

# **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Volunteering May 2012**

Literature Review

## Introduction

To date, there has been minimal research into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in volunteering in Australia. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2006 Census found that over 15% of Indigenous people indicated that they completed voluntary work in the previous 12 months.<sup>1</sup> Research reports that the majority of volunteering in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities occurs as helping others within their communities, and these activities can vary from caring for family to supporting community organisations. In order to encourage more Aboriginal and Torres Strait volunteers, there is a need to understand how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people define and participate in volunteering. This review outlines the current research available on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander volunteering in order to assist the formulation of informed policy and practice recommendations. It is hoped that the findings of research into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander volunteering will contribute to more sensitive policy development and innovative program initiatives and ultimately encourage, support and recognise more culturally diverse experiences of volunteering.

### Concept of volunteering

The formal concept of volunteering reflects the norms and values of a non-indigenous, liberal capitalist society.<sup>2</sup> Volunteering is defined by Volunteering Australia as an activity which takes place through not for profit organisations or projects and is undertaken:

- to be of benefit to the community and the volunteer;
- of the volunteer's own free will and without coercion;
- for no financial payment; and
- in designated volunteer positions only.

This definition and principles of volunteering (see Appendix 1) are the result of a national consultation undertaken by Volunteering Australia in 1996 with a wide range of stakeholders including volunteers, not for profit organisations, policy makers and unions<sup>3</sup>. The definition emphasises the professional status and protection of volunteers in not-for-profit incorporated associations via standards of organisational practice such as the provision of police checks, insurance cover, Occupational Health and Safety, designated position descriptions, training and supervised support. This concept of volunteering, as only occurring through not-for-profit organisations, is also endorsed by key research organisations, including the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), (see Appendix 2 ) who define volunteering as 'the provision of unpaid help willingly undertaken in the form of time, service or skills, to an organisation or group'<sup>4</sup> ..

As a result, the majority of volunteering research available explicitly excludes any forms of less structured and informal volunteering. This narrow definition is in line with Western notions of volunteering which emphasise free choice, personal fulfilment and formal, structured activities and acts to marginalise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, where volunteering is often informal and considered to be obligatory within a cultural framework of reciprocity.<sup>5</sup> Research has found that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians engage in informal voluntary work more than non-indigenous Australians; however informal volunteering networks are often overlooked because they exist in unstructured environments. Therefore, much research that has attempted to measure the levels of voluntary activity in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities does not gain a complete and accurate picture of the real voluntary contribution people are making to

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<sup>1</sup> ABS Census. Voluntary Work, Australia, 2006.

<sup>2</sup> Kerr, L., Savelsberg, H., Sparrow, S. & Tedmanson, D. 2001, *Experiences and perceptions of volunteering in Indigenous and non-English speaking background communities*. Adelaide: Social Policy Research Group, University of South Australia.

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/html/s02\\_article/article\\_view.asp?id=1954&nav\\_cat\\_id=221&nav\\_top\\_id=50](http://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/html/s02_article/article_view.asp?id=1954&nav_cat_id=221&nav_top_id=50).

<sup>4</sup> Nelson, G., & Gruhn, A. *From research to practice: Increasing the Diversity of Australian Volunteers*, Commissioned by NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet

<sup>5</sup> Kerr et al. (2001)

society<sup>6</sup>. For example, many current and emerging approaches by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to build and sustain community engagement, community participation and active citizenship, such as mentoring and night patrols, are often not included under the formal definition of volunteering.

In spite of the benefits the formal definition offers for the protection and status of volunteers, this concept excludes by definition spontaneous, informal and extra-institutional activities. There has been considerable recent research around extending the concept of volunteering to encompass different interpretations of what it means to give of one's time and effort to others, in order to appreciate the experiences of those who do so outside of mainstream organisations and dominant paradigms<sup>7</sup>. Cultural differences mean much volunteering activity occurring in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities is generally not acknowledged, fails to attract both material support and wider recognition, is not formalised and operates within the commonly-accepted frames of reference particular to that community. A broader conception of volunteering and community effort could provide important recognition and understanding of how social capital is actually formed in a contemporary multicultural Australian society<sup>8</sup>.

### Why do Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people volunteer?

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people become involved in volunteering because helping others in need is simply a way of life for many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. Volunteering is embedded within their cultures.<sup>9</sup> Cultural factors play an important part in the valuing of, and attitudes towards, volunteering. The research shows that conceptions of what constitutes volunteering and its social significance are highly influenced by structures, values and norms present in the cultural setting. This is evidenced by the large numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders who devote their time to helping at risk young people from complex social backgrounds.<sup>10</sup> The activities undertaken by the Elders are consistent with other Aboriginal populations, such as New Zealand and Canada indicating their unique position within these cultures. Similarly in the Maori (New Zealand) context, the "mahi aroha" (helping others), is more often about working within a group for the mutual benefit of members of the group.<sup>11</sup>

### Indigenous Volunteers

The limited research on Indigenous volunteers has primarily been conducted in Australia and Canada due to the fact that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people account for a significant portion of their entire population (2.5% in Australia<sup>12</sup>; 3.7% in Canada)<sup>13</sup>. This body of research has found that generally Indigenous individuals volunteer to benefit their communities, they volunteer in informal ways, and they are motivated to volunteer by a sense of obligation and necessity.

Kerr, L., Savelsberg, H., Sparrow, S. & Tedmanson, D (2001) have undertaken the most extensive research of the perceptions of volunteering in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to date which included in depth interviews with 3 focus groups, 10 community

<sup>6</sup> Nelson, G., & Gruhn, A. *From research to practice: Increasing the Diversity of Australian Volunteers*, Commissioned by NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet.

<sup>7</sup> Bittman, M & Fisher, K. (2006) *Exploring the economic and social value of present patterns of volunteering in Australia*, Social Policy Research Centre, University of New South Wales.

<sup>8</sup> Kerr, L., Savelsberg, H., Sparrow, S. & Tedmanson, D. 2001, *Experiences and perceptions of volunteering in Indigenous and non-English speaking background communities*. Adelaide: Social Policy Research Group, University of South Australia.

<sup>9</sup> Kerr, L., Savelsberg, H., Sparrow, S. & Tedmanson, D. 2001, *Experiences and perceptions of volunteering in Indigenous and non-English speaking background communities*. Adelaide: Social Policy Research Group, University of South Australia, p 35

<sup>10</sup> Barush and TenBarge, 2003; Cook.1999. *Indigenous Elders in rural America*, Journal of Gerontological Social Work, 4 (1-2), 121-136.

<sup>11</sup> *Mahi Aroha – Maori Perspectives on Volunteering and Cultural Obligations*, Office for the Community and Voluntary Sector, New Zealand, Foreword.

<sup>12</sup> *"Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Population"*. 1301.0 – Year Book Australia, 2008. Australian Bureau of Statistics. 7 February 2008. <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/bb8db737e2af84b8ca2571780015701e/68AE74ED632E17A6CA2573D200110075?opendocument>.

<sup>13</sup> Hoerber, L (2010) *Experiences of volunteering in sport: Views from Aboriginal individuals*. Sport Management Review (Elsevier Science), Vol. 13 Issue 4, p345-354.

leaders and a further 22 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Kerr et al. (2001) found that the reality for many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians is that volunteer effort is a key aspect of racial and cultural survival, self-determination and mutual responsibility<sup>14</sup>. Research into perceptions of volunteering also found many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander volunteers do unpaid work and extend this kinship support to invest in the thousands of self-determined and community-managed agencies and programs. Policies of self-determination from the late 60s have required the substantially voluntary time and effort of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on innumerable boards, committees, government inquiries and consultative bodies from local, state and national levels and often across a diverse range of issue areas including health, education, arts, sports, youth, tourism, economic development and criminal justice sectors<sup>15</sup>. Recent research indicates there are a minimum of 5,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporations across Australia with 30,000 directors, all of who volunteer their time to benefit Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their communities<sup>16</sup>. The immense contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to mainstream society through cultural tourism, contribution to land management and in advisory capacities regarding the delivery of mainstream services to all citizens is often unacknowledged by the wider society<sup>17</sup>.

Canadian research into volunteerism highlighted the importance of volunteering by Aboriginal individuals as a constructive means of addressing social issues in their communities<sup>18</sup>. Daitch et al. (2005) noted that helping others is seen as an inherent cultural value in Indigenous communities in Canada and there is a strong belief in the reciprocal nature of helping. It is understood that Indigenous people help other Indigenous people, even those they do not personally know. This notion of helping others in their cultural communities was replicated in an Australian study conducted by Warburton and McLaughlin (2005) which found that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults tended to provide support and guidance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth. These youth included not only their own kin, but also other Aboriginals as an extended view of family<sup>19</sup>. While community is often cited as a beneficiary of volunteering, Kerr and Tedmanson (2003) argued that expanding the concept of community beyond a geographical conceptualization (e.g., neighbourhood, town) to the larger and holistic idea of culture would be more inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander experiences as volunteers.

In both Canada and Australia much of the 'helping out' done by Indigenous people would be considered informal, that is it occurred outside of mainstream, formally-structured organisations and was usually unmanaged<sup>20</sup>. Some research has partially attributed the predominance of informal volunteer activity to dissatisfaction with the formalised structure of mainstream organisations and events. However, it has also been noted that there has been a shift in recent years to increased Indigenous participation in more formal volunteer opportunities or ways of 'helping out', such as organising events and serving as board members. Recent Canadian research which examined the experiences of Indigenous individuals as sport volunteers found that the primary beneficiaries of their volunteer efforts were Indigenous communities and Indigenous youth. While Indigenous volunteers did help out in formal organisations, their preference in those organisations was for relatively unstructured positions, for not being managed, and for a fun and relaxed environment<sup>21</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> Kerr et al (2001)

<sup>15</sup> National Volunteer Skills Centre (2007), *Subject Guide: Indigenous Australians and Volunteering – Take a Closer Look*, Volunteering Australia, Melbourne

<sup>16</sup> Jope, Sally (2008) *Indigenous Australian participation in international volunteering: Report on exploratory research*. Australian Volunteers International.

<sup>17</sup> Kerr, L., Savelsberg, H., Sparrow, S. & Tedmanson, D. 2001, *Experiences and perceptions of volunteering in Indigenous and non-English speaking background communities*. Adelaide: Social Policy Research Group, University of South Australia.

<sup>18</sup> Daitch, R., Short, M. P., Bertolini, R., & MacPherson, M. (2005). *It's a noble choice they've made: Sport volunteerism in small communities in the Northwest Territories*. Toronto, ON: Knowledge Development Centre, Imagine Canada.

<sup>19</sup> Warburton, J., & McLaughlin, D. (2005). 'Lots of little kindnesses': Valuing the role of older Australians as informal volunteers in the community. *Ageing and Society*, 25, 715–730.

<sup>20</sup> Hoerber, L (2010) *Experiences of volunteering in sport: Views from Aboriginal individuals*. *Sport Management Review* (Elsevier Science), Vol. 13 Issue 4, p345-354.

<sup>21</sup> Hoerber, L (2010) *Experiences of volunteering in sport: Views from Aboriginal individuals*. *Sport Management Review* (Elsevier Science), Vol. 13 Issue 4, p345-354.

These findings can have implications for the management of Indigenous volunteers both within and outside of the sporting sector.

## Measurement

There was no mainstream information about the volunteering of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians until 1994 when the first National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Survey (NATSIS) was conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). This survey found Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians were actually engaging in voluntary work at a higher rate than non-Indigenous Australians at that time: 26.9 per cent and 19 per cent respectively for those aged 15 and over, but much of this work occurred outside the framework of volunteering through an organisation<sup>22</sup>.

In 2002, the ABS conducted the first National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS) which built on the 1994 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Survey (NATSIS). It was developed in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders such as Commonwealth and State and Territory government bodies, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, Land Councils and research agencies. Individuals in both non-remote and remote areas were involved in focus groups and field testing to ensure the questions were relevant and culturally appropriate. The survey provides information about the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations of Australia for a wide range of areas of social concern including health, education, culture and labour force participation and will be conducted every 6 years.

## Comparisons on Indigenous and non-Indigenous Participation

A comparison of the 2002 NATSISS and the 2006 Voluntary Work Survey (VWS) identified a number of similarities and differences between the rates of participation, age and income, location and educational qualifications of Indigenous and non-Indigenous volunteers. The two surveys are similar in that the voluntary work questions featured in both NATSISS and the VWS focus on work with organisations and do not capture more informal activities<sup>23</sup>.

The proportion of all Australians 18 years and over who had participated in volunteering increased from 24 per cent of the population in 1995 to 35 per cent in 2006<sup>24</sup>. Similarly, 28 per cent of Indigenous Australians had undertaken voluntary work in the last 12 months in 2002 which was an increase since 1994. In the Australian population, employed people, either in full-time (34%) or part-time work (44%), had a higher volunteer rate than those who were unemployed (26%) or not in the labour force (30%)<sup>25</sup>.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians continue to have a significantly lower rate of labour force participation, and a significantly higher rate of unemployment than non-Indigenous Australians, which impacts on their levels of volunteerism. In 2008, the unemployment rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples was 16.6%, which was about four and a half times that of the rate for non-Indigenous people (3.6%). Research by Hunter (2000) and Biddle (2009), found that Indigenous Australians were also more likely to live in areas where the usual resident population (Indigenous or otherwise) is either unemployed or has low income and has relatively low levels of education and volunteerism<sup>26</sup>. Income levels have been found to directly influence volunteer participation. Indigenous Australian volunteer participation increased with income from 21.7 per cent of the lowest income quintile to 39.7 per cent of the fourth and fifth quintiles. This trend was also evident in the all Australian volunteer population.

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<sup>22</sup> Kerr, L., Savelsberg, H., Sparrow, S. & Tedmanson, D. 2001, *Experiences and perceptions of volunteering in Indigenous and non-English speaking background communities*. Adelaide: Social Policy Research Group, University of South Australia.

<sup>23</sup> 2002 NATSISS - Assessing the evidence on Indigenous socioeconomic outcomes: a focus on the 2002 NATSISS - [http://epress.anu.edu.au/caepr\\_series/no\\_26/mobile\\_devices/index.html](http://epress.anu.edu.au/caepr_series/no_26/mobile_devices/index.html)

<sup>24</sup> Jope, Sally (2008) *Indigenous Australian participation in international volunteering: Report on exploratory research*. Australian Volunteers International.

<sup>25</sup> ABS. Voluntary Work, Australia, 2006.

<sup>26</sup> Biddle, N. 2009. 'Location and segregation: The distribution of the Indigenous population across Australia's urban centres', *CAEPR Working Paper No.53*, CAEPR, ANU, Canberra.

Volunteering was more common among Indigenous Australians living in non-remote areas (32 per cent) than those in remote areas (16 per cent). However, Indigenous Australians within the 28 urban centres were less likely to live in neighbourhoods with high levels of volunteering than the general population. Conversely, volunteering was more common amongst all Australians living outside the capital cities (38 per cent) than those living in capital cities (32 per cent).

To some extent the continuing disparities in the employment outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous Australians reflect differences in their levels of education. In 2006, only a quarter (24%) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians had non-school qualifications compared with around half (46%) of the non-Indigenous population<sup>27</sup>. The results of the 2002 NATSISS identified a strong association between education levels and volunteerism. While only about 17 per cent of Indigenous Australians with education levels at Year 9 or below engaged in voluntary work, 42 per cent with non-school qualifications did so<sup>28</sup>. Indigenous Australians with academic and trade qualifications were also found to be more likely to volunteer<sup>29</sup>. While this result needs further analysis, it could reasonably be interpreted to mean that people who have invested in education have an increased tendency to re-invest in their communities through voluntary work.

## 2006 Census

The Australian Census collects data on voluntary work for an organisation or group which includes help willingly given in the form of time, services or skills to a club, organisation or association. Over 15% of Indigenous people who responded to the voluntary work question in the 2006 Census indicated that they completed voluntary work in the previous 12 months, compared with 20% of non-Indigenous people<sup>30</sup>. Indigenous females were more likely than Indigenous males to have volunteered (16% compared with 14%). For Indigenous people, those aged 45-54 years were most likely to participate in voluntary work (19%), followed by those aged 35-44 years (18%) and 55-64 years (17%). There was a similar pattern for non-Indigenous people, where the age groups most likely to participate in voluntary work were 35-44 years and 45-54 years (both 23%).

Indigenous people not in the labour force were less likely to volunteer (11%) compared with employed (18%) and unemployed Indigenous people (17%). In the non-Indigenous population, the proportion of people volunteering did not change with labour force status. As was the case in the 2002 NATSISS, for both the Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations, the likelihood of participating in voluntary work increased with income. People in the highest income quintile, based on equivalised household income, were most likely to participate in voluntary work (22% for both the Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations).

## Informal Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Volunteering

There has been increasing interest over the past few decades in identifying, acknowledging and valuing the unpaid work that supports community life. Much research argues that the unpaid care of other people's children and unpaid assistance to a person with a disability should be classified as informal volunteering. The 2006 census found that Indigenous people were more likely to care for other children (11%) than non-Indigenous people (8%). For Indigenous people, caring for other children was most likely to occur in 'very remote' (16%) and 'remote' (13%) areas. Indigenous people aged 55-64 years were most likely to care for other children (17%), followed by 45-54 year age group (15%). In comparison, 16% of non-Indigenous people aged 55-64 years cared for other children followed by 10% of non-Indigenous people aged 65 years or more<sup>31</sup>.

<sup>27</sup> ABS website -

[http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/1370.0~2010~Chapter~Aboriginal%20and%20Torres%20Strait%20Islander%20peoples%20\(4.3.6.6\)](http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/1370.0~2010~Chapter~Aboriginal%20and%20Torres%20Strait%20Islander%20peoples%20(4.3.6.6))

<sup>28</sup> 2002 NATSISS: an overview of findings about education and training.

[http://epress.anu.edu.au/caepr\\_series/no\\_26/mobile\\_devices/ch14s02.html](http://epress.anu.edu.au/caepr_series/no_26/mobile_devices/ch14s02.html). Accessed 24/11/11.

<sup>29</sup> Jope, Sally (2008) *Indigenous Australian participation in international volunteering: Report on exploratory research*. Australian Volunteers International.

<sup>30</sup> 2006 Census - Voluntary work -

<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/62CB550A4BB19F9FCA2578DB00283CCA>

<sup>31</sup> 2006 Census, ABS website

The 2006 census found that Indigenous people were more likely to provide unpaid assistance to a person with a disability than non-Indigenous people (13% compared with 11%). Indigenous females were more likely than Indigenous males to provide this assistance, 16% compared with 10%. Of Indigenous people that provided unpaid assistance to a person with a disability 25% were aged 35-44 years, 22% were 25-34 years and 20% were 15-24 years<sup>32</sup>.

## Barriers to Volunteering

In the literature, many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people identified considerable barriers to volunteering that made their voluntary activity and community effort difficult. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander volunteers report both structural and attitudinal inhibitions to participation through lack of information about volunteer supports or opportunities; the lack of culturally and linguistically appropriate information and training; financial costs—both at the individual and organisational level (for example reimbursement of expenses and assistance with training costs); and relationships with government departments and other organisations which respondents felt could do more to assist them (for example difficulties in complying with inflexible policies related to the Community Employment Development program); Centrelink restrictions; the nature of police checks; Blue Cards and access to Community Service order placements in a culturally sensitive environment).

At the individual level, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents have cited racism and feeling excluded from recognition for their volunteer efforts as barriers to participation outside of community contexts. Kerr et al (2001) found that a common issue for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents was a sense of the cultural exclusivity of formal volunteer arrangements<sup>33</sup>. Some also spoke of the need to support one's own first—given the depth of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australian disadvantage and the enormous problems facing communities—coupled with a perceived lack of support from mainstream volunteer agencies to overcome this disadvantage<sup>34</sup>.

In 2000, Volunteering ACT commenced the *Talking Together* project, funded by the Federal government's anti-racism program *Living in Harmony*. The *Talking Together* project was undertaken to form partnerships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and mainstream volunteering groups with the aim of promoting the benefits of volunteering to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians<sup>35</sup>. During this project, the 'pairing' of positions was trialled to accommodate a preference expressed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australian informants to travel and function in pairs for greater security and confidence. The final report on the *Talking Together* project, *One Way or Another* stated that it is vital for a successful cross-cultural initiative to augment 'comfort' and enhance cultural appropriateness. It was found that, in line with research findings in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander consumer experiences, both fear and shame (i.e. a heightened self-consciousness and strong reluctance to draw attention to themselves and 'stand out' in a crowd) have a strong undercurrent in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander volunteering experiences. The natural outcome to this awareness is that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are more likely to consider volunteering in safe, known environments.

Research has found that a common perception among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community respondents is that the depth and breadth of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander contribution to non-Indigenous organisations through cultural volunteering, land maintenance and advice to organisations was not widely acknowledged or appreciated. In addition the level of self help and community well being sustained by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people volunteering in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, on Boards,

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<sup>32</sup> 2006 Census, ABS website

<sup>33</sup> Kerr, L., Savelsberg, H., Sparrow, S. & Tedmanson, D. 2001, *Experiences and perceptions of volunteering in Indigenous and non-English speaking background communities*. Adelaide: Social Policy Research Group, University of South Australia.

<sup>34</sup> Kerr, L., Savelsberg, H., Sparrow, S. & Tedmanson, D. 2001, *Experiences and perceptions of volunteering in Indigenous and non-English speaking background communities*. Adelaide: Social Policy Research Group, University of South Australia.

<sup>35</sup> Westcombe, R (2003) Indigenous volunteering: 'parallel worlds and the invisible community'. Australian Journal on Volunteering v.8 no.1: 69-71

committees, in schools, the justice system and for the young, and those needing other forms of material assistance was extensive, yet not well supported by mainstream volunteer structures. The further away from urban settings the more reliant on volunteer effort Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities appeared to be and yet a clear barrier was a lack of coverage by volunteer support services to country areas.

## **Strategies to increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Volunteering**

In 2007, Volunteering Australia published a study guide, *Indigenous Australians and Volunteering – Take a Closer Look*, making numerous recommendations for organisations wishing to attract a higher number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander volunteers<sup>36</sup>. The guide is aimed primarily at not-for-profit organisations and managers of volunteers who have had limited or no experience in working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander volunteers. The study guide can be used in conjunction with an online Subject Guide on Volunteering Australia's website which includes:

- fast facts to help organisations gain an understanding of issues related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and volunteering;
- strategies for organisations to allow them to involve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians more effectively; and
- research findings from reports and journal articles to extend understanding.

The primary strategy to increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander volunteering recommended in *Take a Closer Look* is word of mouth promotion. Almost two-thirds of all Australians who first became involved in voluntary work in the last 10 years did so through word of mouth. They were either asked to volunteer by someone (35 per cent) or did so because they knew someone involved (29 per cent)<sup>37</sup>. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in particular, recruitment and promotion of volunteering works best if they are introduced to the organisation through a friend, relative, or community member, as it is then more likely to be seen as credible<sup>38</sup>. Therefore, to involve more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, mainstream organisations are encouraged to get to know the local ATSI communities and to strongly build relationships with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and community elders to assist this process of involvement<sup>39</sup>.

It is also important for volunteer organisations to be specific about what they can offer to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander volunteers and communities and what is expected. Agencies then need to ensure their policies are inclusive of diversity and do not present further barriers once Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians are informed and interested in volunteering<sup>40</sup>. *Take a Closer Look* recommends that organisations should streamline recruitment practices to ease the transition to volunteering for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people by reducing the amount of paperwork that volunteers are required to complete and possibly creating support via a buddy or mentor system. Recruitment practices should also be reviewed to ensure they do not indirectly exclude Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander volunteers may feel especially isolated if they are new to working in a more formal, structured environment.

An additional recommendation made in *Take a Closer Look* is for organisations to be flexible about days and times that volunteers can contribute recognising the way in which people manage time can vary between cultures and communities. Research has shown that

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<sup>36</sup> National Volunteer Skills Centre (2007), *Subject Guide: Indigenous Australians and Volunteering – Take a Closer Look*, Volunteering Australia, Melbourne.

<sup>37</sup> Jope, Sally (2008) *Indigenous Australian participation in international volunteering: Report on exploratory research*. Australian Volunteers International.

<sup>38</sup> National Volunteer Skills Centre (2007), *Subject Guide: Indigenous Australians and Volunteering – Take a Closer Look*, Volunteering Australia, Melbourne.

<sup>39</sup> National Volunteer Skills Centre (2007), *Subject Guide: Indigenous Australians and Volunteering – Take a Closer Look*, Volunteering Australia, Melbourne.

<sup>40</sup> National Volunteer Skills Centre (2007), *Subject Guide: Indigenous Australians and Volunteering – Take a Closer Look*, Volunteering Australia, Melbourne.



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander volunteers have a preference for unmanaged, loose volunteer positions in line with the history of inclusive and flexible helping out in many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities<sup>41</sup>. While some individuals are interested in structured volunteer opportunities, particularly in relation to sport, organisations and event organisers should also provide and publicise meaningful volunteer opportunities that are unstructured and flexible if they wish to attract and recruit a more diverse volunteer group<sup>42</sup>.

It has also been found that organisations need to be aware of the hidden costs of volunteering and endeavour to support their volunteers to meet these costs where possible. Organisations could attend to the basic needs of their volunteers by providing food, childcare and transportation costs recognizing what they receive in return by retaining and supporting volunteers is much more valuable<sup>43</sup>. Finally, it is recommended that organisations remember to recognise the important contribution that volunteers bring to their organisation by taking advantage of opportunities such as International Volunteer Day to thank volunteer staff.

One main finding of the *Talking Together* project was that the most successful connections to be made were with younger Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and students. Young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, who had benefited from anti-discrimination legislation and enhanced community awareness, seemed to recognise more readily that voluntary work could offer them greater mobility and negotiating power in the workplace<sup>44</sup>. These findings are highly relevant as approximately 60% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians are under 25 years old. Volunteering can be a great pathway to gaining paid employment and can also help build personal and professional development for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians<sup>45</sup>. Volunteering Australia suggests that such capacity building opportunities (e.g., something to add to a resume, training, meeting new people, learning new skills) should be clearly articulated when trying to recruit young people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds<sup>46</sup>.

## **Innovative national practices that target Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander volunteers**

### **1 Capacity Building**

A recent trend in volunteering research is the idea of building the capacity of individuals who are planning to volunteer<sup>47</sup>. Capacity building involves increasing people's knowledge about volunteering practices and opportunities, and increasing their confidence and skills to get involved. Research in Australia suggests that establishing and supporting locally designed and operated community initiatives helps to build the capacity of individuals, shows the strengths, resilience and the skills they need to take control of their lives and makes a powerful contribution to the community and the lives of future generations. In a James Cook University evaluation of community empowerment programs monitored over the past 5 years, it was clearly established that initiatives that actively involve and motivate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people not only help strengthen these individuals in their own lives but have also proven to be an effective way to engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to address issues like health, education and family violence<sup>48</sup>.

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<sup>41</sup> Kerr et al (2001)

<sup>42</sup> Hoerber, L (2010) *Experiences of volunteering in sport: Views from Aboriginal individuals*. Sport Management Review (Elsevier Science), Vol. 13 Issue 4, p345-354

<sup>43</sup> Hoerber, L (2010) *Experiences of volunteering in sport: Views from Aboriginal individuals*. Sport Management Review (Elsevier Science), Vol. 13 Issue 4, p345-354

<sup>44</sup> Westcombe, R (2003) Indigenous volunteering: 'parallel worlds and the invisible community'. Australian Journal on Volunteering v.8 no.1: 69-71.

<sup>45</sup> Indigenous Australians and Volunteering – Take a Closer Look, 2007, Volunteering Australia.

<sup>46</sup> Nelson, G., & Gruhn, A. *From research to practice: Increasing the Diversity of Australian Volunteers*, Commissioned by NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet.

<sup>47</sup> Nelson, G., & Gruhn, A. *From research to practice: Increasing the Diversity of Australian Volunteers*, Commissioned by NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet.

<sup>48</sup> NIDAC website: [http://www.nidac.org.au/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=92%3Alocally-designed-and-operated-indigenous-community-models-and-practices-that-address-indigenous-alcohol-and-other-drugs-misuse-&catid=37&Itemid=63](http://www.nidac.org.au/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=92%3Alocally-designed-and-operated-indigenous-community-models-and-practices-that-address-indigenous-alcohol-and-other-drugs-misuse-&catid=37&Itemid=63)

## 2 Night Patrols

One of the longest running volunteer driven, community-controlled initiatives in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities has been the 'night patrol'<sup>49</sup>. These local initiatives have a strong community capacity building approach that assists Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to reduce harm and crime and to promote and improve the safety of vulnerable members of the community such as young people, women and those affected by alcohol or drugs. Local Community Patrols are comprised of volunteers who are willing to act as "eyes and ears" of the community and prepared to act responsibly by documenting and reporting any/all suspicious activities. They are often targeted at youth and when properly managed, such programs have great potential to build cooperation and mutual respect and support with local police.

Generally the evaluations of night patrols have been very positive<sup>50</sup>. Memmott et al undertook extensive research into Night Patrols for the Commonwealth National Housing Strategy in 2003<sup>51</sup>. A number of effective Night Patrol's were profiled in this research. One particularly successful example was the Kununurra Night Patrol. This service was collecting ten or more children per night and taking them to alcohol-free houses whose residents were registered volunteers. In addition, one of the local businesses had donated some dongas to accommodate such children, whilst another donated breakfasts at the school for them. A second follow on volunteer initiative involved some of these young offenders and at-risk youths attending occasional overnight bush camps with a range of activities emphasising cultural values, developing respect and good role models<sup>52</sup>. In 2004, Blagg and Valuri identified over 100 self-policing initiatives operating in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities throughout Australia, which were driven largely by volunteers. They suggest that underpinning these initiatives is a commitment by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to intervening in a culturally appropriate way to divert Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from a diversity of potential hazards and conflicts<sup>53</sup>.

## 3 Remote Justices of the Peace (JP) Court program

The Remote Justices of the Peace (JP) Court program aims to provide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with training to expand the number of JP Courts conducted in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

## 4 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Volunteers (ICV)

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Volunteers (ICV) is a non government organisation which partners with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to develop community and human capacity. In 2008, ICV changed from a volunteer organisation focused primarily on skills transfer to an organisation that joins with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to empower them to contribute positively to their communities. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities communicated to ICV that they would like ICV to invest 'with' them and 'in' their future and not do things 'for' them. As a result of this important community feedback, ICV is now operating under a 'wellbeing' not 'welfare' approach which is facilitating community empowerment and engagement<sup>54</sup>.

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<sup>49</sup> NIDAC website: [http://www.nidac.org.au/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=92%3Alocally-designed-and-operated-indigenous-community-models-and-practices-that-address-indigenous-alcohol-and-other-drugs-misuse-&catid=37&Itemid=63](http://www.nidac.org.au/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=92%3Alocally-designed-and-operated-indigenous-community-models-and-practices-that-address-indigenous-alcohol-and-other-drugs-misuse-&catid=37&Itemid=63)

<sup>50</sup> NIDAC website: [http://www.nidac.org.au/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=92%3Alocally-designed-and-operated-indigenous-community-models-and-practices-that-address-indigenous-alcohol-and-other-drugs-misuse-&catid=37&Itemid=63](http://www.nidac.org.au/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=92%3Alocally-designed-and-operated-indigenous-community-models-and-practices-that-address-indigenous-alcohol-and-other-drugs-misuse-&catid=37&Itemid=63)

<sup>51</sup> Memmott, P., Long, S., & Chambers, C. (2003) *A National Analysis of Strategies Used to Respond to Indigenous Itinerants and Public Place Dwellers*, Aboriginal Environments Research Centre, University of Queensland.

<sup>52</sup> Blagg, H and Valuri, G. (2003) *An Overview of Night Patrol Services in Australia*. Attorney-General's Department, Canberra. Viewed at <http://www.ag.gov.au/agd/www/ncphome.nsf/Web+Pages/C650BC24F3BFB4F5CA256E6F00062112?OpenDocument>.

<sup>53</sup> Blagg, H & Valuri (2004) *Aboriginal community patrols in Australia: Self-policing, self-determination and security*. Policing and Society, Volume 14, Issue 4.

<sup>54</sup>

ICV is committed to supporting projects that have engagement by local people in their development and implementation. ICV works by building on local strengths, knowledge and developing strong respectful relationships between ICV, volunteers, communities and other organisations. Projects are conducted by community invitation only. Communities determine the skills needed, manage the project design, select the volunteers, and run the project in a way that works best for them. To date, many of these projects have empowered Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to volunteer within their communities and become involved and engaged with ICV projects.

## 5 AIME Mentoring Program

AIME (Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mentoring Experience) is a not-for-profit Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation that provides a six-year Mentoring Program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australian students to access while undertaking their high school studies from Year 7 through to Year 12. AIME partners university student volunteers in a one-on-one mentoring relationship with a high school Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student, for an hour a week over the course of a 17-week program. AIME's goals are to improve Year 10 completion rates, Year 12 completion rates and university admission rates for all participating students.

Apart from the impact AIME is having on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander high school students, it offers a significant opportunity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander university students to gain invaluable experience through volunteering<sup>55</sup>. Programs such as AIME are vital to promote volunteerism among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth. Research shows that volunteers that commence volunteering earlier are more likely to continue to volunteer over their lifespan, thus, promoting volunteerism among school and university aged students has the potential to build a strong future generation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander volunteers.

## 6 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Youth Leadership Program (IYLP)

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Youth Leadership Program (IYLP) is a unique opportunity for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians (21 – 30 years) to build their leadership and vocational skills through volunteering abroad. Funded by the federal government's Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs (FaHCSIA), this program provides young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians with the opportunity to gain valuable leadership and community development experience. The participants work as volunteers, however, all project related travel costs for IYLP volunteers and field staff are funded by FaHCSIA. The program aims to provide participants with personal development, community development, work experience, education and to build their cross cultural awareness and understanding<sup>56</sup>.

Teams of 5 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australian youth participants, along with an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australian Field Staff, receive training in Australia before travelling to Vanuatu to live in a developing community for 6 weeks. The IYLP teams have the opportunity to work, share experiences and develop relationships with other young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and local Ni-Vanuatu youth, as well as various Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in Vanuatu. Former IYLP participants have engaged in further volunteering opportunities on returning to Australia and most continue to volunteer for many years after their IYLP experience.

## 7 Closing the Gap

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<sup>55</sup> <http://aimementoring.com/about/>

<sup>56</sup> Youth Challenge website

[http://www.youthchallenge.org.au/YCA/client/GeneralContent/c\\_singleDynamicPage.jsp?pageName=Indigenous Youth Leadership Program](http://www.youthchallenge.org.au/YCA/client/GeneralContent/c_singleDynamicPage.jsp?pageName=Indigenous>Youth+Leadership+Program)

A recent paper released by the Closing the Gap Clearinghouse has provided key findings about what works to overcome Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disadvantage<sup>57</sup>. These findings replicate many of strategies that research has identified as being effective to engage and retain Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander volunteers. Strategies that worked included:

- **Community involvement and engagement.** For example, in relation to volunteerism, community involvement and engagement have been key success factors that have contributed to the effectiveness and resilience of night patrols in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. A strong sense of community ownership and control is a key element in overcoming Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disadvantage and promoting volunteerism.
- **Adequate resourcing and planned and comprehensive interventions**  
This strategy is used by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Volunteers (ICV) through the provision of grant funding to kick start viable volunteer projects in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. This has proven to be an effective strategy to engage and retain Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander volunteers within their communities.
- **Respect for language and culture**  
Capacity building of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander volunteers and respect for culture and different learning styles are considered to be important to engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander volunteers in training programs.
- **Working together through partnerships, networks and shared leadership**  
Successful examples of this strategy are the numerous ICV projects which have empowered Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander volunteers through the provision of skills transfer and collaboration between ICV volunteers and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members.
- **Development of social capital**  
In relation to volunteerism, a prime example of this strategy is the innovative SES project to engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander volunteers and in turn strengthen Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in the face of disaster.
- **Recognising underlying social determinants**  
Volunteer resources emphasise the importance of recognising social or financial disadvantage experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and reimbursing them for expenses/ provide child care, transport etc, in order to attract and retain Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander volunteers.
- **Commitment to doing projects with, not for, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.** This philosophy is embraced by ICV and works to allow projects to continue in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities after the ICV volunteers have left. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community buy-in is essential for ongoing success.
- **Creative collaboration that builds bridges between public agencies and the community and coordination between communities, non-government and government to prevent duplication of effort**<sup>58</sup>.  
Strategies that were identified as being ineffective included:
  - 'One size fits all' approaches.

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<sup>57</sup> Closing the Gap Clearinghouse (AIHW, AIFS) 2011. *What works to overcome Indigenous disadvantage: key learnings and gaps in the evidence*. Produced for the Closing the Gap Clearinghouse. Canberra: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare & Melbourne: Australian Institute of Family Studies.

<sup>58</sup> Closing the Gap Clearinghouse (AIHW, AIFS) 2011. *What works to overcome Indigenous disadvantage: key learnings and gaps in the evidence*. Produced for the Closing the Gap Clearinghouse. Canberra: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare & Melbourne: Australian Institute of Family Studies.

- Lack of collaboration and poor access to services.
- External authorities imposing change and reporting requirements.
- Interventions without local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community control and culturally appropriate adaptation.
- Short-term, one-off funding, piecemeal interventions, provision of services in isolation and failure to develop Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander capacity to provide services<sup>59</sup>.

## **Innovative state practices that target Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander volunteers**

### Queensland Practices

#### 1. Justice Volunteers

Other successful Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander volunteer driven initiatives designed to reduce Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander over representation in the criminal justice system include Community Justice Groups; Murri Courts (DJAG) and Youth Justice Conferencing (DoC).

- **Community Justice Groups**

A Community Justice Group's (CJG) is formed when a group of community members band together on a voluntary basis to help reduce crime and social problems within their community. A CJG role is to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victims and offenders at all stages of the legal process. They encourage diversionary processes such as Murri Court, the Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Alcohol Diversion Program and develop networks with other government agencies to ensure that issues impacting on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are addressed. The majority of CJG members are respected Elders, traditional owners, people from the main Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social grouping of a community and community members of 'good standing'.

- **Murri Courts (DJAG)**

Murri Courts are an important initiative, providing a forum where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians have input into the sentencing process. When an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person wishes to plead guilty to an offence in a Magistrates Court, the offender may ask to be sentenced in the Murri Court.

In the Murri Court, the Magistrate remains the sentencing authority but is advised by one or more Elders or respected persons from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community who advise on a voluntary basis.

#### 2. Volunteering Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisory panel

This group provides advice to Volunteering Queensland (VQ) on how the organisation, as the state industry peak body, can most effectively work with, assist and learn from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups as well as organisations working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities<sup>60</sup>.

The panel considers VQ's current services including volunteer linking, advocacy, research, capacity building, corporate volunteering and policy work; and looks at how these might be effectively developed to assist communities and organisations seeking assistance. The group also considers what are the policies, protocols and practices which need to be adopted by VQ, to ensure it is able to work in ways which are appropriate, effective and culturally sensitive to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

<sup>59</sup> Closing the Gap Clearinghouse (AIHW, AIFS) 2011. *What works to overcome Indigenous disadvantage: key learnings and gaps in the evidence*. Produced for the Closing the Gap Clearinghouse. Canberra: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare & Melbourne: Australian Institute of Family Studies.

<sup>60</sup> Volunteering Queensland website

Central to these considerations is a commitment to innovative practice and finding an approach which is sustainable and genuinely reciprocal.

### 3. Cultural Stories of Volunteering project

Volunteering Queensland has also collaborated with QUT and State Library Queensland to coordinate a Cultural Stories of Volunteering project. The project trained community leaders in digital story-telling processes. The project engaged six volunteers from various cultural backgrounds to be trained in digital story-telling processes in order to share their personal volunteering experiences. The project showcases the diverse experiences that engagement with community and volunteering can bring. The completed digital stories can now be viewed on the Volunteering Queensland website.

### 4. Trackadigeniez

In 2007, Nathan Appo and Ian Lacey formed a touch football team to compete in the First Contact Sports and Cultural Festival to honour a close friend who had passed away. The Brisbane First Contact Sports and Cultural Festival are regarded as a major Australian sporting event which attracts teams from all over the country. The festival is also considered to be an important event for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mobs as it's an opportunity for all the players and participants families to gather together. Nathan and Ian's team performed strongly at 2007 festival, making it all the way to the mixed finals.

Following the team's success, the young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boys Nathan was working with through the First Contact youth program approached him to be the coach of their touch football team. This was the beginning of the Trackadigeniez Club. Nathan agreed to volunteer his time to coach the team on two conditions; firstly, everyone had to make an effort to attend training and secondly, everyone needed to help out with fundraising to cover the team costs.

Commitment to training is a vital part of the club's success as it not only improves the team's touch football skills but also creates a strong family connection and fosters a supportive community environment. The Trackadigeniez club also promotes leadership and mentoring as the older players take on responsibilities of providing training and guidance for younger players. The club's fundraising efforts ensure that no one is excluded from participating as long as they show commitment. All players are provided with a team jersey, a pair of shorts and a hat to keep free of charge. The uniform gives the players a keepsake and jerseys, shorts and hats are often passed down to younger cousins and family members of players. Nathan also provides food and drinks for teams, helpers and families during the weekend games.

Currently, Trackadigeniez has four teams. As the club grows, the costs associated with running the teams have increased. Sponsorship has been an essential part of covering costs, however, team members selling raffle tickets continues to be the team's main source of funding. The team's contribution to fundraising helps create ownership and builds responsibility among the players. This is an important way for young players to participate in and contribute to their communities.

Social media has proven to be the most effective way of communicating with players and promoting the club to new members and sponsors. Nathan primarily uses Facebook to keep in touch with players and furnish them with information as this is the most easily accessible and cost effective communication tool for young people. He runs a Facebook page that only Trackadigeniez players can access and use to engage in discussions and has also recently launched a Facebook fan page called 'Trackadigeniez Touch' and a Twitter account to promote the teams.

Over the past four years, the Trackadigeniez have achieved exceptional results in schools events as well as at the First Contact Sports and Cultural Festival. Most recently at the 18<sup>th</sup> annual First Contact Sports and Cultural Festival, the Trackadigeniez won the mixed secondary schools/youth group division and came close runners up in the prestigious men's open division. This is an unbelievable achievement as the event

comprised teams from Australia, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea and included a large contingent of current representative level players.

#### 5. Profiling Aboriginal and or Torres Strait Islander Volunteers

In 2012, Office for Volunteering in the Department of Community Service, undertook a project to showcase innovative programs being delivered by the Queensland Government which involve people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds as volunteers, and demonstrate the positive impact this volunteering activity has on the community and on individuals themselves.

A number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were interviewed about their concept of volunteering and the volunteering they undertake. Their profiles developed will be used to promote the achievement and motivation of individual volunteers from Aboriginal and or Torres Strait Islander backgrounds and improve understanding and knowledge of the cultural obligation of Aboriginal and or Torres Strait Islander participation in volunteering and the ways it is referred to by Indigenous volunteers. Following are summaries of some of the profiles:

- **Family Volunteering**

The Binambi Barambah Corporation, Sunshine Coast, is a family-run group that hold one-week cultural enrichment camps for Aboriginal and Torres Strait children from seven to 16 years, four times per year. Aunty Ruth Hegarty began this corporation 17 years ago to respond to a need in the community. At least three Elders attend each camp. Children respect the Elders and in turn the Aboriginal culture is passed along. Aunty Ruth said "In our situation we call upon the family to support our program and just recently we called upon the parents/caregivers of the children going on camp to also nominate for one camp a year".<sup>61</sup>

- **Youth Volunteering**

Ricky Macourt is from the Gold Coast and began volunteering in schools and his community at a very young age. He believes that volunteering within organisations plays an integral role for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth gaining experience to increase their employment opportunities. Ricky advocates that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth volunteering in non-Indigenous organisations, provides the organisations with a new perspective on Aboriginal and or Torres Strait Islander youth volunteering and creates diversity and acceptance.

- **Elders Volunteering**

Uncle Herbie Fortune is from Mount Isa and spent most of his life volunteering to benefit the Cloncurry community advocating for the needs of the most disadvantaged and working with local youth. Uncle Herbie first volunteered at the local bowls club where he oversaw the expansion of the club room and upgrades to the bowling green. His volunteering efforts enabled the club to become a meeting place for the Cloncurry community.

Aunty Joyce Summers formed a Community Committee on the Gold Coast to help parents and children with school issues, and is also an Elder in Residence at schools in the Gold Coast region. Aunty Joyce helped to establish many committees and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations on the Gold Coast

Aunty Carol Thompson from Thursday Island carries on the volunteering tradition from her mother and grandmother, Moya Island, Mualgal ancestry, who were both very family oriented in the community. Aunty Carol has actively participated in volunteering in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, including the Lena Passi Women's Shelter, the Star of the Sea Home of the Aged and the Thursday Island Ladies Bowls Club. Aunty Carol sees voluntary as a part of her daily routine and volunteers for a variety

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<sup>61</sup> [www.communities.qld.gov.au/gateway/information-for/volunteers](http://www.communities.qld.gov.au/gateway/information-for/volunteers), Profiling Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Volunteers Project, 2012.

of events and celebrations, for example: Clean Up Australia Week, The Biggest Morning Tea and National Aboriginal and or Torres Strait Islander Week.

## **New South Wales Practices**

### **1 NSW State Emergency Services (SES) Diversity in Volunteering Partnership Program**

Since 2008 the NSW State Emergency Service (SES) and Adult and Community Education (ACE) Unit (NSW Department of Education and Training) have been partners in the 'Diversity in Volunteering Partnership Program.' The program is a state wide collaboration where community colleges and local SES services deliver accredited SES Volunteer Induction and First Aid training customised for community groups under represented in SES membership, particularly members of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and CALD communities<sup>62</sup>. The two-fold goal of this partnership is enhancement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and CALD participation in the SES and increased capacity of communities to protect themselves in the face of disasters.

The program includes 'Cultural Points of View' - cultural awareness training that supports local SES services to work effectively with the diversity of NSW communities. It is delivered in a combination of face-to-face and online/e-Learning modules which have been specifically designed for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and CALD communities as well as people with disabilities.

In 2010, the program had achieved a retention rate of more than 87% amongst participants and 80% amongst participants from CALD backgrounds<sup>63</sup>. Furthermore, some participants enrol in further learning at community colleges, particularly the Certificate II in Public Safety and tickets in construction industry work. Additionally, others have gained paid employment, used their First Aid skills in their communities, and mentored friends and relatives to get involved in the SES.

### **2 Burrunju Aboriginal Corporation**

Burrunju Aboriginal Corporation in Canberra is an example of how ICV is helping to facilitate increased volunteerism in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. In 2008, Aunty Meg Huddleston, a respected Canberra Elder, approached ICV for a \$5 000 grant. Aunty Meg had established a respite carers' support group for around 40 Canberra-region Aboriginal 'Nannas' who were carers for their sick partners. The Nannas were going to aqua-aerobics at a suburban swimming pool. Aunty Meg wanted to use the funding to purchase a plastic table and some tea cups so her 'Nannas' could have a 'yarn up' after their weekly swim<sup>64</sup>.

Eighteen months after the funding was granted, the Nannas had established themselves as one of the key social service providers for Aboriginal people in the Canberra and Queanbeyan Regions<sup>65</sup>. They are now incorporated as Burrunju Aboriginal Corporation and have an office in Queanbeyan where they provide an internet drop-in service for people who cannot afford to have internet access at home. They run a range of social support services for vulnerable Aboriginal people and carers. They have also engaged with a community in Melbourne to investigate the feasibility of establishing a Koori Food-Bank in Canberra, and they recently worked in partnership with some senior traditional women from Titjikala to run an art and culture workshop for Canberra's Koori children. The women shared their art techniques and stories and instilled these in the grandchildren. The Nannas also run a website to sell their children's art<sup>66</sup>.

## **South Coast Youth Numeracy and Mentoring Project**

<sup>62</sup> <http://www.ace.nsw.gov.au/news.asp?PID=56&MID=56&MediaID=598>

<sup>63</sup> <http://www.ace.nsw.gov.au/news.asp?PID=56&MID=56&MediaID=598>

<sup>64</sup> Indigenous Community Volunteers, Activity Report 2009. <http://www.icv.com.au/about-icv/publications/>

<sup>65</sup> Indigenous Community Volunteers, Activity Report 2009. <http://www.icv.com.au/about-icv/publications/>

<sup>66</sup> Indigenous Community Volunteers, Activity Report 2009. <http://www.icv.com.au/about-icv/publications/>



In November 2009, ICV started working in partnership with south coast Aboriginal communities and Moruya High School to embark upon an innovative youth project. The project aimed to work with Aboriginal people in the Moruya district on the South Coast of NSW to develop and train adults to work within the school system as volunteer tutors. It is targeted at building relationships with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth who have had difficulties picking up on reading and writing and are at risk of disengaging from education. The Moruya community has identified that the retention rates for local Aboriginal students are unacceptable and that action needs to be taken in order to divert these students from having contact with the juvenile justice system. ICV and the community saw this initiative of working with the local state government high school as an excellent opportunity to try and curb this alarming trend.

## **Tasmanian Practices**

### **1. Meenah Mienne Arts Based Diversion Project**

Established by Tasmanian Aboriginal elders, artists and a Youth Justice professional, Meenah Mienne ('My Dream') brings young people and mentoring artists and elders together to 'share time, tell stories and make really deadly art'<sup>67</sup>. Through arts-based mentoring, Meenah Mienne fosters confident cultural and community connections and better emotional health and wellbeing for young Aboriginal people at risk of or in contact with the criminal justice system. A community-initiated project, Meenah Mienne operates from a Launceston shopfront premises and through outreach at high schools and the Ashley Youth Detention Centre (AYDC). Spanning a range of cultural and artistic media, the project matches volunteer Aboriginal artists and young people in mentor and buddy relationships. Group mentoring and workshops are offered, in addition to training for mentors.

The project provides assisted pathways to young Aboriginal people for education and employment. It also refers youth to other services. Meenah Mienne is a space for community members to model good leadership and raises the profile of Aboriginal arts and culture. Outcomes of the initiative have included:

- enhanced arts and cultural skills-base amongst young Aboriginal people;
- a welcoming community space for youth;
- improved self-esteem, communication skills, willingness to participate in decision-making, and planning for the future;
- young Aboriginal 'buddies' pursuing employment and further educational opportunities;
- positive relationships with older people in the community and enhanced sense of belonging for young people;
- supportive networks within the community including young people, mentors, community people and service providers; and
- improved perception by mentors of their personal value and place in the community.

## **Western Australian Practices**

### **1. Yorgum Aboriginal Family Counselling Service**

Yorgum Aboriginal Family Counselling Service Western Australia is an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific service which began in 1991 when a group of Aboriginal refuge workers came together and established an Aboriginal counselling course. At first they provided counselling and staff support on a volunteer basis before attracting funding from World Vision and the State government. Utilising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, the primary focus was to empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to take control over their lives, draw on their cultural strengths and operate according to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander protocols. The importance of Yorgum's

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<sup>67</sup> <http://www.abc.net.au/local/photos/2011/07/06/3262816.htm>

work was reinforced in 2002 by a Western Australian inquiry into family violence and child abuse in Aboriginal Communities<sup>68</sup>.

## Conclusion

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander volunteering is an area that has been long overlooked and there is still much ground to cover. Current definitions of volunteering under-value and under represent the richness of social capital in Australian society, including the often substantial volunteer contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. A broader conception of volunteering and increased awareness about the most effective ways to recruit and retain Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander volunteers is needed to maximise the social capital of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and communities. It follows then that a 'one approach for all' cannot be used to manage an increasingly diverse group of volunteers. There needs to be consideration of adapting volunteer management practices to suit the different volunteer needs and interests.

Research has consistently shown that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander volunteers are likely to be more motivated to volunteer in projects and for organisations that support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Many of these initiatives have achieved lasting results in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Volunteer recruitment messages need to highlight how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and at risk community members such as youth will benefit from their contributions<sup>69</sup>. Despite the fact that research suggests that there are limited supports and many barriers to volunteering for people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, the volunteer and community effort generated by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is significant. Nevertheless, these supports need to be extended and barriers removed in order for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to engage in increased volunteerism. There needs to be productive links established between government, community organisations and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in order to implement inclusive practices and policies, share resources, and co-operate to maximise the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians in community strengthening.

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<sup>68</sup> Nidac website: [http://www.nidac.org.au/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=92%3Alocally-designed-and-operated-indigenous-community-models-and-practices-that-address-indigenous-alcohol-and-other-drugs-misuse-&catid=37&Itemid=63](http://www.nidac.org.au/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=92%3Alocally-designed-and-operated-indigenous-community-models-and-practices-that-address-indigenous-alcohol-and-other-drugs-misuse-&catid=37&Itemid=63)

<sup>69</sup> Hoerber, L (2010) *Experiences of volunteering in sport: Views from Aboriginal individuals*. Sport Management Review (Elsevier Science), Vol. 13 Issue 4, p345-354

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## Appendix 1

Source – Volunteering Australia website

### Definitions and Principles of Volunteering

#### Definition of formal volunteering

Formal volunteering is an activity which takes place through not for profit organisations or projects and is undertaken:

- to be of benefit to the community and the volunteer
- of the volunteer's own free will and without coercion
- for no financial payment
- in designated volunteer positions only.

#### Principles of Volunteering

- Volunteering benefits the community and the volunteer
- Volunteer work is unpaid
- Volunteering is always a matter of choice
- Volunteering is not compulsorily undertaken to receive pensions or government allowances
- Volunteering is a legitimate way in which citizens can participate in the activities of their community
- Volunteering is a vehicle for individuals or groups to address human, environmental and social needs
- Volunteering is an activity performed in the not for profit sector only
- Volunteering is not a substitute for paid work
- Volunteers do not replace paid workers nor constitute a threat to the job security of paid workers
- Volunteering respects the rights, dignity and culture of others
- Volunteering promotes human rights and equality.

## Appendix 2 – Definitions, Measures and Reporting Frequency of Volunteering for Queensland

Source	Definition	Measure/s	Data Available
ABS 4159.0 – General Social Survey Summary Results, Australia, 2010	<p>The provision of unpaid help willingly undertaken in the form of time, service or skills, to an organisation or group, excluding work done overseas.</p> <p>Some forms of unpaid work, such as student placements or work under a Community Service Order, which were not strictly voluntary, have been excluded.</p> <p>Explanatory Note 44. The voluntary work estimates for 2010, and presented in tables 2 to 16 and table 30 exclude those persons who were compelled to do voluntary work because of employment or study commitments, for example, work for the dole. However, for time series comparison purposes, the voluntary work estimates presented in table 1 for 2002 and 2006 do not exclude these populations and therefore a higher rate of 'voluntary involvement' results. For further information on voluntary work, and for comparisons over time, refer to the publication <i>Voluntary Work, Australia</i> (cat. no. 4441.0).</p>	<p>Number</p> <p>Rate (%)</p> <p>Relative Standard Error (RSE)</p>	<p>2002</p> <p>2006</p> <p>2010</p>
ABS 4159.3.55.001 – General Social Survey, Queensland, 2006	Refer to definitions reported for ABS 4441.0	<p>Number</p> <p>Rate (%)</p> <p>Hours</p> <p>Organisations</p> <p>Relative Standard Error (RSE)</p>	<p>2006</p> <p>2010 (due Dec 2011)</p>

Source	Definition	Measure/s	Data Available
<p>ABS 4441.0 - Voluntary Work, Australia, 2006</p> <p>Detailed information on volunteers and volunteering for people aged 18 years and over in Australia, compiled from the voluntary work module included in ABS 4159.0 General Social Survey 2006 (GSS).</p>	<p>The definition has four criteria for unpaid work in the community to be regarded as voluntary work, namely that it be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• unpaid, (reimbursement of costs or an honorarium are not considered as payment);</li> <li>• willingly undertaken, (not as the result of a legal or institutional direction);</li> <li>• help in the form of time, service or skills (it does not include assistance in the form of money, goods or biological donation such as blood or organs – these are seen as other forms of altruism in their own right);</li> <li>• formal, carried out for, or through, an organisation or group, (informal help, given to relatives, friends, neighbours or others, is not included in voluntary work, but this type of assistance is recognised as unpaid community work and participation in this type of work is separately measured in the 2006 GSS).</li> </ul>	<p>Number</p> <p>Rate (%)</p> <p>Hours</p> <p>Organisations</p> <p>Relative Standard Error (RSE)</p>	<p>1995</p> <p>2000</p> <p>2006</p> <p>2010 (due Dec 2011)</p>

Source	Definition	Measure/s	Data Available
ABS 4102.0 - Australian Social Trends, 2008	Summarises results from ABS 4441.0 - Voluntary Work, Australia, 2006	Identifies voluntary work as direct and indirect contribution to social capital. Cross-references ABS 4441.0 results with other measures (informal help given to relatives, friends, neighbours or others is not included in voluntary work, but is recognised as unpaid community work and participation in this type of work is separately measured in the 2006 GSS) to identify that volunteers, regardless of the frequency of their volunteering, were more likely than non-volunteers to donate money, attend a community event or provide unpaid assistance to someone outside their household.	1995 2000 2006 2010 (due Dec 2011)
ABS 1370.0 - Measures of Australia's Progress, 2010	Summarises results from ABS 4441.0 - Voluntary Work, Australia, 2006 and ABS 4102.0 - Australian Social Trends, 2008	Identifies voluntary work as direct and indirect contribution to social capital and social cohesion.	1995 2000 2006
ABS 6342.0.80.002 - Flexible Working Arrangements in Queensland, Oct 2010 Compiled from data collected in the "Flexible Working Arrangements in Queensland Survey" conducted in Queensland in October 2010 as a supplement to the ABS monthly Labour Force Survey (LFS)	Asked if people had volunteered in the 12 months prior to October 2010. Questions about types of volunteering activities, how often people volunteered and whether their participation in unpaid voluntary work had increased, decreased or stayed the same over the last 12 months. The major aim of the survey was to collect data to support analysis of how flexible working arrangements affect caring responsibilities, volunteering, and work preferences.	Same measures as ABS 4441.0. "The estimates for volunteering in the GSS were higher and the difference can be explained due to the different methodologies used. The overall volunteering rate in this survey is in general agreement with the rate observed for Queensland in the 2006 Census of Population and Housing." (see 'Key Points of Difference')	2010
ABS 2914.0 2006 Census of Population and Housing	"...help willingly given in the form of time, service or skills to a club, organisation or association" at any time in the last twelve months.	Number  Rate (%)  Results summarised: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ABS Fact Sheets, 2006 "Measures Of Unpaid Work"</li> <li>OESR Census 2006 Bulletin 8 Volunteers In Queensland. This bulletin contains information on the characteristics of people who performed voluntary work in QLD</li> </ul>	2006  2011 (due 2012)



Source	Definition	Measure/s	Data Available
OESR Queensland Household Survey 2009	<p>In the last 12 months provided unpaid help directly to people other than your relatives, on your own initiative and not through a group or organisation.</p> <p>In the last 12 months provided any unpaid help for an organisation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number</li> <li>• Rate (%)</li> <li>• Hours</li> <li>• Organisations</li> <li>• Relative Standard Error (RSE) Unpaid help provided directly to people</li> <li>• Days per year unpaid help to people provided</li> <li>• Average hours per day unpaid help to people provided</li> <li>• Reasons for providing unpaid help to others</li> <li>• Volunteering for Organisations</li> <li>• On-line volunteering</li> <li>• Days per year of volunteering for organisations, associations or groups in Queensland</li> <li>• Average hours of volunteering per day</li> <li>• Current reasons for volunteering for an organisation</li> </ul>	2009

Source	Definition	Measure/s	Data Available
OESR Queensland Regional Household Survey 2011	<p>Unpaid help to a community group, organisation or an unrelated person or persons in response to a man-made or natural disaster in the past 12 months.</p> <p>Excluding man-made or natural disaster, unpaid help to a community group, organisation or an unrelated person or persons in the past 12 months.</p> <p>Excluding man-made or natural disaster, in the past 12 months unpaid help to a community group, organisation or an unrelated person or persons, not through an organisation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number</li> <li>• Rate (%)</li> <li>• Hours</li> <li>• Organisations</li> <li>• Relative Standard Error (RSE) Overall volunteering – including response to disasters</li> <li>• Overall volunteering – excluding response to disasters</li> <li>• Unpaid help in response to man-made or natural disasters</li> <li>• Unpaid help provided directly to people (excluding in response to man-made or natural disasters)</li> <li>• Days per year unpaid help was provided directly to people</li> <li>• Hours per day unpaid help was provided directly to people</li> <li>• Unpaid help provided to organisations (excluding in response to man-made or natural disasters)</li> <li>• Unpaid help provided to organisations (by organisation type)</li> <li>• Days per year unpaid help was provided to organisations</li> <li>• Hours per day unpaid help was provided to organisations</li> <li>• On-line volunteering</li> </ul>	2011