

# Working with Volunteers

**Advice for land  
managers in the  
South Australian  
Arid Lands**

COVER IMAGE

Australian Retired Persons Association  
volunteers hunt for Wheel Cactus on  
Alpana Station

Over the last six years, several Flinders Ranges pastoralists have built partnerships with a number of volunteer groups to help them control pest plants on their properties.

Together the Blinman-Parachilna Pest Plant Control Group (BPPPCG) and volunteers are working to preserve the magnificent landscapes of the Flinders Ranges.

Their achievements include:

- a 10 kilometre long Oleander infestation removed from Parachilna Gorge
- contributing 15,000 hours of labour over six years, worth over \$300,000
- 30 square kilometres of Wheel Cactus follow-up on four properties

In this brochure the pastoralists and volunteers share what they have learned.



## From the Presiding Member

Gone are the days when pastoral properties supported several families.

With one resident family on most stations today, far fewer people are doing the work that many once did.

Land managers also play an active role in their communities including in contributing to natural resources management planning and governance.

Days are still 24 hours long, but time, increasingly, is in short supply.

*Working with Volunteers* has been developed to provide pastoralists and other land managers with the confidence to collaborate with volunteers.

It is written by Lorraine Edmunds on behalf of the Blinman-Parachilna Pest Plant Control Group (BPPPCG), a successful arrangement which brings together seven volunteer groups and 10 pastoral families to undertake pest plant control in the Flinders Ranges.

Lorraine has worked in the SA Arid Lands region for 28 years managing pest plant and animal control programs across Parks and pastoral land, and for the past 10 years coordinating the BPPPCG's activities.

And while she is now classified as 'self-employed', the BPPPCG's reliance on securing annual grants to continue the work

has meant that Lorraine has been no stranger to volunteer work herself as she has worked tirelessly to promote the efforts of the Group, prepare applications for funding, and coordinate the Group's activities.

We are fortunate to have the benefit of Lorraine's experience here.

This brochure borrows from the lessons behind the BPPPCG's successes – and I thank the land managers and volunteers who generously share with us in the case studies their experiences and advice about creating productive working relationships.

Through Lorraine and the BPPPCG's efforts, land managers now have a road map for engaging with, managing and forming long-term partnerships with volunteers.

The brochure also outlines obligations and responsibilities, opportunities and resources, and indicates where the Natural Resources SA Arid Lands Volunteer Program can provide assistance.

**Janet Brook**  
**Presiding Member,**  
**SA Arid Lands NRM Board**



North Flinders Ranges

# Introduction

Volunteering is deeply embedded in rural and remote Australian culture.

Our lives would be very different without the SES, CFS and many other groups whose acronyms roll off our tongues like family names. From progress associations to gymkhana committees, hospital boards to sports clubs, volunteering is a part of our lives.

When natural disasters occur, volunteers from distant places come into our communities and our lives to help us recover and rebuild.

But we rarely invite volunteers to help us with the management of everyday activities on our properties.

Volunteers can do many things. They can assist with weed control, plant propagation and bush regeneration; help with restoration and maintenance of heritage sites; document station history; and map significant places on our properties.

They can record, write, restore, render, remove, renovate and rehabilitate.

Working with volunteers, you can achieve what is beyond your day-to-day resources. Volunteers have the time. You have the place. Volunteers provide the labour. You provide the experience.

In this brochure, the Blinman-Parachilna Pest Plant Control Group offer some advice to land managers on how to create successful partnerships with volunteers, from helping you consider where and how you could use them; logistics like equipment, transport and access to funding; planning and delivering your activity – and, most importantly, how to celebrate your successes.

**Lorraine Edmunds**  
**Coordinator, Blinman-Parachilna Pest Plant Control Group**



Lorraine Edmunds (right) with volunteers

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# Getting started



Wheel Cactus in Parachilna Gorge

## Dumping assumptions

Nervous about using volunteers? You aren't alone.

Many land managers assume that bringing volunteers onto their properties would mean having to navigate too much red tape. The idea of having people from 'the city' volunteer on remote properties with basic accommodation and few services just wouldn't be worth the hassle.

Here are some common concerns you may have about working with volunteers:

- What if a volunteer has an accident while working on our property?
- We can only provide basic facilities – no TV, mobile phone coverage, or internet connection – and they might not meet volunteers' expectations
- We're too far away – nobody would want to come out here to volunteer
- We can't provide any financial assistance
- We just haven't got the time to spend working with volunteers

- How can we be sure they won't go poking around the property?
- How will we keep them entertained in the evenings?
- Their idea of work and our idea of work are probably two very different things
- There's no such thing as a free lunch – what will we have to give in return?

But when you talk to volunteers this is what they say:

- We value the opportunity to go onto properties and see first-hand the challenges facing families in rural and remote areas
- We appreciate getting access to places and country we cannot normally visit
- We might be from the city but we care about the problems that land managers are having with big issues like weed invasion, feral animals and lack of

workers to get jobs done

- We really believe we can make a difference – you can get a lot done with a team of 10 or more willing workers over several days
- We don't need to be spoon-fed – once we have been shown where to work and what to do, we don't need supervision
- We're not expecting motel accommodation – we're quite happy with shearers' quarters, and a place to cook and sit in the evenings
- We love being away from the TV, mobile phones and Internet
- We don't need to be entertained, we have plenty to do in the evenings – read, play cards and board games, and enjoy conversations with other volunteers
- We have the same respect for your property as we would expect you to have for ours.

'We weren't too sure at the start but now we have volunteers every year'

*Sally and David Henery, Alpana Station, Flinders Ranges*



'The Mitsubishi 4WD Club have been coming to Moolooloo on a volunteer basis for the last four years – we have made some great lifelong friends'

*Keith Slade, Moolooloo Station, Flinders Ranges*



Australian Retired Persons Association volunteers looking over Alpina Station

## Why use volunteers on your property?

Volunteers have the time that many land managers lack.

Many are retirees who are looking for opportunities to do meaningful work in interesting places. They want to remain fit, to use the skills they developed during their working lives, and to continue making a contribution to society now that their working lives are over.

Those who choose to volunteer on remote properties are mostly people who love the Outback. Many have travelled through, camped and walked in remote areas of the State. They have the vehicles, experience, skills and mindset that make them very suitable partners for projects on pastoral properties.

Volunteers have skills that are as diverse as their backgrounds and personalities. They may be happy to work in a team learning new skills, or may seek a role using specialised skills such as mapping and data entry, historical research, photographic documentation of sites, or building restoration.

Volunteers are especially useful where teams are required to undertake labour-intensive work such as weed control. A team of 10 volunteers working for five days can provide 50 days of labour. In just one week, they can achieve more than you could hope to achieve in many weeks.

## How do I find volunteers?

Many volunteers are members of groups or clubs.

Part of the appeal for volunteers is going away with people with whom they share an interest. A number of land managers already have groups that visit their properties each year for recreational activities. Some may be interested in doing volunteer work.

Volunteers can be found in:

- 4WD clubs
- Bushwalking clubs
- Special interest groups – birdwatchers, plant groups, historical societies
- Church groups
- Service clubs
- Schools
- Individuals – historians, builders, naturalists

## Matching your team with the task

The success or failure of an activity depends largely upon how well volunteers are matched with the work expected of them.

This requires effective communication and good judgement during the early planning phase of an activity.

Pastoralists in the Flinders Ranges have chosen to work with bushwalking clubs and 4WD associations because these groups have experience in rough, remote and inhospitable country. Their members are resourceful and self-reliant. They have the mental and physical preparedness required to search for and treat Wheel Cactus in challenging terrain. You can read more about them in the case studies provided in this booklet.

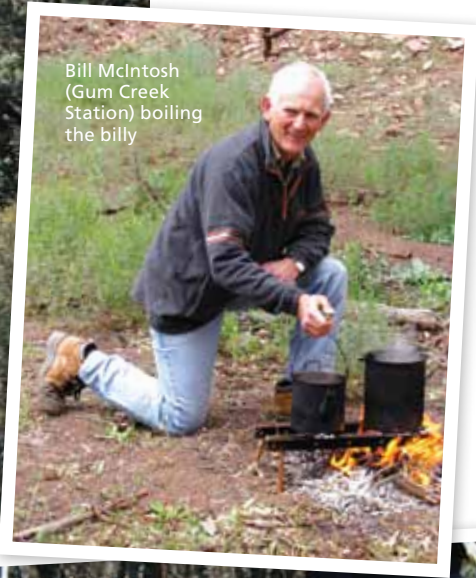
### HOW CAN WE HELP?

**Natural Resources SA Arid Lands has a volunteer program with a dedicated Volunteers Coordinator and register of volunteers. The Coordinator may be able to match your property and project with a specific volunteer or volunteer group.**

**Contact Natural Resources SA Arid Lands 8648 5300.**



A member of the Adelaide Bushwalkers Club on Gum Creek Station



Bill McIntosh (Gum Creek Station) boiling the billy



Adelaide Bushwalkers Club members having some downtime

## To give and to get

Partnerships between land managers and volunteers require goodwill on both sides.

The types of values that volunteers and their hosts should share, include things like:

- trust and respect
- a desire to reciprocate
- concern for the well being of each other
- respect for property and privacy
- honesty and generosity

## Go or stop?

The decision to work or not work with a group is an important choice about which you must feel confident.

As a land manager, you may actively seek volunteers to work with you or volunteer groups may approach you. If the match does not seem right, do not be afraid to say 'No thank you'.

Below are some tips to help you decide whether or not to proceed.

### Encouraging signs

The volunteer/s:

- have a leader and this is the person you deal with at every contact
- are enthusiastic
- are prepared to work within the constraints you have identified – eg your timeframes
- seem to be very self-sufficient and well organised
- can contribute resources such as mapping equipment or laptops to download data (GPS coordinates)
- will travel in vehicles that are appropriate for the tasks and locations (may need to be 4WD only).

### Warning signs

The volunteer/s:

- offer a different person every time you have contact with the group
- make a lot of demands
- change dates several times after you have agreed on an event date
- change the number of people attending the proposed activity several times
- want to bring more people than you can reasonably provide for ('we can bring tents and caravans') – maximum numbers should be determined by your kitchen and bathroom capacity
- will not have independent transport and will require you to move them to worksites on your property.



An Australian Retired Persons Association volunteer takes a well-earned break

# CASE STUDY

## Gum Creek Station & Toyota Landcruiser Club of SA WHEEL CACTUS CONTROL

For five years, volunteers have been working with Bill and Jane McIntosh (Gum Creek Station) to help prevent the spread of Wheel Cactus from their property into the adjacent Flinders Ranges National Park. Vince Monterola, Environmental Officer with the Toyota Landcruiser Club of Australia, and Bill McIntosh reflect on what has become a productive partnership.

'The problem became too big for us to tackle on our own,' said Bill, of the 75 square kilometre infestation. 'But, we reasoned that there would be people out there, like bushwalkers, who would have a stake in the Flinders Ranges.'

And there were.

In 2008, the McIntosh's began a partnership with the Adelaide Bushwalking Club, who had a long association with the Flinders Ranges and the fitness required to do the job.

Two years later, a second partnership was born. Vince Monterola was looking for projects for the Toyota Landcruiser Club's members to 'get out and make a difference' – and Wheel Cactus control on Gum Creek was just the sort of project he had in mind.

'It was an opportunity for four-wheel drivers to show the wider community that they are environmentally responsible,' he said.

'Four-wheel-drive motorists are sometimes criticised, but members of clubs are trained to look after the environment to ensure it isn't spoilt and the Toyota Landcruiser Club aims to do something practical to conserve the environment.'

Club members have been visiting Gum Creek ever since, racking up four visits and treating 5286 Wheel Cactus plants, and always with Vince's coordination.

For Bill, good leaders like Vince make all the difference: 'Good leadership is the number one requirement – it allows groups to become more autonomous and have a greater sense of achievement.'

Both agree that the activity has to be well planned and structured to suit volunteers but Bill also learned to step back a bit.

'I was quite prescriptive at the start, but I soon realised that it doesn't matter if it doesn't work perfectly every time – what really matters is that the work is effective and that volunteers have a good experience.'

Meanwhile, Vince has some tips for land managers who might be thinking about working with volunteers: 'Make sure all of the equipment is working and available – volunteers don't like standing around doing nothing.'

And, to volunteers, he recommends getting to know the owners quickly and well: 'Be self-reliant and not in their pocket – landholders have got other things to do.' And it's not all about hard yakka.

'We have generous morning tea and lunch breaks,' Vince said. 'And, in the evening, we play games and quizzes – complete with chocolate frogs – and ensure that newcomers are quickly integrated with the group.'

'Our mascot Kermit the Frog also brings some fun to the worksite.'

If you're looking for a group to work with, Bill recommends that landholders choose 'a group with a history of doing things, with a good track record' and gaining public risk insurance from Natural Resources SA Arid Lands.

Gum Creek Station's two volunteer groups – the Adelaide Bushwalking Club and Toyota Landcruiser Club – each have a dedicated 'territory' to work on the property. Both groups self-cater and are accommodated in Gum Creek's shearers' quarters with a 'welcome barbecue' on the night of their arrival.

The *Blinman-Parachilna Pest Plant Control Group* has been able to support the volunteers with a small travel reimbursement from funding received through the SA Arid Lands Natural Resources Management Board. However, both groups have indicated that they will continue to work with Gum Creek on Wheel Cactus control into the future, regardless of any travel assistance.

The Toyota Landcruiser Club has been involved in many other volunteer projects in South Australia, including the Clean-up Australia program, tree planting, track maintenance and fencing repairs in national parks, building renovations and general maintenance on remote outstations, and a Natural Resources SA Arid Lands water project at Cullyamurra Waterhole near Innamincka.

Contact Vince Monterola at the Toyota Landcruiser Club for information on becoming a member or to pitch an idea for a volunteer project 0447 331 300 or 8339 1311.

'People have taken on ownership – they want to be there until the last cactus.'

Vince Monterola,  
Toyota Landcruiser Club SA



Toyota Landcruiser Club of Australia mascot

'For Jane and I, this has been a huge morale lifter – we actually believe we can get on top of this now.'

Bill McIntosh, Gum Creek Station



Bill and Jane McIntosh  
(Gum Creek Station)

# Your responsibilities



Volunteers from the Australian Retired Persons Association fill out the induction forms

Adelaide Bushwalkers Club members familiarise themselves with their GPS units



## Insurance

Legal liability is one of the greatest concerns that land managers have about working with volunteers.

Most property insurance policies will include public liability insurance and this may be all that is required to cover volunteers. However, before committing to any activity involving volunteers, land managers should seek advice from their insurer to ensure they have appropriate cover. Some activities such as working in very remote areas on a property, using specialised equipment or working with hazardous substances like herbicides, may require a higher level of cover for the duration of the activity.

## Occupational Health, Safety and Welfare

Land managers are responsible for the safety and welfare of anyone who undertakes work on their property.

The best way to provide a safe working environment is to give clear instructions, ensure that tools and equipment are in good working order and that volunteers are shown how to use them safely. Insist that personal protective equipment is used, and provide advice about what volunteers should do in an emergency.

Unless they have appropriate training, the only herbicides that volunteers should handle are those with a 'Caution' label. 'Caution' indicates low to very low toxicity and is found on products like glyphosate. When working with herbicides, volunteers are expected to use all personal protective equipment listed on the label.

While land managers have a responsibility to provide a safe working environment for volunteers, volunteers are also responsible for their own safety and the safety of those around them.

See page 12 (Induction) for further information.

### HOW CAN WE HELP?

**Natural Resources SA Arid Lands' Volunteer Program provides its volunteers with information, instruction, training and supervision to ensure that volunteers are safe from injury and risks to health. Volunteers must observe these provisions and undertake any necessary training. The program provides insurance cover for volunteers undertaking work on properties in the region. All OHS&W incidents must be documented as a condition of this policy.**

**Contact Natural Resources SA Arid Lands 8648 5300.**



Members of the Australian Retired Persons Association treating Wheel Cactus



# CASE STUDY

## Alpana Station & Blackwood Church of Christ volunteers OLEANDER CONTROL

Deeply concerned about the spread of Oleander in Parachilna Gorge in the North Flinders, an Adelaide Hills church group volunteered to eradicate the invasive plants. Greg Ratcliff from the Blackwood Church of Christ and Sally and David Henery of Alpana Station look back on a remarkable achievement.

Greg Ratcliff is no stranger to the Flinders Ranges, making regular visits since his childhood. His uncle spent some time in the Angorichina Tuberculosis Sanatorium, Parachilna Gorge, after the Second World War and, for a few years, Greg's father managed the Angorichina Hostel.

'For three or four years in a row the Church had a Men's Retreat at Alpana – and each visit we walked up to the Blinman Pools, bemoaning the amount of Oleanders we encountered.'

In 2006 Greg returned with a group from the church who were prepared to make a long-term commitment to tackling the Oleanders.

This was no mean feat – first establishing in the gorge in the early 1990s, in just a decade there were tens of thousands of plants spread along a thirteen-kilometre section up to the Blinman Pools.

'We weren't confident we would be able to treat the whole gorge but we were prepared to spend the time to be sure there would be very little chance of regrowth.'

The volunteers visited twice a year for five years, treating the downstream stands first, and then working back through the gorge to the waterfall and pools.

'A few volunteers dropped out along the way but there were enough of us that had a heart for the place.'

Some years the stands were so thick it would take us the whole fortnight to treat just 50 metres.

But it was a magical moment when the volunteers finally reached the Blinman Pools in late 2009: 'As we walked back to camp, it was a joy to see the whole gorge empty of Oleanders.'

When they started the Oleander work the volunteers camped in one of the Henery's paddocks on Alpana Station.

'We like being on our own, socialising

around the campfire, and enjoying each other's company.'

The volunteers showered at nearby Angorichina Village where equipment was recharged overnight by the proprietor, Dave Scicluna.

David Henery admits he had some early concerns about working with volunteers.

'I was worried about the time I would have to put in – there's always something that needs to be done on the property and I didn't have much time available.'

But the volunteers were able to work independently and David and Sally 'saw something getting done that we'd never have been able to do by ourselves.'

They recommend that land managers who choose to work with volunteers be adaptable.

'They're not all the same,' said David, of the volunteer's fitness levels. 'You need to give some thought to who does what and who goes out.'

And unexpected things will happen from time to time.

'We also work with another group who help us with Wheel Cactus control,' said Sally. 'In 2010 we had six inches of rain in a few hours and some of our volunteers got bogged and we had to tow them out – but everyone saw it as a bit of an adventure.'

The Oleander project has now moved from a control to a maintenance program.

'Our objective is to keep coming long enough to guarantee that we have it beaten,' said Greg.

And, although several in the group are now in their 70s, they keep returning.

Like her husband, Sally was a little apprehensive at first but she is much more relaxed now. 'If you are feeling comfortable that the group is offering what you need, give it a go.'

'There was no point just grumbling. It was time to do something about it.'

Greg Ratcliff,  
Blackwood Church of Christ



Blackwood Church of Christ volunteers tackling Oleander

'It was just amazing that the volunteers stuck with it for all those years – it's a real credit to them.'

Sally Henery, Alpana Station

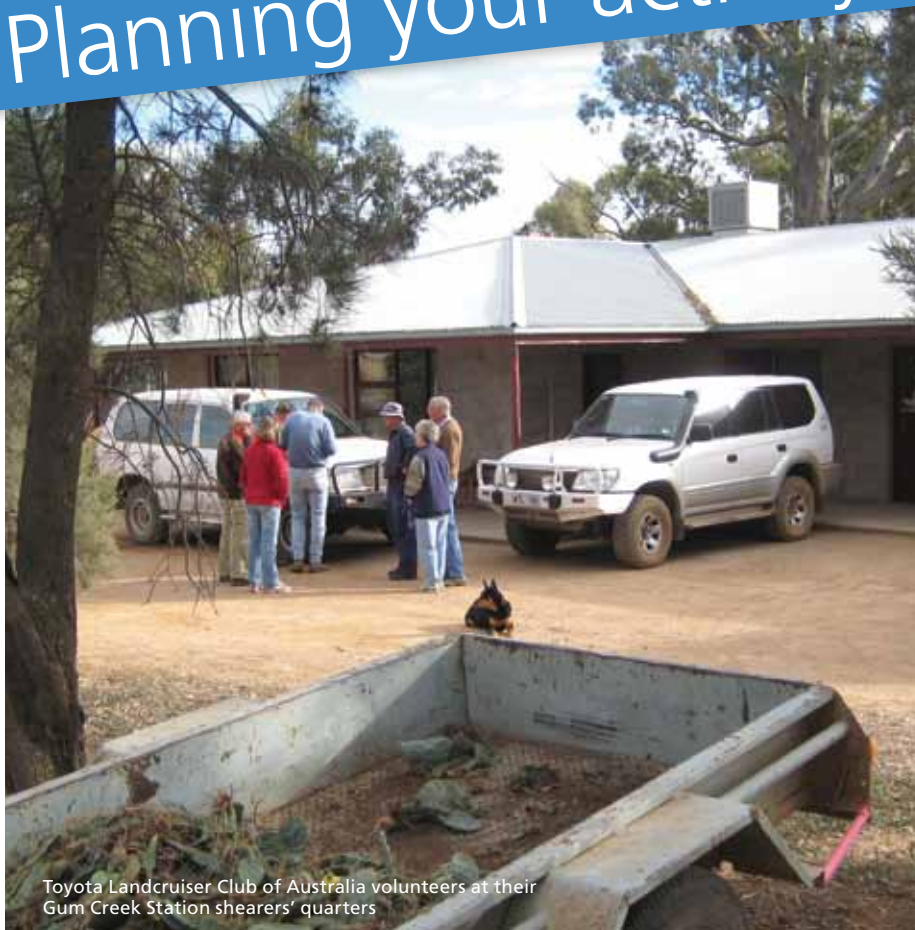


Sally and David Henery  
(Alpana Station)

Landholders from the *Blinman-Parachilna Pest Plant Control Group* secured several small grants to support the Blackwood Church of Christ volunteers, purchase equipment and herbicide, and engage contractors to treat the more dense localised stands of Oleanders. Over a five-year period the volunteers made a total in-kind contribution of \$88,000.

The volunteers return to Alpana Station every second year to keep Parachilna Gorge Oleander-free. What took them five years to control now takes five days to inspect.

# Planning your activity



Toyota Landcruiser Club of Australia volunteers at their Gum Creek Station shearers' quarters

## Funding

As a land manager, you may be eligible to apply for funding if your proposed activities satisfy particular criteria.

For example, both the South Australian and Australian Governments offer annual grants directed at community members to assist with their local NRM projects. It is also worth visiting the Community Grant Ready website [community.grantready.com.au](http://community.grantready.com.au) which provides a searchable database of nation-wide grants and funding programs for community-based and not-for profit organisations.

Volunteers can provide a significant in-kind contribution and may replace contractors in some situations.

For example, in 2011, with funding through the SA Arid Lands Natural Resources Management Board and a State Community NRM Grant, 13 volunteers provided six days labour on Alpana Station, for Wheel Cactus control. The group contributed a total of 546 hours over six days, which, valued at \$20 an hour, delivered an in-kind contribution for Alpana of \$10,920. Alpana also provided free accommodation for the group, a cost borne by the business, which added further value to its in-kind contribution.

## Managing expectations

From the outset, land manager and volunteer expectations must be well managed.

Mis-matched expectations can seriously jeopardise the success of an activity. You need to know what skills and capabilities your volunteers will have, how much work you can expect from the group, both in terms of the number of days they can offer and the size of the group, and what level of comfort and facilities the group will require.

Volunteers need to know what their accommodation will be like, what sort of work they will be doing, and if their own vehicles will be required on-site.

Communication must be open, honest and frank, the 'surprise' factor avoided at all costs.

## Timing of activity

You will need to consider several factors when setting a date for your activity.

These may include:

- your availability
- your volunteer/s availability
- the optimum time for doing the proposed work

You will need to allocate time to spend with your group so peak activity times should be avoided. Some activities, such as weed control, may have seasonal restrictions where control is most effective at particular times of year – the work should be undertaken as close to the ideal time as possible.

Some groups may request that the activity is scheduled during school holidays – this usually suggests that participants are non-retirees and may have children with them. Is it appropriate to have children present at your activity?

The Flinders Ranges land managers involved in the BPPPCG avoid school holidays. All have diversified tourism businesses that generate income from accommodation during holiday periods. Wheel Cactus control is also considered too hazardous to have children present – herbicides are used to treat spine-covered plants that are located by walking long distances over rough terrain.

Volunteers are prepared to work hard but they also want to enjoy themselves and have a memorable experience. Remember, volunteers are not slaves! If the work is demanding, it is a good idea to build in a rest day, mid-way through the activity.

### HOW CAN WE HELP?

**The Natural Resources SA Arid Lands Volunteer Coordinator will be able to advise of any current or upcoming funding opportunities that may be suitable for you to fund your volunteer activity. We may also be able to assist with your funding application.**

**Contact Natural Resources SA Arid Lands 8648 5300.**



An Australian Retired Persons Association volunteer finding his way at Alpana Station

## Transport and logistics

Most land managers won't have the capacity to carry many volunteers in their work vehicles.

When liaising with your volunteer group, specify if 4WD vehicles will be required to access your property and/or worksites. If the activity requires 4WD access, then the group will need to bring enough 4WDs to transport everyone to the worksite.

If your volunteers are working remotely away from the homestead, and you are not always with the group, radio calls should be made when your group arrives at and leaves the worksite.

## Volunteer expenses

Volunteers usually fund their own travel costs to attend activities.

If the activity is funded, some small reimbursement may be offered. However, it is preferable to get the commitment of the group without offering any contribution to travel expenses so that anything that can be offered later becomes a bonus.

If volunteers must travel some distance on the property to access worksites, consider providing some fuel or a small payment to the owners of the vehicles, as an act of goodwill.

## Equipment

All activities will require some tools and equipment. All equipment required for a project should be on-site, inspected and fully serviceable prior to the arrival of volunteers. It can be quite frustrating for a team if work cannot commence because the equipment has not been properly prepared.

### Battery/power supply

Battery-operated equipment should be fully-charged, and if the property is off-grid, power supply will have to be considered as some equipment may rely upon recharge to function. You should have a spare battery supply for GPS units (usually AA) and provide access to powerboards/powerpoints for overnight recharging of cordless drills, GPS units, and hand-held UHF radios.

### Personal protective equipment (PPE)

It is the volunteer/s responsibility to ensure they bring safe, practical clothing (eg wide-brimmed hat, sturdy footwear, sunscreen, drinking bottle, long-sleeved shirts/trousers if working outdoors). However, you will need to provide some personal protective equipment (PPE) – gloves, safety vests, sunscreen – for all activities. High visibility

safety vests are an excellent investment for teams working in rough and remote terrain.

### Equipment inventory

Use an equipment checklist to ensure your volunteers have everything they need and to ensure equipment is returned after they leave. It is very easy for small items like GPS units and hand-held radios to go astray. It can happen unintentionally – a volunteer may not empty their daypack until they arrive home and then discover they have items that belong to the land manager.

Remember, the purchase of dedicated equipment can be a component of a funding grant, particularly if you intend to develop a long-term partnership with a volunteer group.



Adelaide Bushwalkers Club volunteers download the day's data



Gum Creek shearers' quarters

## Accommodation

If you are hosting an activity, you will need to discuss accommodation arrangements with your volunteer group's liaison officer.

This person will be responsible for managing the accommodation and will probably request the following information:

- What is the maximum number of people that can be accommodated without putting pressure on amenities like toilets and showers?
- How many rooms and beds are available? Are they all single beds? How many beds to a room?
- Should volunteers bring all bedding including pillows?
- How many refrigerators are available? Are they electric, gas, or other?

- Is there a freezer available (helpful for larger self-catering groups)?
- Is there a microwave?
- Is 24 hour power available? Will there be restrictions on the use of power?
- Are there powerpoints in the bedrooms?
- Should volunteers bring chairs?
- Would it be helpful to bring tools and other equipment?

There are times when mice and ants can be a problem in buildings. Let your volunteers know so that they can pack and store their food more securely.

# Delivering your activity

Bill McIntosh (Gum Creek Station) and Adelaide Bushwalkers Club volunteers plan their next cactus attack



## Meet and greet

Try to allocate some social time with your volunteers.

The deepest bonds between volunteers and their hosts occur when you spend time relaxing with your group over a shared meal and a few drinks. Interaction with land managers is greatly valued by volunteers and it is not unusual for volunteers to invite their hosts for a meal during the activity.

Hold a 'welcome barbeque' on the evening that your group arrives to 'break the ice'

and give you a feel for the personality of the group. If your volunteers regularly return to your property, the barbeque will become more like a celebration among old friends.

The Flinders Ranges land managers involved in the BPPPCG provide a 'welcome barbeque' for each group of volunteers with whom they work.

## Induction

Before you get started on your activity, hold an induction to ensure that your volunteers have the required skills.

Demonstrate the techniques to be used and how to use equipment safely and effectively. Never assume that volunteers already have this knowledge.

Ensure your volunteers:

- agree to take reasonable care to protect their own and others health, safety and welfare
- complete a volunteer registration form, which includes emergency contact details.

You should retain a copy of the emergency contact details for the duration of the activity.

And ensure that you:

- provide a safe working environment where volunteer safety features in all work instructions and practices

- explain emergency procedures during the induction and include clear instructions for communication from the field (radio channels, call signs)
- provide a first aid kit both in the field and where volunteers are accommodated.

If a group returns to undertake the same work each year, provide a brief refresher before work commences and fully induct any new volunteers.

Over time, some volunteers may modify what they were originally shown. Encourage them to follow the original directions and, if necessary, demonstrate any techniques again. Explain that consistency within the group will mean that, if there is a change in outcomes (eg some treated weeds do not die), the cause can be determined.

## Supervision

On their first visit, you should spend at least the first full day at the worksite with your volunteers.

The nature of the work will determine whether you need to remain for the duration of the activity. This may be necessary if volunteers are moving by foot over rough terrain with impeded visibility between walkers, or if they are travelling some distance from the main homestead. GPS navigation routes can be pre-set but your local knowledge is the best insurance that group members will not get lost.

Where volunteers are working on a more localised scale, such as doing bush regeneration work or renovating old buildings, they should be able to work without supervision, once they have been fully briefed.

Strong leadership within any group is a great asset. Once you have confidence in the leader, you will be able to withdraw from the worksite and get on with other property management activities. Where leadership is not strong, or your group appears to be a bit fractious or lacks cohesion, then you should spend as much time as possible with volunteers.

### HOW CAN WE HELP?

**At the beginning of each volunteer activity, the Volunteers Coordinator (or a nominee trained in volunteer induction), will provide a formal on-site induction to volunteers. This is a requirement of the Volunteer Program's insurance liability process.**

**An Induction Pack including registration forms, information and policies will be provided to each volunteer.**

**If a group returns to the same property each year, and contact details and other information remains unchanged for the group, the land manager may be able to provide a simplified 'refresher' induction on behalf of the Volunteer Program.**

**Contact Natural Resources SA Arid Lands 8648 5300.**



Australian Retired Persons Association volunteers treating cactus

## HOW CAN WE HELP?

The Natural Resources SA Arid Lands Volunteer Coordinator can provide access to technical assistance for NRM-related volunteer activities. This could be advice about herbicide selection and application rates and/or demonstrations of how best to apply herbicides for the control of particular weeds. Or it could be how to set up photopoints for the long-term monitoring of vegetation recovery or weed control.

Contact Natural Resources SA Arid Lands 8648 5300.

## What worked? What didn't?

Once the activity is concluded, discuss how it went with your volunteers in a relaxed setting.

This could be over a cup of coffee, a beer, or a shared 'thank you' meal before volunteers head home. Invite each participant to say a few words about their experience – what did they enjoy? What could be improved? Group leaders will often initiate this and then invite you to respond.

De-briefing will provide insurance against perpetuating poor or ineffective practices and allow you to channel feedback into the activity during the next visit. It provides a non-threatening way for volunteers to make suggestions. You might not agree with everything or be able to act on all suggestions but it is important that everyone has a chance to share their ideas.

And don't forget to convey your appreciation and formally thank the group before they leave the property.

## Issues, incidents and egos

From time to time, there will be issues that need to be resolved.

Good communication, strong leadership, and thorough planning will minimise their frequency.

Deal with issues as soon as they arise. Where an issue jeopardises the safety of your group members or the effectiveness of the work being undertaken, take strong and decisive action.

Egos can be difficult and disruptive, and tolerance levels challenged when volunteers are tired. However, volunteers usually know each other well and can accommodate personal differences. If there is a problem with one member of your group, ask the leader to assist

in resolving the issue. Try to keep the conversation on a professional footing and avoid it becoming personal. Most things can be worked through.

If an incident occurs it does not mean that the activity or partnership must be abandoned. Accidents happen from time to time and, as long as all reasonable care has been taken, and OHS&W protocols followed, land managers should not be left with any legal liabilities.

Try not to let an issue or an incident derail a good project or damage an ongoing relationship with the group.



Australian Retired Persons Association volunteers before heading off for a day's work

# Communication

## Liaison

Ensure your volunteer group has as single spokesperson with whom you can liaise.

A different person at every contact can signal poor organisation at the other end.

Remember, managing expectations is critical to the success of the project and all communication should be open and honest. When your conversation begins with the volunteer spokesperson, you will both need to consider (and communicate) what you want from the activity.

## Email or telephone?

Use the telephone during the early stages of planning and just before an activity begins. In between times, email is useful for sending lists and images and may be the preferred form of communication for some volunteers.



Volunteers from the Toyota Landcruiser Club of Australia relaxing at Gum Creek Station

## Building partnerships

Cultivating partnerships with volunteer groups has many advantages.

Through partnerships, you can:

- tackle problems for which you would not otherwise have resources
- use volunteer hours as 'in-kind' contributions to leverage funding for projects on your property.

Through partnerships, your volunteers can:

- take ownership of a project
- take pride in their work (and can check on its effectiveness if they return)
- develop and expand their skills
- become champions and advocates for outback families.

There are also mutual benefits:

- trust is built
- there are great opportunities for you and your volunteer/s to learn from one another and develop a deeper shared appreciation
- long-lasting friendships can develop
- where your volunteers are from the city, the city/country divide is broken.

Lasting partnerships require good leadership, strong communication, and genuine engagement between you and your volunteers.

## Celebrating success

Successful collaborations between land managers and volunteers are stories worth sharing.

Share your story on Facebook or on your website and consider:

- contributing an article to the bimonthly magazine *Across the Outback*
- contacting local media outlets, particularly radio – the ABC's *Country Hour* or *Bush Telegraph* are always looking for stories from the bush
- sharing your experience with other land managers
- sharing your experience in local community newsletters.

### HOW CAN WE HELP?

If you would like advice on submitting an article to the *Across The Outback* newsletter contact the **Communications Officer, Natural Resources Centre SA Arid Lands 8648 5300**



Mitsubishi 4WD Club volunteers treating cactus on Moolooloo Station

# CASE STUDY

## Moolooloo Station & Mitsubishi 4WD Club SA WHEEL CACTUS CONTROL AND BUILDING RESTORATION

Each spring, volunteers from the Mitsubishi 4WD Club SA travel from Adelaide to Moolooloo Station to carry out building restoration work and Wheel Cactus control. The group's leader, Sue Linnell, and landholder Keith Slade provide some tips about how to build and maintain a strong partnership between volunteers and land managers.

Keith and Lisa Slade had the perfect project for volunteers – they wanted to stabilise some of their old station buildings but could never find time to do the work.

The Slades knew there were groups keen to do volunteer work in the bush and began exploring their options on the Internet, eventually making contact with Sue Linnell of the Mitsubishi 4WD Club SA.

Sue visited Moolooloo to meet the Slades and discuss the job before the work began.

'There is value in seeing with your own eyes – knowing what you are coming to,' she said. 'If you haven't got first-hand knowledge, it is difficult to sell it to others.'

She inspected the quarters and looked at the worksite – the process of 'getting to know each other' had begun.

When some members of the club questioned why they should volunteer to help people with a commercial enterprise, Sue explained that the best way to look after these areas is to help families stay on the land.

Sue has regular contact with the Slades throughout the year as she plans the annual activity.

However, once the volunteers arrive, Keith meets with the volunteers only briefly each morning before getting on with his own work.

'I don't want to be looking over their shoulder,' he said. 'If you want to control them, then employ them.'

So, what makes or breaks a good volunteer event?

According to Sue, a smoothly run activity comes down to 'behind-the-scenes planning' – and Keith agrees: 'Organisation – I think that's the secret – I can have everything in place but they have to be prepared at their end too.'

Sue also stresses the importance of explaining to volunteers why their work is important: 'Volunteers travel a long way, usually at their own expense, and they expect to be kept busy – they want to do work that is meaningful.'

Trust and communication are also essential.

'They have to take us on trust to begin with,' said Sue. 'And the relationship has to be a two-way thing – volunteers don't want to feel that they are nuisances and it's important that land managers ease that feeling, especially early in the relationship.'

'And, if you say you are going to do something, do it,' Sue continues. 'Make sure all the materials and tools are available and get involved – volunteers don't like surprises.'

It's about recognising your volunteer/s skills too.

'The Mitsubishi 4WD members will turn their hands to anything, said Sue. 'Most have had quite impressive working lives – put all those skills together and give them their head a bit, and it is amazing what they can achieve.'

And, when it comes to equipment, come to an arrangement that works for you both.

'We provide all the equipment needed for the Wheel Cactus work but, for building jobs, it is often easier for the volunteers to organise the gear in town and we reimburse them,' said Keith.

Finally, allocate your volunteers the 'they-can-wait' jobs.

'You don't want to take advantage of them,' Keith explains. 'Don't rely on them for really crucial things in running your property – that's your responsibility – do the things you really want to get done but keep putting on the back-burner.'

'It's got to be a valid project, necessary – not just a matter of keeping volunteers happy.'

*Sue Linnell, Mitsubishi Club SA*



A stone wall restored by Mitsubishi 4WD Club volunteers on Moolooloo Station

'At the start you don't know what you're in for – you've got to have a bit of trust.'

*Keith Slade, Moolooloo Station*



The *Blinman-Parachilna Pest Plant Control Group* has been able to support Mitsubishi 4WD volunteers with a small travel reimbursement from funding received through the SA Arid Lands Natural Resources Management Board.

Volunteer hours and other donations such as free accommodation provided for volunteers at Moolooloo, can be used as an in-kind contribution to leverage funding from State and Australian Governments.

# Natural Resources SA Arid Lands Volunteer Program



If you don't want to 'go it alone', the Natural Resources SA Arid Lands Volunteer Program may be able to provide support for land managers who are interested in working with volunteers on their properties.

We can take you through the whole volunteer process, providing advice about finding volunteers, planning for a volunteer activity, insurance cover, funding opportunities, and technical advice.

Volunteers can help with the following NRM-related activities

- Weed control
- Erosion control
- Fencing waterholes and springs
- Threatened species conservation including field data collection
- Surveys
- Vegetation restoration
- Tree-planting
- Restoration and maintenance of heritage sites
- Data entry
- Wildlife and vegetation monitoring

## Can we help you?

Is there work needed on your property that could be achievable if you had a team of willing volunteers to provide the labour?

If your answer was yes, consider:

- Do you need technical advice for your proposed activity?
- Do you think your proposed activity may be eligible for support funding?
- Are you interested in developing a long-term partnership with a volunteer group?
- Do you have a particular group in mind or do you need to find a suitable group of volunteers?
- Would you be willing to host a welcome meal for a group of volunteers?
- Would you be prepared to allocate some time to socialise with the group during their stay on your property?
- How many volunteers can you accommodate?
- Is there anything about your property that may impact upon or influence how a volunteer activity might be run – remoteness, off-grid, etc?
- What is the most suitable time to schedule your activity? Would you be available for part of, or the duration of, the activity?
- What equipment will be required and from where will you source equipment?
- Will 4WDs be required to access worksites on your property? If so, would you be prepared to provide volunteers with some fuel to cover what is used to access worksites?

If you are keen to proceed, staff at the Natural Resources Centre SA Arid Lands may be able to assist. Contact the Volunteers Coordinator 8648 5300.



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Government of South Australia  
South Australian Arid Lands Natural  
Resources Management Board

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