MEALS ON WHEELS: BUILDING TOWARDS A NEW SOCIAL EXPERIMENT FOR OUR TIMES
JUNE 2014

ARC LINKAGE PROJECT LP 100200065

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# Table of contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 1: International Perspectives</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 2: Australian Interviews</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 3: National Australian Survey</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OVERVIEW</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Australian Meals on Wheels Association (AMOWA)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snapshot of Meals on Wheels Australia</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Australia (SA)</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia Capital Territory (ACT)</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New South Wales (NSW)</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queensland (QLD)</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasmania (TAS)</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Australia (WA)</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria (VIC)</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Territory (NT)</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION, BACKGROUND &amp; METHODOLOGY</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1. Project Aims</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2. The Report</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3. Background</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4. Methodology</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 2: THE INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 The International Study [April-June 2011]</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3. Findings: Stage 1 International Innovation and Exploration</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.1. Challenges in Utilizing Volunteers</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.2. New Approaches to Delivering a Food Service</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.3. More Than Just a Meal</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.4. Embedding Within Community Settings</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.5. New Forms of Recruitment and the Thorny Issue of Retention</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.6. Changing Models of Food Service Delivery</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4. Conclusion</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 3. THE AUSTRALIAN PERSPECTIVE</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2. Stage 2 Findings: Australian Interviews</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.1. Challenges</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legislation and Regulation</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meals on Wheels Operations and Systems</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 3. STAGE 2: THE AUSTRALIAN SURVEY

3.1. Survey Design
3.3. Response Rate
3.4. Findings: Stage 2 National Survey Study

CHAPTER 4. STAGE 3: NATIONAL AUSTRALIAN SURVEY STUDY

4.1. Survey Design
4.2. National Survey Distribution (June 2012 – Jan 2013)
4.3. Response Rate
4.4. Findings: Stage 3 National Survey Study

CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION

REFERENCES
Acknowledgements

The three-year project was funded by the Australian Research Council (LP100200065), the Australian Meals on Wheels Association (AMOWA), University of New England, La Trobe University, and Flinders University.

We wish to warmly acknowledge the valuable insights, contributions and support of the Meals on Wheels community across Australia including both volunteers and staff. However special mention must be made of current CEO of Meals on Wheels SA Inc. Sharyn Broer, her predecessor, Cam Pearce, and the MOW board for their ongoing interest in and assistance with the project.

We would also like to make special mention of the work of Research Assistants, Dr Rachel Winterton and Dr Melissa Moore from Latrobe University, and Dr Julie Marsh and Dr Janene Carey from the University of New England, who all worked with us on aspects of the project at different times. Each brought an array of special skills and professionalism to the team.
Executive Summary

Population ageing is a worldwide phenomenon, presenting particular challenges for health and aged care services. Such challenges relate to the increased risk of poor health and disability as one ages, linking with a corresponding rising demand for specialist treatment and more hospital care. Recent improvements in aged care arrangements have led to more and more people opting to age in place, relying on non-profit services such as Meals on Wheels (MOW).

MOW is offered in numerous countries, including Ireland, United Kingdom, Sweden, Canada, United States of America, South Africa, and Japan. It has been operating in Australia since 1952. Although the delivery and operation of services across or within countries is not universal, a fundamental core of MOW services is supporting ageing in place and care within the home, for example, by providing frail older people and those with disabilities with a nutritious meal and basic social contact, thus facilitating their independence.

Similar to other non-profit organizations, MOW organizations worldwide are experiencing challenges that threaten its long-term sustainability. Specifically, over the past 10 years there have been significant changes in the social welfare and health sectors that have impacted on all voluntary organizations. These changes relate to changes in client preferences and expectations; funding issues; changing government policies affecting delivery and funding; a heavy reliance on volunteers to deliver services; and recruitment and retention of volunteers. Consequently, they place increasing pressure on services and threaten the sustainability of MOW. Innovative responses to these challenges are therefore required to enable MOW to continue providing this important service in a continually changing environment.

Many international MOW providers have developed alternative delivery models in response to social and economic challenges (O’Dwyer & Timonen, 2008). These include modifications to funding arrangements, recruiting less traditional volunteers and moving to provide meals outside the home, employing a market approach, drawing on corporate support, and/or providing a commercial service.

This program of research funded by the Australian Research Council in partnership with the peak body AMOWA aimed to analyse the volunteer business models used by both national and international MOW organizations and from this develop a responsive, cost-effective, and sustainable Australian plan for the future.

Specific research aims were to:

- Explore the international dimensions of similar MOW service deliverers with a special focus on the United Kingdom and Canada (Stage 1);
- Evaluate the effectiveness and innovation of services across different Australian States and Territories, and determine the key areas of vulnerability for MOW (Stage 2);
- Undertake the first national research study of Australian MOW focusing particularly on organizational structures, funding arrangements and volunteers (Stage 3);
- Identify strategies to enable MOW to address these vulnerabilities and develop a responsive and sustainable plan for the future.

The mixed-method research design and methodology used in the project reflects the lack of existing national and international data and perspectives, highlighting the need for a comparative study to analyse a range of issues such as future volunteer business models for MOW.

The project was conducted in three Stages. Stage 1: International Perspectives (literature review and site visits to two key overseas destinations); Stage 2: Australian Interviews; and Stage 3: National Survey.

**Stage 1: International Perspectives**

This stage involved two parts. First, an international literature review, drawing on academic and informal literature, was conducted to identify and evaluate various ways MOW services have dealt with challenges to service delivery. Findings from this review suggested two key issues. The first issue related to various ways that MOW services provide meals, and reflects the dual role of services (meal provision and social connection). The second issue related to the diverse ways that volunteers are utilised to provide MOW services, and highlights those aspects that work well in recruiting and retaining volunteers. Findings indicate services are adopting less traditional models to survive in the contemporary context.

This literature review also informed the second part of Stage 1. The UK and Canada were identified as key locations, where MOWs played a major role as service providers and where innovation was underway. Thus, the two countries were visited by one of the chief investigators (Prof Melanie Oppenheimer and Prof Jeni Warburton). Ethnographic and case study methodologies were employed in both locations, which involved conducting interviews with key staff, visiting innovative locations identified as functioning well (e.g. WVRS in the UK, and Multicaf, Santrapol Roulant, and A Loving Spoonful in Canada).

Findings from the international research comprised six key areas:

- Challenges in utilizing volunteers (e.g. some services have moved away from the traditional models of volunteer-based MOW delivery, and mainly employ paid drivers to deliver the service);
- New approaches to delivering a food service (e.g. services in both countries are moving away from hot midday meal toward frozen meals or quick-chill meals, other services were using existing kitchens in other facilities);
- More than just a meal (e.g. the three clear functions of MOW were apparent in service approaches, with emphasis being placed on delivering a nutritious meal, social connection, and client monitoring);
- Embedded within community settings (e.g. some services in both UK and Canada provide social opportunities for their clients, for example, group meals and activities with other clients);
- New forms of recruitment and the thorny issue of retention (e.g. innovative methods for recruiting younger volunteers, including flexible roles and schedules, and ensuring volunteers needs are met); and
- Changing models of food service delivery.
The findings from Stage 1 provided a clear context for the remaining two Stages involving Australian data collection and analysis.

**Stage 2: Australian Interviews**

Using a qualitative study design, the aim of stage two was to explore how the current leadership within Meals on Wheels in Australia view both current challenges and ways forward for the service.

This stage involved conducting 13 semi-structured telephone interviews in November 2011-January 2012 with MOW leaders (paid and volunteer) across six States and one of the two Territories in Australia (SA, NSW, QLD, TAS, WA, Victoria, and ACT). Each interview lasted around 60min, and interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and de-identified. Data was entered into NVivo v10, and inductive thematic analysis was used to analyse the data.

Analysis of interviews identified three main themes: (1) Challenges facing MOW services in Australia; (2) Innovations and changes that enable MOWs to provide a sustainable competitive service (now and in the future); and (3) Benefits of MOWs.

Participants spoke about numerous challenges which threaten the sustainability of their service. These challenges related to:

- a lack of resources, increasing and demanding legislation and regulation requirements;
- inefficient operations and systems (including issues with volunteer recruitment and retention);
- meeting clients’ changing needs and preferences (meal and social);
- declining service demand;
- competing organizations; and
- volunteer resistance to change was identified as a major challenge for services, preventing efficient and effective operations, and successful implementation of needed innovation. Such resistance was often linked to older long serving volunteers reluctant to change their methods of operating which they had been using for years, even decades.

It was apparent that no challenge exists in isolation. Rather, MOW services and staff experience a complex and dynamic range of challenges. For example, pressures to meet legislation and regulation requirements (e.g. food safety) increased volunteer workload, which, in turn, impacts on volunteer resistance, retention, and recruitment. Additionally, challenges such as limited funds, lack of resources, and increased volunteer workload all contribute to the quality of service (social support and meal) provided to clients.

In responding to the challenges, participants highlighted numerous changes and innovations they considered to be essential for MOW to remain a sustainable and competitive service. These changes/innovations relate to MOW operations and systems, staff (i.e. retention and recruitment strategies, human resource and change management), service (i.e. strengthening MOW client focused service, and both the social and nutritional elements of MOW), and connection with the wider community (e.g. improved promotion and public relations).
During interviews, participants also highlighted the benefits that MOW provides for clients (e.g. health and wellbeing, independence, and social inclusion); families/significant others (e.g. reduced burden and peace of mind); and volunteers (e.g. sense of purpose, self-identity, opportunities to meet new people and learn new skills). Acknowledging the far-reaching benefits of MOW reinforces the critical need for MOW to adapt its operations and methods to ensure it remains a competitive and needed service in years to come.

**Stage 3: National Australian Survey**

The aim of the survey was to explore the similarities and differences in the use of volunteers and service delivery models relating to MOW across Australia’s States and Territories. The survey was designed by the team of researchers, and the content was informed by issues raised in the literature review and in the previous stage. The survey was piloted to ensure its validity and reliability, and adjustments were made accordingly. The final 27-item survey involved a mix of yes/no responses and some options for comment, and addressed four key areas of interest: individual service profile (e.g. structure, staff profile, and clients); service delivery (e.g. meal type, preparation, and delivery); volunteers (e.g. volunteer demographics, concerns, issues, management, recruitment, and retention); and challenges and innovations.

Surveys were distributed systematically by each State and Territory MOW organization over an eight-month period (June 2012-January 2013). Initially, the researchers mailed State/Territory MOW key stakeholders (e.g. CEOs) a survey pack containing the survey, prepaid return envelope (addressed to the researchers at the university), and an introductory letter which included a requested return date. Collection methods were revised in an effort to enhance the response rate, particularly across some of the states and territories.

An interactive database (*FileMakerPro Survey Database*) was customized for the survey responses and all data was entered as the forms were returned. Respondents were grouped by State/Territory ensuring anonymity and confidentiality. Overall response rate was 41% (266/651 surveys distributed). While this response rate is lower than anticipated, it is comparable with response rates achieved in studies involving mail out surveys.

Overall, survey findings reinforced the disparate nature of MOW services across Australia in terms of daily operations, geographic location, volunteer/paid staff mix, and food preparation methods (e.g. fresh, frozen, cook-chill). Yet, the findings also revealed similarities in the challenges facing all services. Such challenges include funding shortages, volunteer recruitment and retention issues, meeting clients’ changing and individual meal and social needs, complying with increasingly demanding regulations, and adopting efficient operational models. Challenges related to volunteer management were a noted theme in all three studies, particularly in light of volunteer resistance to change preventing innovation, and thus organization sustainability. On an uplifting note, survey findings identified specific examples of innovations adopted by services across Australia in response to the changing contemporary context. Such innovations include changes in food preparation (e.g. moving from fresh to cook-chill to enable better compliance with food safety regulations and greater variety of food; employing a paid volunteer coordinator to ease the recruitment and workload burden on services and staff; more efficient ordering systems using Technology; and providing more social opportunities for clients to socialize and meet new friends, for example, group meals).
In reflection, findings from this pioneering three stage project have provided valuable knowledge in developing our understanding of the future for MOWs, and importantly, assisting AMOWA with developing a responsive, cost-effective and sustainable plan for the future.

MOWs is already overcoming some of the identified challenges associated with the changing environment – increased regulation, lack of funding, volunteer sustainability, client changes and demands. However, the contemporary context in which MOW is operating continues to change, forcing the organization to consider how it will respond if it is to remain a sustainable and competitive service. This program of research has highlighted three key issues that need consideration.

Responding to these issues will certainly assist MOW with realizing a responsive, sustainable, cost-effective plan. Moreover, findings from this research can be built upon by other non-profit organizations faced with similar challenges, for example, service clubs, social welfare groups, surf life savers, and sport volunteers (Gooch & Warburton, 2009; Brawley; 2007; Hoye & Cuskelly, 2004; Keen, 1999).

The three issues are:

1. Systemic change:

The study showed little evidence of innovation or change in relation to MOW systems, such as support for a skilled management team to manage human resources, operations or other areas of change. This suggested the need for the organization to look at how it will operate into the future, will it continue to be reactive in the face of change or develop a more proactive approach to change and develop strategies for innovation and responsiveness.

There was an identified need for the organization to respond to the pressures facing MOW volunteers who require better support, management and training. Overall, MOW needs to consider what kind of services do we want to deliver and what volunteer would fit this profile?

2. Managing difference:

There is little overall coherence and central processes in terms of the way MOW operates. This could enable improved responsiveness, however, it could also prevent the development of sustainable, client-focused services. Overall, the lack of innovation in Australian MOWs is a concern. In order to remain effective and viable, greater choice and flexibility is essential, particularly as the more discerning baby boomer cohort enters later life and increasingly require services.

One particular area of difference is that of location, with the challenges of distance and delivering MOWs in rural areas noted in the study. Certainly, the importance of MOW services in rural and regional Australia is noted, with more responses from agencies in these settings. Further, some of the innovation in rural areas relates to partnership not competition, and the notion of a central hub in larger regional towns is a model worth considering.
3. Change management and volunteer resistance:

Volunteer resistance as well as the need for services to respond to the changing client and organizational context suggests the critical importance of human resource management to assist staff and volunteers through change and facilitate an enabling work culture. There was little evidence of processes, strategies or support systems in place that can assist and support volunteers through change and innovation. This is an important consideration in the current contemporary context.

Some services are attempting to adapt to changing times and client demands. Yet this is spasmodic and lacks a coherent approach. Far more innovation and change is needed to ensure MOW remains a competitive and sustainable service, and the study has identified areas in need of such change. These include efforts to gain funding, improve systems, improve volunteer processes, and support the social element as well as the meal focus of MOW.

Communication is critical for ensuring smooth change, and this needs to occur at different levels. There is potential for improved communication to meet the ongoing challenges of volunteer concern and even resistance. Furthermore, MOW needs to explore improved proactive public relations and promotion to attract new sources of volunteers and growing national support.

Many of the issues facing MOW are also facing other nonprofit organisations, particularly those involved in welfare and service delivery. The challenge can be summed up as a clash between efficiency as represented by market pressures and include tighter government funding and increased state regulation; and tradition represented by the organisation’s long-standing reputation. MOW is a very well known and well-respected organisation, and has a very saleable brand. In these circumstances, tradition can be a valuable resource to enable MOW to withstand these external pressures. Thus, it has potential to utilise broad community support, and gain professional expertise from the business world to achieve its mission in the contemporary world.

Conclusion

In conclusion, MOW is a critical community service with an important role to play for the growing numbers of people needing assistance. Yet it faces a series of challenges that need addressing if the organization is to remain effective and sustainable. Overall, it was a “new idea” sixty years ago when it was founded as a social experiment. Now, may be the time to reconsider this vision and explore ways for MOWs to be more responsive in a challenging and changing external environment.
OVERVIEW

THE AUSTRALIAN MEALS ON WHEELS ASSOCIATION (AMOWA)

The Australian Meals on Wheels Association (AMOWA) is a peak body representing State and Territory Meals on Wheels Associations that embrace 740 local services; more than 78,700 volunteers; hundreds of paid staff, and around 53,000 recipients daily.

AMOWA serves many important purposes for State and Territory Associations. While it is not a parent body, it is the voice of Meals on Wheels (MOW), representing the interests of State/Territory Associations at a national level. It provides national leadership, and a single reference point for the Federal Government or other third parties or peak bodies that require access into the MOW environment.

As a national body, another important role of AMOWA is to share information and ideas, and seek out best practices among the 740 services that the Associations represent. This information is shared in various ways, including through the State and Territory Associations, the quarterly ‘Connecting’ newsletter, the biennial national conference, AMOWA website, and any other appropriate means.

AMOWA also contributes to building social capital and local communities, for example by promoting and raising awareness about the value and benefits of MOW to the Australian community and to the health and wellbeing of its recipients.

Equally as important, AMOWA is responsible for identifying and developing policy on issues that can only be effectively addressed through the National Association. Additionally, by initiating research in key areas such as client nutrition and workforce development for volunteers and staff, AMOWA helps to inform public policy, and develop partnerships with Government and Non-Government bodies to help fund such research projects (Australian Meals on Wheels Association, 2013).

Due to the disparate nature of MOW in Australia, there has been no national study undertaken to date. Recent state-based studies have been completed in NSW (2009); Victoria (2008); and rural Tasmania (2007), but otherwise there is limited research for other states, some of which date back to the 1980s, and none with a national focus e.g. (Cudmore, 1996; Pargeter, 1986; R. Smith, March 1984; Ulverston MOW, 1997; WA Meals on Wheels, 2002). Outcomes from this research provide critical information to inform MOW on how best to respond to the numerous challenges (outlined in section 1.3 Background), enabling a sustainable Australian MOW plan for the future.

SNAPSHOT OF MEALS ON WHEELS AUSTRALIA

Modeled on a World War II British initiative of providing meals to those made homeless during the Blitz, the Australian version was first initiated by Nancy Dobson, honorary secretary of the Ladies Auxiliary at the South...
Melbourne Council. However, it was in Adelaide where the scheme was most developed through the efforts of Doris Taylor who founded Meals on Wheels Inc. in South Australia in 1953 (Cudmore, 1996; Taylor, 1955). In 1970, as part of the shifting relationship between State and Federal governments in the area of aged care, the Commonwealth government introduced the Delivered Meals Subsidy Act, as a way to encourage a more equitable system nationwide. The policy was further refined in the mid-1980s when the Home and Community Care Program (HACC), an integrated State/Federal government funding program, was introduced (Oppenheimer, 2008).

As portrayed in the State/Territory snapshots below, MOW operates in different contexts and settings within each State and Territory. For example, some groups work with local government, charities, health and homecare departments, and all are funded at different rates by various various State governments and/or the Federal government (The funding model changed in all States other than WA and Victoria in July 2012, with the majority of funding now coming directly from the Commonwealth.) Some prepare their own meals in specially designed kitchens whilst others are sourced commercially from hospitals, canteens, and nursing homes. Some only serve frozen meals, whilst others deliver fresh meals daily. Some groups use only volunteers, others have some paid staff, and a few are now only using paid staff due to the lack of volunteers. Government legislation, regulations, and requirements also differ across Australia. Consequently, and as highlighted throughout this report, each State/Territory faces a range of similar and varied challenges. These statistics reported in the State/Territory snapshots were compiled in 2013 and 2014.

South Australia (SA)
Meals on Wheels SA is unique in governance and structure, being a single, incorporated association with 88 active branch outlets in March 2014. It is a highly centralised organization (e.g. centralised face-to-face assessments; volunteer recruitment, screening, and induction), and has a much lower ratio of paid staff to volunteers (1:230) than any other State/Territory, with around 8,250 volunteers. There are a few kitchen types. Most are fresh-cook kitchens (approximately 30), some cook-chill kitchens (around 9), and only one central special meals kitchen. MOWSA serves around 4,000 meals a day (1.001 million/p.a.) to up to 12,000 clients. Meals per client however have declined (5% p.a.) over the past few years. Clients pay an average price of $7.50 for three courses, and distinctive to SA are cashless payments. Sixty-five percent of clients are in the metropolitan area, with 35 per cent from the regions.

Innovation in MOWSA is centrally not locally driven, and overall, there is minimal evidence of innovation. Some innovation in meal choice however is noted. For example, one branch is trialling a new service model of offering two mains to demonstrate that it is feasible and gives volunteers ownership of procedures.

Australia Capital Territory (ACT)
ACT Meals on Wheels is one organization run by Australian Red Cross, and like SA, there is a low ratio of paid staff to volunteers (8:270). It has around 290 average numbers of clients per day (132,000 p.a.). Meal numbers are stable, but turnover of clients has increased. Meals are mostly fresh cook from Canberra Hospital (or from
a commercial supplier) and the average meal price is $8.25 in 2014. The total number of active volunteers is 450.

There is some innovation evident in ACT MOW. For example, a distinctive feature of ACT MOW is a five-day discharge from hospital service with five frozen meals, bread, milk, Weetbix, eggs, fruit, plus option of a daily wellbeing check phone call.

New South Wales (NSW)

NSW Meals on Wheels is incorporated with 179 autonomous services (reduced from 200 due to recent mergers and formation of cooperatives). Of these services, 70% are incorporated, 28% local government, and 2% run by not for profit organizations (e.g. Benevolent Society). There is a mix of paid and volunteer staff (around 35,000 volunteers), and most services have a paid manager or coordinator. NSW MOW serves 4.5 million meals p.a. to 15,000 clients (one-third (32%) metropolitan and two-thirds (68%) regional, an opposite demographic split to Victoria and Western Australia). Meals are sourced from commercial suppliers, production kitchens, and local hospitals. There is a trend toward cook-chill and frozen meals, and as at July 2013 clients pay from $4.50-$9.00 with a average meal of $6.50.

Some of the best examples of innovation come from NSW. Proactive leadership and a decentralised model have perhaps facilitated innovation implementation. General examples of innovation include services experimenting with solutions to food and safety issues, extending meal options for variety and convenience (e.g. frozen food), and offering social options (e.g. centre based meals). School students are also welcomed for training in meal production and client assistance. Specific examples of innovation are the Future Food Model (a centralised production kitchen to overcome food safety issues and expand range of meal choice for clients); and the Friends of Meals on Wheels initiative to build a stronger support base.

Queensland (QLD)

QLD Meals on Wheels (QMOW) is a State body (umbrella group), which at March 2014 heads 145 separate committee-run services. These services are very independent with their own bank accounts. QMOW staff travel to services around the State to assist and advise on food safety, nutrition, and general paperwork. Similar to SA and ACT, services are heavily reliant on volunteers (15,000 volunteers to 300 part-time paid staff, mostly cooks and kitchen hands). Unlike any other State/Territory, salaries paid to staff must be service-funded (with the exception of the 5 paid positions at QMOW). There are around 75 hot-fresh kitchens, with others purchasing from QLD Health or a commercial supplier, Nutrifresh. Overall, volunteers service 1.970 million meals p.a. to approximately 10,300 clients (but the number of clients is decreasing). Clients pay from $5.00 to $10.00 for a three-course meal, averaging $8.50.

A very conservative approach to innovation is evident in QLD. Volunteers and services seem reluctant to change, and therefore there are few examples of innovation. One example however is the Nundah Activity Centre (north Brisbane), which took advantage of sharing a kitchen with a community centre to expand their
service. The centre now offers a Men’s Shed, computer classes, community garden, dancing, painting, and community meals.

Tasmania (TAS)
Unlike other States/Territories, Tasmania has two independent peak bodies: Australian Red Cross MOW (TAS RC) and Tasmania MOW association. There is minimal interaction or resource sharing between the two bodies. Tasmanian Australian Red Cross is the smaller of the two, with 11 services in north/northwest Tasmania at July 2013. It is centrally managed and administered (with headquarters in Launceston). Volunteer committees were dropped 5 years ago because committee positions could not be filled. This change was “welcomed with open arms”. Similar to SA, ACT, and QLD, TAS RC is heavily reliant on volunteers (460 volunteers to 5 paid staff). Meals come from local hospitals, and are mostly cook-chill in metropolitan areas, and hot-fresh in country areas. Overall, TAS RC serves approximately 7,500 meals per month (90,000 p.a.) to an average number of 6000 clients per day. Clients pay $8.30 for a three-course meal, $8.10 for two courses, $7.40 for a frozen main, or $3.20 for sandwiches.

TAS MOW Association has 33 member groups, and approximately 10 of these groups have paid coordinators, and some use paid drivers. There is an increasing trend for groups to take direction from the State office. Four are centrally run without a committee. TAS MOW Association has experienced a decline in client numbers. Currently there are more volunteers (n = 1,950) than clients (n = 1,100). Overall, the 33 member groups deliver 196,000 meals p.a. (down from 240,000 5 years ago). Meals are a mix of hot, cook-chilled, and frozen, and are mainly sourced from aged care facilities. There is 100% HACC and client contribution funding, and clients pay $8.50 for meals. In July 2013, forty-three per cent of clients were based in a metropolitan area, with 57 per cent in the regions.

There is some innovation evident at TAS RC. For example, Launceston hospital is looking at providing milk drinks for low-calcium clients. Similarly, there are some examples of innovation at TAS MOW Association, including efforts to improve meal packaging and communication efficiency (e.g. moving groups toward email communication).

Western Australia (WA)
There is no MOW State body in WA, rather, there are, in July 2013, around 83 service providers that are all individually operated (approximately 60% by local government). WA is the only State where individual services negotiate their own contracts with HACC. Therefore, in addition to meals, services may also cover transport, in-home respite and domestic assistance, making it a system that allows for more seamless linkages. A diverse range of meal delivery services is used. Similar to TAS MOW Association, WA services have experienced a declining trend in meal numbers and clients in the last few years. Collectively, services in WA provide 968,000 meals to an average number of clients of 6,566 each year. Clients pay from $7.00-$10.00 per single meal (average $8.50), and are subsidised far less in metropolitan areas ($1.86 lower rate nationwide) than in rural and remote areas (more than $8.00).
Some innovation is evident in WA. Aged and Community Services Western Australia is attempting to initiate a steering committee to bring all MOW meal services together, therefore strengthening the sector. Specific innovation examples include catering from mine sites to supply local MOW, and Subiaco has improved its packaging (increasing meal appeal).

**Victoria (VIC)**

Since 2003, Meals Victoria has acted as overarching body for 103 services, which are mostly administered and run by local councils with a regional/metropolitan split of 1:2 (70 per cent in metropolitan and 30 per cent in regional areas). Unlike SA, ACT, QLD, and TAS RC services, there is a high ratio of paid staff to volunteers (1:5) in Victoria. Volunteer numbers have dropped more than 15% since 2008 (to 10,000 in July 2013) whereas the number of paid staff has increased from 18% to 22%. Meals are prepared in various places, including services with own kitchen (18%), hospitals (55%), Community Chef (22%), private caterer (20%), or nursing home (14%). Total meals per year is 4.4 million. Similar to TAS MOW Association and WA, Victorian services have experienced a decline in meal demand over the last few years. Meal prices vary, although the average cost for a three-course meal is between $6.50 in July 2013.

Some innovation is evident in Victoria. For example, most Victorian services now offer a choice of main meals, and some incorporate ethnic meals. Community Chef is revolutionary in terms of production standards quality, and 30-day shelf life. Moreland City Council has increased client choice by labelling each meal as low, medium, or high fat, GI, and gluten free. Another initiative of communal meals is “Let’s Do Lunch” organised by drivers for their own route.

**Northern Territory (NT)**

Although the Northern Territory was not included in the research project, as at July 2013 there were 23 MOW services operating, with an average 880 clients per day and 500 active volunteers. Total meals per year is 197,000, with an average meal price of $5.80. Thirty-six per cent of clients are based in the metropolitan area with 64 per cent in the regions.

See chapter 4 (theme 3) for further examples of State/Territory innovation in the Findings of the National Survey Study.
Chapter 1. Introduction, Background & Methodology

This report presents findings from a three year (2010-2013) research project conducted in partnership between researchers from University of New England (UNE)/Flinders University (FU), researchers from the John Richards Initiative (JRI) at La Trobe University (LTU), and members of the Australian Meals on Wheels Association (AMOWA), with key Meals on Wheels State representatives and volunteers. The project was funded by the Australian Research Council and AMOWA. This three-year research project was initiated by AMOWA.

MOW is one of Australia’s iconic non-profit organizations with a history dating back to the early 1950s. This service is integral to enabling frail older Australians, carers, and those with disabilities to remain in their homes. MOW needs to address its reliance on traditional volunteer models so that it can continue to deliver a critical service and maintain its strong foundations within the community. Through this collaboration, AMOWA has demonstrated its commitment to revitalising MOW to ensure the organization adopts models of volunteering that will overcome challenges and lead MOW into a sustainable and competitive future.

This research aims to analyse the volunteer business models used by both national and international MOW organizations and from this develop a responsive, cost-effective, and sustainable Australian plan for the future.

1.1. PROJECT AIMS

The specific aims of this project:

- Explore the international dimensions of similar MOW service deliverers with a special focus on the United Kingdom and Canada.
- Evaluate the effectiveness and innovation of services across different States and Territories, and determine the key areas of vulnerability for MOW.
- Undertake the first national research study of Australian MOW focusing particularly on organizational structures, funding arrangements and volunteers.
- Identify strategies to enable MOW to address these vulnerabilities and develop a responsive and sustainable plan for the future.

1.2. THE REPORT

This report is divided into six main chapters, a reference list and Appendices. The next chapter (Ch. 2) provides a background of MOW, highlighting the pivotal role of this service in enabling aging in place for individuals world-wide. This chapter also outlines the main challenges that threaten the sustainability of MOW, particularly in Australia, and presents new approaches from the overseas evidence. Chapters 3 and 4 focus on
MOW in the Australian context. Chapter 3 presents the findings from a series of interviews carried out with MOW staff and volunteers. It focuses on a number of challenges and innovations identified through the research. Following this, in chapter 4, is a detailed description of the National Australian survey, its design, distribution and approach. This chapter also contains the findings of the national survey including a service profile, data on service delivery, volunteers, staff and clients as well as a section on challenges and innovation identified. A general discussion and recommendations based on overall project outcomes is provided in chapter 7. Finally, chapter 8 is dedicated to the conclusion, summing up the project and key outcomes to assist MOW organizations with developing an effective and sustainable plan for the future.

1.3. BACKGROUND

Population ageing is a phenomenon occurring worldwide in western societies, and is largely due to an increase in life expectancy and declining fertility. Specifically, past and future trends show the number of people aged 60 years or more has doubled since 1980, and is projected to reach 2 billion by 2050 (Colombo, 2011; World Health Organization, 2012). This projected ageing over the next 40 years presents particular challenges for health and aged care services (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2012), because the increased risk of poor health and disability as one ages will inevitably equate to a rising demand for specialist treatment and more hospital care (Rosenberg & Canning, 2004; Schofield & Earnest, 2006).

In light of foreseeable struggles to manage rising numbers of older people, maintenance of care within the community and the avoidance of institutional care, often termed ‘ageing in place’, is important. Recent improvements to aged care arrangements now make it possible for people to remain in their own home or community regardless of potential changes in health or functioning later in life (Australian Government, 2013; Lehning, 2013). However, the costs associated with formal care have led to a gamut of health and social care services and supports for older people being provided within the community (Skinner & Joseph, 2011). These span formal in-home supports provided by governments or aged care providers to the informal services provided by families, friends, and neighbours. There is also a third type of care that encompasses support services provided by community groups and volunteers (Skinner & Joseph, 2011). Within this context, Meals on Wheels (MOW) is an important organization that assists frail older people to stay in their homes, and thus age in place.

MOW is offered in numerous countries, including Ireland, United Kingdom (UK), Sweden, Canada, United States of America (USA), South Africa, Japan, and Australia. Although the delivery of MOW services across or within countries is not universal, a shared core of MOW services is supporting aging in place and care within the home. This is being undertaken, for example, by providing frail older people and those in need with a nutritious meal and food security, social contact, and facilitating their independence. Similar to other non-profit organizations however, and despite the important role MOW plays in providing care in the home, MOW organizations are experiencing numerous challenges that threaten its long-term sustainability. Specifically,
over the past 10 years there have been significant changes in the social welfare and health sectors that have impacted on all voluntary organizations. These changes have bought numerous challenges, including:

- A growing client base with rising expectations (e.g. meal choice), primarily as a result of the ageing population and generational changes in clients seeking MOW (e.g. baby-boomers);
- Reliance on (typically older) volunteers to deliver services;
- A decline in its traditional volunteer base, resulting in a struggle to maintain sufficient volunteers;
- Recruitment (particularly of younger people) and retention of volunteers;
- Spiralling costs within a context of limited funding streams and increasing dependence on government funding; and
- Changing government policies affecting delivery and funding (e.g. compliance with stricter food safety legislation).

The resultant financial context facing many community services has led to them being squeezed at two fronts, both in terms of demand and capacity to respond (Bowlby, 2011; Office for the Community Sector, 2009; Oppenheimer, 2008; Warburton & Oppenheimer, 2000). Overall, these challenges are placing increasing pressure on services and threatening the sustainability of MOW. Therefore, innovative responses to these challenges are needed to enable MOW to offer a sustainable and competitive service in changing contexts.

Many international MOW providers have developed alternate delivery models in response to social and economic challenges (O'Dwyer & Timonen, 2008). These include modifications to funding arrangements, recruiting less traditional sources of volunteers and moving from providing meals in the home, employing a market approach, drawing on corporate support, and/or providing a commercial service. In terms of specific examples of innovation, perhaps the most controversial is the Apetito model that has been adopted in many European and British contexts. This model involves partnership with a commercial meal provider, Apetito, and is used extensively in Britain, France, Germany, and the Netherlands (Mullen, 2003). Japan MOW has close connections to Australia and offers a comparative assessment based on an Asian model (Shimuzu, 1999; Shimizu & Matsuda, 2000). MOW Canada retains its volunteer base but has developed a national organizational structure. There are a number of innovative programs in Calgary, Vancouver, and Montreal that were investigated as part of this project. Overall, international organizations provide insight into innovative programs to assist Australian MOW with developing the best approach for overcoming challenges, thus enabling a sustainable and competitive future.

1.4. METHODOLOGY

The project was undertaken by a team of researchers at the University of New England / Flinders University and Latrobe University in collaboration with the national secretariat at AMOWA, led by Sharyn Broer, CEO of Meals on Wheels (SA) Incorporated. MOW provided staff and volunteer support throughout the life of the project. Two Chief Investigators (CI) headed the project: Professor Melanie Oppenheimer (UNE/FU) and
Professor Jeni Warburton (JRI, LTU). Research assistants that worked on the project at different times over the course of the project were Dr Rachel Winterton, Dr Janine Carey, Dr Julie Marsh, and Dr Melissa Moore.

The research design and methodology used in the project reflects the lack of national and international data and perspectives, highlighting the need for a comparative study to analyse a range of issues such as future volunteer business models for MOW. We were informed by neo-institutional, motivational, and empirical research methodologies. We also used case studies, interviews, ethnography and surveys to complete the research. This multi-faced approach is central to our aim to investigate, identify and incorporate new possible sustainable contemporary models of volunteering and focus on ways that MOW can revitalize for the future.

The research design reflects the significance of national and international comparative perspectives and recognises that Australia’s current dilemmas are part of a global phenomenon, as ageing is an international issue in the western world. It was conducted in three Stages. Stage 1: International Perspectives (literature review and site visits to two key overseas destinations); Stage 2: Australian Interviews; and Stage 3: Australian National Survey.

Ethics approval was obtained from the UNE Human Research Ethics Committee in April 2011 (HE11/031). A copy of the project description was sent to LTU Faculty of Health Science Ethics Committee for their records.
Chapter 2: The International Perspective

The aim of Stage 1 of the project was to explore the international context of MOW in more detail to identify innovation in service delivery. This stage involved two parts: a literature review and an international study.

2.1. INTERNATIONAL LITERATURE REVIEW [OCT 2010-MARCH 2012]

This literature review informed the second part of Stage 1 (i.e., the two overseas sites to visit, and specific places and contacts at each location). The initial review was undertaken by a research team member between October 2010 and February 2011, using three alternate approaches: (i) a search of peer-reviewed journal articles located through relevant online databases; (ii) a search of Google Scholar to identify peer-reviewed articles, theses, and unpublished reports; and (iii) a targeted Internet search to locate organizational websites detailing models of delivering MOW. Given that the initial literature search yielded results from the USA, Canada, the UK and Australia only, the Internet search was similarly restricted to these countries. Websites were accessed through directory listings on the respective national MOW organizations’ websites, and further articles, reports and websites were selected through examining references in reviewed literature.

To meet inclusion criteria, the literature was required to outline or evaluate models of MOW delivery (inclusive of programmes offered outside of the home by MOW providers), or to address issues associated with MOW delivery. Literature that did not meet these criteria was excluded.

Inductive analysis was used to analyse the literature, enabling a series of trends and implications surrounding delivery models to be identified. The literature was coded thematically to reflect the characteristics of models (delivery, staffing and funding arrangements) and the outcomes of models (implications for clients and providers).

The aim of the international literature review was to identify and evaluate the varied ways that MOW services have dealt with challenges to service delivery, and two key issues were identified (see Table 1). The first issue relates to various ways that MOW services provide meals and reflects the dual role of services (meal provision and social connection). The second issue is related to the diverse ways that volunteers are involved in MOW services, and highlights those aspects that work well in recruiting and retaining volunteers. Findings indicate there have been efforts to involve volunteers by promoting less traditional models, broader community approaches to create social capital, or varied volunteer roles to ensure retention and sustainability. Further details and discussion of literature review outcomes are provided in our literature review article [see (Winterton et al., 2011)].
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Theme</th>
<th>Specific Theme</th>
<th>Specific Characteristics of Delivery Models</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Varied models of service delivery</td>
<td>Methods of meal provision</td>
<td>Tender of meal production and delivery to commercial companies or private providers</td>
<td>(Apetito, 2008; Bishop, 2003; Buzalka, 2002; Kovesky, 1999; Oakhouse Foods, 2009; Wiltshire Farm Foods, 2009)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Incorporating volunteers with commercial companies and/or paid staff</td>
<td>(Calgary Meals on Wheels, 2010; Meals on Wheels of Winnipeg, 2009; Santropol Roulant, 2010; Shields, 1997; Suffolk County Council, 2010; Vanzaghi, 2007)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Balancing social interaction with meal provision</td>
<td>(Chotzinoff, 2009; Loaves and Fishes, 2010; Santropol Roulant, 2010; Vanzaghi, 2007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Community-based congregate meal programs</td>
<td>(Choi, 2004; Meals on Wheels of Winnipeg, 2009; Pool, n.d.; Vanzaghi, 2007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Personalised food preparation and grocery services</td>
<td>(Volunteer Bureau of Montreal, 2010)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Varied models of volunteer recruitment and retention</td>
<td>Approaches to volunteer recruitment</td>
<td>Promotion of alternate modes of delivery (e.g. bicycle delivery programs)</td>
<td>(Buchanan, Murray, Williams, Ennis, &amp; Eckhardt, 2009; Calgary Meals on Wheels, 2010; Campus Kitchens Project, 2010; Chotzinoff, 2009; Citymeals-on-wheels, 2010; Food Outreach, 2010; Loaves and Fishes, 2010; Meals on Wheels Association of America, 2010; Meals on Wheels of Winnipeg, 2009; Meals on Wheels San Diego, 2006; Pool, n.d.; Vanzaghi, 2007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Targeting socially vulnerable and minority populations</td>
<td>(Volunteer Bureau of Montreal, 2010)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Establishment of a central volunteer agency for recruitment</td>
<td>(Volunteer Bureau of Montreal, 2010)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Links with educational institutions, corporate and community organizations</td>
<td>(Volunteer Bureau of Montreal, 2010)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Intergenerational emphasis</td>
<td>(Meals on Wheels of Winnipeg, 2009; Pool, n.d.; Santropol Roulant, 2010; Vanzaghi, 2007)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.2 THE INTERNATIONAL STUDY [APRIL-JUNE 2011]

As discussed earlier, MOW operates in a range of countries including Ireland, UK, Sweden, Canada, USA, South Africa, and Japan. Meals delivery services in all these countries are experiencing challenges in delivering their services especially those that rely on volunteers to cook and deliver the service. In a bid to survive, they are changing and adapting their services.

The preliminary literature review identified the UK and Canada as important sites to consider Meals on Wheels services. Thus, in the first half of 2011, Melanie Oppenheimer went to the UK to investigate how Meals on Wheels was delivered via the Women’s Royal Voluntary Service (WRVS); and Jeni Warburton travelled to Canada to explore some of the innovative services there.

Methods

United Kingdom (UK). Ten interviews and four site visits were conducted over a 5-day period. The hosts were the WRVS who have been providing Meals on Wheels services for over 70 years (and began during the World War II Blitz in war-torn London). Its Head Office is based in Cardiff, Wales. In 2011, WRVS operated 98 meals on wheels services - England (76); Scotland (14) and Wales (8). They provided around 4 million meals and operated services between 3, 5 and 7 days per week, with a varied service charge, set by local authorities, that is between £2.70 and £3.70 per meal (as of 2011) (Lawrence, Unpublished document). WRVS had around 20,000 volunteers and 1,000 paid staff undertaking the major roles of administration, cooking and delivery of meals. Volunteers and paid staff delivered meals alone. All volunteers and staff had CRB (Criminal Records Bureau) checks (paid for by government with administration costs picked up by WRVS), volunteers had induction training to meet legal and contractual obligations, carried photograph ID, had a staff number and wore WRVS branded clothing. Volunteers and staff carried out a ‘safe and well’ check at each meal delivery. This included whether previous meals were eaten, service user was dressed, had no obvious accommodation problems and appeared well (ibid).

Canada. Eight formal interviews and many site visits were conducted across Meals on Wheels sites in Canada, including Montreal, Vancouver and Toronto. The site visits were selected as they were innovative and functioned well. This included Santropol Roulant in Montreal (a highly innovative youth service); St Christopher
House in Toronto (a meals delivery system located within a broader service based on social inclusion principles); and A Loving Spoonful in Vancouver (a meals service specifically for families affected by AIDS). These services involved (1) innovative use of volunteers (e.g. Santropol Roulant involved delivery by pushbikes and organic food production, so a bike workshop and organic roof top garden produced new roles for volunteers; Multicaf in Montreal was a congregate meals service which drew on volunteers who had special needs (e.g. long term unemployed, those with mental health issues, those on community orders). (2) Innovative methods (e.g. A Loving Spoonful was particularly effective at fundraising with the high end of town via art shows etc.). Site visits included going on a distribution run with volunteers, packaging meals with volunteers, visiting gardens and kitchens. At each site, the researcher talked with managers, volunteers and clients to gain a sense of how meals on wheels operated. See Appendix A for a copy of the semi-structured interview questions used to guide the Stage 1 and Stage 2 interviews.

This stage of the research comprised ethnographic and case study methodologies, and involved conducting interviews, as well as observation and participation. The specific places visited and interviews conducted are as noted in the two tables below:

**TABLE 2. INTERVIEWS IN UK (APRIL 2011)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Individuals/activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WRVS</td>
<td>Interview with LB, CEO WRVS, London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WRVS, Gloucester Community Meals Service</td>
<td>Interview with JC, Service Delivery Manager; BW, Food Operations Manager; &amp; TB, Local Service Manager, South West, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOW</td>
<td>Observations with DF during his MOW run – covered 43-44 miles and took over 2 hours.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WRVS (Cornwall)</td>
<td>Interview with AW, Service Delivery Manager and MH, Local Service Manager, Redruth, Cornwall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WRVS</td>
<td>JL, Head of Food Services, WRVS London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WRVS (SE &amp; London)</td>
<td>Interview with ML, Service Delivery Manager, York Centre, Maidenhead &amp; visit to Berkshire Hospital &amp; WRVS’ retail activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WRVS</td>
<td>Interview with LJ, Head of Service, East Midlands and Interim Head for SW &amp; London &amp; LR, Manager of WRVS (Banbury)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leicester City Council</td>
<td>Interview with IC, Contracts Officer, Mobile Meal Service</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### TABLE 3. INTERVIEWS IN CANADA (MAY/JUNE 2011)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Individuals / activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Multicaf (Montreal)</td>
<td>K (Katy)– assistant manager, F (Fred): manager&lt;br&gt;Observed meal preparation and congregate meal delivery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santropol Roulant (Montreal)</td>
<td>PR – volunteer coordinator; talks with volunteers &amp; kitchen manager&lt;br&gt;Observed kitchen process; taken round site; observed volunteer orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Hope (Montreal)</td>
<td>AV and JW – volunteer coordinators&lt;br&gt;Observed meal preparation and congregate meal delivery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montreal Volunteer Bureaux</td>
<td>MN – MOW coordinator; AS – Executive Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MoWs Quebec</td>
<td>CC – provincial director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Christopher House (Toronto)</td>
<td>SS – manager, seniors programs; interviews with volunteers; meeting with staff including F (volunteer manager), O (exec director)&lt;br&gt;Observed meal sorting and participated in delivery of meal route&lt;br&gt;Volunteer discussion group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Loving Spoonful (Vancouver)</td>
<td>A – client service director; LM – exec director&lt;br&gt;Participated in meal sorting; observed meal collection &amp; delivery; attended fundraising gala</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 2.3. FINDINGS: STAGE 1 INTERNATIONAL INNOVATION AND EXPLORATION

Findings from the international research and ethnographic data can be explored from the perspective of six key areas:

- 2.3.1. Challenges in utilizing volunteers
- 2.3.2. New approaches to delivering a food service
- 2.3.3. More than just a meal – roles and functions of MOW services
- 2.3.4. Embedding within community settings
- 2.3.5. New forms of recruitment and the thorny issue of retention
- 2.3.6. Changing models of food service delivery
2.3.1. Challenges in Utilizing Volunteers

The challenges in recruiting new volunteers were acknowledged in many of the interviews conducted. One of the Canadian service providers admitted rather frankly that volunteer-led services “are dying like flies”. She highlighted a number of services that had closed for this very reason. Yet the need for the service remains.

One UK service provider noted, services should be “powered by volunteers not run by them”. In fact, WRVS has moved away from the traditional model of volunteer-based MOW delivery about 10 years ago. Mainly paid drivers now deliver the service with volunteers undertaking the ‘checking up’ aspect of the service. It was also stated that local authorities and councils prefer to use paid drivers and often stipulate that in contracts.

The challenge was to find new ways to use volunteers. With the increasing use of paid drivers because they were more flexible in terms of how many deliveries could be made, and casting the net wider, it was up to organizations to use volunteers in more effective and different ways.

2.3.2. New Approaches to Delivering a Food Service

Evidence from this phase of the study across both countries revealed a move away from a daily hot midday meal. While some services were still cooking their meals, others were moving towards frozen meals or quick-chilled meals delivered in bulk or certainly not every day. Other services were using existing kitchens but in other facilities, such as local schools or hospitals.

One exciting service, Santropol Roulant in Montreal, adopted a particularly innovative approach. Whilst the meal was hot and delivered in the middle of the day, the meal was all organic with vegetables produced in the rooftop garden. This service was a young people’s service, with meals delivered via bikes within the city. This enabled the service to attract a different volunteer group, with new roles (such as bike maintenance and garden work). This approach of Meals on Two Wheels was highly successful (see below under recruitment), and the inter-generational aspect was valued by clients and volunteers alike.

Other services used local corporates to sponsor routes or provide cars for volunteers to drive. This use of local business to support meals on wheels has mutual benefits and can be very cost-effective. Yet others drew on social programs for volunteers – long term unemployed or those with mental health issues. In some sites, this proved beneficial for both the volunteers and the clients. In one Canadian service, the Head Chef was originally an entrant through the social program thus benefit both him and the service. Finally, as well as diversity in use of volunteers, many services recognised the importance of the multicultural context, and provided menus that reflected this diversity.

In the UK, WRVS was able to successfully tender for larger services through the use of paid drivers and ‘hot vans’. The Gloucestershire Community Meals Service, for example, used four of these ‘hot vans’ as part of their service. Able to carry 50 meals and 50 desserts in each oven (electrically operated with the car battery and gas fed), the meals are heated as the driver delivers the meals. Working backwards, they go to their furthest delivery first thus being able to deliver the meals within appropriate regulations and guidelines. WRVS were
clear that they would not have won the contract using the old model of volunteer drivers only who generally deliver between 15-20 meals per shift. Paid drivers do upwards of 20 and more, especially if they drive the hot vans where runs are around 100 kilometres.

2.3.3. More Than Just a Meal
From our ethnographic observation, it was clear that Meals on Wheels in many settings was much more than just a meal. Three clear functions were observed:

- Nutritious meal
- Social connection
- Client monitoring

A nutritious meal was clearly important, and research has been conducted to ensure that food delivered is appropriately nutritious (Galea, Walton, & McMahon, 2013; O’Dwyer, Corish, & Timonen, 2009). It is widely acknowledged that the social context is similarly critical, particularly as many clients are lonely and socially isolated. Volunteers discussed the importance for many clients of seeing a friendly face, particularly those who were housebound or very frail. Others also highlighted the importance of monitoring clients – making sure that they were OK – as a number discussed going to a house and finding that the client had fallen or had an accident, and in a couple of cases, had even died. For lonely, isolated people, MOW can be a lifeline.

The importance of co-ordination and support in the everyday process especially in emergencies was highlighted by the volunteers. The need for practices, supports and systems were evident if volunteers are to be enabled to play their role.

However, many of our participants suggested that the era of the volunteer-run service is over, and that challenges such as lack of volunteers available during the day, frustrations due to restrictions through occupational health and safety and so on, were leading to many organizations struggling to find enough volunteers. Rather, as the meal delivery was becoming “professionalised” with paid drivers, a better way to use volunteers, therefore, was through the making more of a personalised volunteer visitor through embedding the service within a community setting. As one respondent suggested, the role of the volunteer will be “completely reinvented – and getting them to realise that their job is not to run around delivering the meal, rather sitting down and talking”. Some of the innovative services were (1) mixing paid staff with volunteers; (2) delivering meals cooked elsewhere; or (3) embedding the service within a community setting.

2.3.4. Embedding Within Community Settings
Recognising that MOW is more than just a meal suggests approaching the service somewhat differently. It was recognised by most participants in both the UK and Canada that only a proportion of their clients were unable to attend a congregate setting. In some areas, meals were provided primarily in these settings to enable people to take advantage of a social context in which to mix. For those who were completely homebound, a meal could still be delivered.
In one Montreal setting, volunteers from social programs plus three paid staff (a manager, an assistant and a chef) provided daily meals for some 300 people with a range of needs. The community setting enabled more social interaction – with an opportunity for people to read papers, talk together or play games. In the Multicaf setting, there was also an opportunity to make an appointment with a social worker or housing support officer if required. Similar programs are run through the WRVS in the UK, such as the York Centre at Maidenhead, where lunches and refreshments are served by paid staff and volunteers. There is a lunch club as well as a range of classes such as exercise classes for clients. It is really a community facility.

Finally, some programs in both countries offered the opportunity for several local people to make and prepare their own meals together with the support of a volunteer. This again enabled a more naturalistic, social setting for the meal.

Another way that WRVS, as an organization, had embedded itself into the community was through the development over time of its hospital cafes and canteens. WRVS has hundreds of these cafes in hospitals across the UK. They provide a significant funding source that enables the organization to run its other programs, such as MOW. An observational visit was made to a WRVS hospital café in Reading, where a paid manager and volunteers (3 shifts per day) ran the eatery. Volunteers on the day the visit was undertaken were in their mid-30s. One volunteer who had her little shop next to the cancer ward made £1,000 per week. WRVS retails its own brand of sandwiches, volunteers wear WRVS uniforms and there are signs everywhere that promote and publicise WRVS – a great form of advertising.

2.3.5. New Forms of Recruitment and the Thorny Issue of Retention

The ethnographic study suggested both new sources of volunteers as well as new volunteer roles. As noted, this was illustrated through the Santropol Roulant service, which was deliberately geared at recruiting young volunteers (aged > 25 years). This was a highly successful strategy because using a bike for delivery and producing and cooking organic products appealed to the young. Whilst there, we observed a normal Saturday recruitment day, where some 25 young people turned up to attend orientation. One of the secrets to their success was that Santropol Roulant was extremely flexible, with a weekly sign-up roster.

Similarly, other services looked to new sources of volunteers – from corporates or local businesses, or from social programs. Looking outside the box is an important strategy in volunteer recruitment. In particular, it is critical to be inclusive and to consider new sources.

The question of how to retain your volunteers is also important. Not all services are nearly as flexible as Santropol Roulant which has a continuous process of recruitment. However, flexibility is the key – are there opportunities to do something different? What happens if the volunteer wants to go away, is a replacement easy to come by? Most importantly, volunteers’ needs have to be met. At one site, volunteers noted the importance of the social context for themselves – an opportunity to de brief, have fun, be recognised, and so on.
2.3.6. Changing Models of Food Service Delivery

The external forces and significant changes currently underway in the model of food service delivery is evident in both the UK and Canada. The move to a more ‘personalised social care model’ in the UK and the notion of the ‘individual service user’ and the concept of a package of services was being implemented during the research trip. How this was going to impact on WRVS services was unknown but the conclusion was that it was a seismic shift. As one interviewee stated “will they [volunteers] be out there driving a van or delivering meals – I don’t think so!”. The field was “very much an area of transition and change and no-one expects MOW in its current form to be around in five years’ time”.

MOW services, too, continue to be affected by the long-term privatization of meals delivery services; contracting and tendering processes; and the changing technologies with microwaves and frozen foods; and supermarket chains developing large ranges of frozen foods to a very high standard. This has placed enormous pressure of volunteer based organizations such as WRVS to innovate in order to remain competitive and relevant. The emergence of some key private businesses such as Apetito, now the largest provider of meals in the UK and also the largest provider of meals to WRVS, has fundamentally changed service meals provision in that country. Apetito manufactures frozen meals and outsources to private companies for delivery such as Wiltshire Farm Foods which offers franchise businesses for a weekly or fortnightly meal delivery service.

2.4. CONCLUSION

These six points are a brief summary of the international phase of the research. The findings were integrated into our literature review article [see Winterton et al., 2011]. Overall, they provided a clear context for the Australian data collection contained in this report.
Chapter 3. The Australian Perspective

To provide a detailed perspective of the Australian MOW landscape and to understand the challenges faced by MOW from the individual perspective of key stakeholders within the National and State/Territory bodies, we conducted a series of interviews and completed the first National survey of MOW around Australia. In this chapter, we discuss Stage 2: the Australian Interviews.

3.1. STAGE 2 AUSTRALIAN INTERVIEWS [NOVEMBER 2011-JANUARY 2012]

Using a qualitative study design (semi-structured interviews), the overarching research question addressed in this second stage was:

“How does the current leadership within Meals on Wheels in Australia view both current challenges and ways forward for the organization?”

Primary data was collected through a series of semi-structured interviews, conducted in 2011/12 with 13 MOW leaders, both paid and volunteer, across six States and one of the two Territories in Australia (SA, NSW, QLD, TAS, WA, VIC, and ACT). Each interview lasted around 60min (minimum 15min; maximum 90min) and was conducted by telephone. All interviews, with permission, were audio-recorded and transcribed.

Eight interviews were conducted with MOW paid staff (ACT, WA, QLD, SA and AMOWA, VIC, NSW, and two from TAS), and five with volunteers (NSW, QLD, SA, and two from TAS). Participants were asked to address broad issues including describing their State/Territory profile, particular challenges facing the organization, provide examples of possible innovation, and discussion on the future of MOW (see Appendix A for a copy of the semi-structured interview questions used to guide the Stage 1 and Stage 2 interviews). Generally, the number of participants who mentioned a particular theme is noted in the text. Thus, for example, 10/13 means that ten of the thirteen participants made a similar observation. Interviews were supplemented by the provision of local statistical data in order to provide the context within which the different organizations operate. In addition to ethical approval (as stated above), informed consent to participate was received from all participants.

Rigour was maintained through use of a semi structured interview tool to ensure consistency; use of NVivo to establish a decision trail in terms of coding and analysis; and the use of direct quotes to represent key themes in the data (Guba, 1982; Liamputtong, 2005). Data was analysed using thematic analysis (an interpretative approach) to identify key themes and patterns emerging from it.
3.2. STAGE 2 FINDINGS: AUSTRALIAN INTERVIEWS

Analysis of the interviews identified three main themes:

- 3.2.1. Challenges facing Meals on Wheels services in Australia;
- 3.2.2. Innovations and changes that enable Meals on Wheels to provide a sustainable, competitive service – now and in the future;
- 3.2.3. Benefits of Meals on Wheels

These themes are discussed, in turn, and quotes from State/Territory participants are used to support main outcomes. It should be noted that:

Firstly, content is derived only from participant interviews and is not intended to be exhaustive. Nevertheless, at the time of the interviews, all participants were key MOW stakeholders, and therefore their combined depth of knowledge has provided a great understanding of these key themes.

Secondly, there is some overlap in outcomes from stage 2 interviews and stage 3 survey findings which reinforces the relevant issues currently facing MOW, and its future survival. Together, the qualitative (stage 2) and quantitative (stage 3) data provides a rich, in-depth analysis of MOW services across Australia, and a comprehensive platform to assist MOW move forward.

3.2.1. Challenges
Participants explicitly and implicitly highlighted numerous challenges which threaten the sustainability of their service. These challenges fit within the following six general dimensions:

- Resources;
- Legislation and regulation requirements;
- Meals on Wheels operations and systems;
- Meeting client needs;
- Meals on Wheels service demand; and
- Competing organizations

Although some of the challenges discussed were more prominent in some States/Territories than others, such as the unique geographic context and setting of each service, it was apparent that no challenge exists in isolation. Rather, MOW services and staff experience a complex and dynamic range of challenges. For example, pressures to meet legislative and regulatory requirements (e.g. food safety) have increased the workload of volunteers in particular, which, in turn, impacts on volunteer retention and recruitment. Additionally, challenges such as limited funds, lack of resources, and increased volunteer workload all contribute to the quality of service (social support and meal) provided to clients. These challenges are interrelated and cannot be viewed in isolation, but rather, as part of a bigger ‘picture’.
Resources

Funding threats and stretched budgets was a key challenge noted by most (10/13) participants, particularly for services in rural and remote areas, which do not have ready access to other support services or resources. The need for more resources to operate efficiently and effectively (e.g. transport, use of computer software), and expenses associated with producing quality and varied meals were also identified.

Participants spoke about funding shortages that exacerbates further challenges, including services’ ability to provide greater meal choice, meet continually changing regulation and legislation standards, and purchase essential resources. For example, one participant noted:

“a lot of them are struggling to get something in place, and I think a lot will collapse because they don’t have the funding to do it. They are going to be audited on their food safety programs, so there will be compliance orders and I’m afraid a lot of the small services will disappear. They’re the rural and remote ones, where there aren’t other options like supermarkets and commercial operators” (WA).

The increasing daily living costs are impacting both clients and MOW services. One participant mentioned that “since 1995, proportion of single aged pension required to buy MOW has not changed, always been 9-10% of pension. But other prices have gone up (electricity, rent)” (SA). This affects clients – both existing and potential - to afford MOW meals, and on the overall demand for MOW services.

Travelling (increase petrol costs) and auditing costs were particularly noted challenges for geographically large States, such as QLD and WA. For example, one participant commented:

“some audits will be taking place in places where they have to fly for 2hrs and drive for 3hrs to get to wherever they are going. Which means the service has to provide them with overnight accommodation, has to pay for the travel time as well as the flights, as well as the audit. And it’s going to mean the cost of the audit for the organization will make it impossible for them to continue to operate – that’s what we’re all concerned about” (WA).

Costs - both time and money - associated with meeting legislative and regulatory requirements are challenges for all States and Territories. For example, one participant said “they’re having increasing difficulty complying with all the food safety regulations ... we’re having to spend increasing amounts of time training them [volunteers], going up and doing mock audits. It’s getting more and more difficult and expensive” (NSW). The cost of training volunteers to pass audits is not only stretching already limited funds, but is made more difficult when training recipients (typically described as being older aged and long serving volunteers) are resistant to change. For example, one participant said “some of the volunteers don’t take too kindly to training...[and] extra training sessions required can only be carried out by a WorkCover trainer at $1000 session” (NSW). Challenges associated with current volunteers (e.g. resistance) are discussed in a later section of this chapter.

Furthermore, services are not only confronted with substantial costs associated with meeting food safety standards (e.g. training and auditing), but the potential of being fined if such standards are not met. For
example, one participant said they would be “fined $10,000 if they didn’t have a food safety program in place by the end of the week ... I think that’s what they’re finding the most difficult thing, the food safety” (QLD).

A greater pool of available funds is essential for the sustainability of individual MOW services nationwide.

**Legislation and Regulation**

Increasing demands on services to meet new regulation standards (e.g. Occupational Health and Safety, food safety, and audits) was a major challenge expressed by nearly all (10/13) State/Territory participants, and “will continue to be a challenge” (SA). Participants highlighted numerous obstacles making it difficult for their services to carry out these demands. These obstacles include limited funds and stretched budgets, limited (or a lack of) resources to carry out required changes (e.g. changes to meal preparation), and a reliance on volunteers who are resistant to change. Additionally, the pressure placed on services to meet legislation and regulation standards is contributing to other challenges, including an increasing workload and demand expected of volunteers (e.g. administration duties), challenges with volunteer retention and recruitment (e.g. increased pressure and training is a deterrent), quality of service (e.g. reduce time spent with clients) and meal variety offered to clients.

Increasing workload and demands (e.g. administration, job role) were noted to be particular negative derivatives of meeting industry standards, and was being experienced by both management and volunteer staff. For example, the large amount of paperwork received by management committees can prevent them from recognising and reading those important to them: “the management committee would see the paperwork coming in and feel it was too much ... You get so much paperwork you don’t read the important ones” (QLD). Additionally, volunteer roles were generally described as becoming increasingly demanding and a possible deterrent for existing and potential volunteers, because “When you’ve got so much legislation, you can’t expect volunteers to be willing to deal with all the training that’s required, and the paperwork and all the reporting that’s required, it should be a paid job. It’s not a volunteer role any longer. And that’s because of the legislation” (WA).

Some participants also mentioned that the increased level of reporting to government (related to meeting regulation/legislation requirements) impacts on the ability of services to efficiently implement innovation or recruit new volunteers:

“...Trouble is when you have a juxtaposition between needs of government and needs of a sector that has grown up within the community itself, and theoretically should be more flexible, innovative, adaptive to needs of the community, there’s conflict between the two. This massive level of reporting to government, much of which doesn’t serve any purpose apart from measurement – the more of that you impose on a volunteer-based system, the more you bog it down in becoming just another bureaucracy and the more you discourage people from volunteering to go into it in the first place.“ (NSW).

Retention and recruitment of volunteers is a challenge in its own right and is discussed in a later section of this chapter. Nevertheless, it was evident that the increasing demands placed on volunteers to meet regulations
are exacerbating retention/recruitment challenges. One participant described this burden of responsibility as creating a “frightened atmosphere” (NSW), with some people, particularly those resistant to change, choosing “not to continue” (NSW) volunteering.

Meals on Wheels Operations and Systems

Numerous aspects related to the internal operations and systems of MOW services present major challenges for MOW if it is to remain a sustainable and competitive service. These concerns relate to the efficiency and effectiveness of the services’ operations, and challenges associated with MOW staff (paid/volunteers).

Efficiency and Effectiveness of Service Operations. Nearly three-quarters (8/13) of participants explicitly or implicitly highlighted key challenges associated with efficient and effective service operations. Specific issues identified relate to model of service operation and meal preparation methods; resources, processes and procedures; and management skills. While some of these challenges vary across State/Territories, efficient and effective operations are critical to the overall survival of MOW in Australia.

Model of service operation. Participants noted their services operated within either a centralised (SA, TAS, ACT) or decentralised (NSW, QLD, WA, VIC) model, and there was varied opinion about the model most appropriate for effective overall MOW operation. For example, the highlighted benefits of a centralised model included a greater ability to implement and control legislation/regulation requirements on a national level, and a reduced burden on individual services and volunteers (e.g. reduced need to recruit volunteers for demanding roles, and reduced administration). For example, “I think you can control it better if you’ve got a reduced number of kitchens” (QLD); and “I think the time has come that the organization should centralise. To reduce their paperwork and their responsibilities” (QLD). [It must be noted that QLD does not currently have a centralised model]. Another participant commented that TAS RC converted to a centralised model “about 5yrs ago. Out of necessity, couldn’t fill positions at AGMs”. This participant further noted that the change resulted in “no coercion, people welcomed it with open arms” (TAS).

On the other hand, some participants noted the unique benefits of a decentralised model, including the ability to respond to change “because you do tend to get more innovation occurring” (NSW), less bureaucracy, and a greater ability to individualise meals and focus services to meet local community needs. “It’s about having different models and having the ability to make decisions about which are working the best and spreading those” (NSW).

One participant however noted that compliance with food safety is an expensive challenge when all services operate independently. This is particularly problematic for small services struggling to meet regulation standards:

“They’re having increasing difficulty [complying with all the food safety regulations]. And we’re having to spend increasing amounts of time training them, going up and doing mock audits. It’s getting more and more difficult and more expensive” (NSW).
There are pros and cons with both models of service operations to enable MOW to deliver a sustainable, client-focused service. Finding a balance between the two models is the challenge in order to optimise the efficiency and effectiveness of individual MOW services.

**Methods of food preparation.** Consistent with Study 3 survey outcomes (discussed next chapter), participants spoke of various food preparation methods used in their kitchens. These methods ranged from fresh cooked, cook-chill, and frozen, and there were mixed opinions regarding the best preparation methods. Differing points of view arose mainly because of volunteer resistance (e.g. long-serving volunteers not wanting to change their methods of preparing food), or opinions about food quality and appeal (e.g. some perceive fresh food to be superior to frozen food). For example, the Future Food Model (FFM) in NSW was implemented to “provide a wider range of meals” (NSW) by replacing fresh cooked with frozen and cook-chill meals. This was particularly contentious among participants. One participant referred to the model as being “a backwards step” (NSW), believing that “frozen meals are [not] as good as you make yourself” (NSW). On the other hand, switching from cooked to frozen/chill methods were noted by some to have potential benefits for small services struggling to meet clients’ varied meal preferences and food safety standards: “It was just about trying to overcome the problems that the really small services were having with meeting food safety. But also about producing a more comprehensive range of food” (NSW).

Given the unique geographic and social contexts of each community, there is no one size fits all method of food preparation that would enable all services to meet their local client and community needs. This was well summed up by one participant:

“I’d be more than happy to see that [FFM] happening in other areas, but I don’t think I’d want to see it happening across NSW. We then get into the same fixed model again. I think these sorts of services improve much more if there are a range of models out there and they are competing with each other ... I’m not keen on any single model being adopted across Australia. It might suit the bureaucrats because it’s easier to run but it doesn’t foster innovation, change, development, and meeting emerging needs in the community” (NSW).

**Process and procedures.** Some participants talked about services using inefficient and time-consuming processes and procedures:

“Volunteers use idiosyncratic processes and procedures – do things that don’t need to be done – they’re not always very efficient” (SA). “Idiosyncratic processes and procedures not only adversely impact on the efficiency of the MOW service, but it can reduce efficiency by mak[ing] it challenging for new people coming in to take on those roles” (SA).

Inefficiencies in daily operations were also reflected through a lack of up-to-date book/record-keeping, and method of communication used within some services. For example, one participant alluded to the lack of financial record-keeping by commenting: “In terms of the financial data, what the data company said to me was that she’s never known a sector to have less of a handle on its finances than MOW. She thinks that’s a real
problem, and she’s right” (VIC). Not having up-to-date records has a detrimental impact on many levels, including (although not limited to) the overall efficiency and effectiveness of daily operations, workload and stress on staff (e.g. the potential of doubling up on/carrying out time-consuming procedures), and a lack of awareness of money coming in and out of the service.

Regarding communication, a few State/Territory participants mentioned that communicating via the post was the main mode used in their services. [It was for this reason that we used a paper-based survey in this project]. For example, one participant said that “most of the communication within Tasmania is by mail – no email or fax machines. It can be quite tedious and unproductive” (TAS). Another participant noted they have “a huge mailing cost. We mail everything out” (QLD).

Overall, participants acknowledged the inefficiency and cost (time and money) associated with using inefficient processes and procedures. While numerous factors impact on the ability for services to adopt more productive methods (e.g. resource availability), it seemed that volunteer resistance to change in terms of how they operated or a lack of technical knowledge was a main barrier:

“one of my little projects at the moment is to get everybody onto computers ... Quite a few have access to email, but no one has driven it before. There’s been some resistance ... We’ve got some challenges there for change and we’ll keep working on it” (TAS).

Meals on Wheels Workforce (Paid Staff/Volunteers). Participants highlighted several challenges related to MOW staff, including skilled management, the ageing and resistance from current volunteers, and volunteer retention and recruitment.

Skilled management. The importance of having skilled managers leading MOW toward a positive and sustainable future is critical. Despite this awareness, a lack of management training, particularly in the areas of human resource management (HRM), change management, and how to run a competitive and sustainable business was implied by some participants. The consequences of unskilled management has led to the unfortunate closure of one service:

“... the paid coordinator was behaving incompetently and fraudulently in not paying GST and superannuation, and the service ended up in the hands of an administrator. No one looked closely enough at his financial statements ... If the management committee had been diligent they would have picked up on that, but they weren’t. It’s because of lack of knowledge. No offence meant, but they were church-oriented and not business-oriented and as a result they didn’t know what was going on” (QLD).

While some participants indicated that strategies were in place for volunteer management, such as employing a volunteer coordinator, overall, there was no clear indication of HRM in any State or Territory. In particular, there was no mention of processes, strategies, or support systems in place to gain the acceptance, trust, and cooperation of volunteers, and to assist and support volunteers through change and innovation. Ensuring service managers are skilled in effective, tailored HRM is important for MOW to reinforce. As stated by one
participant: “if you’re managing volunteers, it’s not like an employee situation, you can’t say ‘you’ve got to do it this way’… you can’t direct. You’ve got to seek their cooperation. Make them think they made the change” (NSW).

**Current volunteers: ageing and resistance.** Issues related to existing volunteers, especially the ageing cohort and resistance, were noted by nearly all participants (12/13). This presents key challenges for MOW services, particularly those heavily reliant on volunteers. Around half of participants (7/13) described MOW volunteers as being older and long-serving members. While not a problem in itself, as this group are very loyal and give significant time to the organization, it did highlight challenges associated with sustainability as well as resistance to change. In terms of long-term sustainability, this was noted by a number of participants. Thus, one participant said the “cohort is ageing. We have a few younger ones, but the majority of my drivers have been with us for 15 years plus. Some of them are older than the people they’re delivering to. I’ve got a 94 year old who’s driving and his wife who’s 92 does the running in and out. They’ve been volunteering for 42 years” (WA). As will be discussed later, the typically older age of the current volunteer cohort in Australia presents other issues for MOW in terms of declining volunteer numbers, and the need to recruit new volunteers to meet growing service demand.

Volunteer resistance was a major challenge noted by around three-quarters (9/13) of participants. Specifically, these participants highlighted volunteer resistance in a range of contexts, including:

- Resistance to change their ways of doing things (e.g. operations, processes, meal choice, communication methods). For example, one participant said their volunteer cohort is “very old school. There are 96 year old ladies managing these organizations. They don’t want things to change, the committees have become their little kingdoms and they don’t want to let go of them. So until they die off, things won’t change” (QLD).

- Resistance to accepting help from leaders/managers trying to implement change/innovation. For example, one participant said “the trouble is here, they think we’re the government. They say, you have to stop making us do all those things. We’re not making you do them, we’re helping you do them. We’re not the government. We cop all of that blame” (QLD).

- Reluctance to take part in training/up-skill, for example, to meet legislation and regulation requirements. One participant commented “I know some of the volunteers don’t take too kindly to training. People I knew when I was the manager … you bump into them round the place, they complain oh, it’s not the same, they want us to do this and they want us to do that” (NSW). Additionally, this participant noted that “a lot of training was given for food safety …[but] People have chosen to think it’s too hard, we won’t worry about it” (NSW).

- Reluctance to work with other volunteers (e.g. younger generation): “I do think there is a possibility of new volunteers, the problem is the old volunteers send them packing. They don’t welcome them at all. We can go to a service and they know us and they treat you like a piece of dirt. You can imagine if a new volunteer comes in” (QLD).
Some participants indicated reasons why volunteers might be reluctant to work with new volunteers. For example, one participant said “It’s a power trip. That’s the other issue we have here – most of them have been in the services for 40 years” (QLD). Thus it may be that long-standing volunteers are threatened by newcomers to the organization. They fear that their role will be given to a younger person who they perceive as being more competent and able. Additionally, there was an impression that for long-serving volunteers, their volunteer role provides them with a sense of identity. The fear of losing their role (particularly if no strategies are in place to make them feel appreciated or worthy) may be adding to some existing volunteer’s reluctance to cooperate with younger generations:

“In some branches we’ve had long serving volunteers doing very responsible roles, and often it’s hard for them to relinquish those roles. Status, importance attached. There’s some people who’ve almost made themselves indispensable, or at least in the eyes of their branch” (SA).

As mentioned, volunteer cooperation is an essential ingredient for the implementation of needed innovation and change. Thus, resistance from current MOW volunteers is a major, and somewhat unexpected obstacle (alongside funding threats) facing MOW services heading into the future. This issue reinforces the need for HRM/change management to effectively manage and support volunteers during change processes.

**Volunteer retention.** Volunteer retention was a key challenge identified by nearly all (12/13) participants. A general decline in volunteer numbers was a commonly expressed issue (7/13). Participants (explicitly and implicitly) referred to several reasons which might contribute to this decline, including the natural ageing process, with one participant commenting that “sadly they are dying off” (QLD); and increasing volunteer workload and demands, which caused one participant to wonder “every now and then … what’s going to be the straw that breaks the camel’s back? “ (SA). A lack of ‘emotional support’ from management was an implied deterrent. Specifically, there was little mention of any regular emotional support (e.g. debriefing when confronted with complex client needs, dealing with organizational change), or acknowledgement/empowerment provided to volunteers.

**Volunteer recruitment.** The challenge of recruiting volunteers, particularly younger generations, to replace the declining number of current volunteers was a major challenge expressed by most participants (10/13). Summed up by one participant: “There’s no doubt the problem that we and I think most of the other services have is that most of our volunteers are ageing and it’s very difficult to attract younger volunteers into this sort of volunteering” (NSW).

Participants referred to numerous issues that contribute to the lack of recruitment. These issues included:

- A lack of effective, tailored recruitment strategies, and the need to make volunteering for MOW appealing to the next generation: “As far as the volunteers are concerned, I think it’s going to be harder to get the unglamified [sic] volunteer. Unglamified as opposed to the SES person who’s on TV every night and is the hero. We’re just the quiet achiever” (QLD).
- Increased demands on volunteers may be a deterrent for some people, because “If the job’s become so daunting, it would put them off” (WA). One participant referred to volunteering positions being on the “same footing as [paid] employees [which] may prove a problem” (VIC).
- Resistance from existing volunteers and services to work with new volunteers can have a negative impact on recruitment. Strategies to gain the cooperation and acceptance of current volunteers are crucial to enhance the attractiveness of volunteering for MOW, and the potential of recruiting new volunteers.
- Centralised Induction Centres was noted by one participant as being a deterrent for people who were willing to volunteer but unable to attend required induction training. This is particularly problematic for people living in rural and remote areas (e.g. distance/travel issues), and highlights the need for accessible training models: “…It’s never been expected that the country-based volunteers would travel for induction, but even people from not very outer suburbs may find it off putting. The way that we’ve offered induction has not been accessible for people and that’s a big focus for us this year, to turn that around” (SA).

If no changes are made to address these retention and recruitment challenges, closing down is a reality facing many MOW services in Australia today:

“At this point we haven’t had any branches where we’ve had to say look, if we can’t fill this role we’ll have to close you down, because you’re not going to be viable, but I think what will happen … I suspect that over time we will need to have more capacity, from a paid perspective, to step into the breach when there’s not a volunteer available. But it will have to be done very sensitively. We don’t want to infer that we don’t value the volunteers that are still doing those roles. Also sometimes we have volunteers who try it on and say, you know you’d always get people to do this if you paid us. There’s this growing expectation of more than payment for out of pocket expenses” (SA).

This issue is further pronounced by the increasing demands placed on volunteers, with one participant suggesting “it should be a paid job. It’s not a volunteer role any longer” (WA). In response to such challenges, some participants indicated the benefits of employing more paid staff, particularly a paid volunteer coordinator. Highlighted benefits included reduced pressure on services to recruit new volunteers to replace existing (ageing) volunteers, fill board member positions, and meet increasing service demand; reduced pressure on volunteers to carry out tedious and demanding roles, therefore enabling them to maximise their skill-set, focus on providing quality services to clients, and experience the satisfaction of volunteering.

In moving forward, a challenge for MOW is finding ways to lessen the burden and reliance on volunteers, perhaps by introducing more paid positions. The availability of finances, and gaining the trust and cooperation of existing volunteer, however, are critical to enable such change to effectively take place.

**Meeting Client Needs**

Meals on Wheels provides a consumer directed service aiming to maintain and improve clients’ health, wellbeing, and independence through the provision of social support and a regular meal. Nevertheless, nearly
all (12/13) participants identified several challenges related to both MOW elements, and thus the ability of services to fulfil the social and nutritional needs of each client.

**Social Support: Connection and Check-Up.** The social element of MOW is an implied (that is receives no funding), yet vital part of MOW service, as “social isolation is one of the biggest problems facing elderly people” (VIC). Two features is that MOW provides clients with (1) social connection (e.g. forming and maintaining relationships with MOW volunteers, other MOW recipients, and the wider community); and (2) health and well-being check-ups (e.g. informally conducted by volunteers during meal deliveries). Given the growing number of clients with complex needs, the check-up component is becoming increasingly important.

It was suggested that providing clients with social support is MOW’s competitive strength/key point of difference, and should be a main focus in moving forward:

> “The question you have to ask at that point is – MOW grew up at a certain time and grew out of a set of needs that existed in the community at that time. If there’s all these private sector alternatives, and people are happy to buy the meals from them, should we be trying to maintain an existence? But what keeps coming up in my mind is – what is it that MOW provides for those people? That’s why I think our competitive strengths are not in the delivery of the meal, it’s in the social support and the monitoring of the health and wellbeing of that person. Anybody can deliver the meal, what the private sector can’t do is provide those other two things. They’ve got to employ people to do it, and it’s expensive” (NSW).

Participants mentioned numerous factors (challenges) that threaten the amount of quality time a volunteer spends with clients, which impacts on the social support element of MOW service. These factors include:

- The increasing workload and demand on volunteers and food safety regulations (e.g. maintaining correct temperature control of hot food during delivery runs). For example, one participant said she only has “probably a minute or so to stay and chat to people ... you don’t have a lot of time” (TAS).
- Certain meal delivery modes (e.g. services delivering frozen meals for the week): “Meals on Wheels point of difference is that it’s not just the meal, it’s the personal contact and the well-being check. Don’t get that with 7 meals delivered once a week, frozen” (SA).
- Limited funding for resources and volunteer support (e.g. training around social connection skills, communication skills and recognising/responding to signs and symptoms of ill health) was implied by one participant: “A lot of them do get very isolated. I’m close to my drivers because I deal with them every day, and I know the powerful effect having someone come in, daily, has. I think the danger ... is losing sight of that. It’s not just about nutrition. The irony is, if you ask the Department of Human Services what they fund us for, they say they fund us for nutrition” (VIC).
- Lack of shared vision across all levels of MOW staff, government, and other funding providers, regarding the importance of both MOW service elements (social and meal):

> “Myself and a few other people on the board are really pushing that message ... we were feeling that people were losing sight of that. There’s different cultures in local government down here, and some of
them get this, and have a very customer-focused model, and there are other local governments who just see it as, who’s eligible for a meal and who isn’t and the least deliveries and less contact we can have the better. The challenge is to keep that. Because people can buy meals from other places” (Victoria).

- Personality characteristics of the volunteer were implied by one participant as having an impact on the service quality provided to clients: “To some extent it depends on the volunteer. Some of them are extremely brisk” (SA).

Meal Choice and Delivery. Providing clients with a nutritious meal is a key element of MOW, enabling clients to age in place. Thus, meeting clients’ meal preferences is critical for the survival of MOW, especially in today’s competitive market. People are exposed to a growing variety of meal options, such as frozen and ready-made supermarket meals (e.g. Lean Cuisine), pub and take-away meals, and home delivered meal options (e.g. Light and Easy). If MOW no longer meets the nutritional needs of clients, or if the menu does not appeal to prospective clients, they can easily go elsewhere (particularly in urban areas). This is not so easy in rural, regional, and remote parts of Australia. Already MOW services are experiencing (or anticipating) a shift in client demographic, and as noted by around a half (6/13) of participants, there are changes in client needs and preferences. For example, participants often commented on the need for services to produce “a more comprehensive range of food” to cater for the different “expectations from generations reaching retirement ages soon …. [who have] grown up in a more cosmopolitan community, food wise” (QLD).

Some innovation to increase choice and multicultural options were mentioned but generally providing clients with greater meal choice and flexible delivery options is an ongoing challenge for all State and Territory services. Specifically, despite an awareness of need, most participants (to varying degrees) talked about limited meal choice their service provides to their clients. For example, one participant indicated they offer their clients minimal or no meal choice, “in no way, shape or form” (QLD). This participant said they “have an indigenous service … it runs very much like our regular MOW”. These indigenous communities however do not get culturally appropriate meals. Rather, “they just do the normal deliveries, meal and 3 veg. No bush type products at all” (QLD). Similarly, another participant commented:

“No there isn’t a lot of choice. Basically it’s the main meal, and there’s an alternate meal provided if the recipient has a problem with it … There are other ethnic groups, but it’s not an area we cater for. There’s quite a few Sudanese but we don’t target them as a group. Of course service is available to them – but they’d get apricot chicken” (TAS).

Meals on Wheels Service Demand
A declining trend in client number and service demand was, perhaps a surprising point noted by over half (7/13) of participants. For example, one commented that “client numbers are declining. We did have 2.4 million, now it’s 2.1 million. It’s quite a large decline – that’s in the last 12 months” (QLD). Another participant mentioned that “… clients don’t stay on like they used to” (TAS).
Numerous factors that may be contributing to the declining client numbers included the rising cost of living with “people ordering fewer meals due to cost of living pressures” (TAS); clients passing away or moving location; or clients (existing and potential) choosing to purchase meals “from private operators, [particularly those who are] prepared to pay more for better quality” (NSW). A demographic shift in population was also noted by 4 participants to be a contributing factor in the declining service demand, and thus the sustainability of MOW in certain areas. For example, one participant said the “inner city demographics are changing … areas where the kitchens are located are losing their ‘oldies’ and becoming populated by trendy younger people” (QLD).

Competing Organizations

The impact of competing organizations was a key challenge explicitly noted by a few (3/13) although implied by nearly all participants. MOW is competing alongside numerous other ready-made food options, and all are competing for the same clientele. This highlights the critical need for all MOW services to ensure their operations are tailored to meeting their current and future clients’ social and nutritional needs. The declining number of clients and meal demand is an indication that clients are already seeking the services of competitors, especially those offering greater meal choice and better meal quality:

“If there’s private sector operators who will offer a better looking and better tasting meal, but its $2.50 more, maybe quite a few of your clients will start going to them. Because more of your clients coming through now are self-funded retirees and can afford a little more. I say, have you ever actually asked your clients what they’d be prepared to pay for a better meal?” (NSW)

3.2.2. Innovations and Changes

In responding to the challenges noted in the previous section, here we highlight the numerous changes and innovations participants considered to be essential for MOW to remain a sustainable and competitive service. These changes/innovations relate to MOW operations and systems, staff (i.e., retention and recruitment), service, and connection with the wider community. Readers are reminded that some of these suggestions were explicitly stated by participants, whereas others were implied, for example, through discussions of experienced challenges, or a perceived absence of a potentially beneficial innovation (e.g. human resource management). Examples of State/Territory innovations presented here are not exhaustive. Furthermore, they were current at the time of the interviews and may have since changed.

These strategies, however, could potentially assist all MOW services with moving forward in a positive, sustainable direction, they are all worthy of consideration by all service providers. Furthermore, it is acknowledged some State/Territory services may already be adopting suggested or alternate strategies. The four key areas were:

- Meals on Wheels operations and systems;
- Meals on Wheels volunteers;
- Meeting client needs; and
- Public relations/promotion

**Meals on Wheels Operations and Systems**

Participants mentioned numerous strategies/innovations that could improve the overall efficiency and effectiveness of MOW operations and systems related to the model of service operation, processes and procedures used, and management skills.

**Models Of Service Operation (Decentralised Vs. Centralised).** Model of service operation was an implied area in need of change, and as mentioned, there was mixed opinion among participants about the most appropriate model (e.g. decentralised vs. centralised) to drive MOW forward. It seems that certain aspects of both centralised and decentralised models would be beneficial, and services require the flexibility to adapt aspects to suit their client/community needs. For example, elements of a centralised model would enable better standardisation across services, reduce workload and recruitment burden on the individual service, and enable services to meet regulation and legislation requirements, while aspects of a decentralised model would enable services to flexibly adapt to local client and community needs.

**Processes and Procedures.** The internal operations of MOW were a main area in need of innovation and change to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of operations, and in turn, the service provided to clients. These included the need for accurate and up-to-date book keeping and administration; flexibility in service operations and volunteer attitudes to enable a prompt and proactive response to clients’ changing needs; and improved regular communication within and between services (e.g. collaboration, sharing knowledge and resources), and with clients (i.e., asking clients what their needs and preferences are, rather than assuming they are being met). Improved communication also includes using efficient and cost-effective modes of information dissemination (e.g. email).

Additionally, changes to volunteer roles were mentioned by some participants as a way of improving daily operations. These included reducing volunteer workload, for example, “breaking down some of our big coordinating roles so they’re not so overwhelming” (SA), and reducing the reliance on volunteers by increasing the number of paid positions:

“I suspect that over time we will need to have more capacity, from a paid perspective, to step into the breach when there’s not a volunteer available. But it will have to be done very sensitively. We don’t want to infer that we don’t value the volunteers that are still doing those roles. Also sometimes we have volunteers who try it on and say, you know you’d always get people to do this if you paid us. There’s this growing expectation of more than payment for out of pocket expenses” (SA).

An overarching issue implied by most (if not all) participants was the need for more funding opportunities to enable services to upgrade resources, implement needed changes and innovations to improve internal operations. Summed up by one participant, changes and innovations “can be done, but will come at a cost” (TAS).
**Skilled Management.** Appointment of managers and leaders who are passionate and proactive in driving needed change and innovation, and ensuring efficiently daily operations of MOW was an implied and explicit change required:

“... how do you get the right people leading the kitchens or the group? It makes such a difference as to how the whole place runs, if you have someone who’s really with it and on the go, everyone’s happy, you’ll retain people and they’ll let other people do things ... It’s really about how can you ensure that the right type of volunteer is leading the group, because the others will follow” (SA).

While there was evidence of participants displaying (and mentioning managers with) such characteristics (e.g. enthusiasm for improving services, proactive in implementing innovation), there was no mention of any specific strategies (e.g. management training and skills, recruitments strategies) to ensure all MOW services have such leadership.

The need for managers with human resource, and change management skills were a particular implied change required. As mentioned, resistance from volunteers was a main challenge highlighted by participants, preventing MOW services from operating efficiently or effectively, successfully implementing needed change, and thus providing competitive, quality service to clients. This was particularly evident in services heavily reliant on volunteers. Therefore, strategies and support are needed to ensure management are equipped with skills to minimise such resistance.

**Meals on Wheels Volunteers**

Participants mentioned various strategies that might assist with volunteer retention or recruitment.

**Slow and Empowering Change Implementation.** Around half (6) of participants talked about the need for change to be implemented slowly, and in a way that is sensitive to the current (typically older age and resistant) volunteer cohort: “The question of how do you think meals on wheels should change? The answer is – slowly. I think it will happen, the evolution will happen, but it has to happen slowly. You can’t go along to a group and say this is what you’re going to do” (TAS).

Five participants also talked about the importance for volunteers to feel a sense of ownership over the change processes, rather than feeling that change is imposed upon them, and to gain their trust and cooperation:

“It’s a very interesting change management project, because we’re having to overcome the volunteers’ resistance. They’ve never had to think about choice in SA. So therefore it can’t be done. Despite the fact that their counterpart’s interstate are doing it, and have been for years, in their minds it can’t be done. So what this whole project is about is demonstrating that it can be done, and giving the volunteers a lot of ownership about how they establish procedure” (SA).

Encouraging a supportive and team environment was also mentioned as a way of increasing retention.
Volunteer Roles. Matching volunteer skills, desires, and motivation for volunteering with a specific job role was another retention strategy mentioned by one participant: “maybe some of them, instead of being specifically recruited to deliver meals on the road, might be specifically recruited to assist in the administration area. Especially if they come from a clerical/admin background” (NSW).

Tailored Support and Training. As previously noted, the provision of ongoing training and support for management, particularly in areas of human resource, operations, and change management was a key implied area for change and innovation. Similarly, more tailored support and training sensitive to resistant volunteers is needed. Although participants indicated the provision of training to up-skill volunteers in necessary legislation/regulation changes (e.g. occupational health and safety), a frequently mentioned issue was the resistance of volunteers to attend such training.

“A former school teacher who used to be a volunteer [had] given it up, because ‘You’re forever having to go and do training – I was in the classroom for 40 years, I don’t need to be in a classroom now that I’m retired’. You get that reaction. People just want to come, do the job, and go home. I know they’ve got to be shown and instructed, but it just seems to be ongoing and it’s not what they want to do” (NSW).

Participants acknowledged the necessity of the social element that their service provides to clients, but there was no mention of training and support for volunteers to properly implement such services. Rather, it seemed that the quality of social contact/check-up provided to clients was up to the individual volunteer and their skill-set. A lack of training may negatively impact a volunteer’s feelings of competency (e.g. in carrying out client check-ups), and quality of service provided to clients, and thus their retention. This is particularly important with clients being:

“sicker, frailler, more complex needs, because the health system is a mess, it’s really breaking down. They won’t be able to get beds in nursing homes or hospitals when they need it. They’ll be at home. I guess it’s the volunteers having to deal with that and it’s supporting the volunteers to deal with that. And when they bring information back to us about somebody’s ill-health, what’s the best thing is to do with that. Who to report it to and where to get the client help” (TAS).

Therefore, there is a need for tailored training (particularly in delivering the social element of MOW services), catered to typically older, resistant, long-serving volunteers. As stated by one participant, “If you were to ask a volunteer coordinator who’s never had any formal training and any opportunity to set up programs and plans to suddenly produce a food safety program, it’s just not feasible” (WA). This also extends to gaining the volunteers cooperation in wanting to up-skill.

Centralised Paid Volunteer Coordinator. The provision of more paid roles was a strategy suggested by some participants to help alleviate the burden on local individual services (e.g. reduced administration and recruitment needs), including assisting with managing volunteers. Australian Red Cross in Tasmania has adopted this strategy, employing a paid Volunteer Coordinator (located at the Launceston Office). The Volunteer Coordinator’s role includes completing rosters for all communities and managing volunteer
problems. As outlined by one participant, derived benefits include less pressure on small town services to recruit volunteers or fill demanding roles, and increased volunteer retention and recruitment: “yes, had that problem, hence the switch, about 5 years ago. Out of necessity, couldn’t fill positions at AGMs. Converted it all to central admin, send out monthly accounts to clients. Helps reporting-wise to have it all centralised” (TAS).

**Volunteer Recruitment.** It is not surprising that effective tailored recruitment methods were identified as an area in critical need of change and innovation. Although participants were aware of this need, interview outcomes suggest minimal innovation across the board in terms of attracting new volunteers, particularly younger volunteers, to replace the current ageing cohort. Examples included recruiting corporate volunteers (TAS RC) and school students, such as school children’s work experience (NSW, TAS RC).

Therefore, effective, tailored, recruitment strategies are essential if MOW is to remain a sustainable service with a sufficient pool of volunteers.

“Reasons for volunteering are different – they volunteer to meet a need of their own, might be to gain experience, to occupy time between school and university, or to get NewStart allowance. It’s about meeting their needs. I keep saying to our services, look, if you want to attract young kids to do volunteering – they say oh, we’ve been to the schools and they say we can’t give you the kids between 11am and 2pm so we can’t use them – I say well, have you ever thought of running a round at 4.30 in the afternoon? There’s probably plenty of people out there receiving your meals who’d prefer to have it delivered in the evening” (NSW).

**Volunteer Retention.** Only a couple of participants highlighted strategies within their services to assist with volunteer retention. These included providing volunteers with role variety (and thus greater opportunities to learn new skills and meet new people) and facilitating a positive work culture and team spirit. “Instilling a sense of being a team, making it a pleasant place to come, having volunteer social gatherings, e.g. for Xmas, doing special hampers for Easter, Xmas using donations” (SA).

**Meeting Client Needs**

There were numerous explicit and implied suggestions for change and innovation related to enabling MOW to meet the changing and dynamic needs of clients. These suggestions related to strengthening MOW client focused service, and both the social and nutritional elements of MOW service. Participants mentioned a variety of ways their services are attempting to adapt to the changing needs of clients. These strategies relate to ensuring a client focused service, improving the social support and meal variety provided to clients, as well as increasing clients’ independence.

**Client Focused Service.** A common theme mentioned by at least one-third (4) of participants was the need for a client focused vision to drive operations. That is, a vision shared by all levels of MOW staff, government, and other funding providers, focused on satisfying client’s nutritional and social needs. As stated by one participant, there is a need for “changes ... to come from the clients wanting something different and the services responding to that” (NSW).
The NSW and QLD collaborative research project undertaken in 2012 was a particular strategy mentioned as a way of ensuring a client focused service. The aim of the narrative research was to get “meaningful assessments of how well we’re doing at what we’re supposed to be doing” (NSW) in terms of meeting client needs. The research was about measuring quality, not just quantity outcomes.

In providing a client focused service, one participant highlighted the need for more periodic, outcome-focused research to ensure services are actually meeting client’s needs: “All we keep doing is measuring quantities, not outcomes, so that’s why I think we need to start measuring outcomes because what we might find is that people are less satisfied now than they were 57 years ago, which tends to suggest we’re wasting a hell of a lot of money” (NSW).

Open two-way communication with clients was also indicated by two participants. That is, the need to ask clients what they want, rather than assume their changing needs are being met: “I posed the question: how come the hot meal comes at lunchtime, rather than in the evening? Have we ever asked if people would prefer to have their hot meal in the evening? What if the meals were delivered chilled and the person could heat it at whatever time?” (SA).

**Social Support: Connection and Check-Up.** The social element of MOW service includes fostering clients’ social connection (e.g. with other people and the wider community), health, wellbeing, and independence. As previously noted, some participants regarded the social element to be a key strength of MOW and a point of difference over its competitors. Nevertheless, little discussion by participants around specific protocols, strategies, or support provided to strengthening this element suggests this is an area in need of change/innovation. Suggested (explicit and implied) changes to improve the social support (and independence) provided to clients include:

- The need for more group meals to facilitate social inclusion “because there are so many people living alone” (ACT); and the availability of transport (resources) to take clients on social outings: “We are considering how to bring people together to have a communal meal. Transport would need to be arranged” (ACT).
- More formal processes, protocols, and support to assist volunteers carry out client check-ups: “... we’re also providing another service. And that’s a big service, especially with families so far-flung these days, and they haven’t got anyone else ... The welfare check is crucial – I would hate to lose that for chasing something else” (SA). There were no clear strategies mentioned to enhance or ensure volunteers are able to spend quality with clients. One participant however did indicate that there are “... a small number where they’ve got the opportunity of trying to be one on one with the clients. So they’ll have a particular volunteer who’ll be involved with that client and will hang around and stay with them while they eat their meal, just to give them some company. Two things with that – they’ve had the company, and you know they’re eating” (NSW).
- Networking with other local service providers (e.g. Planned Activity Groups, HACC) to offer a greater range of activities and services to clients, and thus opportunities learn new skills and meet new people: “… it’s
about people’s confidence. Often what meals programs are involved in is PAG – planned activity groups – getting people in to do craft ... it’s about engaging MOW clients more in activities to combat social isolation and improve their mental health” (VIC).

There were several examples of innovation in place to improve other aspects of the social element of MOW services. These included:

**Group meals.** Providing clients with the option of group meals was noted by a few participants. For example, in NSW, some services offer centre-based day care (e.g. Beresfield Centre-based day care), club lunches, and group morning tea. Tweed Coast Food Services Men’s Group also do outings and social activities. In Victoria, examples of group-oriented meals include the “Let’s Do Lunch” innovation (i.e., group meals and kitchen tours every fortnight at local production facility), and some services offer Café meals once a week. In WA, some services offer community lunch every month with entertainment. There is also a club that provides clients with a meal and a movie, and opportunities to mix with younger people. As noted by one participant, group meals have the added benefit of enabling service providers to identify clients who may need additional support (i.e., linking with other HACC services).

**Meal Choice and Delivery.** Over half (7) of participants indicated the need for changes and innovation associated with the meals provided to clients. These included the need for:

- More variety in meal choices to cater for individual needs: “updating the choice and style of meal, with baby boomers coming through maybe service has to start looking at that” (NSW);
- Meal choices tailored to local community preferences (e.g. indigenous/ethnic meals): “I have an indigenous service ... it runs very much like our regular MOW ... they just do the normal deliveries, meal and 3 veg. No bush type products at all” (QLD);
- Sustainable meal preparation methods that balance cost efficiency and meal quality (implied change needed): “I have the feeling that some of what we’re doing is working against our own best interests. The services want me to keep leaning on the suppliers to cut their costs, then they also complain to me about the quality of the meals. If you keep leaning on them to cut costs, once you get past a certain point the only way they can do that is by cutting the quality of the meal” (NSW).

There were, however, numerous examples of innovations aimed at improving the meal choice and quality provided to clients:

**Meal choice.** For example, in NSW, Rockdale services offer two meal types (gourmet and standard), and its catering service provides meals and sandwiches to local council and businesses. Additionally, Fairfield Food Service has significantly increased the variety of its menu items, including culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD), Ploughman’s Dinner Pack, and finger food packs for dementia clients. In WA, some services provide clients with the flexibility to change their meal upon request, and also offer specials (e.g. vegetarian option). It is worth pointing out that one WA participant highlighted that a benefit of being a small service, and running their own kitchen meant greater flexibility to adapt to client’s needs (including meal choice):
“Not all services provide them with choice – that was something innovative I introduced 3 or 4 years ago. I thought it was important, if someone had appetite issues or was feeling a bit down, the ability to choose their meal and have it come with their name on it, I hoped would give them more feeling of control over their life. I believe some other services are following suit. Also, we do specials, if someone’s vegetarian we can give them a vegetarian option. We can be quite flexible, because we’re a small service. And we’ve got our own kitchen” (WA).

In Victoria, Moreland City Council offers up to 5 meal choices, and was “one of the first to incorporate multicultural meals because we have the largest Italian and Greek, population in Melbourne living in these suburbs. In the 90s, ethnic meals was the buzz word” (VIC). This participant also noted that as a result of offering greater meal choice “the numbers have increased. Many who aren’t vegetarian order the vegetarian option” (VIC).

Additionally, “Most services [in Victoria] have systems in place to allow clients to choose weekly menu in advance: choice of up two 6 mains”. This participant further commented that “Our service offers 5 choices - drivers take the menu out, clients tick the boxes, and it is scanned into the computer system and production numbers and meal labels come out” (VIC). This client management system is also an example of the ways services are improving the efficiency of their operating systems.

Tasmanian services are exploring ways to improve the nutrient quality of meals. For example, the catering manager at Launceston General Hospital is looking to introduce milk drinks for clients low in calcium.

**Meal packaging.** There were several examples on innovations in place to improve meal packaging, and in-turn, increase client control, meal appeal, and/or food shelf life. For example, Moreland City Council (VIC) labels each meal as low, medium, or high fat, GI, and gluten free, with the aim of letting clients make informed choices rather than imposing the blanket restriction. Additionally, the Community Chef (VIC) innovation of packaging enables 30-day shelf life. Finally, Subiaco (WA) has improved its packaging to enhance meal appeal.

**Meal preparation.** Efforts to improve meal preparation methods were noted by some participants. For example, some services in WA use local roadhouses and mine sites to prepare meals. This innovation also has derivative benefits of enhancing social networks and MOW promotion. One ACT participant noted that employing a full-time nutritionist (working with the hospital) to improve and ensure nutritional quality of meals during preparation was successful. Additionally, an innovation unique to ACT is the 5-day discharge from hospital service (5 frozen meals, groceries, plus optional wellbeing check phone call). Finally, a few State participants noted the switch from fresh to frozen/cook-chill meals to increase flexibility for both the client (e.g. eat when they like) and volunteers (e.g. more flexible delivery times). The Future Food Model in NSW is an example of such innovation. In discussing this food preparation change, participants also noted the benefits experienced on a service level (e.g. reduce burden to adhere to food safety regulations, and increased client numbers).
**Meal delivery.** There were only a few strategies mentioned regarding the way meals are delivered to improve flexibility or ensure meal quality. For example, as mentioned above, a couple of participants commented that switching to cook-chill meals enabled their service to “change the delivery time – deliveries started going out at 8.30am instead of 11.30am. Predominantly they were finished by 9.30 so the volunteers were in and out and had the rest of the day to themselves, the clients could please themselves when they ate the meal, because part of our research was they weren’t eating the hot meal at lunchtime – they were reheating it anyway” (NSW).

Furthermore, to ensure meal quality, some TAS RC services using heated eskies to deliver hot meals in country areas.

**Up-Skilling and Increasing Client Independence.** There were several examples of MOW services providing additional services beyond the traditional social connection and meal. These additional services included giving clients more opportunities for clients to learn new skills and increase their independence. For example, in NSW, there is the “Cooking for You and Me” innovation (offered through the HACC training group on the Central Coast). Other innovations include the Bush Tucker at Lightning Ridge, and Bourke/Wilcannia Aboriginal Elders Breakfast program partners with personal care (laundry and transport). Also in NSW, the Blue Mountains Food Service developed a Food Education and Cooking program for residents of a transitional care home who experience significant mental health and drug and alcohol issues and have not lived independently for some years.

In QLD (north Brisbane), the Nundah Activity Centre paid coordinator took advantage of sharing a kitchen with a community centre to expand the service offered. Thus, the activity centre now has a Men’s Shed, computer classes, community garden that grows vegetables for the kitchen, dancing, painting, crafts, and communal meals.

Finally, in TAS, some MOW volunteers do additional household jobs for clients. As noted by one participant, volunteers doing household jobs for clients further enable them to age in place: “… Even the paid drivers, when it’s not their busiest days, might be able to post a letter or change a lightbulb. It only takes a couple of seconds but it means they can see or their bills have been paid” (TAS).

**Public Relations (PR) / Promotion**

It is well known that proactive and effective public relations (PR) and promotion is a vital component of any business. The 2010 national re-branding of MOW (Meals on Wheels- more than just a meal) is an example of a positive innovation implemented by MOW on a national level, to respond and adapt to the changing society needs, strengthen its public image and awareness, and attract more volunteers:

“If MOW is going to succeed into the future it needs to have a brand identification. Up till now we’ve had 700 different brands around Australia and that’s dissipated the impact we can have on the community, and particularly on the corporates, and also on government” (NSW).
Four participants recognised the need for more effective PR/promotion strategies, particularly to improve service demand and the sustainability of MOW in an increasingly competitive market: “... better PR. To the public – which will flow onto volunteers and the clients. Tell people about the service, what we do, who does it” (QLD).

On a local level, a couple of participants mentioned strategies to assist with promoting their services, including being “out there in people’s faces, it’s the brand as well” (TAS RC), and developing the Friends of Meals on Wheels website “to build a mass support base for MOW in the community...” (NSW). Nevertheless, there was no clear mention of tailored, regular strategies in place to connect with the local community; enhance public image and support; or promote the numerous benefits of MOW (e.g. to clients and their family, and volunteers). Participants however acknowledged this need. Summed up by one participant: “… It’s vital to our business, but I think we’re not very good at telling the general public what we do. And that’s got to change” (TAS).

3.2.3. Benefits

It is important to acknowledge the significant and positive impact MOW has on the social and economic fabric of Australia, fostering individual’s health, wellbeing, and independence. During interviews, participants highlighted several benefits that MOW services provide for clients, their family, and for MOW volunteers.

Benefits for Clients

Participants referred to numerous benefits their service provides for clients. These benefits include providing a support network, facilitating social inclusion (thus reducing isolation), and opportunities to develop friendships (with volunteers and other MOW recipients): “I’m sure some days I’m the only person they see, apart from the person who comes to shower them. Especially those who don’t get around very much. Sometimes you are the only person they see, but you really don’t have the time to sit down and have a chat. You sort of have a quick chat if you can” (TAS).

There is little doubt that certain aspects of MOW services, such as providing regular meals, enable clients to age in place: “her 95 year old mother who used to deliver MOW and now receives them and it enables her to stay at home” (TAS).

Some participants mentioned other ways their service contributes to enhancing the wellbeing and independence of clients. For example, by providing clients with opportunities to learn new skills (e.g. cooking), offering additional services (e.g. laundry, cleaning), and volunteers doing odd jobs around the house (e.g. changing light bulbs). Furthermore, some participants acknowledged that providing clients with transport to attend medical appointments and social outings is a valued service worthy of sustainable funding:

“We’ve got a community transport service with six drivers, six buses out on the road every day. One takes people to medical appointments; the others are full taking people to shopping centres and senior citizen centres where they can have a meal. A lot of that goes on. But it’s said the MOW program should be doing this sort of stuff. Most MOW clients are over 80, are frail, and the challenge is getting them out
socially. That’s where I think it’s difficult. A lot of the transport money councils have is already soaked up with the shopping trips, the senior citizens clubs” (VIC).

Benefits for Family Members

A couple of participants noted benefits that MOW provides for family members of their clients. For example, one participant noted that providing regular, tailored nutritious meals reduces the caring burden on families: “our youngest client is 10, severely disabled with swallowing problems, has to have soft meals, MOW service decreases burden on family to prepare them” (SA).

Additionally, while checking-up on client’s health and wellbeing is a direct benefit to clients, it also provides family members with the peace of mind, particularly for family members who do not live nearby to visit:

“The MOW driver going in every day is something that we get feedback from families and from clients saying that just knowing someone is going every day is a huge relief to them. Especially when someone is getting into their 80s and they’ve had a fall and might have another fall. They know someone is checking on them every day. Especially when the family don’t live nearby and can’t get there. Which is increasingly becoming the case. The MOW service is like monitoring to see they’re okay. It’s different than engaging in a social kind of, I don’t know, it’s the pointy end. Are they alive? Are they on the floor? Can they get to the door?” (VIC).

Benefits for Volunteers

It is widely acknowledged that people gain benefit from volunteering. During interviews, participants referred to several of these benefits. For example, the ability to help out in a variety of roles reduces boredom, and increases opportunities for people to learn new skills and meet new people: There are a “variety of duties ... and the variety amongst the volunteers. Equal numbers of men and women in kitchen, and many different cultures – India, Sri Lanka, South Africa, Malaysia, China, Ocker fellers – nice blend at a barbeque” (SA).

A sense of social contribution was also noted, more so for the older, long-standing generation of volunteers, because “volunteering to deliver MOW was part of meeting your responsibility to the community. But the generation after WWII grew up in a culture of rights. Reasons for volunteering are different” (NSW).

The satisfaction of contributing to someone’s wellbeing was also highlighted:

“Even though I wasn’t in the kitchen, I had a feeling most days that I had contributed to the wellbeing of some people in the area through having been involved at Meals on Wheels. And even now, I’m involved at a local level to some degree, but I’m doing more work at a state and national level, but it still feels like I’m contributing. You’re running the organization but you’re still contributing to the Meals on Wheels concept overall” (NSW).

Finally, volunteering also contributes to a person’s self-identity, particularly for older individuals who have been volunteering for a long time: “In some branches we’ve had long serving volunteers doing very responsible roles, and often it’s hard for them to relinquish those roles. Status, importance attached” (SA).
The noted challenges facing MOW threaten the sustainability of each identified benefit into the future. For example, increasing volunteer workload limits the about of time spent with clients during meal delivery, and therefore threatens the social contact with, and check-up of, clients and reduces the gratification for some volunteers. Additionally, a lack of funding threatens the availability of resources to keep services running, and the variety and quality of services provided to clients. Furthermore, issues with volunteers, including an overall shortage, and problems with retention and recruitment, threaten the overall sustainability of MOW in Australia today.
Chapter 4. Stage 3: National Australian Survey Study

The aim of this stage of the study was to explore the similarities and differences in the use of volunteers and service delivery models relating to MOW across States/Territories. Stage 3 involved two parts: survey design and a national survey distribution.

4.1. SURVEY DESIGN

Using quantitative (survey) methods, a national survey specific to the project was designed by the team of researchers. The structure of the survey elicited quantitative data in multiple choice, requests for statistics, or ‘yes/no’ form, with some options for comment. The issues raised in stage 2 (interviews) informed the survey. Specifically, the 27 questions addressed the four areas of interest: individual service profile (e.g. structure, staff profile, and clients); service delivery (e.g. meal type, preparation, and delivery); volunteers (e.g. volunteer demographics, concerns, issues, management, recruitment, and retention); and challenges and innovations. A pilot of the survey was first conducted in Tamworth, NSW, in March 2012 to ensure validity and reliability. Adjustments were made in consultation with Sharyn Broer.

4.2. NATIONAL SURVEY DISTRIBUTION [JUNE 2012 – JAN 2013].

Once the survey was finalised, the surveys were distributed nationwide by the state bodies. We deliberately used a paper-based survey rather than an electronic one because we were informed by MOW that many services preferred that method of communication. Later some surveys were distributed by electronic copy. See Appendix B for a copy of the Survey.

Response Rate

Overall response rate after an initial distribution of surveys and a number of follow-ups was 41% (266/651 surveys distributed). While this response rate is lower than anticipated, it is comparable with response rates achieved in studies involving mail out surveys, including non-profit organization research (Baruch, 2008; Hager, 2003).
An interactive database (*FileMakerPro Survey Database*) was customized for the survey responses and all data was entered as the forms were returned.

The focus of the analysis was to identify the key areas of vulnerability in the diverse Australian context to build a national picture of current service delivery models.

### 4.3. FINDINGS: STAGE 3 NATIONAL SURVEY STUDY

To assist readers with understanding the survey outcomes, Box 1 below outlines factors to consider when interpreting the survey findings. In terms of presentation, survey questions are presented in order of survey (see Appendix B for a copy of the survey). Specifically, responses to the 10 service profile questions (Q1-10) are discussed first, followed by answers to the seven questions (Q11-17) relating to service delivery, and eight questions (Q18-25) about volunteers. Finally, participant’s responses to the two questions (Q26-27) that focused on challenges and innovations are reported.

#### TABLE 4. SURVEY RESPONSE RATES FOR EACH STATE/TERRITORY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State/Territory</th>
<th>No. of services that received a survey</th>
<th>Response rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>81 (44%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>51 (58%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIC</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>35 (36%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAS</td>
<td>44 (11 Red Cross, 33 MOW)</td>
<td>19 (43%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACT</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QLD</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>46 (32%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WA</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>32 (35%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location Unknown</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>651</strong></td>
<td><strong>266 (41%)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Box 1. Survey Data Interpretation

At the outset, the following points need to be clarified to assist with interpreting the survey data presented in this chapter:

1. Overall percentages (first column of each table, titled ‘ALL’) are based on the total study sample size (N) of 266. Individual State and Territory percentages however are based on the sample size for each respective State/Territory. For example, NSW sample size was 81; therefore, all percentages for NSW (in-text and in each Table) are based on 81.

2. Below each table is the number of respondents (n) who responded to that particular survey question (n = N – ‘missing data’). Using question 1 (site location) as an example, two respondents out of the total 266 sample size (N) did not answer this question. These two missing responses are identified in the table as ‘missing data’. Thus, the number of respondents (n) for question 1 is 264 (i.e. n = 266-2).

3. For some survey questions, State and Territory based percentages are not reported, only overall percentages are given. For these questions, the decision to exclude State/Territory percentages was primarily based on a high non-response rate. Thus, the sample size would have been too small to gain any meaningful State/Territory insight.

4. Caution is needed when interpreting all survey findings (e.g. percentages), particularly for survey questions with high levels of missing data (non-response).

5. Comparing percentages (i.e. survey findings) between States/Territory is not feasible due to differences the response rate and sample sizes for each State/Territory. Therefore, while individual State/Territory understandings can be gained, any differences or comparisons are unlikely to be meaningful (as figures are based on raw data, not standardised).

4.3.1. Service Profile

Site Location

Question 1 asked for the regional location of each service, whether in a metropolitan city, regional town, a rural or remote area. The response was well distributed throughout all areas: Table 1 (Q1) shows that of 266 potential responses, 68 (26%) were from metropolitan cities, 93 (35%) were in a regional town, 88 (33%) were in a rural area, and 15 (6%) were classified as ‘remote’. Site location was not recorded by two (1%) respondents. While ACT, having only one central service is 100% metropolitan, WA (38%) and VIC (37%) are also highly centralised States. Conversely, TAS (11%) and NSW (19%) are the least centralised, yet both have a high percentage of regional town services (42% and 37%, respectively). SA services are predominantly rural (47%), with an even distribution of city/town services (27%, 24%). In QLD, services are evenly distributed between the rural and regional areas (39%, 37%). Interestingly, NSW and WA are the only States with notable numbers of remote services (11%, 16%) while responses from QLD designated only 2% in remote areas. This is
surprising, considering Queensland’s geographical expanse; it may indicate a low survey response rate from that area, or that services are not able to maintain and function in more isolated regions in Queensland.

The high response rate of the regional, rural and remote areas at 74%, compared to 26% in metropolitan cities with their comparative population density, suggests the relative importance of MOW in these regions. Non-metropolitan areas have limited choices in many respects, including those that relate to food services, community centres, transport systems and other public infrastructure. Consequently, it is likely that in these regions, there is a reliance on existing networks, of which MOW is a vital element.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meals on Wheels Site Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ALL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raw Data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metropolitan City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional Town</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remote</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total N</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n = 264

**Question 2** asked for the postcode of the surveyed MOW service.

**Service Structure**

**Question 3** requested information on the individual service structure, regarding the percentage and mix of paid and volunteer workers (Table 2, Q3). The question also allowed for situations outside the stated choices (paid co-ordinator and volunteers; paid co-ordinator, paid staff and volunteers; all volunteers; all paid) with a ‘structure – other’ option for comments. Five (2%) of the 266 respondents did not answer this question. ‘Paid co-ordinator and volunteers’ is the most common structure indicated by around half (51%, or 136/266) of respondents. This structure is highest in NSW (83%), quite high in Victoria (60%), and mid-range in WA (53%), TAS (47%), QLD (46%). SA and the ACT both show 0% to this choice, but for different reasons: SA has 100% volunteers (apart from its centralised head office), and ACT, a Red Cross entity with a single survey response, has one result (100%): ‘paid co-ordinator, paid staff and volunteers’. In an era of high government regulations, a paid co-ordinator with the training and abilities to assure compliance, alongside the challenges of changing client, volunteer and financial circumstances is, perhaps, an increasing necessity.

‘All volunteers’ is the structure with the second highest response rate, at 31% (82/266). SA (100%), TAS (53%), and QLD (35%) comprise the majority of these ‘volunteer only’ services. It is notable that these States exhibit the highest proportion of services reported to be in ‘rural or remote’ regions (although NSW is an anomaly to this). Percentages of ‘all volunteer’ services in other States are quite low – NSW at 1%, VIC at 3%, WA at 13%. Clearly, this picture raises questions of State/Territory governance and/or cultures related to historical and geographical circumstances.
In contrast, ‘all paid’ services are a low 3% nationwide, with VIC and WA predominant (11%, 13% respectively). This response may mirror the relatively high local government involvement in meals delivery in those States.

‘Paid co-ordinator, paid staff and volunteers’ is a structure with a moderate rate of use in VIC (23%), WA (22%) NSW (12%), QLD (17%), apart from the 100% in ACT (Red Cross) and 0% in SA (all volunteers) and TAS (high volunteer/ volunteer and co-ordinator) structure.

Table 2

Meals on Wheels Individual Service Structure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>ALL</th>
<th>ACT</th>
<th>NSW</th>
<th>QLD</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>TAS</th>
<th>VIC</th>
<th>WA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paid coord + volunteer</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paid coord + paid staff + volunteer</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All volunteers</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All paid</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing data</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total N</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n = 261

As stated above, other structural variation could be given in open-ended responses, of which only twenty-two were recorded. Of most interest were two amalgamated services in NSW, one being a Co-operative with seven member services. Five responses concerned Multi Service Outlets (MSOs) with paid workers from HACC, local council, or hospitals. This is, in fact, a common structure found, with variation, nationwide. Three responses mentioned honorariums paid to different volunteers (co-ordinator, cook, secretary). Because so few responses were given to this aspect of the question, the results can be considered anecdotal or indicative only.

Paid Staff’s Jobs

A multiple response table (Table 3, Q4) was provided to establish which jobs in each service were given to paid staff. Among the total sample of respondents, ‘Co-ordinator of volunteers’ is the most commonly held of these paid positions (44%), followed by ‘Manager’ (36%) and ‘Admin Assistant’ (33%). A moderate range of paid positions was recorded for Driver or Deliverer (20%), Cook (18%), Kitchen Supervisor (17%), and Kitchen Hand (17%). Very few respondents indicated they have paid Welfare Officers (0.4%), a Treasurer (2%), Chair (1%); and none indicated they employ a paid Secretary.

For this question, it is important to note that statistics apply only to the services that do have paid staff and have therefore responded. For example, a total of 93 (35%) of the 266 survey respondents did not respond to this question. Therefore, if these services have paid staff, and/or the type of paid staff job roles at these services, is unknown.
The question allows for other responses to the varieties of paid jobs. Of 56 responses, most were variations of the jobs already listed (see Table 3), although eight respondents, mostly from NSW, noted ‘support worker’, with an additional three using the term ‘client support’ (combined, almost 20% of total responses). Paid cleaners were mentioned by eight services (14%), while six (11%) noted ‘food services officers’ as paid positions in VIC and NSW.

**Number of Services with Paid Staff**

**Question 5** presented a multiple options table (Table 4) to account for the number of full time, part time, or casual paid staff. It is important to note that just over one-quarter (90, or 34%) of the 266 respondents did not answer this question. Over one-third (35%) reported having some full time paid staff, with the highest number of services doing so were in VIC (74%) and the ACT (100%). Almost half of NSW services also employ some full time staff (48%), while a third of services in QLD and WA do so. In contrast, TAS (5%) and SA (0%) report negligible numbers of services with full time paid staff.

Overall, part time staff (55%) made up the highest numbers of salaried staff in MOW services. Again, ACT, NSW, and VIC are the States/Territory with the highest percentages of part time paid staff (100%, 88%, 86% respectively), with QLD, TAS, and WA all reporting just over 40% paid part time staff. Noticeably, TAS, with only 5% of full time staff, does have both part time and casual employees. SA, the fully volunteer MOW State, has only one service with part time paid staff member/s.

Nationwide, casual paid staff made up only 26% of the total. The largest number of services employing paid casual staff are in NSW (46%), followed by QLD, TAS, and VIC (each 26%). SA, again, has only 2 services (4%) with casual paid staff. These ‘paid staff’ figures are unsurprising in light of State or Territory demography and service structures, but are further illuminated by the second part of Question 5 regarding changes in paid staff numbers (see below).

Table 4
Number of Services with Paid Staff

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>ALL</th>
<th>ACT</th>
<th>NSW</th>
<th>QLD</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>TAS</th>
<th>VIC</th>
<th>WA</th>
<th>Location unknown</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Raw Data</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Raw Data</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Raw Data</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Raw Data</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Raw Data</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with FT</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with Casual</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing data</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n = 176

**Question 5** also asked whether the number of paid staff is known to be more, the same, or less than it was five years ago, or if that is not known (‘don’t know’). Table 5 (Q5) shows that, 35% (or 64) of the total 266 respondents did not answer this question. Thus, like all other questions, it is important to take this into account when interpreting overall and State/Territory based percentages. Over one-third (36%) indicated numbers were the same, while 22% reported an increase in paid staff. Only 3% had less paid staff, and 3% did not know.

NSW led the increase in paid staff numbers, with 42% of services, while TAS, VIC, and WA also had considerable additional increase. Only 11% of QLD services reported more paid staff, yet QLD showed moderate stability in paid staff numbers (43%), with services in TAS (42%), VIC (57%), NSW (48%) and WA (16%) also retaining paid staff. When both figures (for ‘more’ and ‘same’) are taken into account, the picture that emerges across the nation is of MOW services taking on more paid staff, but essentially managing with the same numbers – a figure that must be compared with client numbers to present a full picture. Only 9 (or 3%) of the 266 respondents reported services having less paid staff, VIC (9%) being foremost of those, closely followed by QLD (7%) which is a contradiction to its high percentage of ‘same numbers’ figures (above). Of the 7 (3%) stating they did not know the figures, most (4, or 57% of the total) were from WA –possibly indicating a lack of records, or change of administration. Yet this is perhaps the case more broadly, as only 172 responses were given to this question, from a possible 266.

Table 5

Current Number of Paid Staff Compared to 5 years ago

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>ALL</th>
<th>ACT</th>
<th>NSW</th>
<th>QLD</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>TAS</th>
<th>VIC</th>
<th>WA</th>
<th>Location unknown</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Raw Data</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Raw Data</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Raw Data</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Raw Data</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Raw Data</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More now</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less now</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing data</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total N</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n = 172

Volunteer Jobs

**Question 6** asked respondents to indicate volunteer jobs, as shown on a multiple response table (Table 6). Of the total 266 potential responses, 24 (9%) left this question blank (‘missing data’). Of the remaining 242 who
did respond, the most common volunteer job, at 89% (236/266), is that of driver or deliverer. Position of ‘Coordinator of volunteers’ is the next most common, at 32% of responses, followed by ‘Kitchen hand’ (27%). A similar number of respondents reported their services have voluntary ‘Admin assistants’ (20%), ‘Treasurer’ (18%), ‘Secretary’ (17%), ‘Chair’ (17%), or a ‘Welfare officer’ (15%). Only a few services retain ‘Volunteer cooks’ (10%) or ‘Kitchen supervisors’ (9%), and only 4% have a volunteer ‘Manager’.

Table 6

Volunteer Job Roles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordinator of driver or deliverer</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cook</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kitchen supervisor</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admin assistant</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welfare officer</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treasurer</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chair</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n = 242

Of 45 responses to the open-ended question regarding volunteer jobs other than those listed for multiple choice selection, 35% indicated that committee or Board members are volunteers. These positions could also have been noted above (Table 6); some answers may therefore be duplicated. In alternative cases, volunteer positions such as ‘treasurer’ are listed as ‘other’ jobs, rather than in Table 6 (revealing a less than careful reading of the survey by the respondent).

In further responses, 11% listed ‘social support’ as ‘other’ volunteer jobs. This generalised answer could be variously interpreted, for another 10% of responses mentioned specific details of support: heating meals, shopping, home visit, dementia respite, meal companionship, taking clients on outings for meals, or helping with day care centre activities. Some services had volunteer fundraising officers (8%); others had computer tutors (4%) or client liaison officers (4%) while single mentions were made of jobs such as gardening, linen assistant and OHS officer. Clearly, MOW volunteers participate in community service in an extensive range of roles.

Volunteer Numbers

**Question 7** asked how many volunteers were needed by services on quiet days and on busy days. As shown in Table 7, these responses were averaged out across each State/Territory, providing a snapshot image that showed the ACT needs 20 volunteers for either quiet or busy days, while services in NSW use 9 – 13; QLD 11 –
13; SA 7 – 8; TAS 6 - 7; VIC 13 –15; and WA 3- 4. It should be noted that 27 (10%) respondents (although around half of non-responders were from WA) across the board left this question blank.

Table 7

Number of Volunteers on Quiet and Busy Days

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ALL</th>
<th>ACT</th>
<th>NSW</th>
<th>QLD</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>TAS</th>
<th>VIC</th>
<th>WA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Raw Data</td>
<td>Raw Data</td>
<td>Raw Data</td>
<td>Raw Data</td>
<td>Raw Data</td>
<td>Raw Data</td>
<td>Raw Data</td>
<td>Raw Data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average number of active volunteers</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>385</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>385</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>385</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing data</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n = 239

Question 8 asked for the number of volunteers currently active in each service. As shown in Table 8a, these figures were also averaged to show the State/Territory range. It is interesting to note that while Tasmania is a State with far smaller population than on the mainland, it has listed a comparatively very high maximum number of active volunteers:

Table 8a

Number of Active Volunteers in Each Service

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ALL</th>
<th>ACT</th>
<th>NSW</th>
<th>QLD</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>TAS</th>
<th>VIC</th>
<th>WA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Raw Data</td>
<td>Raw Data</td>
<td>Raw Data</td>
<td>Raw Data</td>
<td>Raw Data</td>
<td>Raw Data</td>
<td>Raw Data</td>
<td>Raw Data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average number of active volunteers</td>
<td>94</td>
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<td>134</td>
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<td>Maximum</td>
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n = 234

A further multiple response question asked respondents to compare volunteer numbers now to those of five years ago. Table 8b shows that of 236 responses (30 respondents left this question blank), most services (38%, or 101/266) had the same number of volunteers. Markedly, NSW was the only State to report having numerically ‘less’ more frequently than reporting the ‘same’ amount of volunteers (41%; 28%). Many other services also reported having less volunteers (30% overall). It is reasonable to reiterate here that State/Territory percentages are based on the (raw data) sample size for each respective State/Territory.

Therefore, while a good indication of what is occurring within each State/Territory can be captured, as with all other survey questions, standardised comparisons between States and Territory findings cannot be made.

Nevertheless, although falling volunteer numbers have been considered of concern for MOW, it is interesting to note that when the figures for ‘more’ and ‘same’ are totalled, the positive percentage figures outweigh those of losses (‘less’). For example, the overall combined percentage of ‘more’ and ‘same’ number of volunteers across the board is 58%; and for each State/Territory: ACT 100%; NSW 44%; QLD 63%; SA 63%; TAS 58%; VIC 57%; WA 31%. The ‘don’t know’ numbers are not included in this calculation, but it is notable that WA, at 44% (or 14 of the total 32 WA respondents) has the highest number of responses to that point (see also Q.5, above), indicating possible lack or records or an amalgamation of services which has blurred the numbers.
Volunteer Numbers Compared to 5 Years Ago

<table>
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<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>VIC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>WA</td>
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</table>

n = 236

Clients

**Question 9** asked if respondents perceived that their clients differed from five years ago. Table 9 (Q9) shows that of the 266 respondents, 48% said that they felt their clients had changed. It should be noted however that 7% (or 19) of respondents did not answer this question, most of whom were WA respondents (13 WA non-responders). Nevertheless, interestingly, there were some differences by State, with ACT (100%), NSW (48%), and VIC (57%) more likely to say their clients were different from five years ago. Conversely, in WA (38%), TAS (63%), and SA (63%), the majority felt their clients had not changed. A fairly even spread of those who perceived clients to have changed, compared to those who felt they had not, was noted in QLD (46%:54%).

This pattern raises questions such as whether the population is generally more stable in the latter States, or whether government services have changed in the former States, shifting healthcare needs of the population.

Table 9

**Do Clients Differ from 5 Years ago**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
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<td>VIC</td>
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<tr>
<td>WA</td>
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</table>

n = 247

Of these responses, a further multiple response question, **Question 10**, asked in what way respondents perceived clients had changed. As Table 10 shows, over half (53%, or 141) of the 266 respondents provided no answer to this question. Of the remaining 125 respondents who did answer, there was a fairly broad distribution of responses with some services noting a number of changes. The most popular change observed by 29% (76 out of the total 266 respondents) was clients are older. The increased age of clients was most noticeable in NSW and QLD, followed by VIC and SA. In contrast, TAS and WA, only had relatively few respondents noting that clients are older. Apart from the multiple response question, respondents were asked in what other ways clients had changed; of 49 entries, many chose to make comments based on the tabled
responses. On the issue of clients ageing, it was noted in one case that “clients are much more frail and much more confused, leading to a higher level of care being required” (VIC). Another stated that clients were “coming on later (i.e. when they are older) and staying for only short periods, some with chronic ill health – often in hospital” (QLD); and another observed that “the older wait till often too late (had a fall, etc.)” (NSW). With increasing age also comes another observation, that of “more dementia” (WA).

Clearly, the increased ageing of clients also leads to another most frequently cited change, with 20% of respondents noting client’s health is deteriorating and worsening. One respondent commented that “MOW recipients are now those that really need it. 5 years ago anyone could have it and it was more a convenience than a necessity” (VIC).

Much of the worsening health condition of clients may relate to another noted change: clients with more disabilities, as observed by 16% (or 42/266) of respondents. The particular nature of the disabilities was not apparent from the survey responses, except for the frequent comments on mental health. These are, for example, that “mental health problems are becoming more prominent” (VIC); there are “more mental health patients” (VIC); and “an increasing number of referrals for people with mental illness” (WA).

The issue of mental health was reiterated in reference to the increased number of young people becoming MOW clients. Although overall only 9% (25/266) of responses noted ‘younger’ as an issue of client change, in the ACT it was particularly important. Comments showed that many of these younger clients had mental health problems. For example, it was stated that “25% are under 65, and 40% of these have a mental health issue” (ACT). Others commented on the ‘huge range of clients now ... we have younger people (disability of some sort, mental health)” (NSW); and claimed “more disabled younger clients (e.g. depression sufferers)” (QLD), or stated simply “mental health (younger)” (NSW) and “younger people with worse health” (QLD).

Younger clients also include an “increase in men 40-60 living alone” (NSW).

After noting the increased age of clients, the issue where there was a high level of responses (28%) was clients are now using the service for shorter periods of time. NSW, QLD, VIC, and WA were in agreement on this point, but the situation in SA and TAS was markedly different. Possibly it is, in part, related to State government policies, with some respondents commenting that clients “use service for shorter period because of recent changes” (VIC), with ‘more people accessing MOW for shorter period, after serious surgery; however, due to wellness program understand the expectation is for them to reach the goals that have been set to resume their normal life asap” (WA). Or conversely, “lost Transcare out of hospital. Government paid for up to 6 weeks but not anymore” (NSW); and more generally, “a wide variety of clients, more short stay clients” (NSW). Post-hospital care was further mentioned as a reason for short-term clients too, involving “… people recovering from operations” (TAS): “short term clients referred by hospitals as patients leave’ (QLD): “short term post discharge from hospital” (WA); and “shorter period of time due to hospitalization” (NSW).

Clients were observed to have higher expectations of the MOW service in 17% of responses. Again, this response was evenly distributed across all States (although the ACT did not register this issue). One NSW respondent marked the ‘higher expectations’ box with three ticks, for emphasis. Some comments were that “more dietary choices are given/required” (SA): “more special meals required” (SA); and more specifically, “we
have noticed a huge difference with client dietary requirements; we suspect this is due to client food awareness and influence of allied health professionals if clients have been hospitalized” (WA). Clients “want service to suit them in all respects, otherwise go elsewhere for good” (NSW). It may be that higher expectations are also due to competition from other meals sources; as one respondent commented, there is “more choice from outside, e.g. supermarkets, Light’n’Easy” (QLD) and another agreed, noting “more choice of meals in supermarkets, pubs, clubs, other food outlets” (NSW).

A small number of responses (5%) reported that clients were more active now than they were five years previously. It may be that this factor influences meal deliveries, as one comment was that clients take fewer meals per week and more frozen deliveries, to provide more freedom for clients to do other things (NSW).

Another theme emerging solely from respondents’ comments is that over recent times, client needs are becoming more complex. Already noted previously in regard to increased client expectations, this is reiterated, variously, as clients “need greater flexibility” (QLD); “have more food intolerances” (QLD); are of “different ethnicity” (NSW); and overall have “more complex needs/multiple needs” (NSW). This complexity is also because there is “a wide variety of clients” (NSW), which in some instances may be explained by one respondent who stated their MOW comprises “more services so a wider range of needs. We are a MOW with 12 service types” (NSW). Two other comments of interest, uncategorised but not to be ignored, were that “more males” (NSW) are clients now; the other was that, for their MOW service, “85% of clients are the Aboriginal population of Walgett” (NSW).

Table 10
How Do Clients differ from 5 Years ago

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ALL</th>
<th>ACT</th>
<th>NSW</th>
<th>QLD</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>TAS</th>
<th>VIC</th>
<th>WA</th>
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<td></td>
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<td>Use service for shorter period</td>
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<td>24</td>
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<td>8</td>
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n = 125

4.3.2. Service Delivery

Meals

**Question 11** provided a multiple response table to assess the meals delivered. Table 11 (Q11) shows that there is great consistency nationwide on this central issue. Of the 266 potential respondents, it can be seen that almost all States and Territories provide soup (85%), main course (98%), and dessert (95%). Three quarters of sites (74%, or 198/266) provide juice; and only a few places offer sandwiches (5%) or salads (3%). It seems apparent that this basic formula is considered the acceptable nutritious norm. Services do, however, offer variations on this standard, as noted in “Other” comments, below.
Of 77 comments on extra items offered, 31% offer fresh fruit, while 26% offer ‘mini meals’ (which also may comprise snacks, supper, finger food, or cheese and crackers). Bread (bread and butter, bread rolls) was listed in 15% of responses, and 18% offer breakfast packs, or eggs (omelette, quiche, poached eggs). Juice is offered by 10% of responding services (additional to tabled figures), and milk drinks by another 6%. Some suggested other small variations, such as cakes (5%), and in one considerate response from WA, bottled water is distributed in hot weather to encourage clients to drink.

Table 11

**Meals Delivered**

![Pie chart showing meal types](chart)

\[ n = 264 \]

**Meal Deliveries**

**Question 12** asked if MOW services deliver more meals now than five years ago, deliver the same amount, or deliver less (with a ‘don’t know’ option). The most significant result from Table 12 (Q12) is that almost half (48% or 127/266) stated they now deliver less meals. Considering the respective sample sizes of each State and Territory (from which percentages are based on), TAS and VIC have very high percentages for this lower delivery (60% and 63% respectively), with the other States on parity: an average 50% stated they deliver less meals. This result raises many questions touching almost every aspect of Meals on Wheels, local, specific and universal – changing needs, changing demographics, social structure, state policy, economic conditions.

Swaying a little against this broad trend, though, are SA and QLD, both States having a slightly more positive response: their added numbers for ‘more’ and ‘the same’ meal numbers are equal or higher than for ‘less’ meals (e.g. QLD: 46%:46%; SA 45%:35%, respectively). This is an interesting observance, as these States have a long established volunteer ethic – could this make for a more sustainable outlook? Or are changes slower to occur in these States? Alternately, Victorian services, with a high decrease in meals delivery, may mirror state government policy (the HACC Active Service Model) to encourage independence within the community, encouraging clients to become autonomous.
Some comments made in Question 10 may help illuminate this issue. One respondent noted “more aged care places are available at present catering for disabilities; retirement villages with meals available if needed” (SA); while several others had noted the variety of alternative meals available: “more choice of meals in supermarkets, clubs, pubs, other food outlets” (NSW); and “more choice from outside e.g. supermarkets, Light n Easy” (NSW). Another interesting comment was that “the client base has grown, but daily average meals has not, due to better working of allied health services - day respite, transportation, outings” (QLD).

Table 12
Meal Deliveries per Week Compared With 5 Years Ago

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>ACT</th>
<th>NSW</th>
<th>QLD</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>TAS</th>
<th>VIC</th>
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<td>Raw Data</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Raw Data</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Raw Data</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Raw Data</td>
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<td>More now</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>48</td>
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<td>46</td>
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<td>7</td>
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<td>100</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>46</td>
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</table>

\( n = 243 \)

Question 13 consisted of a table for charting the days on which meals were delivered. Again, the result is uniform nationwide. Table 13a (Q13) shows that all services deliver meals consistently from Monday to Friday. However, other comments made in regard to service delivery, in Question 11, stated that many services do deliver frozen meals on Fridays, for weekend use: “frozen meals for weekends delivered Fridays” (TAS); “frozen for weekend only” (SA, TAS). Other responses regarding frozen meals were given in Question 17: “frozen food is delivered when requested, but during work time” (NSW); “frozen foods have choice of delivery times” (NSW); and “frozen –public holidays” (WA).

Table 13a
Meal Deliver Days

\[ n = 264 \]

A second part of Question 13 was an enquiry into meal delivery times. Again, a multiple response table (Table 13b) was provided, which showed that of 266 responses (of whom 14, or 5% did not answer this question), the
most common delivery time across all States (at 81% or 215/266) was 11am to 2pm. Only 19% of services deliver meals before 11am, 12% deliver meals between 5pm to 8pm, and only 1% deliver between 2pm to 5pm.

Table 13b

Meal Delivery Time

![Pie chart showing meal delivery times]

n = 252

**Question 14** asked the source of meals, with the multiple responses Table 14 (Q14) showing that of 266 responses nationwide, the most common provider is a local hospital or aged care facility (44%). Tasmanian services source the highest number of meals from these facilities, at 84% of the State total, while SA followed at 61%. ACT, VIC and WA also source approximately half their meals from hospitals or aged care industries. QLD (52%) is the State most likely to use the service’s own kitchen for meals, followed by WA at 41%.

NSW was by far the most likely to use another Meals on Wheels service as a meals source, although this still accounted for only 23% of NSW responses. Keeping in mind State/Territory based percentages are based on the sample size for each State/Territory, is should be mentioned that ACT, NSW, and VIC (at 100%, 53%, and 31% respectively), also made greater use of commercial suppliers than did other States. Another point is that SA was the only State that showed use of MOW Cook-Chill production kitchens (14% or 7/51 of SA services).

Table 14

Source of Meals

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Source of Meals</th>
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<th>NSW</th>
<th>QLD</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>TAS</th>
<th>VIC</th>
<th>WA</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Raw Data</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Raw Data</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Raw Data</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Raw Data</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Raw Data</td>
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<td>Own kitchen</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>32</td>
<td>13</td>
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<td>Local hospital/aged care facility</td>
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<td>100</td>
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<td>16</td>
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<td>31</td>
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<td>100</td>
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<td>29</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOW Cook-Chill prod kitchen</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>9</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n = 257

**Question 15** asked whether services with their own kitchen also use it for outside catering. The first part of the question called for a yes/no response, and the second part gave multiple options regarding outside users.
More than half (58%) of respondents did not answer this question. Of those who did, only a quarter (32%, or 86/266) use their own kitchen for outside catering. Questions raised by this response include whether outsider catering may save money for the service through the sharing of expenses, or whether it may create increased regulatory work. Either way, the use of MOW kitchens for ‘outside’ catering would undoubtedly make for further integration with the local community, and raise the MOW profile.

For those services whose kitchen is used for outside catering, the most common recipients are other organizations doing centre based meals (8%). Only half that number had other Meals on Wheels services using their kitchens (4%). Caution is needed when interpreting these percentages due to the considerably high number (91%, or 243/266) of non-respondents to this question.

**Question 16** asked whether meals are hot, cold or frozen when delivered to clients. This is again a multiple choice question showing that many services deliver a mix of hot, frozen and/or chilled meals. Table 16 (Q16) shows that of the 266 respondents, 215 (81%) indicated they offer hot meals. In terms of State/Territory breakdown, hot meals were noted by all of SA respondents, 95% of TAS, 85% of QLD, 77% of VIC, 70% of NSW, 69% of WA respondents, and not at all in ACT. In comparison, while the number of hot meals noted in all States/Territory was comparatively higher than the number of cold or frozen meals delivered in each States/Territory, services across the board still reported high numbers of both frozen and cold meals (73% and 57% respectively). ACT was the exception to this trend, with the one ACT service reported delivering no hot meals, only cold and frozen meals. As for the other States (percentages based on each State sample size), TAS reported the highest number of cold and frozen dishes (95%:74% respectively), followed by Victoria (77%:66%). High numbers of cold/frozen meals were also reported in NSW, SA, and WA, however in opposite ratios, with greater numbers of frozen meals than cold meals (NSW 89%:56%; SA 69%:31%; WA 54%:44%, respectively). Queensland reported similar numbers of cold and frozen dishes (67%:65%).

Some respondents did add that cold meals may not mean ‘main meals’, but cold meals = salads (QLD), or cold = dessert (WA). As noted above in Q13, frozen meals are often delivered for weekends or public holidays, when Meals on Wheels services may not operate. Thus, frozen meals make for more flexibility for clients and volunteers alike. One respondent commented that:

> “The changes made to service provision have always been about encouraging user independence. Hot meals delivered for lunch were keeping people at home, making it hard for seniors to accept invitations etc. because they had to be at home for their meal delivery. A frozen meal service enables freedom, flexibility. It stops families from relying on MOW volunteers to check on elderly parents each day” (NSW).

Overall, most States showed a fairly even distribution of each meal delivery type, which could be assessed as demonstrating attempts at flexible, innovative meal delivery, testing the convenience for client and service alike.
In a multiple response question, **Question 17** (Table 17), respondents were asked in which ways services cater for the special needs of clients; a further section for open responses requested other comments on this topic. There was a high response rate to this question, with only 7 (3%) non-responders. Overall, it seems many services deliver a mix of special needs meals. Most services (91%, or 242/266 potential responses) cater for special diets. Several comments added that special needs meals were available if requested: “special meals are on demand and are sourced and supplied as requested” (NSW) while another comment spoke of the possible challenge in meeting such requests, as “special needs are considered - however, with one chef and one support person time is an issue” (WA). Similarly, other responses were that there is “very little variety or special needs available through hospital” (NSW); or that they were available only “within the capabilities of the hospital kitchen” (QLD). A more detailed description of special meals was that “approximately 60/day receive special meal, modified texture, allergy free, or because they have strong likes or dislikes” (VIC). Another aspect of offering special needs meals is that they may need to be vitamised, cut up, texture modified, or heated for clients who could not manage to do that for themselves (27% of 34 additional comments).

Most respondents (85% or 226/266 potential responses) cater for clients with food allergies, and many services also cater for personal preferences (56%) and choice of meals (38%). Regarding meal choice, one respondent explained “that at the initial visit clients are able to have a choice of meals selected from a menu that includes a range of food types, e.g. pasta, curries, vegetarian, diabetic desserts etc. This selection is rotated every 4 weeks” (WA). Another type of choice is shown in the statement “we often order different vegies for clients who can be very specific, not just diet related” (NSW). One service offers a choice of service types: “lunch out, tea, breakfast options” (NSW); another, “choice only if client doesn’t eat what is on offer” (TAS). One respondent suggests a wide selection for choice, their delivery consisting of “hot 2%, cold 95%, and frozen 3%. Clients have choices: soup, 4 main course, salad/sandwich, 2 desserts, 2 juices” (VIC), while another has “choice restricted to no fish only” (TAS) possibly for clients who do not eat fish.

Overall, fewer services cater for ethnic (29%) or Indigenous preferences (18%) or choice of delivery times (12%), each of which could demonstrate a lack of demand or lack of ability to comply. Of supplying ethnic meals, respondents wrote “ethnic preferences if needed, but rarely sought” (NSW); “have asked ethnic groups locally what is required – is not needed, as family look after elders (Sikh family)” (NSW); and “we have contact with Sudanese community but no demand for special meals so far” (QLD). As to choice of delivery times, one
respondent stated “some clients attend sheltered workshop so meals are delivered in the afternoon” (NSW), while another service gave the “option of times choice if client has appointment” (QLD).

Overall, the responses to this question were balanced across all States and the ACT. The high response in supplying special needs diets and those for food allergies reveals the efforts of MOW services to innovate and adapt to changing client demands.

Table 17
Special Needs Meals Available on Request

|                         | Raw Data | % | Raw Data | % | Raw Data | % | Raw Data | % | Raw Data | % | Raw Data | % | Raw Data | % | Raw Data | % | Location unknown |
|-------------------------|----------|---|----------|---|----------|---|----------|---|----------|---|----------|---|----------|---|-----------------|
| Special diets           | 224      | 91 | 1        | 100| 77       | 99| 46       | 100| 43       | 84 | 14       | 100| 28       | 88 | 1       | 100|                 |
| Ethnic preferences      | 76       | 29 | 1        | 100| 30       | 37| 19       | 41 | 4        | 4  | 2        | 11 | 11       | 37 | 9       | 28 | 0                |
| Indigenous preferences  | 48       | 18 | 0        | 100| 22       | 27| 11       | 24 | 2        | 4  | 1        | 5  | 3        | 9  | 9       | 28 | 0                |
| Food allergies          | 226      | 85 | 1        | 100| 70       | 86| 43       | 93 | 39       | 78 | 15       | 79 | 35       | 100| 25      | 78 | 1                |
| Personal preferences    | 148      | 56 | 1        | 100| 54       | 67| 35       | 76 | 14       | 27 | 9        | 47 | 20       | 57 | 15      | 47 | 0                |
| Choice of meals         | 102      | 38 | 1        | 100| 55       | 68| 7        | 15 | 8        | 16 | 2        | 11 | 19       | 54 | 9       | 28 | 1                |
| Choice of delivery times| 33       | 12 | 0        | 100| 22       | 27| 7        | 15 | 3        | 4  | 3        | 1  | 3        | 1  | 1       | 0  | 0                |
| Missing data            | 7        | 3  | 0        | 100| 0        | 0 | 0        | 100| 1        | 1  | 6        | 100| 2        | 30 | 0       | 0  | 0                |

n = 259

4.3.3. Your Volunteers

**Question 18** began an exploration of the volunteer situation in Meals on Wheels, asking if, and how volunteers have changed over the last five years. Table 18 (Q18) sets out multiple responses to this question, showing that from 266 potential responses, 21% (or 56) provided no response. Of those who did answer the question, the most noticeable change, at 59% (158/266) of responses, is **volunteers are now older**. It should be noted that while this is the highest rated issue across all States, the ACT does not mark volunteer ageing as an issue at all.

Other perceived changes include people now tend to **volunteer on a more casual basis** (24% of the total 266 potential responses) or in the **short term** (16%). Equally, they are in the **paid workforce** (16%), **referred from social programs** (17%), are **from corporate organizations** (15%), or are **students** (11%). These differences are fairly standard across the States, although TAS has the highest level of casual volunteers (37%). NSW, with the highest percentage of students (20%, at least double the amount of others) has actively targeted and promoted student involvement in some regions. The ACT presents a completely different scenario. Its volunteers are mainly people who are working, or are referred, or from corporate organizations, in equal percentages, demonstrating its unique situation (Red Cross MOW ACT being one organization with a metropolitan base).
Table 18

How Have Volunteers Changed Over the Last 5 Years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Data unknown</th>
<th>WA</th>
<th>TAS</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>QLD</th>
<th>NSW</th>
<th>ACT</th>
<th>ALL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Older</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short term</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referred</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n = 210

Question 19 asked if services are concerned or not concerned at having enough volunteers. Table 19 shows that 37% (99 of the potential 266 respondents) are concerned, a figure that grew to 50% (134 respondents) when added to the ‘very concerned’ responses. Based on relative State/Territory sample sizes, NSW (54% or 44/81) and TAS (47% or 9/19) show the highest level of concern, although it should be mentioned that 42% of TAS respondents also reported they were ‘not at all concerned’. Compared to other States, relatively high numbers of WA (22%, or 7/32) and SA (29%, or 15/51) respondents also reported they were ‘not at all concerned’, despite reporting a high number of ageing volunteers (as shown above). Once again, the ACT is in a unique situation, and is 100% ‘not at all concerned’.

Table 19

Concern about Having Enough Volunteers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Data unknown</th>
<th>WA</th>
<th>TAS</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>QLD</th>
<th>NSW</th>
<th>ACT</th>
<th>ALL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very concerned</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concerned</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not concerned/unconcerned</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all concerned</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>100</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

n = 240

Question 20 explores the issues related to volunteers more thoroughly, asking which issues are important or unimportant: volunteers ageing, leaving, not committing regularly, being difficult to recruit, or being unwilling to serve on committees. Table 20a shows that of the potential 266 respondents, 185 (70%) feel volunteer ageing is an issue important to the service. This is particularly so in NSW (84%, or 64/81) and VIC (83%, or 29/35), with only TAS (42%, or 8/19) and ACT (100%, or 1/1) being less concerned. It should be noted however that 14% (38/266) of respondents did not answer this question, with the highest non-response rate recorded in WA (56%, or 18/32 potential WA respondents).
Table 20a

**Volunteer Issues: Ageing**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Location unknown</th>
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<th>NSW</th>
<th>QLD</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>TAS</th>
<th>VIC</th>
<th>WA</th>
<th>Raw Data %</th>
<th>Raw Data %</th>
<th>Raw Data %</th>
<th>Raw Data %</th>
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<th>Raw Data %</th>
<th>Raw Data %</th>
<th>Raw Data %</th>
<th>Raw Data %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Important</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>83</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Important</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total N</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\( n = 228 \)

Table 20b shows a fairly even spread in the number of respondents who believe the issue of volunteers leaving to be either important, not important, or who left this question blank (39%, 27%, and 33%, respectively). In terms of individual State/Territory analysis, NSW (48%, 39/81), QLD (46%, 21/46), and VIC (43%, 15/35) are most alerted, followed by TAS (37%, 7/19) and SA (35%, 18/51). WA (13%, 4/32) and ACT (0%, 0/1) have the lowest rate of concern about volunteers leaving.

Table 20b

**Volunteer Issue: Leaving**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location unknown</th>
<th>ALL</th>
<th>ACT</th>
<th>NSW</th>
<th>QLD</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>TAS</th>
<th>VIC</th>
<th>WA</th>
<th>Raw Data %</th>
<th>Raw Data %</th>
<th>Raw Data %</th>
<th>Raw Data %</th>
<th>Raw Data %</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Important</td>
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<td>39</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>7</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Important</td>
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<td>27</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>7</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>66</td>
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<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total N</td>
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<td>100</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>100</td>
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<td>32</td>
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<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\( n = 177 \)

On the issue of volunteers not committing regularly, Table 20c shows this is not an important issue to most services, with 167 (43%) of respondents reporting they are unconcerned. It is only in VIC that more respondents believe this to be an important issue compared to the number who indicated this to be not important (34% vs 23% respectively). It should be noted however that non-response rate was high in VIC, with 43% (15 of the possible 32 Victorian respondents) leaving this question blank. Similarly, the overall non-response rate across the board was relatively high, at 37% (99/266). Thus, as with other questions receiving high non-response rates, caution is needed when interpreting overall and individual State/Territory findings.

Table 20c

**Volunteer Issue: Not Committing Regularly**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location unknown</th>
<th>ALL</th>
<th>ACT</th>
<th>NSW</th>
<th>QLD</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>TAS</th>
<th>VIC</th>
<th>WA</th>
<th>Raw Data %</th>
<th>Raw Data %</th>
<th>Raw Data %</th>
<th>Raw Data %</th>
<th>Raw Data %</th>
<th>Raw Data %</th>
<th>Raw Data %</th>
<th>Raw Data %</th>
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<th>Raw Data %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Important</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>9</td>
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<td>21</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Important</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>53</td>
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<td>25</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>20</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total N</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>100</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\( n = 167 \)
Table 20d shows that 47% of respondents believe recruiting new volunteers to be a problem, 23% believe this not be an issue, and 30% left this question blank. In terms of individual State/Territory analyses, it appears TAS (58%), VIC (57%), QLD (57%), and NSW (56%) consider this to be a more urgent volunteer issue than SA (37%), ACT (0%), and WA (16%). The high non-response rate (30%, or 79/266), particularly in WA (63%, 20/32 potential WA respondents), needs to be considered when interpreting these figures.

Table 20d

Volunteer Issue: Hard to Recruit New Volunteers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>ALL</th>
<th>ACT</th>
<th>NSW</th>
<th>QLD</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>TAS</th>
<th>VIC</th>
<th>WA</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>47</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>26</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total N</td>
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<td>100</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table 20e, around half (51%) of respondents find difficulties forming volunteer committees to be an important issue. Based on State/Territory breakdowns, QLD (70%) responders are most concerned, followed by those in TAS (68%), NSW (63%), and SA (61%). Again, consideration needs to be given to the relatively low response rate to this question, with are one-quarter (26%) of respondents leaving this question blank. Nevertheless, figures suggest that with greater nationwide regulation, compliance and governance is more difficult, and volunteers are reluctant to take on increased responsibility, especially without the necessary skills to competently carry out these roles.

Table 20e

Volunteer Issue: Difficulty Forming Volunteer Committees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
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<th>NSW</th>
<th>QLD</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>TAS</th>
<th>VIC</th>
<th>WA</th>
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<td>31</td>
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<tr>
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<td>100</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 21 asked for open-ended responses which would reveal the way new volunteers were recruited. Of 255 responses, 28% simply replied that they advertise for new volunteers. However, ‘advertising’ could take many more explicit forms, as 52% advertised in local newspapers or articles, 30% used newsletters, letters, flyers and posters, notice boards or brochures. Commonly used places for such advertising literature were doctor’s surgeries, shopping centres, libraries, shire newsletters, even letterbox drops. Other media forms such as radio and websites made up another 25% of responses, while council websites or MOW central office websites were specifically mentioned by 8% of respondents. Community centres such as clubs, schools, groups such as Lions Clubs or Rotary, the local volunteer agency, a dedicated volunteer co-ordinator, or the local council were mentioned in another 25% of responses. Yet at 86% of responses one of the most common
methods of recruitment appeared to be the personal - predominantly by “word of mouth”, but also by personal approach, through existing volunteers or ‘walk in’ volunteers. Promotional days and recruitment days were cited in only 3% of cases, while 2% of respondents claimed to need no extra volunteers. A very strong sense of local community networks is revealed in these responses, but in many cases this may no longer be sufficient to maintain necessary volunteer numbers. Again, there was a relatively low response rate to this question.

**Question 22** asked about the success, or lack of it, in recruiting new volunteers. Table 22 (Q.22) shows that 69% saw their recruiting efforts as successful. Individual State/Territory analysis showed ACT (100%), NSW (75%) and SA (75%) to be the most effective, followed closely by QLD (70%). High numbers of respondents reporting recruitment success was also reported in VIC (60%), TAS (58%), and WA (56%). These answers seem at odds with Table 20d (above) where most stated that recruitment was difficult. Perhaps they are successful in spite of the difficulty, having found effective recruiting methods. Conversely, the concern expressed about volunteer numbers in Q.19 indicates this is not always the case.

Further to this question, comments were invited as to why recruitment was successful or not. Of 192 entries, respondents who saw their recruitment of volunteers as successful fell mainly into two categories: 15% were those who attributed success to the good community spirit in the region, but 18% were those who saw Meals on Wheels itself as a respected and appreciated organization to which people were happy to belong. Typical comments were that success was “because of community spirit” (TAS); “a very community minded town, have always had a strong volunteer base” (NSW); “people want to give back to the community” (NSW); “people want to be involved – good community spirit” (SA); “small community, MOW well recognised – most volunteers know someone receiving the service” (SA); ‘small community – people know each other” (TAS); “the community are kind people; they care” (QLD); and “small town with a high percentage of retirees” (SA).

The popularity of MOW as an organization was attested by many comments such as: “we are a happy group; volunteers enjoy the work and gain satisfaction from it” (QLD); “volunteers proud to be part of MOW and are well respected and appreciated” (WA); “the service is important to the community” (QLD); “well known group within the community” (WA); “our service has a good, peaceful look for volunteers; value our volunteers, never take them for granted” (NSW); “MOW has high community profile; everyone has family who has received the service in the past” (WA); “longstanding profile of MOW delivery model as a worthwhile volunteering role which is well defined, a workable time frame commitment for people and rewarding nature of volunteer work” (NSW); and “it’s a great place to volunteer and meet some fantastic people, both clients and volunteers” (QLD).

Other comments suggested further, pragmatic reasons for recruitment success: “because it is directed locally; careful wording in recruitment drive” (VIC); “flexible and offer a range of options; good, targeted marketing” (NSW); “new MOW advertising campaign being visual at prime TV viewing times” (NSW) and “people don’t necessarily respond to one time ads but do follow up when the ad is repeated” (VIC), or “we provide good orientation and support” (WA).
Appreciation of volunteers is another reason for success with recruiting: “I contact the volunteer almost immediately, never leave them hanging, always sound happy, enthusiastic, excited to have them on board” (NSW); “usually word of mouth referrals. We give generous support and respect for volunteers, free meal as part of reimbursement if wanted; own room for tea/coffee, socialising, variety of options” (VIC); ‘volunteers are happy –management has a practical attitude - this gets around the general public, i.e. good impression” (QLD); “we work hard at it ... we run a series of events aimed at keeping volunteers interested, social days, training days, information days. We have a major volunteer celebration of service day on National MOW day. Apart from a luncheon, the mayor presents appreciation of service certificates” (VIC).

Several respondents also noted that having a designated Volunteer Co-ordinator was a reason for successful recruitment: “we have a full time volunteer co-ordinator (community engagement co-ordinator); great linkage with private schools, TAFE and universities”(NSW); “we have a fulltime volunteer recruiter/placement/trainer and good communication avenues” (VIC); “we have an excellent volunteer co-ordinator who uses email, phone and post to contact volunteers” (NSW) and “employing a volunteer resource officer to focus on this has increased the number of volunteers being recruited “(VIC).

Yet many services are struggling to find new volunteers. Respondents referred to several reasons for this difficulty, including “competition from other services” (SA); “lack of interest. People already volunteer for other organizations –can only do so much, they are older” (VIC); “mildly successful but people are working longer, competition for volunteers from other organizations” (SA); and “many people are ‘volunteered out’ ... some like the idea but the commitment is too much” (QLD); “there are so many volunteering opportunities for volunteers to choose from” (TAS). For some services, particularly those in rural areas, it is simply ‘difficult to attract new volunteers in a small town” (VIC); there is a “lack of source base” (QLD) or there is “not enough people in the area, people are busy” (NSW).

The theme of people being too busy to volunteer was stated repeatedly. People are busy because they are working, minding grandchildren, or because as ‘grey nomads’, they are more frequently absent. Example of respondent comments include: “people are short of time – work is a priority in everyone’s life” (VIC); “people are working for longer or re-joining workforce once children are older. Don’t want to work for nothing” (SA); “the next generation work and the grandparents look after the children” (TAS); “it is getting harder as those who want to volunteer have competing commitments. New retirees don’t want to commit on a regular basis” (VIC); “more people working; retired people committed to grandchildren or travel for long periods” (QLD).

Explaining further, one respondent wrote: “depends on the time of year. Bowls season is difficult and in winter retirees go caravanning so are unavailable” (SA). Other items which hamper volunteering are, for instance, “cost of fuel, rules and regulations, WH&S, grey nomads travelling” (NSW); “age group now working, cost of running a vehicle” (WA). Some volunteers are also “not fully committed: waiting for a job, required by Centrelink; retired people move out of area” (NSW).

Some respondents commented on the difficulty of finding volunteers for more ‘responsible’ positions: they “attract enough volunteers to cook and deliver, but difficult for more ‘responsible’ jobs especially kitchen co-
ordination as this job has become more complex, requires special skills” (NSW); or “committee members needed, but think committee positions are too hard; don’t want to be tied down, commit to going to meetings; grey nomads” (SA).

Considering the need for a younger generation of volunteers, respondents are not hopeful, saying “not too many are interested in volunteering i.e. younger people” (WA); “OK at the moment, but difficult to recruit new volunteers. Older people can’t carry the weight of the meals” (NSW); “younger people are busy working or are young mums, yet these are the people we need as our population is ageing and volunteers are ageing. Of the new volunteers, most have retired to the area and are looking to fill in some time” (NSW); “younger generation not willing to put back into local community” (NSW) and that “younger people need to work longer” (VIC).

Conversely, one positive comment was that volunteers are gained by “word of mouth – younger ones coming on board” (SA).

Table 22

Recruiting New Volunteers: Successful or Not Successful

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>ALL</th>
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<th>NSW</th>
<th>QLD</th>
<th>SA</th>
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<td>101</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the 84 extended comments on this topic, one respondent said of corporate groups “corporates and school groups tend to be short term volunteers – best are those who will commit to long term and regular service” (SA); another, that “new corporate groups are keen to volunteer but it seems to be hard for them to commit to service” (VIC); similarly, another “targeted the banking industry – initial interest but no long term involvement” (VIC), while “trying to get a group to be reliable is difficult” (QLD). A further, thorough explanation about a decision not to use corporate groups was that “…although we are located very close to a large national organization, that offers its staff the opportunity of paid volunteering work, they only offer 2x4 hours per year per person ... we expect our volunteers to spend up to 20 hours on induction ... it is simply not possible
to train someone and send them out on even a single round under those arrangements” (VIC). Yet others do use corporate groups, saying “corporate sector involvement is increasing with 3 local businesses volunteering every month” (NSW) and “open to everyone, corporate groups are included” (VIC); some leave the option open, with “not necessary at this stage” (SA); “not yet – on list to do” (NSW) and “not yet but will need to look to this in the future” (VIC). Some services do not have the option: “not available, as small town and rural and remote area” (QLD).

The use of schools and universities as sources of volunteers also drew some comments, such as “we encourage seasonal volunteers, e.g. teachers on school holidays, as we go to deliver early (7.45 - 9am) people can still go to work after” (QLD); “we host placements for university students and local schools” (NSW); “we have schools volunteer on a regular basis” (NSW); “local school students volunteer as part of their curriculum” (SA). But one respondent commented that they “need drivers so school students are not suitable. 8.30 - 11 time not suitable for workers” (QLD). As for university students, in one case “doctors in training at Monash do placement hours as part of their course” (VIC), while another service takes international students as volunteers (QLD). Two respondents listed a connection with disability groups: “local intellectually disabled group – with supervision, this is brilliant!” (QLD); and “adult disability day programmes, which are activity based within the community provide us with third party volunteer groups” (NSW). In other cases, job networks, church groups, and council employees were cited as volunteer sources.

Table 23

**Recruiting Special Groups of Volunteers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</tbody>
</table>

n = 141

**Question 24** asked respondents to describe common management difficulties regarding volunteers, setting possible issues in a multi response table, with an option to comment on other points of difficulty. Table 24 (Q 24) shows a high non response rate, with 46% (or 123) of the 266 potential respondents leaving this question blank. Nevertheless, at 39% (105/266), the most commonly marked difficulty was that volunteers do not want to accept change. This is not a surprising answer, as volunteers are ageing, with many having followed the same procedures for many years, even decades. Difficulty with volunteers attending training was the next most vexed issue (35%) followed by compliance with rules and procedures (28%).

Of 121 comments regarding management difficulties with volunteers, 20% specifically noted the **difficulty with volunteers accepting change**. It was stated in similar ways, often to do with age: “as our volunteers are over 60
change for them can be difficult. Being able to manage the change is the key to a successful transition” (TAS); ‘have volunteers aged in their 70s and 80s who find it difficult to accept change” (SA); “Older volunteers don’t like change or training” (NSW); ‘Some have been volunteering up to 30 years, find it hard to accept new ideas, resist change. Newer volunteers, younger people, are more open to it” (NSW); “Our long term co-ordinator left after 12 years. We did lose volunteers due to this and for making changes to client rosters and how we run things, due to new electronic rostering system” (VIC). Other respondents did not mention age, but change was still a problem often relating to new regulations: “a few volunteers really don’t like any sort of change” (QLD); “Accepting change is a huge issue. Accepting WH&S responsibility is very difficult” (NSW); “Amount of compliance making it difficult so change is a slow process; volunteers have to be assured it is to improve service provision or required by legislation” (NSW); “accepting change ... in the past the ... volunteers have gone to the director and CEO of council to complain about issues of past management and changes they wanted to implement e.g. every driver needs a jockey” (VIC).

Other respondents addressed solutions to the problem of change: “Change is always difficult but we keep communication open and honest and rarely experience any problems” (NSW); ‘communication the best way to get changes through” (VIC); “Many volunteers have done this work for a long time. Once changes are explained, they do comply (e.g. both deliverers going into homes)” (NSW); “in a small country town it is easy to meet with our volunteers” (SA); ‘most comply with training and change once it has been reinforced” (NSW). On a more positive note, “most are willing to accept change for the wellbeing of the organization” (WA), but “... for management committee, change seems ever ongoing” (NSW).

It should be noted that 22% of total comments were in regard to the issues of training; again, age was sometimes a problem: “age is a factor. The presumption also with volunteering is that I am giving free service, I don’t need to attend training” (NSW); “Training – specific MOW training difficult to access. Not happy with the idea of training e.g. lifting an esky - makes them angry. Just want to help out community - paper work worried older volunteers and younger ones too busy with work and school to want to bother. Some retire because of ‘bureaucratic red tape’” (WA); “Many feel they are too old to worry about training. Others feel that to volunteer for MOW they don’t need any extra training. Others just don’t bother” (NSW); or retired people “a minority of volunteers not keen on attending training because they have been employees or have been in roles as trainers and do not wish to be on the receiving end” (WA); “most come here to retire so we don’t bother them with formal training. Training on the job for cooks and driver/deliverers. They get a package outlining what is required of them” (NSW). Another theme often involved in resistance to training is, as some have mentioned above, that volunteers do not see the link between training and meal delivery: “volunteers don’t want to accept training – just deliver meals and go home” (NSW); “all our volunteers want to do is cook/deliver for clients so they can stay in their own homes instead of being in a nursing home”(NSW); “Volunteers just want to come and do their job – we have to make training, rules etc. user friendly”( QLD); “The volunteers we have are reliable but as all we do is deliver meals they regard training and changes as unnecessary” (QLD); one rather unsympathetic respondent wrote “Many seem to feel that as volunteers we should be grateful and they can do whatever” (NSW); and another “Not want to do training. ‘How hard can it be to deliver a meal?’”
Some respondents suggested solutions to the problem of training volunteers, commenting, for instance, that “Newsletters are the best training for volunteers who only do a few hours. Otherwise, all are very obliging” (NSW); “… they all have a ‘snapshot’ of MOW first so they have a clear understanding of what is involved. All undergo an induction. Volunteers are performance managed when and where required” (WA); “no access to training – use ‘buddy’ system” (QLD); “training not a problem as induction is now done at central office; local training is done on the job at the branch” (SA); “in the 10 minutes before runs go out is the best time to show a short training CD and ask volunteers to complete a short quiz; also training quizzes in vol. newsletter. Most don’t want anything to do with paperwork but are happier doing so if we explain it is really helping the office if they comply” (QLD). “… training is via DVD so they don’t have to come to the office. We do trainings but they are not compulsory” (ACT). Yet some services find there is ‘not enough time for paid workers to manage this” (NSW) or it is “always difficult with limited training budget and volunteer commitments” (VIC).

Many of the comments regarding difficulty complying with rules and procedures related to the requirement for police checks on volunteers: “when we introduced the required criminal reference checks 7 years ago, we had 30 resignations. When we repeated the required checks last year, we had about a dozen resign” (NSW); “The registration process i.e. police checks etc., puts people off. Today’s volunteers are looking for flexibility. They want the process to be enjoyable, not time consuming. We do undertake an induction and on the job training” (NSW); “requirements for 3 year police checks is onerous and very hard to manage. A working party is exploring ways to improve this process” (VIC); “7 volunteers resigned over mandatory police checks, stating invasion of privacy and red tape” (QLD); “new regulations involving police checks may discourage some people who just want to be involved, who just want to help out at odd times. Not worth the hassle” (SA); “older volunteers have difficulty with accepting police checks, confidentiality agreements and code of ethics now required” (NSW).

Other compliance issues are more generalised in tone: “volunteers resent rules and regulations. ‘After all, they are volunteers’” (NSW); “Some who have been volunteers for many years find the WH&S rules hard to adjust to” (SA); ‘Some volunteers do not see the need for all the rules and do not follow procedures at all times”(NSW); “The barrage of OH&S regulations and raft of other state and federal legislation has a debilitating effect – volunteers say ‘enough is enough’” (VIC); similarly, “some retire because of bureaucratic red tape. I’m concerned for the continuance of volunteers as they have to provide more and more. Will have to end up having to employ people to deliver meals, at great cost” (WA); more specifically, “Food safety. Trying to ‘teach old dogs new tricks’” (NSW). Another subject, mentioned twice, was “confidentiality” (NSW); similarly “Privacy re clients can be an issue, in small country town’ (VIC).
These comments give a good overview of the range of problems in managing volunteers, but it is important to note that 14% of the 121 comments stated that none of these issues of training, compliance or change is a problem within their service.

**Table 24**

*Volunteer Management Difficulties*

![Bar chart showing percentages for attending training, complying with rules/procedures, and accepting change.]

\[ n = 143 \]

**Question 25** consisted of an open-ended response to the question of why volunteers leave. Of 235 entries, the overwhelming response (65% of comments) was that they left because of **ageing and ill health**. Related to those issues were added explanations, such as “leave if they feel they are too old - one volunteer left at 85. Not many leave the program” (VIC), ‘hot boxes hard to handle’ (SA), “no longer can physically drive or deliver” (TAS), ‘too old to drive’ (QLD), “they become clients” (NSW), “death” (NSW), “because partner is unwell” (NSW), “worried about failing” (NSW), “they are ready to get the service themselves” (NSW), “older ones retire because physically too demanding, e.g. steep driveways” (NSW), “car unreliable and can’t afford to replace” (TAS).

Another major reason (33% of responses) for volunteers leaving the service is that they ‘relocate’ ('leave town’, ‘move away’). Sometimes it is because “they enter retirement homes or move to Nowra to be near medical/hospital” (NSW), “relocating, selling family home” (VIC), “people are transferred to other towns; people on stations leave because of drought” (QLD), “work commitments change, e.g. get fulltime jobs, move out of area” (QLD).

Related to the previous comment, in 15% of responses some people leave because their work situation changes. Sometimes this may be linked to Centrelink requirements to volunteer while searching for work: “most leave because they find paid employment” (NSW) is stated in several ways, such as “MOW a stepping stone between jobs” (NSW), “younger ones leave as they need to work” (VIC), “Mutual obligation volunteers leave after reaching pension age –not required to volunteer anymore” (NSW) and “Centrelink requirement. Lack of incentive, not paid for their time” (SA); interestingly, some are “returning to paid work after Super crash in GFC” (NSW).
In 8% of responses, family obligations, especially looking after grandchildren, is another reason volunteers leave. This is mostly explained as simply “people are busy ... family situations” (NSW), “older people want to spend more time with family” (TAS), or more fully “life balance – baby boomers supporting grandchildren” (NSW), “become grandparents and then babysit” (NSW); some are young enough to be “having children” (NSW) or also “because partner is unwell” (NSW). Another issue of personal life related to this is, as several respondents noted, “retirees travel” (NSW); volunteers are increasingly “going on trips away” (NSW); and “older volunteers go to warmer places for winter” (WA). A more general comment was “perhaps there are more competing distractions for people now” (VIC).

In 9% of responses it was stated that volunteers’ resistance to change is another reason they leave the service. This was expressed in many ways, as “change and regulations on older age group” (NSW); “driver or jockey retiring and does not want new partner” (VIC); “increasing demand on key staff is becoming a factor” (SA); “some don’t want to do training” (NSW); “need to follow policies and procedures (regulations)” (NSW); “inability to accept compliance requirements” (NSW); “changes to program; making them more accountable; professionalising the program” (VIC); “too many rules and regulations” (QLD); and one vehement statement, written in upper case, was “for our management committee, don’t add more complications and work” (NSW). Others said “have had two go due to recent changes in procedures they were unhappy to comply with – asking them to do a vehicle check on their own car before a run” (NSW); “many are unwilling to change and can’t understand the need to do so – reluctant to go to training especially if it is linked to any kind of assessment” (VIC); “older volunteers don’t like the amount of paperwork involved” (QLD); “Our long term co-ordinator left after 12 years. We did lose volunteers due to this and from making changes to client rosters and how we run things due to new electronic rostering system” (VIC). Other, similar comments were “7 volunteers resigned over mandatory police checks, stating invasion of privacy and red tape” (QLD); “resistant to change, reluctant to train, reluctant to try something new” (NSW).

Respondents had also been asked for ways they could retain volunteers and 10% offered suggestions. One response related to the above issue of regulations, saying “less government intervention and regulation” (NSW). Most respondents, though, reported that their service gave recognition and appreciation to volunteers, often with such events as “a yearly luncheon and have appreciation certificates for x years of service. I’m looking into service badges from NSW MOWA” (NSW); or “we involve them in decision making, quarterly meeting to exchange information, more social events” (VIC); “retain: recognition, acknowledgement; keep in touch” (NSW); “we recognise them with gifts and certificates at functions throughout the year”(NSW); “treat them as a valuable part of the team, not as staff or volunteers”(NSW); “ annual meeting/thank you afternoon tea. Advised of any new regulatory compliance, team games, an honour board (15 years’ service)” (WA); and “retain: having a more balanced approach to workload as volunteers tend to be overlooked or put on the backburner of things to do, as opposed to clients and management of service” (NSW). Another was more detailed: “to retain, make the process enjoyable, use volunteers who like to mentor. Look for new roles i.e. home-based food prep, cooking a shared experience. Value volunteers –day trips etc.” (NSW). One warning response was “recognition is appreciated, though none above others! Especially if asked to nominate a
volunteer for an award” (NSW). Some felt that training and recognition went together as encouragement to stay “we do training and recognition very well” (VIC) while another warned “We have a recognition program in place. Training is more likely a disincentive” (NSW). All the same, some respondents felt that volunteers were not interested in recognition, saying, “they are not interested in training or recognition – activities, i.e. lunches, social events” (NSW); “recognition not really wanted” (NSW); or “most are not looking for recognition” (SA).

4.3.4. Challenges and Innovations

Question 26 presented a multi response table to ask which organizational challenges are important, or not important, to State or Territory MOWs. The relatively low response rate across the board for these questions needs noting, as like the other questions, it has implications for data interpretation.

Table 26a (Q 26) shows that of 193 respondents who answered, by far the majority (56%, 149/266) find regulations to be an important challenge. Regulations were not considered important as a challenge at all in the ACT, and not of major concern in SA, both places where MOW is centrally controlled, but in NSW (81%), VIC (63%), QLD (54%), WA (34%), and TAS (42%), they appear to be of common concern.

Additional comments were invited regarding any other challenges services faced, and also how they are addressing any challenges mentioned. Of 154 entries, 67% commented on the ways that regulations impact the service and how they have attempted to adapt to them. As reflected in the following comments, many respondents wrote of keeping up with the training of staff and volunteers regarding new rules and regulations, both individually and in co-operation with others: “investigating assistance with staff training via RTOs and other service providers to establish a series of hub workshops in local area with other food services; planning, and acting on changes required” (NSW); “all volunteers attend a training session annually for manual handling and food safety handling” (VIC); “being aware of changes to OHS and regulations; liaising with other MOW services in the area; constant contact with state body” (QLD); “being part of Red Cross means we have the infrastructure to deal with these issues” (ACT); “continuing changes to OHS that we need to pass on to volunteers and meal suppliers. We make sure the compliances are met by giving the change in writing where applicable” (TAS); “I have a volunteer with compliance experience. We are working together to rewrite or update all compliance regulations” (NSW); “just the challenge of change, particularly if the volunteers cannot see adequate reason for the changes. Addressing it is to be constantly talking, keeping them aware of the changes and the reasons for them” (SA); “have this year had a new kitchen installed (stainless steel) according to OHS regulations” (SA); “food safety is discussed with local council occasionally” (TAS); “keep on top of the subject and updates; be subscribed to email updates” (NSW); “looking at ways to comply with new WHS re volunteers. A Moodle training online WHS module has been set up but it is proving difficult to get people to comply with doing it.” (NSW); “OHS regulations now part of new inductions. Current volunteers receive fact sheet via mail until current training” (VIC), “ongoing training; investing in new eskies” (WA); and “ongoing training; meetings to change our constitution” (QLD), “making sure the drivers have the food at the correct temperatures” (QLD); “personal instruction; OHS instructions in delivery book, on notice board” (SA); “recent introduction of HiVis vests is a challenge as volunteers are reluctant to wear them. Gentle persuasion seems to
be working!” (SA); “regular meetings and daily talks to reinforce the necessity for changes in regulations etc.” (WA); “special working group set up to deal with ongoing issue of maintaining currency of volunteer police checks” (VIC); “service runs three volunteer training sessions each year. Volunteer induction is one-to-one. New volunteers have several opportunities to go out with rostered volunteers to learn on the job” (NSW). “Talking to volunteers before they go out on a run. Any regulations regarding leaving meals unattended is an issue, so I’ve had talks and given out info sheets regarding this “not to put any meals in eskies left out by clients’. Have also talked to clients about this” (QLD); “We have an active improvement program in place for the last 8 years, listen to all feedback both positive and negative, always consult, include volunteers in impl[lamentation of new concepts. Ensure information is dispersed, share feedback with staff and volunteers so we can all be on the same page” (WA).

At variance with the positive efforts noted in the above comments, many respondents expressed the struggle and sense of frustration they experience with the changing regulatory environment. Examples are that regulations are “more and more time consuming, leaving less time for service development and managing volunteers” (NSW); that “the amount of regulation and red tape takes us away from the service delivery. Need to address some changes to the amount of compliance reporting. People can only do so much within a budget” (NSW); “so many changes to food safety standards and laws” (NSW); “Too many technical demands. Service has become top heavy” (TAS); “the overwhelming bureaucracy associated with receiving government funding has caused so much distress that now we operate without government funding and hence are not subject to excessive paperwork” (WA); “trying to wade through the raft of information and put things into action”(NSW); “we are inundated with bureaucratic red tape – much of our co-ordinator’s work is dealing with changes” (NSW); “more paperwork because of increased regulations – we pay someone to work 2 extra hours/month training volunteers re WHS and food safety” (NSW); with irony, “my life as a bureaucrat is blossoming – more forms, rules, regulations” (NSW); “OHS has become a huge issue. Old habits die hard, long term volunteers are unwilling to change; food safety now so important” (SA); “we are swamped by a mountain of organizational material imposed on us” (QLD); “Addressing with difficulty. Government terms and conditions for aged care funding runs to 51 A4 pages. Compliance runs too many hours, not including core business....HACC manual contains words like “must’ and “will’ and one size fits all. No allowance for scarce availability of persons with admin backgrounds in small towns. Volunteers considered unpaid servants of government. Government attitude is “do the work or no funding” so caring for our community is under duress (blackmail)” (QLD). A further, detailed response on the topic of regulations stated, “Food safety is not an issue in Victoria. Having had food safety programs for so long, everyone understands what they have to do. But OHS is a huge issue, particularly because of the extra time that volunteers need to put into training days etc ... most volunteers organise their life around their volunteer days and find it hard to commit to additional times, particularly for things they don’t see as really important. This is a huge challenge. Also the documentation associated with the Common Care Standards rollout is absolutely overwhelming for them. I think in practice it will be OK, but it is the documentation they find onerous.” (VIC); “regulations are really a problem ... main problem is the changed...
system, where clients now have to go to Commonwealth dept. whereas formerly it was state dept. Clients don’t like dealing with Commonwealth dept. – find it too official” (WA).

Table 26a
Challenges with Regulations

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>QLD</th>
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<th>TAS</th>
<th>VIC</th>
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n = 193

The second part of Question 26 asks whether finding Board members is a challenge for MOW services. Table 26b shows that again this is a concern for most services (41%, 109/266), although not important for the ACT, and of little importance for VIC. These results are logical, as ACT is run by Australian Red Cross, and local government is widely involved in Victoria. Individual State analyses reveal SA (59%) and NSW (51%) have real difficulty with finding Board members, and QLD (48%) and TAS (47%) are also concerned. WA, which has both local government involvement and other centralised multi service groups, shows minimal concern (9%).

Clearly, those States that rely on volunteers as Board members find this a pressing issue.

Of the 192 comments made regarding challenges and how to meet them, 25% addressed the issue of finding Board members, some having more success with this than others. Of the difficulties, respondents wrote that “one service (in the Co-op) recently folded due to lack of committee members (it combined with a neighbouring service)” (NSW); “Board members are hard to come by. We need some new blood on our board. They just don’t want it because the government makes it hard for them” (NSW); “Board members ... people are busy, want to be daytime volunteers but not give up evenings as half our committee work full time” (NSW); “no allowance for scarce availability of persons with admin backgrounds in small towns” (QLD); “committee members reluctant to accept executive positions e.g. treasurer” (QLD); “small, remote rural area, difficult to get board members within a reasonable distance” (NSW); “committee: volunteers only want to volunteer meals; some are too busy, involved in another causes, others think they could not do the tasks required on the committee, especially as an office bearer” (SA); “We have had the same committee for years which is a problem as the next generation are not volunteers. Because of age it is a worry where the next committee will come from. It looks like paid staff for the future of our service” (TAS); “getting training for board members is harder, due to living in a rural area this training is not freely available other than at an absolutely astronomical cost - $3,600 for 4.5 hours training we were quoted the other day. The service has 6 board members!” (WA); “need to headhunt board members but difficult because of amount of accountability involved in service delivery” (NSW); “Need board members with experience” (NSW); “Trouble getting board members and haven’t found ways to do that” (NSW); “hard to get board members due to concerns about government regulations” (QLD); “most people do not want to take on the “position” roles because they have had all that responsibility at work and now just want the “feel good” feeling of being a volunteer” (SA); “Volunteers are not interested in the treasurer /secretary roles- as yet have
not addressed the problem” (SA). Often too, volunteers are just over stretched: “most of our volunteers are on 5 or 6 other committees or volunteer for other organizations” (QLD).

Yet many respondents wrote of the way they are meeting the challenge of finding board members, including several who advertise: “advertise for board members and also ask reliable driving/aide volunteers if they would be interested” (QLD); “board members – keep asking, and putting articles in local paper” (TAS); “approaching services clubs (Rotary etc.), businesses, for new board members” (NSW); “asking volunteers to be on the committee” (SA); “have addressed board member issue at meetings, also in local paper” (SA); “in the past year we have had 3 new board members, each approached because of the knowledge and skills they could contribute” (NSW); “encouraging volunteers to take on/trade roles. Currently we do not have a co-ordinator and no-one is willing to step up; job requires 7 hours a week minimum, more at Christmas, public holidays because of increased demand for frozen meals for non-delivery days” (NSW); “new committee members – trying to recruit through our own volunteers—this is an ongoing problem that we are working on” (NSW); “getting committee members always a challenge but a direct approach to new volunteers after a settling in period has had results’ (SA); “getting board – community consultation, asking friends” (NSW); “talk to volunteers re their skills to see if they can assist committee. Form a database, now include ‘skills’ information” (QLD); “trying to get a skills based board rather than just recruiting volunteers” (NSW); “We try to encourage all board members to find an understudy” (QLD); “we recruit actively for board members and get a steady response” (VIC); “seeking corporate participation/support to encourage more people on board – more professionals” (NSW).

Table 26b

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenges with Recruiting Board Members</th>
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<td>ALL</td>
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n = 163

Table 26c shows that funding is a nationwide challenge for nearly a third (32%) of services, whereas 23% reported this not be an important challenge. The high non-response rate however must be taken into account, with 45% (120/266) leaving this question blank. This might suggest non-respondents are also not concerned by possible funding shortfalls, however this remains a speculative conclusion. Individual State analysis shows funding challenges to be of most concern in NSW (48%, or 39/81), VIC (40%, 15/35), and QLD (30%, 14/46). In contrast ACT (100%, 1/1), SA (41%, 21/51), and TAS (26%, 5/19) have the least funding challenges.

Of the 192 comments on challenges, 18% made some response on the issue of funding regarding which aspects were of concern, and how they are addressing the challenge. They include comments such as that “costs of power and water are increasing” (SA); “funding — writing to local MPs, DOHA, ADHC” (NSW); a
challenge is “paying rent and fixed costs” (QLD); one solution is seen to be “apply for government grants” (QLD); “being only a small group, finding it hard to pay the bills – co-ordinator and secretary do a lot for nothing” (TAS); “funding – apply to the gaming funds and local organizations e.g. Lions” (QLD); “Government terms and conditions for aged care funding runs to 51 A4 pages … ‘funding’ is a meal subsidy: less meals, less money. No funding for administration … government attitude is ‘do the work or no funding’ so caring for our community is under duress (blackmail)” (QLD); “funding – rising costs electricity and transportation particularly” (NSW); “Costs are increasing by 11% per year. Funding is only $1 of the actual cost of the meal. Council funds the service with client contributions and rate payer… current cost is $1 million per year” (VIC); “Funding – we have insufficient income. Poor clients, bad debts” (NSW); “funding will always be an issue” (VIC); “Have applied for funding for new equipment through gambling funds in QLD. Apply to local council” (QLD); “Increasing strategies for sponsorship from local business. Examining cost structures –fixed costs” (QLD); “Funding – this beyond my level of control, as this organization is so big” (NSW) and similarly, “funding – not my role – council, manager’s role” (VIC); “Need increase in funding to cope with increasing costs. Have increased price of meals by 50 cents, but will need further increase to balance books. We are reviewing menu suppliers to keep costs down” (QLD); “We’d love more funding – told it’s not there to have” (NSW); “No extra funding for wages (only co-ordinator 3 hours a day)” (NSW); “obtaining grants to help new innovations” (NSW); “funding: always an issue – we have one of the largest rapidly ageing populations in Melbourne” (VIC); “Currently we are losing money but thankfully have a healthy bank balance – but can’t keep going this way!” (QLD). One respondent ticked the “getting enough funding” box three times, and wrote passionately “If we had a paid position volunteer co-ordinator we would be set. We have over 210 staff and no H/R worker (only the manager who does everything). Really I think it’s a wonder some services are still operating… hence the survey. We have so many new regulations, compliances and our volunteers are our workers – we NEED to put resources into the most precious workers. Where will MOW be if they cannot get volunteers due to lack of resources - the government pay workers? Or people buy meals from supermarket and MOW dissolves. NO WAY!” (NSW).

Several comments related to other challenges. The reduction in client numbers drew 5 responses, such as that “our biggest challenge is the drop in meal clients. Prospective clients are more active and unwilling to stay home to wait for a meal” (VIC); similarly, one wrote “our numbers have dropped a lot over the last couple of years. Local retirement village has increased its capacity, and the extra residents would have been MOW customers. We advertise and promote with little success” (QLD). Another wrote of the “increased competition from supermarkets, commercial delivery services. The MOW association using ‘charity’ images in their templates and advertising – the ‘haves’ delivering to the ‘have nots’ is not contemporary. We need to compete with other food services, lean cuisine etc. Lose the raffle- we are not a charity!” (*ANON – NSW I am sure, as it came in in the very first batch, but no identity details). Yet another comment regarding competition for clients was “It is difficult to alter this trend as provision of aged care packages and day care facilities has diminished the need for daily meal provision” (SA).

Some comments referred to difficulties with meals. For example, one respondent commented “no variety of menu choice – same for 6 years. No options for new supplier. Local sources not willing to take on, due to
regulations” (NSW); others that “We have to collect meals around 40 kms a day. Meals cannot be collected daily due to unavailability to travel by volunteers. They are paid 60c a kilometre but still unable to collect meals daily” (TAS); “we’ve only just ceased hot meal deliveries for weekends in January this year. No other service provided this, which lasted for 30 years” (NSW); and a comment regarding frozen food as a challenge was about the “move to frozen food. Your survey does not address this significant change in MOW, particularly in rural areas, the forced move to frozen meals due to NSW Health increasing their prices of hot meals to unaffordable prices. This has lost many clients and volunteers” (NSW). A few respondents commented on issues concerning volunteer recruitment, the need for paid volunteer co-ordinators, and one, the “need to become computer literate. We have new computer/laptops and are learning thanks to grandchildren” (QLD).

Table 26c

Challenges with Funding

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n = 146

The next point in Question 26 asked whether balancing satisfied clients with satisfied volunteers is a challenge. Again, as displayed in Table 26d non-response rate was high, with around half (49%) of the 266 potential respondents leaving this question blank. Of those who did respond, equal numbers believe this challenge to be either important (25%, 67/266), or not important (26%, 68/266). However, State based analysis revealed NSW is the only state to show a higher percentage of respondents indicating this to be a concern compared to those who believe it is not a concern (47%: 19% respectively). VIC respondents however were equally split between those reporting this to be an important challenge (23%), and those who consider it not to be important (23%). Again, the overall low response rate to this point suggests it is not a concern at all to those non-respondents, adding to the ‘not important’ percentage.

Only 8% of respondents made comments directly on this issue of client/volunteer balance, most of whom seemed to find it is not an issue of great concern. Examples of comments include: “we have lengthy interviews with clients/volunteers to work out what their interests are so we can match them for social activities” (NSW); that they are “planning and acting on changes required” (NSW); of “balancing - via surveys and appreciating the role of volunteers” (VIC); “because of the living conditions of a lot of our clients, we cannot give an in house meal preparation service” (WA); “by talking to them –we have no problems with our clients or volunteers” (NSW); “Rural clients are very appreciative of the service and volunteers feel very satisfied providing ‘hands on’ service to clients” (TAS); “try to match volunteers with clients and move volunteer if there is a problem” (NSW); “Constant review with clients and volunteers to identify and address any concerns or changes to service delivery” (NSW); “we communicate with clients and volunteers to address issues they may have” (QLD); “Fortunately, we have very few dissatisfied clients –in a recent independent survey, many clients commented
on how much they look forward to the visit of the volunteer with the meal” (VIC); “A real challenge is visiting clients who live in squalid conditions. Welfare officer has contacted carers which has led to marginal improvement” (SA); “discussion with deliverers re client’s needs, or changes required” (SA); “satisfaction of clients addressed daily by co-ordinator” (TAS); “Our clients are very appreciative of the service and our volunteers find giving service rewarding” (TAS); “putting customer service to the top of our agenda” (NSW); “It would be preferable to have 2 volunteers per round but we only have one, which works very well...we always need more volunteers in some areas, such as volunteer gardeners” (VIC); “we try to maintain good communications with our recipients” (SA).

Table 26d

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenges with Balancing Satisfied Clients with Satisfied Volunteers</th>
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$n = 135$

**Question 27** offered a multi response table (Tables 27a- 27h) to record any extended offers or innovative themes services may have tried, and whether or not these were considered a success. This question - the final on the survey was ignored by many respondents, indicated by the considerably high non-response rates (ranging from 61% to 95%). Whether that indicates that their MOW branches do not offer extended services due to lack of funding or other resources, or that they overlooked this question on the last page, is speculative. Moreover, many respondents did not tick the ‘successful’ box offered with each question; this may indicate that they did not consider the program successful, that they simply did not respond, or that they did not know how to measure its success. Either way, caution is needed when interpreting the percentage outcomes of these remaining questions.

Table 27a (Q.27) shows that of the 39% of services stated they offer gourmet meal options, with most (24%) reporting this option was a success. Respondents commented that “Clients want choice, and would like an upmarket meal” (NSW); “Gourmet meal introduced because the demographic is changing. People want healthier options, organic etc., some are willing to pay extra for these meals. Others still want the cheapest meals/don’t care about nutritional quality as much” (NSW); “48 items on menu (gourmet options box)” (NSW); “to provide choice and variety; to meet changing needs of our clients” (NSW); “Gourmet via frozen is excellent as they have ethnic choices –large ethnic community” (NSW); but another remark was that “Gourmet not very successful” (NSW).
Table 27a
Additional Meals on Wheels Services Offered: Gourmet Meal Options

<table>
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$n = 34$

Table 27b shows that Centre-based meals is the most commonly offered extended service, with 39% of survey respondents stating they give clients this option, and 24% reported it to be a success. Centre based meals seemed to be viewed as a successful initiative, as attested by many the comments: “Centre based very successful. Waiting for more facilities to increase it” (NSW); “Clients come fortnightly to the hall next door, love the social part of it” (NSW); “Centre base: clients isolated. They like the volunteers, food, transport and activities” (NSW); “Clients enjoy getting out of their homes; enjoy social aspect” (NSW); “Clients love coming” (NSW); “Food is always better when eaten with friends” (NSW); “Social events with food are a winner” (NSW); “The centre based meals is well received and gives clients a chance to enjoy each other’s company” (NSW).

Another rationale was that “Cost of meals from HACC service has increased so introduction of centre based activity, cooking classes, a cost saving for clients, which so far has been successful” (WA); and an inspiring response was “…Centre based meals encourage friendships, provide a forum for info to be shared (community nurse/home care staff/dietician etc.) plus entertainment when possible” (NSW). The advantage of better facilities was shown by the statement “in house centre based meals new this year due to larger premises. People love to get together and out of home” (NSW).

Different forms of centre based meals are possible, too: ‘Social lunch ‘eating with friends’ each month with Blue Care” (QLD); “Let’s do lunch” – clients from particular geographic area are invited to lunch twice a year to foster socialisation. Highly successful, make contacts” (VIC); “Centre based meals are not as popular now – cafe vouchers are very popular and suit clients who like to be active” (VIC). “Centre based meals introduced as a ‘community cafe’ designed to attract new younger clients to MOW” (NSW); “To improve social connection and reduce social isolation centre based meals are organised monthly in 2 locations” (VIC); “Local nursing home provides some of these services. We bring our clients to the centre for Christmas lunch” (TAS).

Some initial difficulties were apparent, and the necessity for funding noted: “Have identified the need for these services, introduced them slowly and will continue to do so” (NSW); “Hoping a larger group would do centre base, but only have 5 at this stage” (VIC); “Lunches or small morning teas at our Centre for clients and
volunteers. Concerned about social isolation – many have no family or neighbour support – we have recently received HACC funding for this social inclusion project” (QLD).

But centre based meals do not work for everyone: “Most of our clients, frail elderly, never leave their homes” (QLD); “started and advertised. Dementia luncheon, unsuccessful. Difficult to maintain communication with these clients” (NSW).

Table 27b

Additional Meals on Wheels Services Offered: Centre Based Meals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>%</th>
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<td>n = 103</td>
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Cafe vouchers are another type of socially inclusive initiatives. Table 27c shows that only 5% of services nationwide offer this option, and 3% deemed it to be successful.

On cafe vouchers, comments included “Group visits to restaurants, BBQ, lunches, cafes” (NSW); “MOW monthly lunch at cafe or restaurant. Successful” (NSW); “Meal vouchers an alternative to staying at home; encouraging socialisation and activity” (NSW); “The meal vouchers are an option if clients are sick of the same menu” (NSW); while another point is that “… cafe vouchers are very popular and suit clients who like to be active” (NSW); the wider possibilities of this idea are shown by a service which provides “… meal vouchers to clients in an isolated area that has a bowling club” (NSW).
Table 27c

Additional Meals on Wheels Services Offered: Café Vouchers

<table>
<thead>
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<td>Successful</td>
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</table>

\( n = 14 \)

As shown in Table 27d, shopping with clients is an extended offer provided in around a quarter (24%) of respondents’ services, with half (12%) reporting this to be a successful endeavour.

Some explanations about shopping services are given in the comments “HACC does shopping and in home food prep” (VIC), while another view is that “internet shopping is successful for those unable to shop personally; can complement frozen meals delivery” (NSW); “… shopping only a few … (NSW); “shopping and in-home food preparation are an important part of keeping clients at home” (WA); “shopping gets clients out into the community” (WA); and “shopping service gives client independence to prepare own meal” (NSW). Moreover, some felt that “shopping service promotes choice and independence with support –works well” (WA); or that “there was a need for centre based meals, shopping and meal preparation for our ageing clients. The introduction of these services has enabled clients to remain at home. Please note these additional services are provided by paid workers.” (VIC).

Table 27d

Extended Meals on Wheels Service Offered: Shopping with Clients

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Successful</td>
<td>10</td>
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</table>

\( n = 63 \)
Table 27e shows that only 15% (40/266) of respondents noted their MOW service offers cooking classes, and only 6% classified them a success. Commenting on the idea of cooking classes, and demonstrating that there are various models and rationale for them, respondents wrote:

‘Community kitchen is a wonderful opportunity for a small group to prepare and cook their own lunch in line with enablement model’ (NSW); “Cooking for one is popular, not for the cooking but for the food” (NSW); “Cost of meals from HACC service has increased so introduction of centre based activity, cooking classes, a cost saving for clients, which has so far been successful” (WA); while “Adopt-a-chef program includes cooking class and nutrition advice – wanted to empower our clients to cook meals for themselves – has been a great program” (NSW). New initiatives are included: “Funding to update kitchen for cooking classes and in home food prep. The classes are just about to start” (WA); “Group cooking classes initiated for social contact and cooking skill development. Successful, as participants enjoy cooking and eating together” (VIC); “Services available through HACC. Interested in building partnership with men’s shed and provide cooking classes there” (WA); “Some partners pass away and the other does not know how to cook. We teach them” (WA); and similarly, “HACC services support people with a client centred approach. This results in individuals working to achieve their own goals e.g. cooking for themselves after a spouse has died.” (VIC). But other responses are less enthusiastic, saying “Clients don’t want to cook or learn to cook, they have had enough.” (NSW); “48 items on menu (gourmet options box) very little take up of cooking classes.” (NSW); and “Cooking class -2 pilot programs tried; too early to judge success.” (VIC).

Table 27e
Extended Meals on Wheels Service Offered: Cooking Class

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Successful</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>14</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
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<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
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n = 41

The ‘In-home’ preparation of meals is offered by 15% of respondents, with 6% viewed this offer to be successful, as shown in Table 27f. Comments explained further the way in home food preparation works:

“In-home prep in line with active service model – to keep people interested in food” (VIC); “In-home: heating of frozen meals” (NSW); “Most of our clients, frail elderly, never leave their homes. Other services provide cooking/in home prep.” (QLD); “Carers run lunchtime frozen meal is delivered, heated and plated for people who are unable to do it for themselves” (NSW); “Assist with microwaving if necessary as we have recently
changed from a hot meal to a cook/chill. The change has been carefully introduced and very successful” (VIC); and “Individuals preference –younger people with a disability” (WA).

Table 27f

Extended Meals on Wheels Service Offered: In Home Preparation

<table>
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<th>%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
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n = 41

Another extended offer is to provide nutritional advice to clients. Table 27g shows that 26% of overall respondents answered to this, although just under half of these respondents (12%) deemed this initiative to be ‘successful’.

Comments explained: “... dietician aid not very popular” (NSW); “… nutrition – to check that clients are eating well.” (VIC); “Like choices; are open to education re nutrition especially when presented informally” (NSW); “MOW in the ACT is part of the Food Security Dept. We also run other food security initiatives and look at what a person needs (rather than fitting them into the service) e.g. an assessment officer sees them, offers nutritional advice, cooking, visiting services etc. The client agrees to be reassessed after a period. We have a full nutritionist in the Food Security Department who offers guidance but our main aim is to get people off MOW service if possible. MOW is part of our food security framework” (ACT). Others say “pamphlets handed out on nutritional advice periodically” (NSW); “Welfare officer distributes all information available on nutrition and updates as available” (SA); and again, “MOW SA has a number of booklets dealing with nutrition. The ‘special meals’ (texture modified, low lactose, gluten free) mean we are able to supply a wider range of people than those who just need a standard meal” (SA).
Table 27g

Extended Meals on Wheels Service Offered: Nutrition Advice

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<th>%</th>
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<tr>
<td>25</td>
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<td>10</td>
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n = 70

Table 27h shows that only 10% of potential respondents answered as having programs for particular groups as an extended offer, of which only 5% believed these groups to be successful.

The ‘particular groups’ participation was described as being, variously, “in community partnership. Occasional morning tea for CALD (Culturally and Linguistically Diverse) women’s mental health support” (NSW); “men’s lunch” (NSW); service contract and individualised program for people under 65 to get them off service and independent” (ACT); also, “we are interested in building a partnership with men’s shed and provide cooking classes there” (WA); “Clients who were most isolated or experiencing memory loss were last on the run list so that the volunteer could stay longer and provide companionship and support” (WA); “Recently established a transit lounge for people travelling to Wagga by community transport for medical and other appointments” (NSW); “Many more dementia clients - hot meals so they don’t have to use stove” (WA).

Table 27h

Extended Meals on Wheels Service Offered: Program for Particular Groups

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<th>%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
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</table>

n = 27
Other comments that were made regarding special programs, but which did not fit the above categories provided an interesting assortment of ideas and insights: “Due to a number of clients being transient and homeless it can be very difficult to start the above mentioned (programs), we also do not presently have a supermarket in town” (WA); a helpful initiative was “extra meals for lunchtime visitors – successful” (SA); “Menu planning; reporting” (NSW); “in home meals with company from other volunteers” (NSW); “picnic at home, bus picnic outings, gallery outings” (NSW); “provide kosher frozen meals” (WA); and “supply of presents to all our clients on Mother’s Day, Father’s Day, Easter, Christmas. Clients are most appreciative” (NSW).

Others offered “Wednesday wandering lunch group/outings” (NSW); “Xmas hampers; Mother’s Day (we use donated sweets; cakes etc. Fathers/Mother’s day token gifts are subject to donations, e.g. Bunnings; flowers” (SA); “5 week menus to choose from and Conessa gourmet and Fresh snacks. Also Blue Care introduced ‘eating with friends’ program 3 years ago. 6 -10 clients attend once a month for 2 course meal and refreshments.” (QLD); “Computer classes” (NSW); “funded to pilot flexible food program” (NSW).

But other services had difficulties implementing extended offer programs: “not big enough service to do any of this” (TAS); or “not easy getting clients to participate in new ideas” (NSW). Another problem was that one service “introduced to extend the ‘more than a meal’ service - successful to a point, but training volunteers is a challenge” (NSW).
Chapter 5. Discussion

The overall aim of the research project was to assist AMOWA to develop a responsive, cost-effective and sustainable plan for the future. This report presents findings conducted over three years and comprising three major stages. The first stage was an international component (reported in chapter 2). It involved a review of the international literature on meals services, and visits to two countries, Canada and the UK, that were identified as delivering innovative MOW services. Interviews and site visits were undertaken across both countries, and the findings documented. This phase set the scene for the Australian stages of the research, and helps to identify both what is currently working as well as new ways of operating.

The second stage of the research (reported in chapter 3) highlights the findings from interviews conducted in late 2011-early 2012 with a number of MOW leaders in Australia. These were highly illuminating, and reported key issues, challenges, and innovations affecting Australian meals on wheels services in the contemporary context. The final stage of the research (reported in chapter 4) was a national survey conducted in 2012-13. The intent of the survey was to explore similarities and differences in the use of volunteers and models of service delivery across the country. The findings of this report are extremely valuable in developing our understanding of the future for MOW.

5.1. RESPONSE TO PROJECT AIMS

This section provides an overview response to the specific aims of the project.

- Explore the international dimensions of similar MOW service deliverers with a special focus on the United Kingdom and Canada.

This aim recognises the importance of modelling and learning by example. We began the project by undertaking a systematic and in-depth look at the literature on delivering meals services. While there is little rigorous academic research in this area, there are numerous examples of interesting and diverse practices scattered through the secondary sources – websites, unpublished papers, reports and so on. These showed evidence of innovation in meals services, however, generally, they were not well evaluated and reported. During this process, we identified that there were some good models delivered in both the UK and Canada. The two researchers made contact with well-known services (e.g. Santropol Roulant in Montreal) and organizations (e.g. WRVS in UK) and set out to visit identified sites.

This stage of the research resulted in some interesting ethnographic and interview data. It revealed that services in these countries, as in Australia, were experiencing a series of challenges in relation to volunteers, funding, service delivery, competition and so on. They were responding in a range of ways. For example, some were using different sources of volunteers (e.g. from other organizations or businesses); delivering meals provided by others (e.g. Apetito, local companies, hospitals, schools); encouraging individuals to get to
centres; and/or delivering multicultural meals offerings. These innovations provide some excellent models for responding to the challenges faced by meals services in the contemporary environment. Although some are utilised in the Australian context, our analysis suggests that there is potential for more services to draw on these innovations.

Findings from this stage of the research are published in an article:


The article was drawn on to set a context and develop ideas for the Australian stages of the research.

- Evaluate the effectiveness and innovation of services across different States and Territories, and determine the key areas of vulnerability for MOW.

This aim directed the focus of both stages of the Australian research – the interviews with key MOW stakeholders, and the national survey (see below). We sought to look firstly at what worked and explore what key MOW personnel thought was working well, as well as explore the main challenges facing MOW. We also wanted to focus on innovation, and how change was evidenced across the different States and Territories. The result was extremely useful, producing in-depth data that highlighted the many challenges facing the organization. These included funding challenges; dealing with increased regulation; the diverse systems involved in relying on volunteers with few staff members; issues impacting clients, including choice and ageing in place; and the growth of competition in the meals delivery field. A particular challenge related to the volunteer workforce. This included volunteer sustainability with the recognition that many volunteers were ageing; and volunteer resistance, whereby a ‘resistance to change’ was detected from within the ranks of volunteers, particularly those who had been with the organization for many decades.

The interview phase highlighted that many services were meeting the challenges head on. There was an identified need for responsive and skilled management practices to respond to change. Generally, change was not being well handled, partly due to a lack of resources and staffing to manage change, implement training and coordinate volunteers effectively. Secondly, some innovation was being introduced at the client level to meet their nutritional and meal choice needs. However, it was evident that although the social support dimension of MOW is increasingly important, it requires coordinator support, good processes and time, the latter often an issue with the need to ensure the meal is kept hot/frozen. Thirdly, MOWs is a well-known and well-recognised traditional brand, which is important, but that can also affect and diminish change. Finally, the importance of MOW in the contemporary context was clearly recognised, and that included the benefits to clients and their families, as well as volunteers and communities.

- Undertake the first national research study of Australian MOW focusing particularly on organizational structures, funding arrangements, and volunteers.
The national survey was delivered with assistance from the national executive and all the State representatives including the ACT (unfortunately the Northern Territory did not participate). It reached across the length and breadth of Australia, and delivered some important findings. Responses varied across the States from a third of all services to nearly two-thirds. Results highlighted important aspects of MOW services in the contemporary context. Firstly, the service profile showed a diverse mix of service structures and use of paid staff/volunteers. The roles of volunteers varied from deliverer/driver, coordinators, kitchen staff, and committee members. Most services reported the same or less volunteers now than five years ago. There was also change in the client profile, with most respondents noting clients were now older, had worse health, and more disabilities than previously. The more complex needs of clients plus reduced numbers of volunteers, signalled concerns for the organization.

Secondly, the survey explored service delivery across the regions. Interestingly, most reported delivering less meals than five years ago, with most using a secondary meal source (often the local hospital or aged care facility); and most were able to deal with special needs.

Thirdly, the survey asked a series of questions about volunteers. Many reported changes in their volunteers, with the main response being that they were getting older, with 70% saying that this was important. A number reported concern with not having enough volunteers and around half (47%) reported new recruitment as an issue. Having sufficient volunteers for the committee structure was a particular challenge especially in certain States. Some were exploring new sources of volunteers through local schools, organizations or businesses. In line with Stage 2 findings, when asked about difficulties with volunteer management, the most common response was that volunteers do not want to accept change. Managing new regulations was also identified as a significant challenge. Finally, there was some evidence across the survey, albeit patchy, of innovation. These included centre-based meals, help with shopping, and nutritional advice.

- Identify strategies to enable MOW to address these vulnerabilities and develop a responsive and sustainable plan for the future.

MOW is clearly already meeting some of the identified challenges associated with the changing environment—increased regulation, lack of funding, volunteer sustainability, client changes and demands. However, the organization is clearly facing a period of vulnerability and change and needs to consider how it will respond into the future. At this point, it is important to note that this is not a challenge facing Meals on Wheels alone. Many traditional non-profit organizations, and particularly those involved in welfare and service delivery, are facing significant challenges in the contemporary context (Aberg, 2013)\(^1\). This challenge can be summed up as a clash between efficiency as represented by the market and tradition represented by the organization’s respected reputation and reliance of a long-serving ageing volunteer cohort. Efficiency is being imposed on

\(^1\) Please note that these issues are discussed in a chapter in our forthcoming book, M. Oppenheimer and J. Warburton (Eds.), *Volunteering: Australian Perspectives*, Federation Press, Leichhardt, 2014. The book chapter is called “Volunteering for traditional organizations: An enigma in the contemporary world of volunteering?”
such organizations through tighter government funding, increased state regulation and so on. Yet tradition is a valuable resource, and enables organizations like Meals on Wheels to gain local community support. We will discuss this further below.

Findings are published in an article:


Overall, this study has identified three key issues that need consideration by Meals on Wheels if it is to be sustainable in the contemporary context:

- Systemic Change
- Managing Difference
- Change Management and Volunteer Resistance

Systemic Change

Findings show that there are several areas where there was no mention of any specific innovation or change in place. Specifically, there was no mention of any strategy to attract and secure sustainable funding (e.g. sponsorship). Additionally, few strategies were mentioned in areas related to MOW operations and systems. These included strategies to update resources, method of communication, or accurate bookkeeping. There was no mention of strategies to support a skilled management team, particularly in areas of human resources, change, or operations management. Similarly, no participant highlighted strategies that relate to *tailored* education and training for volunteers. Furthermore, there were no specific strategies related to strengthening elements of the social support service provided to clients, namely the health and wellbeing check-ups. This was reflected in the lack of volunteer training and support, protocols, or procedures around providing this increasingly vital support. On the whole, while this does not imply that no service has employed innovation/strategies in any of these aforementioned areas, it does perhaps flag areas for future innovation.

One area that is presenting particular systemic challenges is the increasingly onerous legislative and regulatory environment faced by all non-profit organizations in Australia today. For a long-standing organization, such as MOW, involved in managing food delivery there are particular concerns. Findings from this study reveal that these challenges clearly threaten the survival of MOW as they exacerbate numerous other problems. This domino effect places enormous pressures on MOW volunteers who require support, management, and training, if they are to meet these increasing demands. Solutions are needed to ensure MOW can meet industry standards while providing a sustainable and competitive service to an increasingly demanding clientele in an increasingly competitive market.

MOW needs to consider “what kind of service do we want to deliver”, and what volunteer would fit this profile? Purposeful recruitment strategies are needed, that both satisfy people’s motives for volunteering, and yet ensure that MOW is meeting its aims. One way forward for MOW is to find ways to lessen the burden and reliance on volunteers in traditional roles, perhaps by introducing more paid positions, particularly in the
support and management roles. The availability of sufficient funds, and gaining the trust and cooperation of existing volunteers, however, are critical to enable such change to effectively take place.

In particular, MOW needs to consider how it will operate into the future. Will it continue to be reactive in the face of change, or adopt a more proactive approach to change, and develop and promote strategies for innovation and responsiveness? Clear areas for innovation and change have been identified to enable MOW to remain a viable and sustainable organization in Australia. Consistent with the main challenges, however, the major identified areas in need of innovation and change relate to MOW operations and systems, volunteer retention and recruitment, and improving the service provided to clients.

Managing Difference

Currently, the organization has little coherence (and considerable variation) in the way it operates. This could be a strength as it signals the possibility for responsiveness within existing communities. There are pros and cons with both models of service operations (centralised vs decentralised) to enable MOW to deliver a sustainable, client-focused service. Finding a balance between the two models is the challenge for optimising the efficiency and effectiveness of individual MOW services.

On the other hand, the overall lack of innovation is a concern. On the whole, offering greater choice and flexibility will only become an increasing necessity if MOW is to provide a sustainable, competitive service to an increasingly demanding clientele. Can this be done? Certainly, the findings highlight that this may be a major problem for those services that are reliant on increasingly resistant volunteers and struggling to maintain services, let alone innovate.

Evidently, there are differences by location, with services in rural and remote communities challenged by geographical vastness. One participant noted that “distance is our main challenge” (QLD), impacting on the meal choice and delivery times offered to clients. This has significant effect on costs and effectiveness.

The importance of MOW services to rural and regional Australia cannot be over-estimated. Over three quarters of the survey results came from these settings. The high response rate suggests that non-metropolitan regions of Australia have limited choices in a range of public amenities and infrastructure including food and health services and public transport. There is, therefore, a heavy reliance on existing networks, of which MOW is a vital element.

There is evidence of innovation occurring in some regional locations particularly around local MOW working with other local non-profit organizations, in partnership not competition. The concept of a ‘central hub’ in larger regional towns where administration is centralised and governance issues and policy development is run by professional staff with volunteers delivering in their local area is one model to consider. Government policy should encourage organizations and groups to work together in partnership rather than in competition with each other forever decreasing financial assistance.
Change Management and Volunteer Resistance

Organizational change is never easy. In traditional non-profit organizations such as Meals on Wheels that rely on volunteers at all levels from the boardroom to the coalface, it is particularly challenging with the conflicting perspectives of volunteers and management, and trying to negotiate between tradition and market efficiency. There is existing evidence that change is particularly difficult for long term, often older, volunteers (Lie & Baines, 2007; Warburton & MacDonald, 2009). In these circumstances it can be extremely difficult for organizations to contribute to and effect positive change while still retaining a reliable, long term, and cost effective volunteer workforce.

These issues are particularly difficult in circumstances where there is evidence of volunteer resistance to change, as is evident in this research. Here, a particular problem for management is not only to effect change within the organization but to get the workforce to acknowledge that change is needed (English & Peters, 2008). Yet as we have noted in this project, many Meals on Wheels services both overseas and in Australia are introducing innovation and change quite successfully.

Certainly change is not in itself negative. The challenges facing traditional organizations in the contemporary environment also present them with opportunities and scope to advance and be a competitive force in the increasingly marketised and regulated environment. The type of change and how it is implemented and managed will determine success. There are two key issues here. The first is how change is managed within the organization, and the second is how to draw on tradition as a strength.

4. Change Management

First, evidence here of volunteer resistance and the inevitable need for services to adopt processes and procedures to meet changing client demands highlight the particular importance of human resource management (HRM) to assist staff through change, and facilitate a positive work culture. While some participants indicated strategies were in place for volunteer management, such as employing a volunteer coordinator, overall, there was no clear indication of HRM in any State or Territory surveyed. In particular, there was no mention of processes, strategies, or support systems in place to gain the acceptance, trust, and cooperation of volunteers, and to assist and support volunteers through change and innovation. Perhaps time consuming demands relating to new regulations, and/or lack of funding is preventing services from better management of staff. Nevertheless, ensuring service managers are skilled in effective tailored HRM is important for MOW to consider.

Participants in this study have highlighted numerous ways services have attempted to adapt to changing times and client demand. Although encouraging, much more innovation and change can and needs to be done to ensure MOW remains a competitive and sustainable service. Areas in particular need of innovation and change include efforts to gain funding, improve the internal MOW operations and systems, reduce volunteer resistance, and improve volunteer retention and recruitment. Furthermore, there is still great scope to
improve the meal and social elements of MOW, and connection with the wider community through public relations and promotion.

This all suggests the need to pay attention to change management to “unfreeze” the organization from outdated practices and open it to new ideas (Medley & Haki Akan, 2008). As is indicated in the literature on change models, there is a need for the organization to develop deep understanding of where and how change is needed, particularly when, as with Meals on Wheels, change is being imposed from outside. Volunteers in this context need strong, supportive volunteer management to bring them along with the process of change. Thus, whilst opening up to new sources of volunteers, the organization can also maintain its support from reliable long term volunteers.

Communication is critical for ensuring smooth change. This needs to occur at a number of levels. As noted, this includes within services, where some volunteers (particularly older age, long-serving volunteers resistant to change) assume they know what their clients need, and thus assume they are satisfying them. The existence of some resistance to change is highly concerning. Further, the lack of proactive PR/promotion being carried out on either a national or local scale needs addressing, particularly if new and sustainable sources of volunteers are to be attracted to MOWs. This all highlights the need for proactive strategies and attention to change management processes.

5. Using Tradition

Thus, traditional organizations, such as Meals on Wheels, have the potential to revitalise in response to institutional pressures provided it can engage with change. These organizations are by definition well known and well respected, and have a very saleable “brand”.

They have enormous potential to keep their core strengths and constituents whilst still responding to the new environment. Tradition can be drawn on as a strength and enable the organization to draw on its well-respected name to engage in new partnerships with business. Thus, for example, it may be that adopting a marketing orientation could significantly increase the organization’s effectiveness in achieving its mission (Dolnicar and Lazarevski, 2009). In this way, corporate partnerships can be built, providing this professional expertise and bringing it pro bono to the organization.

Non-profit organizations are uniquely situated between the corporate world and the state. Well-known and well-respected organizations like Meals on Wheels have a head start in attracting and drawing management support, skills and expertise from the corporate world into the organization. For example, one Canadian agency visited at Stage 1 of this study works extremely effectively with corporate sponsors and support to undertake high-end fundraising through art shows and dinners produced by renowned chefs. Links with business can be mutually beneficial, providing opportunities for business to promote their community activities, whilst at the same time drawing on business knowledge and expertise as well as access to corporate funding.
In this way, being a well-known traditional organization is a huge opportunity – to attract new sources of volunteers whilst retaining traditional ones, to engage with business – all whilst supporting the more marginalised in our community through the critical provision of meals and social support. The time is rife for such change.
Chapter 6. Conclusion

This is a case study of a traditional voluntary organization under a range of significant pressures yet with the potential to reform and reinvigorate. MOW was a ‘new idea’ sixty years ago but in order to remain relevant and effective in the second decade of the 21st century, it must overhaul its operations, its workforce and how it uses volunteers, as well as continue to shift organizationally to be more responsive to change and innovation.

MOW delivers a critical community service and as has been demonstrated in this report, is much more than just a meal. As a volunteer-run service, MOW is facing a range of organizational challenges around regulation, governance, and service delivery demands. But MOW is also facing a range of challenges with its volunteer workforce, as they age and, as this report has outlined, many are resistant to inevitable change. They find it hard to operate in the contemporary environment of increasing regulations and professionalization of meals delivery services.

In many respects, however, MOW is in a unique position. It is viewed within the sector as a friendly, compassionate, benign, non-threatening, and traditional non-profit organization of long-standing. Over the past 60 years, it has developed significant goodwill and reputation within the community as a trustworthy organization that is volunteer-based, delivering an invaluable service to those in need.

When MOW was introduced to Australia in the early 1950s it was a ‘social experiment’. Its founder, Doris Taylor, wanted to expand the concept of MOW into a broad Home Service for the Aged with meals as the most basic and essential service but incorporating other services such as laundry, cleaning, cooking, mending – anything that would assist older and vulnerable people stay in their own home for as long as practicable and possible. Taylor envisaged a scheme that would ‘enable them to live their lives as part of the community with the maximum of independence, freedom, and comfort possible’.

Perhaps it is time to expand Taylor’s original vision, for MOW to be ‘more than just a meal’.
References


ibid.


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INFORMATION SHEET for PARTICIPANTS

Research Project:

Meals on Wheels: building towards a new social experiment for our times

I wish to invite you to participate in this research project. The details of the study follow and I hope you will consider being involved. This is an ARC Linkage funded project [LP100200065] in partnership with Australian Meals on Wheels Organization [AMOWA]. The two main researchers are Associate Professor Melanie Oppenheimer [I can be contacted by email at melanie.oppenheimer@une.edu.au or by phone on 02 6773 3520]; and Professor Jeni Warburton who can be contacted by email on j.warburton@une.edu.au or by phone on 02 6024 9723. Our research assistant on the project is Dr Rachel Winterton and she can be contacted by email on r.winterton@une.edu.au and by phone on 02 XXXX XXXX.

Aim of the Study:
Meals on Wheels is one of Australia’s iconic non-profit organizations with a history dating back to the early 1950s. Meals on Wheels comprises 750 organizations with around 80,000 volunteers and hundreds of paid staff working to deliver nutritionally balanced meals and personal contact to over 50,000 clients annually. This service is integral to enabling frail older Australians and those with disabilities to remain in their own homes. Meals on Wheels needs to address its reliance on traditional volunteer models so that it can continue to deliver this critical service. Using both national and international examples, this project aims to analyse volunteer business models and develop a responsive and sustainable plan for the future.

Time Requirements:
A face-to-face interview lasting approximately 60 minutes that will be audiotaped/electronically captured.

Interviews:
There will be a series of open-ended questions that allow you to explore your views related to your work, either unpaid or paid, with Meals on Wheels or an associated meal delivery organization. These interviews will be voice recorded or electronically captured. Any information or personal details gathered in the course of the study will remain confidential. If you choose to remain anonymous you will not be identified by name in any publication of results. Your name will be replaced by a pseudonym. If you choose to be identified you will be identified in the publication of results.
**Participation**

Participation is completely voluntary. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent from the project and discontinue at any time without having to give a reason and without consequence. You will be asked to complete a consent form giving your approval to be interviewed and/or accompanied and the information you provide to be included in the results of this research.

The voice recordings will be kept in a locked filing cabinet at the researcher’s office. The transcriptions and other data will be kept in the same manner for five (5) years following thesis submission and then destroyed. Only the investigators will have access to the data.

**Observation**

Managers of various sites will be asked for permission from the researchers to undertake discreet observation of the process of meal preparation and delivery as part of the project’s ethnographic methodology. We will not go into client’s homes nor talk with clients at all.

**Research Process:**

It is anticipated that this research will be undertaken through 2011 and 2012. The results may also be presented at conferences or written up in journals without any identifying information. Only those participants who wish to be identified will be named and anyone choosing to be anonymous will not be identified in any publication/presentation.

This project has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of New England.

Should you have any complaints concerning the manner in which this research is conducted, please contact the Research Ethics Officer at the following address:

Research Services
University of New England
Armidale, NSW 2351.
Telephone: (02) 6773 3449 Facsimile (02) 6773 3543
Email: ethics@une.edu.au

If by any chance you become distressed by any of the questions, you will be able to terminate the interview at any time. You can also contact either a local counsellor, whose number can be found in the yellow pages of your local telephone book or for Australia, Lifeline (131 141). For participants in the UK, see the Volunteer Emotional Support Helpline operated through Samaritans (116 123); and for participants in Canada, the Distress Centres (416-408-HELP).

Thank you for considering this request.

Kind regards

Associate Professor Melanie Oppenheimer
Professor Jeni Warburton
Dr Rachel Winterton
Consent Form for Participants

Research Project: Meals on Wheels: building towards a new social experiment for our times

Name: - ..............................................................................................

Organization: - ................................................................................

Contact details: - ..............................................................................

I, ........................., have read the information contained in the Information Sheet for Participants and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. Yes/No

I agree to participate in this activity, realising that I may withdraw at any time. Yes/No

I agree to the interview having my voice recorded and transcribed. Yes/No

I agree to allow the researchers access to observe the delivery of meals Yes/No

Please circle one of the following statements:-

EITHER

I agree to being identified and quoted in this research project

OR

I do not want to be identified and wish to use a pseudonym for all quotations in this research project

.............................................. ..............................................
Participant Date

.............................................. ..............................................
Researcher Date
Questions for interviewees:

1. What is your current role in the organization?
2. When did you join the organization and in what capacity?
3. How do you see the service provided by the organization and how important is it, in your opinion?
4. What are the main attractions of your work, either paid or unpaid, at your organization?
5. How important are volunteers to your organization?
6. What would happen if volunteers were not used by the organization?
7. Can you think of ways to improve the use and capacity of volunteers in the organization?
8. Any other questions you would like to ask or ideas re new business models for volunteering with your organization?
Appendix B: Stage 3: Survey distributed to services nationwide

INFORMATION SHEET for PARTICIPANTS

Research Project:

Meals on Wheels: building towards a new social experiment for our times

I wish to invite you to participate in this research project. The details of the study follow and I hope you will consider being involved. This is an ARC Linkage funded project [[LP100200065] in partnership with Australian Meals on Wheels Association [AMOWA]. The two main researchers are Associate Professor Melanie Oppenheimer, who can be contacted by email at melanie.oppenheimer@une.edu.au or by phone on 02 6773 2125] and Professor Jeni Warburton who can be contacted by email on j.warburton@une.edu.au or by phone on 02 60249723.

Aim of the Study:
Meals on Wheels is one of Australia’s iconic non-profit organizations with a history dating back to the early 1950s. Meals on Wheels comprises 750 organizations with around 80,000 volunteers and hundreds of paid staff working to deliver nutritionally balanced meals and personal contact to over 50,000 clients annually. This service is integral to enabling frail older Australians and those with disabilities to remain in their own homes. Meals on Wheels needs to address its reliance on traditional volunteering arrangements so that it can continue to deliver this critical service. Using both national and international examples, this project aims to analyse different ways for volunteers to work within Meals on Wheels services and develop a responsive and sustainable plan for the future.

Time Requirements:
The survey should take about 30 minutes to complete.

Participation
Participation is completely voluntary. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent from the project and discontinue at any time without having to give a reason and without consequence. Survey participants will not be identified in any publication of results.
Research Process:
This research will be undertaken through 2012. The results may also be presented at conferences or written up in journals without any identifying information.
This project has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of New England - HE11/031. Should you have any complaints concerning the manner in which this research is conducted, please contact the Research Ethics Officer at the university. Telephone: (02) 6773 3449 Facsimile (02) 6773 3543 Email: ethics@une.edu.au

Kind regards

Associate Professor Melanie Oppenheimer & Professor Jeni Warburton
Consent Form for Participants

Research Project: Meals on Wheels: building towards a new social experiment for our times

Name: - ..........................................................

Organization: - ...................................................

Contact details: - ...................................................

I have read the information contained in the Information Sheet for Participants and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. Yes/No

I agree to participate in this activity, realizing that I may withdraw my consent at any time and I will not be identified in publications. Yes/No

……………………………….          ………………………………….
Participant                        Date

……………………………….          ………………………………….
Researcher                         Date
MEALS ON WHEELS NATIONAL SURVEY, 2012

Name of Service: ............................................................................................................

Contact Person: ............................................................................................................

Contact Details: Phone/Email ........................................................................................

Note: In answering the following questions, please provide an estimate if you are unsure of the exact figures.

I. YOUR SERVICE PROFILE

First, we would like to ask you about your service, including about your paid staff (if any), your volunteers and your clients.

1. Where is your site located? (Please circle)
   Metropolitan city / Regional town / Rural / Remote

2. What is your postcode? ............

3. What is your current structure? (Please circle)
   Paid coordinator + volunteers / All volunteers / All paid
   Other (Please explain)........................................................................................................
   ........................................................................................................................................

4. If you have paid staff, what jobs do they do? (Please tick all)
   Manager ..... Coordinator of volunteers ..... Driver/Deliverer ..... Cook ..... Kitchen supervisor ..... Kitchen hand ..... Admin assistant ..... Other (please specify)........................................................................................................
   ........................................................................................................................................

5. In total, how many paid staff do you have? Full-time: ..... Part-time: ..... Casual: ..... How does this compare to about 5 years ago? (Please circle)
   More now / Same / Less now / Don’t Know

6. If your service uses volunteers, what jobs do they do? (Please tick all)
   Manager ..... Coordinator of volunteers ..... Driver/Deliverer ..... Cook ..... Kitchen supervisor ..... Kitchen hand ..... Admin assistant: .........
Other (please specify) .................................................................

7. How many volunteers do you need to run your service - on a quiet day....... and on a busy day........

8. How many people are currently on your books as active volunteers........
   And how does this compare to about 5 years ago? (Please circle)
   More now / Same / Less now / Don’t Know

9. Would you say that your clients differ from 5 years ago? No / Yes

10. If yes, how do they differ? (Please tick all)
    Older..... Younger..... Worse health..... More disabilities..... More active..... Use service for a shorter period of time..... Higher expectations ..... Other (Please explain).............................................................
    ....................................................................................................................................................................
    ....................................................................................................................................................................
    ....................................................................................................................................................................

II. YOUR SERVICE DELIVERY

11. We would now like to ask you about your meal delivery.
    What do your meals include? (please tick all)
    Soup ..... Main course ..... Dessert ..... Juice ..... Other (please specify)
    ....................................................................................................................................................................
    ....................................................................................................................................................................
    ....................................................................................................................................................................

12. How many meals do you deliver on average each week?.............
    How does this compare to about 5 years ago? (Please circle)
    More now / Same / Less now / Don’t Know

13. On which days do you deliver meals? (Please tick all)
    Mon...... Tue....... Wed....... Thur...... Fri...... Sat...... Sun......
    At what time of day do you deliver meals? Before 11 am ..... 11 am to 2 pm .... 2 pm to 5 pm .... 5pm to 8pm...

14. Where do you currently source your meals?
    Own kitchen....... Local hospital or aged care facility......................... Another Meals on Wheels service............
    Commercial supplier...........
    Other (Please specify)..........................................................................................................................

15. If you have your own kitchen, do you use it for outside catering?
    Yes / No  If yes, who do you supply? (Please tick all)
Other Meals on Wheels services..... Organizations doing centre based meals..... Other *(Please specify)*

16. How are meals delivered to clients? *(Please tick all)*
   - Hot..... Cold .... Frozen....

17. Do you cater for the following special needs? *(Please tick all)*
   - Special diets..... Ethnic preferences..... Indigenous preferences.....
   - Food allergies ..... Personal preferences..... Choice of meals..... Choice of delivery times
   - Other *(Please specify)*

III. YOUR VOLUNTEERS

18. We are interested in finding out if your volunteer group has changed over the past 5 years. Please complete the following table by **ticking the column** if you agree with the statement:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Compared to 5 years ago, new volunteers are more likely to be</th>
<th>Tick if you agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Older (rather than younger)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working (rather than retired)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual (rather than regular)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short term (rather than long term)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student (rather than working / retired)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referred through a social program</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate group</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

19. How concerned are you about not having enough volunteers? *(Please circle)*
   - Very concerned / Concerned / Neither concerned nor unconcerned / Not at all concerned
20. Do you have any of the following issues in relation to using volunteers in your service? Please complete the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Important (please tick here)</th>
<th>Not important (please tick here)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ageing of your volunteers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteers leaving</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteers not wanting to commit regularly</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hard to recruit new volunteers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteers unwilling to be on committees</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

21. How do you recruit new volunteers for your service? (Please list)

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……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

22. How successful would you say you are at recruiting new volunteers? (Please circle)

Successful / Not successful
Why do you think this is the case?
……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

23. Have you tried to recruit specific groups of volunteers? (Please tick all)

Corporates….. Social programs….. Local community groups….. Local school….. Local university…..
Other (Please explain)………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………..
……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

24. Do you have any difficulties managing your volunteers, for example, in the following areas? (Please tick all)

Attending training….. Complying with rules and procedures….. Accepting change…..
Other (Please explain)………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………..
……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
25. If volunteers leave, why do you think they leave? What could be done to retain them, eg training, recognition etc? *(Please list here)*

26. Are there any particular challenges you face currently and how are you addressing them?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organizational challenges</th>
<th>Important <em>(please tick here)</em></th>
<th>Not important <em>(please tick here)</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regulations (eg OH&amp;S, food safety)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting board members</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Getting enough funding</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Balancing satisfied clients with satisfied volunteers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other <em>(please specify)</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please explain how you are addressing any of these challenges:
27. Some Meals on Wheels services have extended what they offer to clients. Please could you look at the table below and see if you have introduced any of the following?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>New approaches to Meals on Wheels</th>
<th>Yes, we do this (please tick here)</th>
<th>This is successful (please tick here)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gourmet meal options</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centre based meals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Café meal vouchers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Shopping service</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooking classes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-home food preparation and cooking assistance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nutrition advice</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programs for particular groups eg dementia sufferers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you have introduced any of these, could you please explain why you did so, and why you think it has been successful or unsuccessful:

……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
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……………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS SURVEY. Please return to Associate Professor Oppenheimer in the attached self-addressed envelope.