

# PARTICIPATE

GET INVOLVED > STAY CONNECTED

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ISSUE  
03



Loneliness in  
the spotlight



**AN INITIATIVE** of the Centre for Participation, **Participate** has been created to encourage participation within the broader Wimmera Mallee community and to help readers in staying connected with current events and opportunities across the district.

Formed following the amalgamation of Volunteering Western Victoria and the Wimmera HUB in 2016, the Centre for Participation encourages people from all walks of life and all skill sets to fully participate in their lives and their communities, via the four pillars of Community, Learning, Volunteering and Partnerships.

As such, the theme of our third edition is Partnerships.

We are exceptionally proud of PARTICIPATE and welcome any feedback you may have about it.

Please enjoy.

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## COVER:

Photo courtesy Robert Wagner

**SPOTLIGHT:** Centre for Participation CEO Julie Pettett (left) and Friends for Good chair Patricia Lauria discuss the issue of loneliness during a national conference in Melbourne. More details appear on page 12.

# CEO WELCOME >

## Strengthening community through women in sports leadership

Sport is an important part of life in rural Australia, contributing to community identity, sense of place, social interaction and good health. Sports clubs are also important for promoting inclusion and giving an avenue for demonstrations of leadership capability.

Under the Change Our Game initiative, the Victoria State Government has set a mandatory quota that by July 1, 2019 40% of Board membership must be women.

The Wimmera Regional Sports Assembly (WRSA) had identified that a significant barrier to women putting themselves forward to be on Boards, or to take leadership roles on Boards, was that women lacked confidence in their knowledge about governance.

This was despite a strong women sports administrator network and a long history of women contributing extensively to the running of sports across the Wimmera.

Centre for Participation coordinated with the WRSA to submit a grant application to address this need through a governance training program for women on Boards who were wanting to lead their clubs, or considering putting themselves forward to be on a Board.

The grant was successful and the centre has, so far, hosted the first of four two-day workshops which will together produce 100 graduates with increased confidence in their knowledge about governance.

Evaluation from the first workshop showed that participants improved their confidence in being an effective Board member, being an office bearer, planning for the future of the club and making a positive difference for the club.

And that participants were overwhelmingly highly likely to recommend the course to their peers.

Those who complete the training program became eligible to attend a celebration dinner, the first of which featured Olympic and Commonwealth Games medallist Belinda Snell as keynote speaker, with Member for Lowan Emma Kealy and former Horsham Rural City Mayor Pam Clarke also present to offer their congratulations.

The Women in Sport Good Governance program builds on the existing relationship between the WRSA and the Centre for Participation which provides annually for a young leaders' program for a dozen final-year school students, and draws upon skills and resources from within the Good Governance program.

**Julie Pettett**  
CEO, Centre for Participation



**CONGRATULATIONS:** Member for Lowan Emma Kealy (centre) congratulates the Women in Sport Good Governance program graduates.

## STRONG LEADERSHIP

# LEADERSHIP MOMENTUM GATHERS

## National Network of Volunteer Resource Centres

MOMENTUM is gathering amongst leaders of volunteer infrastructure organisations as the National Network of Volunteer Resource Centres partner to build and strengthen community resilience.

Along with the other eight founding members, Centre for Participation has been involved in establishing the National Network of Volunteer Resource Centres. The member organisation are committed to working together to strengthen community resilience, by building the capacity and sustainability of small to medium volunteer involving organisations.

The member organisations are committed to working together to strengthen community resilience.

The NNVRC is underpinned by a Memorandum of Understanding and, since the establishment of the NNVRC in 2016, members have participated in a series of meetings in Adelaide, Newcastle, Wangaratta, Horsham and Melbourne.

"In the first year Albury Wodonga Volunteer Resource Bureau Inc. worked with our colleagues, to better understand the 'value proposition' of our volunteer program," Albury Wodonga Volunteer Resource Bureau Inc. CEO Jemma Toohey said. "These inspirational meetings provide a platform to strengthen the leadership and professionalism of place based volunteering infrastructure organisations. Together as a team of experts we have over 100 years of volunteer involvement, management skills and leadership experience," she said.

The NNVRC is currently planning a two day forum for the National Network of Volunteer Resource Centres in early 2019. This will give other leaders from Volunteer Resource Centre from around Australia an opportunity to hear about what we are doing, contribute to the research, participate in professional development workshops and identify further opportunities for collaboration in our sector.

"We are driven to: share what we are learning in our individual organisations, document information that articulates the impact of our services, and to contribute to the 'How volunteerism impacts social cohesion' research being undertaken by Centre for Participation & Think Impact a Melbourne based B-Corporation," Centre for Participation CEO Julie Pettett said.

The 2 day forum will be open to localised\* Volunteer Resource Centres that build community capacity and resilience through the provision and promotion of information, support, services and mentoring to individuals, organisations and communities about all aspects of volunteering.

They achieve this by being: inclusive, respectful and responsive to their communities.

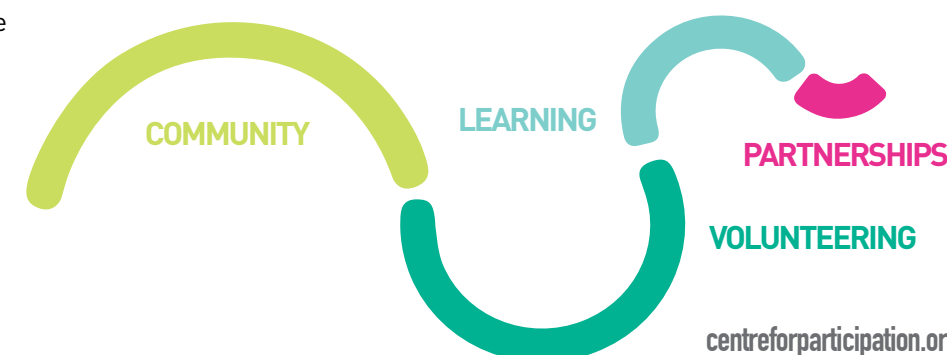
*\*Definition of Localised; operate in a defined area (not state wide or national)*

## WE ARE DRIVEN TO:

> **SHARE WHAT WE ARE LEARNING IN OUR INDIVIDUAL ORGANISATIONS;**

> **DOCUMENT INFORMATION THAT ARTICULATES THE IMPACT OF OUR SERVICES; AND**

> **TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE 'HOW VOLUNTEERISM IMPACTS SOCIAL COHESION' RESEARCH**





# VOLUNTEERING >

## Improving liveability

Centre for Participation assisted St Arnaud Community Action Network (SCAN) to facilitate a workshop in July that investigated ways of improving liveability in the Northern Grampians region.

SCAN's goals are to promote and support local businesses and the community, to advocate on behalf of the community and its environmental and structural assets, and to advocate to the Northern Grampian Shire Council and other organisations, ideas and issues raised by residents and businesses.

A former gold-mining town in the Wimmera, like many small rural towns St Arnaud has a declining and aging population and struggles to maintain services that rely upon scale for their profitability.

Traditionally a home for tourism activities based around recreational water activities it is also feeling the impact of climate change and the impact of that on the management of flood water across the Grampians, Wimmera and Mallee

regions, as well as the impact of its aging and lower income population.

The workshop, which incorporated a survey and flyer listing the network's goals that was sent to every household in the town, received a positive community response.

Responding enthusiastically to the opportunity to be involved in determining their own future a total of 46 residents completed the survey with close to 70 attending the workshop – meaning of the town's 2200 residents almost one in five participated in the discussion.

That's the equivalent of Melbourne filling the MCG for a four-hour interactive workshop!

Providing a clear vision for SCAN and the community the survey and

*SCAN's goals are to promote and support local businesses and the community*

workshop allowed residents to have their say and raise issues of particular concern and give clear direction to their representatives and the others both within and outside of their district who make decisions over their lives.

And, because it was facilitated, the workshop was able to focus ideas and discussion towards a consensus.

Providing a clear vision for SCAN and the community, the survey and workshop allowed residents to have a say and raise issues of particular concern, and to give clear direction as to how they want their community to grow and thrive.

## Strong support for community theatre

St Arnaud Community Theatre have been supported by the Centre for Participation in looking into what the community wants from its theatre, how to better support its volunteers, and confirm a path for its future.

Like other theatres in the wider region, the St Arnaud Community Theatre is staffed by volunteers and led by a volunteer committee. It uses a facility provided by the Northern Grampians Shire Council where a significant number of its film screenings double as fundraisers for other community organisations operating in the town.

So far support has consisted of facilitating a community consultation including the theatre's volunteers, and surveying those from the community who have, or might, use the theatre.

Analysis of the survey shows there is strong support for the theatre and the work of the volunteers, useful feedback

about what films people want to see, and also support for the committee to explore alternative offerings including a film festival. The committee is also looking towards collaboration with other community theatres.

# YOUTH LEADERSHIP >

## Changing the game

Wimmera Regional Sports Assembly youth leadership students celebrated their success at completing the course with a celebratory dinner and certificate presentation.

WRSA has worked with the Centre for Participation for six years to offer the program which provided the backbone for a series of workshops, including external providers training the leaders in first aid, sports medicine and the safe and responsible supply of alcohol.

Targeted at young people, the program had 12 participants this year with the students recently enjoying the culmination of their training with a celebratory dinner.

Dinner guests included clubs which have sponsored the students, the students and their parents who got together to share what the students learnt and consolidate their support for one another.

12  
STUDENTS LEARNED  
LEADERSHIP SKILLS



**WORKSHOP DISCUSSION:** Centre for Participation CEO Julie Pettett discussed improving rural liveability during the workshop



**COMPLETE:** The 12 participants celebrated the culmination of their training with a dinner and certificate presentation.



# WIMMERA SOCIAL SUPPORT >

## Out and about **staying connected**

HAVING been part of the Wimmera Social Support Program for more than a decade, it's the opportunity to see the countryside and chat with other men that keeps Archie Mackley coming back week after week.

Born and raised in McKenzie Creek, Archie was used to a busy life having spent some time in the Army, welcoming five children and being employed for around 40 years on the Horsham Shire, including 34 years as a wood merchant on the side.

But, when it came to retirement he was at a bit of a loose end and he signed up to join the Men's Outings.

Incredibly vibrant at 97, Archie said he enjoys the regular Tuesday trips: "It's good to get out and look at the countryside, sometimes we go up a mountain or look at the crops."

"The volunteers are great and I enjoy chatting with the other men who also go on the trips," he said.

Joined by some family members on the outings, Archie has enjoyed spending time with his relatives on a regular basis, as well as making the new friendships which have developed from the outings.



**SIGHTS:** Long time Wimmera Social Support client Archie Mackley enjoys seeing the region on the weekly men's outings.

"I wouldn't care about going out on my own, but it's lovely to get out and about and see the different parts of the Wimmera I might not have seen before," he said.

Recalling his favourite recent experience, a visit to the Woods Museum at Rupanyup, Archie said he liked seeing the vintage tractors.

"I used to own a few old tractors in my time and was able to recognise some of the models," he said.

"And, just recently, we went to the Murtoa Stick Shed – the great big poles sticking up out of the ground were very interesting and went on for ages; the shed is so long."

"The guide who took us through described the work that had been done on the shed, which I found fascinating. It was a pity we couldn't spend more time there".

## Changes to **access**

Centre for Participation is committed to supporting seniors to remain independent at home and to maintain their social connections in partnership with My Aged Care services.

In August 2016 the Commonwealth Home Support Program was implemented for people aged over 65 (over 50 for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people) to access support to remain independent at home.

**People who participate in community life feel less lonely or socially isolated.**

Federal Government believed a person who received a service with a wellness and reablement focus would only need it for a short time. However, it was discovered that many people coming into the service were entering it at a time when they were not able to be reabled to leave the service, leading to the development of My Aged Care.

To support people to participate in community life and feel less socially isolated, the Centre for Participation offers several services as part of the CHS Program, including community transport and specialised support services, in line with the basic level of care requirements imposed by the Commonwealth.

Anyone with more complex needs must be assessed by the Aged Care Assessment Team to be eligible for a Home Care Package, short term respite in residential care or permanent residential care; an allocation of funds to be utilised to purchase services to meet a person's needs to remain independent to live at home.

Anyone wanting to access My Aged Care services can phone 1800 200 422.

# TIME TO CELEBRATE AGAIN! >

## VOLUNTEERING RECOGNITION 2019 AWARDS

with 1089 3WM, Mixx FM and The Weekly Advertiser

VOLUNTEERS from across the Wimmera, Mallee and Northern Grampians will once again be celebrated for their outstanding commitment when the biennial Volunteering Recognition Awards return in 2019.

Preparations are in full swing for the awards which will be hosted at Horsham Town Hall on May 17, with an array of nominations again expected across a total of 12 categories including individual and organisation awards, and Landcare awards.

The awards celebrate the role organisations play across the region in bringing together volunteers and volunteer managing organisations.

This is also a perfect opportunity to recognise the remarkable effort our region's volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations put in to make our communities so vibrant.

The 2019 awards will be officially launched on December 5.

More details about the awards will appear in future editions of Participate.

## New direction **in 2019**

AFTER four years of excellent, and very much appreciated, support as the major sponsor Bendigo Bank is excited to partner in the creation of the new People's Choice award for the 2019 Volunteering Recognition Awards.

An enthusiastic and dedicated supporter since the inaugural awards back in 2013, Bendigo Bank understands the importance volunteers play in the Wimmera Mallee and is excited to be taking this new direction.

Centre for Participation has introduced the new award category to give the community an extra opportunity to nominate an individual or organisation they feel is doing an outstanding job in relation to volunteering.



**WINNER:** A 2017 winner makes their acceptance speech.



**WELCOME:** The 2017 awards welcomed a crowd in excess of 260 people.



**CELEBRATION:** The Volunteering Recognition Awards celebrate the outstanding commitment volunteers make across the Wimmera Mallee



**PLANNING:** Plans are in full swing for the 2019 awards, with an array of nominations again expected across the 12 categories



# AWARD SUPPORTERS 2019 >



## GOLD SPONSOR:



"ACE Radio Broadcasters, through The Weekly Advertiser and radio stations 3WM and MIXX FM, strongly believe in recognising the quiet achievers of our community.

The priceless efforts of volunteers and people who go 'above and beyond' often sit in the shadows of major organisations, activities, events, celebrations and achievements.

These people form a vital cog in Wimmera society and this is a principal reason why ACE has supported the Centre of Participation awards.

Through observations, from having such a large broadcasting and distribution footprint across the Wimmera, Mallee and Grampians, what has always been obvious to ACE is how much regional communities rely on their unsung heroes.

People coming together to provide support for each other, their communities and institutions is part of life and something we must all encourage.

The Centre for Participation provides a conduit between need and service and the awards are a great way to acknowledge, salute and celebrate achievement".



## SILVER SPONSOR:



"We continue to support the awards because we know how important volunteering is to the fabric of the community.

Volunteers give up their own personal time to help others, and volunteering is such a vital part of our rural communities.

These awards are a perfect opportunity to acknowledge the amazing efforts.

We're looking forward to being again able to help recognise the tireless efforts of the Wimmera Mallee's volunteers and volunteering organisations".



## BRONZE SPONSOR:



"We have supported the Volunteering Recognition Awards since the inaugural event back in 2013.

And we're excited to be on board as the Bronze sponsor again in 2019 recognising the contribution our region's volunteers make to their communities.

All volunteers are to be credited for their remarkable efforts".

# LEARNING INVESTMENT >

## Vibrant space for expression

Centre for Participation has received funding from the Victorian Multicultural Commission to build a new kitchen and training room which will be a vibrant "multi-cultural community co-operative" for new migrants, creatives and the community.

Learning Manager Robbie Millar said the area will provide a place where culturally diverse groups feel safe and able express their culture through food, the visual arts, and crafts and extend the gallery describing journeys and experiences.

"This project invests in creating a shared sense of belonging, respect, acceptance and contribution to the culturally diverse communities across the Wimmera Mallee," Mr Millar said.

"Centre for Participation will share its space as 'go to place' for migrants to learn and volunteer, be supported and help one another to fulfil their aspirations to give, belong and grow," he said.

"The new facilities will increase participation and fulfil the aspirations of migrant peoples who have expressed to us their desire to train, work, create multi-cultural enterprises and practice their culture through food, art, and craft".

However, the area will also be a place where seniors, younger people and the community can come together and learn new skills, and will be the centre of all catering for the proposed Community Connection Café.

During the works the centre is also improving access and increased participation to the Urquhart Street building to ensure it continues to meet the compliance regulations of the Disability Discrimination Act.



**PURPOSE BUILT:** The new kitchen and training room will provide a safe space for new migrants, like Hospitality Workforce Pathways student Duangjai, to express their culture.



## Connecting communities

Centre for Participation will continue to innovate to build skills and connect the Horsham community with new migrants, with the building of a Harmony Van in the works.

Learning Manager Robbie Millar said the Harmony Van aims to connect the Horsham community with new arrivals, migrants, refugees and asylum seekers.

"New culinary experiences will, for the first time, be created and shared between the trainees of different cultures and the community. These shared experiences will create community conversations, cohesion, and connection, whilst creating learning opportunities and workforce skill development," Mr Millar said.

"This project is more than food delivery and service. We are utilising the capacity of the Centre for Participation in community learning, volunteering, migrant support and rural education innovation," he said.

"The project is another example of how we innovate to build skills and grow the workforce utilising alternate delivery models to suit all disadvantaged learners."

The Harmony Van will launch "work ready" trainees of all cultures and workforce participation disadvantage into hospitality education, jobs and enterprise pathways. Our community of Western Victoria will have greater access to food from a variety of different cultures, breaking down barriers and building social cohesion.

This will all be supported by the Centre for Participation learning programs and its volunteer mentors in hospitality, workforce, enterprise and business.



# MEET THE BOARD >

PART  
02



## Why we do what we do

We all know that most organisations have a board, but what is it that the board actually does?

Centre for Participation board is a skills-based board with up to nine members who possess skills in a broad range of areas, from education, social service, community development, financial management, health care and business management.

Members are required to serve a minimum of two years as part of the succession planning process and work to lead the organisation, under the guidance of the management team of CEO Julie Pettett, Serena Kereopa (Manager, Community Services and Volunteering), Robbie Millar (Manager, Learning and Community Development) and other skilled staff in finance, facilities and other services.

This leadership can encompass a range of areas from strategic planning to budgeting, financial planning, recruitment, marketing and more, within the four pillars of **Community**, **Volunteering**, **Learning** and **Partnerships**.

The board's focus is on strengthening individuals, organisations and communities and this includes partnerships with organisations to help them upskill staff, support communities and build networks.

Conscious of the need for diversity, including a balance of age and gender, the board aims to help people build the type of community they want to live in, be part of the community, open doors and strengthen the Centre for Participation to grow and continue to succeed.

Kevin Mills  
Chair  
Centre for Participation Board



### RAY KINGSTON

#### Deputy Chair

A key architect in developing the governance foundations for the "Lighting the Regions" project, which incorporated 16 separate and significantly diverse councils, Ray has a keen interest in governance and is committed to new solutions in community and business development.

Joining the board because he saw it as an "opportunity to utilise some of my skillset in the service of the wider Wimmera Mallee community" and to basically "be useful", Ray is passionate about recognition of, and support for, the profound impact volunteers have in regional Australia, commenting: "An engaged community is an incredibly powerful tool for doing good in the world. It's a concept worthy of support".

Seeing the Centre for Participation as playing a role in finding ways to deliver community support, he said: "Despite being very strong and resilient, Wimmera Mallee communities do need support."

"To stay strong they need support to retain high levels of engagement in the face of a rapidly changing society, and they need support for the ever-escalating volunteer workloads that keep our region functioning".



### WENDY BYWATERS

As the longest serving Centre for Participation board member, at 6 years involvement, Wendy is a woman of many talents; a business owner, former Hindmarsh Shire Councillor and Business Leadership Program graduate.

Living in Nhill, she is passionate about her rural community and her introduction to volunteering started at a young age, later evolving and continuing to grow when she started her family.

As a Councillor, Wendy says she learned quickly how important volunteering is to provide essential Government services and, when she was given the opportunity to apply for a board position in 2012, she felt it was "an excellent way to support my community through strengthening volunteering", grabbing the opportunity with both hands.

During what Wendy describes as "many exciting and some challenging times" during her time on the board, she took an active leadership role to transition Volunteering Western Victoria into Centre For Participation to strengthen volunteerism and community education, and is passionate about a range of projects and issues, including connecting communities, creating inclusive communities for refugees, supporting and celebrating young people, and optimising opportunities to enhance people's wellbeing and the celebration of life in rural communities.

# MEET THE TEAM >

PART  
03

## Meet your Centre staff



### STEPHANIE THOMSON

#### Administration and Co-ordinating the Licencing the Wimmera Program

Working for us in various roles since 2011, Stephanie is proving she is quite versatile and is now not only in a permanent administration role but also acting coordinator of the Licencing the Wimmera program.

And no two days are the same, with the frontline role requiring her to be the first point of contact either face to face or by phone as well as answer any queries or bookings of staff, volunteers and the public with the programs that the Centre for Participation runs.

Stephanie also supports the Finance Officer with the debtors and creditors and, in her LTW role, assists learner drivers, who have been identified as facing a significant barrier or disadvantage which may prohibit them from gaining the necessary driving experience required, to apply for a Probationary licence.

She says her favourite part of her many and varied roles is working with people who enjoy helping others succeed through employment or volunteering.



### ROMAN ULANOWICZ

#### Administration

Starting with the centre six months ago as a volunteer while studying for a Diploma in Business Administration, Roman was later offered the Administration and Student Records position which includes answering customer enquiries, reception duties, enrolling students in courses, logging incoming and outgoing mail, engaging with volunteers and staff, student record keeping, and generally assisting all staff when required.

And Roman says his favourite part of the role is engaging with volunteers and students.



### BARBARA ELTZE

#### Wimmera Social Support Program

Joining the Centre for Participation back in 2013, Barb's role is also varied and, in a nutshell, includes checking emails, taking calls, contacting and visiting service users to ensure the service fits their needs, arranging outings for service users and contacting volunteers.

Barb's favourite part of her role is having contact with service users and completing tasks.



### NARELLE HANRAHAN

#### Finance Officer

A new face at the centre, having joined the team one month ago, Narelle hails from Birchip and finance is her passion having previously worked for Wimmera HUB and Wimmera Volunteers as well as in agricultural finance.

Keeping herself busy with the day to day financial tasks of the centre, in her spare time Narelle loves to volunteer and fundraise for her local CWA, previously serving on the state board, and counts her spoodle Patchy as her best friend.

# LONELINESS FORUM >

## Loneliness in the spotlight

Often largely ignored, the issue of loneliness was thrust into the spotlight during the inaugural Australian Loneliness Dialogue national conference hosted in Melbourne on November 13.

The brainchild of Friends for Good, the conference highlighted the chronic health issues related to loneliness and the need for the development of a national strategy to provide a roadmap to move forward, while also calling on the Australian Government to take action.

"Research demonstrates that chronic loneliness is related to heart disease, depression, anxiety and even reduced life span. It is real and impacts people's health and wellbeing every day," Friends for Good chair Patricia Lauria said.

Centre for Participation CEO Julie Pettett, who attended the conference, said: "Loneliness and isolation is a very real issue in our region; connecting with family and friends, with communities online, volunteering and even getting a pet can assist with overcoming loneliness and isolation and improve quality of life."

The Australian Loneliness Report, published by The Australian Psychological Society and Swinburne University of Technology, shows nearly 30 percent of Australians don't feel part

of a group of friends, while one in four don't feel they a lot in common with the people around them.

"Establishing strong meaningful relationship to enrich people's life is critical. There are a number of initiatives we are partnering with Friends for Good on such as 'Pastime Partners' matching volunteers with seniors to create new friendships, being involved in research and assisting with raising public awareness," Mrs Pettett said.

Speaking at the conference Commissioner for Senior Victorians Gerard Manour discussed a recurring theme amongst seniors was that "the experience of getting older is a bit like living in a closet, not being seen or heard anymore".

Following the dialogue attendees resolved to send a delegation to Canberra to strongly advocate about the issue of loneliness.

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