

# Student Volunteering, Legislative Complexity & the Digital Age:

**It's all happening here in South-East Queensland, Australia**

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# The transformation of volunteering

- If the whole world is changing how can volunteering stay the same?
- It can't & it hasn't.
- As the world changes, so do the trends affecting volunteering.
- Similarly, the experiences & practices of volunteer managers (VMs) will also change.
- In order to capitalise on this transformation, & ensure a bright future for volunteering, these changes need to be understood...

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# What does this change look like?

- **Structural trends impacting volunteering in Australia & internationally;**
  - Technological Changes
  - Legislative Changes
  - University Student Volunteering
  - Corporate Volunteering
  - Episodic Volunteering

**Globally, VMs are experiencing a shift from old or 'traditional' forms of volunteering to 'new' & diversifying forms of civic engagement. The five trends listed above can be seen as major parts of this 'new' model.**

# What about in South-East Queensland?

- Are our experiencing these 'new' changes as well?
- To what extent?
- What about more local trends not captured by these structural changes?
- Are more 'traditional' issues (i.e., training) just as important?

**No research had yet been undertaken to explore the daily experiences & ideas of VMs in SEQ. Therefore, the Futuring Volunteer Management project aimed to give voice to what is happening on the ground & contribute to preparations for the future.**

# Futuring Volunteer Management Forum

- Brought together 84 VMs from SEQ
- Four specific themes were explored;

- 1. Trends affecting volunteering within their organisation**
- 2. Challenges affecting volunteering within their organisation**
- 3. Best practices for recruitment & retention**
- 4. Critical changes required for a bright future**

- Each VM provided five suggestions for each theme.
- Of the 420 written responses collected, similar topics were then categorised & counted.
- The results provide us with a snap-shot of volunteer management in SEQ.

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# Key Findings

## *Structural Trends*

- Remarkably, VMs reported that all five trends were influencing their daily practice...



University student  
volunteering

17



Legislative  
changes

16



Technological  
changes

15



Corporate  
volunteering

10



Episodic  
volunteering

8

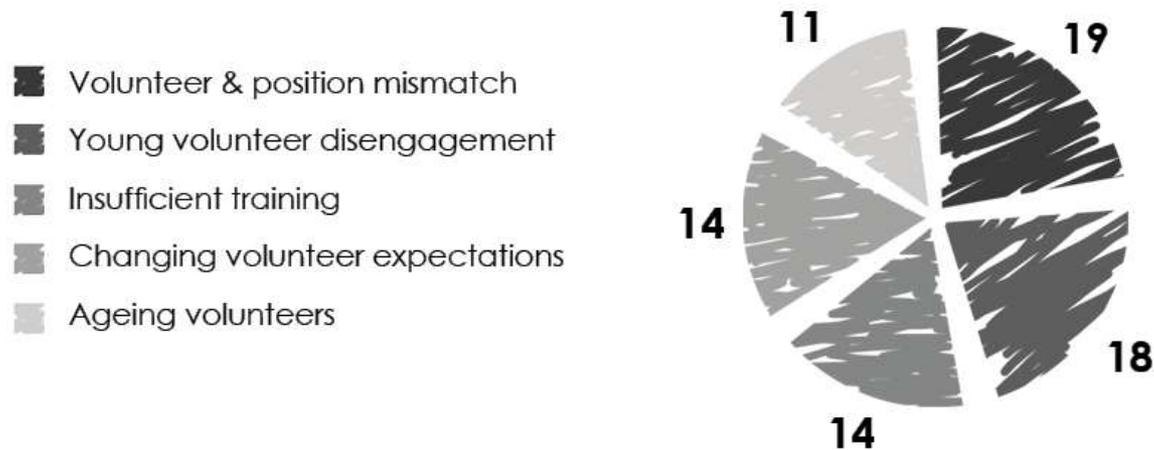
Number of times VMs reported each trend

These trends, however, produce problems. VMs mentioned students are “*volunteering for the wrong reasons – only to gain experience*”, whilst legislation is “*binding volunteers in red tape*”. Similarly, VMs “*lack experience & tools to update*” websites, plus “*newer technology scares older people*”.

# Key Findings

## SEQ-Specific Trends

- Interestingly, VMs also reported local trends just as consistently & frequently...



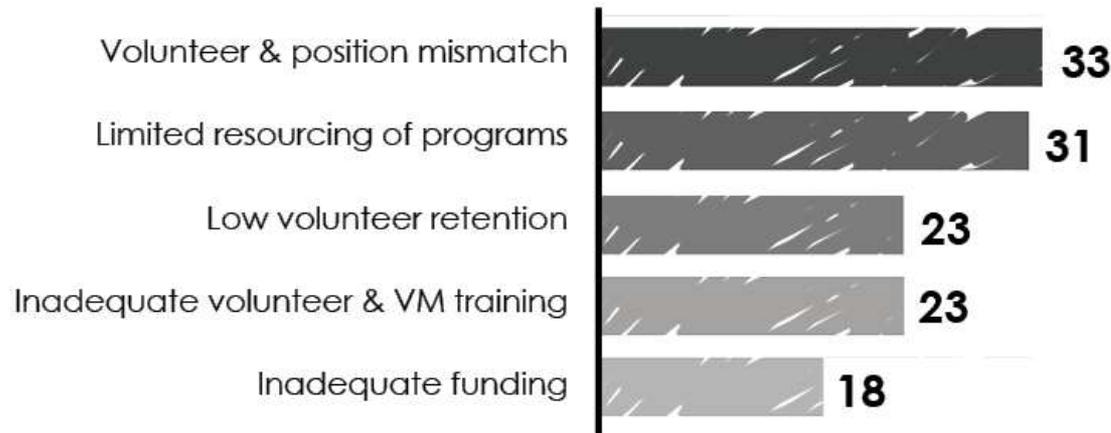
Number of times VMs reported each trend

**On mismatching VMs revealed increasing needs to *“utilise the skills volunteers have & place them in appropriate programs, so they don't get bored”*. On expectations, *“volunteers now seek meaningful tasks plus increased responsibility”* & *“mundane everyday tasks are no longer considered an experience”*.**

# Key Findings

## Challenges

- Surprisingly, the challenges affecting VMs & their organisations were more ‘traditional’ than ‘new’...



Number of times VMs reported each challenge

All challenges involved common shortages. On resourcing VMs reported *“No pre-designed systems or templates are provided - we make it up ourselves”*. On training, *“VMs need more training to manage personalities & volunteers.”* On funding, *“nothing available for volunteer development/recognition”*.

# Key Findings

## *Best Practices for Recruitment & Retention*

- Best Practices identified by VMs included both ‘traditional’ & ‘new’ approaches...



Volunteer  
recognition

**38**



Volunteer  
inclusion

**27**



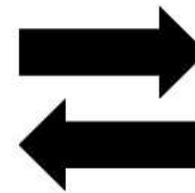
Providing  
appropriate  
training

**27**



Using online  
resources &  
websites

**26**



Volunteer  
& position  
matching

**23**

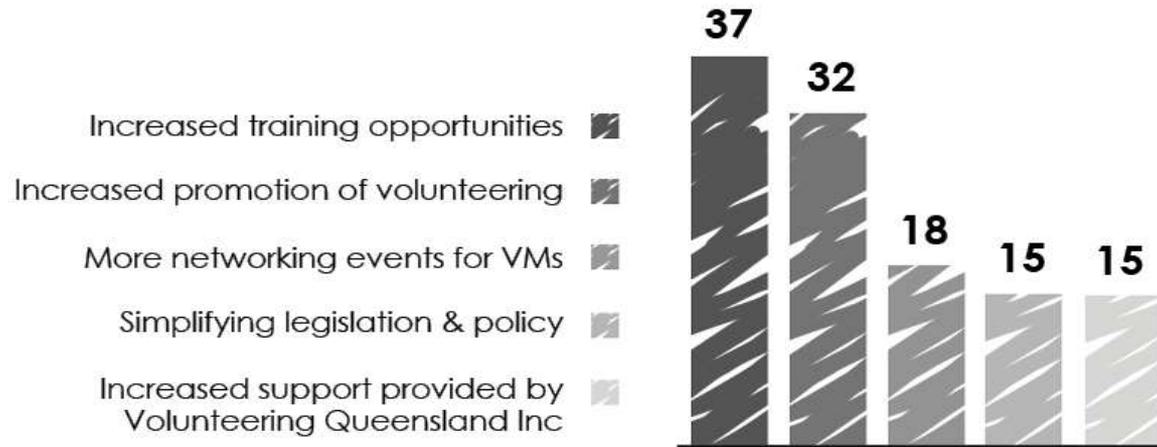
Number of times VMs reported each best practice

**Volunteer recognition & inclusion are the most effective ‘traditional’ retention strategies. However, the ‘new’ approach of online resources & websites is gaining popularity for recruitment, as mentioned “so for placing an add on a free website [like SEEK], I have 10 interviews planned for next week”.**

# Key Findings

## *Critical Changes for a bright volunteering future*

- Changes to both ‘traditional’ & ‘new’ areas were identified...with a call to optimise emerging trends & simplify legislation



Number of times VMs reported each challenge

**VMs suggested promotion could sell ‘new’ forms of engagement by “re-defining what volunteering is, advertising this to the community & breaking down the traditional idea”.**

# Adaptive Leadership

## When do we need adaptive leadership?

In a stable environment all you need is authoritative expertise. During this time there is an appropriate dependency on expertise, on authority and on technical leadership.

In **times of change** authority structures no longer have the expertise and therefore dependency on that system is not longer appropriate. That is when Adaptive Leadership is required – when there is a need for innovation, creativity, boundary pushing- a need to adapt.

# Adaptive Leadership

How is a adaptive leadership different from technical leadership?

| Task        | Technical                                       | Adaptive  |
|-------------|---|---|
| Direction   | Provide problem definition and solution         | Identify the adaptive challenge; frame key question and issues                  |
| Protection  | Protect from external threats                   | Disclose external threats   |
| Order       |   |   |
| Orientation | Orient people to their current roles            | Disorient current roles and resist orienting people into new roles too quickly  |
| Conflict    | Mitigation and conflict resolution              | Allowing for conflict to emerge and explore its causes                          |
| Norm        | Maintain social, cultural and behavioural norms | Challenge social, cultural and behavioural norms or allow them to be challenged |

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# Adaptive Leadership

## Core Adaptive Practices

- Act as leaders as catalysts rather than problem solvers
- Identify and name adaptive challenge
- Focus on values
- Initiate process of change, experiment and take risks smartly
- Challenge the traditional models, conventions and meaning
- Move people to action

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# Tying it all together: Part 1

- So, returning to the opening question; are VMs in Queensland confronted with the 'new' changes to volunteering?
- Based on our findings, **yes**. Many of the daily challenges & pressures voiced by VMs are emerging from the five wider forces.
- Hence, Queensland's voluntary sector is transforming in a similar way to other developed nations.
- And thanks to the insights VMs provided at the forum; strategies to future-proof SEQ volunteering can now benefit by considering these emerging patterns of participation, motivation & engagement.
- However...

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# Tying it all together: Part 2

- The collective voice of VMs also suggests that both ‘traditional’ issues & local trends are also central to a bright volunteering future.
- Importantly, across each of the four themes, efficient volunteer-position matching & accessible training for both VMs & volunteers were repeatedly emphasised.
- Moreover, all of the key challenges proposed by VMs related to ‘traditional’ volunteering (i.e., funding, organisational resources & retention).
- Surprisingly, ‘new’ types of challenges were less discussed.

# In conclusion...

- Overall, volunteering in Queensland is indeed in transition towards newer models of engagement.
- However, based on the feedback & ideas of local VMs, both the 'new' & 'traditional' issues need consideration to manage this transformation.
- This sense was captured by one VM at our forum who wrote a bright future involves...

***“Breaking through the barriers of time, age & technology; by making volunteering a fun & valuable thing to do, aimed at people that want to commit over the long term or only a week”.***