRC brings relevant community leaders together with senior officers from key state departments using a procedure they call Complan (Community Relations Crisis Management Plan (6)).

Council programmes

The **City of Sydney Council** has a volunteering programme called Super V. The programme is coordinated by a full time paid officer. Super V supports various community organisations and projects e.g a multi cultural walking talking group. This brings people together who need to improve their English. It is done in an informal way while a volunteer leads them around parts of Sydney – it therefore helps new arrivals familiarise themselves. The Super V programme has also trained up bilingual volunteers to talk to their respective communities about the importance of recycling. The programme costs the authority about A\$10,000 a year to run plus staff time.

In addition to the Super V programme, different units within the council also have volunteers complementing the work of paid staff e.g. in archives and teams working with older and disabled people.

Marrickville is known as the heart of multiculturalism in Sydney. **Marrickville Council** has a two-pronged approach to inclusion – celebrating diversity e.g. through community events like street festivals, and targeted work aimed at specific communities e.g. the All Nations Soccer

Cup that is promoted during Refugee Week. A new initiative is a multi-faith round table, which brings religious leaders together over dinner to discuss topics of tolerance and diversity and the contribution their faith communities can make. (The University of Western Sydney recently carried out research into the levels of volunteering in congregations and found a positive correlation).

North Sydney Council has a Streets Alive programme where residents help care for public land (open space). Sites range from small planted areas around the base of street trees to extensively landscaped areas hundreds of square metres in size. This programme has been running for about seven years and is about to expand from one council officer to two. The initial budget for this programme was A\$35,000 and it has now grown to about A\$186,000.

Bankstown Council is one of the largest Local Government Areas in New South Wales, with approximately 180,000 residents speaking more than 60 different languages. In June 2005, Bankstown City Council held the inaugural Bankstown Bites Food Festival. Working with the **Bankstown Youth Development Service** and volunteers, this event promoted local food retailers and also involved street performers.

In November 2006, **Lismore City Council** started the Living Library Project. This project has now spread across Australia and creates links between majority and minority communities. Residents can 'borrow' volunteers to have an informal conversation with them about their life and culture. The concept gives people from different walks of life the opportunity to share their experiences with 'readers' who want to know more about the lives of others. The 'books' in the Living Library are people representing groups frequently confronted by prejudice and/or discrimination.

The Voluntary Sector

There are umbrella organisations that provide infrastructure support to the community and voluntary sector in New South Wales, in a similar way to organisations in the UK. Two such organisations are NCOSS and The Centre for Volunteering.

NCOSS is the Council of Social Service of New South Wales. It is part of a network of State and Territory Councils of Social Service linked to the federal body, ACOSS (the Australian Council of Social Service). It is the peak body for the social and community services sector in New South Wales and works with its members on behalf of disadvantaged people and communities. Their members range from the smallest community-based services to the largest welfare organisations e.g. charities, church groups, local councils, consumer organisations and child care services. Their advocacy work includes a major annual pre-Budget submission to the State Government and coordination of community sector responses to the Budget once it has been handed down.

The Centre for Volunteering delivers a variety of programmes including:

- accredited training for volunteers
- a Student Community Involvement Programme – SCIP – which links students to community organisations. This linking happens via seminars held at schools, involving speakers from a wide range of community organisations who require volunteers. It is partly funded by the State Government.
- the NSW Volunteer of the Year Awards. The Centre started this last year to raise the profile of volunteering. The winner gets about A\$200 which goes to their organisation. There is a small amount of state funding for this event. The 2008 Award Ceremony was held in Parliament House.
- links to volunteering opportunities as part of return to work courses run by local colleges

- the free Bridge to Volunteering programme where volunteer trainers run weekly morning sessions telling potential volunteers what is involved in volunteering. About half the participants are from non English speaking backgrounds.

In the future the Centre wants to develop a mentoring system for board members (i.e. management committee members) linking experienced committee members to new ones.

The Smith Family is a national independent social enterprise that supports disadvantaged Australian children to improve their futures through education. One of their programmes involves mentors who support children through educational transition points e.g. from school to university. They have about 1200 to 1500 people working with them as mentors every year. They are developing an alumni structure so that people who have been mentored in the past can go on to mentor others in the future. They also have a system whereby local residents sponsor individual children to help with their schooling costs, so that the Smith Family can offer scholarships. At the moment they have about 18000 supporters and about 30000 children. They have a centralised administration process staffed by volunteers that manages the relationship between children and sponsors.

Bankstown Youth Development Service (BYDS) has carried out intergenerational work with the Greek community. This has included work in schools with children writing about their grandmothers and with the Greek Older Women's Network e.g. linking them to White Ribbon Day (raises awareness of domestic violence). They have also used oral history as a way of capturing local experiences, both through training local children to carry out interviews as part of their history syllabus and also working with local Greek women to produce a book about their experiences of settling in Sydney. This book is now something that the Service sells. The Service has also worked with local residents and businesses to create the Faces of Bankstown mural to celebrate their contribution to the local area.

The Auburn Migrant Resource Centre is one of 12 such centres in New South Wales. It is a community based, non-government organisation, operated by community members from the various cultures who have settled in the area. They provide support to migrants and refugees to help them settle into the area through direct case work, community development and family support. Some of their projects include youth camps with a focus on crime prevention (run jointly with the police), family barbecues and the development of a community garden.

The Benevolent Society was established in 1813 and is Australia's oldest charity. It is a company limited by guarantee with more than 700 paid staff and 900 volunteers. Their purpose is to create caring and inclusive communities. They work with children, women, older people, carers and disadvantaged communities. Every year they support more than 15,700 children and adults across New South Wales and South East Queensland. The Society carries out some intergenerational work linking older people and young people through schools, for example older people attend school concerts and the younger people do home visits and read to the older people. The Society is also exploring how they can create opportunities for older and younger people to volunteer together.

The South Sydney Community Aid Multicultural Neighbourhood Centre (7,8) was set up in 1968, initially to provide support to recently arrived migrants. South Sydney has traditionally been an area of high immigration. The current population includes significant numbers of Chinese and Russian people. The Centre currently has six paid staff and a number of volunteers who run a range of programmes including English language classes, a multi-cultural cooking group, tax help and financial budgeting advice and the Wesley Uniting Employment Work for the Dole Programme. They also run a Life Experience Counts Programme which is a

seven week course supporting participants to get into paid employment. The Centre also provides case management support for refugees.

Social Ventures Australia (SVA) is a non-profit organisation that was set up in 2002 by The Benevolent Society, The Smith Family, WorkVentures and the AMP Foundation. Their vision was to “enhance Australia’s social fabric by developing innovative and entrepreneurial social programs into sustainable high impact ventures”. (www.socialventures.com.au). Their priority areas of activity are working with young people, indigenous community building, older people, employment and the environment. They help new entrepreneurs to develop their programmes, provide multi-year funding and tailored support and also have a broader consulting arm that has been working with the not-for-profit sector since 2007. About 50% of their funding comes from individuals, families and family foundations and the balance from the corporate sector. 20% of contributions go to fund SVA’s core costs.

Faith organisations

Mission Australia (9) was created in 2001 when the individual City Missions across various states in Australia came together. They are a national non-denominational Christian organisation. They operate more than 450 services across Australia and in the last year assisted more than 330,000 people. They work with about 1100 volunteers nationally who support a variety of projects around homelessness, support to families, work with young people and employment and training initiatives. More specific examples include home tutors who teach English to new arrivals and the Links to Learning scheme which is specifically aimed at keeping young people in schools or encouraging them to return. This is a referral service and involves volunteers supporting trained teachers who work with small groups of students to prepare children to re-enter the school system.

Wesley Mission (10) has been operating for almost 200 years and is part of The Uniting Church in Australia Property Trust (NSW) which is a body constituted by the Uniting Church in Australia Act 1977. This means that Wesley Mission is part of a statutory corporation. They have charitable status. They have 2709 staff and 3050 volunteers across New South Wales and run 235 services. These include supported accommodation services, Lifeline Sydney (similar to the Samaritans), financial counselling, hospitals, family support and employment services.

The St Vincent de Paul Society (“Vinnies”) carries out a range of projects (known as Special Works) across New South Wales. One of the Special Works is the Vincentian Social Action Centre in the Wollongong Diocese. The Centre has a few programmes in housing estates. On one estate fortnightly community lunches are run to welcome new residents, on another estate a home visiting service provides support to isolated and vulnerable people and across the diocese there is a friendship support programme for people living with mental illness. The Centre has also worked to support local community action such as the establishment of a community laundromat and cafe.

The Affinity Intercultural Foundation (11) (www.affinity.org.au) was set up in 2001 to meet the needs of the Muslim community to interact with greater society and to increase the awareness of the general public of the Muslim community, its religion and culture. The Foundation’s activities focus on the three key areas of dialogue and building relationships, education and information services and youth activities. In 2007, the Foundation completed over 100 projects. These included opening Muslim homes during Ramadan, a Muslim Youth Conference, a Women of Faith dinner and arranging for Muslims to visit churches during Easter and Christmas.

The Muslim Women's Welfare of Australia (www.mwwa.org.au) mainly deals with newly arrived Muslim women and women who have been out of the workforce for a while. One of their aims is to bridge the gap between Muslim women and the wider community. The Association tries to promote every government project to its members e.g. breast cancer awareness. They also aim to rectify misconceptions about Muslim women. For example, last year they held a public forum for International Women's Day where key issues like the hijab, divorce and arranged marriages were discussed.

Foundations

The Beacon Foundation was set up about 20 years ago as a charitable trust and works to address youth unemployment. One of its programmes is the No Dole Project, where the Foundation links with schools and works with 15 to 16 year olds. It provides a variety of activities over a school year including mock interviews, site visits and work experience. The Foundation works with the private sector who provide a range of support including staff to carry out the mock interviews and opportunities for work experience placements. There are 20 – 25 paid employees who work across Australia, one of whom is based in Sydney. The Foundation estimates that one paid coordinator can support programmes in 10 – 12 schools and has found that programmes are easier to deliver to school clusters.

Sydney Community Foundation is an independent, charitable community foundation. It was set up about four years ago and is building a permanently endowed fund. The interest on this fund goes to support local community projects. They have a range of specific programmes, for example to support women, grandparents and young people at risk.

Some examples of corporate volunteering and programmes

United Way is an international organisation that started in America about 120 years ago and now has a presence in 46 countries. United Way Sydney endeavours "to make Sydney a great place for everyone to live and belong" (12). United Way Sydney runs community investment , workplace giving, social education programmes and a corporate volunteering programme called Corporate Connect. In 2008 they supported 48 community organisations, raised just under A\$3M and involved 1500 volunteers in the Corporate Connect programme.

A range of corporate partners is involved with the work of the **Smith Family**. One of the programmes that the Smith Family run is around financial inclusivity. This is sponsored by a large bank, that also runs an incentive savings scheme where they match every dollar saved by a family. They have also run specific projects together with corporate sponsors, for example a partnership between Colgate and Woolworths. Woolworths promoted the sale of Colgate toothpaste in aisle end bins and Colgate donated a percentage of their profits to the Smith Family. Some companies sponsor a couple of hundred children via the Smith Family's education scholarship programmes.

GE has a philanthropic arm, the **GE Foundation**. The company has a strong commitment to involvement in communities where it has a presence. One of its programmes is the Matching Gifts Program that matches individual contributions of \$25 or more made by their employees. In December 2008, GE re-prioritized its GE Foundation resources and announced it would direct more than \$20 million in funding during 2009 to organisations responding to the impact of the economic downturn.

Good Company was set up in 2001 in Melbourne and expanded to Sydney in 2003. It is a not-for-profit organisation and uses the internet to linked skilled volunteers to community and voluntary groups. The organisations requiring volunteers post wishes; those wishing to volunteer register. It is up to individuals and organisations to search the site for suitable

opportunities/matches. Good Company has tended to attract younger volunteers as they are using the internet. They also have an employee volunteering programme where they charge companies to match their staff with appropriate community opportunities. In addition, Good Company organises regular networking events in Melbourne and Sydney, an annual Wish Exchange event in Sydney and provides a monthly newsletter to volunteers and community groups.

The National Australia Bank has a large programme of virtual volunteering where they free staff up to do work for charities at their desks e.g. database maintenance.

The Centre for Volunteering has started business breakfasts as a way for companies to network and discuss employee volunteering. They invite speakers from companies already running programmes to tell participants about their work.

A number of organisations run fundraising dinners in aid of specific charities. A speaker from the charity attends to promote their work. Participants pay more than the cost of the dinner with the surplus going to the charity. Raffles/silent auctions are also commonly held to raise additional funds on the night.

Work elsewhere in Australia

Adelaide has a public holiday, usually the first Monday in June, to commemorate volunteering. On that day the Government of South Australia, Office for Volunteers holds a free public event. In addition, on the 5th December, to coincide with the UN International Day of the Volunteer, they hold a State Volunteer Congress, linked to the partnership that they have with the voluntary sector. (This partnership sets out a working agreement which appears to be similar to the UK Compact). Every year this Congress considers a particular theme; last year the focus was on communication. Adelaide also has a Voluntary Partnership Action Committee and a number of projects develop from this. They include a project working with new immigrants to encourage them to volunteer to both use their skills and help them settle in better. The government in Adelaide runs a range of volunteer programmes to support their work e.g. in parks (with Friends of...organisations) and in hospitals. There are 391 such programmes currently operating and just over 139,000 volunteers. In addition, government departments are encouraged to release staff for corporate volunteering. There is an Act that allows staff two paid days off a year, to do a range of things, including community work.

The Local Government Association of **Queensland** identified the South East Queensland area as the main area for migrants and refugees. The challenge of working in this area is addressing the increasing issues of intercultural conflict. This is being done via projects focusing on social and economic inclusion. An example given was of Brisbane which has adopted a 3% refugee background employment target. Brisbane and some other councils are joining the International Coalition of Cities Against Racism and Discrimination run by UNESCO. Volunteers are involved in many other projects in the Queensland. An example given was of the Volunteer Ambassador's programme run by Moreton Bay Council. This trains and supports representatives of all the main CALD communities to interact effectively with government around services/ barriers/ opportunities. This is managed by a paid part time coordinator. Another example given was the Capricorn Coast Volunteer Literacy Programme run by Livingstone Shire Council. This programme teaches English by linking community volunteers to new arrivals who need English assistance, so they receive 1:1 support

Appendix 3 Definitions of Cohesion in Australia and the UK

The current Australian government has highlighted inclusion as a key policy initiative. They have agreed a set of Principles for Social Inclusion in Australia. These include both aspirational principles and principles of approach. The aspirational principles are reducing disadvantage, increasing social, civil and economic participation and a greater voice combined with greater responsibility. The principles of approach are:

- building on individual and community strengths
- building partnerships with key stakeholders
- developing tailored services
- giving a high priority to early intervention and prevention
- building joined up services and whole of government(s) solutions
- using evidence and integrated data to inform policy
- using locational approaches
- planning for sustainability

To achieve its goals, the Government has established performance targets relating to educational opportunity, reduction of homelessness and tackling the complexities of Indigenous disadvantage. Further information can be found at www.socialinclusion.gov.au.

In Australia, there appears to be no one generally accepted definition of social inclusion or community cohesion. This is borne out by an Australian Institute of Family Studies report (13) and recent work by the Benevolent Society. The Society carried out a literature review (14) which included reference to definitions of social cohesion. The Society concluded that “there are competing definitions of social cohesion...The most common definition described social cohesion as social capital and social networks. This definition...utilised a ...framework of social capital with three key elements – bonding, bridging and linking capital. ...it is vital for communities to develop all three types of social capital in order for positive outcomes to ensue”. This literature review referred to joint research by The Benevolent Society and the University of Sydney (“Creating better communities: a study of social capital creation in four communities”) which identified factors that positively contributed towards a community’s social cohesion. These factors include participation in local organisations and volunteering. (“Social capital describes the ...networks among people and the shared values which arise from those networks. Greater interaction between people generates a greater sense of community spirit. Definitions of social capital vary, but the main aspects include citizenship, 'neighbourliness', social networks and civic participation. www.statistics.gov.uk).

In the UK, the Government has suggested a new definition of community cohesion (www.communities.gov.uk) in response to the ‘Our Shared Future’ report from the independent Commission on Integration and Cohesion:

“Community cohesion is what must happen in all communities to enable different groups of people to get on well together. A key contributor to community cohesion is integration which is what must happen to enable new residents and existing residents to adjust to one another.

Our vision of an integrated and cohesive community is based on **three foundations**:

- people from different backgrounds having similar life opportunities
- people knowing their rights and responsibilities
- people trusting one another and trusting local institutions to act fairly

And **three key ways of living together**:

- a shared future vision and sense of belonging
- a focus on what new and existing communities have in common, alongside a recognition of the value of diversity
- strong and positive relationships between people from different backgrounds”.

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