

**REVIEW OF VOLUNTEER RESOURCE CENTRES/
VOLUNTEER REFERRAL AGENCIES IN NSW**

Options Paper

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1. *Executive Summary*

Purpose and background of the review

This review of Volunteer Referral Centres (or Volunteer Referral Agencies) was undertaken between July and September 2003 and was commissioned by the NSW Premier's Department, in response to the report *International Year of Volunteers 2001: NSW Report and Recommendations*. The funding is VRCs currently ad hoc:

- funding has been primarily program based through a range of government agencies, with a significant contribution from the Commonwealth;
- a diverse range of funding levels; and
- no consistent approach to the geographic distribution or allocation of funding.

This is consistent with the stage of policy development in other western countries including the UK, US and Canada. Canada and Australia are currently leading practice in changing this fragmented and ad hoc policy approach with initiatives at the national level through Volunteering Australia and with SA, Victoria and WA in the early stages of establishing or implementing Offices of Volunteering.

Volunteering plays an important role in the NSW community as an important capacity building process and offering opportunities for people to build skills, access social networks, contribute to their communities and in many cases to assist in finding employment or social participation. Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) figures show that 29.3% of people living in NSW offer their services as volunteers.¹ These 1,383,700 people contributed a total of 204.7 million hours of voluntary work in 2000.

The terms of reference for the review were to undertake a study of existing VRCs and to address the following elements:

- mapping of the current VRA/VRC network including locations, funding and current activities;
- review of current role of VRCs, arising from funding requirements and based on past & current practice;
- identification of demographic information (including population groups and non-government organisations) relevant to the location and role of VRCs;
- survey VRCs to seek their view on options for the future;
- identify models in other jurisdictions; and
- prepare a report to Government regarding options for the future including the identification of models addressing level and source/s of funding, including core funding, geographical spread, management structures/auspicing arrangements, role & functions and other relevant issues.

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics Voluntary Work 4441.0 (2000), Table 5

Approach to the review

The review involved a qualitative study which included:

- a written survey of existing VRCs analysed using an ACCESS data base;
- the development of a Scoping Paper for distribution with a call for submissions which elicited a total of 34 submissions;
- desk research of previous reports, reviews, studies and some material provided by government agencies;
- a sample of 17 face to face and telephone interviews with key informants;
- two meetings with the Project Advisory Group and a half day joint workshop with COVERRS members and the Advisory Group; and
- research on national, interstate and international comparisons and models.

In total 24 VRCs and 1 VRC support project responded to the survey and the data in this report reflects data provided from these VRCs. Historically there has been no agreement on a number of important definitional issues and this has been the first attempt at mapping and documenting the service system of VRCs. To the best of our ability we have reported and interpreted the data provided as accurately as possible. The data provided should be taken as representing a snapshot in time.

What the mapping study revealed

Funding to VRCs across NSW is characterised by the following (Section 4.2 discusses the concept of renewable and non renewable types of funding):

- at best estimate it appears that around \$2.7m is currently allocated to around 33 VRCs in NSW – survey data was collected from 25 VRCs representing \$2.33m of this total allocation;
- disparate funding levels across the VRC service system ranging from \$10,000 to \$150,000 (three VRCs receive more than \$150,000)– this ranges from tiny, volunteer referral services in an inland rural location to for example a significant regional centre receiving multiple funding from a range of sources and located on the Central Coast;
- over 54% of funding is received from the Commonwealth government via the Volunteer Management Program (VMP), the Voluntary Work Initiative (VWI) and a share of HACC funding – Commonwealth government departments also provide a total of \$160,000 in ‘project’ or ‘non-renewable’ funding;
- the balance of the ‘renewable’ funding is received from the NSW Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care (DADHC) and Department of Community Services (DoCS) Community Services Grants Program – non-renewable funding is currently provided through Area Assistance (\$50,000) and the Community Development and Support Expenditure Scheme (\$48,000);
- ten VRCs have only one funding source, eight had two sources, four had three sources and three had more than three sources – many commented on the challenge of having multiple

reporting requirements for relatively small amounts of funding and the work this creates for small organisations or ventures;

- local government and neighbourhood and/or community centres are common auspicing bodies with both providing important in-kind and infrastructure support;
- only 4 organisations in the sample are stand alone non-government entities;
- the geographic distribution of VRCs suggests that the metropolitan area, most coastal areas and some inland locations are reasonably well covered by the existing network of VRCs – possible gaps are:
 - the Far West and Central Inland areas of NSW;
 - the mid-North Coast and hinterland;
 - parts of the Riverina and lower western region;
 - the Far South Coast;
 - the Baulkham Hills, Windsor, and Fairfield areas in Sydney.
- indicative figures of the spread of funding across regions suggest that the issue of equity across the regions needs to be examined with the full funding figures being made available;
- opening hours for VRCs have a limited correlation with funding levels with one of the lowest funded VRCs providing a service 5 days/40 hours per week using volunteers to staff the office, however as the level of funding increases, in the main, so do the hours of access;
- the vast majority of VRCs have less than 1 FTE and most have small, part-time staff teams;
- just over two thirds of the VRCs surveyed involved volunteers in their own service provision model;
- a high level of promotional activities was reported across all VRCs including promotion of volunteering and of the services offered through the VRC;
- volunteers are referred to a wide range of volunteer involving organisations and this includes the full breadth of areas of government policy including emergency services, arts and heritage, schools and education facilities, nursing homes and hostels, sport and recreation, community services, health, environment, animal welfare, and local government;
- the four key areas of service delivery identified were:
 - recruitment and referral;
 - promotion of volunteering;
 - support and training to volunteers and other organisations;
 - information dissemination.
- the extent of service across these four areas increased with the level of funding with higher funded VRCs undertaking more training and support for other organisations than lower funded VRCs;
- the age distribution of volunteers is concentrated in the age ranges 35-64 (50-60%) with variations from this distribution in particular locations – attracting younger people was identified as a challenge for many VRCs. This is consistent with national data on this issue;

- access by people from Indigenous backgrounds was surprisingly high in many locations - volunteering is an important obligation in most Indigenous communities and this is mostly concentrated in Indigenous organisations; and
- the involvement of people from other cultural backgrounds was highest in metropolitan areas of Sydney (10%) with the exception being the Illawarra region (16%).

In summary the mapping study reveals a complex service system facing considerable demands on its services with no policy coherence, funding sources confined to two key state government departments, DDADC and DoCS and a substantial Commonwealth Government funding commitment. Gaps in VRC coverage have been identified in several regions, and the funding allocations are inequitable and idiosyncratic.

Evidence from other Australian jurisdictions suggest that coherent frameworks are emerging as a possible way forward, with WA, SA and Victoria all at various stages of implementing Government Offices of Volunteering to play a coordinating policy role.

Issues raised through the review

A number of issues have been raised and/or identified through the mapping study and submissions received by the review team. These include:

- a strong and consistent view that there is a need for a coherent funding framework for the funding of VRCs and that this should be developed in conjunction with the network of VRCs, Government funding agencies, the broader and diverse sector of volunteer-involving organisations, local government and the Commonwealth government;
- the need to develop a consistent and equitable approach to the funding and distribution of VRCs;
- the need to develop a flexible and responsive range of models which take account of state wide, regional and local approaches and needs;
- the need to establish some benchmarks for viability and sustainability;
- the need to investigate and develop a minimum level of funding;
- the importance of volunteer support and generic training as a core part of a well supported and good practice approach to VRCs activities and supporting volunteering generally;
- the importance of ensuring that services are adequately supported with a viable auspicing body and infrastructure support;
- the importance of VRCs establishing the involvement of volunteers in VRC service delivery as a principle;
- the potential for other Government Departments to be contributing to funding given the diversity of sectors supported through VRCs;
- the potential, not universally supported, for a greater role for local councils as auspicing bodies which can provide a contribution to funding, in-kind support, and infrastructure; and

- the possibility of establishing a centralised funding approach either through pooled funding models or a Treasury allocation to a central agency.

Options for the future

There is a need for a Volunteering Framework for NSW which would provide a definitional and policy framework. From this two 'sub-frameworks' would need to be developed: one a VRC framework, and the other a related Funding Policy Framework. The elements of a Volunteering Framework would be

- purpose of volunteering and the intended social benefit:
 - a statement of the purpose of volunteering and key definitions;
 - a summary of research on the need for and purpose of, on volunteering, and support for and promotion of volunteering, numbers of volunteers and comparisons with national statistics etc;
 - identification of the outcomes being pursued.
- ways in which volunteering occurs across a wide range of settings and organisations and how volunteers and volunteering involving organisations can be supported.

Volunteering is a very widespread activity in the community and VRCs are only one element of the overall picture. Many organisations which involve volunteers have their own resourced and supported volunteer programs. Many people find their own volunteering opportunities. However networks of VRC type organisations have emerged, not only in NSW and Australia but also in a number of other countries, in recognition of the need to have services to provide support to those people and organisations which do not have their own resources. In recognition of the fact that organisations have their own volunteer programs and do not currently use VRC services, one important potential initiative for the state government would be to have a requirement in funding of volunteer-involving organisations that they provide appropriate support to volunteers.

Within the overall framework for volunteering there needs to be a "sub framework" that sets out the service system that could exist to provide support to volunteers and organisations, and fulfil a key role of promoting volunteering. This VRC framework would address:

- identification of the service model and the types of services involved,
- the service system structure and resourcing:
 - issues such as for example adoption of a regional structure, partnerships required across government, and between government and non-government, workforce training and development;
 - this section of the Framework would outline the overall resourcing needs from which a more detailed funding policy would flow.
- leadership, management and support:

- what partners will need to do to provide leadership and how, ways in which volunteering will be promoted as a social benefit for the whole community at the statewide level.
- principles and objectives to guide the service system;
- policy in relation to evaluation and data collection.

The key directions statement to guide a Funding Policy Framework could flow from the Volunteering Framework. The key elements of the Funding Policy Framework would be:

- a source of funds - which may be the result of multiple streams including income generation and must consider infrastructure costs - and a mechanism and process for distributing the funding if necessary:
 - this may need a solution to the question of whole of government or integrated funding approaches;
 - this would also need to take account of the role of local government.
- possibly a structure for the service system to cover a large and complex state – e.g. a regional model, and provide for access for diverse groups of people in widespread locations;
- a strategy for providing viable funding to the service system proposed;
- a strategy to address sustainability including support for training and development of services, and to address issues such as auspicing and governance or management.

A number of options for service models and funding options are presented in this Paper. One of the main outcomes has been interest in the adoption of the following set of core activities which would be a central part of a coherent policy framework. These core activities appear in Service Option 4.

- **Connecting people** to volunteering opportunities – what has been known as ‘recruitment and matching’ but this term is seen as limited and ‘connecting people’ includes generic training of volunteers, development of data bases on volunteering opportunities, information and resources for people wishing to volunteer;
- **Promoting volunteering** as a key resource in the community – from local to state level promotion including, at regional and state level, development of promotion resources, awards etc;
- **Building capacity** for effective volunteering – working with organisations and communities as already happens – covers training including for volunteer management, consultancy services, liaison and network support;
- Development of **Strategic Initiatives** for volunteering opportunities - working with other partners to develop volunteering projects and strategies.

A further option developed addressed the possibility of having a number of models for VRCs according to size and geographic coverage. These models are provided as Service Option 5 and more detail is given in Section 9.2.1.

Model 1 – Small local VRC

A small local VRC would be operating at their local level. The likely focus would be 'connecting people' and 'promotion of volunteering'.

Model 2 – Medium sized VRCs

A VRC with more resourcing and infrastructure, and covering a larger local geographic area and population than Model 1. The focus of their work is likely to be 'building capacity of organisations' and 'promotion of volunteering' with 'connecting people' as needed given the local situation.

Model 3 – Regional VRCs

Regional VRCs would be an important element of the overall service structure providing support throughout their region to the community, organisations and to the Model 1 and 2 VRCs in their region. Model 3 services could be the basis for a structure of regional hubs and 'satellite services'.

A proposal called Region Assist has been put forward in NSW which seeks to establish a coherent regionally based approach to supporting community organisations and building their capacity. This may provide a significant structure to enable the establishment and support of a strong volunteering system through linkage to this Model 3 type of organisation.

Model 4 – Statewide Volunteering organisations

Model 4 gives a structure and framework for a coherent statewide service system that addresses differing needs at different geographic levels. The main focus of these services is likely to be promoting volunteering, building capacity state wide and developing major strategic initiatives.

Given the number of auspice bodies currently engaged in running VRCs it would probably not be viable to withdraw all funding and restructure on a region with satellite model where the regional service 'owned' the satellites. What would be possible would be to fund a regional service to coordinate an integrated network and make funding of the satellites conditional upon working as part of the integrated region network. This model also offers good opportunities for local government involvement at the level of local and/or regional funding.

There was very strong support for a centralised funding program, this is not necessarily as easily achieved as many people might think, particularly identifying the appropriate government agency to administer a whole of government funding program given the range of areas in which volunteers provide important contributions. However, there are ways in which such an approach can be established. Of the options explored there is a minimalist approach (Funding Option 2) which would establish the policy framework within which funding programs would be expected to operate, as set out in Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs). Two other options differ on whether the pooling of funding would include Commonwealth funding or not: in one all the current funding would be pooled and administered, within a coherent policy framework, by a government agency (Funding Option 3); in

the other option the state funding would be pooled and the interface with Commonwealth funding negotiated (Funding Option 4). Some further brief details are discussed in the Paper.

Minimum levels of funding for VRCs have been discussed but not researched sufficiently to propose a definite level. A minimum range of between \$30 – \$50,000 for a Model 1 VRC, and \$50 –\$100,000 for a Model 2 VRC may be appropriate but this would need further research.

Issues of geographic spread of services and funding have also emerged in this study and are explored in this Paper. Overall there is reasonable coverage on the basis of population. Factors to consider in geographic coverage could include:

- local government areas;
- population;
- number of NGOs in area;
- percentage of aged population (for HACC-funded services);
- geographical size and population;
- linked to DoCS regions.

Further work would need to be done on both geographic spread and funding issues.

The study also collected ideas for other ways of providing services in regions such as:

- regional hubs with satellite offices;
- outreach programs from existing VRCs (offering training and information);
- advanced technology options (no details specified).

The regional hubs and outreach ideas have been linked in the four service models outlined above.

Finally important issues are the need for:

- leadership within government and a whole of government approach;
- effective auspice bodies and good in-kind and infrastructure support for viability.

Summary of potential directions

In summary options have been explored in relation to aspects of a coherent Volunteering Framework and a coherent Funding Policy Framework. By combining options, an overall framework can be developed to address the issues of geographic spread, funding (levels and source/s and viable core funding), management structures/auspicing arrangements, service models and role and functions that were to be the main focus of this review.

In particular there seemed to be support for combining:

- Service Option 4 – four core activities;
- Service Option 5 – four models for VRCs, including a regional level in the structure and geographic coverage of the service system;

- Funding Option 4 - centralised state government funding which addresses the interface with Commonwealth funding, and partnerships between government bodies, and between government and on-government;
- an agreed basic level of funding for VRCs which could be achieved in a number of ways;
- development of an appropriate approach to benchmarks for viability and sustainability; and
- development of good practice guidelines for auspicing.

2. Introduction

The aim of this study was the development of this Options Paper to Government regarding VRCs, including the identification of models, addressing levels and source/s of funding, including core funding, geographical spread, management structures/auspicing arrangements, role and functions and other relevant issues.

2.1 The contribution of Volunteering in NSW and nationally

Volunteering builds community cohesiveness and capacity, assisting individuals to gain skills and social networks, as well as building a stronger sense of belonging for both individuals and families.

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) figures show that 29.3% of people living in NSW offer their services as volunteers.² These 1,383,700 people contributed a total of 204.7 million hours of voluntary work in 2000. In both urban and rural regions, sourcing of volunteers happens primarily through methods other than referral from a VRC. Many larger organizations run their own volunteer recruitment campaigns (e.g. Benevolent Society, Wesley Mission) and many volunteers self-refer to volunteer-involving organizations, such as sports clubs and charitable groups. However, VRCs suggest that they provide a pathway to volunteer service for a wide range of people, from those who are highly skilled and unsure where to offer their skills and time, to those who might be considered disadvantaged, e.g. those living on low incomes and having difficulty accessing employment.

Analysis by the Australian Nonprofit Data Project of the 1995 Australian Bureau of Statistics data has suggested that 2,283,300 people gave a total of 374 million hours annually to third sector organisations. This effort was estimated to be worth \$7,480,000,000.³ Within these figures, the largest field of voluntary activity was sport, recreation and hobbies (103.5 million hours), followed closely by community welfare (102.5 million hours). Religion (70.6 million hours) and education, training and youth development (33.0 million hours) were also significant contributors to the total.

These figures shifted slightly in the 2000 census with community welfare registering the highest proportion of volunteering (35.2% of volunteer effort), followed by sport and recreation (34.1%), education, training and youth development (28.0%) and religious activities (17.6%).

2.2 This Study

The New South Wales Government commissioned this study of volunteer resource centres in NSW in response to the *International Year of Volunteers 2001: NSW Report and Recommendations*. The review, undertaken over 3 months between July and September 2003, focussed on all agencies and

² Australian Bureau of Statistics Voluntary Work 4441.0 (2000), Table 5

³ Lyons, M. & Hocking, S. (2000), *Dimensions of Australia's Third Sector*, UTS, Sydney. p. 93.

groups performing functions similar to a volunteer resource centre (e.g. Volunteer Referral Agencies, Volunteer Centres).

The study focussed on volunteer resourcing and referral agencies which provide services to individuals and to organisations to ensure volunteering is well managed and supported and volunteer opportunities are accessed. Such organisations have various names but for ease of reference, the abbreviation "VRC" is used throughout this paper to cover this range of agencies. Further, for this study volunteering resource centres have been differentiated from organisations involving volunteers which do their own recruiting, training and support. VRCs therefore, for this review, are organisations which:

- provide services to both individuals who want to volunteer and organisations which need volunteers;
- refer volunteers not just to their own services or to the one organisation; and
- self identify as a VRC.

VRCs refer volunteers to a wide range of organisations including environmental, sport and recreation, and arts and cultural organisations as well as organisations providing community or welfare services. A discussion of the definitional issues surrounding volunteer resourcing and referral agencies is included in Section 6.2.1.

This Options Paper:

- provides a summary of the current situation, drawing on the data collected in the survey of VRCs;
- outlines the issues raised in the surveys, the submissions, the site visits, the in-depth interviews and the half-day workshop held with VRC coordinators and the Advisory Group for this review;
- discusses the implications for the future and proposes some options.

Some key information is included in the attachments.

3. Methodology

3.1 Description of Methodology

The methodology for this study was a qualitative mixed method approach; combining a consultation strategy, based on an extensive survey and submission process, with desk research on previous reports and models from other jurisdictions. Given the geographical spread of VRCs and the range of individuals and organisations with which they deal, the consultation strategy sought to achieve breadth of coverage, encouraging participation by client organisations, auspicing bodies, and other community organisations. It also aimed to provide opportunities for participation from VRCs, funding bodies and peak bodies (such as Volunteering NSW (VNSW), COVERRS (Coordinators of Volunteer Education, Resource and Referral Services Inc), and NCOSS (New South Wales Council of Social Services)).

The key elements of the research included:

- preliminary meeting with the Advisory Group to identify key issues, key contacts and the proposed consultation approach and survey;
- site visits to Wagga Wagga and Hurstville VRCs, Volunteering ACT and Volunteering NSW, to familiarise the study team with the day to day operations of a VRC;
- desktop study of previous reports on volunteering and on VRCs;
- desktop study of models from other jurisdictions, both nationally and internationally;
- comprehensive survey of all existing VRCs in NSW;
- preparation and distribution of a Scoping Paper to all VRCs and other key stakeholders (Government departments, academics, peak bodies), together with an invitation to make a submission to the review (for Scoping paper **see Attachment 6**);
- publication of information about the Study on the Volunteering NSW website, in the 'Local Government Weekly' and through the Local Community Services Association and the Local Government Community Services Association, together with an invitation to participate by lodging a submission;
- telephone interviews and a limited number of in-depth face-to-face interviews with a range of key stakeholders (listed in **Attachment 2**);
- analysis of the data collected through the surveys using an ACCESS data base;
- analysis of the surveys and submissions received (listed in **Attachments 3 and 4**);
- a half-day workshop with the Advisory Group and members of the COVERRS network to discuss survey findings and emerging issues;
- a final meeting with the Advisory Committee to present and test the findings and options.

3.2 Limitations

A number of limitations need to be taken into account in considering the findings of the Review. These include:

- there is not a coherent framework for VRCs and there is no consistent or agreed data collection system or definitions on many of the data items collected – therefore to the best of our ability we have attempted to interpret the data and to qualify it where it is clear there may be significant differences in reporting;
- the tight time frame within which this Study has been undertaken has meant that there has not been the opportunity to undertake site visits and in-depth interviews in the post-data collection phase of the project. This has limited the study team's capacity to examine and discuss the data provided in detail with the respective VRC;
- the data provided through the survey is best viewed as a 'snapshot' of VRCs at a point in time in 2003 and is therefore indicative;
- the tight timeframe also posed a challenge to some government agencies in providing submissions to the study although most worked hard to meet the deadline;
- the survey return rate of 75% (25 of 33) is a very good sample although not the total picture for the distribution and use of the funding provided through all of the identified funding sources. The study team will have access to the total amounts of funding provided through the respective funding programs and can report on this.

Notwithstanding these limitations, which are common in reviews of this nature, the findings can be considered to represent a valuable reflection of the broad issues facing VRCs, and of the implications for the future funding options available to the NSW Government.

4. *The situation now*

This section presents the findings of the survey and other research, giving a picture of the location, funding and services provided by VRCs operating in NSW in July-August 2003, the 'snapshot' period. Over longer periods of time the funding and staffing levels may change as levels of project and once-off funding change but the overall pattern of VRCs having funding from a variety of funding programs is indicative of the situation for this group of services for some time.

Factors in the external environment can have significant impact upon VRCs. For example, the introduction of volunteering as a way of meeting mutual obligations for people on unemployment benefits has been a significant development for VRCs, and the introduction in September 2003 of volunteering as an option for people receiving parenting payments to meet their mutual obligation requirements may also have an impact on the client base and workload of VRCs throughout Australia.

4.1 **Current Frameworks**

There is not a coherent volunteering framework or funding framework for VRCs in NSW. This is consistent with other States and territories across Australia and in the main, across the western world, however there is evidence of the emerging development of frameworks here in Australia and overseas in the last 2-3 years. Whilst volunteering is recognised by most governments as an important and essential part of community building and of active citizenship, policy statements of any significance are relatively recent. Funding is provided through a range of State and Commonwealth funding programs targeted at specific population or target groups and/or service systems, with local government providing relatively small but important contributions to many VRCs in direct or 'in kind' funding to locally based VRCs.

In 2001 the Commonwealth Government signed off on the National Agenda on Volunteering in conjunction with Volunteering Australia; the ACT Government released a Volunteering Strategy for the ACT in late 2002; the Victorian, SA and WA Governments are all at various stages of implementing an Office of Volunteering. To date there is limited, tangible funding policy emerging from any of these initiatives although several attempts have been made to encourage governments to adopt whole-of-government approaches to such aspects as the reimbursement of volunteers, funding volunteer activities in service delivery models and developing formulae for particular volunteer activities such as management, training and support. Hence the NSW situation with respect to volunteering policy and funding frameworks is at a similar stage of development as other States and territories and the Commonwealth and overseas (see **Attachment 5**).

The issues of volunteering and funding frameworks are addressed further in the chapters on issues and the future options.

4.2 The Funding Programs

The total funding reported across organisations and funding programs is \$2.3m. The following is the range of funding programs across the three levels of government which provide this funding:

State Government

The total State government funding to VRCs is 53.7% of the total, being \$1.27m. However 58% of the HACC funding included in this total is from Commonwealth funds. For each program the figures are:

Department of Community Services (DoCS)

From the surveys received it is evident that 12 VRCs receive a total of \$426,000 through the DoCS Community Services Grants Program (CSGP). This funding provides for VRCs to undertake recruitment and training at the local level. One project is also funded for regional coordination. This funding represents 18.2% of the total amount for the 25 VRCs in the sample, and the total VRC funding is only 0.56% of the total of \$75m in the CSGP.

Departments of Ageing Disability and Home Care (DADHC)

DADHC is a major funder of VRCs to undertake a range of tasks including volunteer recruitment, information and training for Home and Community Care (HACC) funded services. According to the survey data \$825,000 is provided to 12 VRCs across NSW according to the surveys. DAHDC report funding 14 sites. There are also two regional projects and two major projects, referred to below, funded through this program. DAHDC funding is 35%, however 58% of the HACC funding is from Commonwealth funds. The DAHDC funding to VRCs is only 0.23% of the total HACC funding, which may be a disadvantage in that this funding is not significant in the overall HACC funding.

Commonwealth Government

Commonwealth funding provides 54% of the funding if the Commonwealth HACC funds are included with the VWI and VMP funding.

Commonwealth funding is currently provided through the Department of Family and Community Services (FaCS) under two key programs; the Volunteer Management Program (VMP) and the Voluntary Work Initiative (VWI). The **VMP** provides funding for training and support of volunteer managers, and matching and referral services for people wishing to volunteer. A total of \$347,000 is provided to 6 VRCs in NSW. FaCS reports funding 8 sites. VMP funding represents 14.8% of the total funding.

The **VWI** is a relatively recent initiative aimed at supporting opportunities for people in receipt of income support to access volunteering as an option to meeting their mutual obligation requirements; and supporting organisations providing volunteering opportunities. This funding for VWI is

administered through Volunteering Australia (VA) with a strong role for the respective State and Territory Volunteer Centres in supporting VRCs in receipt of VWI funding. In NSW, Volunteering NSW receives this funding from Volunteering Australia for this purpose. Thirteen (13) of the VRCs surveyed were in receipt of a total of \$459,000. FaCS advises there are 16 sites in total, including the peak network COVERRS. VWI funding accounts for 19.6% of the total funding to VRCs.

Local Government

There is no consistent approach to funding volunteering through the network of local councils throughout NSW. However the survey demonstrates that for many VRCs, particularly in rural and regional areas, local councils act as auspice to VRCs and to small VRCs this support is an essential element of their survival. Data collected through this survey indicates that a total of 8 local councils contributed \$34,000 to 5 VRCs. The local government contribution in funds is 1.45% of the total funding in the sample. Local government also provides in-kind support as indicated in Section 4.4.2. Of the \$136,000 in in-kind support quoted in that Section it appears that approx \$82,000 or (60%) is provided by Councils. It is not possible to give a figure for Local Council funding of infrastructure for the sample, as the data was inconsistently reported.

It appears from the submissions from local councils that some provide small amounts of funding, less than \$15,000, to a low number of small local organisations for these organisations to be able provide some form of volunteer service or support in their local community.

Major 'Project' funding

One of the features of the funding is that VRC sites are successful in winning projects for various purposes and timeframes. For this study we have identified funding that is non-renewable as 'project' funding to distinguish this funding from what may be fixed term funding but is currently regarded as renewable. Some of the major 'projects' are:

- *Experienced Hands* - 2 projects for a total \$112,000 (DAHDC) – intergenerational contact
- *Community Visitor Scheme* – 2 projects for a total of \$48,000 (FaCS) – friendly visiting in residential aged care facilities
- *Area Assistance* - 1 project for \$50,000 – mapping volunteering, looking at support needs and best practice, sharing resources in one region - DIPNR
- CDSE funding supports 1 VRC for recruitment and referral with one-off grants totalling \$27,000.⁴

⁴ Under the NSW Gaming Machine Tax Act 2001, registered clubs are eligible for certain tax rebates provided the Liquor Administration Board is satisfied that an amount equivalent to the tax rebate has been applied to expenditure on community development and support. This scheme is known as the Community Development and Support Expenditure Scheme (CDSE).

The total funding through major projects is \$237,000; this represents 10.1% of the total funding. Only 4 VRCs receive project funding and one is a pilot exploring the establishment of a VRC for a consortium of organisations.

4.3 Geographical Location and Service Distribution

This section provides information on the location of the various services and the distribution of services.

4.3.1 Maps and Gaps

The three maps (**Attachment 1**) show the coverage of NSW by VRCs, linked to Local Government Areas (LGAs). This information was provided by the VRCs who responded to the survey and from the preliminary population statistics as at 30 June 2002 for Local Government Areas in NSW available from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) website.⁵ Where a VRC is known to exist but has not provided any information to the Review, its existence is noted by the presence of a box containing its name only.

NSW State Map (excluding Sydney)

The map for NSW excluding the metropolitan areas of Sydney suggests that there are some areas of NSW which do not fall within the sphere of operation of a VRC:

- the Far West and Central Inland areas of NSW;
- the mid-North Coast and hinterland;
- parts of the Riverina and lower western region;
- and the Far South Coast;
- the Baulkham Hills, Windsor, and Fairfield areas in Sydney.

There are a number of agencies which provide some services for volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations in some of the regions not covered by a VRC:

- Broken Hill Community Inc provides some volunteer referral and networking services to the Broken Hill LGA;
- Ngadrii Ngalli (My Mother's Way), an indigenous agency at Bourke, has been funded by DoCS to explore providing some volunteer referral and resourcing services in Bourke. This work is in a preliminary phase;
- Volunteering ACT provides opportunities for networking in south eastern NSW and, on a cost recovery basis, some resourcing of VRCs in the area;
- during the final stages of preparation of this report, the Review team became aware of the operation of a small VRC servicing Bega Valley Shire from Merimbula on the Far South Coast. Funded by FaCS under the Stronger Families and Communities program, it employs a

⁵ www.abs.gov.au, accessed 3 September 2003

Volunteer Project Officer 15 hours per week to maintain a volunteer database and to train volunteers for a number of organisations. The VRC is auspiced by the Sapphire Coast Community Centre. Knowledge of this VRC too late for it to be included in the survey but any further consideration of service gaps will need to investigate the status and funding arrangements for this VRC more closely.

Outer Sydney

The map for outer Sydney shows that most of the LGAs in the Outer Sydney region are covered by a VRC, although the absence of surveys from a number of VRCs in this region limits the information available on the extent of coverage in this region. Notably the Fairfield area does not fall within the area of any VRC and has been identified as a 'gap' by surrounding VRCs and a local council.

Inner Sydney

The Inner Sydney map shows excellent geographical coverage of the region by VRCs and, in the Northern Sydney region, additional support in the form of a HACC-funded Regional Support Worker working with three VRCs in the region (covering 11 LGAs).

Sydney: other factors

Volunteering NSW Volunteer Resource Service operates within those areas of Sydney not covered by another VRC. Within areas of Sydney that are covered by another VRC it offers services which the other VRC might not be funded to provide. In other words, it could be seen as a further resource to the whole of the Sydney region by 'backfilling' where other VRCs are unable to offer services.

Issues in relation to coverage are addressed further in the chapters on the issues and future directions.

4.3.2 Services provided by VRCs and the link to the level of funding received

There are 8 types of services identified in the survey which VRCs offer but not all services offer all of these eight service types.

VRCs were asked to estimate the percentage of their time spent in the following activities:

- providing information and resources related to volunteering;
- volunteer recruitment;
- matching of volunteers;
- training of volunteers;
- training and support of volunteer-involving organisations;
- promotion; and
- fostering of networks.

The chart in **Attachment 3** shows the services provided related to the amount of funding received.

The information on services in the chart above is consistent with the services required by their funding. The data provided suggests a correlation between the level of funding received and the services provided by the VRC. In general, although not exclusively, the lower the level of funding, the fewer functions a VRC is able to offer its clients and the greater the proportion of time spent on volunteer matching and volunteer recruitment. The more funding a VRC receives, the higher the proportion of time spent on training and promotion. This is consistent with the current emphasis on volunteering and referral as a core function which is discussed further in the next Section.

Other functions reported by VRCs and not included in the above categories include administration and reporting, meetings, and advocacy.

In the Chapter 9 Options, the range of services provided is related to the idea of a series of 4 models for VRCs based on the funding level and key services.

4.3.3 Core Business and Changes in Core Business

In the previous Section the point was made that across the different levels of funding the consistent types of service provided were volunteer matching and volunteer recruitment. One service is a regional support worker for VRCs and therefore does not provide this service. VRCs were asked to identify the current core business of their service and the results confirmed that at present, on the basis of the service consistently identified as core by services, *volunteer recruitment* and *referral* is regarded as the core service for a VRC:

SERVICE	No. of VRCs
Recruitment and referral	23
Promotion of volunteering	11
Support (unspecified)	7
Volunteer training	7
Information dissemination	4
Volunteer management	3
Peer support & networking	2
Support to volunteer-involving organisations	2
Advocacy	1
Promotion of best practice	1

NB this table does not mean that the services did not provide the other services but that this is what VRCs regard as their core service. The chart to be provided for the previous Section 4.3.2 indicates the extent to which VRCs are involved in providing a wider range of services.

The survey also asked if there had been any changes to their core business over the last two years. Seven (7) VRCs reported increasing workload, and 4 specifically reported increasing numbers of clients referred from Centrelink. It is of note that of the 4 VRCs which reported increased numbers of referrals from Centrelink, i.e. people on income support, two are not funded under the VWI program administered by Volunteering Australia. This gap in VWI funding may need to be addressed.

4.3.4 Profile of Client Organisations

The following chart gives a breakdown of the types of organisation to which VRCs refer volunteers and the number of VRCs referring volunteers to each category. One service does not refer volunteers, being a regional support service and one VRC is not yet operational.

Organisation	No. of VRCs referring
Local Councils	23
HACC services	22
Environmental organisations	22
Neighbourhood Houses	21
Hospitals	21
Schools	21
Arts & cultural organisations	19
School Education	18
Animal Welfare	18
Emergency services	18
Sporting & recreational bodies	17
Nursing homes and Hostels	17
Others (eg charitable organisations, disability services)	15

This information is important for three significant reasons:

- it is often argued that in deciding where to locate VRCs one of the criteria should be the number of community services in an area or region;
- many of these areas of Government do not provide funding to VRCs;

- local government is mentioned by almost every service.

In relation to the point about the criteria for location being the number of community services in an area, it would be vital to refer to community *organisations* - i.e. including e.g. arts and cultural, emergency services, school education and sports and recreation and to stipulate that this is much wider than the traditional areas of community *services* – i.e. including e.g. nursing homes and hostels, disability services, hospitals and HACC services. The evidence of the involvement of volunteers across areas of government is confirmed in these figures. Later in this study (Chapter 9) the issue of a whole of government approach and whole of government funding is discussed.

Currently local government provides only a small proportion of funding for services and infrastructure and some in-kind support, and yet all of the VRCs, which refer volunteers, indicated that they provide volunteers to local government. This issue is also discussed further in the issues and future directions chapters.

4.3.5 Opening Hours

The opening hours of VRCs in NSW vary from one day per week between 10am and 3pm to five days per week between 8.30 am and 5.30pm. There is limited correlation between funding levels and opening hours; one of the smallest funded organisations opens 42.5 hours a week (8.30am – 4.45pm Mon-Fri). This VRC has a large volunteer staff working within the VRC. This is the only VRC in the lowest funding category (<\$30K pa) which opens every day of the week. The others in this group operate on a very part-time basis, opening for limited hours on 2 or 3 days per week.

VRCs in the next funding category (\$30K-100K) all open for either 4 or 5 days each week and for longer hours (typically 7.5 hours per day). With only one exception, all VRCs receiving funding of more than \$100, 000 pa open for 7.5 hours or more each working day. One VRC in this group opens for 6 hours a day, Tuesday to Friday.

4.3.6 Paid Staffing Levels and involving Volunteers in VRCs

Only seven VRCs reported having a full time staff member. The remaining VRCs are staffed by part-time workers with total part-time staff hours per week varying from 7 hours to 151 or the equivalent of approx 4 full time positions. Among the 21 VRCs employing part-time staff, on average 40 hours per week are worked by part-time staff. The median is 35 hours per week.

The use of part time staff, even though there may appear to be sufficient hours for full time positions, is likely to be for one or more of three important reasons – flexibility of staffing, specific project positions, and/or part time work suiting the staff of these organisations who are predominantly women.

The data shows that the involvement of *volunteers* within the VRCs themselves is inconsistent, both geographically and according to funding levels. Key data reported on this element of service suggests that:

- 17 VRCs involve volunteers on a weekly basis – from 1 to 100 per week with 3 VRCs having over 70 volunteers and many utilising 5 -10 per week;
- volunteer hours ranged from 2 to 85 hours per VRC per week (the exception to this is Volunteering NSW where approximately 100 volunteers give about 6 hours each per week);
- volunteers provided over 50 hours per week in 2 VRCs;
- 8 VRCs had access to between 2 to 29 hours per week.

The significance of this finding is that volunteers themselves play a significant role in service provision through VRCs: in the case of one service with less than \$50,000 full time opening hours, five days a week are achieved through the involvement of volunteers. However, a number of VRCs do not involve any volunteers at all in the provision of their own services. This issue was raised at the Sydney workshop with COVERRS members and the Advisory Committee and is discussed further in Section 6.6.

4.3.7 Promotion of the VRCs, their services and volunteering

All of the VRCs reported doing extensive promotion of their services and by implication of volunteering as well. The survey asked specifically about promotion of services but by and large this involves promoting volunteering too. With the exception of one VRC, all reported at least 5-6 different types of promotion. Even the very small services reported multiple approaches to promotion within their local area. The following information was provided by VRCs on the ways in which they promote their services:

- 23 report using brochures, pamphlets and/or fliers;
- 12 regularly used articles or paid ads in local papers;
- 13 regularly used their local radio to advertise or to do interviews;
- 9 produced newsletters;
- 15 regularly used word of mouth including through interagency meetings;
- 10 reported using websites including 5 who specifically identified GoVolunteer;
- 7 produced posters for open days or expos;
- 4 advertised in shopping centres;
- 3 did regular mail-outs, and
- 3 had their own open days.

One VRC, with the only source of funding being DADHC, contained its promotion to HACC services.

There appears to be an extensive and diverse level of promotion occurring across all of the VRCs. Given the capacity of many of these services the level of promotion appears to be quite high.

4.4 Funding

As mentioned earlier in this report the funding in this area of service delivery is complex and 'ad hoc', with no single identified funding program, however this is not unlike other areas where what is called 'cocktail' funding is the common way in which services are resourced.

4.4.1 Funding Sources

The claim has been made during this study that some VRCs receive no government support but this is not apparent in the survey. All VRCs represented in the sample are in receipt of some government funding; the Commonwealth and State Governments fund to differing levels under one or more programs⁶. As presented in Section 4.2 there are five major sources of funding that are not project based. Some of this funding is for contracted periods and other funding has been recurrent. The other key source of funds is projects; some of which are reasonably substantial (\$50,000) but by their nature are for limited time periods. In recent years, some of the major funding has been linked with Commonwealth government income support programs e.g. Voluntary Work Initiative (VWI). Local Government also plays a role in auspicing and supporting a number of VRCs.

Total funding for the VRCs represented by the 25 completed surveys received is \$2.33m. The chart in **ATTACHMENT 2** indicates the mixed funding situation for VRCs.

In relation to sources of funding the chart indicates that:

- ten VRCs have only 1 source of funding and for 9 of these the amount is less than \$55,000 (3 less than \$20,000, 2 between \$20-30,000 and 3 between \$40-55,000), the other service receives \$126,000;
- eight VRCs receive funding from only 2 sources and for two of these the second source is time-limited project funds;
- four VRCs receive funds from 3 sources – none of this funding is project funding;
- one VRC has 4 funding sources – none is project funding;
- one VRC receives funds from 5 sources – however 2 of these sources are projects;
- one VRC receives funds from 6 sources – however 2 of those sources are projects.

In relation to **total** amounts of funding:

- six VRCs have a total of less than \$30,000;
- eleven VRCs have between \$30 – 100,000;
- four VRCs have between \$100,000 – 150,000;
- four have more than \$150,000.

However, if you take **only non-project** funding, as defined in 4.2, the figures are:

- for the 2 of the 8 VRCs receiving funds from 2 sources, one source is a project and the non-project funds are less than \$30,000 – with the VRCs which have only one funding source this makes a total of 8 VRCs with less than \$30,000 in non-project money;
- the remaining 6 VRCs with 2 sources of funding and 1 VRC with one source but more than \$120,000; 5 receive between \$50-100,000, one receives more than \$120,000, and one receives more than \$150,000 in non-project funds;

- VRCs with 3 sources of funding received no project funding and 3 received between \$55 – 115,000 in total and 1, more than \$350,000;
- the one organisation with 4 sources of money receives no project funding resulting in a non-project funds total of \$132,000;
- the one organisation with 5 sources of money receives two amounts of project funds but a total of \$212,000 in non-project money;
- finally, the organisation with 6 sources of funding of which two are projects receives a total of \$146,000 in non-project funding.

⁶ Two councils which responded to the Scoping Paper did identify very small volunteer services in their local areas which they argued could easily convert to a VRC with small amounts of additional funding. It is impossible to know how many such examples are in existence in other local council areas.

Summary:

8 VRCs receive less than \$30,000 in non-project funds

9 VRCs receive between \$30-100,000 in non-project funds (2 between \$40 – 50,000, 5 between \$50- 65,000 and 2 between \$85-100,000)

5 VRCs receive between \$100-150,000 in non-project funds

3 VRCs receive more than \$150,000 in non-project funds

4.4.2 In-Kind Support and Funding for Infrastructure Costs

In total 15 VRCs reported receiving *in-kind support* with 8 of these being from local councils. Fourteen VRCs reported in-kind support valued in total at around \$144,500 pa; sources of this in-kind support were most commonly local councils or the auspicating body. Three of the 15 VRCs reported that their local council provided all infrastructure support but did not specify the value of this support. One VRC reported that their council had provided \$7,000 in computer equipment. By far the most common form of in-kind support is subsidised office space (14 VRCs), followed by insurance (2), utilities (5) and postage (2). The value of this support ranged from \$2000 to \$30,100 pa. Where a service is auspicated by a local council, the council would also be responsible for all insurance and this was not specified in the data provided, hence the value of insurance as a form of in-kind support would be significantly under-reported.⁷

The level of in-kind support provided by local councils to VRCs appears to be as high as that provided by larger community based organisations auspicating VRCs. This is very significant as many of these VRCs are the small, lower funded services which could not survive without that support. As many local councils have very effective infrastructure, especially related to human resource and financial management and often better than the larger community based organisations, this represents substantial support from local councils for VRCs generally. This has implications for the future options for funding and for the question of viable and sustainable models

Eighteen VRCs reported receiving some recurrent or one-off support for *infrastructure items* (e.g. office space, technology, running costs). Sources varied but included DoCS, DADHC, DIPNR, FaCS/VWI (through Volunteering Australia), and local councils. The data on this survey question was very idiosyncratic and difficult to interpret and patterns of support for infrastructure assistance were harder to ascertain.

⁷ This was a result of the survey design and not the reporting VRC – the survey did not ask for details of all expenditure related to the service and many VRCs might be unaware of insurance costs paid by their auspicating body. This is very common to small programs in larger organisations and should not in any way be taken as a criticism of these VRCs.

4.4.3 Outcomes and/or outputs

VRCs were asked to provide details of what outputs or outcomes were sought by funding bodies. A reasonably consistent pattern of reporting was achieved on this data item particularly for DADHC, DoCS, and FaCS funding. Funding expectations vary only to the extent that the nature of some funding is expressly project based rather than ongoing service delivery.

DADHC

In summary VRCs are required to provide outcomes and/or outputs regarding:

- the recruitment and training of volunteers for HACC services;
- training and support to management committees;
- support and networking opportunities for HACC services;
- referral of volunteers to HACC funded services;
- promoting volunteers.

One DADHC funded service is funded to provide 1078 output hours pa to HACC services in 3 LGAs. One regional service is funded to provide 40 training sessions across 3 LGAs; another regional service is funded to coordinate the recruitment and training of volunteers across a regional area.

Another is funded to undertake a mapping study of volunteering x the LGA and to develop volunteering services in that region. The three *Experienced Hands* projects are funded to provide increased intergenerational contact through volunteering.

DoCS

DoCS funds 11 VRCs to recruit, train and refer volunteers and specifies outputs for each VRC. These output measures range from 11 individuals recruited and trained, to 4000 individuals for the largest VRC; support to organisation measures range from 12 organisations to 250 organisations.

One VRC is funded to provide peak coordination functions including support to providers and advocacy to DoCS on behalf of providers.

FaCS/Volunteering Australia – VWI

Most VRCs are funded to provide training and support for people on income support choosing to fulfil their mutual obligation through volunteering (deemed to be community work) and to support organisations involving these volunteers. Outputs are specified but these were not provided by the majority of VRCs and the survey did not emphasise this data.

FaCS/VMP

The VMP funding is explicitly for support to organisations in the management and development of volunteering in specified regions. No output data was specified for most of these VRCs.

Department of Health and Ageing – Community Visitors Scheme

Only two VRCs receive this funding and it is dedicated to recruiting and matching volunteers to aged care facilities.

The service data provided by VRCs is consistent with these expectations and funding requirements. It has implications for future funding models and this will be discussed in the Options chapter.

4.5 Auspicing Arrangements

Findings on auspicing are:

- only 5 of the VRCs which completed the survey are stand-alone organisations⁸. Of these, 3 are currently funded at levels less than \$100,000 pa, including project funding for one. The remaining 2 receive more than \$200,000 each of non-project funding;
- six VRCs are programs within a wider community organisation (non-Council or neighbourhood centre) 5 of these receive less than \$60,000 in non-project funding (only one receives project funding) and one receives more than \$150,000;
- eight are auspiced by local councils: funding ranges between \$10,000 and \$132,000 with none receiving any project funding;
- five are auspiced by neighbourhood or community centres: funding ranges between \$23,000 and \$146,000 with one project also receiving \$76,000 in project funding;
- 1 VRC reported itself as both one program within a wider program and auspiced; and
- all of the VRCS in the lowest funding bracket (< \$30,000 pa total funding) are auspiced services. Local councils and neighbourhood or community centres were the most common form of auspicing body for this group.

This last finding is important. The future of small, stand alone NGOs is a topic of considerable debate in the community services, governance, and Third Sector literature. The legal and financial responsibilities of governance place enormous demands on small agencies and invariably on committees comprising volunteers.

There are very strong arguments for larger bodies to auspice and support services such as those funded through some existing VRC models. These include effectiveness, viability and sustainability, efficiency, and legal rationales. In particular the explicit industrial and legal responsibilities facing organisations suggest that auspicing bodies need to have HR expertise and financial infrastructure to ensure good employment practices and effective financial management. This also has significant implications for future funding policies and funding formulas for VRCs. At the moment only three stand-alone organisations have less than \$100,000 but some smaller services indicated they might prefer to be stand alone, sustainable services. The level at which a service as a stand-alone service is

⁸ For the purpose of this study 'stand alone organisation' refers to an incorporated or other legal entity whose core business is volunteering. Small, stand alone entities are usually considered to be those entities with 1-2 part-time or lone workers.

considered to be viable and sustainable is a matter of some debate; some people argued that a minimum of \$200,000 would be necessary, and even that funding level can leave a small organisation with a small group (2-3?) of isolated and inadequately supported staff.

The other major issue in relation to auspicing is the amount of ‘subsidisation’ of costs that an auspice body provides and this level can be hard to fully cost – e.g. costing the role of an established governance body such as a Board, against the time taken to find members for a small management committee and provide the necessary ongoing support for this committee to play the appropriate governance role as outlined above.

4.6 Volunteer Profile

4.6.1 Age of volunteers

Throughout NSW, the two age categories from which the largest % (usually 50-60%) of volunteers accessing VRCs are drawn are 35-49 and 50-64. This tallies with the national rate of 59.16% of volunteers being drawn from the 35-64 age range.⁹ The next age category was the 25-34 cohort; 4 VRCs reported more than 20% of volunteers in this age range; 12 reported more than 10% of volunteers from this age group. **Table 1** provides a summary of the patterns of volunteering reported by VRCs by the number of VRCs.

Table 1 Patterns x age x no of VRCs

No of VRCs	Age range	As % of volunteers
3	65+	Between 10 and 30%
16		Less than 10%
11	50-64	More than 30%
8		Between 10 and 30%
nil		Less than 10%
9	35-49	More than 30%
9		Between 10 and 30%
1		Less than 10%
5	25-34	More than 20%
12		Between 10 and 20%
2		Less than 10%
3	18-24	More than 20%
11		Between 10 and 20%
5		Less than 10%

⁹ Australian Bureau of Statistics Voluntary Work 4441.0 (2000), Table 1

The 7 exceptions to these patterns in the Survey are:

VRC	<17	18-24	25-34	35-49	50-64	65+
VRC 1					35%	24%
VRC 2			23%		30%	
VRC 3		21%	21%	38%		
VRC 4		28%			26%	
VRC 5			35%	22%		
VRC 6	10%	10%	20%	20%	20%	20%
VRC 7					29%	

The 2002 HACC volunteering services study undertaken for DADHC, identified the challenge of recruiting young volunteers as a major issue for HACC services. It is not clear what action was taken by DADHC as a result of this finding and whether any strategy was ever discussed or developed with VRC network. From the study team's understanding of the low priority of VRCs within HACC, it seems unlikely that this was progressed.

The issue of attracting more young people into volunteering was acknowledged in the workshop with services that formed part of this project.

4.6.2 Volunteers - specific groups

VRCs were asked to indicate the percentage of their volunteering clientele who identified as being Indigenous Australians, as having a disability, or as being of another cultural or linguistic background

Indigenous clients

There are very high levels of volunteering in Indigenous communities and by far the majority of this is through Indigenous organisations in local communities. Anecdotally most volunteering is reported to be by word of mouth and familial or skin based in Indigenous communities.

Twelve VRCs gave a nil return on the use of their VRC by Indigenous Australians, but the remaining 13 reports between 15% (Skills, Training and Resource Service in inner western Sydney). This is likely to be related to the geographical location of VRCs as well as to cultural factors. A usage rate of between 1% and 5 % relates well to the average percentage of Indigenous Australians in the community but in a few areas the percentage in the local population may be higher. As noted, VRCs are located predominantly in Sydney, the Sydney region and the coastal areas of NSW. The *Social Health Atlas of Australia: NSW* shows clearly that, expressed as a percentage of the total population, the greatest density of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people occurs in the central west of

Sydney and far west of the State. The Bourke project, funded specifically to pilot an Indigenous VRC model, is yet to report progress and did not provide data through this survey. The NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs notes that there is little connection between the volunteering sector and Aboriginal networks. The Department argues the VRC network needs to be better spread geographically and suggests locating a VRC in Dubbo.

Under the Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia (ARIA), Indigenous people have a striking distribution: only 1.2% live in the 'Very Accessible' category, while 32.8% live in the 'Very Remote' category.¹⁰ This suggests that it is unlikely that a high proportion of indigenous Australians will live within easy access of a VRC. In this context, it is interesting to note that in Bathurst and Grafton 4% of clients were Indigenous Australians.

Clients with disabilities

Four VRCs reported that 20% or more of their volunteering clients were clients with disabilities. This high level appears to be related to VWI funding sources for 2 of the VRCs. Volunteer Network reports high level of Centrelink/Job Network referrals although they do not get VWI funding and this figure would appear to confirm the high levels. One VRC is in receipt of DADHC funding which might explain the high level at this location. For the fourth site, Armidale, the explanation is not clear.

%	VRC	LGAs covered	Funding Sources
26%	Volunteer Resource Centre, Mildura	Wentworth (+ some in Victoria)	VWI
25%	Valley Volunteer Referral And Resource Centre	Grafton, Maclean, Pristine Waters, Copmanhurst	DoCS, VMP, VWI
21%	Volunteer Network	Burwood, Strathfield, Homebush, Ashfield, Five Dock, Drummoyne, Canada Bay, Enfield, Croydon, Concord	DADHC/HACC, Burwood Council
20%	Armidale Regional Volunteer Centre	Armidale, Dumaresq, Uralla	DoCS

Of those sites reporting less than 20%, Lismore and Coffs Harbour, also on the North Coast, reported 16% of their clients had disabilities, while all other services reported 10% or less. These levels are likely to reflect Centrelink/Job Network referrals. While directly comparable statistics were not available, *The Social Health Atlas* suggests that the percentages of disability support pensioners in those areas fall within the range of 4 to 7%.¹¹

¹⁰ A Social Health Atlas of Australia, Volume 2: NSW 1999, Map 3.17, p. 53

¹¹ *ibid*, Maps 4.3 and 4.4, pp. 88- 89

Clients from other cultural or linguistic backgrounds

By far the highest levels of people from other cultural or linguistic backgrounds using VRCs were reported by VRCs in the Sydney area.

% of clients	VRC	LGAs covered
69%	Skills, Training and Resource Service	Canterbury, Leichhardt, Marrickville
67%	Volunteer Link	Hurstville, Kogarah, Rockdale, Sutherland Shire
64%	VAST Eastern Region of Sydney	Waverley, Woollahra, Randwick, Botany, South Sydney, Inner City
50%	Central Western Sydney Volunteer Resource Centre	Holroyd, Blacktown, Parramatta, Auburn
42%	Ku-ring-gai/Hornsby Volunteer Recruitment, Referral & Training Service	Hornsby, Ku-ring-gai
37%	Volunteer Network	Burwood, Strathfield, Ashfield, Drummoyne, Canada Bay, Five Dock, Enfield, Croydon, Concord
29%	Lower North Shore Volunteer Referral Agency	Lane Cove, North Sydney, Willoughby, Mosman

The only regional area reporting more than 10% of people from other cultural backgrounds is the Illawarra region (16%).

These statistics reflect the percentages of people with other cultural and linguistic backgrounds in the general population. *The Social Health Atlas* shows that this group comprises 20% or more of the population in the LGAs covered by the relevant VRCs. 15-19.9% of the population in the Kogarah area are also in this group.¹²

The extremely high levels of use of VRCs by this group suggests that VRCs in these areas are providing an important pathway to volunteering for a group which may have difficulties accessing more informal networks to access volunteering opportunities.

4.6.3 Sources of volunteers

As might be expected, those VRCs in receipt of VWI funding reported significant percentages (from 27-60%, average 44.27%) of volunteers being referred from Centrelink or a Job Network provider. Centrelink/Job Network referrals, combined, account for 5 times more than any other form of referral except for word of mouth – 15 VRCs reported 10% or more from this source (one service reported 60%). Ten VRCs report 10% or more self-referrals and 15 VRCs reported more than 10% referrals

¹² *ibid*, Maps 3.18 and 3.19, pp. 55-56 NB These figures show people resident in Australia for 5 years or more.

from publicity. Other VRCs reported lower percentages of these volunteers, with some centres reporting no volunteers being referred from these sources.

A number of VRCs which do not receive VWI funding are being accessed by volunteers referred from Centrelink or a Job Network provider. The Liverpool Volunteer Resource Centre, for example, reports that 30% of its clientele comes from these sources. Volunteering Eurobodalla reports that 20% of its clientele comes from these sources, while Volunteer Link at Hurstville and STARS at Lakemba report 15% each. It has been previously reported that Volunteer Network is in this situation.

It is likely that these percentages will increase in the near future; from September 2003 volunteering will be a choice available for people receiving parenting payments to meet their mutual obligation requirements.

4.7 Support for VRCs

A number of organisations currently provide support for VRCs. Volunteering NSW offers consultancy, education and resource development, and hosts the School of Volunteer Management. COVERRS provides networking opportunities for coordinators of volunteer resource and referral centres and also acts as a lobby group. NCOSS, LCSA, LGCSA and the Local Government Association and The Shires Association also provide some services such as committee training. Nationally, Volunteering Australia also provides important support to the network of VRCs and leadership on volunteering issues generally.

Membership across the three organisations varies only slightly with COVERRS at 20 VRCs, and both Volunteering NSW and Volunteering Australia have 19 VRCs. Twelve VRCs are also members of NCOSS, which provides non-targetted support, and eleven are members of the LCSA. A small number of VRCs reported links to regional forums, local interagency groups, ozvpm, cybervpm (online resources). Volunteering Wingecarribee has links with Volunteering ACT and Volunteering Illawarra.

The types of support received by the VRCs ranged through advocacy, peer support, information and resources, training, IT support and tools, insurance, promotion (at State and national levels), and conferences. The data on the nature of support appears to suggest that there may be overlap in support. However, some is geographic area or topic specific, and some is targeted specifically to VRCs while other is general support to non-government organisations (e.g. through NCOSS). Nevertheless, it is apparent that some discussions would be valuable to identify any potential areas of speciality or resource sharing or joint activity. This is consistent with the report from a small group discussion at the workshop held as part of this review.

5. Summary of the issues from government submissions

Submissions were received from the following NSW government agencies:

- Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care (DADHC);
- Department of Community Services (DoCS) – full submission not yet received;
- Department for Women;
- NSW Commission for Children and Young People;
- NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service;
- Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney;
- NSW Health; and
- Department of Aboriginal Affairs.

In addition, the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services (FaCS) also provided information to the Review.

FaCS, DADHC and DoCS are the major funders of VRCs and their submissions or comments to the Study reflect this level of involvement. The following table (**TABLE 2**) gives a summary of data provided to the Study team related to funding allocated to NSW VRCs by these three agencies.

A common set of issues emerged from several of these submissions.

Table 2 Funding levels by major funders¹³

DADHC	DoCS	FaCS	FaCS	Various Sources
HACC	Community Services Grants Program	Volunteer Management Program	Voluntary Work Initiative	Major projects
825,000	426,000	347,000	459,000	237,000

5.1 Significance of volunteering effort and activities to communities

All of the government submissions emphasised the important contribution made by volunteers to community capacity building (or social capital) and to their respective area of responsibility. Their submissions highlighted the value of VRCs building strong links with other agencies with a focus on supporting or involving volunteers in the department's respective programs and/or service system. Several of these submissions also highlighted the importance of support to ensure volunteering was

¹³ We have done everything we can to get accurate figures but have not been able to do so and these figures are only indicative.

undertaken in the most effective and efficient manner and the existing and potential role of VRCs in meeting this need for organisations seeking to involve volunteers and for volunteers themselves.

The Department for Women highlighted the gendered nature of much volunteering effort especially in community and social services areas. This submission also noted that in many Indigenous communities volunteering forms part of the cultural obligation and responsibility to that community and that women also carry this responsibility disproportionately within their communities. They identify the Volunteer Resource Service, recently funded as a pilot program in Bourke, as being an important initiative for volunteering in Indigenous communities.

5.2 Current approach to funding

Several Departments raised the need for a more coherent framework for funding VRCs and expressed concern that the current approach was 'ad hoc', lacking coherence and consistency with the result that the distribution of funding was inequitable across the State, with some geographic areas lacking any VRC type services at all, and disparate funding levels across VRCs. This lack of a consistent approach or framework, and the low levels of funding for some VRCs, was seen to present viability and sustainability issues for many services, in particular those which were not part of a larger entity with adequate infrastructure to support the service.

5.3 Role and effectiveness of VRCs

All of the submissions commented on the important role of VRCs in assisting in the recruitment and support for volunteering whether this be through direct recruitment services, being a source of referrals, or through training and support for agencies involving volunteers. Several submissions noted the difficulties some of their respective areas were experiencing in recruiting adequate volunteer numbers and perceived a significant role for VRCs to assist in addressing this shortage.

DADHC funding to VRCs is specifically targeted at HACC funded services and these VRCs are expected to give priority to HACC services. In 2002 DADHC commissioned a study of volunteering in HACC funded service.¹⁴ This study noted that many HACC funded agencies were having major problems in retaining existing volunteers, recruiting new and younger volunteers, and needed higher levels of support to manage their existing pool of volunteers through training and support.

The DADHC submission to this current Study noted that regions appeared to have a limited understanding and/or awareness of VRCs in their area. It was difficult to source this finding to the 2002 study and the study appears not to have surveyed VRCs. However there are consistent issues in the DADHC submission with issues raised by HACC funded services, in the 2002 study, in areas where there were existing VRCs. As the survey of VRCs reported high levels of promotion in most areas, the claim from the regions that VRCs are not well known needs to be treated with caution. This

¹⁴ Nyland study cited previously

study was not able to verify data such as this – neither to cross check with stakeholders nor to establish the exact level of promotion by VRCs.

The 2002 study proposed that there was an urgent need for a strategic framework for the support and development of volunteer participation in HACC funded services. Elements of the framework proposed in that study included:

- the development of models for assessing and structuring volunteer workforces;
- the development of resources or guides for targeting volunteer groups;
- examining the potential for existing HACC peak bodies to centralise and streamline volunteering resources and assistance;
- strategies to build the understanding of HACC funded services of the significance of volunteer coordination in the job roles of service coordinators and managers, and of the importance of volunteer management in meeting HACC standards, and
- a range of aspects related to agreed and coherent principles regarding the reimbursement of volunteers.

The submissions from the three Departments providing the bulk of the funding to VRCs, FaCS, DoCS, and DADHC, all provided comment on their view of what the key elements of the VRC role should be to support volunteering as an activity:

- training and recruitment – directly and as a support service to volunteer involving organisations;
- the development and provision of resources to volunteer involving organisations;
- building innovative ways of recruiting volunteers, and
- developing good practice volunteer management.

5.4 Need for a more consistent framework

Two of the submissions argued strongly that there was a need for a more coherent framework for funding VRCs in NSW which:

- was supported and agreed across government (whole of government);
- was underpinned by agreed principles;
- considered the possible pooling of funding across government with a centralised approach to administering funding;
- achieved a more equitable distribution of VRCs across NSW; and
- improved the coordination and management of volunteer effort across the State.

5.5 Local council submissions

Six local councils took the time to respond to the study and provided comment on the Scoping Paper. Two of these were auspicing bodies for existing VRCs. The remaining four councils provided some in-kind support, and in two cases direct funding, to very small local groups in their area specifically to support volunteering. Two of these are located in areas where there is no VRC coverage/service. All

of the councils supported the role of VRCs as important resources within their local communities. The data collected through the survey on the levels of in-kind support suggest that local councils are playing a significant role in areas where there are low populations, limited community services infrastructure and wide geographic spread across an LGA.

6. Issues

Through the course of the study a number of themes have emerged in relation to the current arrangements under which VRCs operate. These themes are discussed in this section of the Report, drawing on the material raised in the completed surveys, the submissions, the interviews and the half day workshop held in late August with members of the Advisory Group for the project and the COVERRS network.

6.1 Geographical Spread

As reported earlier in this report, the mapping exercise indicates that VRCs are located unevenly across New South Wales, but there is overall reasonable coverage. There is a relatively strong presence of VRCs in large centres along the coastal fringe with very few located west of the Great Dividing Range. The strongest concentration of VRCs in NSW is in the most densely populated areas (Sydney, the Central Coast and the Illawarra). In this context, it is relevant to note that the volunteer rate outside Sydney is considerably higher than in the metropolitan area (37.6% compared to 24.7%).¹⁵ This may be linked to higher unemployment rates in non-metropolitan areas.

Many submissions discussed the question of geographical location of VRCs with an 'equitable' statewide structure, with agreed core services being proposed by many respondents. It was seen as a means of facilitating best practice while utilising the vital local knowledge of VRCs. Volunteering NSW noted the need to consider natural community borders and boundaries when determining the appropriate strategy in a particular region. Some options to address the differing regional circumstances across NSW were proposed by respondents:

- regional hubs with satellite offices;
- outreach programs from existing VRCs (offering training and information); and
- advanced technology options (no details specified).

Further major issues which emerged were equity of access and sustainability.

Equity of Access

Equity of access to a VRC was seen to be important, both for individual volunteers and for client organisations. This was seen to be particularly the case with the role being played by a number of VRCs in relation to VWI and *Australians Working Together*. Some expressed the view that the lack of volunteer referral centres in parts of New South Wales may limit the options available to people receiving income support, and therefore place pressure on the existing VRCs to provide volunteer referral services over a large geographic area, whether or not they are funded to do so – where this is

¹⁵ ABS, 2000, 4441.0 Voluntary Work Australia, Table 5, p. 16

done it is usually possible because of the use of volunteers. One respondent noted the importance of considering transport options for clients in determining placement of VRCs.

A number of respondents sought to address these questions in offering opinions on the organising principle of an equitable network. A range of methods were suggested:

- local government areas;
- population;
- number of NGOs in area;
- percentage of aged population (for HACC-funded services);
- geographical size and population; and
- linked to DoCS regions.

These options are incorporated in the discussion of options in Section 9 of this paper.

Sustainability

The issue of sustainability is more complex and raises some difficult policy issues. In particular the challenge of ensuring that VRCs have sustainable levels of funding, models of governance and security of funding are all matters requiring careful and open discussion. The issue of sustainable levels of funding is covered in the Funding Section below.

Sustainability was also raised in many submissions in relation to factors such as appropriate location, availability of auspicing support, effects of demographic change, and support from the local community. Respondents were concerned that VRCs should be located where there are both individuals wanting to volunteer, organisations seeking to involve volunteers; and where it is evident that the Centre would be supported and would 'fit' with the community. It has been pointed out that the services are clustered in the metropolitan area but there is relatively more volunteering in country areas. However this is a complex issue involving differences in pathways to volunteering and the fact that the difference in levels between country and city are as a proportion of the population; the numbers of people in the country are lower.

6.2 Services

Section 4.3.2 of the paper described the services currently provided by VRCs in NSW. This report showed all VRCs offering recruitment and referral services, with training the next most widespread service offered. However, it also highlighted the variability of the other services provided. The 2001 *Rural and Regional Volunteer Support Strategy Volunteer Survey* showed that both volunteer-involving organisations and volunteering support organisations rank training, the provision of information, and assistance with matching and recruitment as the three most important priorities for volunteering support. However, services currently provided by VRCs across NSW vary according both to the programs under which funding is made available and to the strategic decisions made by each VRC on its spending priorities. A number of VRCs surveyed commented that although they are only

funded to provide volunteer recruitment and referral services to one particular target group, they in fact provide a broader service.

6.2.1 Core Services and a definition

The issue of the definition of core services for volunteering services is complex and not well understood by many people as evidenced in some of the information provided to the study team. The desirability of the provision of a suite of core services by VRCs across NSW was a strong theme through the surveys, submissions and interviews. In this section we present the various views on this issue

In responding to the survey the following services were the full list of those services identified and reported as core to a VRC, in order of priority:

- recruitment and referral;
- volunteer training;
- support to volunteer involving organizations;
- promotion of volunteering;
- provision of resources;
- information gathering;
- information dissemination;
- maintaining a database;
- advocacy;
- background checks; and
- consultancy.

Not all of these issues would be core as in the major activity for all of the organisations in the network of volunteer services and one item in the list is unusual as identified services e.g. background checks. If VRCs are seen as the local level service provision 'unit' it is still the case that recruitment and referral are seen as the core activities. In the Chapter on Options for the future, Chapter 9, this is addressed further.

In submissions the recruitment and matching feature as core services; individual VRCs, VNSW, and the COVERRS network all argued that there are core generic roles or functions for VRCs. Volunteering NSW argues that there are three such functions: promotion, capacity building, pathway assistance and support. Volunteering Australia has adopted a definition of VRC which includes a comprehensive listing of what they term core business:

- resource and support people to make informed choices about volunteer work;
- maintain relevant, up to date information on volunteer services;
- refer, as opposed to recommend, volunteers to a wide range of not-for-profit organisations and projects across all sectors of the community;
- provide agencies with information on involving and managing volunteers;

- raise the profile of volunteering in organisations, governments and the community by promoting the 'Principles of Volunteering';
- work with other volunteer resource centres across Australia to maintain common standards of practice;
- maintain sufficient resources to provide the required services to volunteers and the community; and
- to work with other agencies to promote best practice standards for volunteer involvement and management.

Some of these would not usually be identified as core services and in Chapter 8 a definition and core services linked to a series of four models for VRCs is proposed as one option for a framework for the future.

The following services were seen as those a VRC should offer if 'funding were not an issue':

- recruitment and referral;
- volunteer training;
- development of relationships with volunteer-involving organisations;
- development of corporate volunteering;
- provision of a meeting place;
- outreach services;
- advocacy;
- provision of a resource library;
- administration (including maintaining a sustainable database); and
- keep abreast of changes in government policy.

Again not all of these are necessarily relevant to all VRCs, depending on the framework adopted for the overall provision of volunteering services across NSW in an efficient way.

6.2.2 Service Specifications and Standards of Service

Standard service specifications and implementation of professional service standards were seen as very important. Current service specifications were perceived by some to be narrow such that there are gaps in some communities (eg volunteer training on the Central Coast). This however depends on the overall framework adopted for NSW and will be addressed in Chapter 9.

Almost all VRCs implement the National Standards on Volunteering, with many also meeting service standards specified in HACC contracts.

6.3 Funding

6.3.1 Weaknesses of current arrangements

There was strong agreement among respondents to the survey, in submissions, and from the interviews, that the current funding arrangement for VRCs has multiple problems. It is variously described as inadequate, inequitable, insecure, and administratively onerous. The following is a summary of these views:

Inadequate: The 'contribution to service' approach taken by funding departments is said to leave many agencies, particularly the smaller VRCS, struggling to deliver the services required and to find additional support to enable the agency to remain viable. This is especially so for the small number of stand alone agencies but is also relevant for those poorly resourced VRCs located as a program within a wider organisation or auspiced by another body, where the infrastructure support of various kinds by the auspicing body is not seen to be sufficient.

Inequitable: Some participants were concerned that there are no funding criteria applied consistently across NSW. Some areas are not funded at all; some HACC funding has been rolled over for many years without account being taken of changing demographics and increasing need. FaCS have also commented that the distribution of VMP funds reflects 'historical realities' rather than the current situation in relation to VRCs in NSW.

Insecure: While approximately 47% of the total funding for VRCs is reported to be recurrent, VRCs report a sense of insecurity about the continuity of funding. A small number of pilot projects have reportedly failed to attract further funding and have 'fallen over' (e.g. Mudgee, Yass), leading to a reported 'loss of impetus in the region'. Pilot projects which have sunset clauses to the funding can also create problems for VRCs by raising community expectations which can no longer be fulfilled when the funding ends (e.g. DADHC Experienced Hands funding to 2 VRCs is expected to finish in 2005). A further reported problem is that the insecurity of funding, together with low levels of funding, creates problems retaining skilled and professional staff.

Administratively Onerous: At present there are up to six Government agencies, both State and Commonwealth, providing funding to the VRC network in NSW. Fifteen out of the 25 sites surveyed receive funding from 2 or more sources, the largest number being 6. This multiplicity of funding sources creates an administrative burden as agencies try to comply with different submission, acquittal, reporting and monitoring regimes.

It is important to note that many of these issues are not unique to VRCs but are common across other areas within community services which has historically struggled to achieve attention and priority in all State, Territory and Commonwealth budgets. The growing awareness of the importance of well-managed, and professional volunteer programs to the safety and well being of volunteers, to people who are on the receiving end of volunteer services and to communities, increases the need for

Governments to consider more carefully the need to adequately support volunteering as an important community capacity building activity. The administrative burden of the current approaches to funding not only falls on the NGOs but also on the government officers, and reduction of administrative load from lack of a coherent framework is a significant and important challenge for government to address in the development of more integrated approaches

Issues related to police checks in relation to child protection, duty of care and responsible volunteering are fundamental and represent significant risk management strategies for communities and ultimately for governments across all levels.

6.3.2 Strengths of Current Arrangements

The identified strengths of the current system, whilst limited, were:

- that it was responsive to local needs and enabled partnerships;
- that the breadth of sponsorship avoids monopolistic control;
- that it allows support from local government;
- being able to apply for funding from different sources;
- one submission commented on the high level of parity achieved by the VWI program to date; and
- VMP and its contribution to individual organisations.

Many submissions commented that finding strengths was not easy given the ad hoc nature of the funding overall.

6.3.3 Recurrent Core Funding

Recurrent funding of core services (see discussion above) was seen by many, including Volunteering Australia, Volunteering NSW and COVERRS, to be necessary to ensure uniformity in service provision, organisational stability, development and growth, and to provide a base on which minimum service standards could be introduced. It would also reduce the potential for 'mission drift', caused by VRCs losing sight of their core functions in the search for funding to ensure viability. Contributors commented that any core funding would need to be approached on an equitable basis, taking into account regional cost differentials (e.g. rental costs, travel and phone costs).

6.3.4 Centralised Funding

The possibility of adopting a centralised funding model was raised by many contributors to the review. The channelling of funding through one central body was seen by participants as having many potential advantages:

- raised profile of VRCs and volunteering;
- demonstration of a clear volunteer policy by government;
- flexibility;

- equity in distribution of funds;
- transparency in distribution of funds;
- administrative simplicity, including a centralised reporting mechanism;
- consistency;
- a proactive approach; and
- core service provision.

The potential disadvantages of such an approach were seen to be:

- loss of flexibility at local level;
- difficulty of maintaining appropriate roles between the peak body (Volunteering NSW) and the central funding body.

Some respondents believed all funding should flow through such a central body. Others, including Volunteering NSW, proposed a model in which core funding would be administered and managed through one central agency, and additional funding could then be accessed through line agency specific target group funding (e.g. DADHC/HACC funding).

6.3.5 Potential for Income Generation

The Scoping Paper sought comment on whether there is any perceived potential for VRCs to generate income. The response was generally negative although it was reported that some income generation is happening through membership fees and more might happen through corporate volunteering. Volunteering NSW noted the potential for sale of some services to the business sector (e.g. employee volunteering assistance, community engagement strategies, major event planning and recruitment, volunteer management training and facilitation).

Income generation was, however, seen by some to have limited potential for both practical and philosophical reasons. Respondents saw that attempts to generate income through fee structures could lead to the exclusion of certain clients and thus to a drop in diversity and equity. They also felt that volunteers should not have to pay to be referred to a volunteer involving organisation. Other reasons were raised such as that managers would experience increased stress as they sought projects that would pay. Moreover, VRCs are seen to operate within an under-funded sector and consequently the potential to charge a fee for service is limited.

As reviewers we believe this reflects a narrow concept of income generation and also underrates the extent to which the auspice bodies are well placed to and do successfully apply for project funding. Many of the auspice bodies have multiple sources of funding and are successful in the funding application process. The work would/should not have to fall only on the shoulders of the VRC manager, this is a potential area for greater infrastructure support from the auspice bodies.

6.4 The Role of Local Government

The *International Year of Volunteers 2001 NSW: Report and Recommendations* contained a recommendation to support and strengthen volunteering by building on existing structures such as local government.¹⁶ While the role of local government was perceived by respondents to be very important, views on the appropriate role for it to play are very varied. Opinions range on a spectrum from seeing VRCs as ideally being integrated into the local government structure, to seeing local government helping VRCS with some activities and resources but allowing flexibility and independence. One respondent cautioned that it cannot be assumed that the current levels of local government support to VRCs will continue and that some form of framework agreement, committing local government to supporting a statewide network of VRCs should be negotiated.

Volunteering NSW argues that local government involvement can bring some constraints to the operation of VRCs: determined geographical boundaries, high dependency on a council's social investment and vision, and the potential for local political issues to dominate. As reviewers we believe this view of the role of local government needs significant further discussion and challenge.

6.5 Networking Needs for VRCS

VRCs report a need for greater collaboration within the whole network, including Volunteering Australia, Volunteering NSW and the School of Volunteer Management, to enable efficiencies in the sharing of information, training resources. The following elements of a more coordinated approach were identified at the half day workshop of VRC coordinators and the Advisory Group:

- mapping of existing training tools, strengths (sharing of knowledge & resources);
- resources to continue and expand support of existing networks and new VRCs;
- more developed support from COVERRS;
- establish and maintain a COVERRS website;
- Volunteering Australia and Volunteering NSW to support VRCs with evidence-based research; and
- collaborative network approach to issues (e.g. applying for funding for research).

6.6 Involving Volunteers

The involvement of volunteers by VRCs was discussed at the half-day workshop and the principle was considered. The group proposed that VRCs should support the involvement of volunteers in VRCs as a matter of principle for the following reasons:

- involving volunteers is important modelling for other organisations;
- volunteers bring skills and add value to the service provided through VRCs;
- volunteers are best at spreading the word to and 'mentoring' other volunteers;

¹⁶ NSW Premier's Department, 2002, *International Year of Volunteers 2001: NSW Report and Recommendations*, p. 26

- a range of positions/tasks can be offered– short term or on-going; and
- their involvement should be supported by good volunteer management principles including good orientation and supervision, duty statements, conditions outlined in volunteer agreements, not replacing paid workers, and reimbursement policies.

Ironically the group reported the following disadvantages to involving volunteers. The disadvantages were seen to be that volunteers move on, leaving gaps in capacity and that they bring additional responsibilities in terms of supervision needs. Some participants expressed a view that the issue of not replacing paid workers was potentially problematic if no service was the alternative. Involving volunteers in an organisation has resource implications. The common misconception is that volunteers are 'free' but organisations which manage their volunteers well expend time and money to ensure that volunteers are equipped and trained for the work that they do. Costs will vary according to the type of work being undertaken.

These arguments about the disadvantages of using volunteers apply to the organisations to which VRCs refer volunteers and for which VRCs are meant to provide support to manage these problems and therefore it is reasonable to assume that while these issues definitely face organisations, the VRCs would be particularly well qualified to manage them.

7. Summary of options proposed in the non-government submissions

Submissions were received from a number of VRCs and Volunteering Australia (see **Attachment 4**). Many of the key issues raised in these submissions are incorporated into the various sections of this report. However some submissions provided extensive and or innovative ideas for future models and approaches and this section attempts to summarise these ideas. As stated many VRCs raised sustainability, viability and access across NSW as major issues for future funding and development. Volunteering NSW provided a comprehensive submission containing a model for the future; a summary of the model is included at the end of this section.

Other key issues raised by VRCs and Volunteering Australia included the following:

- the development by the WA Government of the Volunteer Community Development Grants in the context of a government policy, titled Valuing Volunteers, and the subsequent establishment of 17 VRCs across WA with some being launched in 2003. The limitation with the WA approach is that funding is only allocated for one year;
- the establishment of the Office for Volunteers in SA and the development of a Strategic Plan for the Office with four priorities for action, Promoting Volunteering, Supporting Volunteers in SA, Facilitating Partnerships, and Policy and Advice;
- both the SA and WA initiatives suggest that these approaches support the importance of a policy framework in which funding policy is then located;
- initiatives in the UK and Canada support the importance of Governments playing a leading role in setting policy and allocating resources to volunteering management and support;
- the value and significance of locating volunteering in the context of citizenship and citizen participation was raised in several submissions;
- the need to recognise new demands and/or knowledge regarding volunteering and the possibility of locating future trends and options in a new paradigm of social development, civic engagement, and mobilisation and skill exchange; and
- in some of the submissions, and at the workshop in Sydney, the desire to achieve a more integrated approach was raised and this included both whole-of-government commitments and improved coordination within the volunteering network and across the VRC network. An integrated approach might manifest in shared and/or pooled funding approaches, improved use of shared resources, stronger links with the business community, effective state, regional and local strategies which also includes an emphasis on addressing access across NSW, a planning approach which anticipates future trends and needs, and the effective use of technology.

Whilst the issue of viability was raised in most submissions, interviews and surveys, there is no agreement on what level of funding would achieve this. The Options Chapter proposes some possible funding levels for the future.

Volunteering NSW proposed a complete framework for a volunteering service system in NSW the key features of which were:

- a strategically mapped network:
 - Volunteering NSW, 12 metropolitan VRCs, 15 rural regional VRCs
- integrated volunteer resourcing sector from national to local level;
- broadening of VRC roles appropriate to regional and market demands, community development and citizen participation;
- appropriate core funding for each VRC, with at least a 3 year commitment;
- streamlining and/or complementarity of cross-government funding;
- integration of VRCs within the core of social infrastructure and planning; and
- greater interaction with business and government.

8. *What this means for the future*

The need for a coherent framework within which VRCs operate in NSW has been highlighted in previous reports (HACC 2002, and IYV reports) and this review provides an opportunity to establish such a framework. The issues raised in Chapter 6 suggest that while there are some commonly agreed problems with the current arrangements, no consensus exists on how to address many of these problems.

8.1 Summary of the key implications from the findings

- Funding from NSW Government for VRCs is provided primarily through DADHC and DoCS and there is almost no funding allocated to VRCs through other government agencies with responsibility for policy or program areas which benefit from the work of VRCs. This includes health, arts and culture, sport and recreation, environment and heritage, emergency services, education and local councils. However some of these areas do have volunteer programs of their own;
- The Commonwealth Government, through FaCS, is a significant funding source for many VRCs and VWI funding is a critical source of funding for many newer VRCs;
- Local government plays an important role for many VRCs, local councils currently auspice 8 of the VRCs surveyed and provide a relatively high level of in-kind support for many VRCs;
- Recruitment, referral and training of volunteers are the most common activities of all of the VRCs which responded to the survey; the data confirms that these are the outcomes and outputs for which they are funded;
- Support to and training for organisations is the next band of activities for many VRCs;
- The majority of VRCs are auspiced by a larger organisation and the most common auspicing bodies are local councils or community based neighbourhood or community centres or other community services organisations;
- The distribution of VRCs across NSW achieves a relatively high level of coverage with only 5 key gaps in coverage; namely Far Western NSW, the lower South Coast, a small area of the North Central Coast, small pockets of inland NSW, and Fairfield in Sydney;
- Most VRCs involve volunteers in their service delivery and for many this is a significant element in their capacity to provide a service to their communities However 6 VRCs do not involve volunteers at all in their own service provision;
- The funding levels for VRCs are extremely disparate, and lack consistency with some VRCs struggling to provide a daily service of opening hours; many VRCs achieve a high level of coverage by involving volunteers;
- The potential for regional models which address the wide range of possible services needs to be explored with some innovative approaches to providing services with wide geographic areas and small populations;

- Strategies which build the involvement of younger people need to be incorporated in future models; the need to build the pool of younger volunteers is an important sustainability and access issue. Future models must consider approaches which attract younger volunteers recognising that both volunteering patterns and methods of accessing information about volunteering, may be different for young people;
- It has been difficult to determine what constitutes a sustainable funding level for a VRC as this depends significantly on the infrastructure support available, the geographic area to be covered, the population size, whether all VRCs should be providing the full range of services or whether there are possible alternative models which include regional approaches for some services and what other services exist in the area.

The matters for which options might need to be developed are:

- a volunteering framework;
- a funding framework for volunteering:
 - funding policy and mechanism
 - a regional approach to organisation of the network of services
 - geographic coverage
 - levels of funding – viable core funding, the role of infrastructure costs and in-kind support?
 - sustainability – more than just funding
 - policies in relation to auspicing
- a definition for VRCs and the core services;
- the collection of data for resource allocation purposes;
- access issues:
 - handling Centrelink referrals without VWI funding
 - client intake or entry to the VRC network
 - strategies to promote volunteering to younger people
- support for VRCs; and
- potential for income generation.

9. Options

As summarised in the previous Chapter, Chapter 8, there are a number of matters for which options for the future need to be identified. As a result of the input to this review, the workshop discussions with the Advisory Committee and the COVERRS organisations, and research on approaches to the funding of volunteer services in Australia and overseas, we have developed the following options for consideration.

9.1 A Volunteering Framework

Many fields of community service provision, including volunteering, have grown up in largely unplanned ways that have been responsive to need as this has been recognised and addressed. After some time of such ad hoc development, overall policy frameworks have gradually been developed in some fields. Overall policy frameworks set the direction and outline the way in which the need will be addressed. A complete overall policy framework would include a number of elements including the funding policy, however sometimes there is policy outlining the field of activity without a funding policy or alternatively there is a funding policy but not the overarching policy framework to clarify the social purpose, the service model etc.

Even if there is no change to funding for VRCs in NSW there is support for the development of a consistent policy framework for volunteering – a Volunteering Framework. Such a Framework would address the overall picture of volunteering for the state. Some key elements would be statements of the:

- purpose of volunteering and the intended social benefit:
 - a statement of the purpose of volunteering and key definitions
 - a summary of research on the need for and purpose of, on volunteering, and support for and promotion of volunteering, numbers of volunteers and comparisons with national statistics etc.
 - identification of the outcomes being pursued
- ways in which volunteering occurs across a wide range of settings and organisations and how volunteers and volunteering involving organisations can be supported.

Volunteering is a very widespread activity in the community and VRCs are only one element of the overall picture. Many organisations which involve volunteers have their own resourced and supported volunteer programs. Many people find their own volunteering opportunities. However networks of VRC type organisations have emerged, not only in NSW and Australia but also in a number of other countries, in recognition of the need to have services to provide support to those people and organisations which do not have their own resources. In recognition of the fact that organisations have their own volunteer programs and do not currently use VRC services, one important potential initiative

for the state government would be to have a requirement in funding of volunteer-involving organisations that they provide appropriate support to volunteers.

Within the overall framework for volunteering there needs to be a “sub framework” that sets out the service system that could exist to provide support to volunteers and organisations, and fulfil a key role of promoting volunteering. This VRC framework would address:

- identification of the service model and the types of services involved;
- the service system structure and resourcing:
 - issues such as for example adoption of a regional structure, partnerships required across government, and between government and non-government, workforce training and development
 - this section of the Framework would outline the overall resourcing needs from which a more detailed funding policy would flow
- leadership, management and support:
 - what partners will need to do to provide leadership and how, how volunteering will be promoted as a social benefit for the whole community at the statewide level
- principles and objectives to guide the service system;
- policy in relation to evaluation and data collection.

Development and adoption of a Framework for Volunteering in NSW might be seen to be a minimum required outcome from this project and it is an important/necessary prerequisite for a coherent service system for volunteer support. Such frameworks would usually be developed in collaboration with the field involved; in this case there is very important material available through Volunteering Australia (VA), Volunteering NSW (VNSW) and COVERRS, that would contribute to a volunteering policy (see **ATTACHMENT 9** for relevant VA material). However on its own a Volunteering Framework is unlikely to address the major issues raised in this study, which would be addressed in the development of a framework for VRCs specifically and a Funding Policy Framework.

Statement of purpose and definition for a framework

For this paper we have assumed that statements of purpose and social benefit, principles and objectives, and definitions of VRCs, such as those used by VA or VNSW or COVERRS would provide the starting point for statements of this kind for a NSW Volunteering Framework with a funding policy incorporated. From the foundation statements of the overall program an approach to evaluation of the overall program can be developed. Resources could be developed for individual service evaluation which could ensure the work of individual services can be compared to each other and are compatible with the overall approach.

9.2 Options for a Funding Policy Framework

A number of elements need to be addressed in a funding policy framework and some of the direction setting comes from the Volunteering Framework i.e.:

- statement of the social issue to be addressed;
- statement of the services and service model

The key elements of the Funding Policy Framework flow from these direction statements:

- a source of funds - which may be the result of multiple streams including income generation and must consider infrastructure costs - and a mechanism and process for distributing them if necessary:
 - this may need a solution to the question of whole of government or integrated funding approaches
 - this would also need to take account of the role of local government
- possibly a structure for the service system to cover a large and complex state – e.g. a regional model, and provide for access for diverse groups of people in widespread locations;
- a strategy for providing viable funding to the service system proposed; and
- a strategy to address sustainability including support for training and development of services, and to address issues such as auspicing and governance or management.

9.2.1 Core services, the service model and service structure

The Volunteering Framework would establish the overall service structure but for funding purposes more detail is needed – particularly clarification of the core services or activities. There has been some controversy and confusion in the discussions held as part of the development of this options paper, about core services for VRCs. The concept of core services or activities needs to be clarified, and as well as the implications for the relative weighting of services. In summary a number of options for a set of core services are possible:-

Service Option 1: Adoption of the full list of services given by VRCs in answer to the question in the survey about 'core' services namely:

- recruitment and referral;
- volunteer training;
- support to volunteer involving organisations;
- promotion of volunteering;
- provision of resources;
- information gathering;
- information dissemination;
- maintaining a database;
- advocacy;

- background checks; and
- consultancy.

Such an approach is inclusive but unfocussed and not all VRCs can or do provide such services. In working with the Advisory Committee on these options this Option was not supported.

Service Option 2: Adoption of a minimalist set of core services by which a local level VRC can be identified namely:

- recruitment and referral – majority function;
- volunteer training – minority function;
- support to local level volunteer involving organizations – linked to the needs of an effective the recruitment and matching service; and
- simple promotion of the service and volunteering at the local level.

This allows for a defined approach to the services of VRCs at a local level but does not address some of the services necessary to maintain, develop and support the VRCs themselves and the quality of their services – e.g. more significant promotion campaigns of volunteering especially to attract potential volunteer-involving organisations; or development of major resources and training. On its own it cannot guide a coherent service system but may contribute to the design of a service system.

Service Option 3: A change of focus for VRCs to supporting volunteer involving organisations. In this option services would not provide interviews, referral or training to individuals who are wishing to volunteer. These functions would be left to volunteer involving organisations and the VRCs would provide support to these organisations to ensure best practice.

The services in this option would probably be:

- support to volunteer involving organizations;
- training and support for volunteer managers;
- promotion of volunteering;
- provision of resources for management and training of volunteers; and
- consultancy on these matters.

This Service Option comes from the concern that the majority of individuals who volunteer do not find their volunteer position through VRCs but through their own informal networks or the recruitment activities of a number of organisations seeking their own volunteers, and that support to volunteer involving organisations would be an effective targeted strategy to create a strong volunteering system in NSW. Some VRCs were concerned at the implication of this option and that certain groups of people wishing to volunteer would be unassisted as a result. The Advisory Committee supported this strategic approach however there was recognition that to provide for some volunteers and some smaller community organisations which are unable to resource their own volunteer recruitment, a set of core services for VRCs would need to include 'connecting people'.

As with the previous Service Option, a model based on local VRCs which *only* worked with organisations at the local level would not provide a coherent model for the provision of volunteering for NSW. It may provide one element of a system at either the local or regional level.

Service Option 4 For the Advisory Committee the preferred Service Option for core activities for VRCs in NSW was a set of four core activities which are well supported by the directions in volunteering here and overseas. These four Core Activities are:

- **Connecting people** to volunteering opportunities – what has been known as ‘recruitment and matching’ but this term is seen as limited and ‘connecting people’ includes generic training of volunteers, development of data bases on volunteering opportunities, information and resources for people wishing to volunteer;
- **Promoting volunteering** as a key resource in the community – from local to state level promotion including, at regional and state level, development of promotion resources, **awards etc;**
- **Building capacity** for effective volunteering – working with organisations and communities as already happens – covers training including for volunteer management, consultancy services, liaison and network support;
- Development of **Strategic Initiatives** for volunteering opportunities - working with other partners to develop volunteering projects and strategies.

This Service Option for Core Activities has important support from key sectors in the field of volunteering, however it would need explanation and clarification to some sections particularly smaller, more localised services which may need to have a clearer understanding of the overall structure of volunteering to see that there is support available to them and that they do not have to undertake all activities. Promoting this approach and supporting organisations to work within the structure and find their place in it would be the work of the peak and network support organisations.

Service Option 5 Given the very varied size and resources of VRCs it is not intended that all VRCs would be doing the same amount of work in the four Core Activity areas proposed in Service Option 4. A further option has been identified which builds on this set of Core Activities in a way that provides a structure to cover local, regional and statewide service needs. Service Option 5 proposes a service system with four models for organisations at different geographic and/or funding levels in NSW. It is based on support to VRCs being at regional and statewide levels and on each VRC assessing the systemic needs for their geographic area – e.g. more ‘connecting people’ or more ‘building capacity’:

Model 1 – Small local VRC

A small local VRC would be operating at their local level and the balance of work on the four core activities would be based on their resource level and the needs of the local service configuration:

- building capacity of local organisations and the community;
- connecting people to volunteering options;
- local promotion of volunteering; and
- local strategic initiatives.

Variables effecting the proportion of work to be undertaken in any one of the Core Activities, and the size of the organisation, would be funding level, population of catchment area and size of geographic area to be covered. The likely focus would be 'connecting people' and 'promotion of volunteering'.

Model 2 – Medium sized VRCs

A VRC with more resourcing and infrastructure, and covering a larger local geographic area and population than Model 1:

- building capacity of organisations and the community;
- promotion of volunteering;
- strategic initiatives; and
- connecting people to volunteering options – as needed in the particular area to support people who are finding it difficult to find volunteering options and to assist smaller organisations to find volunteers.

The focus of their work is likely to be 'building capacity of organisations' and 'promotion of volunteering' with 'connecting people' as needed given the local situation.

Model 3 – Regional VRCs

Regional VRCs would be an important element of the overall service structure providing support throughout their region to the community, organisations and to the Model 1 and 2 VRCs in their region. Model 3 services could be the basis for a structure of regional hubs and 'satellite services'. This relationship could be incorporated into funding agreements and MOUs between the organisations:

- building capacity of organisations and the community – including support to VRCs in their region;
- regional level promotion of volunteering, and resourcing and support to the local level;
- regional strategic initiatives which would also support creation of volunteering opportunities in the local areas for the Model 1 and 2 VRCs in the region; and
- connecting people to volunteering options – only as needed in the particular region/area.

A proposal called Region Assist has been put forward in NSW which seeks to establish a coherent regionally based approach to supporting community organisations and building their capacity. This may provide a significant structure to enable the establishment and support of a strong volunteering system through linkage to this Model 3 type of organisation.

Model 4 – Statewide Volunteering organisations

Model 4 gives a structure and framework for a coherent statewide service system that addresses differing needs at different geographic levels:

- promotion of volunteering statewide, and resourcing and support for the regional VRCs in this work;
- building capacity of organisations and the community – including support to regional organisations, and to regional VRCs;
- strategic initiatives – major initiatives and supporting regional initiatives with VRCs; and
- connecting people to volunteering options – only as needed in the particular region/area.

Given the number of auspice bodies currently engaged in running VRCs it would probably not be viable to withdraw all funding and restructure on a region with satellite model where the regional service 'owned' the satellites. What would be possible would be to fund a regional service to coordinate an integrated network and make funding of the satellites conditional upon working as part of the integrated region network. This model also offers good opportunities for local government involvement at the level of local and/or regional funding. The main focus of these services is likely to be promoting volunteering, building capacity state wide and developing major strategic initiatives

This four model Service Option could be combined with indicative levels of funding. The levels suggested here have not been researched but indicate ideas provided as part of this study and the information collected on the current levels:

- between \$30 - \$50,000 for Model 1;
- \$50 – 100,000 for Model 2;
- \$101,000 – 300,000 for Model 3; and
- more than \$300,000 for Model 4.

The number of services of any one Model type would be decided on the basis of the priorities decided at State level and taking local factors into account. For example the overall system could change to one predominantly focussed on support to organisations but allow for a smaller number of Model 1 services at the local level in areas where local needs assessment indicated that there was a need for 'connecting people' activities for individuals. Such local services might be needed particularly if there is a specific needs group, or groups, identified for whom this support was needed.

In other words such a structure can be tailored to address agreed priorities and change to accommodate changes in local demography or profile of volunteer involving organisations in the community.

9.2.2 Sources of funding

At present funding comes from a number of sources and across all three levels of government (i.e. including local councils). There are also non-government resources and funds contributed by the local community organisations where they auspice a VRC. As already pointed out in this report the levels of infrastructure support provided by auspicings bodies are a key element of resourcing for this (and other) service areas. A number of participants called for the creation of one funding program, some recognised that this might not be possible and looked to other approaches. Some Funding Options, not referring to *levels* of funding only to *sources* of funding, are:

Funding Option 1: No change to the current funding arrangements and no volunteer policy – i.e. no change at all. This Funding Option was not favoured by any participants including government agencies.

Funding Option 2: No change to the current funding sources, but development of a Volunteering Framework with a structure and service model like Service Option 5 above, which establishes some ability to negotiate or steer services into a coherent framework and could, with promotion and support of its purpose, influence a range of funding decisions across funding programs. An example of this would be to introduce an obligation on funding programs in NSW to have a requirement in contracts with volunteer involving organisations that they provide appropriate support to volunteers. A centralised body in government could negotiate with funding departments to have the funding arrangements fit the overall NSW Volunteering Framework.

Funding Option 3 Creation of one funding source/program by pooling the existing funding from both Commonwealth and State sources, and administering it through one central body of the NSW government. Funding could be administered through an MOU between the administering agency and the funding agency. Funding Option 3 would definitely enable the development of a coherent Funding

Framework but it may be impractical to aim to bring together funding across the three levels of government and several funding programs. This Funding Option could use Service Option 5 above to give a framework for service models to provide for services to individuals, organisations, and the volunteering system as a whole at regional and state levels. Within this new funding program the need to secure funding across areas of state government could be addressed. A whole of government approach would address the point made in this report that volunteers work in almost every major area of government activity. If Service Option 5 structure were adopted, funding levels could be established for each model thereby addressing viability. Service Option 5 would also provide a way of structuring the service system on a regional basis because of the Model 3 service.

Funding Option 4: Creation of a centralised and more whole-of-government funding program from the *State government funding*, to be administered by one centralised body in the NSW government. As with the previous Funding Option, coherence, a service structure based on Service Option 5 and a whole of government approach could be achieved. The interface with the considerable proportion of Commonwealth funding would need to be negotiated but this could be done using a 'top up after Commonwealth funding' basis. For example if levels of funding for the 4 Models were targeted, then a Model 3 organisation that did not have funding within that range could receive 'top up funding' from the State program to bring it to an acceptable level. This approach is a variation on the approach recently announced in Western Australia.

There are approximately 3 existing services which provide services to a number of people referred by Centrelink/Job Network and receive no VWI funds. This issue could be addressed and negotiated as part of this funding prior to establishing the top up funding needed from the state government.

A further advantage of this Funding Option is that in both DoCS and DADHC the amount of funding to VRCs is an extremely small percentage of the total funding program (DoCS CSGP 0.56% and DADHC HACC 0.23%) and therefore VRCs are not a key element of these programs not, whereas for the VRCs these funding programs account for approximately 40% of the funding available.

A regional structure would be possible in this Funding Option in the same way as for Funding Option 3.

9.2.3 Levels of funding

Significant concerns were raised in this project about viable levels of funding for services. VNSW suggests in prior work that \$30-50,000 is the minimum level to provide core funding. This fits with the amount mentioned for Model 1 service mentioned in Section 9.2.2. In fact the funding of a service in most programs is a complex combination of direct core funding, contribution to infrastructure costs often by auspice bodies, in-kind support also primarily from auspice bodies, project funding and income generation. VNSW more recently has argued for a minimum funding level of \$82,000 per VRC, which fits with the range for a Model 2 VRC as in Section 9.2.2.

One approach to setting a minimum level may be to set a level such as \$40,000 for a Model 1 service and then 'top up' or 'match' to this level after assessing the funding and resourcing already received – as set out also in Funding Option 4. The onus would be on organisations to be seeking funding and to indicate what efforts have been made to seek other funding. The locations for services would have to be agreed in the overall framework for the State and would not be reactive to organisations choosing independently to set up a service and then require top up funding. In WA applications were sought for funding of \$17,5000, which was offered as only half of the set level for a VRC of \$35,000. This approach was possible because there was not the same level of coverage existing in WA. In NSW this approach would need to be explored including establishing a strategy for migration from the existing funding arrangements to any new one.

Calculation of a definitive funding level has not been part of this project but material developed by VNSW and probably other work done by VA and COVERRS, along with any information that could be obtained from overseas, could be used to develop a funding range.

9.2.4 Geographic spread

Some gaps were identified in the geographic coverage in NSW namely:

- the Far West and Central Inland areas of NSW;
- the mid-North Coast and hinterland;
- parts of the Riverina and lower western region;
- the Far South Coast; and
- the Baulkham Hills, Windsor, and Fairfield areas in Sydney.

In order to provide complete coverage further investigation of models should be undertaken to develop strategies to build on existing services within a regional approach. For example possibilities include the use of outreach approaches and small satellite services supported by regional support workers.

Criteria for location of VRCs could include any of the following:

- local government areas;
- population;
- number of NGOs in area;
- percentage of aged population (for HACC-funded services);
- geographical size and population; and
- linked to DoCS regions.

9.3 Leadership, governance, auspicing and management

A further key element of frameworks for service systems is the cluster of issues to do with leadership, governance and management.

Leadership for the overall service system requires leadership partnerships and in this case a key partnership is a whole of government approach; a partnership across levels of government is also important. This whole of government framework needs to be linked by partnership to the local councils and the non-government sector as the service providers. Planning, review and evaluation of the overall framework should be the responsibility of the total partnership – government and non-government. Such partnerships are usually enacted in formal bodies with representation of the partners in various forms. These approaches are not new and models are probably known to the key players in this field. One of the shared responsibilities of the partners is promotion of the social value of the mutual enterprise, in this case volunteering.

As discussed in Section 4.5 **Auspicing** arrangements, there are major challenges in relation to governance responsibilities for non-government organisations in the community services field. It is often seen that these are best resolved in good practice auspicing arrangements where the auspicing organisations have a number of programs to share infrastructure including governance infrastructure. Guidelines for good practice in auspicing could be developed to assist with strengthening this aspect of this program. Auspicing is also important to the sustainability of organisations: small stand alone organisations are not viable or sustainable for the reasons identified in this report.

In this program a number of participants, but not all, support a greater role for local councils as auspicing bodies, thereby bringing infrastructure support, and management structures to provide support and supervision to the services. Current auspicing arrangements have not been criticised in this project. Some participants in this review did not favour auspicing by local councils. Consideration of more services being auspiced by local government could be an option to consider in future planning, and system design and restructuring, where needed. In some locations local councils may be the only and/or the most appropriate option for auspicing a VRC and they may offer the best chance of achieving a viable model. On the other hand some local councils may not have the necessary commitment and understanding to be appropriate auspicing bodies

9.4 Summary

In summary options have been explored in relation to aspects of a coherent Volunteering Framework and a coherent Funding Policy Framework. By combining options, an overall framework can be developed to address the issues of geographic spread, funding (levels and source/s and viable core funding), management structures/auspicing arrangements, service models and role and functions that were to be the main focus of this review. In particular there seemed to be support for combining:

- Service Option 4 – four core activities;

- Service Option 5 – four models for VRCs, including a regional level in the structure and geographic coverage of the service system;
- Funding Option 4 - centralised state government funding which addresses the interface with Commonwealth funding, and partnerships between government bodies, and between government and on-government;
- an agreed basic level of funding for VRCs which could be achieved in a number of ways;
- development of an appropriate approach to benchmarks for viability and sustainability; and
- development of good practice guidelines for auspicing.

10. *Attachments*

Attachment 1: Maps

Armidale Regional Volunteer Centre
 LGAs Covered: Armidale Dumaresq, Uralla
 Total Population: 30,886
 Funding Sources: DoCS
 Total Funding: <\$30K

Volunteering Tweed

Lismore Volunteer Referral Centre
 LGAs Covered: Lismore (Unfunded Ballina, Casino, Nimbin, Kyogle)
 Total Population: 43,070 (Lismore)
 Funding Sources: FaCS/VWI
 Total Funding: <\$30K

Ballina District Community Services Association

LGAs Covered: Grafton, Maclean, Pristine Waters, Copmanhurst (Unfunded training and support from Coffs Harbour to Tweed Heads)
 Total Population: 50,397 (Main LGAs)
 Funding Sources: DoCS, FaCS/VMP, FaCS/VWI
 Total Funding: \$100-150K

Coffs Harbour Volunteer Service
 LGAs Covered: Coffs Harbour, Nambucca, Bellingen
 Total Population: 93,906
 Funding Sources: DoCS, FaCS/VWI

Port Macquarie Neighbourhood Centre Inc. – Volunteer Referral Centre
 LGAs Covered: Hastings
 Total Population: 67,087
 Funding Sources: FaCS/VWI
 Total Funding: <\$30K

Central Coast Volunteer Referral Agency
 LGAs Covered: Wyong, Gosford (Unfunded Morisset in Lake Macquarie)
 Total Population: 300,399 (Wyong & Gosford)
 Funding Sources: DoCS, FaCS/VWI, DADHC, Premiers Dept.
 Total Funding: >\$150K

Volunteering Central West & Volunteering Bathurst
 LGAs Covered: Bathurst, Greater Lithgow, Parkes, Forbes, Orange, Cabonne, Lachlan, Weddin, Cowra, Oberon (Unfunded for Wellington, Dubbo, Mudgee, Rylstone [VMP & VWI])
 Total Population: Funded: 151,510 Unfunded: 70,009
 Funding Sources: DoCS, Premiers Dept., DADHC, DADHC/HACC, FaCS/VWI, FaCS/VMP, HAC (C'wealth)
 Total Funding: \$100-150K

Volunteering Illawarra
 LGAs Covered: Wollongong, Shellharbour, Kiama, Shoalhaven, (Unfunded for Eurobodalla, Wingecarribee, Camden).
 Total Population: Funded: 369,490 Unfunded: 118,008
 Funding Sources: DoCS, FaCS/VWI, DADHC/HACC,
 Total Funding: \$100-150K
 NB: Volunteering Shoalhaven (Nowra) opened in July 2003 – no stats yet available

Volunteering Wingecarribee
 LGAs Covered: Wingecarribee
 Total Population: 43,517
 Funding Sources: DIPNR (Area Assistance Scheme), Wingecarribee Shire Council
 Total Funding: \$30-100K

Volunteering Eurobodalla
 LGAs Covered: Eurobodalla
 Total Population: 34,625
 Funding Sources: Eurobodalla Shire Council
 Total Funding: <\$30K

Volunteer Connections

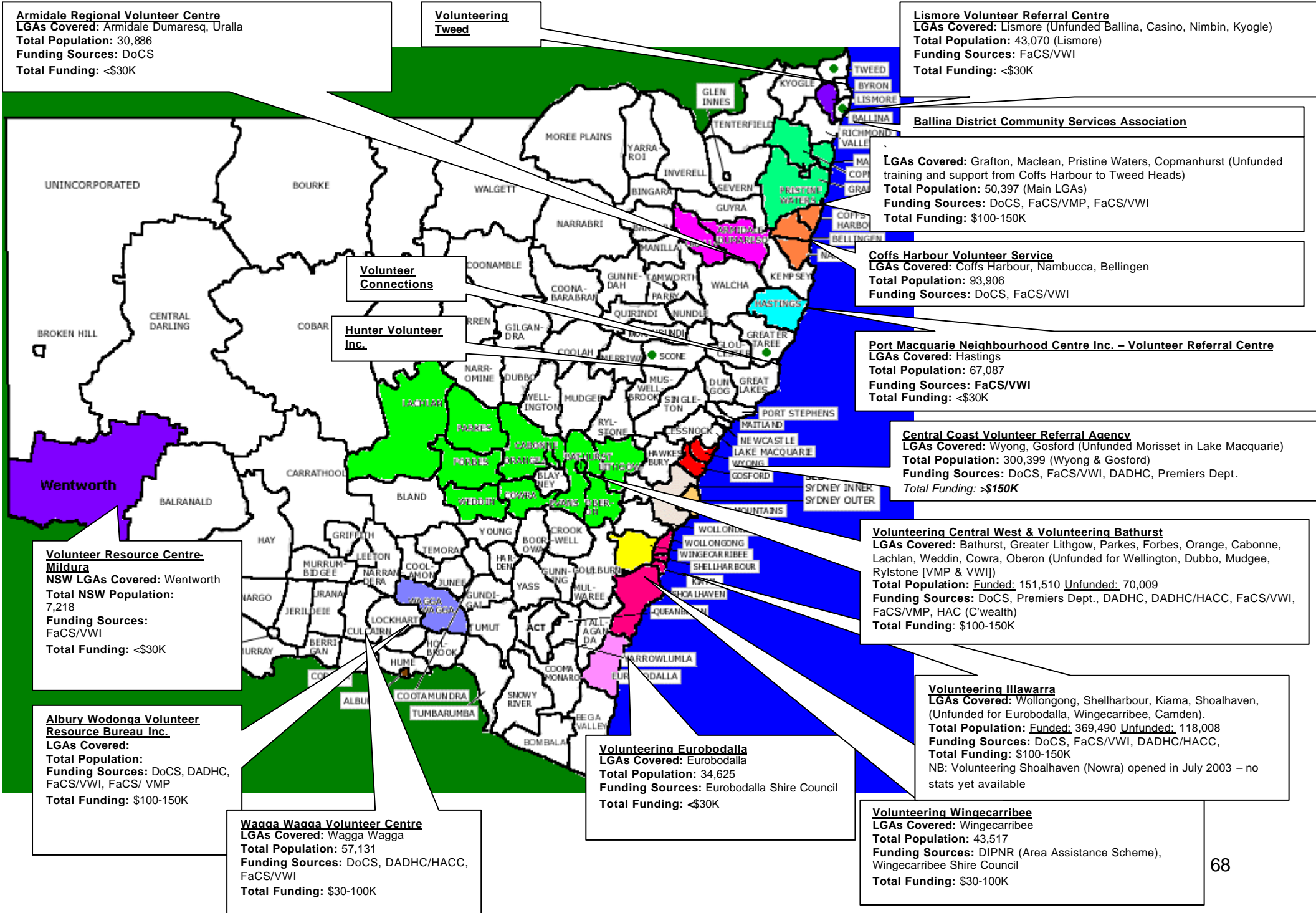
Hunter Volunteer Inc.

Wentworth

Volunteer Resource Centre- Mildura
 NSW LGAs Covered: Wentworth
 Total NSW Population: 7,218
 Funding Sources: FaCS/VWI
 Total Funding: <\$30K

Albury Wodonga Volunteer Resource Bureau Inc.
 LGAs Covered:
 Total Population:
 Funding Sources: DoCS, DADHC, FaCS/VWI, FaCS/ VMP
 Total Funding: \$100-150K

Wagga Wagga Volunteer Centre
 LGAs Covered: Wagga Wagga
 Total Population: 57,131
 Funding Sources: DoCS, DADHC/HACC, FaCS/VWI
 Total Funding: \$30-100K



1.1.2 Northern Sydney Regional Community Forum

VRC Support Project
LGAs Covered: 11 in North Sydney
Total Population:
Funding Sources: DADHC/HACC (VRA support)
Total Funding: \$30-100K

1.1.3 Northern Beaches Volunteer Service

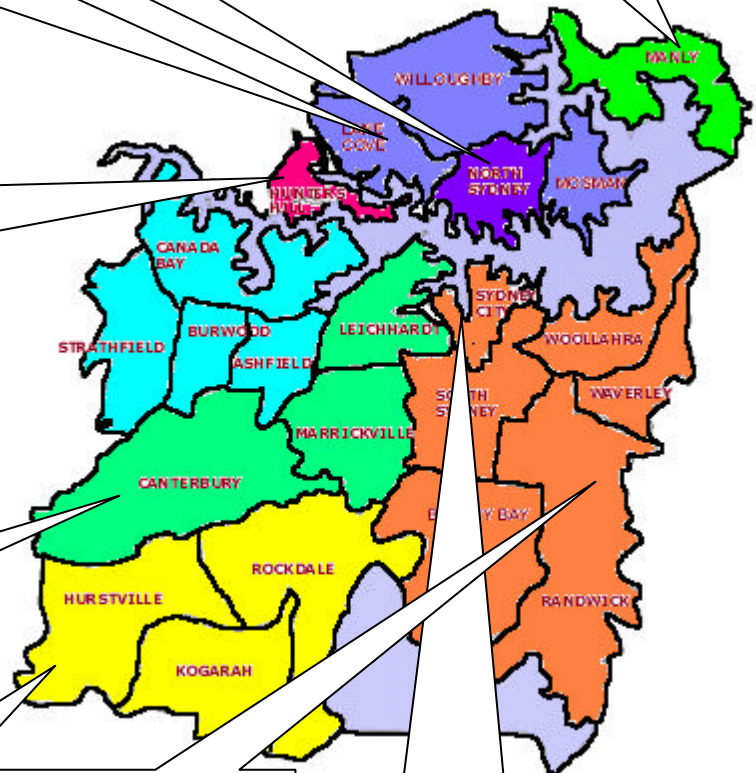
LGAs Covered: Manly, Warringah, Pittwater (see also Outer Sydney map)
Total Population: 232,620
Funding Sources: DADHC/HACC, FaCS/VWI
Total Funding: \$30-100K

1.1.1 Lower North Shore VRA

LGAs Covered: Lane Cove, North Sydney, Willoughby, Mosman
Total Population: 182,350
Funding Sources: DADHC/HACC
Total Funding: \$30-100K

1.1.4 Ryde Community Volunteers

LGAs Covered: Ryde, Hunters Hill (see also Outer Sydney map)
Total Population: 112,955
Funding Sources: Ryde Council, DoCS
Total Funding: <\$30K



Skills, Training and Resource Service (STARS)

LGAs Covered: Canterbury, Leichhardt, Marrickville
Total Population: 277,800
Funding Sources: DADHC/HACC, Canterbury City Council, Leichhardt Council
Total Funding: \$100-150K

VAST

LGAs Covered: Inner City, South Sydney, Randwick, Botany, Waverley, Woollahra
Total Population: 377,362
Funding Sources: DADHC/HACC
Total Funding: \$100-150K

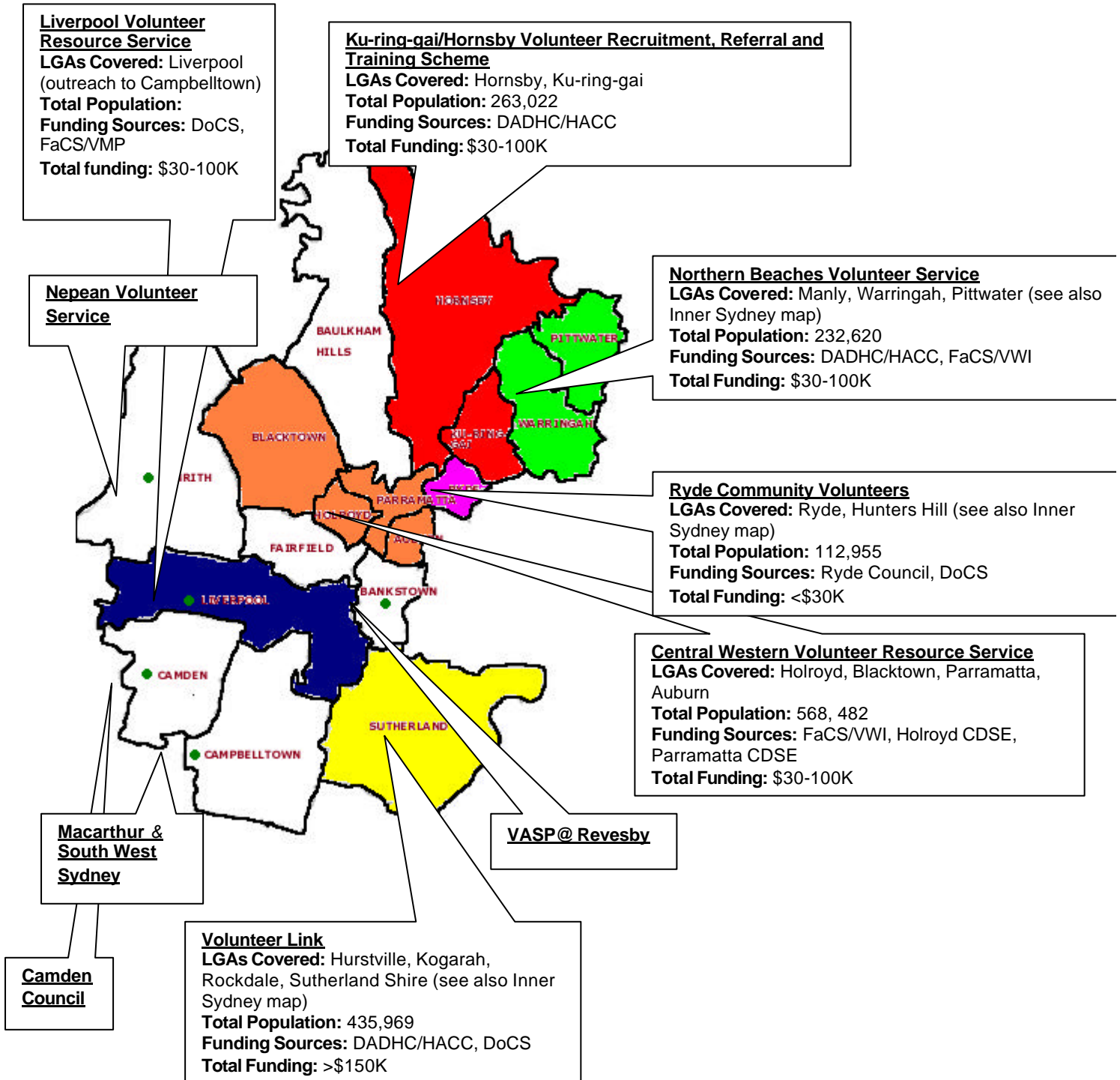
Volunteering NSW Volunteer Resource Service

LGAs Covered: Metro Sydney & 'backfill' in other LGAs
Total Population:
Funding Sources: FaCS/VMP, FaCS/VWI, DoCS
Total Funding: >\$150K

Volunteer Link

LGAs Covered: Hurstville, Kogarah, Rockdale, Sutherland Shire (see also Outer Sydney map)
Total Population: 435,969
Funding Sources: DADHC/HACC, DoCS
Total Funding: >\$150K

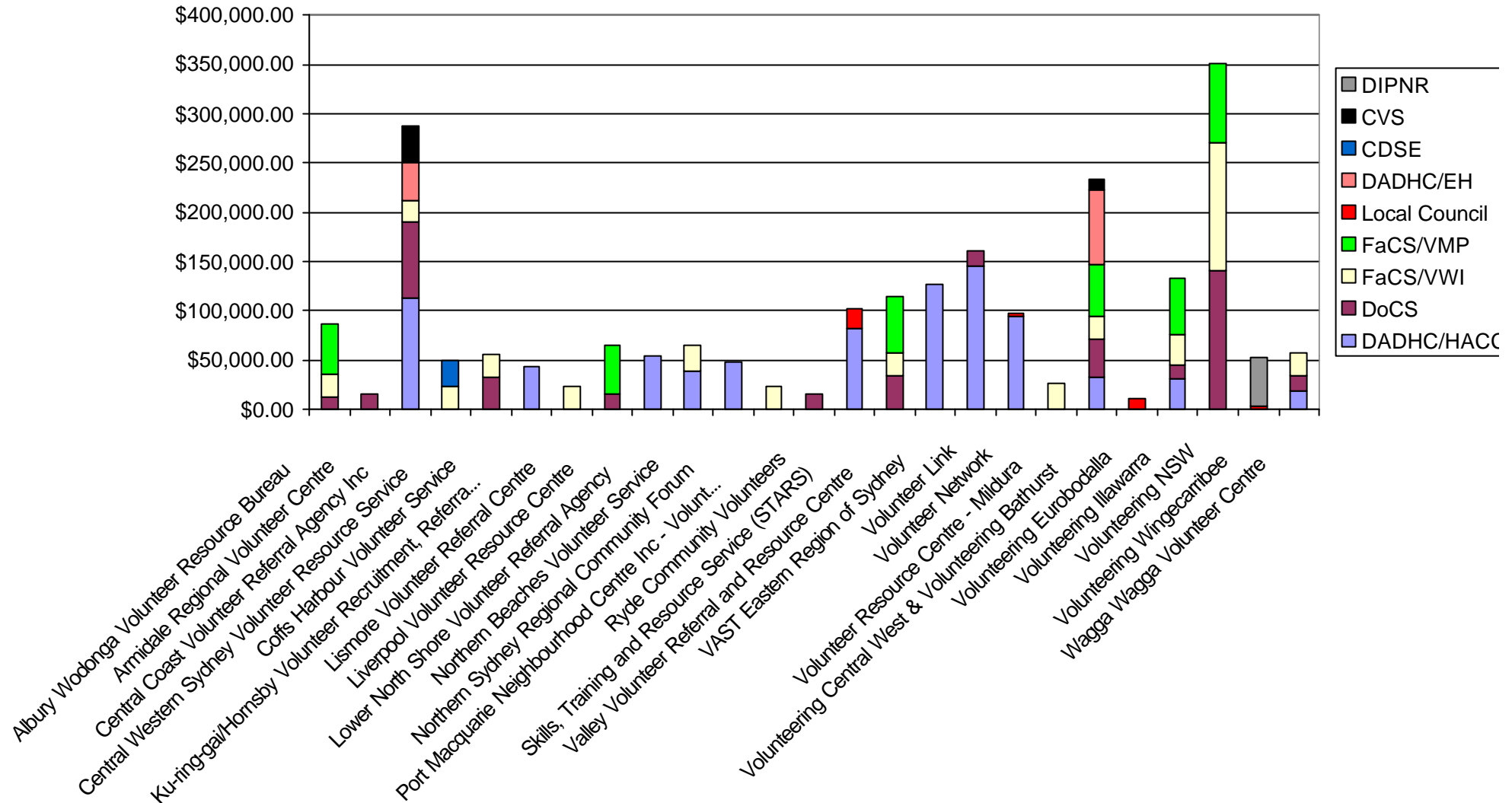
Inner Sydney



Outer Sydney

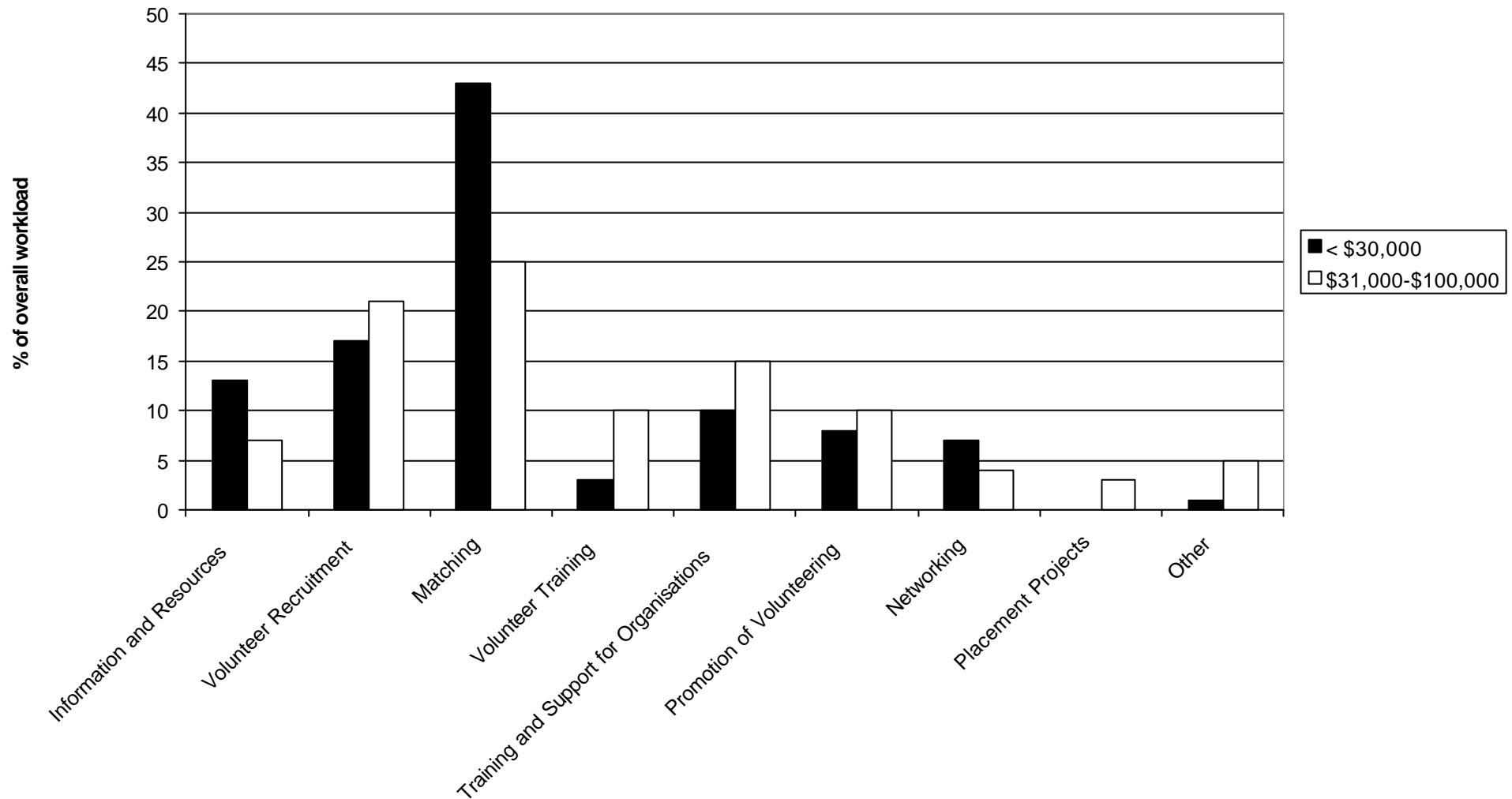
Attachment 2: Funding mix for VRCs

Funding sources for each VRC

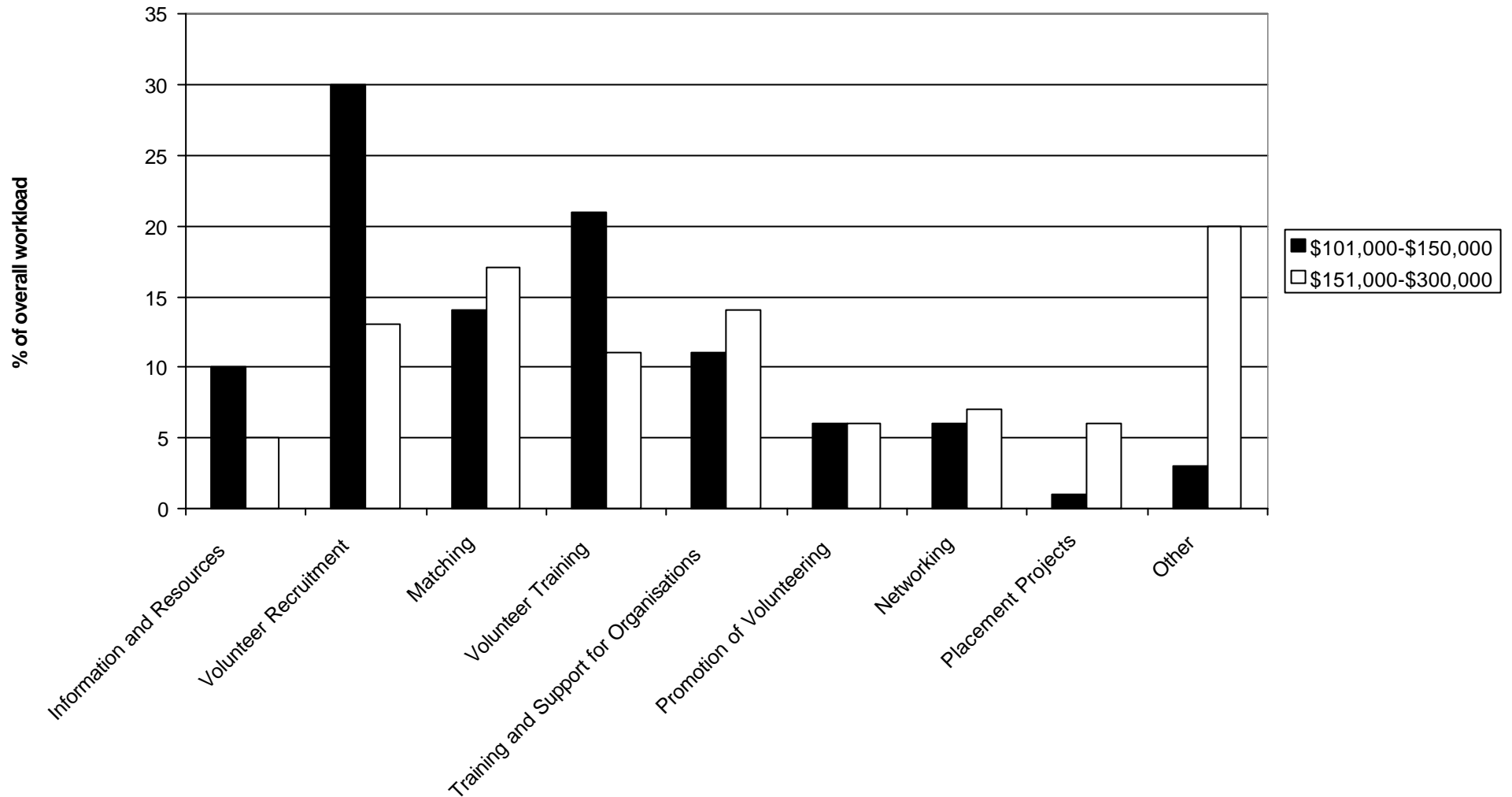


Attachment 3: Services related to level of funding

Spread of activities for VRCs with funding under \$100,000



Spread of activities for VRCs with funding over \$100,000 and under \$300,000



Attachment 4: Distribution of VRCs across NSW

Distribution of VRCs across NSW

Sydney and Region

Camden Council, Camden

Central Western Sydney Volunteer Resource Centre, Merrylands

Kuringai Hornsby Volunteer Recruitment & Training Service, Turramurra

Liverpool Volunteer Resource Centre, Liverpool

Lower North Shore Volunteer Referral Agency, Crows Nest

Macarthur & South West Sydney Home & Community Care Training, Campbelltown

Nepean Volunteer Service, Penrith

Northern Beaches Volunteer Service, Dee Why

Regional Volunteer Support Worker, Chatswood

Ryde Hunters Hill VRA, North Ryde

STARS (Skills, training & resource service), Lakemba

VAST (Volunteer & service training), Maroubra

Volunteer & Agencies Support Program, Revesby

Volunteer Link, Hurstville

Volunteer Network, Burwood

Volunteering NSW, Sydney

Central & North Coast, Hunter Valley

Ballina District Community Services Association, Ballina

Central Coast VRA, Niagara Park

Hunter Volunteer Centre, Hamilton

Lismore Volunteer Referral Service, Lismore

Port Macquarie Neighbourhood Centre, Port Macquarie

Valley Volunteer Agency, South Grafton

Volunteering Coffs Harbour, Coffs Harbour

Volunteer Connections, Taree

Volunteering Tweed, Murwillumbah

Central West, West and South West NSW

Albury-Wodonga Volunteer Resource Centre, Wodonga, Vic

Broken Hill Community Centre, Broken Hill

Mildura Volunteer Resource Centre, Mildura, Vic

Ngadrii Ngalli Way (My Mother's Way), Bourke

Tamworth Community Centre, Tamworth

Volunteering Central West & Volunteering Bathurst, Bathurst

Wagga Wagga Volunteer Centre, Wagga Wagga

New England

Armidale Regional Volunteer Centre, Armidale

NSW surrounding the ACT

Goulburn Volunteer Resource Centre, Goulburn

Volunteering ACT, Canberra

South Coast

Volunteering Eurobodalla, Moruya

Volunteering Illawarra, Wollongong

Southern Highlands

Volunteering Wingecarribee, Bowral

Attachment 5: Interviews conducted

Interviews conducted

State Government Departments

DoCS

DADHC

Commonwealth

FaCS

Peak Bodies and Networks

Volunteering NSW

COVERRS

NCOSS

The Local Government Association and The Shires Association ('The Associations')

The Local Community Services Association

Academics

Professor Mark Lyons, UTS

VRCs Operating in NSW

Volunteer Link, Hurstville

Wagga Wagga Volunteer Resource Centre

Volunteering ACT

Volunteer-Involving Organizations

St Vincent de Paul, Wagga Wagga

Mosman City Council

Interstate Volunteer Organizations

Volunteering WA

WA Volunteering Secretariat

SA Office for Volunteers

Attachment 6: Surveys returned by VRCs

Surveys returned by VRCs

By 23 September 2003, 25 surveys had been received, of which 24 had been entered into the database.¹⁷

Regional NSW

Albury-Wodonga Volunteer Resource Bureau

Armidale Regional Volunteer Centre

Central Coast Volunteer Referral Agency

Coffs Harbour Volunteer Service

Lismore Volunteer Referral Centre

Port Macquarie Neighbourhood Centre Inc – Volunteer Referral Centre

Valley Volunteer Referral and Resource Centre

Volunteer Resource Centre, Mildura

Volunteering Central West and Volunteering Bathurst

Volunteering Eurobodalla

Volunteering Illawarra

Volunteering Wingecarribee

Wagga Wagga Volunteer Resource Centre

Sydney

Central Western Sydney Volunteer Resource Service

Ku-ring-gai Hornsby Volunteer Recruitment, Referral and Training Scheme

Liverpool Volunteer Resource Service

Lower North Shore VRA

Northern Beaches Volunteer Service

Northern Sydney Regional Community Forum VRC Support Project¹⁸

Ryde Community Volunteers

¹⁷ 2 surveys were received covering the Wingecarribee LGA: Highlands Community Centre and Volunteering Wingecarribee. Volunteering Wingecarribee is a new service which is taking over the volunteering resource centre role in the area. The survey completed by Volunteering Wingecarribee was used for the database. The information supplied by Highlands Community Centre was treated as a submission.

¹⁸ While technically not a VRC itself, this service is funded by DADHC/HACC to support the 3 VRCs in the Lower North Shore region.

Volunteer Link

Volunteer Network

Skills, Training and Resource Network (STARS)

VAST Eastern Region of Sydney

Volunteering NSW Volunteer Resource Service

Attachment 7: Submissions received

Submissions received

By 23 September 2003, 34 submissions had been received.

VRCs (10)

Central Coast VRA

Highlands Community Centre (see note to Attachment E)

Ku-ring-gai Hornsby VRC

Lower North Shore VRA

Northern Beaches Volunteer Service

Orange Community Information & Services Centre (unfunded)

Port Macquarie Neighbourhood Centre

Queanbeyan VRC (closed due to resourcing problems)

Valley Volunteers

Volunteer Network, Burwood

Client Organisations (7)

Benevolent Society

Easy Care Gardening, Turramurra

Ella Community Centre, Haberfield

Forster Neighbourhood Centre

National Parks and Wildlife Service (govt)

NSW Sports Federation Inc.

Wesley Mission, Sydney

Auspicing Bodies (2)

St George Community Services

Wollongong City Council

Local Government (2)

Wyong Shire Council

Canterbury City Council

NSW Government

Funding Departments (2)

FaCS (Volunteering Section, National Office)

NSW Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care (DADHC)

Other Government Bodies (7)

NSW Commission for Children and Young People

NSW Community Relations Commission

NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs

NSW Department for Women

NSW Department of Sport and Recreation

NSW Environment Protection Authority

State Library of NSW

VRC Network (1)

COVERRS

Peak Body (2)

Volunteering NSW

Volunteering Australia

Academics (1)

Martin Stewart Weeks

Attachment 8: National and international comparisons

National and international comparisons

INTERNATIONAL

USA

An extensive network of volunteer resource and referral centres exists in the US. According to the national peak body, the Points of Light Foundation, volunteer centres make up 'the largest national infrastructure dedicated to volunteerism and volunteer efforts'.¹⁹ As in NSW, there is a range of sizes and organizational arrangements. The three primary structures are:

- independent non-profit organizations governed by a Board of Directors (42.7%),
- a division or internal program of the United Way (37.7%)²⁰,
- a program internal to another non-profit organization (9.1%).

A small percentage of volunteer centres are part of a local government or a college or university.

The funding profiles for the volunteer centres reveal that most centres in the lower budget categories are internal to other entities, rather than autonomous organizations. This supports our belief that small stand-alone organizations are problematic. It should also be noted that the US funding categories are considerably higher than those we have used in this Review: the lowest category is set at <\$US75,000. The categories then rise from \$US75,000-\$US149,999, through \$US150,000-\$US349,999, and \$US350,000-\$US1 million, to >\$US1 million. Almost all of the VRCs in NSW would fit into the lowest of these categories.

Since 1993 the Points of Light Foundation has been conducting a biennial survey of volunteer centres. The most recent report,²¹ based on the 2001 Survey, has some findings and comments relevant to this Review. Of 408 centres eligible to take part in the Review, 286 responded, a statistically significant sample.

The survey report raises some important issues in relation to smaller, less well funded centres, pointing to the difficulties they experience in attracting and retaining experienced staff. Moreover, data from the survey suggests that the financial difficulties of smaller centres may be reflected in key activity areas, such as the number of volunteer opportunities and connections registered.

It was clear from the survey that volunteer centres, whatever their level of funding, have a small number of staff. One-half or more of the responding centres had one or fewer full-time employees and one or fewer part-time employees. 3.1% had a volunteer working as director of the centre.

¹⁹ http://216.149.206.183/volunteerscenters/volcenters_overview.html, accessed 17 September 2003

²⁰ The United Way movement includes approx. 1400 community-based United Way organizations, each of which is independent, separately incorporated, and governed by local volunteers.

²¹ Brudenay, J. L. *The 2001 Volunteer Center Survey: A Report on Findings and Implications*.

The Points of Light Foundation has developed four 'core competencies': connecting people with opportunities to serve, building the capacity for effective volunteering, promoting volunteering, and participating in strategic initiatives that mobilize volunteers to meet local needs. The 2001 survey showed that volunteer centres spend 40% of their time on connecting people with opportunities to serve, 21% promoting volunteering, 20% participating in strategic initiatives that mobilize volunteers to meet local needs, and 19% building capacity for effective local volunteering. Unfortunately, the survey report does not break this aggregated figure down into regional or funding level subsets.

The 2001 US study reveals very similar issues, patterns and challenges as those facing VSW VRCs.

NEW ZEALAND

There are 10 volunteer centres in New Zealand, some of which operate regionally. They are not-for-profit, independently organized, community-initiated, registered charitable trusts or incorporated societies. The Volunteering New Zealand website²² lists their activities as: recruitment and referral of volunteers to volunteer opportunities within registered agencies, training for individuals and not-for-profit agencies, support of not-for-profit agencies by promoting best practice in volunteer management and advocacy for and on behalf of volunteers and not-for-profit agencies.

CANADA²³

There remains no coordinated or coherent national funding program for volunteer centres across Canada. There are currently several models of volunteer centres operating which engage in four general kinds of activities:

- promoting volunteerism,
- building capacity for effective local volunteering,
- providing leadership and advocacy on issues relating to volunteerism and volunteer programs, and,
- connecting people with opportunities to serve through recruitment and referral.

Each volunteer centre is a stand alone, incorporated body with its own Board of Directors. Funding was, and largely still is, obtained via a mix of sources including United Way, national funding for specific projects, foundations or trusts, or provincial governments (analogous to Australian state government).

In December 2001 the Canadian Government announced the Canada Volunteerism Initiative with an \$C8m investment which has been allocated to Volunteering Canada to implement. The Initiative is designed to encourage Canadians to participate in voluntary organizations, to encourage organisations to benefit from the contributions of volunteers and to enhance the experience of volunteering. The Initiative is focused on providing some national-level infrastructure and involves the

²² See <http://www.volunteeringnz.org.nz>

²³ See <http://www.volunteer.ca>

establishment of three centres in partnership with peak bodies such as Volunteer Canada: a Knowledge Development Centre, an Information, Capacity-Building and Awareness Centre, and a Community Support Centre. In addition to these three centres, Canada Volunteerism Initiative Local Networks have been proposed for each province/territory to identify volunteering opportunities in their respective communities and to give advice and direction to the three national centres.

The funding does not provide core funding to local voluntary organisations and most centres are described by the national body on volunteering as 'struggling' to survive.

Provincial funding is available to some centres in Quebec, Alberta, Newfoundland and British Columbia. In Ontario, project specific funding is provided through a large Foundation which is supported by gambling revenues. However, we understand that in Quebec, where a different, provincially-funded model operates, funding is related to client load and amount of service provided. Quebec has over 200 volunteer centres which offer direct services to their community (e.g. Meals on Wheels) but do very little recruitment and referral.

Volunteering Canada observed that a more sustainable approach in Canada might be to consolidate some centres, with better distribution and more sustainable funding levels and a more coherent approach to funding.

In summary, whilst funding through the Canadian Volunteerism Initiative has created significant opportunities to build an infrastructure to support volunteering, funding remains ad hoc, contingent on the support of provincial governments, United Way or on the receipt of project funding from a range of sources.

AUSTRALIAN

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

A recent initiative by the Western Australian Government has seen a dramatic increase in the number of volunteer resource centres in the state. From a traditional base of 5, located in urban areas and funded under VWI, VMP and by the State Government, the number of centres has risen this year to 21, distributed across the state. Two more are on the 'drawing board'. In extending the network the State government sought applications from interested communities, especially through local government channels, and has provided some funding for the new centres. This commitment was initially for one year and provided funding for a coordinator (usually part-time).

Volunteering WA, the peak body, has expressed concern that some of the new centres may not be viable.

The WA Government has established a Volunteering Secretariat within the Department of Community Development. The Secretariat's objectives are to:

- develop and implement Government policy,

- monitor issues and coordinate research,
- develop program initiatives, and,
- establish communication mechanisms in order to develop partnerships through consultation.

Of the 21 VRCs the State Government funds 19. This commitment to funding is fulfilment of an election promise; the Govt provided additional funding for VRCs for 2003. The 5 existing VRCs were allocated \$15,000 each, the new ones \$30,000 each. The funding was initially for one year and the Government has just announced 2 more years of funding (i.e. to end 2005) at a level of \$17,500 for each VRC, regardless of how long each has been established (2 community-based VRCs with no other sources of funding will receive \$20,000 each). The rationale was that it costs approx \$35,000 pa to run a basic service - the government is willing to fund half that and expects the services to find the other half. In addition, the Secretariat pays to bring together the centres at a meeting 3 times a year (organised by Volunteering WA). The Secretariat is hoping to be able to continue providing a (low) level of funding to VRCs beyond 2005.

There are 3 models of VRC operating in WA. The most common model is in partnership with local government; these receive in-kind and infrastructure support and, in some cases these were described by the Secretariat, as 'becoming almost an arm of local government'

The second model is that of Telecentres - these operate in small country towns and are technology hubs for their community. 2 of these applied for VRC funding and were successful. This model seems to be working well. The final model is stand-alone. There are 3 in WA: Kalgoorlie, Busselton and Manjimup. Kalgoorlie also receives VWI funding but Busselton and Manjimup are less secure.

In WA VRCs do not receive HACC funding.

Geographical spread: Both the southern metropolitan area and the south-west of the state are well covered by VRCs. The northern metro area and the north-west of the state are currently under-resourced. The Secretariat is looking at how to address these gaps.

Services: the basic service provided is recruitment and referral, with training and promotion also being on the list. However, the Secretariat has required the VRCs to target youth volunteering and to refer volunteers across every sector. One large metropolitan VRC has developed a web-based link-up methodology but the Secretariat is now discussing with them how they might operate a little more 'traditionally', with a physical location.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

There are currently 2 VRCS in SA, plus Volunteering SA. The 2 VRCs are Northern Volunteering SA and Fleurieu Volunteering Centre. Another 3 regional centres are being established in locations determined by Volunteering SA. The Office for Volunteers, located within the Department of Human Services, plays a central policy role for the SA Government.

The funding situation is like that in NSW - multiple sources and multiple reporting regimes. The Office for Volunteers is currently considering ways of simplifying the reporting regimes. There is a considerable amount of HACC funding and the SA Department of Human Services also provides some funding, mainly for health-related activities. The Office for Volunteers has some money itself which it distributes to VRCs (mainly for training) but does not act as a centralised funding channel. They have, however, put together a list of funding sources which they publish on the website. They provide funding to Volunteering SA which is not tied to any particular outputs. Most funding available to VRCs in SA is annual.

Basic services offered by VRCs are the recruitment and referral service, as well as training and local promotion. The Office for Volunteers has largely taken over promotion, conducting a State-wide campaign to promote volunteering.

The VRCs operate with budgets of less than \$100,000 and only have a 1-2 staff each in a mix of full-time and part-time positions.

Some local councils in SA also run extensive volunteer programs and provide support to local community based organisations seeking or involving volunteers.

Attachment 9. Scoping Paper

REVIEW OF VOLUNTEER RESOURCE CENTRES/ VOLUNTEER REFERRAL AGENCIES IN NSW

Scoping Paper

**Morgan Disney & Associates Pty Ltd
July 2003**

10.1 Brief background to the Review

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) figures show that 29.3% of people living in NSW offer their services as volunteers. (ABS Voluntary Work Australia 2000, Table 5). This volunteering effort is undertaken through a wide range of organisations of all sizes. People volunteer in a range of different ways, for different reasons and at various life stages. It can be an ongoing activity or a once off experience for specific events.

Volunteering is seen as an important activity in building community cohesiveness and capacity, assisting individuals to gain skills and social networks, and in building a stronger sense of belonging for individuals and families. There is a common misconception that volunteering is something everyone can do and that no support is required to ensure volunteering happens well for everyone. In fact the management of volunteers is known to take time, training and effective management. Undertaken poorly it can result in significant risk management issues, frustration for individuals, time wasting activities for organisations, and in some cases places children and other vulnerable groups at considerable risk of physical and psychological harm. On the other hand undertaken well it can be a rewarding and productive experience for everyone.

Volunteering resource centres provide services to individuals and to organisations to ensure volunteering is well managed and supported. The New South Wales Government is committed to the support of volunteering throughout the state. It has initiated this review of volunteer resource centres in NSW in response to the International Year of Volunteers 2001: NSW Report and Recommendations.

The review will cover all agencies and groups performing functions similar to a volunteer resource centre (e.g. Volunteer Referral Agencies, Volunteer Centres). For ease of reference, the abbreviation "VRC" will be used throughout this paper to cover this wide range of agencies. The review will survey existing VRCs to map current service delivery in NSW, covering such matters as location, funding arrangements present activities and important issues. It will also seek submissions from stakeholders, consider previous reports on VRCs and volunteering, and identify models from other jurisdictions.

The outcome of the review will be an Options Paper on possible future directions for VRCs particularly such issues as the funding, geographical spread and role of VRCs in New South Wales.

This review is being undertaken over 3 months between July and September 2003. Morgan Disney & Associates, a social policy consulting group, has been contracted to undertake the Review. In developing this Scoping Paper we have gathered information through a preliminary literature review, a visit to a Volunteer Centre in, our own knowledge of volunteering from previous projects and activities, and a series of brief telephone interviews. The purpose of this Scoping Paper is to act as a 'conversation starter' for organisations and individuals wishing to make submissions to the review.

This Scoping Paper provides:

- A brief background to the review
- Discussion of some key issues
- Questions to assist stakeholders in the preparation of submissions.

All stakeholders, including VRCs, are invited to make submissions to this review. If you have any questions or would like us to interview you in relation to the review, please contact us at: VRCproject@morgandisney.com.au.

Note: This paper does not aim to be comprehensive; rather it seeks to highlight the most significant issues raised to date for the review and to stimulate discussion on the future role and activities of VRCs in the consultative and information collection stages of the review. A more detailed coverage of the issues will be developed from the information gathered in these stages and will be presented in a Deliberative Workshop with key stakeholders and in the final Options Paper.

10.2 Some Key Issues for the Review

Some of the specific issues which need to be considered in the review are briefly outlined below. However, you are not restricted to these issues for your submission. Input on any other issues related to the operation and future directions of VRCs are welcome.

1. Funding

The funding arrangements for VRCs in NSW are very varied, with no single identified funding program. Some VRCs receive no government support; the Commonwealth and State Governments fund others to differing levels under one or more programs. Some funding is on a one-off basis, some is recurrent and some is provided for a fixed contract period. In recent years, some funding has been linked with Commonwealth government income support programs e.g. Voluntary Work Initiative (VWI). Local Government also plays a role in auspicing and supporting a number of VRCs.

From the information we have been able to gather to date we understand that:

- Funding in NSW is provided through DoCS, DADHC, and some local councils, and nationally through Volunteering Australia (VA)
- Funding levels vary from \$5,000 to \$275,000
- The VMP provides funding through FaCS for 13 volunteer resource centres to provide volunteer matching and referral services, as well as some resourcing, education and training of volunteer involving organisations
- Some VRCs receive funding through the VWI program for volunteer matching and referral services

A number of matters have been identified as issues in relation to funding of VRCs:

- Funding is currently ad hoc, with almost all funding allocated via program areas such as HACC and CSGP. The *IYV 2001 NSW Report and Recommendations* recommended that the NSW Government provide core funding to existing VRCs and any new VRCs

(Recommendation 5). This core funding would be used to support VRCs in providing support to community organisations regarding best practice, hands-on support for organisations in crisis, and in acting as a broker in relation to other useful resources (e.g. businesses). The Review will be exploring this recommendation further and examining what options there might be for future funding arrangements and roles.

- The multiplicity of funding sources across several levels of government is reported to create challenges for VRCs in that reporting requirements vary, several data sets may be required, and the overall administrative load is high.
- Funding levels are not consistent. In some cases, funding of VRCs for specific projects is at levels which may be unsustainable (e.g. 4 hours per week).
- A number of VRCs appear to be experiencing an increase in demand for placements for people on income support – many of these do not receive funding through VWI.

Questions:

From your perspective, what are the strengths of the current funding arrangements for VRCs?

From your perspective, what are the weaknesses of the current funding for VRCs? (for VRCs) What pressures, if any, does your VRC experience in meeting demands on your service?

Do you have any suggestions for alternative funding arrangements or approaches? If so, could you outline what these might be?

What would be the advantages of any such changes?

What potential is there for VRCs to earn income through the sale of services?

2. Geographical spread

An integral part of this review is the mapping of existing services in New South Wales. This is proving to be a difficult task as currently no comprehensive listing exists. Attachment A lists those VRCs of which we are aware and which receive some funding from Commonwealth, State and/or local government. It includes those VRCs which are members of Volunteering NSW and those which belong to the COVERRS network (Coordinators of Volunteer Education, Resource and Referral Services). It may be that there are other groups offering volunteer referral and resourcing services and which are receiving little or no funding and do not belong to either Volunteering NSW or COVERRS. If you are aware of any please let us know. We will also be examining this possibility through other networks too.

The mapping to date suggests VRCs are located unevenly across New South Wales. There is a relatively strong presence of volunteer referral and centres in large centres along the coastal fringe with very few located west of the Great Dividing Range.

The existence of a number of centres in the same region has raised questions about the possibility of unnecessary duplication of services. On the other hand, it may be argued that this offers choice to client volunteers and organisations.

The relatively small number of centres in the south and west of the NSW also raises equity issues. In this context, it is relevant to note that the volunteer rate outside Sydney is considerably higher than in the metropolitan area (37.6% compared to 24.7%). Some people express the view that the lack of volunteer referral centres in parts of New South Wales may limit the options available to people receiving income support, and therefore place pressure on the existing VRCs to provide volunteer referral services over a large geographic area, whether or not they are funded to do so.

Questions:

Should there be a coordinated approach to funding a network of VRCs in NSW and what might that include?

In deciding locations of VRCs, what consideration needs to be given to any relationship between the size of the population base, and the number and types of community organisations in an area?

How would a geographically comprehensive, coordinated network of VRCs improve service provision to local areas?

Are there issues relating to duplication of service provision by VRCs in any geographical area of which you are aware or from your experience?

To what extent should VRCs provide services beyond their geographical area?

To what extent should local government fund and support volunteer referral services across NSW?

3. VRCs: Their role and the services they provide

In both urban and rural regions, sourcing of volunteers happens primarily through methods other than referral from a VRC. The 2001 *Rural and Regional Volunteer Support Strategy Volunteer Survey* undertaken for the IYV Secretariat [ref] showed that only 4% of organisations working with volunteers in the areas covered by the survey recruited volunteers through a volunteer resource and recruitment service.

However, VRCs suggest that they provide a pathway to volunteer service for a wide range of people, from those who are highly skilled and unsure where to offer their skills and time to those who might be considered disadvantaged, that is living on low incomes and having difficulty accessing employment. In many places VRCs are funded to provide referral services under the Voluntary Work Initiative (VWI) program to people receiving income support. Some VRCs are not funded through the VWI but do provide referrals for people on income support and seeking volunteer experience. Many VRCs also provide services which encourage and support volunteering in their region e.g. training programs for organisations and individuals, and promotion of volunteering.

The 2001 *Rural and Regional Volunteer Support Strategy Volunteer Survey* showed that both volunteer-involving organisations and volunteering support organisations rank training, the provision of information, and assistance with matching and recruitment as the three most important priorities for volunteering support. However, the comment has been made that services currently provided by VRCs across NSW vary according both to the programs under which funding is made available and to the strategic decisions made by each VRC on its spending priorities.

In looking to the future, a possible emerging question is the extent to which VRCs are, or become, involved in facilitating private sector volunteering initiatives in their area. Such activity may involve the promotion of company-based volunteering initiatives with individual companies e.g. programs where employees are released to do voluntary work in their community, training the employees about volunteering, and linking volunteers with volunteer-involving organisations. This may be more possible for the larger VRCs but may be very challenging for low funded VRCs in rural and remote areas if the time needed to work on such initiatives is too great.

A number of organisations currently exist which support VRCs. For example Volunteering NSW offers consultancy, education and resource development, and hosts the School of Volunteer Management. COVERRS provides networking opportunities for coordinators of volunteer resource and referral centres and also acts as a lobby group. NCOSS, LCSA, LGCSA and The Local Government Associations also provide some services such as Committee training. Nationally Volunteering Australia also provides support to the network of VRCs. The review will explore the support currently offered to VRCs and the potential for enhancing that support.

Questions:

Should there be a set of core services provided by VRCs? If so, what do you believe they should be?

Are current service specifications from funding bodies in line with community needs and are there any particular gaps in your community?

From your perspective, to what extent should VRCs support and work with the private sector in volunteering initiatives?

If funding were not an issue, how would you structure a VRC to support a community?

10.3 Where to from here with the Review

As we indicated earlier in this Paper it is not definitive or comprehensive in describing VRCs, but raises issues or challenges, and presents questions. It is a snapshot of some key elements which will need to be examined and explored over the next 6-8 weeks with a range of stakeholders. Many of the issues raised may be contentious and contested. The paper is being circulated to stakeholders (including VRCs) as part of the consultation process which has commenced and will conclude in late August with a workshop with the Advisory Group and COVERRS. That workshop will be used to test the emerging findings.

You are invited to make submissions to the review, addressing any of the issues being discussed or raising further issues which you believe are of importance. **Submissions should be forwarded by August 18 to:**

Attachment 10: Volunteering Australia definitions

Definition

A volunteer resource centre is a not-for-profit, independently managed, community based organisation which subscribes to a code of ethics, standards of practice and the Australian 'Principles of Volunteering'.

Core Business

The core business of a volunteer resource centre is to:

- resource and support people to make informed choices about volunteer work;
- maintain relevant, up to date information on volunteer services;
- refer, as opposed to recommend, volunteers to a wide range of not-for-profit organisations and projects across all sectors of the community;
- provide agencies with information on involving and managing volunteers;
- raise the profile of volunteering in organisations, governments and the community by promoting the 'Principles of Volunteering';
- work with other volunteer resource centres across Australia to maintain common standards of practice;
- maintain sufficient resources to provide the required services to volunteers and the community; and
- to work with other agencies to promote best practice standards for volunteer involvement and management

Code of Ethics

Volunteer resource centres that are affiliates of Volunteering Australia agree to a code of ethics such that:

- volunteers are given sufficient information and support in order to make informed choices about volunteering;
- the 'Principles of Volunteering' are actively promoted and adhered to;
- volunteers are referred to not-for-profit organisations and projects only;
- volunteers are not referred to organisations involved in industrial dispute
- a volunteer is not knowingly referred to a job which directly replaces a paid position;
- volunteers are not referred directly to individuals; and
- confidentiality is maintained.

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