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**Addressing social disadvantage through volunteering**

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Dr. Debbie Haski-Leventhal

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## Executive Summary

In this paper we review the current state of volunteering in Australia, particularly volunteering by socially disadvantaged groups. After presenting the advantages and challenges involved with volunteering, the relation of volunteering to socially disadvantaged groups is discussed: as the recipients of voluntary services and as providers. Two innovative concepts are presented to suggest how the Government can help to enhance both in a way that will facilitate social inclusion: volunteerability (the ability of individuals to volunteer) and recruitability (the ability of organisations to recruit volunteers). By presenting many examples from the Western World, various options by which the Government can enhance both are discussed.

Finally, ten policy options are presented to address social disadvantage through volunteering:

1. Take actions to improve the general context and status of volunteering in Australia
2. Take general measures concerning encouragement and facilitation of volunteerism
3. Support facilitating organisations
4. Encourage volunteering by socially excluded groups
5. Improve and expand the provision of suitable services to the disadvantaged by volunteers
6. Encourage volunteer organisations to recruit volunteers from socially excluded groups
7. Encourage disadvantaged groups to form their own voluntary associations
8. Enhance the professionalisation of volunteer managers and volunteer organisations
9. Promote research on volunteerism in Australia
10. Encourage collaboration between the Government, business and voluntary sectors

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## Addressing social disadvantage through volunteering

The importance of volunteering to society, voluntary organisations and individuals has been acknowledged in the last decades (Salamon et al., 1999; Salamon et al., 2004; Wilson and Musick, 2000). Since the United Nations announced 2001 as the International Year of Volunteers, governments of many western nations have increased attempts to encourage volunteering (Davis Smith, 2003).

In this paper we will review the current state of volunteering in Australia, particularly volunteering by socially disadvantaged groups. After presenting the advantages and challenges involved with volunteering, we will discuss the relation of volunteering to socially disadvantaged groups: as the recipients of voluntary services and as providers. We will focus on the ability of individuals to volunteer ('volunteerability') and the ability of organisations to recruit volunteers ('recruitability') and suggest how the Government can help to enhance both in a way that will facilitate social inclusion. Finally, we will recommend ten policy issues on volunteering and social disadvantage.

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### Volunteering in Australia today

For its Voluntary Work surveys the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) defines volunteering as "the provision of unpaid help willingly undertaken in the form of time, service or skills, to an organisation or group" (ABS, 2007). This is similar to the definition of volunteering used in overseas jurisdictions and studies, although it should be noted that many people volunteer outside of formal organisational settings, such as for neighbours, friends and extended families (work undertaken within the household would not be counted as volunteering). This is called informal volunteering, as opposed to formal volunteering, or volunteering that is done through an organisation. The data reported below applies to formal volunteering; ABS Time Use surveys report data on informal volunteering, but this is not readily compared with the Voluntary Work survey data and is not well analysed.

In 2006, 34% of the adult population in Australia (5.2 million people) volunteered formally (for an organisation). This is known as the volunteer rate. The volunteer rate has remained steady for the past 6 years, after increasing during the previous decade. The Australian volunteer rate is higher than that recorded by similar studies in the USA and Canada. These 5.2 million Australians volunteered a total of 713 million hours. We estimate the value of this to be around \$15 billion.

Although over one-third of the adult population volunteer, many do so for only one organisation and for only a few hours; a somewhat smaller number of highly committed volunteers contribute most of the heavy lifting. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS, 2007), close to one half (46%) of volunteers contributed less than 50 hours in the previous 12 months while 8% of volunteers had contributed at least 400 hours. As a result of this pattern the average hours spent volunteering (136 hours per year or 2.6 hours per week) was greater than the median hours (56 hours per year or 1.1 hours per week). Over one-half of the volunteers (56%) had been volunteering for more than 10 years, and 65% volunteered with only one organisation.

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## **Where do Australians volunteer?**

This question has three dimensions: geographical, organisational type and field of activity.

Patterns of volunteering differ on an inter- and intra-state level. The ACT and Queensland had the highest proportion of volunteers in 2006, with 38% of their adult population volunteering. Western Australia, Tasmania and the Northern Territory had a rate of 36%. Volunteering was more common among those living in parts of the state outside the capital city. The volunteer rate was 32% for capital cities overall compared with 38% outside the capital cities. South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania exhibited this pattern, but the differences were greatest in Victoria and New South Wales. The proportion volunteering in both Sydney and Melbourne was 30%, but the proportion in areas outside of the capital cities was 41% in Victoria and 37% in New South Wales. Queensland (38%) and the Northern Territory (36%) each had volunteer rates that were the same for both types of areas (ABS, 2007).

Australians volunteer for many different organisations. We can think of these organisations by their ownership or the sector they belong to: as private nonprofit organisations, as government owned and controlled organisations or as privately owned for profit ventures. For around 95% of nonprofit organisations, volunteers supply the only labour and also control the organisation. For 5% of nonprofits and all government and for-profit entities for which people choose to volunteer the main work of the organisation is undertaken by paid staff or owners; volunteers sometimes add to this paid labour but more often fill niche roles under the supervision of paid staff. In nonprofit organisations, direction of the organisation is generally undertaken by volunteer boards or committees. Based on an analysis of data collected for the 2006 Voluntary Work Survey we estimate that of the total of 713 million hours of voluntary work undertaken during 2006, 46% was for volunteer-only organisations, 42% was for the 40,000 nonprofit organisations that employ staff, 11% was for government organisations and 1% for for-profit organisations (mainly in the social assistance industry).

The most popular field of volunteer engagement was sport. In 2006, 11% of Australians volunteered for sport organisations, 9% for education organisations, 7% for community and welfare organisations and 7% for religious organisations (ABS, 2007).

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## **Who volunteers?**

Some social-demographic factors are related to volunteering. In 2006, women (36%) were more likely to volunteer than men (32%). People aged 35–44 years were in the age group most likely to volunteer (43%). This age group includes a large number of parents with dependent children. Female partners with dependent children had a volunteer rate of 50% compared with 32% for female partners without dependent children (ABS, 2007).

People born in Australia were more likely to undertake voluntary work than those born elsewhere, 36% and 29% respectively. Those born in the main English-speaking countries had a higher rate of volunteering (34%) than those born in other countries (26%) particularly among 18-24 years olds (17%) and those aged over 65 (19%). In 2002, the estimated volunteering rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians was 28%. For the 75% living in non-remote areas the rate was 32% (ABS, 2004).

Other factors associated with above average rates of volunteering were excellent/very good health (38%); current study (43%); level of educational achievement (45% of those with a diploma/advanced diploma and bachelor degree or higher); and high income, 39% for those in the highest quintile of equivalised household income (ABS, 2007).

This is in accordance with many international studies which demonstrate that human capital (education, income, being employed) and social capital (networking) are related to volunteering. In other words, the more social resources people have, the more likely they will volunteer (Wilson & Musick, 1998). Pearce (1993) also asserted that people with higher income, higher education, jobs and family tend to volunteer more, to volunteer in several organisations, to undertake leadership roles and to be more committed to their volunteer work. According to Smith (1994), dominant status is defined by prestige components, such that positions of higher status in western nations is dominated by white men, with higher income and education, middle aged, who are active in church and in sports. Smith showed that these features of the dominant status are also related to volunteering.

Thus, we can see that in Australia, as well as in other parts of the Western World, low-income households, migrants, unemployed, people with disability or poor health and other social disadvantaged groups are to varying degrees socially excluded from volunteering. A proactive approach is needed both by the volunteer organisations as well as by third parties such as governments, to address the issue of socially inclusive volunteering.

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### **What sort of work do volunteers do?**

Recalling that almost 50% of volunteering is applied to volunteer only organisations suggests that a good deal of volunteer work is of a kind designed to maintain and grow an organisation. It is not the 'helping' activity that is the conventional picture of voluntary work. The Voluntary Work Survey confirms this and makes it clear that most volunteer work for employing organisation is of an organisational kind. By far the largest amount of voluntary work is done in tasks devoted to organisational maintenance – committee work, fundraising and administration. For example, 19% of adults volunteer for fundraising or sales work; 11% for administrative work and 10% as directors or committee members for nonprofit organisations. Another 13% are engaged in the preparation and serving of food. Only 4% of adult Australians are involved in providing personal care and assistance and 9% in supportive counseling and listening. Only 2% are directly engaged in emergency services.

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### **Advantages and disadvantages of volunteering**

Volunteering is usually perceived as a social and communal activity that enhances social capital; strengthens the community and helps in delivering services that otherwise would have been more expensive or underprovided (Putnam, 2000). Volunteers are an important resource in human service organisations, and they legitimate the organisation and signal its trustworthiness, so further resources can be recruited. Volunteers are an important link between the organisation and the community, as they represent the interface between these two groups. Volunteering reduces social exclusion and alienation, and can empower clients to give, and not only receive. Additionally, it has been found that clients, especially from socially excluded groups such as distressed young people trust volunteers more than paid workers; prefer to receive services from volunteers; and see them as altruists (Ronel, Haski-Leventhal, York, & Ben-David, 2009). Volunteering can have a positive impact on the individual

volunteer as well: it can increase physical and psychological wellbeing, create a wider social network, enhance career opportunities, reduce loneliness, help young people overcome adolescence-related problems, and more (see review by Wilson & Musick, 2000). Thus, when socially disadvantaged persons do not volunteer, they are further excluded from the additional benefits and opportunities of volunteering.

However, volunteering may also have some negative social aspects, which should also be taken into account. Volunteering may emphasise social divides, as volunteers are typically people with higher income, higher education and social resources providing support for those in need (see Wilson, 2000). They sometimes bring prejudices to their volunteer work. More importantly, they are rarely trained to work with people with complex disadvantage. Some nonprofit social assistance providers insist that only professional staff work with severely disadvantaged groups.

Although some volunteer agencies are putting effort into recruiting volunteers from socially excluded populations (e.g., minorities) and people with disabilities, they are not always successful. As a consequence, volunteering may even lead to further social exclusion. Volunteerism may encourage governments to privatise services and withdraw from their basic responsibilities to citizens, as NGOs and human services organisations provide services to populations in need at a low cost through the use of volunteers (for more see Salamon et al., 2000). Finally, at a time of economic downturn, volunteers may be perceived as cheaper labour, and nonprofit organisations may choose to replace paid employees with volunteers, contributing to unemployment.

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## **Volunteering, social exclusion and social disadvantage**

Social exclusion is a broader concept than poverty alone, and incorporates issues such as inadequate social participation, a lack of social integration and a lack of power. While related to poverty, social exclusion is also linked to the important notion of social capital; one can be socially excluded without being in poverty. Atkinson (1998) argues that social exclusion is relative to the norms and expectations of society at a particular point in time and may be caused by an act of some individual, group or institution. Social disadvantage refers to the range of difficulties that block life opportunities and which prevent people from participating fully in society. These difficulties include economic poverty, but also poor health, disability, lack of education and skills and subjection to inequitable treatment or discrimination (Vinson, 2007).

The relation between social disadvantage and volunteering is twofold: 1. Socially disadvantaged persons as the recipients of volunteer services; 2. Socially disadvantaged persons as the providers of volunteer services.

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### **Volunteering to help people with social disadvantage**

Persons from different social disadvantaged groups (homeless people, youth in distress, single parents, elderly etc) are often the recipients of services provided by volunteers. The United Nations General Assembly recognised that “volunteerism is an important component of any strategy aimed at, inter alia, such areas as poverty reduction, sustainable development, health, disaster prevention and management and social integration and in particular, overcoming social exclusion and discrimination” (United Nations, 2001, p. 2).

Many volunteer using organisations in Australia provide services to these groups. To name but a few major nonprofits: Mission Australia has community programs for families and children, homeless people, and at-risk youth. The Smith Family has 6500 volunteers working for disadvantaged Australian children and their families, directly and indirectly. St. Vincent de Paul Society provides services to homeless people, people with mental and physical disabilities, elders, poor families etc. They do so with over 20,000 volunteers.

There are only a handful of studies on the impact of volunteering on social disadvantaged persons, being the clients or recipients of the volunteer service. Haski-Leventhal, Hustinx and Handy (in press) studied volunteering at the Ronald McDonald House in Philadelphia. They demonstrated that the clients (families with seriously ill children) perceived the volunteers in a very positive light, even more positive than that of the paid staff. The volunteers had a high impact on the recipients in tangible impacts (providing services); attitudes (satisfaction and perceived altruism) and future behaviour (willingness to volunteer). Ronel, Haski-Leventhal, York and Ben-David (2009) investigated the impact of volunteers on clients in a case study of at-risk youth in drop in centres in Israel. They concluded that clients did distinguish between who is a volunteer and who is not, and attributed “perceived altruism” to the volunteers. Regardless of the volunteers’ individual motivations to provide help, the youths considered the volunteers to be people that really cared for them, showed them there is “good in the world” and inspired them to volunteer themselves. The recipients were so satisfied with the volunteer service that they actually preferred them to paid workers. The results showed that the volunteers succeeded in providing various intervention services for the target youth and that their unique contribution, as volunteers, improved the service as a whole.

Without underestimating the high importance of providing services for socially disadvantaged groups by volunteers, one should note that sometimes such services maintain social gaps, and may even lead to further social exclusion. As was noted above, volunteers usually have social resources, and it is people with higher income and education who volunteer for the poor and the needy. Relying on Maslow's hierarchy of needs, volunteers work to fulfil esteem and self-actualisation needs, which are considered higher needs, while the recipients have physiological and safety needs: the more basic, lower needs. The best way to deal with these social gaps is by including people with social disadvantage in volunteering and, more importantly, by creating opportunities in every volunteer organisation for its recipients to take part in providing services to others.

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### **Volunteering by people with social disadvantage**

Persons with physical and mental health issues, minorities, and persons from other socially excluded groups are volunteering less than those who possess dominant status features. To make volunteering socially inclusive, volunteer organisations as well as governments, need to have proactive policy and practices. It is not enough to accept a person with disability to the organisation as a volunteer, but persons from all populations and all social circumstances should be targeted and recruited to volunteer. We need to proactively target the involvement of all segments of society, including youth, older persons and people with disabilities and persons belonging to minorities. We need to create opportunities for voluntary activities to facilitate the participation of those groups that have little or no access to the benefits of engaging in volunteering. We need to do this for all types and settings for volunteering and all forms of voluntary work. There are already some organisations that are reaching out explicitly to recruit people who experience some form of disadvantage, Conservation volunteers and Surf Lifesaving

Australia both seek to recruit volunteers from immigrant communities into their work. Self-help groups only recruit from people with similar disadvantages to their members. A great deal could be learned from the experiences of this disparate group of organisations.

In order to include people with physical disability, as an example, the organisation has to be physically accessible. Some of the groups that must be considered in ensuring accessibility include: the mobility disabled, people with vision or hearing impairment; persons with intellectual or psychiatric disability; or people with manipulatory disability. That means that the organisation has to have physical access for people with wheelchairs; forms in large prints/Braille or alternative ways to apply for people with vision impairment; volunteers to help persons with intellectual disability to volunteer. Groups with disabilities have to be targeted in manners which are suitable (if an organisation only advertises in a newspaper, it excluded all persons with vision impairment) and the organisation has to publicise that it is accessible to all. There are many disability support organisations in Australia which can provide assistance in this process, and Volunteering Australia has some guidelines in their website.

In a national survey done in 2005 by Australian Multicultural Foundations and Volunteering Australia, it was found that most organisations did not actively recruit from culturally and linguistically diverse communities, but that “their doors were always open” to all volunteers. This is not sufficient. In order to include people from minorities, the volunteer organisation has to appeal to them in their own language; have a facilitator who can outreach this group; and be culturally sensitive. Migrants should be targeted in their own ‘backyard’ and be offered programs and volunteer opportunities that are suitable for them, including volunteering for their own community.

Guidelines can be found on the Volunteering Australia website

([http://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/files/2UCSDQND6/VA\\_CALD%20Training%20Manual\\_final.pdf](http://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/files/2UCSDQND6/VA_CALD%20Training%20Manual_final.pdf)).

In addition, volunteer organisations which serve social disadvantaged groups should create opportunities for their own clients to volunteer and become providers, not just recipients. This needs to be a proactive policy for organisations to purposefully recruit volunteers in this way. One good example is Homeless Connect, which encourages homeless persons who are the recipients of their services to volunteer in Homeless Connect Day. Women with Disabilities Australia (WWDA) calls on its members to volunteer to further its mission. This can also be achieved by organisations working with young people in distress who then encourage their clients to volunteer to help others (Haski-Leventhal et al., 2008). An Australian example is Youth Challenge, which empowers young people to support their community. People living in disadvantaged circumstances or experiencing chronic illness can also be encouraged to form their own organisations to provide support, advocate for recognition. This has long been at the core of community development practice. Self-help is at the heart of the nonprofit economy.

The Government can help to make volunteering more socially inclusive by supporting organisations that focus on this reciprocal relationship. For example, the British Government is allocating millions of pounds to Goldstar (an organisation which helps other organisations to recruit, manage and retain volunteers from groups at risk of social exclusion, including people with no qualifications, people from black and minority ethnic communities; and people with disabilities or limiting long-term illnesses) and to Volunteering for All. Furthermore, the

Government can require by law that all volunteer organisations will become accessible to all over time, in accordance to The Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA).

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## **Volunteerability, recruitability and motivation to volunteer**

In order to think creatively about how to address social disadvantage through volunteering, two concepts should be first introduced: *volunteerability* (Meijs *et al.*, 2006a; Meijs *et al.*, 2006b) and *recruitability* (Haski-Leventhal, Meijs, & Hustinx, in press).

**Volunteerability** covers the willingness, capability and availability of individuals to volunteer. The concept is derived from *employability*, a term used to express an individual's employment status and ability to be employed. Volunteerability addresses the question – what makes a person more or less willing or able to volunteer? Three key characteristics are suggested:

1. **Willingness:** the will to volunteer is influenced by social norms, individual attitudes and values, psychological motives, and by perceiving volunteering as rewarding and as feasible. It can be enhanced by different incentives, mainly by improving volunteers' reputation in society, providing intrinsic benefits and reducing free riders. The willingness to volunteer is influenced by the different individual's **motivations to volunteer:** altruistic (wanting to help others); egoistic (wanting to feel good about oneself or enhance one's career) and social (wanting to meet new people or to elevate social pressure). It is also about overcoming the obstacles or **barriers** to volunteer such as having a bad experience, emotional difficulty, lack of time, misalignment of expectations, and attached risks. However, most people say they do not volunteer because, simply enough, they were not asked to do so.
2. **Capability:** a person may be capable of volunteering if she or he has the skills and knowledge required for volunteering in a specific role or organisation. Everyone is capable of volunteering in some role, in some organisation. However, training and guidance can be a key element in improving capability to volunteer.
3. **Availability:** a common obstacle to volunteering is lack of time (Sundeen, Raskoff, & Garcia, 2007). In modern life, juggling between jobs, family, education, friends and leisure, leaves people with limited time to give. Therefore, increasing volunteerability may be achieved by combining volunteering with one of these activities. Additionally, people need to be emotionally available and able to commit themselves in order to volunteer.

The second factor in fostering better volunteerism and addressing possible negative impacts of volunteering is **recruitability**, which refers to the ability of volunteer organisations to recruit volunteers and maintain them. In order to have an effective process of enhancing volunteering, we need not only focus on the supply side of the volunteers, but also on the demand side: the volunteer organisation and their abilities to provide professional management of volunteers. Organisations' recruitability also has three main components:

1. **Accessibility:** the degree to which the organisation is accessible to potential volunteers: can people know that the organisation needs volunteers and what kind? Can people reach the organisation - physically, technically and even geographically? Is the organisation open to diversity and accessible to people with disabilities? Is the organisation accessible for its own clients to volunteer? Accessibility may be improved by marketing; by opening branches; by improving physical access; and by creating virtual volunteering opportunities.

2. **Resources:** It is very important to understand that **although volunteers do not earn money, they cost money**. To increase the number and diversity of volunteers in an organisation, some resources are needed. As always, financial resources are important, but human resources are, too.
3. **Networks and cooperation:** by creating networks with other organisations, a volunteer organisation may increase its accessibility as well as its resources. Cooperation with other organisations (volunteer, business and governmental) can help increase the number of volunteers, by pooling resources and by sharing knowledge and expertise.

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## Enhancing volunteerability and recruitability by Government

There seem to be four major reasons for governments to be involved in enhancing volunteering (see Haski-Leventhal et al., in press). First, volunteering is a way to improve the quality of life and (career) possibilities of individual volunteers. Second, volunteering is a way to keep services affordable or to improve the quality of these services. This would mean for example a reduction in costs for society, clients, and/or participators (members) and higher quality of public services, particularly for socially disadvantaged clients. Third, volunteering is a way to develop or at least maintain social capital and social cohesion and to socially include disadvantaged groups. Lastly, volunteering is connected with democratic processes and to the participation of citizens in local governance. Volunteering can also strengthen the local community and neighborliness (Haski-Leventhal, Ben-Arie & Melton, 2008).

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### Volunteerability

Governments and parliaments have the unique power to promote volunteering through legislation enhancing citizens' **willingness** to volunteer. According to Brudney (2004), the US federal government created a climate that encouraged volunteering through different appeals from US Presidents to citizens to volunteer and by passing laws such as The National and Community Service Trust Act (passed by the Clinton administration in 1993). In the UK volunteering was encouraged by an agreement signed between the government and the voluntary organisations by PM Blair in 1998, development of a UK Compact and the PM's speech to the National Council for Voluntary Organisations in 1999 (Howlett & Locke, 1999). Plowden (2003, p 426) described the UK Compact as a general agreement and a set of codes that "should guide working relationships between government and the voluntary and community sector". The National and Community Service Trust Act led to the start of the Corporation of National and Community service ([www.NationalService.gov](http://www.NationalService.gov)) running several programs such as Senior Corps, AmeriCorps, AmeriCorps\*VISTA, AmeriCorps NCCC and Learn and Serve America. Willingness to volunteer can also be promoted by giving awards to volunteers and thus acknowledging their unique contribution to society (such as the President's volunteer service award in the USA or the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service in the UK. There used to be national awards in Australia but now they exist only on a state level and only in some states). By commemorating the international volunteer day (December 5<sup>th</sup>) or a national volunteer week (in Australia this falls on 11--17 May) political leadership may also show its appreciation to the volunteers (see, for example, Senator Stephens speech in 2009). The states of South Australia and NSW signal the importance of volunteering by assigning a Minister of Volunteering. Willingness to volunteer can also be improved by protecting the volunteers through instruments like the Volunteer Protection Act that gives legal or liability protection to volunteers (passed in 1997 by the U.S. National Congress; Department of Transportation, 1997) or by the provision of insurance for volunteer activities.

Governments can also improve the professionalisation of the managers of volunteers, and thus improve people's **capability** to volunteer. The first thing that (mainly state and territory) government departments and agencies that use volunteers can do is to ensure that in their recruitment, training and management of volunteers they manifest best practice and work with other volunteer-using organisations to build a professional cadre of volunteer managers. At present governments are laggards in this regard. Governments can encourage quality standards in volunteer managements and accreditation of volunteer managers and organisations. Governments can build a culture of knowledge about volunteering (Brudney, 2004) by supporting research on volunteerism, making knowledge more accessible, and developing centres, which train volunteer managers and even volunteers themselves (such as Volunteering Australia). Although the US government may not be involved in research funding, the European Union and several European national governments are (see e.g. the 2008 Study on volunteering tender from the European Union [EACEA/2008/07]). By assigning committees to suggest ways to encourage volunteering (such as the Russell Commission in the UK), governments may gain ideas and solutions that were previously overlooked. In a disaster relief situation, governments can enhance people's capability to help by providing training, resources and support. When the 2004 Tsunami occurred, the Australian government offered to cover travel costs, accommodation and medical insurance to Australians who wanted to volunteer and help in the disaster areas.

A great deal of volunteering is directed to management committees and boards of nonprofit organisations. At present many potential volunteer board/committee members are deterred from volunteering because they are not sure what is involved, or because they are concerned about the perceived risks a directorship entails. The confusing array of legal forms for incorporating nonprofit organisations and uncertainty about the way the law applies to directors in these circumstances is a matter that the Commonwealth government can address, as recommended by a recent report of The Senate Standing Committee on Economics (2008). In other cases those responsible for administering state and territory association's registers could do more to provide simple answers to the sorts of questions that many people who seek to form a new nonprofit association would have.

Governments have limited power to increase people's **availability** to volunteer. By giving tax deductions to people who volunteer, governments can allow people a little less work and a little more time to volunteer. Additionally, by giving priority to people who volunteer in a public job, governments assure that volunteering is part of people's career plans, and not just leisure time activity. They may also encourage their own workers to volunteer (similar to corporate volunteering). Combining volunteering with work may help people find the time to volunteer.

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### **Recruitability**

Governments can certainly enhance **recruitability** among volunteer organisations. First, they can improve the **accessibility** of volunteer organisations to potential volunteers, especially for those who are socially excluded. They can develop volunteer centres where people may come and learn about volunteer opportunities. In some countries, volunteer centres are strong and well-known organisations whose job is to encourage volunteering and promote the professionalisation of volunteer managers. In Australia, there are volunteer centres in every state and many regions, in addition to Volunteering Australia – the national body. By supporting volunteer centres, state and local governments can provide in-kind support, technical assistance including training, assistance in 'matching' (volunteer job banks), and incentives for volunteer

work, for citizens in general or for specific groups such as young people or minorities (Pennell, 2003). Accessibility can also be promoted by providing national internet sites on volunteering and volunteer opportunities (such as [www.govolunteer.com.au](http://www.govolunteer.com.au)). Finally, physical accessibility could also be improved, by laws which require volunteer organisations to be accessible to all, and by financing organisations to meet their obligations.

The power to divert financial **resources** to volunteer organisations and for the promotion of volunteering can also be helpful. In addition to the provision of financial resources, through funding voluntary action, the Government may signal its commitment and communicate the importance of volunteering. The British government allocated £100,000,000 for the implementation of the Russell Commission recommendations (England Volunteering Development Council, 2005). The Australian Government funds Volunteering Australia, volunteer resource centres and volunteer programs. For example, FaHCSIA provides a limited number of \$3000 grants to help organisations make their volunteers' lives easier. They fund projects by Volunteering Australia such as the website (go volunteer), the national week of volunteering and national skills centres. However, most of the funding goes to volunteering for welfare, while other types of volunteering could also be enhanced (for example emergency services, arts and sports). Additionally, governmental institutes and organisations can encourage their own workers to volunteer for certain organisations. This resembles the growing contribution of corporate volunteers: where businesses encourage and support their employees to contribute their time to non-profit organisations.

There are new and intensifying **networks** between governments and non-profit organisations aimed at enhancing volunteering. Relations may be defined in terms of 'complementarity' or 'cooperation'. Complementarity exists when governmental and non-governmental organisations share the same goal, but use different strategies. This applies in particular to governmental efforts to improve the volunteerability component. A cooperative relationship is characterised by a convergence of preferred ends as well as means. This may apply to an important extent to governments' efforts to improve the recruitability of organisations. The volunteer programs for socially excluded groups established by the UK government are a good example of new partnerships with non-profit and community organisations. Such partnerships differ from more common contracting relationships in the provision of public services, in which non-profit organisations function as a supplement to government.

To deliver on all of the suggested policy proposals requires a single, well resourced entity that is resourced by but largely independent of government: **an Australian Institute for Volunteer Management**. For such a body to be able to bring together the best expertise in the nonprofit sector as well as government; it must be given a set of clear objectives and then time to deliver these. It might be established as a statutory body or as a nonprofit company with its board appointed by a Minister with responsibility for volunteering (and the Third sector generally). This should not be limited to social inclusion – while volunteering can help address social inclusion it has a far wider relevance and will only succeed if it is prospering generally within Australian society. Its primary role should be the development of volunteering and voluntary associations; to that extent it will need to rely extensively on good quality research but it need not undertake research itself; rather commission and use it in pursuit of its developmental objectives.

To summarise:

Volunteering has many social benefits to the community as well as the individual and needs to be encouraged by governments. However, socially excluded groups are less likely to volunteer and receive all the involved benefits and opportunities.

Volunteering and social disadvantage should be thought about in three ways:

1. The socially disadvantaged receive valuable assistance from volunteers – thus broadening the pool of resources available for nonprofit and government organisations working with the disadvantaged;
2. The socially disadvantaged are provided with the opportunity to volunteer alongside other volunteers and thus gain some of the social advantages of volunteering;
3. The socially disadvantaged are assisted to form their own voluntary associations (self-help groups), again enabling them to capture social benefits of volunteering and also give them opportunity to determine and give voice to their collective interests.

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### **Addressing disadvantage through volunteering: Top ten policy issues and options**

The Australian Government can further enhance volunteerability and recruitability in Australia to address social disadvantage. The Australian Government could further support voluntary activities for and by socially disadvantaged persons, by creating a favourable environment, including through the following options for policies and measures:

1. **Take actions to improve the general status of volunteering in Australia**
  - a. Adopt a national strategy for volunteering in Australia. Some states have already developed strategies (Vic and QLD) but there is no national approach. In order to do so, better collaboration is needed between federal, state and local governments regarding the enchantment of volunteering
  - b. Dramatically simplify and clarify the legal environment of nonprofit organisations and volunteers, including having national standards for police checks, and let volunteers have these checks for free. This will help to encourage people to volunteer and remove some barriers (there are plans to have volunteer passports to ease this processes)
  - c. Provide national insurance to volunteers (at the moment only this is done in the organisational level, and only with volunteers working in specific types of organisations)
  - d. Introduce a volunteer service acts which acknowledge volunteering, encourage people to start volunteering, and details volunteer rights
  - e. Recognise volunteering in a public manner
  - f. Publicly award exceptional volunteers
  - g. Celebrate international day of volunteering and national volunteer week, and air a public campaign in the mass media to thank volunteers and encourage others to join
  - h. Set a personal example by having the political leadership volunteer.
2. **Take measures to encourage and facilitate volunteerism**
  - a. Establish a committee, similar to the Russell Commission in the UK, to suggest ways to encourage volunteering, particularly among socially excluded groups

- b. Provide an adequate human and physical infrastructure for volunteering
  - c. Provide information on volunteer opportunities to all, possibly by volunteer centres
  - d. Provide financial and in-kind support to volunteer organisations, so they will be able to support their volunteers
  - e. Encourage public sector workers to volunteer by introducing volunteer opportunities in their workplace and giving them leave days to volunteer.
- 3. Encourage volunteering by socially excluded groups**
- a. Develop an awareness campaign which specifically targets socially excluded groups, such as indigenous Australians, migrants or people with disability
  - b. Use targeted financial assistance to nonprofit and government volunteer-using organisations to recruit the socially excluded to volunteer
  - c. While awarding all volunteers, give priority to volunteers from socially excluded groups
  - d. Provide benefits for volunteers from socially excluded groups, such as scholarships for students.
- 4. Improve and expand the provision of suitable services to the disadvantaged by volunteers**
- a. Support volunteer organisations which work with socially excluded groups through volunteers
  - b. Identify, through the Social Inclusion Unit, social disadvantaged groups and suggest support to organisations who can provide needed services
  - c. Particularly when working with multitude social disadvantage, professional volunteers should be providing the service. People need to be recruited with the necessary skills and knowledge, or a training program set in place.
- 5. Encourage volunteer organisations to recruit volunteers from socially excluded groups**
- a. Establish a facilitating organisation to include socially excluded groups in volunteering, similar to the “Goldstar” initiative in the UK
  - b. Recognise and reward volunteer organisations that are socially inclusive.
- 6. Encourage disadvantaged groups to form their own voluntary associations**
- a. By forming their own associations, disadvantaged groups collectively can articulate their interests, advocate for them and identify and possibly organise the services they need
  - b. Encourage mentoring by skilled community development staff who are themselves experienced in the formation of associations and able to help others negotiate the pitfalls
  - c. Once such associations are established provide financial support and mentoring for several more years.
- 7. Enhance the professionalisation of volunteer managers and volunteer organisations**
- a. Adopt the national standards for volunteering which was develop by Volunteering Australia, and enhance accreditation of volunteer managers and organisations
  - b. Collaborate with facilitating organisations to train volunteer managers
  - c. Fund scholarships to enable people in volunteer management roles who have no training appropriate to those roles to attend appropriate training courses
- 8. Promote research on volunteerism in Australia**

- a. Fund research into volunteering to ensure that policies are based on the best available evidence. There are several academic and non-academic institutes today that can undertake the role
- b. Resource a volunteer research centre within or across several universities – perhaps as a CRC or a Centre of Excellence
- c. Use research based evidence to develop policy

**9. Support facilitating organisations**

- a. Work with volunteer centres such as Volunteering Australia and the Centre for Volunteering in NSW along with appropriate training authorities, to establish **an Australian Institute for Volunteer Management** and ensure that it is adequately funded to develop clear standards appropriate for establishing volunteer management as a profession. This will also involve encouraging government agencies that are volunteer users to ensure that their programs are overseen by professionally qualified staff
- b. Work with facilitating organisations to identify and address barriers to volunteering, particularly by socially disadvantaged
- c. Collaborate with volunteer organisations when including volunteers in governmental departments
- d. Develop a body of leading volunteer managers to enhance collaborations with volunteer-using organisations
- e. Collaborate with volunteer organisations such as Volunteering Australia to recruit and manage volunteers in the public sector.

**10. Encourage collaboration between the Government, business and voluntary sector**

- a. Enhance more standards and collaboration between federal and state Governments regarding volunteer policy and strategies
- b. Encourage corporate volunteering
- c. Facilitate the exchange of knowledge and skills between all sectors: including learning from the voluntary organisations
- d. Allow people, particularly from socially excluded groups to volunteer in public service organisations, and worker from public service organisations to volunteer for socially excluded groups.

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## About the Author

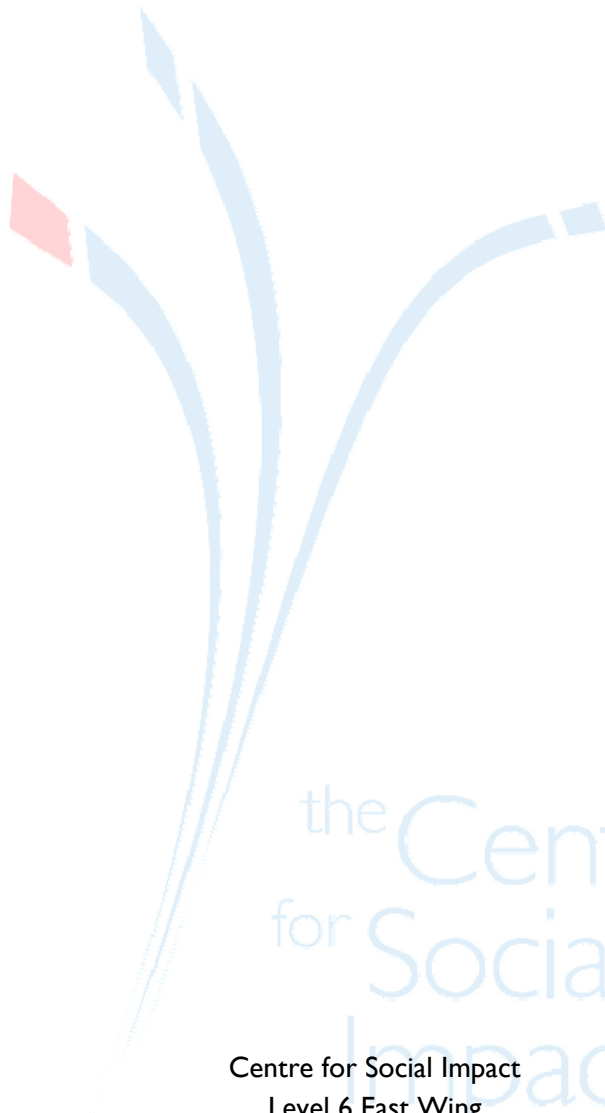
Dr. Debbie Haski-Leventhal is the NAB research fellow in the Centre for Social Impact, UNSW, Australia (CSI). In this position, she conducts research on the third sector, philanthropy, and volunteerism as well as teaches executive courses on the management of volunteers.

Dr. Debbie Haski-Leventhal gained her MA in the management of nonprofit organisations from the Hebrew University in Jerusalem (Summa Cum Laude). Her PhD dissertation focused on organisational socialisation of volunteers. She spent a year as post-doctoral fellow in Penn University the United States, with Prof. Ram Cnaan, an expert on volunteerism. Prior to arriving to Australia, She had a teaching and research position in the Israeli Centre for Third Sector Research in Ben-Gurion University in Israel, and taught and conducted research in the Hebrew University and Haifa University, as well as in Clemson University in the US.

She has twice gained the Emerging Scholar Award from ARNOVA, and was appointed member of the committee on the Israeli President's Volunteer Award in 2008, and a member of the research committee on volunteering in Australia.

Her main areas of interest are management of NPOs and volunteering, and she has studied and published widely on different aspects of volunteerism, including articles on student volunteering, youth volunteering, elderly volunteering, social policy on volunteering, and the impact of volunteering. Her articles were published in the Journal for Social Policy, Voluntas, Human Relations , Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour and others.

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Centre for Social Impact  
Level 6 East Wing  
Australian School of Business  
University of New South Wales  
Sydney NSW 2052  
Tel: 61 2 9385 6568  
Fax: 61 2 9385 6161  
[www.csi.edu.au](http://www.csi.edu.au)