

We have had 2 thought provoking and stimulating days, which I hope have given you the opportunity to reflect on the way the volunteering is supported and encouraged within your organisation and has provided you with ideas and insights – possibly a boggling array that will take some processing - that you can consider to make changes to develop and amend these so that they remain relevant into the future.

I'm are not going to provide any answers this afternoon but give you even more questions to go away with.

These are questions I think need to be asked and they need to be asked now. Why? Well as a very good friend will often remind me that if you always do, what you've always done you'll always get what you've always got. Only today that chances are you won't even achieve that!

I believe that volunteering is just as relevant and needed today as it has always been, but we need to adapt and change to keep it vital and significant. Maurice Gray yesterday reminded us of the unique cultural heritage of Aotearoa New Zealand and that we need to recognise that maori and pakeha have different world views. We know too that many new New Zealanders bring different perspectives to volunteering and that a "one size fits all" approach is, I believe, a sure fire recipe for disaster.

We all know that volunteers, both through formal and informal avenues, are the fabric that keeps this country together, woven

through all aspects of society. Volunteers are involved within organisations, be they sport and recreation – from the thousands of volunteers at the netball courts every Saturday to all of those who will be involved in the rugby world cup in 2011, the arts and heritage – the choirs and singers that Bryan reminded us of last night to the museum volunteers here at our place, Te Papa or the local museums such as the O’Kains Bay as the Minister made mention of, service groups such as Lions or Rotary which as Greg Brownless noted yesterday was part of his civic involvement that had set the groundwork for his life changing experience in post tsunami Phuket. The environment – protecting and saving our natural heritage be it local community members involved in gully or coastal protection work through to major project such as the establishment of pest free mainland islands such as Maungatautari in the Waikato. The emergency services and social services who are focussed on ensuring the safety and well being of all citizens; through to those groups we do always think of those involved in human rights and union, and religious movements.

Volunteers are involved in all of these areas because there is a need. I found it fascinating that to discover that New Zealand has 97,000 not for profit organisations as identified in the 2005 census and only 10,000 have paid staff. The participation of these volunteers enables these organisations not only to exist in the first place but to meet their objectives and purpose.

So if my maths is to be trusted this equates to about one organisation to every 41.23 people. Do we need this many organisations? We talk about sustainability, about the competition for resources, about the desire to work more collaboratively, so how ready are we to let go of some power, to consider alternate and creative ways of working?

So given that volunteers are so vital and we all must think they are pretty important or we wouldn't be here I suspect there is a whole lot of work waiting to be done back at the office - I think that we have some tough questions to ask of ourselves –

We heard yesterday from the Minister about the need for and importance of a civil and engaged society, so what do we want this to look like?

How do we maintain a balance between learning from the experience of other countries while ensuring a 'world view' of volunteering that meets the needs of the people of **this** country is achieved? Don't fall into the trap of thinking that just because we have a common language with other countries that we have a similar way of looking at the world – we don't!

For instance with the current discussion about taxation of reimbursements being undertaken by the IRD, we need to ensure that in fixing the problem around honaria we do not disadvantage Maori with the giving and receiving of koha.

When considering formal volunteering, how do we, as the people with the passion, interest knowledge and experience challenge the organisations that we are involved with to be as volunteer friendly as they can be? Do you have senior management support? Is your organisation committed to involving volunteers in its activities? Are they given meaningful and satisfying roles?

You could ask your colleagues whether if the organisation you are involved with had all the funding that it needed whether it would still involve volunteers? And if so why? It may be an interesting question to ask.

How do we meet the need to be creative with our volunteer programmes so that they are attractive and of interest to prospective volunteers, while keeping our current volunteers engaged and at the same time ensuring that the needs of the organisation and if you are a human service organisation, that the needs of your clients are being met – which at the end of the day is why the volunteering programme exists in the first place?

As you may know my paid work is with the Foundation of the Blind, so I have a real interest in ensuring that our volunteer programmes give access to, are supportive of and encourage diversity? Would they stand up to an EEO audit?

How do we ensure that the huge amount of informal volunteering, that which takes place outside of organised bodies, is recognised and given a voice to be heard?

We know that it can be difficult to recruit people on to boards and committees – are they still the more relevant structures for what we aim to achieve?

How do we meet the challenge of meeting the needs of the distinct generations of volunteers?

Here I must add, a personal plea – if you are involving young volunteers, please do all you can to ensure that they have a positive experience. They are the volunteers of the future and we need to make sure that that first experience is one that encourages them to continue to volunteer in the future.

Are our volunteer programmes able to change and adapt to appeal to the differing motivations and interests of different groups of volunteers? The corporate volunteers, the families or special interest groups. How good are we at communicating our needs and building relationships whether with individuals or groups that are based on mutual understanding and respect and shared values – and being clear enough of our purpose and values that we are ok about saying no thanks.

How brave are we and how committed our organisations to stand back from what we do, to see the wood for the trees and critically

examine what we are doing and whether it is the best way to meet the need. And if they are reviewing the volunteer programme is it done internally or do you bring someone in from outside the organisation. And then if we do decide to change how do we manage the whole change management process taking people with us on the journey.

When you consider these and the other questions that you have rolling around in your minds the situation may be a little daunting – and some people think that managing volunteers takes few skills, is really very easy – good touchy feely sort of stuff – well I know its jolly hard work. Dealing with people or working through challenging situations has huge rewards but it is not always easy! We require a huge raft of skills and the complexity of the role is not always recognised.

So.... How do you look after yourself – what do you do to ensure that you are the best volunteer coordinator, manager, resourcer that you can be?

Hopefully you will go away from today not only with ideas and questions but with contacts, people that you can catch up with in your area, or by using the technology. Think about joining groups such as AAVA – the Australasian Association of volunteer Administrators, join OZVPM email group, use the internet Google ..... seek out like minded people.

One of the things that I am really interested in perusing is the need to promote the role of the volunteer manager as a career, so that this work is recognised and valued and that it continues to attract people of passion and integrity.

I think that I am in a motorbike phase at the moment, yesterday I mentioned Bert Munroe and his creativity, his ability to turn the ordinary into the extraordinary and to have a dream and give your all to achieve it. This morning I sat up on level 4 of the museum working on this speech, opposite John Britten's motorbike. People of all ages and nationalities got out of the lift and were drawn to the bike, the ultimate racing machine. What makes it special - it was designed and built on the cheap by an amateur, it was a radical new design and engine, he used different building materials, carbon fibre, so it is light and strong, it has an onboard computer, goes extra fast around corners and for those of us who don't know much about these sorts of technical things – it is a work of art.

Why do I think this is important , well for me it was yet another example of what makes new Zealanders special. We have the ability to look at the world differently, to take commonly held ideas and make them our own, creating and adapting so that they meet our needs. Just like the Future problem solvers Rod talked of yesterday.

So, we leave here today armed with a wide variety of information, insights into different world views and cultural perspectives, fascinating statistical information and trends from NZ and Australia, a greater understanding of new technologies and their potential (and

just remember what is current today is out of date tomorrow), the challenges and complexities of measuring the value of volunteering, the need to keep volunteering accessible for all, with a flexibility to meld to different needs and circumstances and the ability to evolve and keep relevant and up to date.

As I have mentioned before we need to find our own solutions and if we think the task is worth the effort and has value we will achieve this and volunteering in Aotearoa new Zealand will be stronger, more robust and relevant because of it.

My sincere thanks again to the organising team, to Amy and Jay, and Diana for all that you have done to make this gathering such a success. And to the back up crew who have beavered away with all the background bits and pieces that you never notice when they work well and only to aware of when they go bung!

And our grateful thanks to the conference sponsors: IHC, SPARC, the Office for the Community and Voluntary Sector, Stats NZ, Absolutely Positively Wellington, ANZ national bank and Strategic pay – without their support this conference just would not have happened.

Thank you for your engagement over the last 2 days, may you take the positive energy that has been so evident back with you and may it inform and impact on your future work.

Go well and go safely!

