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Natural resource management participation, knowledge &
skills in the SA Arid Lands region – volunteers

Prepared by Ehrenberg-Bass, University of South Australia

Natural Resource Management Participation, Knowledge & Skills in the SA Arid Lands Region – Volunteers

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Report to the South Australian Arid Lands Natural Resources Management Board

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the findings from research undertaken by the Ehrenberg-Bass Institute (the Institute), on behalf of the Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources (DEWNR) and the South Australian Arid Lands Natural Resources Management Board (SAAL NRM Board) in 2013 - 2014.

The broad research aim was to provide information that can be used in meeting the SAAL NRM Board target of ensuring 'that all those actively involved in the management of natural resources have the information, knowledge, and skills needed to meet NRM priorities'.

Two key groups were surveyed: members of volunteer groups and coordinators of volunteer groups. In total, 187 volunteer members were emailed an online survey link, resulting in 60 completed surveys; and 25 telephone interviews with volunteer coordinators were completed between November and December, 2013.

Specific information was sought regarding age, recruitment, sources of information used to build knowledge and skills, and knowledge of grants and funding assistance.

The findings will be used to improve the services designed to aid people actively involved in managing natural resources, to achieve mutually beneficial goals.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	I
TABLE OF CONTENTS	II
BACKGROUND & RESEARCH OBJECTIVES	1
METHOD & SAMPLING APPROACH	2
RESPONDENT PROFILE	3
Volunteering Profile	5
Respondent and Volunteering Profile Summary	7
FINDINGS ABOUT VOLUNTEERING	8
Understanding of Natural Resources Management	8
Sources of Information / Knowledge & Skills	9
Knowledge & Skills	15
Motivations to Volunteer	17
Barriers to Future Involvement / Recruiting Volunteers	19
Perceptions of Regional Issues	22
Grants / Funding Assistance	23
RESEARCH CONCLUSIONS	28
Method & Sampling	28
Respondent Profile	28
Understanding of Natural Resources Management	28
Sources of Information / Knowledge & Skills	29
Knowledge & Skills	30
Preferred Activities & Motivations	30
Recruiting Volunteers	30
Grants / Funding Assistance	31
APPENDIX A: VOLUNTEER ORGANISATIONS INVITED TO PARTICIPATE	33
APPENDIX B: QUESTIONNAIRE	34



Background & Research Objectives

This report details the key findings of research conducted amongst natural resource management volunteers that perform work in the South Australian Arid Lands (SAAL) NRM region. The aim of this research is to provide information that can be used in meeting the SA Arid Lands NRM Board target of ensuring 'that all those actively involved in the management of natural resources have the information, knowledge and skills needed to meet NRM priorities'. Additionally, this research also allows for monitoring progress towards achieving such targets, serving as a benchmark against which future progress can be assessed. This report, focusing on volunteers, is a companion report to 'Natural Resource Management Participation, Knowledge and Skills in the SAAL Region', which focuses on pastoral leaseholders or managers of pastoral leases. In this study, the respondents included members of volunteer organisations active in the SAAL region, as well as the managers of those volunteer organisations. The research was commissioned by Natural Resources SA SAAL (NR SAAL) in 2013.

The specific objectives of this project are similar those of the pastoral landholders (also for NR SAAL) research, because these projects are strongly linked. These objectives are as follows:

- To identify knowledge, skills, and participation in natural resources management in the SAAL region, amongst key stakeholder groups (in this instance, volunteers)
- To develop sound empirical benchmarks that can be tracked over time to assess change in knowledge, skills, and participation
- To identify and capture the level of awareness and perceived efficacy of current services offered in the SAAL NRM region
- To identify how stakeholders build knowledge on relevant issues, through an examination of the information sources used
- To determine the most effective methods for engaging with stakeholders who are actively involved in managing natural resources, about NRM issues (differences between groups)
- To inform the improvement of services designed to aid people actively involved in managing natural resources, to achieve mutually beneficial goals

These research objectives link back to long-term resource condition targets (RCTs) and shorter-term management action targets (MATs), as outlined in the SAAL Regional NRM Plan. Specifically, these targets are MAT 46 and 49, and RCT 9 and 10. Additionally, Goal 1 from the State NRM Plan was considered in the development of this research, to ensure that the data could also contribute towards state-level targets.

The research was developed in consultation with NR SAAL / DEWNR staff, including input into the research design and questionnaire.



Method & sampling approach

Two different groups of volunteers were surveyed, with similar questionnaires used for each to ensure comparability of responses. Firstly, those who are the volunteer coordinators, or hold other senior positions in volunteer organisations were surveyed via a 20-minute telephone interview. In total, 25 surveys were completed amongst this group, with contact details of respondents provided to the Ehrenberg-Bass Institute (the Institute), from DEWNR. While call-backs were arranged in order to complete the interview, none of the respondents declined to participate in the research, resulting in a 100% response rate for this component of the research. This is an excellent result, suggesting that volunteer coordinators engaged well with the research and were keen to share their views. Fieldwork for the phone survey of volunteer coordinators was carried out between the 14th and 16th of November 2013, by AMSRS accredited interviewers of the Institute.

The second respondent group were members of volunteer groups, whose details were also provided to the Institute by DEWNR. For many of these volunteer members, telephone numbers were not available, and so they were surveyed using an online questionnaire. In total, 187 emails were sent to addresses from the list provided, but 45 emails 'bounced back'. Sixty surveys were filled out by respondents resulting in a response rate of 42%. This result is within the range that we would expect for this type of survey. Unfortunately, however, some volunteer members did not fully complete the survey, meaning that for some questions, the total number of responses is lower than the total sample size. The online survey was active for two weeks, from the 30th of November 2013, until the 11th of December, 2013.

Appendix A contains a list of volunteer groups invited to participate in the survey.

Results

Throughout this report, results are reported as either a percentage of total responses (for proportional questions), or as a mean score (for scale-based questions). The column labeled 'n' represents the total number of respondents giving a particular answer. Results are reported based on whether the respondent is a manager or member of their volunteer group. Totals are also reported where appropriate. All analysis was completed using SPSS and Qualtrics software. Where the total number of responses is higher than the total sample size it is because respondents were able to give more than one response to the question. We do not report a total for the percentage column where such multiple responses occur, as the figures will sum to over 100%.



Respondent Profile

This section details the various socio-demographic characteristics of both volunteer coordinators and volunteer members. Where the sample size for the volunteer members is lower than 60, this is due to respondents not fully completing the survey, or simply skipping the demographic questions.

All respondents to the online survey were screened for whether they are currently, or have previously been a member of a volunteer organisation that operates in the SAAL region. Where they were not (n=3), they did not participate in the survey.

Table 1: Gender

	Managers		Members	
	n	%	n	%
Male	17	68	25	61
Female	8	32	16	39
Total	25	100	41	100

Table 1 shows a higher proportion of male volunteers compared to females and that the magnitude of difference is consistent between volunteer coordinators and members.

Table 2: Age

Years	Coordinators		Members	
	n	%	n	%
18 – 25			3	7
26 – 35			2	5
36 – 45			2	5
46 – 55	1	4	2	5
56 – 65	6	24	13	32
66 +	18	72	19	46
Total	25	100	41	100

Table 2 shows that volunteers are typically older, predominantly over the age of 55 years, with 96% of coordinators falling into this category, and 78% of members. The volunteer members group includes a higher proportion of younger respondents, with 22% under the age of 55.

Table 3: Employment Status

	Coordinators		Members	
	n	%	n	%
Full-time	4	16	10	24
Part-time	1	4	3	7
Looking for work			5	12
Not looking for work			2	5



	Coordinators		Members	
	n	%	n	%
Retired	20	80	21	51
Total	25	100	41	99

Results for employment status of the respondent (Table 3) reflects their age, with older respondents being significantly more likely to be retired. Of those over the age of 66 years, for both groups, only three respondents were not retired, and these people stated that they were working only part-time. Younger respondents were more likely to be working full-time.

Table 4: Household Status

	Coordinators		Members	
	n	%	n	%
Single, no children	5	20	8	20
Single, children			1	3
Couple, no children	19	76	23	58
Couple, children			3	8
Other	1	4	5	13
Total	25	100	40	102

As for employment status, age was a key influence over the household status of respondents (Table 4). Across both groups, those respondents over the age of 55 years, were more likely to suggest that they were married or in a defacto relationship, and no longer had any children living at home. Younger respondents were more likely to be single with no children.

Table 5: Education Relevant to NRM

	Coordinators		Members	
	n	%	n	%
Yes	3	12	10	24
No	22	88	29	71
Unsure			2	5
Total	25	100	41	100

Overall, the majority of respondents claimed not to have undertaken education specifically relevant to NRM. Volunteer members were more likely to say they had undertaken some education relevant to NRM compared to coordinators, however, the absolute number in both groups is low, and could be a sampling artefact. The undertaking of education relevant to NRM did not vary significantly with the age of the respondent.

Where the respondent stated that they had undertaken education relevant to NRM, they were asked what form of education or training that was. Results varied, with no one form of education receiving more than three responses – these include a university undergraduate degree, postgraduate degree, other postgraduate studies, a TAFE course, short course related to NRM, and agricultural high school.



Table 6: Live in the Region

	Coordinators		Members	
	n	%	n	%
Yes	1	4	4	10
No	24	96	35	88
Some of the time			1	3
Total	25	100	40	101

The vast majority of volunteers lived outside of the SAAL area, based throughout South Australia, typically within the metropolitan area. Only three respondents lived outside of the state (two based in regional Victoria, and one in regional NSW).

Volunteering Profile

The majority of respondents were current members of a volunteer organisation, with only one volunteer manager (4%), and four (9%) volunteer members suggesting that their membership had lapsed. All lapsed members indicated that they had only stopped volunteering within the last two years.

Due to a wide range of volunteer organisations respondents were associated with, rather than report the individual names of clubs / groups, responses have been grouped into relevant categories of volunteering organisations. Respondents were able to give multiple responses to this question, meaning that totals do not sum to the total sample size. Results for the type of volunteering organisation respondents belong to are shown in **Table 7**.

Table 7: Volunteer organisation type

	Coordinators		Members	
	n	%	n	%
'Friends of' group	14	44	10	23
4x4 club	12	38	8	19
Bushwalkers club / track cleaning	2	6	6	14
SA Arid Lands NRM			5	12
'Clean up' group	1	3	6	14
Other	3	9	8	19

'Other' responses given included: Bush Heritage, Trees for Life, Buffel Busters, Birds SA, and Nature Conservation Society.

Table 8: Time Spent Volunteering per Month

	Coordinators		Members	
	n	%	n	%
5 hours or less	5	20	8	21
5 – 10 hours	5	20	6	15



	Coordinators		Members	
	n	%	n	%
10 – 20 hours	2	8	9	23
20 hours +	10	40	3	8
Varies too much to say	3	12	11	28
Unsure			2	5
Total	25	100	39	100

There was a good spread across respondents in terms of total time spent volunteering per month, for both members and coordinators. Overall, coordinators were found to spend more time volunteering per month than members. Amongst members, older respondents (those over 55 years) were more likely to suggest that they spend either 10 – 20 hours, or 20+ hours per month volunteering than for younger people. All volunteer members between the ages of 18 and 45 years who answered the question volunteered for five hours or less per month.

Table 9: Years associated with a volunteer group

	Coordinators		Members	
	n	%	n	%
0 – 2 years			11	23
2 – 5 years	2	8	16	34
5 – 10 years	6	24	10	21
10 years +	17	68	10	21
Total	25	100	47	99

Volunteer coordinators were significantly more likely to have been associated with the volunteer organisation for a long period of time (Table 9), with responses largely demonstrating that coordinators have worked with their organisation for 10+ years. Results were more varied for members, with age again being a key influence over length of association – older respondents were more likely to have been associated with the organisation for a longer time (either 5-10 or 10+ years).

Table 10: Activities participated in

	Coordinators		Members	
	n	%	n	%
Clearing weeds / weed control	15	60	31	66
Re-vegetation	8	32	18	38
Fencing areas of a property	7	28	12	26
Restoration of heritage buildings	7	28	12	26
Pest animal control	4	16	10	21
Administrative tasks	4	16	9	19
Developing tourism infrastructure	3	12	13	28



	Coordinators		Members	
	n	%	n	%
Field data collection / monitoring	3	12	16	34
Developing or reviewing management plans			6	13
Other	11	44	16	34

Respondents stated experience with multiple activities, gained as part of their volunteering (Table 10). 'Clearing weeds / weed control', and 're-vegetation' were the most commonly participated in activities. Activities not strongly associated with NRM were also mentioned, such as the 'restoration of heritage buildings', and 'administrative tasks'. This breadth of experience appeared to be associated with the length of time respondents had been associated with a volunteer organisation, as those with more experience claimed to have participated in more activities. 'Other' activities predominantly included 'picking up rubbish', 'cactus removal / poisoning', and being a 'committee member'.

Respondents were asked whether the activities they had completed had been performed on-park, off-park, or a combination of both. Results in **Table 11** show that for the majority of respondents, activities were performed both on and off-park. For approximately three in 10, activities were only off park and, for the remaining few, activities were exclusively on-park.

Table 11: On versus off-park work

	Coordinators		Members	
	n	%	n	%
On-park	3	12	1	2
Off-park	7	28	15	32
Both	15	60	30	64
Unsure			1	2
Total	25	100	47	100

Respondent and Volunteering Profile Summary

In summary, the profile of respondents showed many volunteers, both coordinators and members, to typically be older, retired, and to have been associated with a volunteer group for a long period of time, experienced in a range of volunteering activities, both on and off-park.

Given that existing volunteers have typically been associated with their organisations for a long time and currently older (seven in 10 coordinators and almost five in 10 members are 66+ years of age), attracting younger volunteers is likely to be a key issue for increasing total participation in volunteering activities in the SAAL region and for succession planning.



FINDINGS ABOUT VOLUNTEERING

This section presents and discusses research findings, with results compared between volunteer coordinators and volunteer members where possible.

Understanding of Natural Resources Management

Respondents were asked what they considered the term 'natural resources management' to involve and what they understood by this term. This was to determine the different ways in which volunteers view and interpret the term which is commonly used in the context within which volunteers operate and the materials used to support them.

Volunteers were largely able to provide a clear definition or explanation of NRM, which possibly demonstrates a high level of interest and understanding. Responses largely reflected the activities that volunteers have been involved in, so the productivity aspects were not mentioned (ie stock management).

Volunteer members often gave more detailed responses than the coordinators, though this may be due to the differing methods of data collection: an online survey allows more time to write out a reasoned response. It is also possible that they could have referred to reference sources to help when completing the survey.

Indicative responses from each group included:

For volunteer coordinators:

"Any of the natural assets that we have in our environment, its water, trees, creeks"

"Conducting activities in a way that preserves nature in its current condition"

"The management of the state's assets relating to the environment"

"To look after the whole country, really. Keeping the bush in its natural state"

"Trying to keep weeds, rabbits and unwanted animals out. To preserve the remaining native species"

For volunteer members:

"Human intervention in managing the surrounding natural resources in the best way possible, as deemed by experienced scientists, field staff, pastoralists and land managers"

"NRM - is the term used for the caring and maintaining of our natural resources (plants and animals) for future generations in a sustainable manner"

"To me, a natural resource is something that is part of nature, things like natural springs, wildlife (including fish), landscapes (e.g. scrublands or mountains), oil/minerals etc. The need for natural resource management seems to imply that modern society has too much of an impact on natural resources to simply let nature take its course. In my opinion, the primary focus of natural resource management should be in limiting the impact of modern society. As an example, it may be unreasonable to expect people not to draw water from the ground, natural resource management would be charged with making sure the amount of water being drawn from the ground is not having a significant, detrimental impact upon nature (i.e. local flora/fauna)"

"Management of a resource or potential resource - an economic interest - but with the assurance that the environment (vegetation, animal, land and atmosphere) impact is none or minimalised, or not undertaken"



“Taking care of our country’s natural resources e.g. flora fauna etc. and the land and rivers and oceans to ensure that they are environmentally sound”

From the findings of this question, volunteers can be seen to have a sound understanding of the term ‘natural resources management’, are correctly interpreting its meaning and have a shared understanding of the term. It is likely, therefore, that this term can be used in communication materials without requiring further explanation.

Sources of Information / Knowledge & Skills

A key objective of this research was to identify how volunteers build knowledge of relevant NRM issues and to determine the most effective methods for communicating with them. To address this objective, respondents were asked which sources of information they use to build their knowledge on volunteering opportunities, of the region in general, and to learn about natural resources management issues. Multiple responses to the questions were possible. Results are shown in **Table 12**.

Table 12: Sources of Information

	Coordinators		Members	
	n	%	n	%
The Internet (generally)	14	56	30	64
Family and / or friends	1	4	22	47
Newspapers			21	45
NRM factsheets			20	43
TV news			19	40
Across the Outback			18	38
NGOs			13	28
SAAL Board website	1	4	13	28
SAAL NRM Board publications			13	28
SAAL NRM Board staff	1	4	6	13
Landcare			5	11
SAAL NRM District Groups			4	9
On Track publication			3	6
Unsure			1	2
Other	11	44	11	23

General Internet searches were the single most claimed source of information, for both volunteer coordinators and members. This result was particularly strong for the volunteer coordinators group, where respondents rarely identified other sources as being used. Of the 44% of coordinators who indicated that they use ‘other’ sources, these were identified as being information from ‘The Conservation Council’, ‘word of mouth / natural resources colleagues’, ‘journals and conferences’, ‘lectures’ and ‘talks through the 4x4 club’.

Volunteer members were more varied in the sources of information they used, demonstrating a higher usage of in-person information sources, such as ‘family and / or friends’ (47%), and ‘SAAL NRM Board



staff' (13%). Other sources of information stemming from NRM organisations were also more highly used by volunteer members, such as the 'Across the Outback' publication (38%).

Volunteer members were not prompted for each source of information, so they may use sources beyond the Internet in general but not recall those sources.

'Across the Outback' & 'On Track' Publications

To further investigate the use of information sources, respondents were asked questions specific to NR SAAL publications, these being "Across the Outback", and the 'On Track' annual report. Firstly, volunteers were asked whether they read 'Across the Outback' and, if so, how often. Results are seen in **Table 13**.

Table 13: Across the Outback Readership

	Coordinators		Members	
	n	%	n	%
Yes – always	10	40	5	12
Yes – most times	1	4	11	26
Yes - sometimes	2	8	7	17
Rarely	2	8	6	14
Never	9	36	5	12
Don't know of it	1	4	8	19
Total	25	100	42	100

Results demonstrate that, while no volunteer coordinators identified 'Across the Outback' as a source of information unprompted, when prompted, 40% stated that they always read it, with an additional 20% having read it in some capacity. Volunteer members were more varied in their readership of this publication, though responses demonstrate that it was also widely read amongst this group. For both the manager and member respondents, approximately 40% claimed to either not be familiar with the publication or to never read it, despite the members being prompted with the publication's name.

To better understand the use of this publication, several open-ended questions were asked. Firstly, volunteers were asked what aspects of the 'Across the Outback' publication they found to be useful. Indicative responses included:

For volunteer coordinators:

"It provides a good idea as to what is going on in the region. We get ideas for future projects from it"

"The educational articles and what people are up to"

"The information is very broad, good to see what people are up to in the region"

"Just seeing the bigger picture on what people are doing"

For volunteer members:

"It gives an overall indication of the NRM work going on in the region"

"Up-to-date information on research and NRM activities"

"General interest stories about people from the Outback"



“Just a good overview of NRM activities in the SA Arid Lands”

“Well-presented and informative, covers a broad range of topics”

“Promotes the work of volunteers, and keeps us informed of what’s happening in our areas”

Responses highlighted the usefulness of general updates on activities being undertaken in the region, and on the usefulness of articles that promote the work of volunteers and articles highlighting their achievements.

Volunteer coordinators and members were also asked what they would like to see more of in ‘Across the Outback’. Volunteer members declined to provide any suggestions here, instead commenting that it already has “heaps of information”, and to “continue as it is now”. Volunteer members were of the same opinion, commenting, in the main, that they were unsure how it could be improved, or were “happy as it is”. This should be interpreted with care as respondents often find it hard to make product or service improvement suggestions when asked. Of the responses that were provided by volunteer members, comments included:

“More pictures and features on individual areas”

“More technical articles, and more articles from specialist “guest contributors”.

“Conservation and how station owners are looking after the Outback”

“More about what volunteers are doing to improve the environment”

These were all individual responses, however, and therefore not reflective of the larger sample.

Finally, respondents were asked what they would like to see less of in the publication. Again, volunteer coordinators declined to make suggestions. The same was true for members, with only two respondents providing a response:

“Less government speak. Let the magazine be a bit controversial in terms of content and views”

“... waste disguised as worthwhile projects, e.g. locking of tracks to save the environment instead of fixing the track for public access”

Overall, responses related to ‘Across the Outback’ are similar to those identified amongst pastoral landholders, with people suggesting that the most useful content is the general information about activities in the region and what others are doing.

Following questions about ‘Across the Outback’, respondents were asked the same questions for the ‘On Track’ publication. Results for the frequency of reading this publication can be seen in **Table 14**.

Table 14: On Track Readership

	Coordinators		Members	
	n	%	n	%
Yes – always	6	24	2	5
Yes – most times			3	7
Yes - sometimes	1	4	6	15
Rarely	3	12	6	15
Never	13	52	8	20



	Coordinators		Members	
	n	%	n	%
Don't know of it	2	8	16	39
Total	25	100	41	101

Responses reflect a lower readership of 'On Track' than for 'Across the Outback', with 52% of coordinators and 20% of members stating they never read it, and an additional 8% of coordinators and 39% of members claiming to be unfamiliar with it. The higher proportion of respondents who have not heard of this publication compared to 'Across the Outback' (4% coordinators and 19% members unaware) is understandable given that it is a new, annual publication with only two editions released at the time of the survey.

As for 'Across the Outback', respondents were asked what aspects of the publication they considered to be the most useful, and what they would like to see more and less of included. The responses for the useful aspects of 'On Track' were as follows:

For volunteer coordinators:

"It contains a lot of information to see what is happening"

"Includes good general information about what is going on in the region"

"Provides a good indication as to how things are progressing in the region"

"Information about the areas and people in which we work"

"Just the general information and knowing what other people are doing"

For volunteer members:

"Just general information"

"Stories about the Outback"

"Information about what's happening in the Outback"

"Outback news and information"

Overall, responses are largely the same as those for 'Across the Outback', in that volunteers stated that 'On Track' is useful for general information about activities within the region. When asked what they would like to see more of included in 'On Track', no volunteer coordinators were provided suggestions, but two volunteer members did respond with:

"Include features on parks and their issues"

"Other people's stories"

No suggestions were made for what they would like to see less of in the 'On Track' publication.

Sources of Information for Volunteering Opportunities

Respondents were asked which sources they use to hear about new opportunities for volunteering activities, in order to better understand how they become involved. Multiple responses were possible for this question. Results are presented in **Table 15**.



Table 15: Sources for hearing about volunteering opportunities

	Coordinators		Members	
	n	%	n	%
Through informal networks	15	60	30	67
At meetings	1	4	25	55
Emails	5	20	22	49
Newsletters	5	2	24	53
Phone calls from vol organisation			7	16
Volunteer organisation website	1	4	5	11
I don't find out about any	3	12	2	4
Unsure			1	2
Other	8	32	2	4

When searching for information about NRM, respondents largely said that they use the Internet (generally) as their main source, however, when looking for information specific to volunteering opportunities, information sources do differ. Informal networks were the most commonly used source of information (60% for coordinators, 67% for members), while emails were also commonly used by both groups (20% of coordinators, 49% of members). Volunteer members were shown to use a wider variety of sources compared to coordinators, with information about volunteering opportunities also relayed to them at meetings (55%), and through newsletters (53%). 'Other' responses for volunteer coordinators included: 'the internet in general', 'Volunteers SA', and 'through the club', while for members the 'other' response was 'Landline on TV'.

Respondents were then asked if there was any way in which they would prefer to receive information about new opportunities, that they currently did not. Volunteer coordinators overwhelmingly (n = 23) did not want to receive information in any other way than they currently do, with only two respondents suggesting another method, these being 'through the volunteer association' and 'the coordinator could give us a talk'. As such, the following table (Table 16) only displays preferred information sources for volunteer members.

Table 16: Preferred information sources for new opportunities

	Members	
	n	%
Emails	17	40
Happy with current sources	16	38
Newsletters	9	21
Through informal networks	8	19
Volunteer organisation website	5	12
At meetings	3	7
Phone calls from vol organisation	1	2
Unsure	1	2



	Members	
	n	%
Other	3	7

Preferred information sources largely align with the methods of information delivery currently used, with emails (40%) and newsletters (21%) being the most common. While informal networks are clearly important, respondents also seem to have a preference for receiving information about volunteering opportunities through non-personal modes of communication.

NRM District Groups Awareness & Information

Respondents were asked, firstly, whether they were aware of any of the NRM District Groups in the SAAL region (ie Marree-Innamincka, Marla-Oodnadatta, Gawler Ranges, Kingoonya, North Flinders and North East) and, if so, whether they had received or sought information about natural resources management from any of these groups. In terms of awareness, 56% of volunteer coordinators (n = 14) were aware of at least one group, compared to 63% (n = 26) of members. The question was prompted, likely contributing to the high level of awareness. Of those who were aware of the NRM District Groups, eight volunteer coordinators (32%) had received or sought out information from them, while 11 (26%) volunteer members had.

Those aware of NRM District Groups were then asked whether they had had any involvement with someone from these groups or support from them for their NRM activities. Five volunteer coordinators (20%), and twelve members (29%) claimed to have to have received support from groups.

Internet and Social Media Usage

The vast majority of both volunteer coordinators and members stated that they use the Internet either daily or every few days. 16% of coordinators stated that they 'never' use the Internet, these respondents were all 66 + years of age and retired. The fact that there are some volunteer coordinators that do not use the Internet, however, suggests that communication with those coordinators through multiple methods remains important, e.g. online and through more traditional methods of communication, such as mail. Overall results are seen in **Table 17**.

Table 17: Internet Usage

	Coordinators		Members	
	n	%	n	%
Daily	10	40	28	68
Every few days	6	24	8	20
Weekly	1	4	2	5
Monthly	2	8	1	2
Rarely	2	8		
Never	4	16	1	2
Unsure			1	2
Total	25	100	41	99



When asked how often they check their email, 95% of volunteer members (n = 37) did so either daily, or every few days. This figure was lower for coordinators, aligned with their lower use of the Internet in general, with 66% of respondents saying that they would check emails either daily or every few days. 20% of volunteer coordinators stated that they never checked their email (though this includes the 16% that never use the Internet). Both volunteer coordinators and members typically had a broadband or wireless Internet connection, with only two respondents in total stating that they had a dial-up connection, suggesting there would be few problems in sending large files to either group (e.g. digital versions of 'Across the Outback' or 'On Track'). This point is further supported by respondents from both groups generally stating that they find their Internet speed to be 'acceptable' or better (64% of coordinators, 69% of members).

Social Media Usage

Social media usage was lower than general Internet usage, or checking of emails, with only two volunteer coordinators (8%) stating that they use sites such as Facebook or Twitter, and only 23% of members. Younger respondents were significantly more likely to state that they used social media, and where they did so, they used it regularly (daily / every few days).

Those respondents who used social media said they would consider it a useful source of information for learning about events, news or other NRM information, so there are some opportunities to communicate with volunteers, through creating events / posting relevant information. Overall, however, social media is currently unlikely to reach a large proportion of volunteer members or coordinators.

Knowledge & Skills

A series of questions were used to assess volunteers' current level of knowledge and skills about NRM issues. Firstly, respondents were asked whether they considered that they had all of the necessary knowledge and skills to perform the various activities they have completed as a part of their volunteering activities, at the time at which those activities were performed. Results are seen in **Table 18**.

Table 18: Necessary knowledge / skills

	Coordinators		Members	
	n	%	n	%
Yes – always	15	60	24	52
Yes – mostly	10	40	22	48
Did not have				
Total	25	100	46	100

No respondents suggested that they did not have the necessary skills or knowledge necessary to perform the activities they had undertaken as a part of their volunteering, possibly indicating that volunteers feel competent and able to complete the various tasks they are given. Most also felt that their volunteering activities provided them with the opportunity to build their knowledge and skills about natural resources management. Results are shown in **Table 19**.



Table 19: Opportunity to develop knowledge / skills

	Coordinators		Members	
	n	%	n	%
Yes	24	96	37	80
No	1	4	5	11
Unsure			1	9
Total	25	100	46	100

To better understand how volunteers felt their knowledge and skills were being developed, they were asked which methods were used to help them gain their knowledge and skills. Results are seen in **Table 20**.

Table 20: Method of developing knowledge & skills

	Coordinators		Members	
	n	%	n	%
On-site training	24	100	35	97
Attending special course / briefing	9	38	20	56
Mentoring			19	53
Instructional manuals			10	28
Other	1	4	5	14

On-site training was the most commonly claimed method of developing volunteer knowledge / skills, with 100% of coordinators, and 97% of volunteer members having undertaken such training. Given that volunteers all considered that they have the necessary skills / knowledge to complete the various activities they have undertaken, it seems that such methods are proving successful.

Where respondents said that they had developed their knowledge / skills in relation to NRM through 'other' sources, they identified these as:

- Informal discussions with experts;
- Educational talks from park rangers;
- Learning from other volunteers; and
- CVA seminars.

Both groups of respondents were asked to rate their knowledge of recognising and managing natural resources management issues, on a scale from '0' to '10', where '0' suggested that they were "not very knowledgeable at all" and '10' indicated that they were "extremely knowledgeable". The mean score for these results is seen in **Table 21**.

Table 21: NRM knowledge rating

	n	Mean
Coordinators	25	7.1



	n	Mean
Members	43	5.2
Average	34	6.2

Despite the finding that no respondents considered that they did not have the skills or knowledge to complete the activities in which they have been involved, volunteers did not consider themselves to be 'very knowledgeable', with mean scores of 7.1 out of 10 for coordinators, and 5.2 for members. Volunteer members who stated that they had completed education relevant to NRM were more likely to give themselves higher NRM knowledge scores. Where volunteer members had not completed education relevant to NRM, the mean score for NRM knowledge was only 4.8 while where they had completed relevant education it was 6.9. This pattern was not seen clearly in the manager group.

Motivations to Volunteer

In determining the reason(s) why people choose to volunteer in the SAAL region, respondents were asked to identify the single most important reason they volunteer their time and energy to a natural resources management / environment-related cause. Respondents were only able to give one response to this question, in order to determine the *most* important reason. Results are seen in **Table 22**.

Table 22: Most important reason to volunteer

	Coordinators		Members	
	n	%	n	%
Concern for the environment	12	48	19	50
Preserve the natural environment for future generations	4	16	3	8
To be a useful citizen / community member	4	16	3	8
Makes me feel good / enjoyment	2	8	5	13
Enhances activities I enjoy	2	8	4	11
To help others	1	4	4	11
Total	25	100	38	101

As was expected given the nature of volunteer operations in the SAAL region, 'concern for the environment' was by far the most commonly identified reason for volunteering. Another environment-related response of 'preserve the natural environment for future generations' was also commonly identified. Other popular responses related to contributing to the community through their work, gaining a sense of enjoyment, and enhancing activities that people already enjoy. Such motivations indicate that recruitment effort might be best focused on the positive environmental benefit achieved through volunteering work, to appeal to those with a strong concern for the environment.

In addition to motivations for performing volunteer work, the research sought to determine which activities volunteers most want to be involved in. Respondents were able to provide multiple responses to this question, so as to capture a range of activities. Results are seen in **Table 23**.



Table 23: Preferred volunteer activities

	Coordinators		Members	
	n	%	n	%
Clearing weeds / weed control	14	56	26	59
Greening projects / revegetation	11	44	26	59
Infrastructure construction	6	24	14	32
Heritage building restoration	4	16	13	30
Fencing areas of property	2	8	7	16
Pest animal control	2	8	12	27
Helping to develop management plans	1	4	10	23
Field data collection			20	45
Administrative tasks			5	11
Other	4	16	4	9

Results were largely consistent between coordinators and members, with both groups suggesting that ‘clearing weeds / weed control’, ‘greening projects / revegetation’ and ‘infrastructure construction’ were the activities they were most interested in being involved in. Volunteer members also commonly identified (45%) ‘field data collection’ as being an activity they would like to be involved in, e.g. counting bird numbers. Administrative tasks were generally unpopular, with very few people interested in performing these activities.

‘Other’ responses for coordinators included ‘raising community awareness of issues’, ‘educating other volunteers’, and ‘gardening’. For volunteer members, responses included:

- IT tasks in remote locations;
- Helping to make cleaner, safer roads; and
- Culling cactus.

Overall, preferred volunteer activities align with motivations to volunteer, that is, a general concern for the environment, with weed control and revegetation being strongly tied to this, while the very unpopular administrative tasks are not.

Desired Skills / Experiences

Current volunteers were asked whether there were any experiences or skills related to natural resources management that they are wanting, but not currently receiving. Two volunteer members and four coordinators suggested that this was the case, so were subsequently asked what these missing skills or experiences were. Responses were:

- Field data collection (e.g. counting bird numbers);
- Training courses;
- Clearing weeds / weed control;
- Helping to develop a recruitment strategy; and



- First aid qualification.

Overall then, it appears that volunteers are satisfied with the experiences that they are currently receiving as a part of their volunteering activities.

Barriers to Future Involvement / Recruiting Volunteers

While respondents were able to provide clear reasons for current participation in volunteering activities, the research also sought to determine whether they saw any barriers that would prevent their future involvement. Results to this question were mixed, with 76% (n = 19) of volunteer coordinators and 43% (n = 19) of members suggesting that there were barriers.

Those who stated that they saw barriers to their continued involvement were then asked to identify what those barriers were – they were able to give multiple responses. Results are seen in **Table 24**.

Table 24: Barriers to continued involvement

	Coordinators		Members	
	n	%	n	%
Age / age related health issues	18	95	8	42
Not enough time / other commitments			8	42
Costs associated with travel			7	37
Unsure as to the direction the group / organisation is going			3	16
Don't consider activities to be worthwhile			1	5
Other	1	5	2	10

Age, as discussed in the demographic profile earlier in this report, seems the biggest issue to continued involvement in volunteering activities. The majority of volunteer coordinators are over the age of 66, with many others close to this age range, so enabling volunteer members to become more involved in the management side of volunteer organisations will be a key challenge facing volunteering organisations in the SAAL region.

Volunteer members gave a broader set of potential barriers to their continued involvement, including time constraints (42%) and the operating costs associated with travelling to the region (37%). Increasing awareness of, and access to, reimbursements for associated costs will likely contribute to the continued involvement of volunteer members.

Relevant to the succession issue, both coordinators and members were asked for their perception of whether their organisation finds it difficult to attract new volunteers. Results are seen in **Table 25**.

Table 25: Difficulty of attracting new volunteers

	Coordinators		Members	
	n	%	n	%
Difficult	14	56	18	42
Not difficult	11	44	15	35



	Coordinators		Members	
	n	%	n	%
Unsure			10	23
Total	25	100	43	100

There was a divide in volunteers' perceptions of the difficulty of attracting new volunteers, with 56% of coordinators stating that their organisation finds it difficult compared to 44% who do not see it as being difficult. There was no link between perception of difficulty in attracting new volunteers and the type of volunteer organisations or to whether or not their organisation is active in recruitment. These mixed results may indicate that volunteers are not well placed to provide an assessment on recruitment.

Actively recruiting new volunteers was measured, based on whether they (the volunteer organisation) placed advertisements, conducted letterbox drops, held open day events etc. Respondents were asked whether their organisation was active in such recruitment activities. Results are seen in **Table 26**.

Table 26: Volunteer organisation recruitment (active / not active)

	Coordinators		Members	
	n	%	n	%
Actively recruits	19	76	17	39
Doesn't actively recruit	5	20	16	36
Unsure	1	4	11	25
Total	25	100	44	100

While the number of people who were 'unsure' was higher for the volunteer members group, coordinators largely felt that their organisation was active in its recruitment efforts (76%), with 20% stating that they did not actively recruit new volunteers. Almost 80% of coordinators feel their organisation is active in recruitment efforts yet they still perceive issues with growing their volunteer membership base.

Those that stated that they felt their organisation was active in recruitment were then asked to name the method or methods that their volunteer organisation(s) typically used. Results to this question can be seen in **Table 27**.

Table 27: Methods of recruitment

	Coordinators		Members	
	n	%	n	%
Word of mouth	20	80	12	71
Online	5	20	10	59
Advertising (letter box drops, etc.)	2	8	7	41
Field days	1	4	4	24
Through other volunteer groups			2	12
Unsure	1	4	3	18



	Coordinators		Members	
	n	%	n	%
Other	3	12	5	29

'Word of mouth' was most commonly identified by both coordinators and members (80% and 71%, respectively) as being a method of recruitment, with far fewer responses for other methods, such as online (20% of coordinators and 59% of members), or letterbox drops (8% for coordinators, 41% for members). Given the often large differences in identified methods of recruitment between members and coordinators, it appears that some coordinators may be unaware of the breadth of recruitment activities that are undertaken within their organisation(s).

'Other' responses to this question included 'meetings', 'newsletters' and 'publicising photos and reports based on the activities we conduct'.

Recognition of Achievements / Contributions

In addition to questions concerning recruitment and skills / experiences, respondents were asked how they liked to see their volunteering achievements or contributions recognised, if at all. Responses to this question are seen in **Table 28**.

Table 28: Achievement / contribution recognition

	Coordinators		Members	
	n	%	n	%
It is not important to be recognised	16	64	21	48
'Thank You' events			17	39
Mention(s) in Across the Outback			16	36
Acknowledgement in On Track			9	20
Nominations for community awards			8	18
Unsure			2	5
Other	11	44	4	9

Responses demonstrate that many (64% of coordinators, 48% of members) volunteers do not consider it important that their contributions are recognised formally. Those that did like recognition suggested 'thank you' events (39%), being mentioned in publications (36%, 20%), and being nominated for community awards (18%) as means to do so. 'Other' responses for volunteer coordinators included 'the council continuing to show recognition', 'the enthusiasm of others', 'property owners and coordinators being grateful', 'visitors showing a greater appreciation for what has been done', and 'personal contact with landholders'. Several respondents also commented that it is important to recognise the achievements themselves, rather than the specific volunteers that contributed towards them.

The responses to this question were not strongly linked to any demographic variables, or variables associated with the volunteering profile of respondents.



Perceptions of Regional Issues

Volunteers were asked for their perceptions of the major issues that are affecting the SAAL region. They were asked to rate a range of issues from 'no problem' through to being a 'major problem'. They could also indicate that they considered an issue to be a 'small' or 'moderate' problem.

Results here are reported as mean scores to aid comparability. A score closer to '1' suggests that more volunteers considered it to be less of a problem, while scores closer to '4' suggests that respondents considered that issue to be a greater problem. Results are seen in **Table 29**.

Table 29: Regional issues between groups (mean)

	Coordinators		Members		Difference
	n	Mean	n	Mean	
Dust	25	3.2	35	3.2	
Impacts from tourism	24	3.2	39	2.7	- 0.5
Changing land use	19	3.1	36	3.1	
Erosion	25	2.9	34	3.4	0.5
Impacts from mining	25	2.8	36	3.1	0.3
Impacts from pastoralism / grazing	25	2.8	38	3.0	0.2
Decline in soil health	21	2.7	32	3.2	0.5
Decline in native vegetation that is suitable for grazing	21	2.7	33	3.2	0.5
Young people leaving the area	23	2.5	37	3.3	0.8
The availability of labour	23	2.4	32	3.3	0.9
Decline in native vegetation (overall)	24	2.4	35	3.6	1.2
Increasing costs of labour	19	2.4	33	3.5	1.1
Dingoes / dogs	25	2.2	33	3.2	1.0
Impacts of climate change	23	2.2	26	3.2	1.0
Weeds	25	2.1	39	3.5	1.4
Native pest animals	23	1.9	29	2.7	0.8
Decline in biodiversity / native species	23	1.7	35	3.6	1.9
Non-native pest animals	24	1.4	36	3.8	2.4
Average	23	2.5	34	3.3	0.8

The volunteers show somewhat different results between the coordinators and members of those organisations, with members consistently rating issues as being more problematic than coordinators. Across every item measured, members considered it to be a greater problem than coordinators, often with large differences evident.



The average mean score across all issues for coordinators is 2.5, while for members it is 3.3. This demonstrates a clear difference in perceptions of issues affecting the SAAL region. Such a finding has implications as there may be a lower level of support for members conducting those activities.

The most problematic issues for volunteer coordinators and members are found to be related to environmental issues, including climate change, decline in native vegetation, and soil health. Volunteers also rate financial considerations (e.g. increasing costs of labour) as being a major problem, with volunteer members giving a mean score of 3.5 on this item. Volunteer members largely considered issues in which they have more involvement to be of a more serious problem, with the largest problems identified as being 'decline in native vegetation', 'non-native pest animals', 'decline in biodiversity', and 'weeds'.

Grants / Funding Assistance

Respondents were asked whether they were aware of any grants, or other assistance available to support their natural resources management activities. Amongst volunteer members, 51% stated that they were aware of a grant or other assistance, while 96% of coordinators were aware of at least one source. Those respondents who indicated that they were aware of such a source were then asked if they could name that grant or source of assistance, unprompted. The sources identified can be seen in **Table 30**.

Table 30: Unprompted awareness of grants / assistance

	Coordinators		Members	
	n	%	n	%
Can't name any, but aware of some	20	83	6	32
DEWNR Volunteer support grants	2	8		
Australian Gov's Volunteer grants	1	4	1	5
State community NRM grants	1	4	3	16
Other			9	47
Total	24	99	19	100

Results overall highlight that respondents have a low ability to name any funding sources, though they claim to be aware of them in a general sense. 'Other' responses to this question were varied, with respondents often giving answers associated with an organisation, without specifically identifying the name of the grant / assistance available such as:

- Commonwealth grants;
- Government grants for the environment;
- Council grants;
- Through the NRM Boards; and
- Something related to being reimbursed for travelling costs.

Such results fit with the initial finding of a poor ability to name specific grants or assistance available, but having an overall high awareness of there being organisations that provide funding and support. Following this, respondents were asked whether they had actually received any assistance from any of



the various sources. Eighty percent of volunteer coordinators (n = 20) stated that they had received such assistance, while 18 volunteer members also stated that they had received some grant or assistance.

Where respondents identified that they had received a grant or some form of assistance, they were asked whether they considered that support, training, or information to be useful in helping them with the issues for which they had sought help. Responses to this question are seen in **Table 31**.

Table 31: Usefulness of support provided

	Coordinators		Members	
	n	%	n	%
Completely useful	11	46	8	44
Somewhat useful	9	38	9	50
Not useful	1	4		
Can't recall / unsure	3	13	1	6
Total	24	101	18	100

One respondent did not consider the support provided to be useful, but most respondents found support to be 'completely' or 'somewhat useful' in meeting their needs. When asked if there were any ways in which the support they had received could be improved, respondents typically suggested that they were fine as they were and could not be improved. Those responses given were:

“Easier availability from government departments”

“More access to training courses”

“More recognition of people’s knowledge and expertise”

“They need to supply training, but the application of the training has been questionable”

“More face-to-face rather than written materials presented”

“A better induction process”

“We urgently need more volunteers”

While the above questions examined unprompted awareness, respondents were also read a list of relevant organisations’ names and asked whether they had (either now, or in the past) received any support from that organisation. Multiple responses were possible here, and responses are seen in **Table 32**.

Table 32: Received Support

	Coordinators		Members	
	n	%	n	%
National Parks	17	68	12	29
SA Arid Lands NRM Board	14	56	18	43
DEWNR	13	19	17	40
NR SAAL	13	19	11	26



	Coordinators		Members	
	n	%	n	%
Volunteer support unit	12	18	9	2
Have not received support from any	2	8	2	5
Unsure	1	2	15	36

When prompted for organisations' names, National Parks was identified by coordinators as the most common organisation (68%), while for members, it was the SAAL NRM Board (43%). Very few respondents claimed to have not received support from any of the divisions named, all of which are actually part of the same overarching organisation. That much higher recall was achieved in this question compared to the unprompted one prior, shows the difficulty respondents have in recalling specific names in a crowded communication environment and highlights the need for consistency and clarity in communication and branding.

Following this question, respondents who identified that they had received support from at least one organisation were asked what kind of support this was. Results are seen in **Table 33**.

Table 33: Type of support provided

	Coordinators		Members	
	n	%	n	%
Equipment	10	48	16	64
Fuel reimbursements	10	48	12	48
Notification of grants	10	48	11	44
Technical advice	5	24	12	48
OHS&W training / equipment	2	10	10	40
Insurance	1	5	10	40
Inductions			9	36
Unsure			2	8
Other	5	24	4	16

The type of support took the form of equipment, fuel reimbursements, notification of grants, and technical advice, for both groups, while volunteer members also commonly identified OHS&W training, insurance, and inductions as support provided to them. This demonstrates that both volunteer coordinators and members are using a variety of divisions within the organisation to support their operations in a range of ways. 'Other' responses for support received included:

- Accommodation;
- Finance guidance and training;
- Funds for student participation;
- Food.

Those who had received support were then asked to rate that support by giving a rating ranging from 'excellent' to 'very poor'. Results are seen in **Table 34**.



Table 34: Support rating

	Coordinators		Members	
	n	%	n	%
Excellent	8	38	7	27
Good	10	48	12	46
Average	3	14	6	23
Poor				
Very poor			1	4
Total	21	100	26	100

Results showed that most considered the support received as positive, with 86% of coordinators and 73% of members considering it as either 'excellent' or 'good'. Only one respondent rated the support provided as being 'very poor'.

Given that paperwork is considered a typical barrier when applying for or receiving funding or other assistance from a grant or program, respondents were asked to rate the level of paperwork involved in receiving support. Responses are shown in **Table 35**.

Table 35: Level of paperwork for support

	Coordinators		Members	
	n	%	n	%
Too high	5	24	6	23
Appropriate	13	62	10	38
Less than expected	1	5		
Unsure	2	10	10	38
Total	21	101	26	99

While the level of paperwork was largely considered to be appropriate, 24% of coordinators, and 23% of members considered the level to be too high.

Following these unprompted questions about sources of grants or other assistance, respondents were prompted with a list of grants / support available to them and asked whether they had heard of that grant, or not. Volunteer coordinators were additionally asked whether they had applied for that grant. Results are seen in **Table 36**.

DEWNR Volunteer Support Grants were the most commonly applied for by volunteer coordinators, though not the most well-known. All respondents who were aware of these grants had applied for it. Landcare grants had the highest level of awareness, but the equal lowest level of applications.

Table 36: Prompted awareness of grants / support

State Community NRM Grants, as well as other grants offered through the Australian Government had low levels of awareness amongst both coordinators and members. These results indicate opportunity



for increasing the total awareness of such grants, and assisting volunteer organisations to apply and

	Coordinators		Members	
	n	%	n	%
Australian Government's Community Action Grants				
<i>Have heard of it</i>	3	12	14	34
<i>Have applied for it</i>	3	12		
<i>Have not</i>	19	76	17	41
<i>Unsure</i>			10	24
Landcare Grants				
<i>Have heard of it</i>	16	64	26	62
<i>Have applied for it</i>	3	12		
<i>Have not</i>	6	24	9	21
<i>Unsure</i>			7	17
State Community NRM Grants				
<i>Have heard of it</i>	8	32	18	44
<i>Have applied for it</i>	5	20		
<i>Have not</i>	12	48	13	32
<i>Unsure</i>			10	24
DEWNR Volunteer Support Grants				
<i>Have heard of it</i>	8	32	20	49
<i>Have applied for it</i>	8	32		
<i>Have not</i>	9	36	12	29
<i>Unsure</i>			9	22
Australian Government's Volunteer Grants				
<i>Have heard of it</i>	9	36	10	25
<i>Have applied for it</i>	4	16		
<i>Have not</i>	12	48	16	40
<i>Unsure</i>			14	35

increase their capacity to conduct their various activities.

Volunteer coordinators were then asked whether they have made any unsuccessful applications for any of the above-mentioned grants. Only five respondents (20%) indicated that this was the case, while another five were unsure.



RESEARCH CONCLUSIONS

This section highlights and discusses the major results across the report and identifies key metrics from this research that may be used to monitor these results over time.

Method & Sampling

Telephone surveys proved to be an extremely effective method for reaching volunteer coordinators, with a 100% response rate achieved, suggesting that coordinators were highly motivated to participate, and have an interest in the research. This may have been aided by the fact that most volunteer coordinators are retired, and potentially have more time available to complete such a survey, compared with those in full-time employment.

While an online survey was able to reach sixty respondents, resulting in a response rate of 42%, approximately 19 of these respondents dropped out of the survey at various points. The use of an appropriate incentive to complete the survey is recommended for future iterations of this research, in order to achieve a higher level of survey completions.

Pre-notification was carried out in this research and is recommended for future, to ensure that participants are aware of the purpose and timing of the research.

It is also recommended that every effort is made to build and maintain the database of volunteer members and coordinators contact details to ensure they are up-to-date so that the response rate can be maximised.

Respondent Profile

The first section of this research which profiled volunteers and their activities highlighted some important research implications, in particular the age of volunteers and its implications for their continued involvement. Most volunteer coordinators and almost half of members are over the age of 66. In addition, 24% of coordinators are between 56 and 65 years, while for members this figure is 32%.

These respondents, particularly volunteer coordinators, identify their age, and age-related health issues as being the major barriers preventing their continued involvement in volunteering in the SAAL region.

There is a clear need to recruit younger volunteers to take the place of the ageing population who are likely to cease their volunteering activities in coming years. This is further discussed as a part of the section related to recruitment.

Understanding of Natural Resources Management

Volunteers have a clear, common understanding of the term 'natural resources management' and were able to give quite detailed descriptions of its meaning. While some differences exist in the way in which volunteers describe NRM, it can be said that they have a shared understanding of the term, and are able to use it appropriately. The use of this term in publications and other communication with volunteers, can therefore be said to be appropriate.



Sources of Information / Knowledge & Skills

General Internet searches were the most used source of information for volunteers seeking information related to NRM, with 56% of coordinators stating that they use this source, and 64% of members. Coordinators did not claim to use a variety of other sources, but were not prompted for them – it is likely that they do, in fact, use other sources for information, but given that they only recalled their use of the Internet, suggests its importance. Volunteer members used a wider range of sources of information, commonly identifying NRM factsheets (43%), 'Across the Outback' (38%) and the SAAL NRM Board website (28%) and SAAL NRM Board publications (28%).

While volunteers use information from a range of sources, it is clear that information published by the SAAL NRM Board is commonly used and assists in developing volunteer knowledge of NRM activities.

Across the Outback

As was the case for landholders, volunteers generally highlighted the useful / positive aspects of 'Across the Outback' as being related to its general information providing updates on the various activities being undertaken in the region.

Few suggestions were provided for potential improvements, or aspects of the publication that could be removed or have less of a focus. Research commonly finds that respondents are unable to offer product or service improvement suggestions.

Just over a third (36%) of volunteer coordinators said they 'never' read 'Across the Outback,' though they are aware of it, showing scope for further uptake of this publication amongst volunteers.

On Track

Readership of the 'On Track' publication was significantly lower than for 'Across the Outback', with 52% of coordinators stating that they 'never' read it, while 39% of volunteer members had never heard of it. However, it is a new, annual publication which had only had two editions at the time of the survey, so it is expected that awareness and usage is lower. Again, responses suggested that 'On Track' is interesting for its general information about what is happening within the region.

Volunteering Opportunities

Volunteers typically receive information about new volunteering opportunities through their informal networks (60% for coordinators, 67% for members), though emails were also a common method of learning about new opportunities for both groups (20% for coordinators, 49%). Volunteer members utilise a larger number of sources for learning about opportunities, including when they attend meetings (55%), and newsletters (53%). It appears important that a range of communications methods are used to increase the awareness of various volunteering opportunities, as there is a high-degree of variability in information sources used.

When volunteer members were asked what their preferred information source was for learning about new opportunities, they indicated email (40%), and through newsletters (21%), though again, there were a number of different preferred sources identified. As such, the key point again is that varied sources of communication need to be used to disseminate volunteering opportunities.

NRM District Groups were not commonly identified as being useful sources of information for volunteer coordinators or members, likely due to the relatively low level of contact between these groups and volunteers.



Knowledge & Skills

Volunteers considered themselves to possess all of the necessary knowledge and skills required to complete the various activities they participate in. They also found volunteering to provide them with the opportunity to develop their knowledge / skills, noting that on-site training is by far the most common method for acquiring new knowledge / skills (100% of coordinators, 97% of members). Attending specific courses or briefings were also considered an important way to gain new knowledge and skills related to NRM (by 38% of coordinators, and 56% of members).

Preferred Activities & Motivations

Volunteers in the SAAL region were motivated primarily by a general concern for the environment (48% of coordinators, 50% of members), and a desire to preserve the natural environment for future generations (16% of coordinators, 8% of members).

Preferred volunteering activities reflected these motivations. For example, the most preferred activities included weed control (56% of coordinators, 59% of members), and revegetation projects (44%, 59%), both of which strongly tie to environmental concern. The most preferred activities align strongly with the activities that are most participated in – being weed control (60%, 66%), and revegetation activities (32%, 38%).

This indicates that the interests of volunteers and the volunteering activities required are well-aligned.

Recruiting Volunteers

The primary barrier to continued participation in volunteering activities for existing volunteers is their age. Recruitment of new volunteers will be vital to the ongoing operations of volunteering in the SAAL region.

Increased awareness of the availability of grants / support to cover the costs of travelling to the region are an important communication message, given that 37% of volunteer members identified the costs associated with travel as a barrier to their continued involvement.

Respondents largely stated that their volunteer organisation found it difficult to attract new volunteers, with 56% of coordinators, and 42% of members stating this was the case. These results were not influenced by perceptions of whether their volunteer organisation was active in attempting to recruit new volunteers or not. The vast majority of volunteer coordinators stated that they actively recruit new volunteers (76%), with 'word-of-mouth' being the most commonly used method to do so (80%). Online was also mentioned as a method (20% of coordinators, 59% of members), though all other methods received few mentions. Large differences were evident between coordinators and members in terms of how they saw their organisation recruiting new volunteers, suggesting that many within volunteer organisations are removed from their organisation's recruitment activities.

In a related, previous SAAL NRM report which focused entirely on pastoral leaseholders and managers of pastoral properties, results found that conservation management properties were willing to use volunteers on their properties, while leaseholder / managers, largely, were not. NR SAAL has since commenced developing and promoting opportunities on private or conservation properties.

Given the age of the majority of volunteers, and the remote location in which the activities take place, there are significant challenges in increasing volunteer participation in NRM activities. Strategies for addressing these issues include:



- Clearly communicating the various activities that volunteers are able to participate in, and how they align with volunteer preferences (e.g. revegetation, weed control, infrastructure building).
- The physical ability required to complete these tasks – e.g. ensuring that activities match the profile of the volunteers who are able to work on them. For example, where the activities would require a higher level of physical fitness, ensuring that potential volunteers are aware of this, but also that volunteers are aware of the less physically demanding roles.
- Clearly communicating how to access travel reimbursements, and facilitating this process, would improve perceptions of cost. Where possible, provision of amenities for volunteer groups would also be beneficial.
- Clearly signalling the amount of time required to complete the activities, and determining whether there are tasks that require a lesser time commitment would allow for time-poor volunteers (e.g. those who still work full-time), to better plan when they are able to volunteer in the SAAL region
- Continuation of on-site training and running special courses / briefings for volunteers, given these relate to respondents' perceptions of developing their skills / knowledge in relation to NRM and their volunteering activities

While volunteer coordinators stated, in the main, that they did not see it as important that their achievement / contributions were recognised (64%), volunteer coordinators were more likely to suggest that their achievements should be recognised in some way. Hosting 'thank you' events was the most favoured option (39% of members), while mentions in NR SAAL publications ('Across the Outback' and 'On Track') were also seen as important. Therefore, where possible, achievements should be acknowledged and formally recognised in NR SAAL publications. Such activities also help in communicating the type of activities that occur in the region, and possibilities to become involved in similar work / to achieve tangible outcomes through their volunteering activities.

Grants / Funding Assistance

Most volunteers were aware of at least one form of grant or funding assistance, though they had a low ability to name those sources. Eighty percent of volunteer coordinators stated that they had received some form of assistance in the past; however, over 50% of volunteer members did not answer the questions relating to provision of support so it is not clear if they are aware of the availability of support.

Of those organisations identified as having provided support to volunteers, National Parks was most commonly recognised (68% of coordinators, 29% of members), though SA Arid Lands NRM Board, NR SAAL, and DEWNR were all commonly identified; all of which are actually parts of the same organisation.

Where support had been received, most were satisfied, with 86% of coordinators and 73% amongst members considering it to be either 'good' or 'excellent'.

While the unprompted awareness of sources of grants / funding assistance was low (most said they are aware of some, but could not name them), when prompted with the names of funding sources, awareness was far higher. Landcare grants were the most commonly recognised source (64% of coordinators, 62% of members), though still had a lower level of volunteers who had applied for these grants (12%).



DEWNR Volunteer Support Grants were the most commonly applied for (32%), though not the most well-known source (32% of coordinators, 49% of members). All volunteer coordinators who indicated that they were aware of this source of funding also said that they had applied to receive funding through this source. Such a finding suggests that:

- There is a clear need to more clearly communicate / raise awareness of grants and other funding sources, and provide assistance with applications if needed
- Building awareness of these grants amongst relevant parties will overcome the perceived cost associated with participation. Multiple methods of communication are required, as identified above, to maximise awareness levels.



Appendix A: Volunteer Organisations Invited to Participate

- 4WD SA
- Adelaide Bushwalkers
- Ardenvale Pest Management
- ARPA Bushwalkers
- Blackwood Church of Christ
- Blinman Parachilna Pest Plant Control Group
- French Forest Baptist Church
- Friends of Arid Recovery
- Friends of Flinders Ranges
- Friends of Gammon Ranges
- Friends of Gawler Ranges
- Friends of Heysen Trail and other Walking Trails
- Friends of Mound Springs
- Friends of Mount Remarkable
- Friends of Simpson Desert
- Great Tracks Cleanup Crew
- Independent (family)
- Mitsubishi 4WD Club
- Outback Field Naturalists
- Overland 4WD Club
- Research (Uni or Other)
- SA Herpetology Group
- Sporting Shooters Association
- Toyota Landcruiser Club
- Walking Trails Support Group
- Work Experience (School/Uni)



Appendix B: Questionnaire

While different questionnaires were used to reach volunteer members and volunteer coordinators, the overlap between the two was extremely high (to allow for comparability of results). As such, this appendix includes only the telephone survey used amongst coordinators, for reasons of brevity. The response sets are also excluded.

Question # 1

Good morning/afternoon. My name is (name) and I am calling from the University of South Australia. We are conducting research on behalf of the South Australian Arid Lands Natural Resources Management Board. May I please speak to (name).

Reintroduce if necessary, if correct person not available, schedule call back

We are conducting research about volunteering and natural resource management. You have been listed as either a past or current member of a volunteer group or organisation with an environmental or natural resource management focus such as Landcare or a Friends Group. Is this correct?

Question # 2

I'd like to start with a very general question. Could you please tell me how you would broadly explain your view of the term 'natural resource management'.

Question # 3

In general, where do you look for more information about natural resources management or environmental issues in general ?

Question # 4

Are you a current volunteer member of any environmental or natural resource management group or organisation or are you no longer volunteering in this area?

Question # 5

Can you please tell me the name of the volunteer group or groups that you currently work with?

Question # 6

Can you please tell me the name of the volunteer group or organisation that you used to work with?

Question # 7

How long ago was it that you stopped your volunteering in the Natural Resources Management or environment area?

Question # 8



Approximately how long have you been/were you associated with this/these group/s.

Question # 9

In general, how many hours per month would you spend volunteering in total for this group/these groups

Question # 10

Which natural resources management or environmental activities you have been involved with as a part of your volunteering?

Question # 11

Were these activities on-park or off-park or both?

Question # 12

Do you feel that you had the knowledge or skills required to complete these tasks, at the time they were carried out?

Question # 13

As a part of this volunteer work, did you have the opportunity to build your knowledge and skills about natural resources management?

Question # 14

How was this done?

Question # 15

And how would you rate your knowledge of recognising and managing natural resources management issues today? Please rate your knowledge on a scale of 0 to 10 where 0 is 'not very knowledgeable at all' and 10 is 'extremely knowledgeable'. You can choose any number in between 0 and 10.

Question # 16

What are the main reasons you are doing/did your volunteer work?

Question # 17

What are the main reasons you are doing/did your volunteer work?

Reason 2

Question # 18

What are the main reasons you are doing/did your volunteer work?



All other reasons

Question # 19

What would you say is the single most important reason that you volunteer for an organisation involved in natural resources management, with a focus on environmental outcomes?

Question # 20

How do you find out about new volunteering opportunities and activities?

Question # 21

Are there any ways in which you would like to receive information about new volunteering opportunities and activities that you currently don't?

Question # 22

What issues / activities are you interested in contributing to through your volunteering work in the future?

Question # 23

Do you see any barriers to you doing natural resource management or environmental volunteering in the future?

Question # 24

What are those barriers?

Question # 25

Does your group find it hard to attract new volunteers?

Question # 26

Does your group actively recruit for new volunteers?
e.g. placing advertisements, letter box drops, open day events

Question # 27

What are the main ways your group recruits new volunteers?

Question # 28

Are there any current volunteer experiences or skills with Natural Resources Management that you are wanting but not currently getting?



Question # 29

What are those experiences or skills?

Question # 30

As a volunteer, how do you like to see your achievements recognised?

Question # 31

I'd now like to ask some general questions about the South Australian Arid Lands Region.

I'd like to know to what extent do you consider the following issues to be a problem in the SA Arid Lands region. Please tell me if each issue is a small, moderate or major problem or no problem at all in the Arid lands region

Question # 32

Decline in soil health

Question # 33

Increasing costs of labour

Question # 34

The availability of labour

Question # 35

Decline in native vegetation overall

Question # 36

Decline in native vegetation that is suitable for grazing

Question # 37

Changing land use

Question # 38

Young people leaving the area

Question # 39

Weeds

Question # 40



Dingos/dogs

Question # 41

Non-native pest animals

Question # 42

Native pest animals

Question # 43

Impacts of climate change

Question # 44

Impacts from mining

Question # 45

Impacts from tourism

Question # 46

Decline in biodiversity/native species

Question # 47

Erosion

Question # 48

Dust

Question # 49

Impacts from pastoralism or grazing

Question # 50

Are you aware of any grants or other assistance that is available to support your natural resources management activities? Could you name the ones you can think of please?

Question # 51

Are you currently, or have you previously, received any assistance from these sources?

Question # 52



Did you consider the support, training or information you received to be useful in helping with the issues you sought help with?

Question # 53

Do you have any improvement suggestions for the support, training or information that was provided ?

Question # 54

If not mentioned unprompted already

Does your group receive support from the SA Arid Lands NRM Board; the Natural Resources SA Arid Lands; the Department for Water, the environment and Natural Resources; National Parks; or the Volunteer Support Unit?

Question # 55

What sort of support have you received?

May be insurance, notification of grants, inductions, OHS&W training and equipment, fuel reimbursements, technical advice (eg herbicide use)

Question # 56

How would you rate the level of support you are receiving?

Question # 57

How would you rate the level of paperwork involved? Would you say it was...

Question # 58

Can you think of any improvements/support options that may not be available?

Question # 59

Now, just thinking about grants, have you heard of or applied for any the following grants....

Question # 61

Landcare Grants

Question # 62

State Community NRM Grants

Question # 63

DEWNR Volunteer Support Grants



Question # 64

Australian Government's Volunteer Grants

Question # 65

Have you made any unsuccessful applications for these grants ?

Question # 66

Do you read the publication 'Across the Outback'?

Question # 67

What do you find useful about this publication?

Question # 68

What would you like to see more of in it?

Question # 69

What would you like to see less of in it?

Question # 70

Do you read the publication 'On Track'?

Question # 71

What do you find useful about this publication?

Question # 72

What would you like to see more of in it?

Question # 73

What would you like to see less of in it?

Question # 74

Have you heard of any of the SA Arid Lands NRM District Groups?

Question # 75

Have you received, or sought information related to Natural Resource Management from SA Arid Lands NRM District Groups?



Question # 76

Have you had any involvement with anyone or other support from the SA Arid Lands NRM District Groups?

Question # 77

And to close, we have a few general questions about yourself.

Which of the following age groups do you fall into?

Question # 78

Have you undertaken any specific education and / or training or other background that is relevant to land or water management outside of your volunteer work? We are interested in informal training and qualifications as well as formal.

Question # 79

What education or training was that?

Question # 80

What is your current employment status?

Question # 81

And your household would best be described as....

Question # 82

Gender (by observation)

Question # 83

How often do you access the Internet?

Question # 84

And how often would you check your emails?

Question # 85

What type of Internet connection do you have?

Question # 86



How would you best describe your Internet speed? If you were to look at multiple web pages at once or download a big file would it be....

Question # 87

Do you use social media sites such as Facebook or Twitter?

Question # 88

What sites do you use the most?

Question # 89

How often would you access them?

Question # 90

Would you find it useful to learn about events, news or other NRM information through these sites?

Question # 91

Do you live in the SA Arid Lands Region?

Question # 92

Which town do you live in or, which would be the closest town to where you live?

Question # 93

If outside Arid Lands

What is your postcode?

