The Invisible Volunteers

Capturing the Volunteer Work of the Auburn community

AUBURN CITY COUNCIL

MANY CULTURES ONE COMMUNITY

NOVEMBER 2015

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Executive Summary

The Volunteer Contributions Research Project aimed to examine, record and quantify volunteering activity within Auburn City. Whilst acknowledging the range of corporate and formal volunteer programs operating and their valuable input, the particular focus of this study was informal volunteering, which has not been previously well documented.

Volunteering has traditionally been defined as activity that is done freely and without payment, takes place through not-for-profit organisations, in a specific role that is of benefit to the community. However, this definition is changing. Volunteering now includes a range of formal and informal volunteering activity. Such volunteering has varying durations, maybe ongoing or episodic, and may occur in person or online. The face of modern volunteering is a changing one.

The research indicates that formal volunteering is a more common occurrence in long standing communities. This type of volunteering places onerous demands on organisations to satisfy the formal processes required to support volunteers. In contrast informal volunteering is more common in indigenous and culturally and linguistically diverse communities. Informal volunteering tends to be highly responsive to the emerging needs of the community, flexible and less bound by bureaucratic processes.

Auburn City has one of the most diverse, vibrant and fluid communities in Australia. Whilst data for the Auburn LGA records volunteering levels one third less than the percentage for NSW, Auburn City Council identified that the prevalence of informal volunteering (the majority of which is not formally recorded) was likely to be much higher than the data indicated. Anecdotal evidence suggested that large amounts of informal volunteering were indeed occurring and were not well captured (or captured at all) by mainstream data collection methods.

The Volunteer Contributions Research Project used a combination of vox pops, interviews which were developed into short case studies and surveys to capture a sample of the volunteering efforts in the Auburn City area. Videos of interviews and vox pops are available on the Auburn City Council YouTube channel.

The findings of the study revealed that volunteers from culturally diverse backgrounds bring with them a high motivation and desire to give something back to the local community, particularly to a community that helped them when they were in need. This perspective is also reflected by the fact that much volunteering is completed in the evening or on weekends by those who also have other work commitments, often full time. It identifies the benefits to the volunteer, as well as the individuals and communities that receive services and support. As one community member said with reference to volunteers, "they don't come for fame, or money or recognition but they come to find themselves in volunteering".

Case studies on a variety of volunteer programs were also developed.

DOOLEYS Catholic Club in Lidcombe conducts a corporate volunteer program. Twenty percent of the 300 strong workforce take advantage of the support and encouragement that DOOLEYS offer to those in their workforce who want to give something back to their community. Their contribution was over 700 hours in the last financial year.

Auburn City Council conducts its own Volunteer Program which provides opportunity for community members to volunteer in a variety of roles within the Council. Roles range from bush care to children's reading support programs and JP services. In one month alone, over 60 volunteers contributed more than 260 hours in 13 different areas of work. The program has been so successful in attracting potential volunteers it is unable to place all of those who register for placements.

The Auburn City Men's Shed also provides volunteering opportunities. Despite the extensive number of volunteer hours their members contribute to hosting local school visits and coaching school children in basic woodwork, running fundraising barbeques (over 500 hours per year), woodworking projects like toy making, furniture restoration and so forth, the members did not recognise that their endless hours of unpaid work were in fact volunteering. This is another reason why significant amounts of volunteering goes unrecorded. Many people simply do not realise that what they are doing is volunteering.

The study investigated the prevalence of informal volunteering by taking a sample of organisations who are part of the Auburn Small Community Organisation Network Inc. (ASCON). ASCON is a network of volunteer run, not-for-profit organisations operating in the Auburn City area. Given their access to small volunteer-run agencies a sample of 12 organisations from their membership were used for the study. These 12 organisations completed a detailed survey of their volunteer activities that included ongoing activities and one off events.

The findings identified that, in the last 12 months, these 12 small community organisations mobilized **3,487 volunteers** to contribute **312,641 hours** towards ongoing community activities. These activities include running language schools, organising funerals for non-family members, organising fundraising activities, supporting the emotional wellbeing of others, taking non-relatives to hospital, providing health care, visiting the sick, isolated and elderly, providing interpreting services, referral services and skills development.

An additional **10, 426 hours** were contributed to the running of one-off events during the same period. These include events that enhance the profile of Auburn City like Flavours of Auburn and the Africultures Festival.

Combined, the total estimated value of these volunteer contributions to the Auburn economy is **$11,375,171** for the 12 month period to April 2015.

[1] Micro-volunteering is a small project that can be completed online, completed in bite size chunks of time.

Several opportunities have been identified for Council to support the continued contribution of these and other similar local organisations in Auburn City.

- Governance support and capacity building efforts will enable these organisations to continue to grow and thrive.
- Infrastructure to support the management of volunteers will ease the burden on these small, already overworked organisations and allow them to grow their volunteer activities. An incubator to promote the growth of their volunteer activities will accelerate the process.
- A well-coordinated volunteer recruitment and referral service could make good use of Council's existing Volunteer Program processes.
- The Council Volunteer Program could consider the development of micro-volunteering as strategies to support local volunteer-run, small community organisations.

A number of good practice considerations are also provided to guide funded service providers when working with small volunteer community organisations. Opportunities for local collaboration and referral of volunteers between local volunteer-involving organization are also identified.

Auburn City has an active volunteering culture, generous and strong. Greater acknowledgement and recognition of the amount, extent and real value of the substantial contribution of volunteers in the community is warranted.

1. Introduction

1.1 Aims and Objectives

The 'Volunteer Contributions Research Project' aimed to accurately map and portray the specific volunteer contribution of individuals, community groups and organisations working in Auburn City, which historically appears to be under reported. The project also aimed to quantify the value and impact of that volunteer contribution. The project included formal, informal and corporate volunteering programs. The objectives of the research were:

- To map the contribution of volunteers in Auburn City and to provide accurate data on the occurrence and type of volunteer activities across the LGA and to quantify the value that volunteers contribute to the local community.
- To undertake comprehensive research on the current volunteer contributions of individuals, community groups/organisations and business in the Auburn LGA.
- To effectively liaise with the local volunteers in our community and better understand their needs.
- To strengthen the links between Auburn City Council's Volunteers Program, other community volunteer programs and local community volunteer groups in order to provide a quality framework for the provision of voluntary activities and services.
- To identify who are the volunteers in our community and to develop improved support networks for their professional development, training and skill sharing opportunities.
- To identify and promote the types of volunteering in our community in order to strengthen and build local community resources and networks, improve promotion and referral processes, engage businesses and encourage corporate volunteering.
- To identify best practice guidelines in volunteer management and develop a checklist for assessing volunteer programs/organisations.
- To support the development of effective and culturally appropriate volunteering programs being delivered in the Auburn LGA.
- To develop stronger partnerships between voluntary organisations and business.

1.2 Volunteering defined

Volunteering is defined in different ways by different organisations. Traditionally volunteering has been defined as 'an activity that takes place through a not for profit organisation, in a designated volunteer position, that is of benefit to the community and the volunteer, is done freely and without remuneration'.[2]

[2] Volunteering Australia, 2015, website.

Over the past few years a shift has occurred away from this formal view of volunteering towards a broader, less restrictive view of what volunteering may include. A big part of this shift is towards recognition that volunteering occurs in many different ways and in many different contexts. It has been acknowledged that whilst the term may be a very familiar one, what the term means may differ significantly from person to person and from group to group[3]. Many people from refugee and humanitarian backgrounds may not consider themselves as volunteers at all[4]. It is possible that unpaid work within different communities is viewed more in terms of community obligation[5]. This may occur for multiple reasons including the different meanings of volunteering in different cultures, different cultural experiences that include very different ideas or recognition of volunteering or may not include such a concept at all[6].

The broadening of the definition of what it means to volunteer is important for several reasons not the least of which is the risk that the volunteer contributions of many individuals from diverse cultures may go unrecognized and unacknowledged when more narrow definitions are applied . This is frequently the case in volunteer statistics in Australia, many mainstream volunteer organisations do not gather data on the backgrounds of volunteers, e.g. refugee specific information, as already mentioned many individuals may not identify as volunteers and many individuals from CALD communities do not volunteer through formal volunteering organisations. Therefore these factors combine to make estimating the quantitative contribution of diverse groups extremely difficult[8]. In this study we have adopted a broad definition of volunteering to accommodate the diverse community that Auburn City is and
to ensure that many who may not be included in other statistics are acknowledged here.

[3] McAllum, K. 2013. p. 85

[4] Hugo, 2011. p. 216

[5] Ibid, p. 217

[6] Warburton, J., & McLaughlin, D. 2007. p. 50

[7] Ibid. p. 48

[8] Hugo, 2011. P.216

1.3 Types of volunteering

In addition to these differing definitions of volunteering there are many different types (or models) of volunteering, which reflect the different ways volunteers engage with their communities. Some of the most common include formal, informal, fixed term, governance, social action and online. These types of volunteering are not necessarily mutually exclusive. A brief description of each is provided below.

Formal or traditional:	This type of volunteering involves a volunteer working in an ongoing and defined role for a nonprofit organisation. Usually there is someone responsible for the coordination and recruitment of volunteers within the organisation.
Fixed term:	Fixed-term volunteering occurs when volunteers work for a nonprofit organisation to achieve specific outcomes, on a set project or an event. The work may involve being part of a project team, it will have a clear start and end, and it may be short term – hours or days or can be longer across several months. This is also referred to as episodic volunteering[9].
Governance:	This refers to those who hold volunteer roles on management committees of nonprofit organisations. In this category, volunteers establish and refine the strategic direction, oversee the operations and have ultimate responsibility for the organisation's finances.
Informal:	When community members come together around a shared interest this is also a form of volunteering. Hobby groups like dance groups, illness related self-help groups, seniors groups, unfunded community and cultural groups are all examples of informal volunteering.
Social Action:	Social action groups are similar to self-help groups in that people come together around a shared interest, but differ in that for social action groups that interest is in bringing about defined changes. Environmental groups, political lobbying groups and community action groups all fit into this type of volunteering.[10]

[9] Bryen and Madden (2006), p.20

[10] Volunteering Queensland http://volunteeringqld.org.au/web/index.php/volunteering/volunteer/1527-all-about-volunteering

Online:

Online volunteering and its relative micro volunteering tasks are bite sized, crowd sourced and networked managed creative ways for people to volunteer. For example the United Nations Volunteer Programme offers an online volunteering service offers opportunities for interested people to volunteer online in a variety of ways, for a variety of organisations across the globe. The types of activities volunteers can contribute online include writing and editing documents, research, translation services and many more.[11]

[12]Other organisations such as the UK based Help from Home[13] focus on small chunks of volunteer activities that volunteers can do from home (or work) on their own terms. "Field Photo" is one such micro-volunteering opportunity to help monitor and document changes in the environment for the Earth Observation and Modelling Facility (EOMF) at the University of Oklahoma, US. Volunteers take photographs from four directions (north, south east and west) of a landscape in their environment, geotag them, and then email or upload them directly to the website.

For our purposes the most important distinction here is between formal and informal volunteering. The main distinction being that formal volunteering traditionally occurs through an organisation, is coordinated by that organisation and mostly involves individuals participating in specified roles. Whereas informal volunteering may happen in a much less structured manner, responding to the needs of a community or group. Such volunteering is not necessarily provided under the auspice of an organisation and the roles may vary frequently. Sometime these different forms of volunteering have been referred to as organised and unorganised volunteering[14].

[11] The rise of micro-volunteering, The Guardian, July 6 2011 www.theguardian.com/voluntary-sector-network/2011/jul/06/micro-volunteering-charities-people

[12] United Nations Volunteer programme https://onlinevolunteering.org/en/vol/index.html

[13] Help from Home http://helpfromhome.org/

[14] Ironmonger, M. 2000 cited Hugo, 2011. p. 216

2. Research

Formal volunteering is more common among long standing communities that have established structures to implement formal volunteering arrangements and processes. Whereas informal volunteering is more common in sports, emergency management, indigenous communities and culturally and linguistically diverse communities (CALD), particularly those in the early stages of settlement. This type of volunteering is often considerably more nimble and includes intangible forms of volunteering with some parts of such volunteering taking on varying degrees of formality. Almost three quarters of the CALD volunteers surveyed by the Australian Multicultural Foundation and Volunteering Australia Research were involved in informal volunteering.[15]

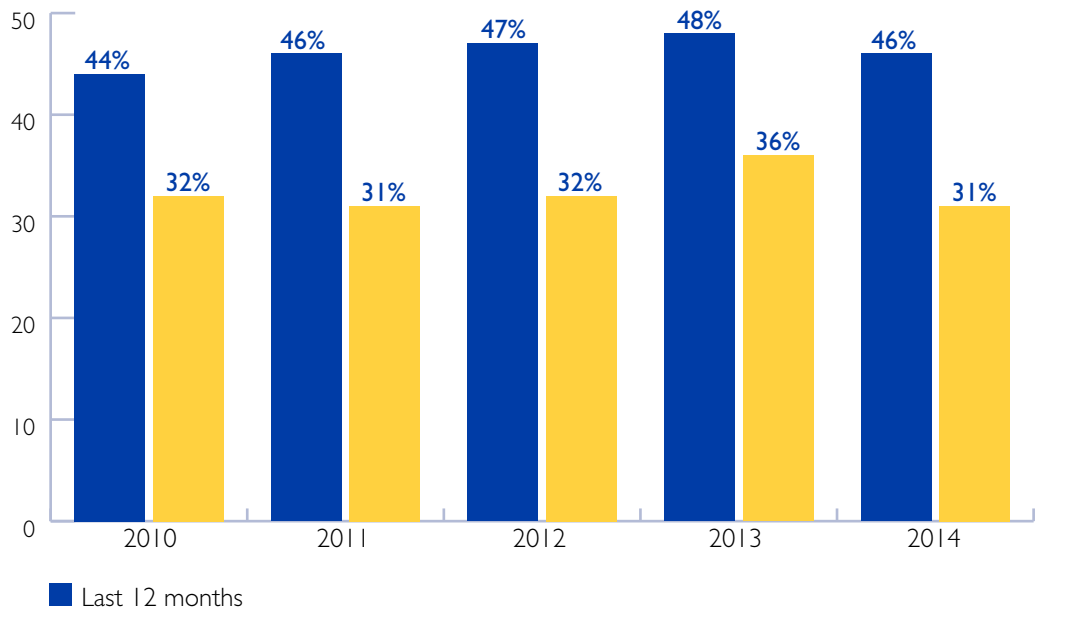
The practice of volunteering in cultural terms is worth considering as there is a strong emphasis on community and community values within many new and emerging communities. Much of this sort of volunteering is done in response to an immediate or emerging need within a community and therefore is highly responsive and fluid. It may include activities like interpreting services offered by bilingual community members or welcoming activities or navigation of government agencies and services. Frequently these activities emerge in response to gaps or inadequacies in existing government and/or community services.[16]

Unfortunately the level of formality required by formal volunteering programs is onerous and extremely difficult for voluntary organisations to satisfy. It is often seen as an additional burden on the organisations and a barrier to accessing volunteers and to its ability to directly support its community[17].

According to the Scanlon Foundation's Surveys 2014, volunteering in Australia has recorded only small changes in participation rates over the past five surveys; however the frequency of participation shows a marginal decline in 2014[18]. Figure 1 shows the results recorded in the 2014 Mapping Social Cohesion Report.

Figure 1.
Responses to the question "Have you done any unpaid voluntary work in the last 12 months?"

If response is yes, "How often do you participate in this sort of voluntary activity?" Response "at least once a week" or "at least once a month", 2010-14.[19]



[15] Volunteering Australia, 2006. Research Bulletin, Involved and Valued, July p4

[16] Ibid, p. 30; Hugo, 2011. p. 217

[17] Volunteering Australia, 2006, p. 31

[18] Markus, 2014. p. 27

[19] Ibid, 2014. P.27

3. About Auburn City

Auburn City continues to be one of the most culturally diverse local government areas in Australia with residents born in over 124 countries. It is often a first place of settlement for many newly arrived refugees and migrants. Auburn has one of the largest overseas born populations of any local government in NSW (ABS, Census 20011). At the 2011 Census, 56.9% of residents were born overseas. 71% of residents speak a language other than English at home[20].

Auburn City is home to a diversity of religions and religious cultural groups. At the 2011 Census, Christian based religions collectively comprised 34.2% of the population, followed by Islam with 25.5% of the population. Buddhism (9.1%) and Hinduism (5.1%) also represent significant portions of the population.

Auburn City is ranked as the second most disadvantaged local government area in the Sydney Statistical Division (SEIFA Index of disadvantage)[21] (2011 Census).

The exceptional diversity of cultures is both a great strength and a burden. There is a need to build respect, relationships and understanding among the many small and emerging and more established communities in Auburn and to enable these communities to engage collectively with the broader community.

Despite the socioeconomic disadvantage, Auburn has high levels of social capital. Auburn has a vibrant community sector and a high rate of volunteering. There are over 200 community organisations based here, 75% of which are run wholly by volunteers without any regular source of funding. Many are ethno-specific organisations run by small and emerging migrant and refugee communities.

Figure 2.
Auburn City Area

[20] Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing, 2011 (Usual residence data)

[21] SEIFA Index of Disadvantage measures the relative level of socio-economic disadvantage based on a range of Census characteristics including income, educational attainment and employment status.

4. Volunteering in Auburn City

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) General Social Survey defines a volunteer as "someone who, in the previous 12 months, willingly gave unpaid help, in the form of time, service or skills, through an organisation or group (ABS, 2010)." This definition excludes unpaid work done for employment (including 'work for the dole' programs) or as a part of study commitments. It also fails to capture 'unorganized' or informal volunteering in the community. Already then, we must qualify the following findings with the caveat that they are likely to represent a **significant underestimate** of the total economic impact of volunteering in the community.

Table 1. *People who volunteered through an organisation or group in the year before the 2011 Census.* [22]

Region	Number of Volunteers	Volunteer Rate (% of total persons)
Auburn	**5,681**	**9.6**
Greater Sydney	532,884	15.1
New South Wales	942,085	16.9
Australia	3,090,874	17.8

According to ABS data, 9.6% of Auburn City's population (aged over 15 years) engaged in voluntary work compared to 15.1% in Greater Sydney and 16.9% for New South Wales as a whole. At the 2011 Census, Auburn City had a lower proportion of people who volunteer for an organisation or group, however it is important to note that this varied across the Local Government Area. Proportions ranged from a low of 6.2% in Silverwater which includes a large proportion of manufacturing, light industry and other businesses to a high of 15.4% in Newington.

The five areas with the highest percentages were: Newington (15.4%), Sydney Olympic Park (13.0%) Wentworth Point (12.9%) Lidcombe (South) Rookwood (11.7%) Lidcombe (10.9%). These figures include voluntary work undertaken at any time in the 12 months prior to the Census. Examples of voluntary work counted within this category are: assisting with events and with sports organisations, helping with school events and activities, assisting in churches, hospitals, nursing homes and charities, other kinds of volunteer work (e.g. emergency services, political causes). This excludes unpaid work done through a club, organisation or association mainly in order to qualify for government benefits such as Newstart Allowance, and any work done as part of a person's employment or business[23].

Figure 2 shows the Auburn City area which includes the suburbs of Auburn, Berala, Lidcombe, Regents Park, Silverwater, Sydney Olympic Park, Newington, Wentworth Point.[24]

Anecdotally, the statistics are not reflective of the high rates of volunteering within the Auburn community sector, particularly by CALD communities.[25]

[22] ABS 2011 Census of Population and Housing www.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2011/quickstat/LGA10200?opendocument&navpos=220

[23] Based on information compiled and presented in profile.id by .id, the population experts

[24] Figure constructed from information compiled and presented in profile.id by .id, the population experts

[25] Auburn City Council, personal communication

5. Method

This project used a variety of methods to gather information about volunteering and volunteer activities in the Auburn local area. These methods included:

1. Vox pops: A selection of people who attended the "Working with the Volunteer Community Sector" on May 27, 2015 at the Auburn Centre for Community were asked "What does volunteering mean to you?". These short, one minute snapshots were gathered to reflect a community perspective of volunteering to balance the more formal and academic perspective also presented. The vox pops videos are available on the Auburn City Council YouTube channel.

2. Interviews and Case Studies: Interview were used to find out about the corporate and formal volunteer programs. Interviews were semi structured. A basic schedule of questions was developed. These are provided in the Appendices. From this initial starting point, further questions were asked in response to information provided during the interview. Interviews were recorded. Recorded interviews were then edited into short case studies. These case studies available through the Auburn City Council Youtube channel.

3. Surveys: As the type and volume of informal volunteer activities was of particular interest for this report, surveys were used to capture and quantify information about the type and range of informal volunteering that occurs and the amount of this within the Auburn LGA. A sample (n=12) of volunteer run agencies was used, access to these groups was facilitated by ASCON, a local network of volunteer run organisations, refer to a later section for more information about ASCON. Given that the range and type of activities undertaken by these organisations was unknown, a group of ASCON members assisted the researcher to identify and develop a fairly extensive list of common activities for inclusion in the survey.

6. Community Perspectives on Volunteering

6.1 What does volunteering mean to you?

"I think a lot of us actually think that volunteering is about people giving their time to help different organisations or the community, but the other thing, I think it's a two way thing. To me, I think a volunteer when they volunteer their time it gives them a lot of self-esteem, a lot of confidence and especially for people who come from a different country."

"When they come to this country they want to give something back to the community. To me that's what volunteering means."

Figure 3.
Irene Choo

"For me, I'm a volunteer, a lot of volunteers work, …. we have to spend our own money, own car, own petrol and to do everything for the people. One week we nearly did 40 hours volunteer work, this is the truth. Nearly six days a week. But if we don't do that, nobody will do that."

Figure 4.
Yin Lan Ge

"Volunteering for me is giving up your time, offering your time to people that need it in some way. In my case I work full-time, so my volunteering goes after that. What I do is to work with a group of older people to teach them folk dances from Argentina and Uruguay. The oldest person is over seventy five so for them it's a way of helping them maintain their mental wellbeing and exercise at the same time."

Figure 5.
Marta Menendez

"When a volunteer asks to volunteer in the program, they want to do something for the community, it's from their heart, they want to give something back to the community. They've been helped before and they want to give something to other people in need. So they don't come for fame or money or recognition but they come to find themselves in volunteering."

Figure 6.
Nahid Khalil

7. Volunteering Contribution Case Studies

The current research aimed to capture a sample of the contributions of volunteers within the Auburn City area. The study acknowledges the wide range of organisations and individuals within Auburn City that volunteer through corporate volunteer programs, formal volunteer programs and informal programs. Whilst acknowledging the extent and variety of volunteering activity that occurs within the LGA, the focus of this study was on informal volunteer efforts not previously documented. To ensure the variety of volunteer efforts were recognised a number of individuals from a variety of volunteer contexts were interviewed and their interviews are available on the Auburn City Council YouTube Channel.

7.1 Corporate Programs

CASE STUDY: DOOLEYS LIDCOMBE CATHOLIC CLUB

Figure 7.
Julie Milsom, Community Relations Manager, DOOLEYS

DOOLEYS Lidcombe Catholic Club has a community volunteer program with two arms:

1. The first program is available for DOOLEYS members and this involves members volunteering on committees which arrange all of the sporting and inter-club activities the Club offers to its members;

2. The second program is the staff volunteering program which is available to all staff, both full and part time. Up to four occasions per year each staff member is eligible for "community leave" where they complete community work and DOOLEYS pays them to do so. DOOLEYS work with a number of community partners each year who provide details of the community volunteering opportunities they have available. From this DOOLEYS produce a calendar of community volunteering opportunities from which staff can choose.

Julie Milsom, DOOLEYS Community Relations Manager says that essentially DOOLEYS is a community club and the Management and Directors feel strongly that DOOLEYS needs to give back to the community. For our staff it provides a means of feeling engaged with both their workplace and their community which in turn creates a team of people who want to provide a good service to their members.

Twenty percent of DOOLEYS 300 staff are involved in the volunteer program. Julie says "We try to offer a broad range of volunteering activities that our staff can be involved with because obviously everyone has different interests."

The DOOLEYS volunteers have done landscaping, feeding the homeless, volunteering at community events like festivals and fundraising barbeques just to name a few. Their contribution was over 700 hours in the last financial year.

The video of the DOOLEYS Lidcombe Catholic Club interview is available on Council's YouTube channel.

7.2 Formal Volunteer Programs

Figure 8.
Bohdana Szydlik, Community Participation and Engagement Officer, Auburn City Council.

CASE STUDY 1: AUBURN CITY COUNCIL VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

The Volunteer Program is run by Auburn City Council and was developed to provide local community members with opportunities to contribute towards the betterment of their environment and their community. The program focuses on Council-run volunteer activities only.

Bohdana Szydlik, Council's Community Engagement and Participation Officer, and the person who managers the Volunteer Program, suggests "Council runs a volunteer program because it recognises that there are lots of people in the community who want to give back". The benefits to Council are that they are able to run programs that rely on volunteers like in "the JP service or helping children learn to read, we couldn't run these programs without our volunteers". From the "administration perspective we are fortunate to have a number of volunteers who come along and contribute to the work of the Council which is useful for the volunteers and for the Council itself."

Some of the activities volunteers are engaged with through the program are a Bush Care Program, a free JP Service, English conversation classes, Reading buddies program, corporate information support, Auburn Poets and Writers, administrative work in Council, event organising for the Citizenship Ceremony and Flavours of Auburn.

The volunteering efforts are quite substantial. For the month of October 2014 the Volunteering Program engaged 66 volunteers for a total of 277 hours in 13 different activities. For example, English conversation classes, approximately 20-25 classes per week are held across the LGA at Auburn, Lidcombe and Regents Park Libraries, "they couldn't run if we didn't have our volunteer tutors" says Ms. Szydlik.

The Program's strengths include

1. Having an abundance of volunteers, Council as an entity is seen as reputable and people want to volunteer for Council.
2. All the formal processes are in place – there is a strong application and induction process and Council has the appropriate insurances and formal support systems in place.
3. Council has resources to offer training opportunities as well as uniforms for volunteer and supports volunteer activities through provision of equipment and resources.

Areas of the Program that could benefit from improvement are the internal communications between Council supervisors and the Volunteer Program Coordinator as well as the quality of the supervision of the volunteers. The opportunities for volunteer placement are not always well recognised by staff within Council.

The response to the Program has been so large that not everyone wanting to volunteer can be provided a volunteer placement with the Council. It is for this reason that the Program hopes to be able to expand its services to provide a referral service whereby potential volunteers who cannot be provided with a suitable placement that matches their skills can be referred to a local not-for-profit organisations to be offered a suitable volunteer position. An application and assessment process for the not-for-profit organisations is being considered. This would allow potential volunteers to be referred to those organisations with the capacity to appropriately support a volunteer placement.

The videos of the Auburn City Volunteer Program interview is available on the Council's YouTube channel.

Figure 9.
Abbie Russell
President, Auburn
City Men's Shed Inc.

CASE STUDY 2: AUBURN CITY MEN'S SHED INC.

Auburn City Men's Shed Inc. is a member based association that provides a place for men to come and build friendships, learn skills, contribute to and participate in their community. Abbie Russell, the President of the Shed says all members can "come here and can sit and have a talk and a cup of coffee. There are computers here for them to get on to, we've got people here who can teach them a bit of woodworking and other training, we've got some men who've got the expertise to do that."

Some of the volunteering activities that members are engaged in through the Shed include running barbeque days at Bunnings on Saturdays (about 500 hours per year), participating as committee members on the Committee of the association, providing management of the organisation and maintenance of the premises, hosting school visits and teaching woodwork to students, organising events like seminar days for members e.g. men's health, arranging and conducting special events like the ANZAC Centenary service and barbeque. A one off event a few years ago involved organising and running a barbeque for 2,500 people as part of a refugee event organised by the government. Twelve volunteers participated, one member, John Maxwell recalls they used "a quarter of a ton of sausages, I seem to remember working it out."

Other volunteer activities in which members take part include making furniture or restoring old furniture which they then offer in exchange for donations,. All money is then put back into the organisation to run future activities.

Abbie talks about the schools program, "We help schools, we have the school children in here. We have them making little tool boxes. Teaching them basic woodwork. Show them how to use a saw, how to hold a hammer, how to nail and then we let them glue the timber together. Then they can burn dad's name onto it and 'Happy Father's Day' or whatever. And we've done that two or three times in the last couple of years." In addition to this Abbie says "We make a lot of toys for kindergartens" and "desks and blackboards" as well. Members have made music stands for children with a disability and toys for children in Vietnam.

Figure 10.
Eric John Maxwell, member, Auburn City Men's Shed

The Shed has a well-equipped woodworking workshop. The making of the wood products sounds like a professional operation, as Abbie describes "Any new member that starts, we won't let them use any machinery until John shows them ….their inductions, you've got to be able to use them correctly otherwise there'd be accidents." John describes the process line they use to make the products "If we're making a whole heap of trucks or cars, what I would do is try and get a production line going. Find the guy who can use the band saw, find somebody who can drill holes competently and then I'll cut out the timbers and then they can finish them off down the production line and somebody glues and pins them and paints them. That sort of thing."

Despite all of these activities when the researcher made initial contact with the organisation to ask if they did any volunteering the answer was "no". There was no recognition that the activities they engage in are in fact volunteering "it just goes with the membership" says Abbie Russell, the President of the Association.

The videos of the Auburn City Men's Shed interviews are available on the Auburn City Council YouTube Channel.

7.3 Informal Volunteering

To examine the extent of informal volunteering within the LGA the Auburn Small Community Organisation Network (ASCON) Inc. was chosen as the focus of the present study as they are a collection of volunteer run, non-for-profit organisations operation in the Auburn LGA. Here is a brief background on the organisation and its work.

7.3.1. Auburn Small Community Organisation Network (ASCON) Inc.

The Auburn Small Community Organisation Network (ASCON) was formed in 2007 and incorporated in 2015. ASCON is group of small not-for-profit community organisations who do not receive regular funding and who operate on a voluntary basis. ASCON aims to promote multicultural harmony through the establishment of a network of representatives of volunteer run, not-for-profit community organisations (from small and emerging communities) in the Auburn Local Government Area.

The Association will achieve this by:

- Facilitating the sharing and coordination of relevant information, expertise, training and other resources;
- Supporting the development of member organisations;
- Advocacy on behalf of small community organisations and their communities;
- Education of the larger community on issues affecting small community organisations and their new and emerging communities through cultural events and other relevant activities;
- Collaboration on funding submissions and projects;
- The provision of peer support for community leaders; and
- Other such activities that may be decided by the Association from time to that are consistent with these objects.

ASCON has a membership of 30 local organisations and regularly collaborates on projects such the Flavours of Auburn food sampling event and the Connect to Work Project which aims to provide individual employment assistance to local residents not eligible for government funded employment services.

7.3.2. Capturing Informal Volunteering in ASCON

Initially the researchers met with ASCON members to identify the types of volunteer activities in which, they and their members, were engaged. The list formed the basis of a self-report survey that was distributed to ASCON member organisation representatives to complete on behalf of their organisation. Twelve ASCON member organisations completed the survey. The results of these surveys were verified by the researchers with each organisation. The following are some examples of the organisations and types of activities and programs they run. A full list of organistions surveyed in is included in the Appendix.

The **NSW Multicultural Seniors Association**, with 40 members, provides a number of volunteer activities to their membership and beyond. Some of their activities include conducting a program of events for Seniors Day, providing and supporting health care, visiting non relatives including those elderly who are isolated and / or sick and organising funerals for non-family members.

The **Alliance of Philippine Community Organisations Inc.** (APCO) with 300 members also provides a very broad range of services and activities on a volunteer basis. Included amongst their many activities are supporting the emotional wellbeing of community members both on the phone and face to face, organising and conducting cultural activities and advocacy. Some of the special events they have had a key role in include the Freedom Gala Dinner and Flavours of Auburn.

The **Somali Welfare and Cultural Association** (SWCA) are also active members of the Auburn volunteering community providing a range of support services for members and non-members including organising and conducting language schools, providing assistance with migration and settlement issues and the administration associated with these processes. In addition SWCA help those unfamiliar with Australian processes to get connected the utilities like telephone, Internet and electricity services. Their members also take those in need to hospital or link members of their community to one another. They organise and conduct the Africultures Festival and participate as stall holders in the Flavours of Auburn food festival.

Yet another Auburn based organisation that provides an extensive range of activities organised and run exclusively by volunteers is the 250 member strong **Auburn Tamil Society (NSW) Inc**. Their members organise cultural activities, organise funerals for non-family members, organise and run language schools as well as provide health care, visit non-family members who may be in detention, isolated, frail or sick. To this they add participating in Board meetings for a range of groups and attending network events to ensure their community is represented and informed.

The **Australia Afghan Khorasan Association** have about 300 members who volunteer in a variety of different ways including the provision of emotional support and wellbeing to those in need right through to attending monthly committee meetings. Their volunteers organise and conduct cultural activities, help people understand and comply with the school system, organise funerals for non-family members, provide case work to those who require ongoing support, advocacy services, assistance with migration and settlement issues and the attached administration. They also organise special events for Naw-Rúz and the Eid Festivals.

Table 2 details the types of volunteer activities recorded by ASCON members. The categories are used to organise and simplify the data. Later they are used to show the percentage of volunteer contribution against each category, the economic value of each category and the number of volunteer hours for each category.

Table 2. Types of volunteer work in which ASCON member organisations engage

A. Governance and administration related activities

- Attend monthly committee / Board meetings
- Training and skills development
- Media work – interviews, press releases, etc.
- Communicate with members via email, phone
- Supporting affiliate organisations with their projects

B. Cultural and related activities

- Organise cultural activities
- Participate in cultural activities
- Organise funerals (for non-family members)
- Organise and run language schools
- Providing interpreting services

C. Special event related activities

- Organise fundraising activities (for events/ projects in Australia and/or overseas)
- Organise and conduct special events
- Cooking for events

D. Health and welfare related activities

- Case work, referral services
- Support emotional wellbeing (on the phone or face-to-face)
- Assist with migration and settlement issues & the administration associated with these issues
- Helping people understand and comply with the school system
- Taking non-relatives to the hospital
- Connecting people to available services
- Provide and support health care
- Helping people write resumes and engage in job seeking activities
- Linking community members to each other
- Management and maintenance of rental accommodation
- Visiting non-relatives e.g. in Villawood, jail, or who are isolated, elderly or sick
- Helping to hook someone up to utilities e.g. telephone, the Internet, electricity

E. Advocacy and Lobbying

- Attending network events to ensure your community is being represented
- Represent community in government conferences and events etc.
- Advocacy

7.4 Estimating Volunteer Contributions

In calculating the hourly rate for each category listed in Table 2, Ironmonger's 2006 price of $24.09[26] per hour, which is based on ABS estimates, was used as a starting point as Ironmonger is generally considered an authority on estimating the value of volunteer contributions. This figure is a "gross opportunity cost wage" which means it is essentially a replacement cost, if the volunteer was replaced with a paid worker then the value of the replacement includes gross wages (which includes income tax) and other costs such as superannuation contributions[27].

The hourly wage rate is adjusted with a 12.7% loading applied to allow for volunteers' use of their own resources, often motor vehicles; however as is this case in our study, use of personal equipment such as computers, internet connections and telephones are also commonly supplied by the volunteer[28]. Since 2006 when these base rate estimates were made there has been significant increases in wages which are estimated at having grown by 29.7 per cent nationally[29]. The wage replacement cost adopted in the present study, inclusive of loadings and adjustments, is the 2013 hourly wage equivalent - $35.21[30]. This rate is a conservative estimate if for no other reason than, casual labour is more expensive than full time work[31].

Using this hourly rate the financial value of the volunteer contribution was calculated. Table 3 provides a summary of the outcomes of the 12 ASCON member-organisations surveyed and the number of their members involved in volunteer activity. Also included in the table is a summary of volunteer hours for both on-going activities and one-off events and finally the total financial value of the volunteer contribution is listed.

[26] Ironmonger, 2012, p. 5.

[27] Ironmonger, 2012, p. 9.

[28] Ironmonger, 2012, p. 17

[29] MMCLINK, 2014, p. 7.

[30] MMCLINK, 2014, p. 7

[31] Ibid, p12

Table 3. Total Volunteer Contribution Summary Tables for our Sample (12 ASCON member organisations)

Organisation And Members Summary	
Total number of ASCON organisations that completed the survey	12
Average number of members per organisation	136*
Total number of people involved in volunteer activities in ASCON organisations sampled	3,487
Volunteer Hours Summary	
Total number of volunteer hours completed for ongoing activities (in hours)	312,641
Average number of volunteer hours for ongoing activities per organization (in hours)	26,053
Average number of volunteer hours for ongoing activities per person per year (in hours)	159
One-Off Events Summary	
Total number of volunteer hours completed for special one-off events (in hours)	10,426
Average number of people volunteering for special one-off events	66
Average number of volunteer hours for special one-off events per person (in hours)	158
Estimated Financial Value Summary	
Estimated financial value of the recorded volunteer hours (in dollars)	$11,375,171.00**

Notes:

N=12

* Where a range of members was provided the lower of the two numbers was taken.

** Hourly rate used $35.21

Figure 11 shows volunteer effort by category. Clearly health and wellbeing related activities provides the largest percentage contribution. It is worth noting that this category includes the largest number of individually identified activities including supporting emotional wellbeing (face-to-face and on the phone) which alone accounts for 21% of total volunteer hours for all categories. Another activity in this category - connecting people to available services - accounts for about 8% of total volunteer hours.

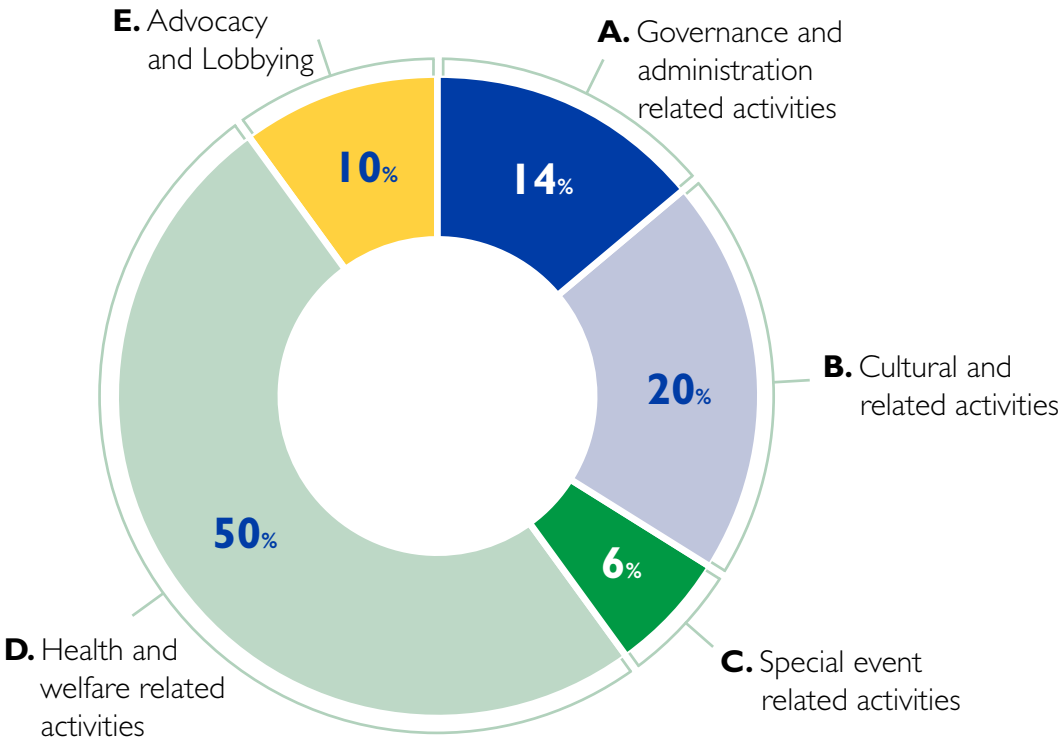


Figure 11. Percentage of overall contribution by activity type

Figure 12 shows the number of volunteer hours per category. Within the governance and administration category the activities that contributed the highest number of volunteer hours were supporting affiliate organisations with their projects - 13,520 hours and communicate with members via email and phone at around 16,450 hours.

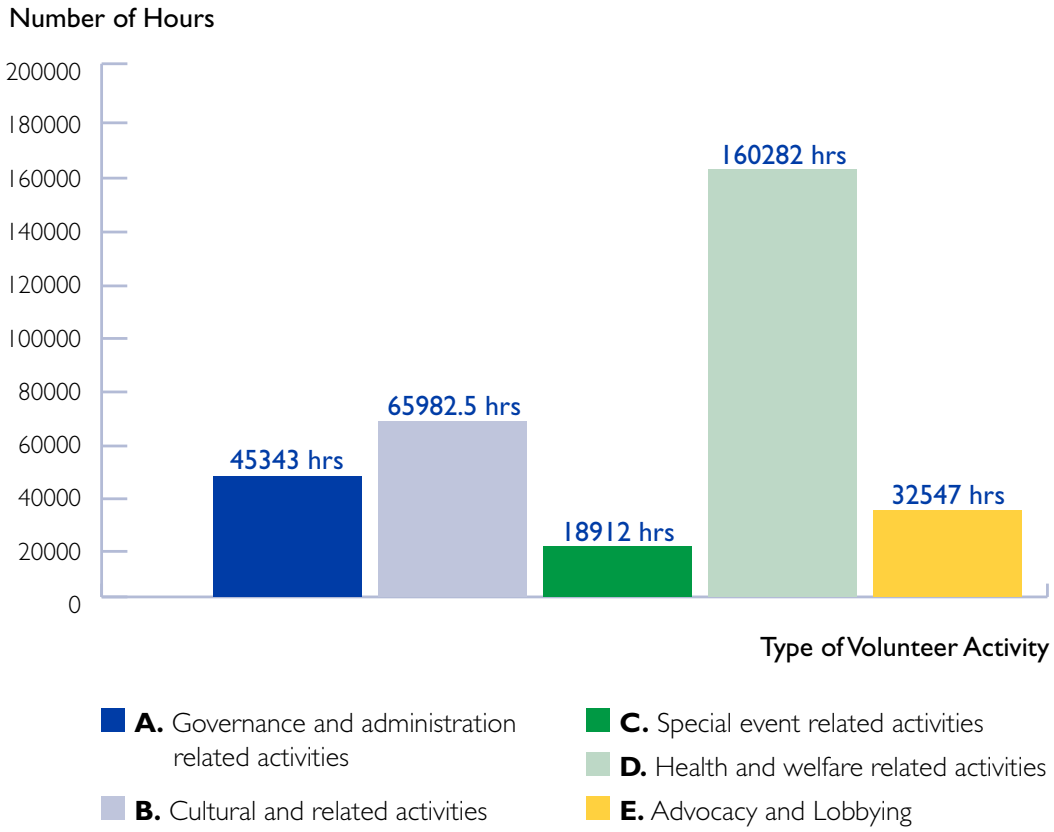


Figure 12. Volunteer hours of contribution by activity type

Figure 13 shows the financial value of each category to the other categories. Notwithstanding those items previously identified, some additional individual activities that accrued high financial values include: organising cultural activities ($1,370, 514), attending network events (approx. $700,000), and providing and supporting health care (valued at approximately $500,000).

Interestingly special events only represent a small fraction of the actual value for total volunteering activities within these organisations, with it representing less than half of the amount associated with Advocacy and Lobbying activity and only about 12% of the value associated with the largest category –Health and welfare related activities. So whilst many ASCON member organisations may be well known for the one-off events they run throughout the year (which by nature are more visible to the public), these events represent a very small part of the volunteer activities with which members are involved.

Estimated economic value of contribution by activity type

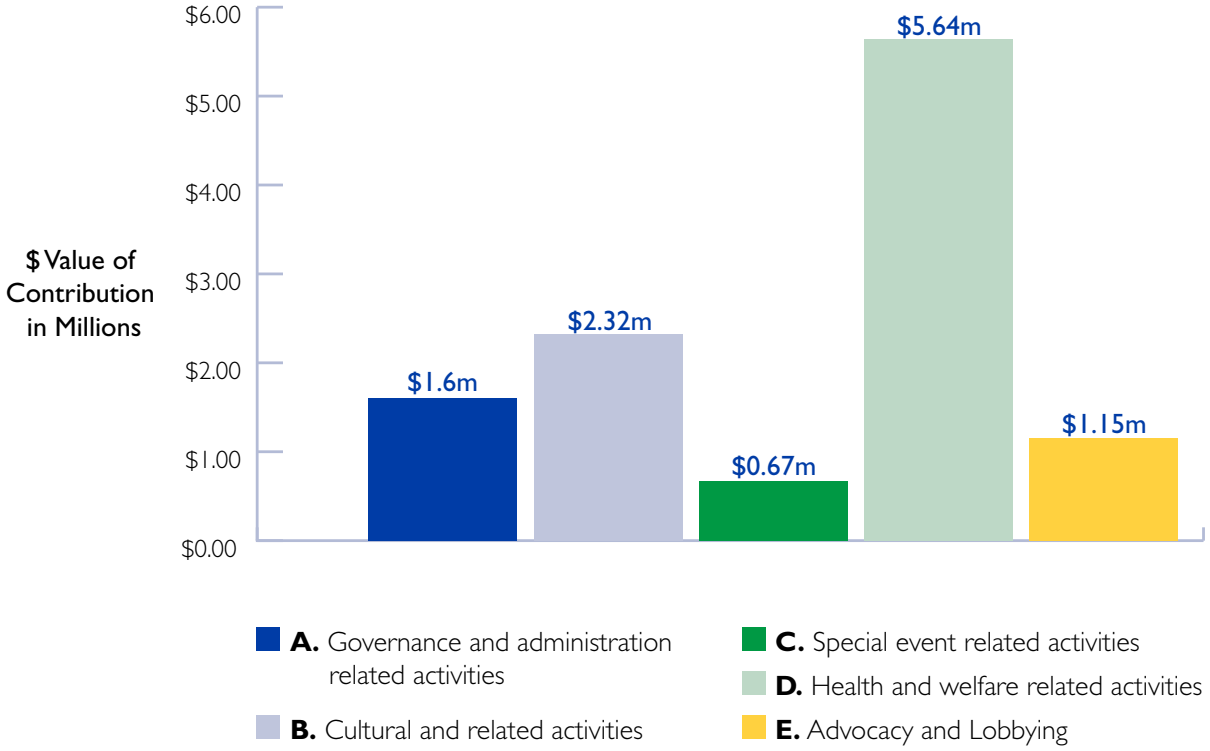


Figure 13. Estimated dollar value (in millions) of volunteer contributions by activity type

In recent estimates of the economic value of volunteering it has been suggested that increasing the rate of volunteering in the community by as little as one per cent per year through marginal increases in government investment will yield exponential community benefits[32].

Therefore preserving the current personal investment that organisations and individuals currently make to the Auburn community is critical and capitalizing on this investment and supporting it in such a way that ensures its future growth can only help the Auburn economy and its community.

[32] Volunteering Tasmania, 2014, p. iv

8. Opportunities for Auburn City Council

Given the areas of activity in which these volunteer-run organisations invest the most volunteer time, the type of assistance that is required include:

- Governance support including the provision of expert support and capacity building efforts which assist these organisations to run more effectively and manage their affairs to ensure compliance with legislative requirements and to assist their organisations to develop appropriately and fulfil their objects. This may lend itself to micro volunteering and online volunteering activities.
- Management of volunteers and volunteer activity including processes/system support. Figure 14 shows a model for a small voluntary organisation incubator which provides processes, system support as well as mentoring and the services of a paid Volunteer Coordinator. The intention of such a service is to relieve some of the administrative burden involved in the co-ordination and organisation of volunteers and to develop the capacity of these organisations and assist them to grow.

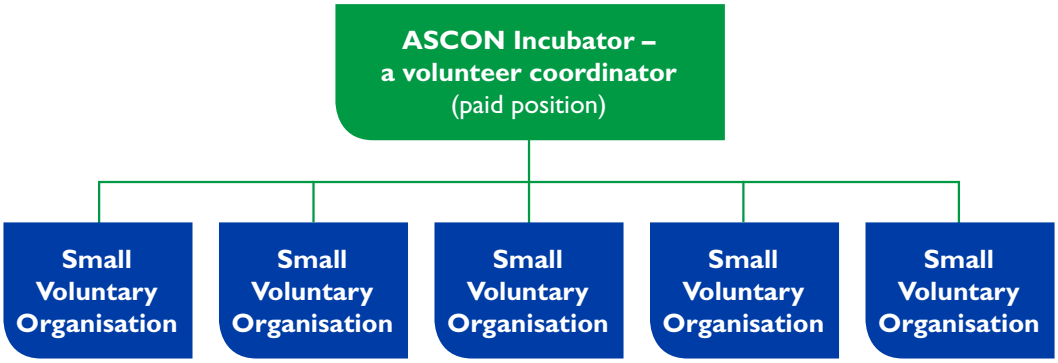


Figure 14. Possible structure for ASCON small voluntary organisation incubator

- A large proportion of the volunteer activities run by ASCON members rely on specific language skills and cultural understanding. It is therefore unlikely that volunteers without these skills will be useful supports to these organisations and their development in these areas. Consequently capacity building within these organisation in how to make better use of current members/ volunteers, rostering and planning skills are likely to be of more assistance. Whilst this is true of the majority of volunteer activities, it is not so for all volunteer activities. Therefore separating those volunteer activities that can be provided by those without specialist language skills and cultural knowledge will be helpful for Council's Volunteer Program in identifying areas most likely volunteers may be supplied to support ASCON member services.

- It would be helpful to these organisations if a system for the recruitment and referral of volunteers for special events could be developed with the Council Volunteer Program. For example training on key topics such as Work Health and Safety, volunteer rights and responsibilities, handling difficult people, cross cultural communication and self-care strategies. Certainly other appropriate referrals would be useful however; special events seem to provide the most likely avenue for straightforward volunteer referrals to these organisations.
- The Council Volunteer Program consider the development of micro-volunteering and online volunteering opportunities as strategies to support local volunteer run small community organisation.

9. Good Practice Guidelines

Implications and good practice considerations for funded service providers working with these small voluntary community organisations:

1. Understand the amount of volunteer work these organisations and individuals are already engaged in and don't ask them to do work for your organisation for nothing – they can't as they are already overloaded.
2. Support them to develop their capacity in areas identified by them.
3. Consider what their priorities are to ensure that the programs you seek to develop together are in areas that are of most value and importance to their organisation and members.
4. Pay for their services. If you require recruitment of their community members this involves time and effort as well as communication and persuasion. These are skills that would under any other circumstance be paid for and therefore should be paid for here as well.
5. Employ staff from diverse backgrounds to reflect the cultural mix of the local community.
6. Supporting the endeavours of these small organisations helps them but also helps you to establish a relationship which will underpin any future partnerships that may develop; it also assists you to have a better understanding of their organisation and its activities.
7. When seeking to work with these small organisations be aware of the programs they choose to deliver and the manner in which they deliver them. These choices reflect their priorities, the cultural norms and are cognizant of cultural taboos. It is important to ensure that these aspects of culture are understood and respected if working together it to be successful.

10. Opportunities for Local Collaboration

Due to the high number of volunteers in Auburn City, Council recognises that opportunities exist for both collaboration and referral of volunteers between local volunteer-involving organisations. Opportunities for collaboration are identified below.

- Due to the high number of volunteer applications received for Council's Volunteer Program, it is difficult to provide regular volunteering opportunities to everyone who applies.
- Council can inform its pool of volunteers about other local volunteering opportunities but will request the following information from local organisations prior to doing this: position description (which includes tasks), date/time/venue of volunteering, contact details of volunteer supervisor or, confirmation that host organisation has volunteer insurance.
- Organisations can utilize existing resources developed to assess and identify gaps in their capacity to recruit, train, supervise and maintain volunteers within their organisations. Self-assessment tools such as the *Checklist of Policies and Procedures* developed by Volunteering Queensland[33] will assist in this.
- Pooling of training resources for local volunteers and volunteer involving organisations. This includes delivery of joint training sessions on topics such as Work Health and Safety, volunteer rights and responsibilities, handling difficult people, cross cultural communication and self-care strategies. The Volunteer Solutions program of TriCommunity Exchange[34] is funded to provide this support to volunteer involving organisations until June 2016. (Note: This information is current as of November 2015.)

[33] Volunteering Queensland www.volunteeringqld.org.au

[34] Tri Community Exchange www.tricomm.org.au

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11. Appendices

11.1 Interview Questions Formal and Corporate Volunteer Questions

AUBURN CITY COUNCIL VOLUNTEER CONTRIBUTIONS RESEARCH PROJECT

Dooley's Catholic Club

1. Tell me about the Dooley's corporate volunteering project

2. How do Dooley's define volunteering?

3. What benefits do you see the program offers your organisation?

4. What challenges were encountered along the way?

5. What do you look for in volunteering opportunities?

6. At Dooley's:
   a. Who volunteers?
   b. How many volunteers do you have at present?
   c. How many hours on average does each volunteer contribute?
   d. In what types of activities are volunteers involved?

11.2 Unpaid Community Work Activity Survey

VOLUNTEER WORK ACTIVITY SURVEY

1. Name of your organisation:_____
2. Name of person/people completing the form:_____
3. Approximately how many members does your organisation currently have:_____
4. Please list all of the VOLUNTEER activities you and your members have engaged in over the last 12 months Please do not record activities more than once.

Activity	No. of volunteers	Average Hours	Select a period
Support emotional wellbeing (on the phone or face-to-face)			Per day/week/month/year
Attend monthly committee / Board meetings			Per day/week/month/year
Organise fundraising activities (for events in in Australia and/or overseas)			Per day/week/month/year
Organise cultural activities			Per day/week/month/year
Helping people understand and comply with the school system			Per day/week/month/year
Participate in cultural activities			Per day/week/month/year
Organise funerals (for non-family members)			Per day/week/month/year
Organise and run language schools			Per day/week/month/year
Case work			Per day/week/month/year
Advocacy			Per day/week/month/year
Assist with migration and settlement issues & the administration associated with these issues			Per day/week/month/year
Cooking for events			Per day/week/month/year
Training and skills development			Per day/week/month/year
Helping to hook someone up to utilities such as telephone services, the Internet, electricity etc.			Per day/week/month/year

Activity	No. of volunteers	Average Hours	Select a period
Attending network events to ensure your community is being represented			Per day/week/month/year
Providing interpreting services			Per day/week/month/year
Taking non-relatives to the hospital			Per day/week/month/year
Visiting non-relatives e.g. Villawood, jail, or those who are isolated, elderly or sick			Per day/week/month/year
Helping people write resumes and engage in job seeking activities			Per day/week/month/year
Linking community members to each other			Per day/week/month/year
Connecting people to available services			Per day/week/month/year
Referral			Per day/week/month/year
Supporting affiliate organisations with their projects			Per day/week/month/year
Represent community in government conferences and events etc.			Per day/week/month/year
Communicate with members via email, phone			Per day/week/month/year
Provide and support health care			Per day/week/month/year
Maintenance of rental accommodation			Per day/week/month/year
Media work – interviews, press releases, etc.			Per day/week/month/year
			Per day/week/month/year
			Per day/week/month/year
			Per day/week/month/year
			Per day/week/month/year

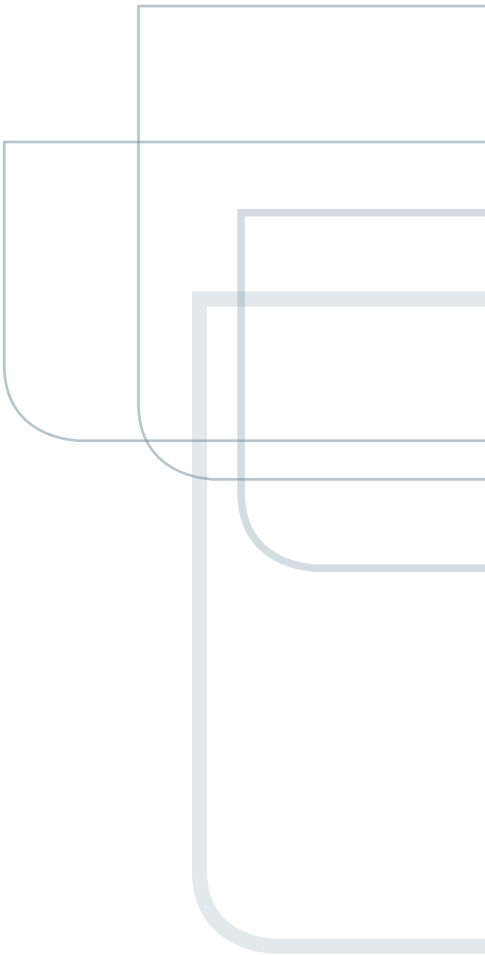
5. Please list all of the VOLUNTEER work for special one-off events e.g. a particular festival you and your members have engaged in over the last 12 months. Please do not repeat activities recorded elsewhere.

One-off event name	**Total number of volunteers**	**Average Hours p.p.**	**Total** (office use only)
Event name: 1. Preparation for the event			
2. On the day of the event			
3. After the day of the event (follow-up)			

11.3 List of 12 ASCON member organisations surveyed in the sample

The following

1. African Hunting and Drumming Group
2. Alliance of Philippine Community Organisations Inc
3. Auburn Tamil Society (NSW) Inc
4. Australian Afghan Hassanian Youth Association
5. Australian Afghan Khorasan Association
6. Dinka Literacy Association
7. Human Care Welfare
8. Kapit Bahayan Coop Ltd
9. Nepalese Indigenous Nationalities Forum Australia
10. NSW Multicultural Seniors Association Inc
11. Somali Welfare & Cultural Association
12. Sri Om Foundation Ltd



AUBURN CITY COUNCIL

MANY CULTURES ONE COMMUNITY