

## Northern Sydney Volunteer Network Submission to the Productivity Commission Inquiry – Caring for Older Australians.

The Northern Sydney Volunteer Network is a collaborative team made up of 4 Volunteer Resource and Referral Services covering the 4 regions of Northern Sydney.

Our task is to provide assistance to Home and Community Care organisations that use volunteers in Northern Sydney.

In response to the Draft proposal of the Productivity Commission we propose that:

1. Home and Community Care Services are much more cost effective than residential aged care while at the same time supporting aged communities to stay healthy, active and independent.
2. If HACC services are to be able to properly support aged communities they need to be able to offer volunteers proper reimbursement for expenses outlaid and going further tax exemptions or tax breaks to encourage volunteers.
3. It is well documented that volunteering can improve well being "Formal volunteering has a direct impact on well being , functional health and longevity " ( Onyx and Warburton,2003 page 67 ). Volunteering needs to be seen as a community health issue and as a way to support older Australians staying engaged and healthier. Depression in the elderly is a huge issue and volunteering is beneficial in combating this growing trend "Formal volunteering lowers depression levels in older people 65 and over " ( Musick and Wilson 2003)
4. There is an expected influx of Baby Boomers who when retired will look to volunteering to keep healthy and connected. This provides a great opportunity for community services. However these new volunteers are educated and capable and will insist on proper training, support from paid staff, reimbursement and good conditions if they are to be retained.
5. The localised nature of Home and Community Care is essential for volunteer recruitment as 95% of volunteers are recruited in their local community and do not want to move out of their local area. As a training provider we have found that volunteers will not travel out of their area for volunteer duties or training.
6. In 2006 volunteers contributed 704.1 million hours to the economy according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics. The contribution of volunteers in the aged care sector is very considerable and should neither be underestimated or undervalued. In an economy with an ageing population it will be very difficult to replace volunteer positions with paid positions.
7. More funding needs to be directed to the community sector so it can adequately build services which will support an ageing population to remain healthy in their own homes and including in their communities as long as possible