



*a look at organisations led by young people.*

*make a difference*



**volunteering**  
queensland



# INVIGORATING AND INSPIRING

## executive summary

This report outlines the findings of our initial stage of the research project 'Youth Leading Youth', as part of **Volunteering Qld's innovative engagement initiatives**. The project aims to examine the key factors that **inspire + engage young people** in the not-for-profit sector and maintain their volunteering practice. The project has been undertaken to provide a **different perspective** on young people and volunteering and considers **how young people work** with other young

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people as volunteers and leaders. The report is the result of a **series of interviews** completed with eight organisations that described themselves as being volunteer organisations **led by young people**. The report contains a detailed description of the research process and interviewing methodology, followed by the findings including **characteristics** of the organisations, **good practice, challenges** and **trends**. These elements are articulated through the key areas of organisations' **culture, linking** and **engaging** processes, as well as **leadership/belonging** connection analysis. The report is complemented with the relevant literature review summary.

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## credits

This research was undertaken by **Volunteering Qld** as part of our **innovative engagement** initiatives. The research was conducted and authored by **Jenny Geale** and **Mark Creyton**. The literature review was conducted by **Melinda Tindoy**. The final report was compiled by **Ana Radovic**.

We wish to **thank** all the **participants** who gave their time so generously to share the **stories** of their **amazing organisations, people** and **processes**.

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# research process

The aim of this research was to investigate **how to effectively support and manage volunteering by young people from the perspective of organisations led by young people**. This specific perspective was chosen to:

// Fill a gap in the current literature concerning youth volunteerism and working with young volunteers. The existing literature does not explicitly consider the motivations and practices of these organisations. We agreed that a set of understandings drawn from young people who are leading other young people in a volunteer organisation would be **valuable to all organisations that work with and engage young volunteers**.

// Build upon the personal experiences and observations of the authors – one working within, and the other working with, organisations led by young volunteers – which were that organisations led by young people revealed **distinctive characteristics about youth volunteering**.

The first objective of this research was to provide a **summary of findings and observations as detailed in this report**. The final objective of this research is to produce a **set of tools and resources** that can be applied to enhance the effectiveness of all organisations seeking to engage young volunteers.

We selected a group of eight organisations that described themselves as being volunteer organisations led by young people. The lower and upper age limits of each organisation varied depending on their industry/sector and their target demographic (e.g. school/university).

	sector	description	age bracket <sup>1</sup>	number of interviewees
1	arts	a multi arts festival for youth.	minimum: n/a maximum: 26 (flexible)	1
2	youth	focused on providing a platform for youth leadership development, offers young people the opportunity to participate in international internships + experience leadership.	enrolled in university	1
3	public policy	a non-partisan organisation trying to get young people involved in public policy.	minimum: 16 maximum: 24	1
4	social justice	an aid and development organisation run by young people under the age of 26.	minimum: n/a maximum: 26	1
5	disability / community services	community centre with a special interest in community special needs.	board under 26	1
6	social justice	a national youth organisation aiming to encourage young people to strive towards a greater understanding of global issues.	minimum: 15 maximum: 25	2
7	social justice	the national youth movement.	minimum: 15 maximum: 25	2
8	science	engages the youth of Australia in science.	minimum: 15 maximum: 25	2

1. Age limitation imposed on volunteers. Most of these organisations happily and readily engage with the community across generations.

We audio recorded the interviews and conducted them as semi-structured conversations, following a set of questions that provided some guidance and structure to the exploration of **key issues**. The questions were grouped around a practice framework developed and used by Volunteering Qld called **'The Five Stages of Volunteer Engagement'**:

1. create the culture
2. link
3. engage
4. build identity
5. lead

After all of the interviews were conducted, we reviewed the transcripts and collated findings under each of the five stages. These findings included characteristics of the organisations, good practice, challenges and trends.

The **key findings from this research have been grouped into four key areas** that reflect the five stages of volunteer engagement:

1. culture
2. linking
3. engaging
4. belonging/leadership

The five stages that were used during the initial enquiry were condensed into four key areas, with the final stages of **belonging and leadership being combined**. This occurred during the process of collating findings, when we identified that the line between belonging and leadership was blurred amongst the youth-led organisations: **those volunteers that felt a strong sense of belonging were often described or perceived as being leaders** (and vice-versa).

# the findings **culture**

There has been an increasing recognition of the importance of the **link between an organisation's culture and participation**.

The organisations interviewed seek high levels of involvement, demand high levels of accountability and require **significant innovative practice** - and this requires a strong and active culture. This culture is driven by shared passions, built through experiences and a focus on reciprocity and by a **very strong sense of bonding**. This close form of volunteer bonding does create a challenge for organisations to be inclusive to new volunteers and to different types of young people.

A key finding was how the word 'volunteer' was perceived by most interviewees as being an inappropriate of their work and **not a label they would place on themselves**. The term volunteer was perceived as primarily indicating administrative and supportive roles rather than leadership and taking initiative.

## **a strong culture driven by shared passions**

A characteristic of these organisations is a strong culture that members and volunteers can **"feel a part of"**. Culture is frequently described as being driven by or built upon a shared "passion" for a particular issue (rather than a general tendency towards social activism or involvement). This passion creates groups that are "really well bonded, kind of like friends", because it is "fun to be working with other people with the same passion as you".

The word passion was used to **convey a deep affinity with a cause**, rather than a mere interest or hobby. One organisation explained that their volunteers "do the organisation for the sake of the organisation", while the founder of Organisation 5 referred to the way that her friends and family had "indulged this obsession" of hers.

Being surrounded by similarly passionate volunteers is seen as critical to building a strong culture. Organisation 6 explained that this **bringing together of like-minded passionate individuals** within the organisation was "invigorating and inspiring". They also referred to the manner in which this collection of incredibly passionate individuals gathering together around a particular cause allowed

young people to establish themselves as experts in a particular field (in the positive sense of being comparatively more knowledgeable than their peers and being able to impart this knowledge and experience).

Passion is seen as an important determinant of an individual's participation in an organisation, and **identifying this connection with the issue featured in the screening processes** for new volunteers. Passion is also part of the way organisations marketed themselves to prospective volunteers and members.

## **culture exists and can be made**

These organisations recognise that **culture is critical** and can be both created and embedded through a variety of practices. However they also highlight the value of a culture that is built on existing friendships and bonds. The common thread is that **culture centers around people and their experiences**.

Formal induction and bonding processes are used by some organisations to build culture. Organisation 1 conducts an **extensive induction period** that covers the history of the festival, the plan for the year ahead and how the new team of volunteers will be involved. This is described as **"probably the most important part"** of the process.

The bond between volunteers can also be built by the **similarities between members**. This is often their shared passion, but can also be the inherent similarities in the volunteers (age, fashion choices, music and other preferences).

Culture is strengthened by the experiences that volunteers share. Large experiences (running a festival, conference, or significant event) that are viewed as once-in-a-lifetime chances tend to enhance the feeling of connection with the organisation and fellow volunteers.

Some organisations referred to the benefit of a formal office space that could be used by volunteers in forming a strong culture, with one organisation identifying this as the single most important factor in building the culture of the current team. Others found that a lack of a dedicated office space actually led them to a closer culture as they would meet at the homes of other volunteers, just like friends.

An important element of building a culture is that of **reciprocity**. Organisation 6 emphasised that a strong culture could exist where the volunteer felt that the relationship they had with the organisation was reciprocal. This means aligning the goals of the individual and the organisation, providing opportunities and new experiences, and providing opportunities that **"add some kind of meaning to your existence"**.

### **bonded together yet seeking to be inclusive**

While most of these organisations could proudly attest to a well-bonded, tightly-knit culture, several identified that this created a **constant tension in how they were able to accommodate and welcome new people and ideas**. There is a high consciousness of this issue but no specific solutions.

Organisation 6, which is comprised mostly of university students, highlighted this point when explaining that many of their volunteers had known each other at high school (largely because of their shared passion, which led the majority to engage with Organisation 6 and similar activities while at school). This **pre-existing bond made them an effective, incredibly tight-knit team**, but new volunteers who did not come through "the traditional way" could "struggle to be engaged a little bit because everyone... is such strong friends".

Organisation 8, a large organisation, explained that **'factions' showed themselves** within the group when it came time to vote for positions. They also explained that "science nerds ... all go through the same programs" so many of their members had known each other for many years (more than the maximum ten years that a person may be involved with the organisation).

Organisation 3, a new organisation where volunteers generally do not know each other prior to joining the organisation, is conscious that their affiliation with a particular university limits their inclusivity.

The 'close' nature of the teams, although potentially difficult for a new volunteer to 'break into', is **not viewed as entirely negative from the perspective of creating a space**

**for new people**. Organisation 6 observed that it can be a good way to show new volunteers "that we have the same interests and we can be friends as well as organising things together".

### **the language**

Several examples of the use of words and language were identified during the interviews. Both the words 'volunteer' and 'youth' received some negative feedback, while others highlighted language as yet another way of building culture.

The word 'volunteer' was associated by several organisations with the lower-level, less sophisticated tasks that a person may perform in an organisation. They **did not view any of the organisation's leaders as volunteers** (rather as coordinators or other business-like titles) and would only self-identify as volunteers in order to clarify that their work with the organisation was not paid. Alternative phrases such as "I work with" or "I am involved with" were used in preference to "I volunteer with".

The word "youth" was also rejected by at least one organisation that preferred to refer to "young people", as they felt that "youth" carried a negative connotation of amateurism.

Despite the prevailing negative views of the word 'volunteer', one organisation had embraced the use of the term and personalised it for their organisation. Organisation 5 used the word 'volunteer' and an associated gesture (making a 'V' with their hands) as a tool for **creating a connected organisation**. The symbol is made by volunteers and clients alike and has been embedded in the culture of Organisation 5. Other organisations identified that they used words or phrases in a similar way, creating a common discourse for volunteers. Organisation 6 described themselves as having "almost an Organisation 6 language" based on phrases that would be used by Organisation 6 members at events such as "the worst of times", "such a blow", "oh that's bogus", "that's rubbish", and "jump on the bandwagon".

# the findings **linking**

The term linking is used to describe how organisations recruit volunteers and initially build a relationship with the volunteer. The organisations interviewed demonstrate **sophisticated and often innovative volunteer recruitment and orientation processes**.

Events are often used both to promote the organisation and to recruit volunteers. Social networking is used to connect and link volunteers. Yet the key message from organisations was that they **placed a great deal of emphasis on direct people contact** and face-to-face connection and discussion. Contrary to much of the literature, technology is not central to the way young people work in these organisations; it is simply one tool in a suite of tools.

## **sophisticated hr processes**

These organisations use sophisticated processes to source, recruit and bring onboard new volunteers. They perceive their processes to be professional and "very similar to a normal interview process". The processes used by some of these organisations appear to be more structured than traditional organisations.

**Recruitment processes are sophisticated and relatively formalised**, such as developing position descriptions, advertising positions vacant, conducting information sessions, requiring written applications and concluding with in-person interviews. Those that follow a completely different process are member organisations that vote for their leadership.

Some organisations have developed more innovative practices to engage potential volunteers. Organisation 4 conducts **recruitment breakfasts**, where a small group of potential volunteers meet with a group of Organisation 4 volunteers over breakfast. Volunteers are seated next to potential recruits and it is a casual opportunity for the new recruit to find out more about Organisation 4, while the Organisation 4 volunteers are also able to make an assessment of the potential volunteer. They aim to ascertain not only if a person would fit with the organisation, but more specifically what their skills and interests are and therefore what position would suit them best.

Seeking to match needs with skills like this was common - organisations are looking not just for volunteers, but for **skilled volunteers that can fulfill particular needs and requirements within the organisation**. For some, this is because they are taking on such large projects that "they are thrown in the deep end and... it would be unfair for us to put someone in a role that they were not capable of doing". Others require that volunteers holding particular positions have some prior experience or knowledge, so that they can bring something new to the organisation. Induction processes are often structured, as are a variety of processes across the organisations, such as performance reviews and exit interviews.

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## **it's not all process and procedure - it's people**

Despite an impressive array of formalised HR processes, a distinguishing feature of this group is the **prominence of a personal aspect to all processes**.

Recruitment is an area that demonstrates the 'personal connection' to a high level. **Word of mouth is heavily relied on** to fill positions, by asking team members to look for friends who might be interested in certain roles or in joining the organisation. This was described as using "unofficial social channels" to find likeminded people to join the organisation.

**Peer-recommendation** is seen as an essential method for linking with new volunteers. Organisation 6 commented that they had assumed school teachers would play the dominant role in encouraging students to join a volunteer organisation, but their experience had been that student-to-student discussion about the organisation was a bigger factor.

Potential volunteers (such as those who contact an organisation via email requesting some involvement) are **followed up with personal contact**. This means a phone call or a conversation over coffee. This personal contact then often **facilitates the other formal processes** (of going over position descriptions, completing documentation, assessing candidate suitability).



Personal connections are not just viewed as a method for engaging or as a spin-off from other activities - personal connection was described as even "**underpinning a lot of the organisation**".

### **technology: just a tool for linking**

Traditionally, **social networking and extensive use of technology have been linked with young people** and, by extension, the organisations in which they work. The view has been that to 'youth friendly' an organisation, the quickest fix is to engage in a social networking strategy, so as to meet the young generation on their home turf.

These organisations made clear that **although they utilised technology in what they viewed as the 'usual' or expected ways** (such as having a website or a Facebook presence), they did not see these as playing a dominant role in their organisation or strategy. It was identified that "any organisation, whether you have a coffee shop, whether you are putting on a festival, or whether you have a bank.... [must] have a website".

Technology is viewed as **just another tool in the effort to link with current and potential volunteers**. It is one method in a suite of approaches to connecting, communicating and working together. Organisations might advertise vacant positions on Facebook, but at the same time they are advertising on a website, in the newspaper careers section and other career sites. Social networking is just another method of reaching their audience. Only one organisation commented on the use of Twitter, saying that although they did use Twitter, "I don't think we've got anything huge out of it".

As a tool for connecting with existing or former volunteers or members, Organisation 6 observed that **social networking technology had been most effective where its use had been organic** - where the members of the target group had initiated the use of Facebook as a platform for staying connected. They had found limited success when implementing social networking as part of a top-down "campaign".

The key reason that these groups use technology is as a tool to facilitate or enhance

a personal connection. Platforms such as Facebook are used to advertise positions (and candidates are followed up with a phone call and a meeting over coffee), to advertise events (where new and existing members can get together), and to stay in touch with existing volunteers while on holidays. **In no instance did technology replace a personal, face-to-face interaction**. The organisations expressed a desire to make personal connection so that new people could not just find out about the organisation, but **experience the organisation, its people and culture**. As Organisation 6 observed, "until people physically set foot on the premises, I don't think they could realise what it could mean to their life".

### **connecting through events**

Continuing the theme of personal connection, these organisations **rely on events as a key method of linking with potential new volunteers**. They organise and host a range of events, where often the end goal is simply high attendance (rather than a certain fundraising target, for example). High attendance can translate into potential volunteers, which makes the event a valuable exercise.

Events are viewed as a clear and reliable funnel for people into the organisation. Organisation 6 explained that they get "a regular intake of people into the organisation from the events we hold". Organisations feel that it was important to **have a clear 'next step' for people after an event, to ensure they had an avenue for engagement**.

**Events play a key role** in many of the organisations, as an essential part of engaging volunteers, providing information about the organisation and achieving the aims of the organisation.

# the findings **engaging**

Engaging represents the process of **involving volunteers fully in the organisation**, its culture and practices. The findings from this section challenge a range of traditional views about young people and volunteering. While many young people prefer projects, it is clear that the organisations use both project and on-going roles to ensure effectiveness of the program. While it is assumed young people want freedom in their volunteer roles, these organisations spoke about a **strong commitment to autonomy within clear boundaries**. Most importantly dialogue is central to how people work together and are involved in the organisation. Of particular interest is that these organisations recognised that young people were **not a homogenous group but at different stages of their life** - primarily school, university or work - and this had significant impact on how they engaged.

## **use of projects and roles**

There has traditionally been a split between organisations that primarily use project volunteers and those that create ongoing roles for their volunteers. However a variety of the interviewed organisations used both forms of volunteering within their organisations.

	<b>roles/ongoing commitment</b>	<b>episodic volunteering</b>
<b>1</b>		1 off large project (running the festival)
<b>2</b>	state team coordinate and do most events/organising	
<b>3</b>	state team coordinate	regular policy projects (3 months duration)
<b>4</b>	state team coordinate and do most events/organising	some episodic volunteering by school teams
<b>5</b>	board and regular volunteers	monthly events
<b>6</b>	state team coordinate and do most events/organising	
<b>7</b>	state team coordinate and do most events/organising	some episodic volunteering by school teams
<b>8</b>	state team coordinate	events (at schools) can be done by episodic volunteers

Some organisations showed a **clear and deliberate use of both episodic and role-based volunteering**, while others were primarily role-based, using episodic volunteers as required to fulfill projects requirements. **This clearly challenges the assumption that all young people seek short-term project roles.**

## **flexibility within boundaries**

It was reported that young volunteers want "flexibility, more than autonomy". They want to be able to exercise creativity and perform a task in their own way and time, while **understanding their boundaries** and options for support.

Framing tasks and roles in a way that allows flexibility within defined boundaries **harnesses the creative spirit of young people**. It allows young people to shape their experience within an organisation to match their own interests and goals, working with their skills and availability.

Defining boundaries is also seen as a way of developing sustainable ideas. This **ensures that past experience and learnings are not lost** and previous mistakes duplicated, which is particularly relevant in youth organisations where volunteers may only stay with the organisation for a short period of time. It also ensures that activities initiated by volunteers are aligned with the aims of the organisation, and that tasks do not get too big.

Organisations **avoid practices and processes that are too stringent or appeared to impose bureaucracy**. Unnecessary meetings are avoided, and the entire group is engaged in deciding how a particular goal or target (such as a fundraising target) will be met. Organisations also engage their volunteers - including new, episodic project volunteers - in choosing their area of focus for the organisation.

**Initiative is encouraged** and is viewed as being compatible with articulating and enforcing boundaries. However not all ideas are accepted or pursued and organisations have clear reasons for rejecting any ideas.

## generation conversation

Dialogue and conversation is a critical element of the way that organisations operate day-to-day. It **permeates all processes in a way that is non-negotiable**, and for some of these organisations it is a defining factor of their mission and reason for being.

From the moment a volunteer expresses interest in the organisation, they are met with conversation and dialogue. They will meet a current volunteer over coffee and they will then join a culture that is saturated with dialogue.

**Performance feedback occurs through casual, impromptu, or semi-structured conversations.** Dialogue is seen as a basic element of managing a team.

One organisation indicated that the presence of so much conversation through every process can slow progress. Though the others did not make this exact observation, they indicated that **personal connection outranked efficiency**. Organisation 6 expressed the centrality of dialogue and conversation as going beyond just their mode of operation - it was, in part, their reason for existing. They described Organisation 6 as "a space to express personal opinion... to talk about really interesting issues with really interesting people". Similarly Organisation 2 viewed conversation as an opportunity for their volunteers and members to **"see their connections, where they want to go, what they want to do"**, and therefore it helped them to fulfill their own organisational goals.

## differing paths

Young people engaging with these organisations could not be described as a homogenous group. An important differentiator was that they were each at **different stages of their life** - primarily school, university or work - and this had a significant impact on the way they engaged. While **these divisions present some challenges** for organisations, they also **provide opportunities to develop pathways to transition volunteers** between these stages.

Different life stages provide challenges for some organisations. Some identified that individuals at different stages displayed different

characteristics and needed to be managed accordingly, such as a school student's ability to handle a certain workload. Others identified the practical difficulties of engaging with younger volunteers, such as transport and the need to seek parental permission for activities.

The difficulties were not just regarding young students; university students presented their own difficulties. Speaking in their capacity as volunteers, interviewees suggested that it was harder to 'get involved' as a volunteer at university than it was at school, as things at school are more structured and information more accessible. The variation in individuals' timetables and other logistical difficulties (such as booking rooms and building a membership base) make running volunteer organisations that engage university students more challenging. **Engaging with individuals at the various life stages also present its own idiosyncrasies**, including in the realm of technology: "we'll go to a [function], and [the school students] still talk about MySpace", whereas university students are more typically engaged on Facebook.

Some organisations are specific about the life stages they are targeting with specific programs, and therefore use the differences/variations in stages to their advantage. Others are non-specific about the stages and either use age brackets or refer simply to required skills and experience.

Some organisations are more effective than others at transitioning individuals from one life stage to the next. The emphasis is mostly on transitioning from school to university, and the important issue highlighted here is the **need for continuous follow-up** (as the time between engaging with a student at school and them beginning university can be many months). For organisations that focus on the university-to-work transition, the emphasis is not on keeping that individual within the organisation, but rather providing them with opportunities to gain skills and experience to enter the workforce. Some saw this opportunity or clear pathway as an important factor for engaging volunteers.

# the findings **belonging/leadership**

While for many traditional organisations belonging and leadership are seen as separate stages, in youth lead organisations these two stages are seen as one phase. This may be due to the **need for quite rapid succession** required by organisations with an age cut-off. A strong element of building belonging is using **powerful stories of success**. These organisations focus on **enabling leadership** through **scaffolding ideas, providing opportunities to lead and deliberate succession planning**.

## **narratives of effectiveness**

An interesting theme throughout the interviews was the use of stories to **convey the history, purpose and culture of the organisation**. These stories were powerful narratives of effectiveness that were delivered without prompting by many interviewees.

These organisations **build identity and connection through the use of narrative**. Stories of success, such as notable initiatives and campaigns, or powerful founding stories, have been passed, in some cases, from generation to generation – such as the 19 year old representative of one organisation who passionately explained their genesis out of World War II. These powerful stories helped to build a culture that connects volunteers with the organisation.

Stories are **frequently conveyed by word of mouth**. They are presented to individuals at inductions as well as via electronic means on websites and through **digital stories**.

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## **scaffolding and empowering**

Empowering volunteers and **encouraging the natural transition to leadership is in the DNA** of many of these organisations. It defines their approach to managing volunteers and structuring many of their programs and events.

One organisation described their method of empowering volunteers as '**scaffolding**'. Their organisation **encourages the follow-through of good ideas** by focusing on those volunteers who generate ideas and then **providing the appropriate support and resources** to help them get the idea off the ground. The volunteer is then **empowered to run with the program** or initiative they have devised and, with support, set up.

### opportunities to lead

The interviewed organisations have abundant opportunities for leadership. Organisations typically did not talk about "a leader", but rather multiple leaders. Anyone who is "setting an example" is seen as being a leader, and therefore these organisations **provide numerous leadership opportunities**.

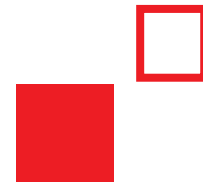
Providing opportunities to lead - at a young age - is seen as being **an attraction to potential volunteers**. "I guess it seemed like you could have more responsibility and you could make a bigger difference [than] if it was an adult organisation".

Leaders are identified in a variety of ways. Some organisations deliberately **identify and foster the growth of particular volunteers**, others have voting systems, while some allow a greater degree of 'self-selection' into leadership roles. **Small acts of initiative** are identified as a signal that an individual is suitable or ready for a leadership role.

### succession planning

These organisations have a **naturally high turnover of leaders**, as volunteers reach the upper age limit and have to bow out after perhaps only a few years in the organisation. University-age organisations experience significant fluctuations in leadership due to other commitments, such as going overseas on exchange or for travel, while some organisations operate on a yearly or project-based cycle. Organisations use a **variety of succession planning tools to address this inherent issue**.

Organisations often focus on **deliberately earmarking and then approaching certain individuals to take up a leadership position**. They use a variety of procedures to build up the leadership capacity of that individual. Some use **'taster management'**, where the individual is allowed and encouraged to develop their leadership skills by taking on small tasks or displaying initiative in undertaking tasks or projects. Some organisations use **shadowing or placing multiple individuals in a role to transfer knowledge and experience**. Not all utilise structured handover processes, but those that do, invest significant time and effort in developing **handover documents to ensure knowledge transfer**. Several organisations have **clear and defined pathways** within the organisation that could help an individual see their 'path' and work their way up.



## *culture*

- Culture is frequently described as being driven by or built upon a shared **“passion” for a particular issue.**
- The organisations recognise that **culture is critical and can be both created and embedded** through a variety of practices. However they also highlight the value of a culture that is built on existing friendships and bonds.
- While most of these organisations could proudly attest to a well-bonded, tightly-knit culture, several identified that this created a constant tension in how they were able to **accommodate and welcome new people and ideas.**
- Both the words 'volunteer' and 'youth' received some negative feedback, while others highlighted **language as yet another way of building culture.**

## *linking*

- The organisations use **sophisticated processes** to source, recruit and onboard new volunteers.
- Seeking to match needs with skills was common - organisations are looking not just for volunteers, but for **skilled volunteers that can fulfill particular needs and requirements** within the organisation.
- **Induction processes are often structured**, as are a variety of processes across the organisations, such as performance reviews and exit interviews.
- Despite an impressive array of formalised HR processes, a distinguishing feature of this group is the **prominence of a personal aspect to all processes.**
- **Technology is viewed as just another tool** in the effort to link with current and potential volunteers. It is one method in a suite of approaches to connecting, communicating and working together.
- The organisations rely on **events as a key method of linking** with potential new volunteers.

## engaging

- There has traditionally been a split between organisations that primarily use project volunteers and those that create ongoing roles for their volunteers. However a variety of the interviewed organisations **used both forms of volunteering** within their organisations.
- Young volunteers want to be able to **exercise creativity** and perform a task in their **own way and time**, while **understanding their boundaries** and **options for support**.
- **Dialogue and conversation is a critical element** of the way that organisations operate day-to-day.
- Young people engaging with these organisations could not be described as a homogenous group. While the divisions present some challenges for organisations, they also provide **opportunities to develop pathways to transition volunteers** between these stages.

## belonging/leadership

- While for many traditional organisations belonging and leadership are seen as separate stages, in youth lead organisations these two stages are **seen as one phase**.
- The organisations build identity and connection through the **use of narrative**. The powerful stories help building a **culture that connects volunteers** with the organisation.
- Empowering volunteers and encouraging the **natural transition to leadership** is in the DNA of many of these organisations. It defines their approach to managing volunteers and structuring many of their programs and events.
- The interviewed organisations have **abundant opportunities** for leadership.
- Providing **opportunities to lead - at a young age** - is seen as being an attraction to potential volunteers.
- The organisations have a **naturally high turnover of leaders** for various reasons.
- Not all utilise **structured handover** processes, but those that do invest significant time and effort in developing handover documents to ensure **knowledge transfer**.





# appendix one literature review

A literature review was undertaken into the key areas impacting on this project: youth volunteering, youth leadership and youth organisations. The summary of the review is outlined below.

Young people represent at least 18 per cent of the world's population. As a potential tool for community and youth development, volunteerism by young people needs to be recognised, encouraged, promoted and supported at regional, national and global levels. There is a need to recognise the potential for empowering young people as a valuable but under-utilised resource (International Year of Youth 2010). A current review of literature on volunteering and young people has revealed four key areas to consider: who are youth volunteers including their demographics, motivations and barriers; how and why young people become involved with youth organisations; the importance of volunteering for youth development and what organisations should and should not do to attract, retain and motivate young people.

## **who are youth volunteers: their demographics, motivations and barriers**

Born between 1980 and 2000 they prefer to be called the Millennials (Raines, 2002). In 1996 50% of US teenagers aged 12-17 had volunteered approximately 3.5 hours per week while the UK had a participation rate of 43% of young people aged 18-24. In Canada 37% of 15-19 year olds contributed an average of 136 hours in 2000 while Israel had 32-40% of adolescents volunteering in the years 2005-2006. Lopez and Marcelo (2007) claim that millennial patterns of volunteering are different than those of older age groups. In Australia young volunteers are more likely to participate in one-off or short-term volunteering rather than long-term experiences. According to Boessler and Ding (2010) Millennials are time poor and juggling many commitments, are more likely to be full time students and have a high self-esteem and strong sense of concept often coming from a higher socio-economic background and should be noted that young people dislike the term 'volunteering'.

Motivations to volunteer include gaining social contacts, gaining career-related experiences, belief in a cause, an opportunity to explore their strengths and use their skills and experience. In Australia young people volunteered because they believed it to be meaningful in helping others less fortunate, it gave them a sense of achievement and social responsibility and because their friends were volunteering. According to Lopez and Marcelo (2007) young people are more likely to volunteer if they believe they can make a difference in their community. Young people advocate for issues such as human rights and the abolishment of land mines, proposed new laws in their areas, protests against nuclear and animal testing and chronic environmental problems (Camino & Zeldin, 2002).

Duke, Skay, Pettingall & Borowsky (2009) state that strong connections with family, friends, church and schools predict a greater likelihood of youth volunteerism. Haski-Leventhal, Ronel, York and Ben-David (2008) suggest that education, socio-economic status, locality and social networks were the most consistent predictors of volunteerism as well as socialisation to prosocial behaviour, self-actualisation and peer pressure. The single most reported way volunteering occurs is through young people directly contacting organisations for opportunities (Lopez & Marcelo, 2007). Young people are most likely to volunteer with youth organisations, community groups such as health or social service organisations and environmental organisations. Opportunities are often accessed through the internet with Carpini (2010) suggesting that young people see it as the most useful source of information. The Internet resolves the problem of locality by bringing young people together from all over the world is effective at reaching interested by inactive citizens, reaches new audiences and provides new ways of motivating and facilitating action for existing interest (Carpini, 2010).

Barriers to young people volunteering include a negative image of volunteering as boring and poorly organised, a belief that organisations do not want them to volunteer, negative image of young people as problematic and closed decision making processes where young people do not have a say in the decisions that affect them. They are dissatisfied with traditional volunteering opportunities and are looking for challenging, meaningful and responsible roles where they can make a difference in areas they care about. According to Oates (2004), the two most common reasons for not volunteering is the lack of meaningful or relevant opportunities and because no one has asked. Hamilton and Hussain (1997) report that teens were four times more likely to volunteer if they were asked and of those who were, 93% actually did.

## how and why young people become involved with youth organisations

Young people need to feel their work is meaningful, valuable, appreciated and respected as individuals and members of the organisation. Queniert (2008) says that involvement must correspond with their values and interests which give meaning to their actions. If they feel manipulated or 'adultised' they will not stay involved. Four out of ten young people think it 'not cool' to volunteer where they feel unappreciated and unwelcome by organisations and given unattractive tasks that fail to engage or satisfy (Hankinson & Rochester, 2005). Accordingly when young people cannot find organisations that address issues they deeply care about or if organisations are not open to youth involvement they will start their own organisations.

According to Mohamed and Wheeler (2001) young people join nonprofit organisations to undertake civic activism. Young people want and expect support through coaching, dialogue and connections to institutional resources and community leaders. Many young people's projects risk becoming 'tokenistic' if they lack knowledge and experience of leadership and administration (Camino & Zeldin, 2008). Those who reported having positive role models were nearly twice as likely to volunteer as those who did not (Hamilton & Hussain, 1998). When young people volunteer for youth lead organisations their common language generates trust, promotes social inclusion and trustworthiness of the organisation. These elements signal an informal, youth-friendly place (Haski-Leventhal et al, 2007). Collective action occurs to pursue a power struggle through strength in numbers and from the 'collective experience' young people learn to work together. It also enables the bridging of differences related to race, ethnicity and orientation (Queniert, 2008).

## the importance of volunteering for youth development

Young adult outcomes of healthy youth development include achievement of independence, high self-esteem and development of a commitment to community and civic responsibility (Duke et al 2009). Volunteering serves as a vehicle for developing an altruistic identity increasing likelihood of prosocial behaviour in later life and deters youth deviant behaviour (Cheung & Ngai, 2000). It serves as an outlet for helping behaviours, enlightens many who enter the experience with bad attitudes and encourages self-exploration of one's role in the community (Johnson, Beebe, Mortimer & Snyder, 1998). Young people become valuable contributors to their constantly changing society and can dramatically make a difference in their lives by enhancing psychological, social and intellectual development (Torres, 2003).

In promoting positive youth development Mohamed and Wheeler (2001) recommend: **a**) creating a place where young people can gather to exchange ideas, strategies and prepare to be better facilitators, trainers and managers of youth development programs and organisations, and **b**) provide support and training opportunities for adults and facilitators of leadership development. For youth development to occur Mohamed & Wheeler (2001) claim that there must be supportive adults that create spaces and places that value participation, voice and decision-making of young people.

Youth Development Programs promote leadership by young people through developing leadership life skills (Smith, 1999). According to Seevers, Dormody & Clason (1995) the life skills developed include communication, decision-making and management skills. Miller (1981) claims that indicators of youth life skills development include encouraging and recognising the worth of others, practicing good citizenship and being a good role model, and the ability to communicate verbally and non-verbally. Leader attributes include cognitive abilities such as reasoning and problem-solving skills, motivation such as the need for achievement and leader expertise and tacit knowledge such as the ability to learn from experience (Zaccaro, Kemp & Bader (2004). What young people considered important influences on their involvement as leaders were influential people such as parent, role models and peers, and influential experiences such as experiences that set them on the path to leadership (Arnold, Cohen & Warner, 2009). The challenges inherent in youth-led organising include the deep generational gap, shifting priorities of youth as they grow older and 'adultism' that undermines young people creativity, drive and energy (Delgado & Staples, 2008).

## what organisations should and should not do to attract, retain and motivate young people

To recruit and retain young volunteers' organisations need to 'make-over' the image of volunteering from outdated to a more modern representation (Hankinson & Rochester, 2005). For youth programs to be successful the profile of volunteering needs to become relevant and meaningful to young people (Smith, 1999). Youth involvement skyrockets when participation is seen as a principal and not just a program (Pittman, 2000). Millennials need an environment where they are led by positive role models with honesty and integrity, are challenged through learning opportunities and allowed flexibility in their activities (Raines 2002). They need a mix of services, supports and opportunities to stay engaged (Mohamed & Wheeler, 2001). Too many organisations do not practice youth empowerment and so fail to address the need for young people participation, input and power in the decision-making process however Mohamed and Wheeler (2001) argue that organisations that involve them as integral participants can expand the capacities and outcomes of their efforts. Young people must be seen as an asset and investment and not as problems to be fixed. Oates (2004) suggests that this requires an attitude of inclusivity, flexibility and the ability to view the organisation through a youth lens. Genuine youth engagement requires the creation of a field of interest relevant to young people, real decision-making responsibility, supportive adults and room for new ideas. Stolle and Cruz (2005) argue that promoting youth engagement is as simple as offering young people a seat at the table while effective youth engagement combines mentoring, skill development, support and training (Oates, 2004).

In creating 'space' for young people organisations should recognise that young people will have different ideas and skills to bring to the table, ensure organisational culture is youth-friendly by providing staff with information, training and support about what effective youth engagement looks like and how it can be supported, and integrate young people into the organisation by including them in events, meetings and projects (Kirlin, 2002). They also need to utilise technology effectively through innovative campaigns that make use of different media outlets to ensure information is reaching the target audiences (Boesler & Ding, 2010). Rigid approaches limit the space available for young people to contribute their talents and skills that are meaningful for them (Williams, 2010). Newan (2008) found that the biggest challenge in youth participation was keeping the lines of communication open between young people and adults. Barber (2009) encourages the 'engagement zone' where adults engage and interact with young people and allows for compromise, insight, possibility and positive change.

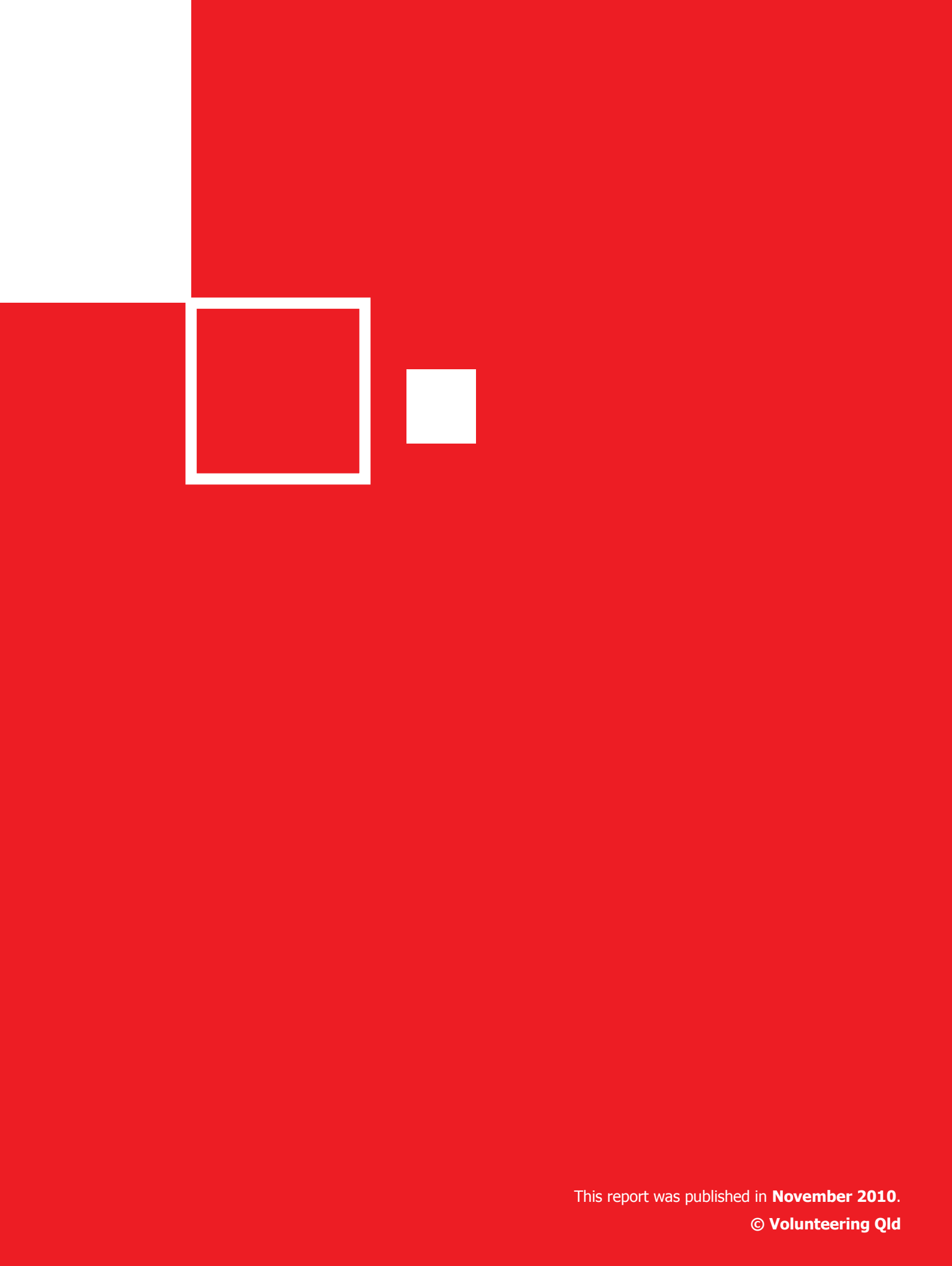
Moreover, affiliation is important to young people so it may be prudent for organisations to recruit collectively. Haski-Levinthal et al (2007) suggest working toward building and working with groups and initiating more social contact between volunteers as joining in a group can overcome social obstacles and fears which may hold them back from volunteering such as the anxiety associated with being new and the need to be accepted. According to Roker, Player & Coleman (1999) peers serve to legitimate and encourage volunteering. Brown (2000) suggests ways to increase the amount of volunteering include asking young people to volunteer as doing so conveys confidence in their abilities and makes them aware of specific opportunities, making volunteering fun and exciting and encouraging volunteering at an early age. Torres (2003) argues that volunteering at a young age will solidify and ground the value of giving within a child's emerging self-concept. In Australia many young people engage in activities they do not consider as volunteering so are more likely to downplay their involvement as they do not see themselves fitting the image of a volunteer making it less likely to hear about their voluntary acts (Boessler & Ding, 2010).

# appendix two **selected bibliography**

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