

Plenary II

Topic: Social Framework for the Development of Volunteering



Social Framework for the Development of Volunteering

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Australia, like many countries is highly dependent on the work of volunteers with around forty percent of the adult population actively involved in the community. Broadly speaking Australia can categorise its volunteer workforce into those who provide essential services and those who are seeking to make a social impact or change in other ways.

As a large country subject to natural disasters such as fire and flood governments rely heavily on the support of emergency management and disaster response volunteers to provide services that cannot be paid for. Additionally other community members ensure, amongst other things, that the frail elderly are supported in their homes, the environment is protected and the rights of those who cannot speak for themselves are upheld.

Given that the demographic and expectations of the typical volunteer is changing communities and governments are faced with the challenge of providing the conditions within which volunteering can flourish whilst withstanding the temptation to engineer the involvement of citizens. In Australia the dialogue around this issue has gained momentum. This paper will discuss the approaches taken in Australia and how this has divided opinion on the best way in which to support the growth of community volunteering.