

# Population change and volunteering

## Population change and volunteers

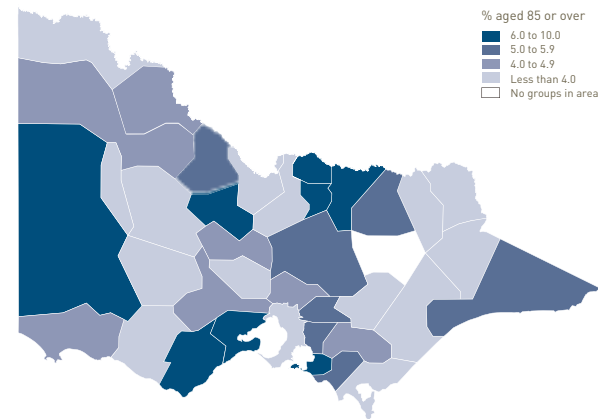
Ageing of the population, population decline and social change can have impacts on the ability of communities to resource volunteer activities. In areas of population decline, numbers of volunteers are often reduced, placing stress on charity groups, service clubs, sporting clubs and environmental groups. Areas experiencing growth may seem to be better off for volunteer recruitment however in-migrants to regional or rural areas may be unfamiliar with local conditions or may not realise that some services are volunteer-based.

## Fewer young recruits: the case of the CWA

The Country Women's Association (CWA) is the largest women's organisation in Australia. The organisation aims to improve conditions for country women and their families, especially those living in rural and remote Australia. Victorian membership accounts for around 7,500 or 17% of the national total. Over the past two decades, the CWA has been affected by rural out-migration and ageing of the population.<sup>2</sup>

## Country Womens Association (CWA) members aged 85 years and over<sup>1</sup>

CWA Regions, 2003-04



## Implications of population change for volunteer-based organisations

### Regions of population growth:

- | Potentially an increasing pool of volunteers although this may be constrained if newcomers are full time workers/commuters.
- | Increasing use of services and facilities. Pressure on Committees of Management, and volunteer service providers.
- | Newcomers may not realise volunteer element of many services (eg. fire fighting, health care).

### Regions with an ageing population:

- | Large group of people reaching retirement age may form a large pool of people with many active years available.
- | However, the oldest residents may increase demand for volunteer services (eg. meals on wheels, transport).

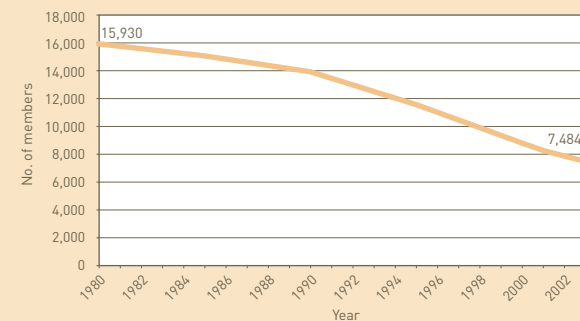
### Regions with peak or seasonal populations:

- | Volunteer-based emergency services (eg. CFA, SES) are likely to have increasing demand for their services as population increases and creates greater risk of fires and accidents.
- | Volunteer management of services and facilities (eg. coastal reserves and recreation grounds) may experience extra pressure.

## Regions of population decline:

- | A declining youth population will mean fewer young people are available for volunteer recruitment than in the past.
- | Land management activities such as Landcare can be put under strain as fewer farmers and other community members are available for labour intensive remediation activities like tree planting.

## CWA full membership holders, 1980-2003<sup>1</sup>



Servicing Communities "Caring for an ageing population" p. 41

Sources <sup>1</sup>CWA unpublished data 2004 <sup>2</sup>CWA website 2005 [www.cwaa.org.au](http://www.cwaa.org.au)

