



***Community Involvement through
Volunteering***

Evaluation Report

2011

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The Project Steering Committee dedicated their time and commitment to the project, meeting on a monthly basis over the two-year project. We gratefully acknowledge the contribution made by:

- DPCD;
- Glen Eira Volunteer Resource Service;
- City of Port Phillip;
- Inner South Community Health Service;
- Ozanam House;
- Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre; and
- Windermere Children and Family Services

Sincere thanks go to the Staff Working Group for their contribution and passion over the life of the project. Special thanks to Hanover staff, volunteers and clients who completed surveys and participated in the focus groups, which made this evaluation possible.

Addendum

Following the end of the CITV project, the new Volunteer Program has continued to evolve and develop. The creation of the permanent volunteer coordinator role (achieved during the CITV project) has been instrumental in ensuring the continuing development and progress of the program.

Much has been achieved since the CITV project ended in April 2009 and since this evaluation report was first drafted. A number of the recommendations identified in the report have already been implemented, specifically Recommendation 4: Volunteer appreciation events take place annually; Recommendation 7: Include regular updates of the Volunteer Program in staff newsletter and General Staff Meetings; and Recommendation 8: Advertise volunteer opportunities at Hanover on various networks established as a result of the CITV project.

The range of achievements to date includes:

- Volunteer policies and procedures are available to all staff via eKey.
- All Position Descriptions include reference to working with volunteers.
- Position Descriptions have been developed for all new volunteer roles.
- A volunteer database has been established – a total of 72 volunteers were registered on the database as of March 2010.
- Surveys of volunteers occur on a regular basis; the most recent was completed in March 2010. The online survey was emailed to 72 volunteers and was completed by 23; a 32% response rate.
 - A majority of participants (61%) had been volunteering with Hanover for less than 6 months.
- All volunteer roles are advertised on Hanover's website as well as on the Go Volunteer website and the Volunteer Resource Centre.
- Volunteer orientation training occurs on a monthly basis.
- All new volunteers must attend the orientation prior to commencing in their roles.
- Supervisor contacts, specifically for volunteers, are located at each Hanover site.
- There are regular meetings for all supervisor contact staff.
- Volunteer appreciation events occur at all Hanover sites.
- Updates on the Volunteer Program are communicated to all staff at staff meetings and via a staff newsletter.

Client participation remains a key challenge. Importantly, however, an initial draft strategy on client participation has been developed, which confirms Hanover's commitment to providing opportunities for clients to participate in Hanover's services as well as the Volunteer program. Hanover received a grant from VicHealth to enhance our client participation and, as a result we will be able to finalise this strategy in 2011.

Hanover has approved the establishment of a Client Advisory Group but to date, no clients have been appointed to these volunteer roles. The *Big Issue* is in the process of establishing a Speakers Bureau and is currently negotiating with Hanover to involve clients as speakers.

Executive Summary

This report presents the findings of the evaluation of the *Community Involvement through Volunteering* (CITV) project conducted by the Research Unit at Hanover Welfare Services (Hanover) between October 2008 and May 2009.

The CITV project

In 2006 Hanover received a Volunteer Support Grant through the Department of Planning and Community Development (DPCD). Named *Community Involvement Through Volunteering* (CITV), the project began in 2007 and was funded for a period of two and a half years.

The underlying vision of CITV was that volunteering could provide:

- opportunities for members of the community to participate in the work of Hanover;
- opportunities for clients to participate at Hanover and in the community; and
- a means of exposing the broader community to issues and causes of homelessness leading to greater understanding and social change that benefits people experiencing homelessness.

The specific objectives of CITV were to:

- establish a best practise volunteer management model;
- increase the number of volunteers at Hanover; and
- engage clients as volunteers.

Evaluation of the CITV project

The aim of the evaluation was to assess whether or not the three CITV project objectives had been achieved and to inform the ongoing development of the volunteer program.

Background: active citizenship and community engagement

Hanover recognises that active participation in the community is a key dimension of social inclusion for all citizens. For this reason Hanover implemented and embraced the CITV project because it provided the organisation with an opportunity to be more strategic and effective in its mission to empower clients and tackle homelessness. CITV provided members of the community with important opportunities to be actively participating citizens, who could assist Hanover to expand its services and support to people experiencing homelessness.

The project aspired to develop a sustainable best practice volunteer management system to increase the number of volunteers involved in the community and expand the range of volunteer opportunities available within the organisation. It was also recognised that the engagement of volunteers in the work at Hanover could promote greater community understanding of homelessness

Provision of volunteer opportunities for people who are or have experienced homelessness was a particular interest for Hanover and fits with it's mission and

strategic direction. Indeed, a key strategic goal was to: *build and develop client capacity to fully participate and engage in the community* (Hanover Annual Operational Plan 2007-2008). The nature and extent of civic participation by people experiencing homelessness is an important issue. One of the negative effects of homelessness is that many people are disconnected from local communities, schools, and places of employment, recreation and other avenues of social interaction. Volunteering is one way for people who are homeless and isolated to re-engage as citizens and participate in civic life.

Evaluation findings

1. Was a best practice volunteer management model established?

A best practice volunteer management structure, benchmarked against the *National Standards on Volunteering in Not for Profit Organisations*, has been established within Hanover. Important changes occurred in the following key areas: organisational culture, staffing, volunteer roles, policies and procedures, data requirements, training, and external relationships.

Summary of achievements

Organisational culture

- **Half day 'turning dreams into plans' workshops with staff** at all Hanover sites over a nine month period. The workshops were designed to promote cultural change by increasing staff knowledge and understanding of the CITV project. It provided opportunities to connect with staff around volunteering issues that resulted in 20 proposals related to potential volunteer activity. These proposals formed the basis of a five year plan for the ongoing development of Hanover's volunteer program (Appendix 1).
- **Partnerships established internally amongst staff** that supervised volunteers and participated in the Staff Working Group to promote volunteering within the organisation and thereby assist with in changing the organisational culture.
- **Cultural change was promoted** through regular presentations at staff meetings and monthly internal newsletter for staff which reported on the progress and achievements of the CITV project in order to promote;
- Based on documented Staff Working Group minutes, support for volunteers had increased over the two-year period of the project - **Hanover had changed from an organisation that regarded volunteers as being on the periphery, to seeing them as a valuable asset** that can enhance services and support to clients.

Staffing

- Permanent volunteer coordinator position created; further reflecting the organisations changed culture and it's commitment to an ongoing volunteer program.

Volunteer roles

- New volunteer positions created that provided reception assistance and computer training.
- Regular formal recognition and appreciation event for volunteers;
- A dedicated page on the Hanover website on volunteering and the CITV project where volunteer opportunities at Hanover were advertised;

Policies and procedures

- Creation of program documentation (policies, procedures, position description template, publicity materials, brochure, website);
- Identification of volunteer management system goals and procedural steps
- Development of five year volunteer strategic plan;
- Explicit references to volunteering were included in the strategic plan and all staff position descriptions.

Data requirements

- Consolidation of files into centralised database and screening checks;
- Completed audits that rated the new volunteer management model against the *National Standards for Involving Volunteers in Not for Profit Organisations*;
- In addition, good baseline data were collected from surveys with staff and volunteers, which can be used to mark the ongoing development and progress of the volunteer program.

Training

- Development of a common volunteer training package for new volunteers.

External relationships

- Effective engagement and sharing knowledge and skills with a broad range of community groups and volunteer organisations,
- External partnerships established via external members of the Project Steering Committee, which increased the knowledge of all members around the National Standards as well as working with people who experienced homelessness.

Summary of opportunities for improvement

Despite these achievements, there remain areas for improvement, especially around internal communication, training and volunteer support.

Internal communication

- Promote the program to sites without volunteers;
- Improve knowledge of whole organisation around volunteers; and
- Better communication/information sharing between specific volunteer projects and across Hanover generally (such as regular email, brief updates around the volunteer program, updates on new roles; newsletter).

Training

- Training & resources for staff in order to work effectively with volunteers.

Volunteer support

- Support volunteer supervisors so they do not feel isolated at sites; and
- Provide opportunity for volunteers to get together for mutual support.

2. Was there an Increase in the number of volunteers at Hanover?

The numbers of volunteers at Hanover were not automatically increased as a result of the implementation of a best practice volunteer management model. Nevertheless, key milestones, summarised below, were achieved.

Summary of achievements

- Working with volunteers who had been with the organisation for several years and were reluctant to embrace changes resulted in volunteer numbers actually decreasing during the course of implementing a best practice model. However, those volunteers who remained were committed to working within a best practice model.
- Systems have been developed to increase volunteer numbers and they include
 - Policies and procedures in line with National Standards;
 - Centralised volunteer database;
 - Completion of brochures for volunteers;
 - Information packs developed for all new volunteers; and
 - Volunteer vacancies and position descriptions detailed on Hanover's website.
- Over the course of the latter half of the project, a volunteer recognition strategy was developed and the first recognition event for volunteers was held in May 2008.

Summary of opportunities for improvement

An effective communication strategy would provide a key opportunity for increasing volunteer numbers, particularly within the organisation:

- Improve communication across sites around what's happening with volunteers and new opportunities for volunteer roles;
- Promote the success stories related to new volunteer roles, particularly how staff have responded to challenges; and
- Implementing ideas around potential new volunteer roles in a timelier manner would also assist in increasing volunteer numbers.

3. Were clients engaged as volunteers at Hanover?

Engaging clients as volunteers was a cornerstone of the CITV project. However, it could not progress without the implementation of a best practice volunteer management model. It was unfortunate that the project came to an end before this key component could be fully realised. Nevertheless, as detailed below, important steps were achieved.

Summary of achievements

- One client was engaged as a volunteer on the CITV project, which was a representative role on the Project Steering Committee;
- Support for clients as volunteers was explored in staff surveys with findings indicating general support amongst staff, who participated in surveys, for the involvement of clients as volunteers; and there was recognition that such volunteering opportunities could benefit clients and Hanover;
- The views of clients were also sought via focus groups and a structured survey. For clients who participated in focus groups and the Annual Client Survey,

findings showed that people who experienced homelessness were no different to the general volunteering population in terms of willingness to participate. Indeed, some clients had experience in volunteering in the past.

Summary of opportunities for improvement

- Communication remains the key; the benefits that can result from providing volunteer opportunities for clients need to be highlighted to staff.
- Explore the opportunities for clients to participate as volunteers that may exist in the 5-year volunteer plan, particularly in roles that clients flagged in the focus groups – for example, some clients expressed interest in roles that provided work experience and enhanced living skills, while others wanted to participate in advocacy programs related to fundraising, public speaking, community awareness campaigns, and input into service decisions;
- The reality of homelessness means that the issue of client capacity or readiness to volunteer is a critical issue - feedback from client focus groups indicated flexibility is central to engaging clients in potential volunteer opportunities, particularly in terms of time and roles. For example, there was a preference by clients to volunteer at events did not require ongoing commitment.

Specific issues for further consideration and development

The CITV project ended with the development of a 5-year volunteer plan designed to both increase volunteer numbers and, importantly, provide volunteer opportunities for client participation. However, a model for involving clients as volunteers within the organisation still needs to be finalised, although at the time of writing a strategy for client participation was drafted.

Specific issues that need further consideration and development, and that were raised in the staff survey, include:

- Focus on empowerment and 'fit for role' –
 - Support workers should encourage clients to apply for volunteer roles, which should be advertised across the organisation in the same way as paid roles;
 - Clients would be assessed for roles as per the assessment process that *all* volunteers undergo; in relation to the issue of dependency, for example, if staff perceived a client could become dependent, then they would be assessed as not fit for the role; this would be decided on a case by case basis;
- Maintaining confidentiality –
 - Clients can choose whether or not they disclose that they are a current client of Hanover;
 - Staff would respect the confidentiality of any client volunteer; they would not share client's support needs with the volunteer supervisor, for example.
- Maintaining boundaries -
 - Again, the criterion of 'fit for role' would apply; if staff were concerned about a particular client maintaining boundaries, then they would be

- assessed as *not fit for role*; the interview process would also be another element that would highlight boundary issues;
- Clients who volunteer would not be supervised by their support worker; or they could volunteer at a site where they were not receiving support, although this may not be as easy to put into practice for sites such as Cheltenham and Dandenong;
 - The client volunteer supervisor would not be expected to play a support role.
- Clients barred from a Hanover service would not be eligible to volunteer -
 - Clients would be given the opportunity to disclose this information during the interview process.
 - Volunteer supervision training –
 - The Staff Working Group agreed that the same supervision training that staff accessed would be appropriate and would mean that supervision of volunteers could be seen as a professional development activity.
 - Development of roles for clients and volunteers –
 - The 5-year strategic volunteer plan provides the blueprint to move forward and expand the program both in terms of the variety of opportunities offered and volunteer numbers;
 - Ideas for volunteer roles should continue to be submitted via the project bank; and
 - A range of roles is needed to address the interests and aspirations of clients in both crisis accommodation and transitional housing.

Summary of recommendations

The following recommendations are presented according to the objectives of the project.

1. Establish a best practice volunteer management model

Recommendation 1:

Continue to promote the Volunteer Policy and Procedures at general staff meetings and in the staff newsletter to ensure broad organisation understanding of the strategic importance of the program.

Recommendation 2:

In the interests of best practice, Position Descriptions should be issued to all current volunteers who joined Hanover prior to 2009.

Recommendation 3:

Volunteers who joined Hanover prior to 2009 should attend a volunteer orientation session.

Recommendation 4:

Ensure that volunteer appreciation events take place annually.

Recommendation 5:

Provide opportunities for volunteers to network with each other and with staff.

2. Increase the number of volunteer

Recommendation 6:

Reinvigorate the 5 year volunteer strategic plan by more active implementation of the ideas from the staff 'dreaming workshops' that were used to inform its development; this would help maintain momentum and support for the volunteer program.

Recommendation 7:

Include regular updates of the Volunteer Program in Hanover staff newsletter and General Staff Meetings.

Recommendation 8:

Use networks established during CITV to advertise volunteer opportunities at Hanover.

3. Engage clients as volunteers

Recommendation 9:

Finalise the development of a model (policies and procedures) for involving clients as volunteers.

Recommendation 10:

Ascertain current levels of staff support for clients as volunteers in the next staff survey.

Recommendation 11:

Develop communication strategy to build staff support for clients as volunteers

Recommendation 12:

Build staff capacity via training around key areas of concern, such as supervision, confidentiality, boundaries and risk

1. Introduction

Hanover's mission is to empower people who are homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness to enable them to take greater control over their lives, and to stimulate and encourage change in the Australian community to benefit them. A two-year project known as *Community Involvement through Volunteering* (CITV) provided Hanover with a valuable strategy to work towards its mission.

This report presents the findings of the **evaluation** of the *Community Involvement through Volunteering* (CITV) project conducted by the Research Unit at Hanover Welfare Services (Hanover).

The aim of the evaluation was to determine the extent to which the three CITV objectives were achieved. It is anticipated that the results will be used to inform the development of an ongoing volunteer program, future reviews and to continue to influence positive cultural change within Hanover.

The overall aim of CITV was to build a modern and comprehensive volunteer program in partnership with local government and community organisations to facilitate the involvement of people who were homeless and isolated, in the wider community and within Hanover. Specifically, the objectives of CITV were to:

- establish a best practise volunteer management model;
- increase the number of volunteers at Hanover; and,
- engage clients as volunteers.

This report includes details of the evaluation framework and a description of the CITV project. The report has been structured around each of the three project objectives and provides a detailed account of the extent to which the objective has been achieved and its impact for staff, volunteers and partnerships. For each objective, there is a summary of achievements and areas for improvement, followed by a list of recommendations. The third objective includes a section on key areas for further consideration, which is particularly pertinent for the ongoing volunteer program in relation to engaging clients as volunteers.

1.1. Evaluation methodology

The aim of the evaluation was to determine the extent to which the three objectives of the CITV have been achieved and to inform the ongoing development of the volunteer program. An essential component of the evaluation, therefore, was about *process*.

The second essential evaluation component was about *outcomes*; specifically what benefit the project had for the key groups: staff, volunteers and partnerships. In order to determine this, the KASA (*knowledge, attitudes, skills and aspirations*) principle, developed by Claude Bennett in 1975, was used. KASA measured success based on change that occurred in *knowledge, attitudes, skills and aspirations* among staff, volunteers, staff and partnerships.

Details of the evaluation framework and process are presented in Tables 1 and 2. The first table highlights the specific aims of the evaluation in relation to each of the three project objectives, the indicators and data sources used. Table 2 provides a description of how the KASA principle was used to inform the evaluation of the CITV project.

Table 1: Evaluation Framework

Project Objectives	Aim	Indicator	Data Source
1. Establish a best practise volunteer management model	1.1 Best practice benchmark	Description of 'old' model	Discussion Paper reviewing volunteering at Hanover (Dec 2004)
		Description of best practice model	National Standards
		Audit of achievement	Baseline audit 2007; follow-up audit 2009
	1.2 Implement best practice	Policies and procedures	Audits
		Implementation process	
	1.3 Experience of staff	Increase commitment & understanding to volunteering – based on KASA principles (see table 2)	Staff survey (2008)
	1.4 Partnerships and practice dissemination		Perceptions of SWG Document review
2. Increase the number of volunteers at Hanover	2.1 Profile of volunteers	Number of volunteers	Administrative data (ConnX)
		Age groups, CALD, Indigenous, etc	Administrative data (ConnX)
	2.2 Experience of volunteers	Satisfaction & experience with volunteering at Hanover – based on KASA principles (see table 2)	Volunteer Survey (2007; 2009)
3. Engage clients as volunteers	3.1 Profile of client volunteers	Number of clients as volunteers & type of activities	Registration forms / Administrative data
		Age groups, CALD, Indigenous, etc	
	3.2 Experience, perception & aspirations of clients to volunteers	Interest in and barriers to volunteering – based on KASA principles (see table 2)	Focus groups
	3.3. Staff understanding & perception of clients as volunteers	Staff support for clients as volunteers	Staff Survey (2008)
			SWG minutes

Table 2: KASA principle (Knowledge, Attitudes, Skills, Aspirations)

Evaluation to cover the following elements:	Volunteer experience	Staff experience	Partnerships and wider practice dissemination
* Knowledge	Initial & changing knowledge of role	Increase in knowledge re. volunteering	Increase in knowledge re volunteering and social inclusion
* Attitudes	Increase in positive attitudes	Increase in support for volunteers	Increase in support for volunteer roles for people experiencing homelessness
* Skills	Increase in skills relating to volunteering and specifics to the role	Increase in skills to support and work with volunteers, refer clients to volunteer	Increase in skills in working with people experiencing homelessness
* Aspirations	Increase in aspirations to volunteer	Increase in aspirations for volunteers	Increase in aspirations
* Resources	Increase in resources available	Increase in resources available	Increase in resources available

1.3. Data sources

Over the period of the CITV project, data were collected via audits, focus groups, surveys and via project documentation:

- **Audits**
 - Audits against National Standards for involving volunteers in not for profit organisations - July 2007, March 2009);
- **Focus groups**
 - Focus groups with clients – a total of 19 participants across four focus groups that were split by crisis and transitional accommodation, and a focus group that was women only;
 - Focus groups with SWG and PSC – March 2009;
- **Surveys**
 - Online survey of staff – September 2008. Findings presented in this report are based on the results of a staff survey completed in September 2008. Survey questions focused on staff attitudes and knowledge about volunteering and explored the extent to which staff supported a volunteer program. The survey was circulated to all Hanover staff, which at the time approximated to 160 employees. Completed surveys were returned by 65 staff across all Hanover sites, representing a response rate of 41%;
 - Online survey of volunteers – July 2007, March 2009;
- **Document review**
 - Project documentation (minutes/notes) and
 - Review of conference presentations.

1.4. Research ethics

In line with Hanover's Ethics Policy, the evaluation component of the CITV project was subject to approval by Hanover's Ethics Committee. It was made clear to staff, volunteers and clients that participation in surveys or focus groups was completely voluntary and confidential.

1.5. Limitations of evaluation

The interpretation of findings from the evaluation will be affected by a number of limitations. For example, the CITV project operated in a context of substantial organisational change, which may have impacted on staff interest and commitment to the project. This context may have prolonged the implementation of the project and may well have affected the number of participants who completed the range of surveys; overall, the surveys yielded relatively low response rates.

The absence of a volunteer database when the project began meant that it was difficult to provide a benchmark profile of volunteers; initial numbers are based on a best estimate. While focus groups with clients were split by accommodation type, results are not necessarily reflective of all clients.

The Staff Working Group was represented by members from across seven Hanover sites. However, continuity and knowledge of the project was compromised as staff left the organisation and new representatives were appointed. Only one original staff member remained a representative of the Staff Working Group for the duration of the CITV project.

Lastly, the initial aim of the CITV project was to increase volunteer numbers. However, it became clear very early on in the project that a significant amount of developmental work was required before increased volunteer numbers could be achieved. Accordingly, the emphasis of the project shifted to implementing a best practice model.

2. About the Community Involvement through Volunteering project

This Section gives a brief description of the Community Involvement through Volunteering project in order to provide a context for the evaluation outcomes, which are presented in Section 3.

2.1 Background to the project

The *Community Involvement through Volunteering* (CITV) project aspired to develop a best practice volunteer management system that increased the number of volunteers involved in the community and expanded the range of volunteer opportunities provided within the organization. The work carried out by volunteers could be a catalyst for greater community understanding of homelessness and its underlying causes. It would also be a means for linking isolated and marginalised people into the wider community.

Of particular interest for Hanover was the provision of volunteer opportunities for people who were experiencing homelessness. Volunteering is an expression of active citizenship and it is one way that people can participate in the broader community. Volunteering can help build skills, nurture self esteem and provide pathways for employment and education, thereby empowering people who are homeless to take greater control over their lives.

In 2006 Hanover received a Volunteer Support Grant through the Department of Planning and Community Development (DPCD). The funding provided Hanover with an opportunity to be more strategic and effective in its mission to empower clients and tackle homelessness. Hanover named the new project CITV; it began in 2007 and was funded for a period of two and a half years.

The underlying vision of CITV was that volunteering:

- Could provide opportunities for members of the community to participate in the work of Hanover;
- Could provide opportunities for clients to participate at Hanover and in the community; and
- Could be a means of exposing the broader community to issues and causes of homelessness leading to greater understanding and ultimately change.

2.2 Homelessness

According to the 2006 Census figures, 105,000 people experience homelessness on any given night (ABS, 2006). Homelessness is not always visible. While many people who experience homelessness sleep rough (16%); most stay with family or friends on a temporary basis (45%), or in accommodation that is insecure and substandard (21%), or have entered the specialist homelessness service system (19%) (ABS, 2006).

Homelessness is not just about a lack of shelter. Importantly, it's also about not having a home that provides privacy, security and warmth, a sense of belonging and a base to enable participation in the broader community. Homelessness represents an extreme form of social exclusion and disadvantage that can undermine a person's confidence, self-esteem and dignity.

2.3 Volunteering

Enormous benefits flow from volunteering, both for the broader economy and for the people who participate. Close to a third of Australians (32%) over the age of 18 years, or 4.4 million people, are involved in volunteering (Volunteering Australia, 2001).

Volunteers constitute a major component of the workforce in the not-for-profit sector, representing more than \$45 billion of the gross domestic product (Volunteering Australia, 2001). It can also provide pathways for employment and education.

For people who are at risk of or experience homelessness, volunteering can also provide benefits. Research focusing on the benefits of volunteering for people who experience homelessness was first completed in the United Kingdom in 2005 by Kate Bowgett. She found that it is the experience of actively choosing to help someone that increases self-worth and can help people to recover their self esteem (Bowgett 2006). She described volunteering as:

An expression of active citizenship. Volunteering is not just about helping others - it is also about playing an active role in shaping the community in which you live (2006:21).

2.4 Governance

Hanover appointed a **qualified community development worker** with extensive experience in the volunteering sector to manage the CITV project and provide regular progress reports to the Hanover Board as well as the DPCD.

Partnerships, both external and internal to the organisation, were deemed to be central to the success of the CITV. The project coordinator, therefore, assembled an external group known as the Project Steering Committee, and an internal group referred to as the Staff Working Group. Both groups acted as catalysts for change.

The **Project Steering Committee (PSC)** comprised representatives from local government and community organisations including: DPCD, Glen Eira Volunteer Resource Service, City of Port Phillip, Inner South Community Health Service, Ozanam House, Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre and Windermere Children and Family Services. The PSC provided strategic advice and support to the project coordinator. It met monthly with the co-ordinator and was responsible for monitoring the progress of the CITV, providing advice about the development of the CITV and the CITV evaluation.

The **Staff Working Group** involved several staff members, each representing a Hanover site or portfolio. The SWG, working under the direction of the PSC, was convened to inform and assist with the implementation of the CITV across the whole organisation. It was anticipated that the SWG would bring a whole of Hanover perspective to the CITV and thereby facilitate knowledge transfer and cultural change across the organisation.

The SWG met on a monthly basis and was responsible for developing a vision for the project, implementing a new structure for managing volunteers that involved the development of new policies and procedures in line with the National Standards for volunteering and the Universal Declaration of Volunteering. SWG were involved in completing audits against the National Standards on Volunteering, identifying training needs for staff and volunteers, exploring new opportunities for volunteer involvement and contributing to the project evaluation.

3. Evaluation of the Community Involvement through Volunteering project

The findings from the evaluation of the CITV project are presented in sections 3, 4 and 5; they are discussed according to three key questions:

- Was a best practice volunteer management model established,
- Was there an increase in the number of volunteers, and
- Were clients engaged as volunteers?

3.1. Was a best practice volunteer management model established?

'An organisation that is able to demonstrate compliance with the standards is well positioned strategically to recruit and retain more volunteers, as well as attract funding or sponsorship for new initiatives' (Volunteering Australia, 2001:10).

The first program objective was to develop a best practice model: a professional and contemporary volunteer management program. While Hanover has a long history of working with volunteers, relationships and processes were informal and the organisation recognised there was major room for improvement. The intention, therefore, was to develop a volunteer management program that worked in new and diverse ways to engage volunteers in the work of the organisation and more effectively benefit people experiencing homelessness.

A key evaluation question was to determine the extent to which a best practice volunteer management model had been established.

3.2. Best practice benchmark

This section first details how Hanover managed volunteers prior to CITV. This is followed by a description of the best practice principles for volunteering that the organisation sought to implement

3.2.1. Volunteer management practice before the CITV Project

Volunteers have been a part of Hanover for most of its forty-year history. They have consistently enabled Hanover to deliver much needed support to people experiencing homelessness across Melbourne. At the start of the CITV project, Hanover was utilising the support and services of approximately 100 volunteers in a variety of roles. This included members of Hanover's Board, tutors for children in families who are homeless, volunteers at children's camps, art and craft classes, barbecues, and assistance with public relations and supporter events. Hanover also received numerous requests from potential volunteers especially around Christmas.

The absence of a formal volunteer management system meant that activity in relation to volunteers operated in an ad hoc manner. While volunteers were referred to in policies and procedures relating to recruitment, training and supervision, practices across the

organisation varied. Volunteers operated on the periphery of the organisation, rather than as an integral part of the organisation. The absence of a dedicated coordinator position to monitor volunteer roles and responsibilities may well have contributed to the inconsistent approaches and varying levels of commitment to volunteering throughout the organisation. An internal discussion paper referred to the need to *'develop a strategy for orienting staff across the organisation to the revised Hanover Volunteer Policy to increase an understanding of and commitment to the policy'* (p.2 2004).

3.2.2. Principles of a best practice volunteer management model

Hanover's commitment to the principles of best practice is based on The *National Standards for involving Volunteers in not-for-profit organisations* (Volunteering Australia, 2001). There are a total of eight National Standards on volunteering; they encompass policies and procedure; management responsibility; recruitment; work and the workplace; training and development; service delivery; documentation and records; and continuous improvement.

Each Standard is stipulated in full to illustrate the scope and level of commitment demanded of a best practice model:

- Standard 1 – An organisation shall define and document its policies and procedures for volunteer involvement and ensure that these are understood, implemented and maintained at all levels of the organisation where volunteers are involved;
- Standard 2 – An organisation shall ensure that volunteers are managed within a defined system and by capable personnel with authority and resources to achieve the organisation's policy goals;
- Standard 3 – An organisation shall plan and have clearly documented volunteer recruitment, selection and orientation policies and procedures that are consistent with non-discriminatory practices and guidelines;
- Standard 4 – An organisation shall clearly specify and control the work of volunteers and ensure that their place of work is conducive to preserving their health, safety and general well-being;
- Standard 5 – An organisation shall ensure that volunteers obtain the knowledge, skills, feedback on work, and the recognition needed to effectively carry out their responsibilities;
- Standard 6 – An organisation shall ensure that appropriate processes are established and followed for effective planning, control, and review of all activities relating to the delivery of services by volunteers;
- Standard 7 – An organisation shall establish a system and have defined procedures to control all documentation and personnel records that relate to the management of volunteers;
- Standard 8 – An organisation shall plan and continually review its volunteer management system to ensure that opportunities to improve the quality of the system are identified and actively pursued.

3.3. Implementing best practice

Implementing best practice in line with the National Standards involved a major overhaul of Hanover's approach to volunteering as well as the organisational culture. For the first time progress was benchmarked against the National Standards. To enable benchmarking surveys were undertaken by staff and volunteers, and focus groups were conducted with clients. The volume of work demanded significant time and energy from all staff.

At the time, there were a number of challenges, as well as opportunities, for the CITV project. For example, Hanover underwent a restructure and was also faced with a stringent registration and accreditation process in relation to client services. This had implications for staff time including the overall organisational culture.

Additionally, the focus of the CITV project changed. When the project first began within Hanover, it aimed to implement a *regionalised* volunteer management model. Midway through, the model was replaced by a *centralised* volunteer management model. These challenges are detailed below.

3.3.1 Restructure

Hanover's management model was comprehensively restructured and became effective as of 4 February 2008. There was also an exhaustive overhaul of policies and procedures as part of a registration and housing sector accreditation requirement. Around the same time, Hanover introduced new information technology and implemented new management software that changed the electronic management of policies, documents and personnel.

The timing of all these changes increased the complexity of the processes and decisions required to improve the volunteer management system. But it also presented a major opportunity for the CITV project. The new structure explicitly raised the profile of volunteers as one of Hanover's service development priorities. Accordingly, all management and staff positions were redesigned so that position descriptions referred to responsibilities for supervision of volunteers and implementing the volunteer strategy.

3.3.2 Culture

A far greater challenge was changing the organisational culture, which involved tackling inconsistent practices as well as changing knowledge and attitudes around volunteering. A shift in the organisation's culture was crucial to the success of the CITV project.

Engaging staff in the process was paramount, particularly in order to find out their level of understanding of the volunteer project and volunteering more broadly. A critical strategy to enabling this change was the establishment of the Staff Working Group (SWG). Staff representatives on the group from each site enabled the work of the project to be shared widely across the organisation. Without engaging staff across the organisation and raising awareness and understanding, implementing a best practice model would have been undermined.

- Staff had a diversity of experiences in working with volunteers; some sites were highly involved with volunteers while others had no direct experience at all.
- There was also a diversity of experience that existing volunteers had with the organisation – some groups received comprehensive training and orientation to

Hanover, while others received very little. There were some volunteers who had been with Hanover for several years and operated autonomously and independently of the organisation. This group was strongly resistant to change.

- It meant that cultural change was needed on two levels – among staff as well as among volunteers.

3.3.3 Regionalised versus centralised model

Originally, Hanover had committed to what was called the 'regionalised approach'. This involved designing procedures that would enable coordinating tasks to be undertaken by staff already employed by the organisation, rather than having a central volunteer coordinator role. The volunteer program would then be managed by a committee made up of staff and management representatives. This was a new approach to volunteer management where normally either a coordination or centralised coordination role forms the foundation for volunteer systems.

In working through the structure of a regionalised model, discussions at both PSC and SWG meetings were concerned with the sustainability of the model in the context of a new management structure and staff turnover. A main concern for staff, expressed through SWG members, was about the additional workload and resources required to support a regionalised volunteer program.

These discussions, and a resulting discussion paper, provided the Hanover executive with a clear picture of the options and pros and cons of a regionalised versus centralised approach. By September 2008, the Hanover executive decided to endorse the centralised model of volunteer management. This meant that an ongoing volunteer role would be funded by the organisation. It was a major boost for the project and reflected a tangible shift in the organisational culture.

3.4. Auditing best practice

To determine the extent to which a best practice volunteer model had been established at Hanover an audit of achievement against the National Standards was required.

The auditing exercise was first completed by members of the SWG in 2007. This provided the necessary benchmark that helped to establish both the level of knowledge of SWG members on volunteer management practices, and to chart the project's progress and development.

A follow-up audit was finalised in 2009. Completing both audits required each member of the SWG to fill in an individual scorecard contained in the National Standards workbook.

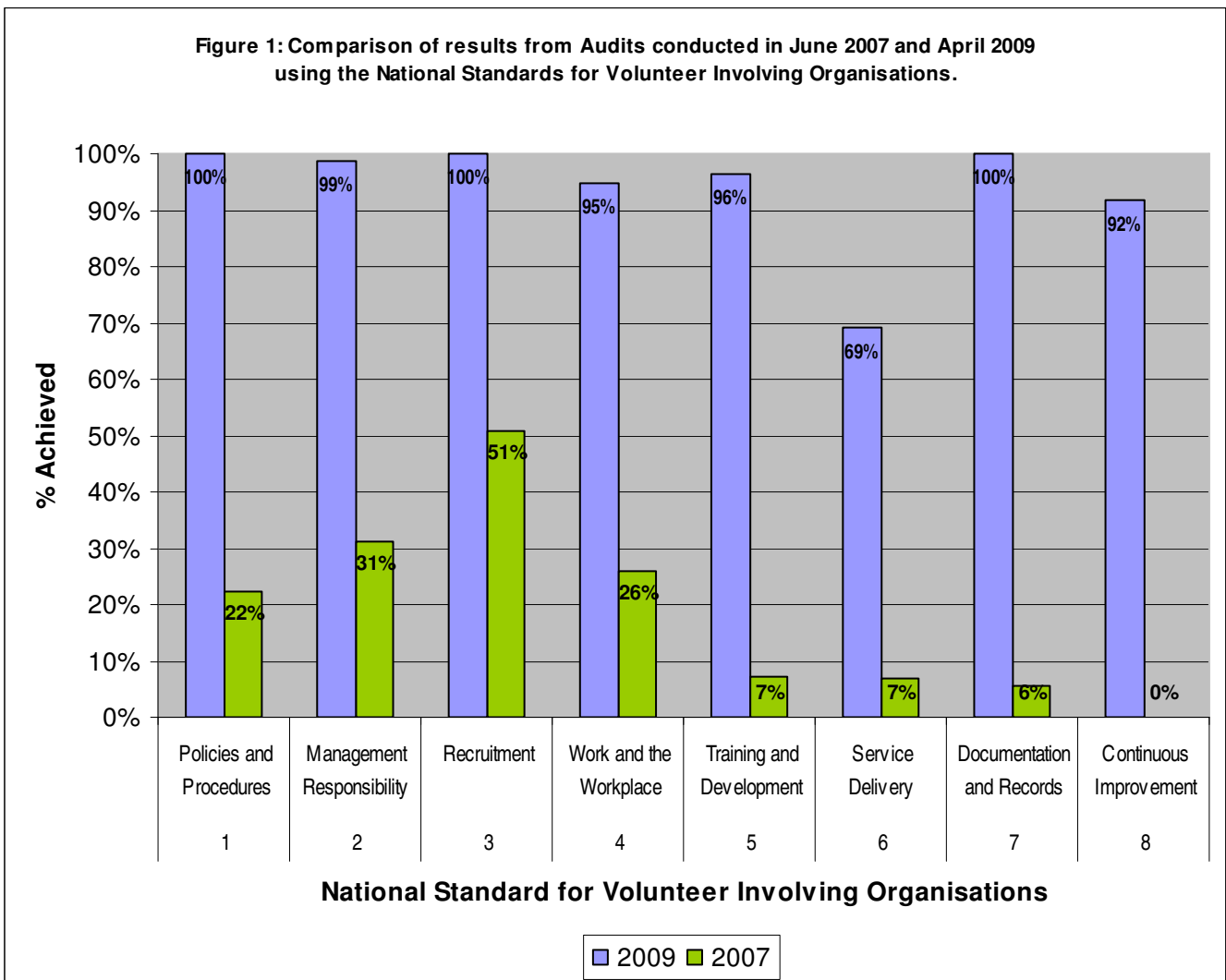
Each of the eight Standards contains detailed criteria that were given an individual score; this was then summed to give an overall score for each Standard. Volunteering Australia (2001) provides the following interpretations for categories of scores and their associated implications:

- *30% or less of the Standard's criteria achieved* – indicates major gaps in most areas (or criteria) of a Standard, which warrants urgent action to address deficiencies;

- *31% to 55% of the Standard's criteria achieved* – indicates significant gaps in many areas (or criteria) of a Standard; it means that priorities for urgent action need to be established;
- *56% to 85% of the Standard's criteria achieved* – indicates the organisation is generally well prepared to achieve best practice in a Standard, but likely to be deficient in some critical area (or criterion);
- *86% to 100% of the Standard's criteria achieved* – indicates the organisation is very prepared to achieve best practice, but may need to address some specific gaps.

Results

As illustrated in Figure 1, the 2007 benchmark results highlighted significant and major gaps within the organisation regarding volunteer management practices and knowledge, which required urgent action. It also highlighted the considerable work necessary to establish a best practice model.



Hanover's highest performing areas in 2007 were in *recruitment* (51%) and *management responsibility* (31%). But these scores pointed to 'significant gaps' in these two Standards. Additionally, the remaining six Standards had scores of less than '30% achieved', which indicated 'major gaps that required urgent attention'. *Training and development*, *service delivery*, and *documentation and records* all scored less than 10%, while *continuous improvement* failed to gain a score. To put this another way, there was no organisational concept of continuous improvement in relation to volunteering.

In contrast, the results from the 2009 audit, undertaken towards the end of the CITV project, showed significant improvements in all eight National Standards for Volunteering. As Figure 1 highlights, ratings of 92% or more were achieved in seven Standards. Of particular note were *policies and procedures*, *recruitment*, and *documentation and records*, which all scored 100%. Service delivery was an exception with a score of 69%, indicating that there was opportunity for further improvement.

Overall, the changes were a result of considerable effort. It took almost 12 months, for example, to develop program documentation, policies, procedures, position description templates, publicity material for recruiting volunteers, brochures, website and a centralised volunteer database. Expectations for staff supervising volunteers were also clarified, uniform training packages for new volunteers were designed and police and working with children screening checks were now systematically undertaken for volunteers. Overall, the high scores suggest that a volunteer management structure, in line with the National Standards, was successfully implemented at Hanover over a two year period

3.5. Experience of staff

An important aim of the evaluation, as detailed earlier in Table 2, was to determine the impact of the CITV project on Hanover's staff. A lot of the work undertaken in the project focused on increasing knowledge and understanding around volunteering, among staff in general and the Staff Working Group in particular.

3.5.1. Increasing knowledge and understanding

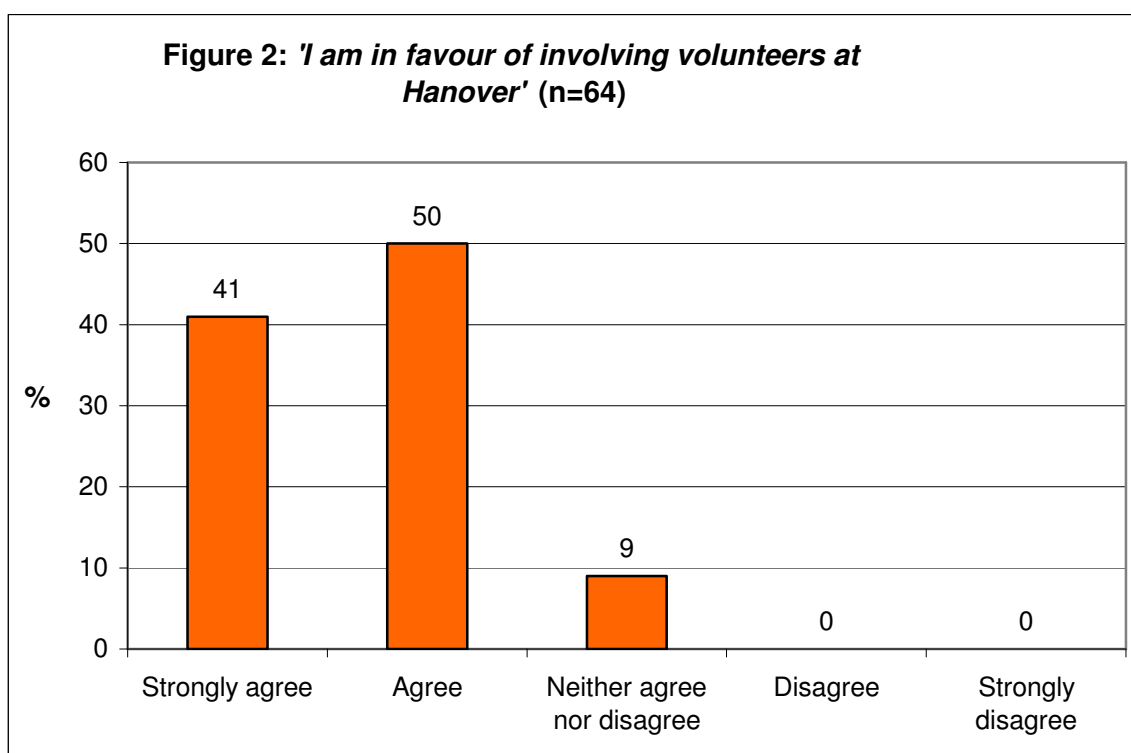
The coordinator of the CITV project invested time and effort to engage with *all* staff in order to build shared understanding, commitment and enthusiasm across the organisation for the volunteer project. This involved a range of activities:

- Regular presentations at staff meetings;
- Monthly internal newsletter for staff which reported on the progress and achievements of the CITV project;
- A dedicated page on the Hanover website on volunteering and the CITV project where volunteer opportunities at Hanover were advertised;
- Half day 'turning dreams into plans' workshops with staff at all Hanover sites over a nine month period. The workshops were designed to promote cultural change by increasing staff knowledge and understanding of the CITV project. It provided opportunities to connect with staff around volunteering issues that resulted in 20 proposals related to potential volunteer activity. These proposals formed the basis of a five year plan for the ongoing development of Hanover's volunteer program (Appendix 1).

Staff survey findings

Findings from the staff survey completed in 2008 indicated that staff were positive about the concept of volunteers at Hanover and had personal experience with volunteering. For example, over half of all staff (53%) who completed the survey were a volunteer or had volunteered in the past; this is consistent with national averages. Further, many had worked with volunteers in other organisations (48%) or were part of a team that included volunteers (44%).

Figure 2 shows that participants were overwhelmingly in favour of involving volunteers at Hanover (91%). No-one disagreed with involving volunteers while only 9% of staff were unsure.



Additionally:

- Most participants agreed that volunteers were an important asset in any organisation (88%);
- 89% agreed that volunteers expanded Hanover's capacity to deliver services;
- 67% agreed that volunteers took effort to manage.

Benefits of including volunteers at Hanover:

When asked to identify the benefits that volunteers could provide for Hanover, staff focused on the following:

- The capacity to extend services to clients and to alleviate staff workload,
- A range of skills and experiences that volunteers could bring to Hanover,
- Capacity to complement existing Hanover services, and
- Opportunity to bring a diversity of views to Hanover.

Potential difficulties related to volunteers at Hanover:

In terms of potential difficulties associated with having volunteers at Hanover, staff raised the following concerns:

- Appropriate levels of supervision and support for volunteers;
- Staff time required to supervise and work with volunteers;
- Level of training and orientation of volunteers;
- The competency level of volunteers;
- Whether volunteers could respect confidentiality issues; and
- Whether volunteers could be reliable.

Staff skills

Fifty percent of participants did not report a need for further training in order to work with volunteers. For the 50 per cent who did, most referred to the following:

- Supervision or management training;
- Training on how to work with volunteers;
- Assistance around staff caseloads to give sufficient time to supervise volunteers, and
- Provision of information or resource packs for staff who supervised volunteers, although there was no detail about what should be contained in the pack.

CASE STUDY: Developing and refining volunteer roles

The Dandenong site required volunteers to fill new reception roles. Four volunteers were required to cover 5 full day shifts. This proved to be a big undertaking and created difficulties for staff, particularly around providing support to the new volunteers. On reflection, it was reported by staff that it would have been easier to start with one volunteer at a time; this would have given staff time to learn to work with volunteers. Although they expected it, staff had not really planned for the amount of support/liason work required to provide backup for the volunteer. Resentment started to fester. Senior staff quickly responded to staff concerns and resentment quickly dissipated. Important responses included clarifying the role of the volunteer supervisor, which ensured that the volunteer was well supported.

Just as with any new role, whether paid or unpaid, there is a period of settling in and learning the requirements of both the role and how an organisation functions. With appropriate support in the early stages, necessary skills were developed. Both staff and the volunteer benefited from the experience and the volunteer became a valued member of the team.

Changing knowledge of the Staff Working Group (SWG)

Regular monthly SWG meetings and participation in a focus group highlighted the changes in the knowledge, attitudes and skills that occurred for SWG members. By completing the audits, for example, SWG members demonstrated a marked increase in both their understanding and awareness of volunteer management practice, and in gaining organisational agreement about performance benchmarks. They also indicated

greater confidence in their own volunteer management skills and felt able to play a more active role in initiating discussions at the services in which they were based.

The SWG meetings emerged as an effective forum for maintaining momentum for the project and provided an opportunity for internal networking across Hanover sites around volunteering management issues. Members talked about working with volunteers in isolation from other staff in similar situations. Participating as a member of the SWG helped to overcome this isolation. It was the opportunity to come together as a group that played a significant role in validating the work with volunteers. This was both in terms of recognising the genuine role that volunteers can play in supporting the organisation's strategic intentions and in terms of acknowledging the additional resources and skills required to support volunteers.

To record the changes that SWG members had undergone in terms of knowledge and understanding related to a best practice volunteer management model, the project coordinator developed a structured reflective exercise. SWG members were asked to rate and comment on what they perceived to be the key achievements of the project and the issues that presented ongoing difficulties.

Overall, the structured exercise involved 5 stages: the first rated the project using a 10-point scale with 10 the ultimate goal; the second identified the reasons for the rating; the third focused on achievements needed to improve the rating; the fourth identified the blocks to the project; and the final stage described the ideal. The first exercise occurred in August 2008 when the project was 12 months old and then again in March 2009, two years since the project began.

The outcomes of the exercise completed in March 2009 are presented in Figure 3, which also shows the SWG members' rating of the project at 2008, as a point of contrast. As illustrated in Figure 3, at the conclusion of the two-year project, SWG members rated the project a 7.5 (compared with a rating of 4 at the 12 month mark). As shown in the text box titled 'Where are we now', the rating was informed by a total of 15 important project milestones, which mostly related to the implementation of a volunteer management model and the increase of volunteer numbers,

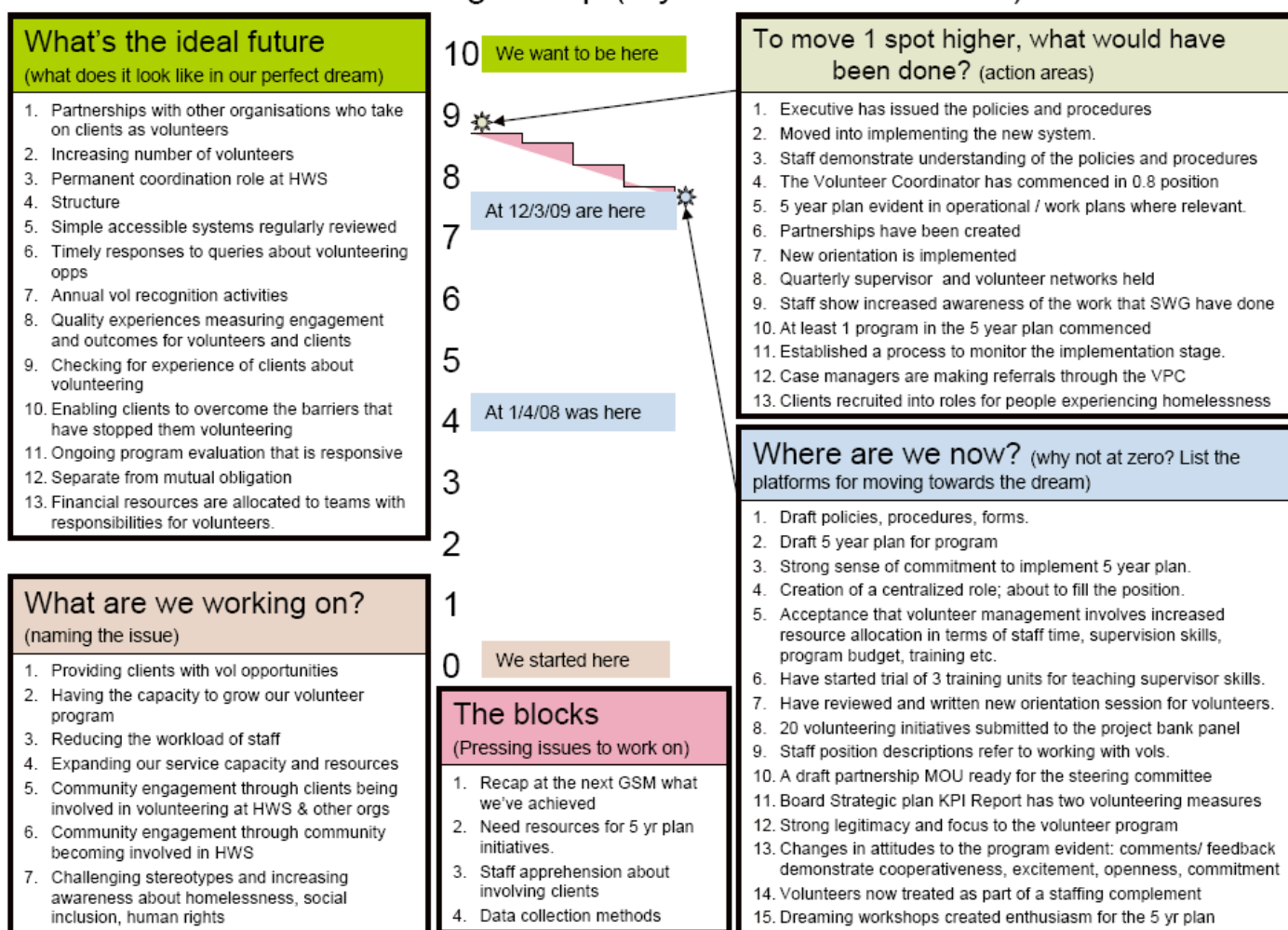
Towards the end of the CITV project, a number of gaps remained. As detailed in Figure 3, SWG members were still working on ways to grow the volunteer program; how to expand service capacity and resources; ways in which volunteers could reduce staff workloads; increasing community engagement; challenging stereotypes and increasing awareness about homelessness and human rights.

By the time the CITV project had ended in April 2009, additional aims were achieved. Of note were that the volunteer policies and procedures were issued and uploaded onto an electronic database accessible to all staff. Importantly, the volunteer coordinator position was created and filled.

A key focus of the CITV project was to develop volunteer opportunities for clients. However, staff apprehension around involving clients in volunteer opportunities was a stumbling block for the SWG. This is discussed further in Section 5.

Figure 3: Summary of Staff Working Group Ratings and Reflection

Staff Working Group (2 years on: 12/03/2009)



3.6. Partnerships and wider practice dissemination

An important part of the CITV project was to create new partnerships and networks to offer guidance to the project. An underlying aim of these partnerships and networks was to facilitate greater awareness about homelessness and to support volunteer participation for people who experienced homelessness in a range of external community organisations.

To this end, the project coordinator participated in a range of networks for managers of volunteers that included the Wester Region and Glen Eira. Partnership meetings were conducted in May and August 2008 with the Council to Homeless Persons; and in August 2008 with Ozanam Community Centre.

Further, in September 2008, a presentation was made at the 2nd National Research Symposium on Volunteering, and a workshop delivered at the 12th National Volunteering Conference. This workshop specifically focused on the concept of providing volunteer opportunities for people who experienced homelessness. All members of the Project

Steering Committee played key roles in facilitating discussion among workshop participants. The workshop aimed to:

- Encourage participants to think about engaging Hanover's clients in volunteer opportunities;
- Encourage participants to sign up future partnership or contact with Hanover;
- Increase understanding about how the housing system works, statistics and facts about homelessness and the lived experience of homelessness;
- Demonstrate how the CITV influenced cultural change at Hanover so group participants could engage in similar strategies in their own organisations;
- Share practice wisdom in the group to assist the project to develop policy responses around involving Hanover clients in volunteer opportunities, and
- Create networks among the group participants.

The concept of volunteering opportunities for people experiencing homelessness generated a lot of interest among the workshop participants, which resulted in the following outcomes:

- A training package around homelessness and volunteering was delivered to the Boroondara Volunteer Resource Service and the Monash Volunteer Resource Service;
- Workshop participants keen to stay in touch with the CITV project in order to:
 - Receive feedback on policy issues;
 - Implement the 'clients as volunteers' concept in their own organisation; and
 - Participate as a possible partner to recruit volunteers via Hanover's volunteer program.
- Discussions with Volunteering Queensland on the implications for a volunteer program they conducted in partnership with Brisbane City Council, a bi-annual event that provided professional services to people experiencing homelessness; a group increasingly interested in participating as volunteers at the event;
- Shared insights on benchmarking the project against the National Standards influenced Volunteering Tasmania to incorporate the National Standards into an accreditation project; and
- Participants interested to use Hanover's experience as a case study, focusing on partnerships, the development of the project, and implementing cultural change.

Changing knowledge of the Project Steering Committee (PSC)

Key partnerships were established with members of the Project Steering Committee. As with SWG, a focus group with PSC members highlighted that they had experienced significant improvements in their understanding of volunteer management issues. They also expressed interest in adopting the National Standards on Volunteering as a benchmark in their own respective organisations.

PSC members noted that it was professionally and personally beneficial to be involved in the Project Steering Committee. They especially valued the opportunity to network and share information around volunteering, and enjoyed building relationships in person, rather than over the phone. They talked about the gaps in their own volunteer programs and were particularly keen to learn from Hanover's experience in relation to providing volunteer opportunities for clients; this was an important example of what was possible.

Pushing the boundaries with such new ideas challenged their own thinking about what 'clients in crisis' were interested in and capable of.

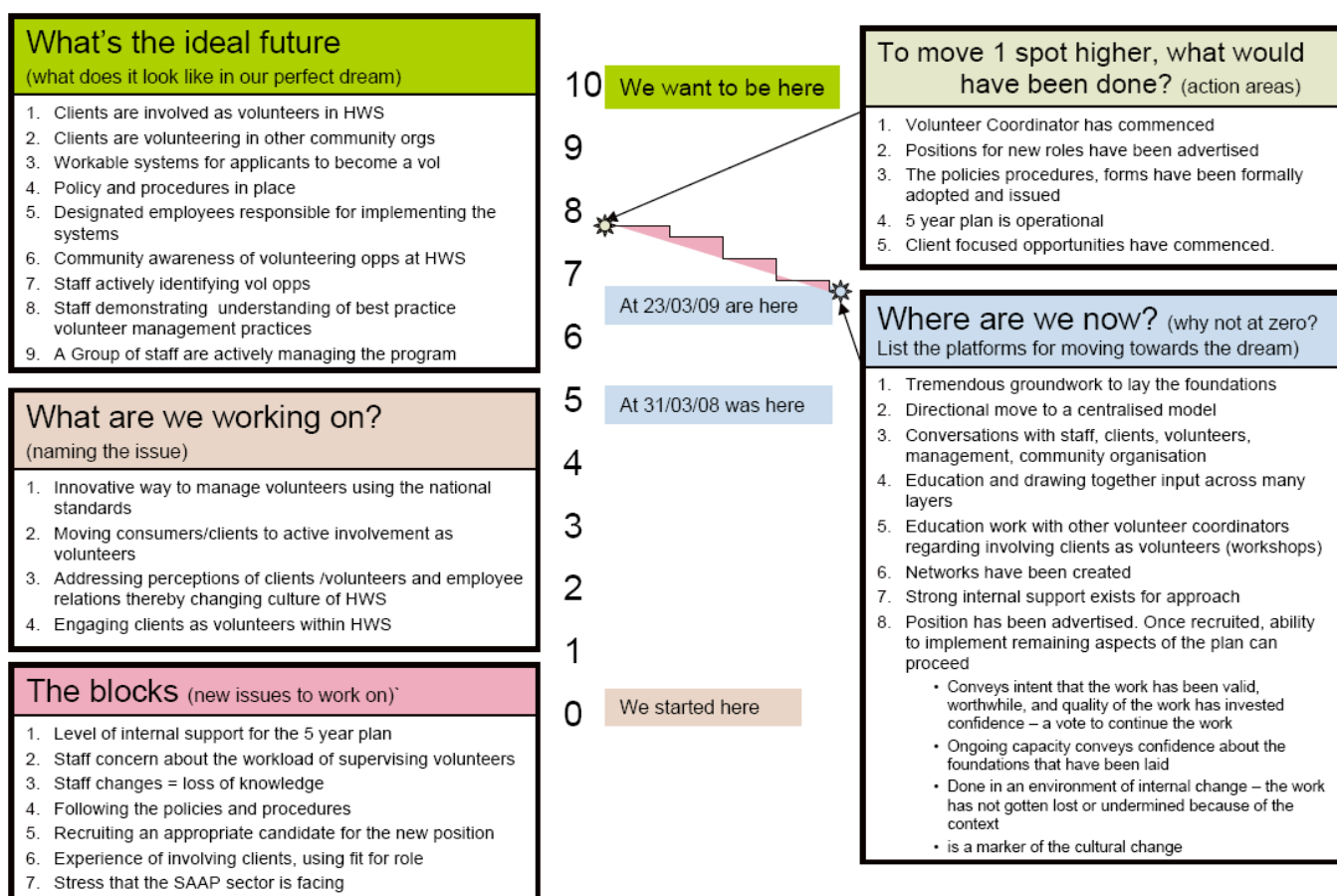
PSC members had also acquired skills that they used to benefit their own organisations. For example, they ensured that police checks and working with children checks were done in a consistent manner and made sure that volunteer supervisors received adequate training and volunteers felt supported.

Members of the PSC participated in the same structured exercise as SWG, with very similar results. For example, as detailed in Figure 4, PSC members rated the CITV project as a '5' at 12 months and then a '7' when the project neared completion. PSC members reported that the 'ideal future' was one that involved clients as volunteers at Hanover as well as other organisations; policies and procedures were in place; staff actively identified volunteer opportunities and demonstrated an understanding of best practice volunteer management; and also meant the broader community was aware of volunteering opportunities at Hanover.

At the time the project was due to end, PSC members were working on a number of inter-related issues. They included innovative ways to manage volunteers using the National Standards; moving consumers/clients to active involvement as volunteers; addressing staff perceptions of clients/volunteers; and ways to engage clients as volunteers within Hanover.

Figure 4: Summary of Project Steering Committee Ratings and Reflection

Project Steering Committee (2 years on: 23/03/09)



3.7. Summary

The findings from two audits, document reviews, focus groups, and the rating and reflection exercises indicate that a best practice model for the management of volunteers was achieved. While the findings from the rating and reflection exercises conducted with members of the SWG and the PSC suggest that gaps remained, the documented success of the CITV cannot be underestimated. It was a difficult journey for the CITV with major challenges along the way, especially due to the organisational restructure.

The CITV project can boast two significant achievements:

- The cultural change within the organisation, which was strongly reflected in the commitment to an ongoing centralised volunteer coordinator position, fully funded by the organisation; and
- A best practice volunteer management structure developed for the organisation, benchmarked against the National Standards on volunteering.

Summary of achievements

A best practice model has been achieved for Hanover with important changes occurring in the following key areas: organisational culture, staffing, policies and procedures, data requirements, training, and external relationships.

Organisational culture

- Half day 'turning dreams into plans' workshops with staff at all Hanover sites over a nine month period. The workshops were designed to promote cultural change by increasing staff knowledge and understanding of the CITV project. It provided opportunities to connect with staff around volunteering issues that resulted in 20 proposals related to potential volunteer activity. These proposals formed the basis of a five year plan for the ongoing development of Hanover's volunteer program (Appendix 1).
- Partnerships established internally amongst staff that supervised volunteers and participated in the Staff Working Group to promote volunteering within the organisation and thereby assist with in changing the organisational culture.
- Regular presentations at staff meetings and monthly internal newsletter for staff which reported on the progress and achievements of the CITV project in order to promote cultural change;
- Based on documented Staff Working Group minutes, support for volunteers had increased over the two-year period of the project - Hanover had changed from an organisation that regarded volunteers as being on the periphery, to seeing them as a valuable asset that can enhance services and support to clients.

Staffing

- Permanent volunteer coordinator position created; further reflecting the organisations changed culture and it's commitment to an ongoing volunteer program.

Volunteer roles

- New volunteer positions created that provided reception assistance and computer training.
- Regular formal recognition and appreciation event for volunteers;
- A dedicated page on the Hanover website on volunteering and the CITV project where volunteer opportunities at Hanover were advertised;

Policies and procedures

- Creation of program documentation (policies, procedures, position description template, publicity materials, brochure, website);
- Identification of volunteer management system goals and procedural steps
- Development of five year volunteer strategic plan;
- Explicit references to volunteering were included in the strategic plan and all staff position descriptions.

Data requirements

- Consolidation of files into centralised database and screening checks;
- Completed audits that rated the new volunteer management model against the *National Standards for Involving Volunteers in Not for Profit Organisations*;
- In addition, good baseline data were collected from surveys with staff and volunteers, which can be used to mark the ongoing development and progress of the volunteer program.

Training

- Development of a common volunteer training package for new volunteers.

External relationships

- Effective engagement and sharing knowledge and skills with a broad range of community groups and volunteer organisations,
- External partnerships established via external members of the Project Steering Committee, which increased the knowledge of all members around the National Standards as well as working with people who experienced homelessness.

Summary of opportunities for improvement

Despite these achievements, there remain areas for improvement, especially around internal communication, training and volunteer support.

Internal communication

- Promote the program to sites without volunteers;
- Improve knowledge of whole organisation around volunteers; and
- Better communication/information sharing between specific volunteer projects and across Hanover generally (such as regular email, brief updates around the volunteer program, updates on new roles; newsletter).

Training

- Training & resources for staff in order to work effectively with volunteers.

Volunteer support

- Support volunteer supervisors so they do not feel isolated at sites; and
- Provide opportunity for volunteers to get together for mutual support.

3.8. Recommendations

Recommendation 1:

Promote the Volunteer Policy and Procedures at General Staff Meetings and in the staff newsletter, to ensure broad organisation understanding of the strategic importance of the program.

Recommendation 2:

In the interests of best practice, Position Descriptions should be issued to all current volunteers who joined Hanover prior to 2009.

Recommendation 3:

These same volunteers should attend a volunteer orientation session.

Recommendation 4:

Ensure that volunteer appreciation events take place annually.

Recommendation 5:

Provide opportunities for volunteers to network with each other and with staff.

4. Was there an increase in the number of volunteers?

An important aim of Hanover's new best practice approach to volunteer management was to increase the number of volunteers. Increasing volunteer numbers would enable Hanover to complement and extend its services. As well, it would help raise awareness of homelessness in the broader community and foster greater understanding of underlying issues.

The evaluation findings presented in this section highlight the extent to which volunteer numbers changed as a result of a new and best practice volunteer management model. The findings also detail the extent to which volunteer experiences were positively affected as a result of a best practice model.

4.1. Development of the volunteer program strategic plan

As noted in the previous section, a key achievement of the CITV project was the development of a five year strategic plan that focused the work of the volunteer program up to 2013. This plan, informed by the 'dreaming workshops' conducted with staff across the whole organisation in 2008, had resulted in 20 new volunteer opportunities. These new ideas could not all be implemented at once. The Staff Working Group, therefore, worked on consolidating the ideas and prioritised them into a five year volunteer work plan (refer to Appendix 1).

Informing the work of the Staff Working Group were the following considerations: the different client needs that were to be addressed; the skills needed by volunteers; and the support structures required to support these. Some projects required no resources to implement, while others needed a bit more investment, of both time and money. These considerations are highlighted in the five year work plan. According to the work plan, the new opportunities for volunteers included mentoring and consumer advocacy as well as driving positions and wellbeing roles. It was anticipated that the work plan would result in growing numbers of both volunteers and exciting volunteer opportunities.

The five year work plan was internally focused with referrals to external agencies due to occur in year 2 of the plan. The plan included opportunities aimed at all volunteers while others were specific to clients participating as volunteers. It is evident from the timeframe that clients as volunteers emerged as an area that required much more targeted focus. This will be discussed in the next section.

4.2. Fluctuating volunteer numbers

When the CITV project began in 2007, Hanover had approximately 70 to 100 volunteers. Since there was no volunteer database that stored relevant details, the exact number of volunteers and associated characteristics were difficult to determine. What was clear, however, was that the numbers of volunteers had fluctuated over the course of the CITV project.

It was the auditing process conducted when the CITV project began that affected one of Hanover's main events and resulted in reduced volunteer numbers, as illustrated below.

CASE STUDY: *Impact of best practice on volunteer numbers*

The BBQ program was the largest volunteer event run by Hanover, with around 60 volunteers. Held at one of Hanover's crisis centres, the BBQ had been running for more than 10 years and provided an opportunity for clients to socialise as well as receive a meal two nights a week.

Serious gaps were highlighted by the auditing process about the way the volunteers had operated. Namely, while the volunteers operated the BBQ on Hanover premises, there were no formal arrangements for supervision and accountability back to Hanover.

As an informal and self-organised group, the volunteers had no insurance cover, nor were they subject to any screening process to ensure they were suitable to work with clients. Such an arrangement represented significant liability risks to the organisation around duty of care and legal responsibilities.

Working through these issues presented significant challenges to the project given the length of time the BBQ program had been running and the resulting high level of ownership amongst the program coordinators and long standing volunteers. The program coordinators were presented with the option of incorporating as a separate entity, and then effectively contracting to Hanover, or becoming part of Hanover's volunteer program. They chose the latter.

This meant that position descriptions as well as screening checks were needed for all volunteers. They were also required to undertake appropriate training in safe food handling and in Hanover's strengths-based approach to working with clients. This all involved considerable time, effort and communication. But it proved to be a good opportunity to determine the status of volunteers. A total of 60 volunteers were on the BBQ list at the start of the process. With such a comprehensive process in place, it was inevitable that there would be a loss of numbers. When the process was completed, 32 volunteers remained.

The organisation was assured that the remaining volunteers were dedicated and committed to the principle of best practice. Indeed, the overall end result was a program that provided for the needs of Hanover clients and the volunteers; while the risks to all involved were minimised by ensuring relevant volunteering and safety standards were not.

Fluctuating volunteer numbers are illustrated in Table 3, which indicates that numbers changed as the database was being developed and updated. Indeed, at the time of the first volunteer survey, in November 2007, it proved difficult to determine how many volunteers were initially contacted about the survey and therefore, the response rate. A total of 50 volunteers completed the first survey.

The development of a centralised volunteer database was finalised in early 2009, in time for the second volunteer survey. This was emailed to volunteers in March 2009 via the database. At the time; it contained the details of 76 volunteers. This survey was completed by 28 volunteers, which yielded a 37% response rate.

Both surveys were designed as an online survey but with the option that participants were able to complete a hardcopy, if preferred. A total of 50 participants completed the

2007 survey and 28 the 2009 survey. This discrepancy was most likely influenced by a one factor, which was mainly due to communication difficulties. The closing period for the 2007 survey was extended on two occasions, which meant the survey ran for about 4 weeks. In contrast, no extension was applied to the 2009 survey, despite some hiccups with the online survey. The 2009 survey ran for only 2 weeks and was most likely the reason for the comparatively low response.

Just three months following the 2009 survey, a total of 68 volunteers were recorded on the database. This would likely have been associated with updating volunteer details and confirming which volunteers were active in the database.

Table 3: Fluctuating volunteer numbers

Date	Numbers	Source	Surveys
January 2007	70 to 100 volunteers	No central database	N/A
November 2007	Number unknown	Database development underway	First volunteer survey (N=50 completed)
March 2009	76 volunteers	Database completed	Second volunteer survey (N=28 completed)
June 2009	68 volunteers	Database updated	N/A

4.3. Volunteer roles

Findings from the 2007 survey and information from the volunteer database (2009) both indicated little change in the types of activities engaged in by volunteers. The three main volunteer roles, which existed prior to the CITV project, involved:

- Participating on Hanover's Board and managing governance issues;
- Mentoring and coaching young children in social skills and providing homework support through the tutor program; and
- Providing barbeques two evenings each week so clients could socialise and have a meal.

Overall, from an estimated 70 to 100 existing volunteers, only 36 remained with Hanover under the CITV project, although 32 new volunteers were registered on the database at June 2009 (Table 4). Only three new projects were created and these provided opportunities for four new volunteers. The roles were located in IT, reception at Dandenong, and an oral history venture.

In the main, Table 4 shows that those who participated in volunteer roles were members of the general public with women taking up roles across a range of activities, except those that were IT related. The roles attracted both young people (15 to 25 years) and those aged 50 and over.

The centralised volunteer database was limited in the characteristics it contained so that the diversity of volunteers was not possible to ascertain. For example, it did not contain information on disability, Indigenous status, refugee or socio-economic status or whether volunteers were from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Table 4: Volunteer activity and profile as at June 2009

VOLUNTEER ACTIVITY	Existing number of volunteers	Number of new volunteers	General public	Women	15-25 yrs	50 yrs +
Board members	8	4	✓	✓		✓
BBQ program	19	7	✓	✓	✓	✓
Tutor program	3	13	✓	✓	✓	
Administration	3	4	✓	✓	✓	✓
Gardening	1	0	✓	✓		✓
IT computer club	0	2	✓			✓
IT support	0	1	✓		✓	
Oral history project	0	1	✓	✓		✓
Event management	2	0	✓	✓		
Total volunteers	36	32				

4.4. Experience of volunteers

In addition to the numbers and the types of roles engaged in, the experiences of volunteers were an integral component of the evaluation framework. Based on the KASA principle, the evaluation focused on changes to volunteer knowledge, understanding, attitudes and skills. Findings presented in this section are based on the results of the two surveys completed with volunteers in 2007 and 2009.

Figure 5: Length of time volunteering with Hanover, as at March 2009 (N=28)

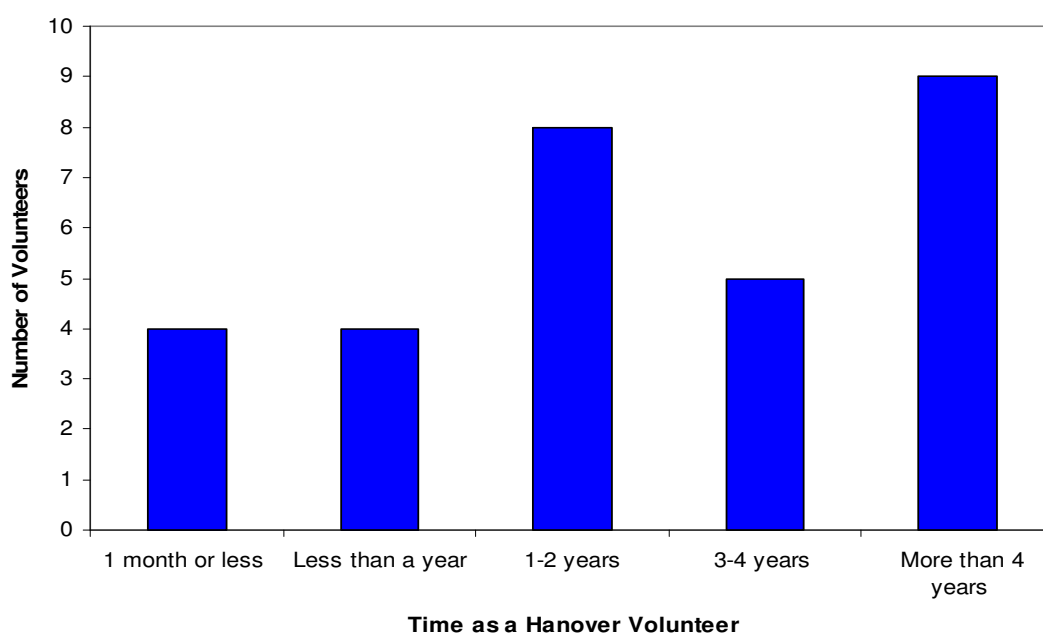


Figure 5 shows that in March 2009, most participants had been volunteering at Hanover for more than four years; the longest period of service was 13 years. This meant that many of the volunteers who completed the survey had commenced volunteering at a time when no formal policies and procedures were in place. In other words, their responses may not necessarily reflect their knowledge or experience with the new best practice model. Despite this drawback, the survey provides a useful benchmark for future reviews of volunteers working within a best practice model.

4.4.1. Satisfaction and recognition

Overall, volunteers worked in a positive environment, reflected in the results of two volunteer surveys.

Volunteers who completed the 2007 survey, shown in Figure 6, felt appreciated and welcomed at Hanover. They reported feeling satisfied with their role and also that they were treated as part of a team. Nevertheless, a high proportion was unsure that their opinions were valued or that they influenced decisions. This may be a reflection

Despite the relatively small numbers, the same positive sentiments prevailed in the 2009 survey, as shown in Figure 7:

- Most of the participants felt welcomed at Hanover and felt they were treated as a valued member of a team;
- Most felt that their opinions were valued, although some were ambivalent about this (n=8);

Both Figures also show that there were areas for improvement. For example, participants were:

- Ambivalent about receiving recognition for their volunteer work and the opportunities they had to contribute ideas and suggestions; and
- Some disagreed (n=6) or were unsure (n=11) that they were able to influence decisions that affected their role.

Figure 6: 2007 Survey - Extent to which participants agreed they were appreciated & consulted (N=50)

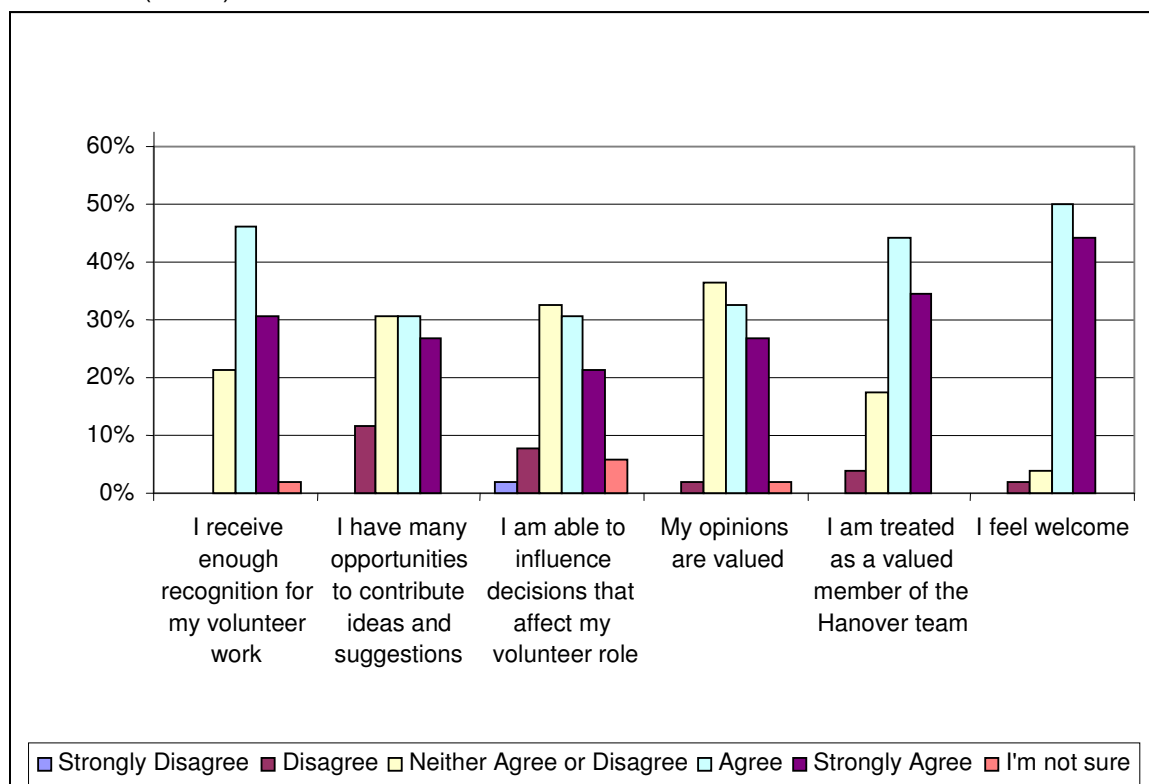
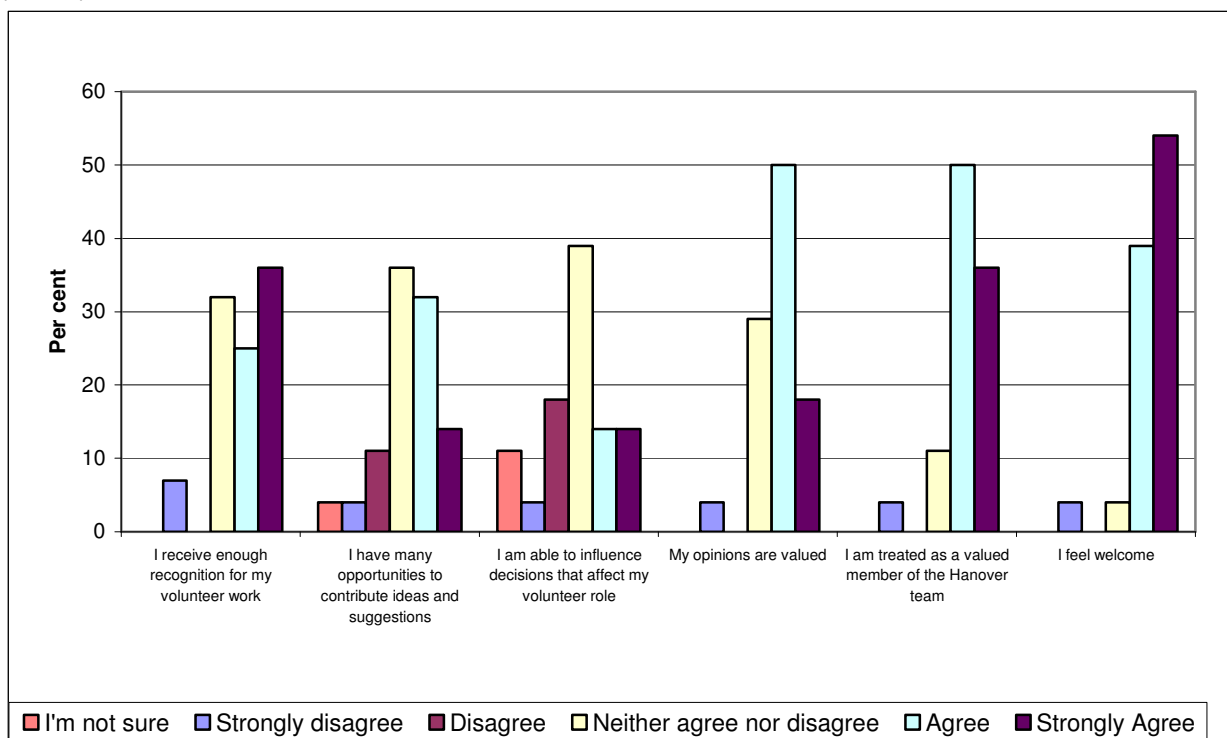


Figure 7: 2009 Survey - Extent participants agreed they were appreciated & consulted (N=28)



4.4.2. Knowledge and skills

The information covered in an orientation session for volunteers included issues such as: Hanover's values, mission and philosophy, volunteer policy, organisational structure, duty of care, confidentiality issues, and written material. How useful was this information to volunteers?

Figure 8 shows that, in general, most participants had found the information useful. Others, however, reported that some key areas were not covered when they had commenced volunteering. They included duty of care and confidentiality issues (n=5), grievance procedures (n=7), emergency procedures (n=8), the organisational structure (n=5) and Hanover's volunteer policy (n=6).

Figure 8: 2009 Survey - Usefulness of information received during orientation (N=28)

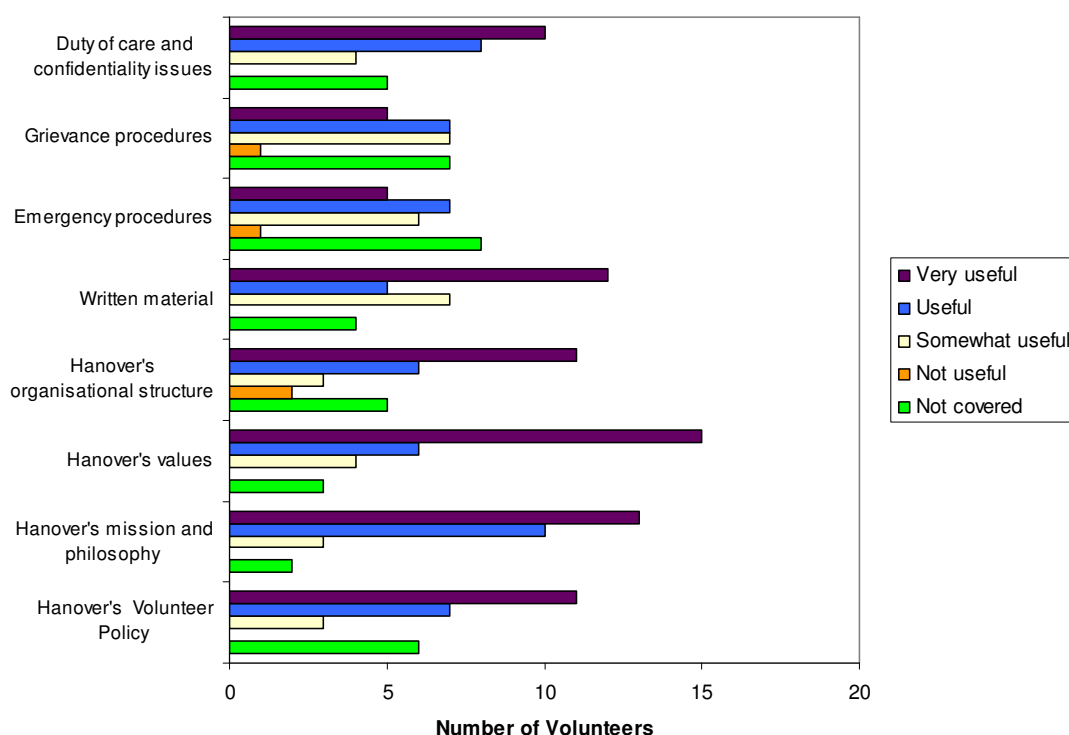
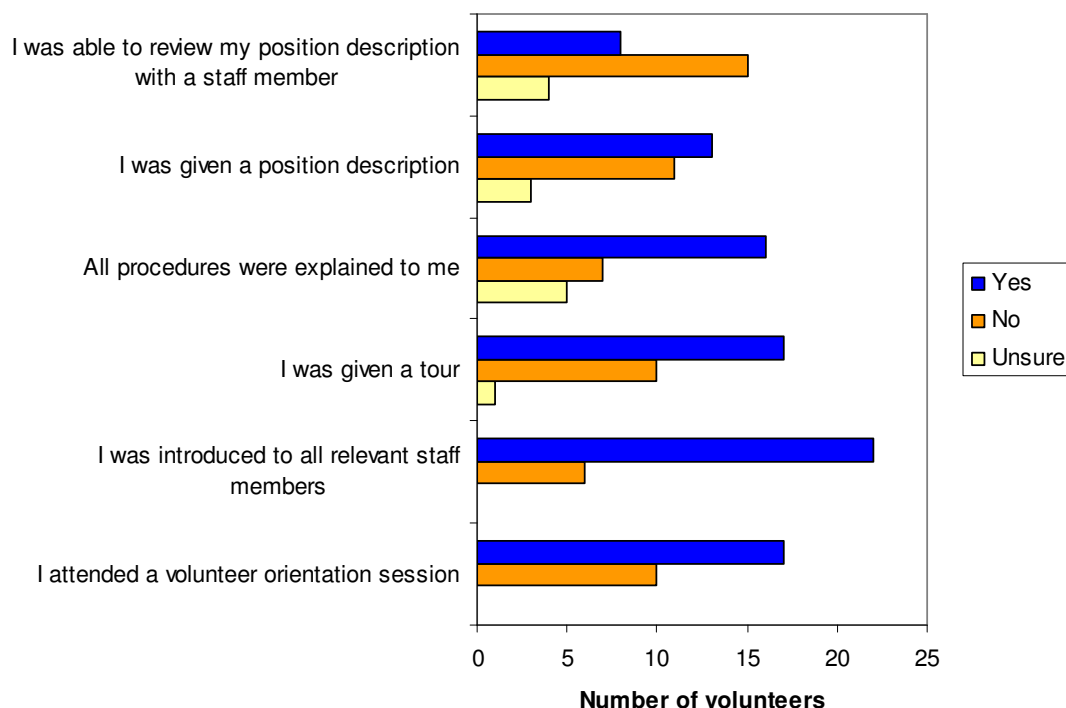


Figure 9 shows that 36% (n=10) of participants had not attended an orientation session. This may reflect the experience of long-term volunteers who had commenced with the organisation three or four years ago.

Figure 9 also shows that while most participants were introduced to all relevant staff members (n=22) and were given a tour of Hanover (n=17), there were still a number who were not (n=6 and n=10 respectively).

In addition, and consistent with the 2007 survey results, most participants were not able to review their position description with a staff member (n=15) and a number were not given a position description (n=11).

Figure 9: 2009 Survey - The induction checklist for volunteers (N=28)



Training (N=28)

Just over half (n=16) of all participants had received some training through Hanover in the 12 months prior to the 2009 Survey. Most of this training related to food handling and safety. Five had listed the orientation as training and one had listed governance training.

Of those 16 participants, most were satisfied with the training they had received. Only one had reported mixed feelings.

Design and support for volunteer roles (N=28)

Participants were asked about their experience of the roles they had. In the main, they agreed that their volunteer role was designed well and was well supported. However, consistent with the 2007 survey, there were some mixed responses:

- Participants, in the main, agreed that their volunteer role was designed well and was supported;
- However, five participants had disagreed while nine were ambivalent;
- Five participants also disagreed that they had the resources and equipment needed to do their volunteer role well; and somewhat worryingly
- Two participants indicated that their health and safety needs were not met, with a further two participants expressing ambivalence; and
- Seven participants were ambivalent about whether the information and instruction they had received helped them to undertake their tasks well.

Perceptions of the volunteer program

When asked what Hanover's volunteer program did well, a total of 16 participants shared their thoughts. In summary, praise for the program focused on:

- That it provided a good and essential service for clients;
- It furthered Hanover's mission and goals; and
- There were good processes and good organisation.

Other issues of importance

Organisational recognition and appreciation of the work done by volunteers was important to the participants. The first Hanover appreciation event for volunteers occurred in May 2008. The event was an opportunity for a diverse group of volunteers to come together to meet each other and Hanover staff from across the organisation. Unfortunately, not all volunteers were able to attend; nevertheless, it was perceived as a success by those who had attended.

Suggestions for improvement

When asked about suggestions for improving the volunteer program, participants identified the need to increase the numbers of volunteers at Hanover.

Participants also commented on:

- Improving the volunteer recruitment strategy through a comprehensive communication strategy, including profiling the program in the media and advertising volunteer vacancies on the Hanover website; and
- Providing opportunities for volunteers to meet each other and work as a team.

Overall volunteering experience

By and large participants described their volunteer experience with Hanover as rewarding, as highlighted in the following statements:

"It has been a fantastic experience and I am very proud to have been a Hanover volunteer. I have learnt so much and enhanced my personal life and my professional career because of this experience and because of what I have learnt by being a volunteer. I have provided a great role model to my family and friends of giving my time and expertise to support the work of such an agency. I wonder what I will do once my short-term project is finished";

"Rewarding knowing that I am making a difference to the education of children of homeless families";

"I believe that Hanover is in touch with the needs of the community and are filling these gaps well, because not only are they there for the homeless but also cater for those who regardless of being qualified still need to keep in touch with the industry because of difficulties in gaining full employment. This was my need for the volunteer program."

CASE STUDY: Building skills and networks through volunteering

One of the wellbeing programs that ran at Hanover was the computer club where clients came along to develop their skills in the use of computers. They learned not just about computer software but also how the hardware components worked.

Ben volunteered on the wellbeing program in 2008; he had significant skills in computing but as a new migrant struggled to find paid work.

Terry was an existing volunteer with the wellbeing program. He and Ben worked together on the computer club and developed a strong working relationship.

Ben was able to develop his English language and communication skills. At the end of the program, Terry, who owned his own company, offered Ben a paid job.

4.5. Summary

Summary of achievements

- Implementing best practice and working with volunteers who had been with the organisation for several years and were reluctant to embrace changes resulted in volunteer numbers actually decreasing. However, those volunteers who remained were committed to working within a best practice model.
- Systems have been developed to increase volunteer numbers that include
 - Policies and procedures in line with National Standards;
 - Centralised volunteer database;
 - Brochures for volunteers were finalised;
 - Information packs developed for all new volunteers; and
 - Volunteer vacancies and position descriptions detailed on Hanover's website.
- A couple of new volunteer positions were created and benefits flowed to both volunteers and staff.
- Over the course of the latter half of the project, a volunteer recognition strategy was developed and the first recognition event for volunteers was held in May 2008.

Summary of opportunities for improvement

An effective communication strategy provides a key opportunity for increasing volunteer numbers, particularly within the organisation:

- Improve communication across sites around what's happening with volunteers and new opportunities for volunteer roles; and
- Promote the success stories related to new volunteer roles, particularly how staff responded to challenges.
- Implementing ideas around potential new volunteer roles in a timelier manner would also assist in increasing volunteer numbers.

4.6. Recommendations

Recommendation 1:

Reinvigorate the 5 year volunteer strategic plan by a more active implementation of the ideas from the staff 'dreaming workshops' that were used to inform its development; this would help to maintain momentum and support for the volunteer program

Recommendation 2:

Include regular updates of the Volunteer Program in Hanover staff newsletter and General Staff Meetings.

Recommendation 3:

Use networks established during CITV to advertise volunteer opportunities at Hanover.

5. Were clients engaged as volunteers?

The engagement of clients as volunteers represented a major challenge for the CITV and especially for the organisation. The evaluation findings indicated that engaging clients as volunteers added a layer of complexity that was only partly addressed by the time the project ended.

This section details the range of sentiments and perspectives in relation to clients as volunteers. Based on the results from surveys and focus groups, the perspectives of both staff and clients are presented.

5.1. Staff understanding and perception of clients as volunteers

Findings from the 2008 staff survey showed that, amongst staff who completed the survey, there was general staff support among for including clients as volunteers at Hanover.

Participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement to a range of statements to do with clients as volunteers. As an example, Figure 10 shows the level of agreement reported by participants to the specific statement: *'I am in favour of involving clients as volunteers at Hanover'*.

The findings illustrated that:

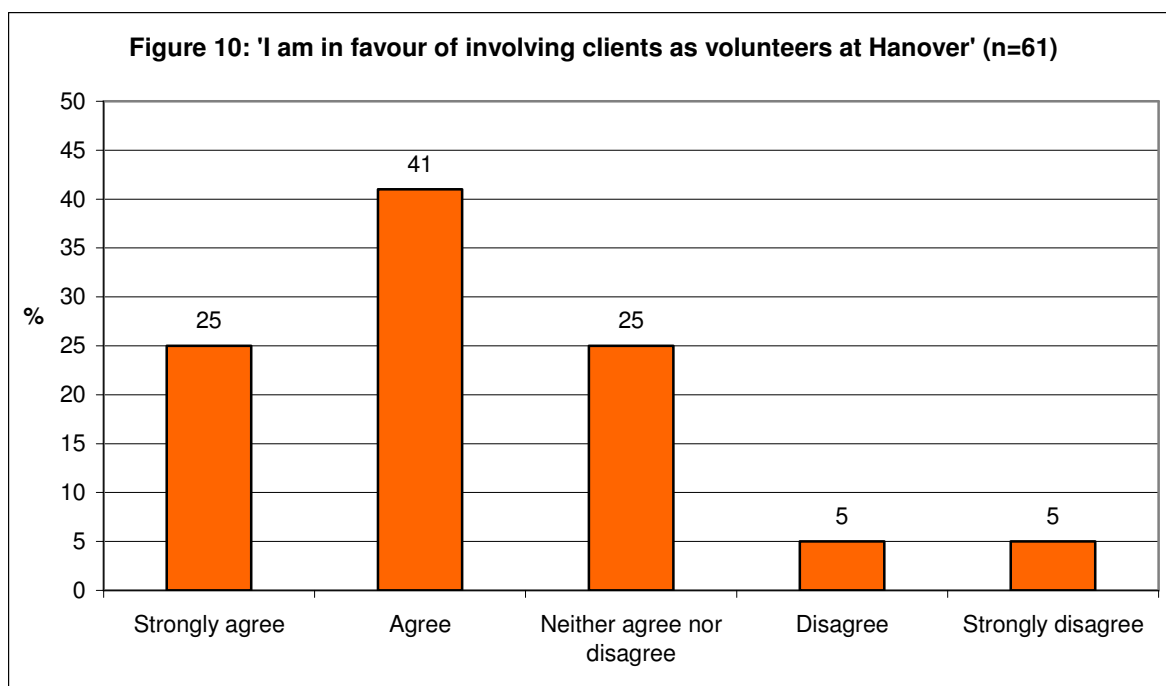
- 66% of staff who participated in the survey agreed with the statement;
- A quarter were ambivalent, which suggests that this group could be persuaded to embrace the concept given consultation and information; and
- A relatively small proportion (10%) disagreed with the statement.

Participants were also asked how comfortable they would be working along side clients who were volunteers. Interestingly, the majority of participants (66%) reported they would be comfortable. In comparison, only 13% reported they would not be comfortable with such an arrangement.

Benefits of volunteering for clients

Staff who participated in the survey were also able to identify the benefits that volunteering could have for clients. A vast majority of participants agreed that clients who volunteered would benefit personally from the experience in terms of:

- Learning new skills (93%);
- Improving self esteem (90%);
- Gaining work experience (98%);
- Improving communication skills (95%); and
- Feeling less isolated (83%).



As some participants from the staff survey explained:

"Inclusiveness and opportunity to engage in meaningful activity are so vital to our clients' support. This direction is a wonderful opportunity for Hanover to facilitate client engagement and the building of self-confidence".

"The client volunteers would gain immensely, for example, self esteem, self worth, experience being part of a community, be able to give back to that".

"I think if clients have the capacity to be a volunteer within Hanover [it] can empower clients and make them feel like they are part of the team, a sense of belonging and in any job, paid or non-paid, you develop new skills, which will increase client confidence to continue their vocation into paid employment, if that is what they wish to do".

"Ethically it demonstrates our commitment to bettering the lives of clients and community members. It can teach workers new things and how to role model, supervise, teach".

"Client participation needed to focus, drive our service, receive regular feedback on what we need to improve, break down divide, create choice, goals, sense of normalcy for clients 'recovering' from homelessness".

Referring clients to volunteering opportunities

Over a quarter of participants (27%) had, in fact, already talked to their clients about volunteer work and 20% had referred clients to volunteer opportunities. However, 49% of participants were ambivalent about whether clients would be interested in volunteering. Additionally, a high proportion of participants (41%) were ambivalent about the suitability of clients to become volunteers.

Concerns related to clients as volunteering

In response to specific statements around clients as volunteers, staff expressed reservations around the following issues:

- Confidentiality (44%);
- Boundaries (57%);
- Risk to the organisation (49%); and
- Dependency on the organisation (48%).

In general, staff felt more comfortable and supportive of the idea of clients volunteering in roles outside Hanover:

"I feel that we should be supporting our clients to find volunteering opportunities in the broader community rather than creating dependence on Hanover. I also feel that there are issues with confidentiality, having clients or ex-clients in office spaces".

"A good match of volunteer to position can be very rewarding for the organisation and volunteer – however, it would be better for Hanover to facilitate clients to engage in volunteer activities elsewhere – [otherwise] boundaries would be very blurred and the relationships between workers and clients would be confusing".

"I believe it is likely to be more beneficial to link clients, as volunteers, with other agencies located in their immediate community. This would serve to increase community participation without the need to have the homelessness identity reinforced".

Appropriate resources and skills

Participants recognised that any initiative to include clients as volunteers needed to be appropriately supported. They talked about staff being appropriately skilled, client volunteers suitably screened and adequate resources in place. As some participants explained:

"Selection process and support would need to be thorough – concerned about reliability and wellbeing of clients. [Some] staff would need support/training around issues clients may be dealing with. Understand the positives of engagement and participation and the benefit clients experience will bring, but would like for clients and paid staff to be adequately trained and supported".

"Depends upon screening process and all policies/procedures must be in place prior to implementation. Appropriately skilled staff must be made available to the volunteers. It must also be considered a long term plan/direction"

"I would like to know what tasks we are referring to for current clients to volunteer in. Depending what tasks they are volunteering for – could be really useful for them (self esteem, filling time, meeting other, learning skills) and Hanover. However, some people are in such crisis that their abilities are affected, time reliability and understanding and acceptance

of Hanover practices and the system we work in. I think suitability of tasks and ongoing support may be issues”.

“Supportive in principle. Appropriate resourcing must be provided by Hanover and well-thought through and planned to maximise success and avoid tokenism”.

“Staff involved with volunteers may need training/supervision for both parties to effectively work together and achieve the best outcomes possible”.

5.2. Experience, perception and aspiration of clients to volunteer

What were the views of clients around volunteering? To explore this critical question, focus groups were conducted in June 2008 to understand clients’ experiences and aspirations around volunteering. To facilitate the focus groups with clients, contact was made with the Peer Education Support Program (PESP) at the Council to Homeless Persons (CHP). This program involved volunteers, who had experienced homelessness, in highly skilled roles involving advocacy, community education and research.

CHP Peer Education Support Program (PESP):

- All client focus groups were facilitated by one Peer Educator from PESP; this role proved to be an inspiration to focus group participants; and
- At the end of each focus group, participants were excited by the PESP volunteer’s involvement and talked about wanting to experience similar opportunities.

Aspirations to volunteer

Overall, participants were enthusiastic about the prospect of volunteering. Most had a good understanding of volunteering and some had volunteered in the past. Indeed, results from Hanover’s 2008 Annual Client Survey indicated that a total of 36 clients who had volunteered or had looked for volunteer work.

When asked what volunteering meant to them, participants in the focus groups talked about positive aspects such as:

- Giving something back;
- Stepping stone to employment;
- Interacting / socialising with people;
- Learning and growing;
- Opportunity; and
- Makes you feel good / good for self-esteem / good for the soul.

On the question of benefits of volunteering, participants emphasised the following:

- Provides greater sense of self;
- Alleviates boredom / doing something, not just sitting at home;
- Connectedness / feeling less isolated;
- Confidence;
- Dignity;
- Learning skills for the future (communication & teamwork);
- Sense of purpose;

- Happiness / feeling good; and
- Empowerment.

As some participants explained:

“When people volunteer they get a sense of pride about themselves, they can say “I’m not useless”

“You’re also choosing to do it, and it’s empowering to make your own choices. I don’t choose to have a doctor’s appointment, but I can choose to volunteer!”

“Getting used to other people; when you talk to others, you’re overcoming shyness and building your confidence”.

Volunteering was something that

Some participants had thought about volunteering and how they wanted to contribute. For example, helping others in similar situations or who cannot help themselves was a common theme:

“I’d like to work in support for people who have been in my situation, especially with single parents, helping them to move on”.

“Work with people who can’t help themselves, like the disabled, if the chance comes. I’d also like to form social groups for the homeless, at least they can feel comfortable and at home. When you get a chance to meet with other people going through the same thing you are, they feel like your family”.

Most participants said they would volunteer at Hanover and were keen to take part in opportunities that developed their language, cooking, office and computer skills. Some talked about recreation, craft, and social groups programs to alleviate boredom and develop interpersonal skills. Others were interested in community awareness campaigns, public speaking, influencing service decisions and peer advocacy roles. Some also expressed interest in volunteering opportunities that provided accredited training.

There was, in fact, no shortage of ideas for volunteer roles from the client focus groups. They included:

- Helping the elderly;
- Helping the very young;
- Teaching life skills;
- Working with animal welfare and wildlife;
- Volunteer roles that involved learning other languages;
- Volunteering in op-shops;
- Helping people who were newly arrived; and
- Helping people just out of prison reintegrate into the community.

Commitment to volunteer

Flexibility was the key. A long-term commitment was not feasible and people needed to be able to ‘opt-in’ and ‘opt-out’. Some were interested in volunteering once or twice per week, while others preferred “come and try” events or mentoring/buddy programs to

overcome fear of negative perceptions and stigmatisation, and to ensure more accurate matching of interests.

Barriers to volunteering

Overall, the following issues were identified by participants as barriers to volunteering:

- Misinformation about refugee status and asylum seeker status and eligibility to volunteer;
- Lack of clarity around Centrelink rules – a perception that Mutual Obligation was the only permissible way to be involved in community;
- Too up and down to commit to regular role, appointment requirements very fluid;
- Concern about negative perceptions that paid work was more important than being involved in community;
- A perception that some community organisations excluded people excluded those with criminal records;
- Not knowing how to find out about volunteering opportunities; and
- Transport, childcare costs.

Referring to childcare issues, one participant explained:

“I’m thinking of volunteering but who’s going to be taking care of my little one? My little one is in day care at the moment, which is why I can do this today, but that’s all I can afford – once a week. If people pay for childcare, then I’d go out and do it – I can build communication skills and meet new people”.

Were there differences between focus groups in crisis accommodation compared with transitional? Overall, reflections from participants were mixed. For example, one participant’s experience was that she had more time to volunteer while in crisis accommodation compared to being in transitional housing. Others noted that being in crisis housing meant that people needed time to sort out their lives before being in a position to volunteer. As one participant explained:

“When you first go into crisis housing you’re not in the right mind to volunteer. You’re ashamed ... there’s health issues involved, your first three months are involved with recovery, finding direction, housing, you don’t even know what day it is. When you’re in transitional housing, you’re more stable”.

Interestingly, while participants in crisis accommodation indicated they were too busy to volunteer, they had also complained of boredom

5.3. Profile of client volunteers

During the period of the CITV, there was effectively only one client engaged as a volunteer. This was a client representative role on the Project Steering Committee (PSC). This role was significant not only for the insight given to the PSC but also for the client representative’s personal development. The client representative indicated increased confidence and self-esteem from participating on the PSC, which in turn led to this volunteer getting involved in other community activities external to Hanover.

This outcome represents only one success story. Nevertheless it is a significant example that challenges preconceived notions about the capacity of clients to be effective volunteers, as well as their interest to participate as volunteers.

5.4. Key areas for further consideration

While there may be some roles that are specifically for Hanover clients, peer mentors for example, clients would be eligible to apply for any volunteer role at Hanover. Some of the concerns that were identified by participants in relation to clients as volunteers, such as confidentiality maintaining boundaries, were issues that had been identified and developed by the Staff Working Group.

A review of documents, which included meeting minutes and presentation, indicated a number of areas where the Staff Working Group had reached a level of agreement. However, these were not able to be finalised before the CITV was concluded but should be considered for further development by the Volunteer Program. For example:

- Focus on empowerment and 'fit for role' –
 - Support workers should encourage clients to apply for volunteer roles, which should be advertised across the organisation in the same way as paid roles;
 - Clients would be assessed for roles as per the assessment process that *all* volunteers undergo; in relation to the issue of dependency, for example, if staff perceived a client could become dependent, then they would be assessed as *not fit for the role*; this would be decided on a case by case basis;
- Maintaining confidentiality –
 - Clients can choose whether or not they disclose that they are a current client of Hanover;
 - Staff would respect the confidentiality of any client volunteer; they would not share client's support needs with the volunteer supervisor, for example.
- Maintaining boundaries -
 - Again, the criterion of 'fit for role' would apply; if staff were concerned about a particular client maintaining boundaries, then they would be assessed as *not fit for role*; the interview process would also be another element that would highlight boundary issues;
 - Clients who volunteer would not be supervised by their support worker; or they could volunteer at a site where they were not receiving support, although this may not be as easy to put into practice for sites such as Cheltenham and Dandenong;
 - The client volunteer supervisor would not be expected to play a support role.
- Clients who are barred from a Hanover service will not be eligible to volunteer –
 - Clients would be given the opportunity to disclose this information during the interview process.

- Volunteer supervision training –
 - The Staff Working Group agreed that the same supervision training that staff accessed would be appropriate and would mean that supervision of volunteers could be seen as a professional development activity.
- Development of roles for clients and volunteers –
 - A range of roles is needed to address the interest and aspirations of clients in both crisis accommodation or transitional housing;
 - Ideas for volunteer roles should continue to be submitted via the project bank;
 - The 5-year strategic volunteer plan provides the blueprint to move forward and expand the program both in terms of the variety of opportunities offered and volunteer numbers.

5.5. Summary

Summary of achievements

Engaging clients as volunteers was a cornerstone of the CITV project. However, it could not progress without implementing a best practice volunteer management model. It is unfortunate that the project came to an end before this key component could be fully realised. Nevertheless, important steps were achieved.

- One client was engaged as a volunteer on the CITV project, which was a representative role on the Project Steering Committee;
- Support for clients as volunteers was explored in staff surveys with findings indicating general support amongst staff, who participated in surveys, for the involvement of clients as volunteers; and there was recognition that such volunteering opportunities could benefit clients and Hanover;
- The views of clients were also sought via focus groups and a structured survey. For clients who participated in focus groups and the Annual Client Survey, findings showed that people who experienced homelessness were no different to the general volunteering population in terms of willingness to participate. Indeed, some clients had experience in volunteering in the past.

Summary of opportunities for improvement

- Communication remains the key: it is important to promote the benefits of clients as volunteers, for the organisation as well as for individuals, to all staff;
- Explore the opportunities for clients to participate as volunteers that may exist in the 5-year volunteer plan;
- The types of volunteer roles that clients were interested in included:
 - Those that provided work experience and enhanced living skills;
 - Volunteering in pairs to overcome fears about stigmatisation; and

- Advocacy programs that related to fundraising, public speaking, community awareness campaigns, and input into service decisions.
- The reality of homelessness means that the issue of client capacity or readiness to volunteer is a critical issue - feedback from client focus groups indicated flexibility is central to engaging clients in potential volunteer opportunities, and there was a preference to volunteer at events did not require ongoing commitment
- The CITV project ended with the development of a 5-year volunteer strategy, clearly designed to both increase volunteer numbers and, importantly, provide volunteer opportunities for client participation. However, a model for involving clients as volunteers within the organisation still needs to be finalised, although at the time of writing a strategy for client participation has been drafted.

5.6. Recommendations

Recommendation 1:

Finalise the development of a model for involving clients as volunteers.

Recommendation 2:

Ascertain current levels of staff support for clients as volunteers in the next staff survey.

Recommendation 3:

Develop communication strategy to build staff support for clients as volunteers

Recommendation 4:

Build staff capacity via training around key areas of concern, such as supervision, confidentiality, boundaries and risk

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Appendix 1- Five year volunteer work plan

	2008/2009 year1 Focus is on transitioning into the new program	2009/2010 year2 Focus is on bedding down the program, building partnerships with referral agencies and establishing one big volunteer opportunity	2010/2011 year 3 Focus is on bedding down developments to date and establishing smaller projects	2011/2012 year 4 Focus developing another big volunteer opportunity	2012/2013 year 5 Focus on bedding down developments to date and establishing smaller projects
External referrals		Establishing external referral program: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Client intro to volunteering seminars • Cert. 1 2 or 3 in volunteering for clients • Training for community orgs on recruiting our client group • Recruitment expos • Matching clients to roles • Monthly volunteering days for crisis clients 			
Administration roles	Hanover Receptionists	Admin and IT Angels (PB8&9)	Stepping stones pilot (PB6 - admin with cert training. leading to traineeships)		
Driving / advocate roles		Appointments Advocate expansion On the move Advocate program (PB20)	Cultural liaison advocates (PB14)		
Education & training			Tutor program @ Cecil St / other sites (PB26)		
Mentor roles				Mentoring Programs (PB36) Crisis visitors (PB13)	Peer Mentors (PB16)
Wellbeing / group work	Scoping Hanover Wellbeing Programs (PB37)	Hanover Wellbeing Programs (PB37 – life skills activities)		Parenting support (PB21)	Learning Centres (PB7)
Consumer advocacy	Consumer Participation Reference Group (PB11)	Listen NOW (PB5 Speakers Bureau)			

Blue – program open to all volunteers / Orange – program specific to clients as volunteers / **Black** – program shouldn't require additional resources
 Black – steps to making referrals for clients to external volunteer opportunities

