

**Submission
No 22**

VOLUNTEERING AND UNPAID WORK PLACEMENTS AMONG CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN NSW

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Date Received: 20/05/2014



Office of
Communities

Commission for Children & Young People

Submission on volunteering and unpaid work placements among children and young people

May 2014

Table of Contents

Introduction	3
About the Commission.....	3
Background	4
Existing policies relating to volunteering and unpaid work placements among children and young people in NSW.....	5
Measures to encourage volunteering and foster opportunities for volunteering among children and young people, including possible incentives to volunteer	6
Motivation.....	6
Support and encouragement.....	8
Barriers.....	11
Conclusions	15
Recommendations	17
The role of the Commission for Children and Young People and the Office of the Children’s Guardian in supporting and promoting safe volunteering and unpaid work placement opportunities among children and young people in NSW.....	19
Bibliography	20
Appendix A.....	21

Introduction

The Commission for Children and Young People (the Commission) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Inquiry into volunteering and unpaid work placements among children and young people in NSW.

Volunteering can provide substantial benefits to young people and the community. These include the development of self-discipline, compassion, empathy, commitment to civic responsibility and greater likelihood of pro-social behaviour later in life. The Commission therefore believes that all young people in NSW should enjoy the benefits that volunteering has to offer.

This submission focuses on measures to encourage volunteering and foster opportunities for volunteering among children and young people in NSW. In doing so, it draws on recent consultations with over 350 children and young people in NSW aged between 8 and 17 years, conducted specifically for this Inquiry by the Commission.

The submission also draws on a scan of the literature, although it should be noted that much of this literature relates to young adults (over the age of 18 years). The Commission's consultation with younger, school-aged children is therefore significant but in no way representative of the views of all children and young people in NSW.

About the Commission

The Commission promotes and monitors the overall safety, welfare and well-being of children in NSW. The Commission was established in 1999 as an independent statutory authority within Government under the *Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998*.

The Commission influences and initiates positive change by:

- making recommendations to Parliament, and government and non-government agencies on legislation, policies, practices and services that affect children and young people
- promoting children and young people's participation in activities and decision-making about issues that affect their lives
- conducting research into children's issues and monitoring children's well-being

Further information about the work of the Commission can be found at:

www.kids.nsw.gov.au.

Background

The Terms of Reference (ToR) of the Inquiry cover a range of matters relating to volunteering and unpaid work placements among children and young people in NSW.

This submission focuses primarily on measures to encourage volunteering and foster opportunities for volunteering among children and young people in NSW. It touches briefly on existing policies in relating to volunteering among children and young people and the role of the Commission for Children and Young People in supporting and promoting safe volunteering and unpaid work placement opportunities among children and young people in NSW

The submission does not address the reference to unpaid work placements as this is an issue that generally affects young people who are 18 years of age or over (and is therefore outside the Commission's remit). The Commission understands that the NSW Education and Communities has already provided information to the inquiry on school-based work experience programs.

The submission is based on feedback from consultations conducted in the first term of 2014 with over 350 children aged 8-17 from public, Catholic and independent schools in NSW and from a mix of metropolitan, regional and rural locations¹. Feedback was received from four primary schools and eleven secondary schools as well as from approximately twenty young people who completed the consultation questionnaire through the Commission's website. A copy of the consultation questionnaire is at Appendix A.

The consultations were conducted using the Commission's Classroom Consultation model which provides young people and classroom teachers with materials, information and opportunities for input to government decision making in a way that fits with the school curriculum and enhances educational and social outcomes. The Commission designed materials promoting knowledge and interest in volunteering and a questionnaire to gather feedback. The questionnaire was developed in consultation with stakeholders and tested with members of the Commission's Young People Advisory Group.

The Commission would like to thank all schools and students who participated in this consultation. The Commission has undertaken to provide a copy of this submission to all participating schools.

¹ The Commission has used the geographic terms 'metropolitan' 'regional' and 'rural' to broadly describe the location of the schools involved in the consultation. These do not necessarily match the Australian Standard Geographical Classification.

Existing policies relating to volunteering and unpaid work placements among children and young people in NSW

Goal 24 of NSW 2021 is to make it easier for people to be involved in their communities. One of the targets under this goal is to increase the proportion of the NSW population involved in volunteering to exceed the national average by 2016.

In committing to this goal and target, the NSW Government has recognised that volunteering not only benefits recipients of services, but provides valuable mentoring and work experience for volunteers, along with personal fulfilment. Actions to meet this target include developing and implementing the NSW Volunteering Strategy.

Youth specific actions under the NSW Volunteering Strategy include:

- Launching an annual competition for students to develop a media campaign aimed at increasing volunteering
- Encouraging young people and employers to recognise the value of skills acquired through volunteering
- Helping young people to demonstrate evidence of their community participation to future employers
- Identifying opportunities to raise the profile of National Volunteer Week in NSW, particularly among key population groups such as young people.
- Initiatives around fostering cultural diversity and increasing volunteering among Aboriginal people; using digital media and technology, promoting new forms of volunteering; and partnering with universities on a five year research plan which may impact on youth.

There are also particular actions in relation to young people under the National Volunteering Strategy including:

- Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet provided one-off funding to the Foundation for Young Australians to support the Young People Without Borders volunteering program. This program provides a structured journey into volunteering and global citizenship for young Australians aged 13 to 20.
- Working with State and Territory governments and education providers to promote, support and recognise volunteering programs in educational institutions.
- An online video competition for young people, to promote the benefits of volunteering to their peers and generate videos about young people volunteering.

The Commission understands that NSW Education and Communities has made an extensive submission to the Inquiry that covers existing programs under the NSW volunteering strategy and an overview of volunteering programs in schools.

Measures to encourage volunteering and foster opportunities for volunteering among children and young people, including possible incentives to volunteer

Measures to encourage volunteering and foster opportunities for volunteering among children and young people need to be informed by the diverse motivations of children and young people, the kinds of supports and encouragement young people of different ages and backgrounds need to volunteer, and the various barriers to volunteering that may face children and young people.

The consultations looked at each of these factors and the findings are reported below.

Motivation

Seventy per cent (70%) of the classroom consultation participants aged 8-17 years indicated that they had volunteered.

However, it should be noted that most of the schools recruited for this consultation had active volunteering programs in place and so this figure is likely to exceed the state average. (By contrast, the 2013 Mission Australia Youth Survey found that 57.5% of young people aged 15-19 in New South Wales and the ACT had been involved in volunteering in the past year (Mission Australia, 2013)).

Even although the Commission's consultations included many schools with strong volunteering programs, nearly a fifth of the young people consulted had **not** volunteered.

Those who had not volunteered were more likely to be male (27% compared to 12% of females), from Sydney (25% compared to 15% of rural students and 9% of regional students) and aged 12-14 years (26% compared to 14% of 8-11 year olds and 13% of 15-17 year olds).

The strongest motivation to volunteer was to help others (88%), followed by having new experiences (70%); gaining job-related skills and experience (66%); meeting new people and making new friends (64%); and to have fun (61%).

Over half of young people also indicated that motivations include feeling useful to the community (56%); contributing to something they believe in (57%); and feeling good about themselves (55%).

Being able to help others, and seeing the joy that they get from your help, is more than payment.

The happiness of knowing you are going to help the life of someone less fortunate.

Finding something that I am passionate about and knowing that my contribution will be meaningful.

Giving back to a certain community who gives a lot to you.

The new experiences - getting out of my comfort zone.

Helping others -trying out new activities and seeing whether it would be something I would like to do when I finish school.

Learning new skills, meeting new people, personal fulfilment.

To help out and hopefully in the future get my dream job to have a new experience and to have fun.

Females were more likely to indicate that they were motivated by helping others (95%) than males (79%).

Males were more likely than females to indicate that they were motivated by using their skills (55% compared to 43%); doing an activity with their friends (48% compared to 32%); and volunteering with other people they know doing it (26% compared to 15%).

Primary school students were more likely than secondary students to be motivated by having fun (77% compared to 58%); meeting new people and making new friends (75% compared to 64%); and feeling good about themselves (67% compared to 54%).

Secondary students were more likely than primary students to be motivated by new experiences (78% compared to 52%); and contributing to a cause they believe in (61% compared to 39%).

Males who *hadn't* volunteered were more motivated than males who had volunteered by gaining skills (74% compared to 67%); having new experiences (77% compared to 67%); and meeting new people and making new friends (67% compared to 61%).

Motivation is also affected by the personal interests of young people.

The consultation participants were most interested in volunteering with animals (53%); sport (46%); children and young people (37%) and education (23%).

Specific things in the volunteering: EG Sports (eg Basketball), Pets etc.

Other areas of substantial interest were: environment (20%); arts and culture (20%); and volunteering with old people (19%).

Males were most interested than females in volunteering in sport (64% compared to 33%) and education (28% compared to 19%).

Females were most interested than males in volunteering with animals (57% compared to 48%); volunteering with children and young people (48% compared to 20%); old people (26% compared to 9%); and people with disabilities (21% compared to 10%).

Males who hadn't volunteered had a stronger preference than males who had volunteered for volunteering in sport (74% compared to 61%) and environment (28% compared to 18%),

Females who hadn't volunteered had a stronger preference than females who had volunteered for volunteering in the areas of arts and culture (38% compared to 20%); young people and children (62% compared to 45%) and people with disabilities (33% compared to 19%) than females who had volunteered.

Volunteering in the area of poverty was more popular with students in Sydney (15%) and regional areas (15%) than in rural areas (0%).

Volunteering in the area of education was more popular with students in Sydney (24%) and regional areas (28%) than rural students (5%)

Volunteering in the area of animals was more popular with rural (79%) than regional (48%) or Sydney (48%) students.

Volunteering in the area old people was more popular with rural (43%) than regional (15%) or Sydney (13%) students.

Interest in volunteering with animals and in the area of homelessness declined with age while interest in education, overseas aid, politics and activism increased with age.

Support and encouragement

Most young people stressed that volunteering was their decision, but support or encouragement from school and friends and structured volunteering programs facilitated their involvement.

I don't think anyone is made to volunteer, most people do it out of the goodness of their hearts and are encouraged and supported by the community.

Encouragement from family and friends is good. They help you become a better person.

I was told to volunteer for my youth group, and in all honesty, it was actually a great experience, and it was a fundraiser for a famine overseas.

Our school informed and encourages us about volunteering.

My nan is a volunteer to the Wesley mission for 18 years and is still going strongly hoping to follow in her foot steps.

The most commonly mentioned factors that young people said would encourage and support them to volunteer were: having other young people to volunteer with (44%); knowing about volunteering opportunities (40%); volunteering close to home or school (39%); and having the hours that fit in around their life (37%).

If more friends went and tried out volunteering, it would encourage me because I'd rather volunteer with people I know as well as new people.

Friends volunteering with me because it would be easier to get involved and young adults supervising as we can relate to them more and get along with them easier.

Knowing about opportunities to volunteer and being able to choose what I want to volunteer for.

Already available positions to volunteer (no need to go job hunting), friends to do it with.

Having volunteering opportunities nearby would encourage me to volunteer because if it was far away, my parents would probably not let me and it would probably be too difficult and inconvenient for me.

Volunteering is based around my life and I have the option to postpone the volunteering date if something important comes up or if school work gets too heavy.

Encouragement from family (33%) and support from schools (32%) also ranked highly in responses.

... people like family and friends encouraging me to give up my time.

I believe that the school needs to organise ways in which students are able to get involved. A lot of people I know would be willing to give their time to others and make a difference. It needs to be advertised enough and have organisations come to schools to try to engage students to participate. In the end we will all benefit and feel good about ourselves.

Females were more likely than males to indicate that encouragement from schools (29% compared to 18%); support from schools (38% compared to 25%); and encouragement from the organisation they are working with (32% compared to 22%) were important to them.

Males were more likely than females to emphasise the importance of training (36% compared to 23%) and reimbursements for costs (29% compared to 10%).

The relevance of some encouragements and supports declined with age:

- Encouragement from family (51% of 8-11 year olds; 36% of 12-14 year olds; 23% of 15-17 year olds)
- Help with transport (26% of 8-11 year olds; 11% of 12-14 year olds; 8% of 15-17 year olds)
- Cost reimbursements (23% of 8-11 year olds; 19% of 12-14 year olds; 14% of 15-17 year olds).

The relevance of other supports increased with age:

- Knowing about volunteer opportunities (20% of 8-11 year olds; 43% of 12-14 year olds; 46% of 15-17 year olds)
- Organised volunteer programs in school time (11% of 8-11 year olds; 24% of 12-14 year olds; 26% of 15-17 year olds)
- Having a certificate to show at the end (9% of 8-11 year olds; 18% of 12-14 year olds; 21% of 15-17 year olds)

Students from regional schools placed a higher importance on:

- Knowing about volunteer opportunities (48%) than students from Sydney (37%) and rural (21%) schools.
- Encouragement from family (38%) than students from rural (33%) and Sydney (30%) schools.
- Encouragement from the organisation they are volunteering with (32%) than students from Sydney (26%) and rural (18%) schools.

I believe that volunteering opportunities need to be more easily accessible for young people, particularly in areas outside large cities. Many students don't volunteer simply because they have become programmed to believe that there are no opportunities for them to volunteer, that people /organisations don't want their help (particularly when the volunteering requires specific training etc), and that it requires too much work to volunteer.

Students from Sydney schools:

- Placed a higher importance on hours fitting around their life (46%) than students from regional (37%) and rural (21%) schools.
- Placed a higher importance on a certificate at the end (24%) than students from regional (15%) and rural (12%) schools.
- Placed lower importance on support from schools (21%) than students from regional (40%) and rural (47%) schools.

Students from rural schools placed a higher importance on:

- Training (39%) than students from Sydney (27%) or regional (25%) schools.
- Transport (26%) than students from Sydney (13%) or regional (7%) schools.

Young people who hadn't volunteered placed greater emphasis than students who had volunteered on:

- Volunteering close to home or school (47% compared to 37%).
- Knowing and liking the adults they volunteer with (35% compared to 25%).
- Money back if they have to pay for things (29% compared to 14%).

If I could find a organisation and people I can work with and be happy around

Males who hadn't volunteered placed more emphasis than males who had volunteered on:

- The hours fitting around their lives (50% compared to 36%).
- Encouragement from the organisation they are volunteering with (32% compared to 15%)

Females who hadn't volunteered placed more emphasis on knowing about volunteer opportunities (57%) than females who had volunteered (41%).

Volunteering close to home, having hours that suit my schedule, knowing the people I will be working with, getting a certificate at the end.

Barriers

The consultation found that there were a range of barriers affecting young people's decision to volunteer or to continue to volunteer.

I think that volunteering is somewhat daunting. Not only does it require a regular devotion of time and effort, difficult to schedule around an already closely-packed schedule, volunteering often demands social skills and confidence that is hard to find in oneself.

The main reason given for young people choosing not to volunteer was that they were too busy with other things (62%). This was the strongest reason whether the young people had volunteered before (63%) or had never volunteered (59%)

Other commonly reported factors included:

- Not being interested (38%).
- Not feeling comfortable with people they don't know (38%).
- Unsuitable hours (30%).
- Not knowing what kind of voluntary work would be good (23%).

Some volunteer options may take up too much time between school, homework and outside sports etc. Whilst others may not know about any volunteer opportunities open for them that they would be interested in.

They have too much on their schedule already.

Mainly because they can't really find something that they want to volunteer for or they don't have the time to do it or their parents would rather have them focusing on academic or sporting endeavours.

Lack of interest or the need to be working with no spare time to volunteer.

It can be quite hard even just finding something helpful to do because quite a few places have requirements such as age, or driving, or being able to volunteer during school hours.

Females who had never volunteered were more likely than females who had volunteered to report barriers such as: they didn't know they could volunteer (26% compared to 11%); they were not interested (52% compared to 38%); and their family was unable to help (13% compared to 3%).

Because they do not know about any volunteering positions that are available (Like Me).

Some young people don't volunteer because they don't know how to or what type of support they will receive.

Males who hadn't volunteered were more likely than males who had volunteered to indicate that taking too long to organise (24% compared to 13%) or hours not being suitable (43% compared to 26%) were barriers.

Primary school children were more likely than secondary students to indicate problems with family being unable to help (14% compared to 2%); not feeling they have the skills (22% compared to 13%); and too much paperwork (21% compared to 10%).

I want to volunteer in a few years as I'm too young. – [12 year old]

Because some organisations or volunteering experiences aren't fit for some youth.

People under the age of 12 need to have more choices in volunteering in spare time.

Secondary children were more likely to indicate that they were too busy (64%) than primary school children (56%). This was even more prominent for 15-17 year olds (66%) than 12-14 year olds (59%).

As I am currently undergoing my HSC, the prospect of giving up my time to volunteer becomes more and more unappealing for both myself and my friends.

Secondary school children were also more likely to indicate not being interested as a barrier (41%) than primary students (26%)

Lack of access to transport was a particularly prominent issue for primary students in rural schools (34% indicated this was a problem) compared to primary students in Sydney and regional schools (14%).

Another significant barrier is lack of access to information. Less than half of respondents indicated that they received enough information about volunteering opportunities (44%).

Those who hadn't volunteered were more likely than those who had volunteered to say that they hadn't got enough information about volunteering opportunities (67% compared to 35%).

I never see any information.

You should tell the young people the opportunities they have otherwise they won't care and they will never volunteer

Volunteering is not something no one wants to do. It's just it is too hard to access information and opportunities for volunteer work for it to become a habit. It's like exercising, if there are no gym memberships or even exercise facilities at all for the people to exercise with they are less inclined to get into the habit of exercising.

There is a need for more advertising for volunteering and more knowledge about opportunities for volunteering.

The consultations asked about the best ways for young people to get information about volunteering opportunities.

The most popular ways to get information about volunteering opportunities were through a school or teacher (64%); on the internet (54%); and through television advertisements (36%).

Sometimes it is very very hard to find what volunteering there is available so I believe there should be something in schools that allows people to easily view this data.

All children should volunteer for at least one thing in their lives. You must also do more advertisements on the tv, because that's where most kids spend their day doing.

It would be cool if there was a way to find out through school such as pamphlets or flyers of possible opportunities. Or maybe a website emailed out to everyone.

Having teachers come up to, and asking if you would like to help.

Through TV and internet because that's where the majority of teenagers see things being advertised. and if there is something that they'd like to do showing, they might want to do it.

Through the school would be the best way. I've only ever volunteered a few times in my life and all of them were through the school. If the school did more to publicise volunteering, I would definitely be more inclined to take volunteering opportunities.

If you would like more children to volunteer then promote it through school or as advertisements.

The best way to find out is through your parents, teachers at school, sport teams coaches or a relative or friend.

Students who hadn't volunteered had a stronger preference than students who had volunteered for getting information through the internet (70% compared to 51%) or a website (28% compared to 15%).

Those who had volunteered expressed a stronger preference for information through friends (27%) than those who hadn't volunteered (12%).

Males had a stronger preference for getting information through the internet than females (64% compared to 48%) while females had a stronger preference for getting information through their school or teacher than males (68% compared to 57%).

Students from rural schools had a stronger preference for receiving information through family (34%) than students from Sydney (15%) or regional schools (19%).

Students from rural schools also had a stronger preference for receiving information through friends (38%) than students from Sydney (28%) or regional schools (18%).

Students from Sydney schools had a stronger preference for getting information through social media (41%) than students from regional (33%) or rural schools (12%).

Students from regional schools had a stronger preference for television advertisements (46%) than students from rural (29%) and Sydney schools (27%).

Younger children had a stronger preference for receiving information through the Internet than older children (76% of 8-11 year olds; 58% of 12-14 year olds; 44% of 15-17 year olds) and for getting information from family (36% of 8-11 year olds; 21% of 12-14 year olds; 13% of 15-17 year olds).

As children get older they prefer to get information through:

- Television advertisements (24% of 8-11 year olds; 37% of 12-14 year olds; 40% of 15-17 year olds).
- Schools (46% of 8-11 year olds; 61% of 12-14 year olds; 72% of 15-17 year olds).
- Organisations (2% of 8-11 year olds; 12% of 12-14 year olds; 22% of 15-17 year olds).
- Social media (24% of 8-11 year olds; 33% of 12-14 year olds; 40% of 15-17 year olds).

While many young people may start volunteering they do not always continue.

The consultation found that the main reason young people might stop volunteering was that it was boring (56%).

they might get bored of it or getting too tired between other things or problems with their organisations.

Some people stop volunteering because they think it is boring or too hard or they might be lonely whilst they are doing the volunteer work.

Young people need to have fun while volunteering otherwise they will not like to volunteer again.

This was closely followed by being too busy/not having enough time (53%) which increased as children get older (37% of 8-11 year olds; 48% of 12-14 year olds; 63% of 15-17 year olds).

when they get to year 11 and 12 and have to start studying for the HSC they find it hard to juggle study, homework, a job (if they have one) and volunteering all at once. so because they have trouble managing time they drop certain activities like volunteering.

Other significant reasons for young people stopping volunteering were: being told what to do and not having a say (35%); not feeling welcome or part of things (28%); and because adults didn't respect young people (26%).

Young people might stop volunteering due to the fact they might not be getting recognition, its far out of their way or they feel uncomfortable with the people surrounding them.

I think this may be because they are not getting the respect they think they deserve.

They feel they are not being valued for the effort they put in.

not being able to suggest an idea, always getting rejected.

the people they are helping are giving them the bad jobs.

This can be because they are disappointed with what they have to do when they volunteer.

Young people have opinions so don't sort of treat them young or look down on them.

Females were more likely than males to report that not feeling welcome or part of things would stop them from volunteering (31% compared to 23%).

Females were also more likely than males to report practical barriers such as not being able to go at the expected times (17% compared to 6%); travel difficulties (19% compared to 12%); and being too busy or not having enough time (57% compared to 46%).

Males were more likely than females to report that the reasons for stopping volunteering were: boredom (68% compared to 48%); lack of respect for young people (34% compared to 21%); and not learning anything new (20% compared to 14%).

Conclusions

While the consultations involved a relatively small number of children and young people in NSW the findings broadly correlate with the literature reviewed.

The first thing to note from the consultation findings is the variation in the motivations and capacities of young people to volunteer and the areas in which they are interested in volunteering.

The pattern of these variations indicate that the attitudes and behaviours of young people in relation to volunteering are influenced (in part) by age, gender, family and cultural background, where young people live and the family and community resources available to them.

This suggests that volunteering opportunities should be promoted and implemented in a variety of ways to appeal to the diverse motivations and capacities of young people.

The consultations found that young people are particularly interested in opportunities to volunteer with their friends, and that friends are also an influential source of information. The literature supports this finding (Webber, 2011).

It has been suggested that volunteering organisations may wish to recruit groups of young people to capitalise on the importance of peer affiliation and that promoting existing youth involvement may also help to attract more young volunteers (Volunteering Queensland, 2011).

Australian research has suggested a role for youth ambassadors who have had positive volunteering experiences as a way of helping other young people envisage a positive volunteering experience (Moffatt, 2013). Provided ambassadors can relate to a diverse range of young people (and thereby help promote volunteering as 'cool') this would seem to be a promising strategy.

Other research has suggested that volunteering needs to be something young people are doing and talking about to capitalise on peer influence (Wynne, 2011), and points to the importance of social media as a platform for young people to share experiences and find other motivated young people to engage with (Birdwell and Miller, 2013).

Perhaps the most significant distinction in the consultation findings was between the young people who had volunteered and those who had not. As noted above, this may be a function of gender (females were more likely to volunteer than males); age (12-14 year olds were

less likely to participate than younger or older children); or location (people living in Sydney volunteered at a lower rate than children in rural and regional areas.)²

However, these variations may also be due to other factors that were not explored in the consultations.

While the Commission's consultations reveal very little about the backgrounds of those who volunteered compared to those who did not volunteer, a study of volunteering among Australian adolescents found that volunteers are typically people with higher incomes, higher education and more social resources and that parents who volunteer are more likely to have children who volunteer (Webber, 2011). So while volunteering can be particularly important for disadvantaged young people as a pathway to develop confidence and skills, meet new people and enhance pathways to social and economic participation, these young people are often the ones with least access to volunteering programs or the supports needed to help them volunteer (Volunteering ACT, 2013).

Overall, the consultations found that young people are generally enthusiastic about volunteering and are interested in a broad range of volunteering opportunities.

For both males and females and primary and secondary school students, helping others was the strongest motivator to volunteer. Other strong motivators included having new experiences, gaining skills, meeting new people and having fun.

Having other young people to volunteer with, knowing about volunteering opportunities, volunteering close to home or school and having the hours that fit in around their lives were the main supports and encouragements identified by young people as desirable.

However, encouragement and support from family and schools also ranked highly.

Schools are important in helping young people access volunteering opportunities and exposing them to the values that underpin volunteerism (Webber, 2011). Schools can also assist in increasing the diversity of young people who participate in volunteering (Birdwell and Miller, 2013).

School-based volunteering programs can reach out to vulnerable young people (Volunteering ACT, 2012); overcome the barrier of time commitments for many young people (Volunteering ACT, 2013); and have flow on effects in terms of motivating students to volunteer outside of school (Ofsted, 2011).

Partnerships between schools and volunteering programs and organisations can provide alternative learning experiences and environments for young people at risk of disengaging from education and increase the supportive bonds between young people and their communities (Adams, 2009). For very vulnerable young people, in-school volunteering may be an attractive option, particularly where health problems or lack of confidence and experience prevent volunteering in a community setting (Ofsted, 2011).

² These demographic variations should be treated with caution as the young people who participated in the consultations were not representative of the NSW population of children and young people. For example, the perhaps surprising finding about the high rate of volunteering among children aged 8-11 years can be explained by the high level of support for volunteering within their primary schools and among their parents.

The quality of the volunteering experience is important for maintaining engagement in volunteering. Young people want to feel they are respected, able to have a say and that they are welcome in their volunteering roles.

The main barrier to volunteering for the young people consulted was being too busy. Overall, busyness, a boring experience and lack of time were the main reasons given when asked what might stop young people volunteering again. Lack of time or being too busy increased with age.

Other disincentives to volunteering include not being interested, not feeling comfortable with people they don't know, unsuitable hours and not knowing what kind of volunteering work would be good.

There is also a significant information barrier, with less than half of respondents indicating that they received enough information about volunteering opportunities. Those who hadn't volunteered before were much more likely to say that they hadn't received enough information about volunteering opportunities.

Primary school students were more likely than secondary school students to report barriers to volunteering such as their family was unable to help, not feeling they have the skills and too much paperwork.

The consultation findings and the literature suggest that effective strategies to encourage volunteering among young people need to:

- Respond to the diverse motivations of children and young people.
- Ensure that young people are provided with the right information in the right way.
- Provide the kinds of supports and encouragement young people of different ages and backgrounds need to volunteer.
- Support early engagement.
- Sustain and build ongoing engagement.
- Pay particular attention to those children and young people who do not volunteer.

Recommendations

On the basis of the consultations and the literature reviewed, we make the following suggestions for improving the uptake of volunteering among children and young people:

1. Organisations responsible for promoting volunteering should consider engaging young people in the design of promotional strategies and materials (including the use of social media) to promote volunteering among young people in a way that reflects and responds to the diverse motivations and capacities of young people. This could include involving young people as positive story-tellers and ambassadors in school visits, articles and other promotions.
2. Organisations that are interested in attracting young volunteers should consider offering opportunities with flexible hours, lower levels of initial commitment and reduced paperwork as soft entry points to longer term volunteering.

3. Organisations that are interested in attracting young volunteers should consider ways for young people to volunteer together to encourage further involvement and capitalise on peer influence.
4. Schools and volunteering organisations should consider providing volunteering opportunities for young people earlier in their school life when they have more time to give to volunteering.
5. Schools, volunteering organisations and NSW Government agencies should explore specific supports that may be required to assist younger children to volunteer (for example through primary school programs, youth mentoring of younger children, and whole-of-family involvement and support).
6. The Department of Education and Communities should consider ways to extend current in-school opportunities to volunteer. Schools should be encouraged to develop volunteering programs that suit their student cohort and local communities, recognising the potential for volunteering to engage students at risk of disengaging from education.
7. Volunteering organisations that are interested in retaining young volunteers should model respect for children and young people by listening to them and involving them in the decisions of the organisation and their work as volunteers. They should ensure good practice in inducting and communicating with young people and provide supervision and training tailored to the volunteers' age, maturity, vulnerability and the nature of the work performed.
8. Volunteering organisations that are interested in retaining young volunteers should work from individual volunteer strengths rather than fixed position descriptions and adjust to young people's study and other commitments.
9. More targeted research is needed to understand the policies and supports that will encourage volunteering among those children who do not volunteer, including those who are vulnerable or disadvantaged. This should include a focus on assistance with transport in areas where access to transport for young people is poor and financial support for young people who wish to volunteer where cost is a barrier to their participation.

The role of the Commission for Children and Young People and the Office of the Children’s Guardian in supporting and promoting safe volunteering and unpaid work placement opportunities among children and young people in NSW

The Children’s Guardian is responsible for regulating and administering the Working with Children Check and associated compliance to screen people who work with children in a paid or voluntary capacity. The Children’s Guardian is also responsible for the Child Safe Organisations Program which promotes child safe practices at a whole-of-organisation level. The Children’s Guardian also regulates the employment of children in the entertainment industry.

The role of the Commission in supporting and promoting safe volunteering opportunities is provided for in its core functions of: promoting the overall safety, welfare and well-being of children and young people in the community; and promoting the participation of children in the making of decisions that affect their lives and encouraging government and non-government agencies to seek the participation of children appropriate to their age and maturity. The Commission’s role is reflected in Recommendation 7 above.

At a broader level, the children involved in the consultations (particularly primary school aged children) raised concerns about safety.

Not feeling safe was perceived as a barrier to volunteering for some children and particular safety supports were sought by other children. As one primary school student said:

having other people doing volunteering with me would make me feel safe and having someone to be there to help if I needed and supervision for the first little while then I would be able to do it by myself

The presence of additional barriers to volunteering for younger age groups is also reflected in other research, with a Victorian study finding there are limited volunteering opportunities for young people less than fifteen years of age due to concerns about legal and supervision requirements and misconceptions about the ability and potential of young volunteers (Wynne, 2011).

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Appendix A

Volunteering Inquiry

If you are a young person aged 10-17 years, this is your opportunity to tell the NSW Parliament your opinions about volunteering.

Volunteering means freely giving your time to help the community.

There are no right or wrong answers– everyone will have different points of view about what is important .

WE REALLY VALUE YOUR OPINIONS AND ENCOURAGE YOU TO TELL US WHAT YOU THINK.

The Commission for Children and Young People will write about the views we collect from young people in our submission to the NSW Parliament's Committee on Children and Young People. The Commission will also send a copy to your teacher to give to you.

NOTE:

The survey is completely anonymous so we do not know who you are.

The more you tell us the easier it will be able to take your ideas into account.

Volunteering Inquiry

Are you male or female?

- Male
- Female

How old are you?

- 9
- 10
- 11
- 12
- 13
- 14
- 15
- 16
- 17

What is the name of your school or organisation? (optional)

What is your suburb or postcode?

Volunteering Inquiry

Have you ever volunteered?

Volunteering means freely giving your time to help the community.

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

What would make you want to volunteer?

Stuck for ideas? You might like to think about what looked good in the volunteering videos and what you have heard friends and other people say about volunteering that appealed to you.

Here are some reasons we thought of for volunteering. Please tick the most important ones to you.

- To help others
- To have new experiences
- To contribute to something I believe in
- To feel useful to the community
- To gain the skills and experience to prepare me for a job
- To use the skills I have
- To meet new people and make new friends
- To do an activity with my friends
- To feel good about myself
- To have fun
- Other people I know were volunteering and i thought I would try it
- I am part of a group that organises voluntary work
- I don't know
- Other ideas (please specify)

Volunteering Inquiry

What might encourage or support you to volunteer and why?

Stuck for ideas? Think about your own experiences or your friends' experiences, or other people you know and things you might have heard about.

Here are some things that we thought might support or encourage young people to volunteer. Please tick UP TO FIVE that are relevant to you or the young people you know.

- Knowing about volunteer opportunities
- The hours fit around my life
- Volunteering close to home or school
- Training
- Help with transport
- Money back if I have to pay for things
- Other young people volunteering with me
- Knowing and liking the adults I would volunteer with
- Support from schools
- Support from youth group
- An organised volunteer program in school time
- An organised volunteer program in school holidays
- A thank you or words of encouragement from the person or organisation I'm helping
- Encouragement from my family
- Encouragement from my school
- There is a certificate to show at the end
- There is a school award or presentation ceremony
- Nothing would encourage me to volunteer
- Other ideas (please specify)

Some young people say they are made to volunteer by their family or school or an organisation they belong to. If this is true for you tell us how it happened.

Why do you think some young people DON'T volunteer?

Stuck for ideas? Think about your own experiences or your friends' experiences, or other people you know and things you might have heard about.

Here are some of the reasons we thought of why young people might not volunteer. Please tick what you think are the TOP THREE things relevant to you or the young people you know.

- Not knowing what kind of voluntary work would be good
- Too much paper work
- It would take too long to organise
- Too busy with other things
- Feeling uncomfortable with people they don't know
- Don't feel they have the skills
- Didn't know they could volunteer
- Hours are not suitable
- Not interested
- There is no real community need
- There is no training for the young people who volunteer
- No access to transport
- Family not able to help
- Need to work instead
- Effort of young people not valued
- Adults don't respect young people
- Other reasons not mentioned? Write them here

Sometimes young people stop volunteering. Why do you think this might be?

You might like to think about what young people might not like about volunteering - your experiences, your friends' experiences or things you have heard from other people you know.

Here are some thoughts about what might stop people volunteering again. Please tick what you think are the TOP THREE things that you think would stop young people volunteering.

- It was boring
- Being told what to do and not having a say
- There were no other young people to talk to
- Adults didn't respect young people
- Not learning anything new
- Not being well supervised or supported
- Not feeling welcome or part of things
- Not being able to go at the expected times
- Too busy or not enough time
- Travel difficulties
- There was too much to do
- There was not enough to do
- Other reasons (please write below)

Volunteering Inquiry

Do you get enough information about volunteering opportunities?

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

What is the best way for you to find out about volunteer opportunities available to young people?

These are some of the ways we thought of. Please tick **THREE** ways that you would like to get information about volunteering opportunities.

- On the internet
- TV advertisement
- Through my school/teacher
- Through my family
- Through a friend
- Through groups or organisations I belong to
- Through a website
- Through social media (facebook, twitter, instagram, etc)
- Being asked to help out by an organisation
- Other (please specify)

Volunteering Inquiry

What areas of volunteering are you most interested in?

Here are some of the areas we thought of. Please tick the **THREE areas you would most like to volunteer in.**

- Sport
- Environment
- Animals
- Arts/Culture
- Overseas Aid
- Young People/Children
- Old People
- People with Disabilities
- Health
- Education
- Poverty
- Refugees
- Politics/Activism
- Homelessness

Other (please specify)

Is there anything else you would like to tell the Parliamentary Inquiry or the Commissioner for Children and Young People?

Thank you for taking part in this consultation.

Do you have any suggestions to improve future consultations (tick all that apply)?

- Have fewer questions
- Make the questions easier to understand
- Have fewer questions where you need to write long answers
- Have more games/activities
- Have better videos and materials

Anything else? We'd love to hear your ideas.

Would you be interested in taking part in future consultations?

- Yes
- Yes but only if the topic interests me
- No
- Can't decide

When you finish the survey your teacher will give you some information from the Centre for Volunteering on Youth Volunteering and finding volunteer opportunities. These will assist you should you choose to volunteer in the future.

To get more information about volunteering you can find links on the Commission's website:

<http://www.kids.nsw.gov.au/Your-space/Your-voice>