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# PUFFING BILLY RAILWAY & PARTNER RAILWAYS VOLUNTEER REPORT

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# Introduction

The Victorian Government in 2022 released funding for the Emerging Stronger Volunteer Grants. The purpose of these grants was to support local partnerships and innovation projects to re-engage volunteers, broaden the volunteer base, and strengthen volunteering in local communities.

Puffing Billy Railway and Partner Railways known from here in this report as PBRPR were successful in obtaining a grant to address in part the re-engagement of inactive volunteers.

EV Inc. formerly Eastern Volunteers, was engaged to survey inactive volunteers and make recommendations on reactivation of the volunteers. Specifically the scope of work was to:

- Prepare survey questions in consultation with PBRPR
- Survey inactive volunteers to identify barriers to participation
- Provide advice concerning priority actions to help re-engage inactive volunteers
- Advise and input into the project throughout in a project working group.

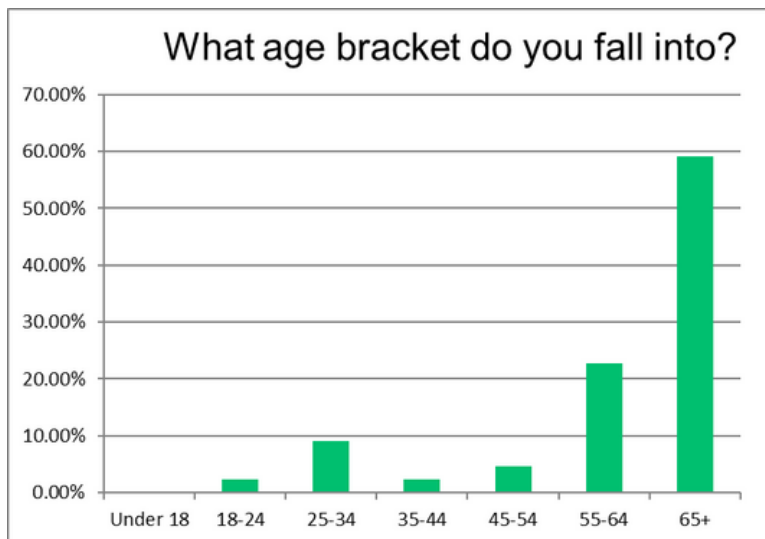
To identify barriers to participation and reactivate volunteers who want to be reactivated, one must understand why they have disengaged. PBRPR provided EV Inc with details on their 78 inactive volunteers who were subsequently surveyed both through survey monkey and offered individual consultation should survey monkey be inaccessible or they wanted to discuss further views with the team. The survey questions were designed with and approved by the PBRPR team. The survey was implemented in late 2022 with analysis occurring in early 2023.

EV Inc. was chosen as it has been the Volunteer Support Service for the eastern region for 45 years specialising in the support of organisations small to large who operate with volunteer and paid workforces. It currently supports over 600 community organisations in the region. It has particular expertise in engagement and retention of volunteer workforces and in inclusive volunteering.

This report reflects the results obtained for the scope of work commissioned.

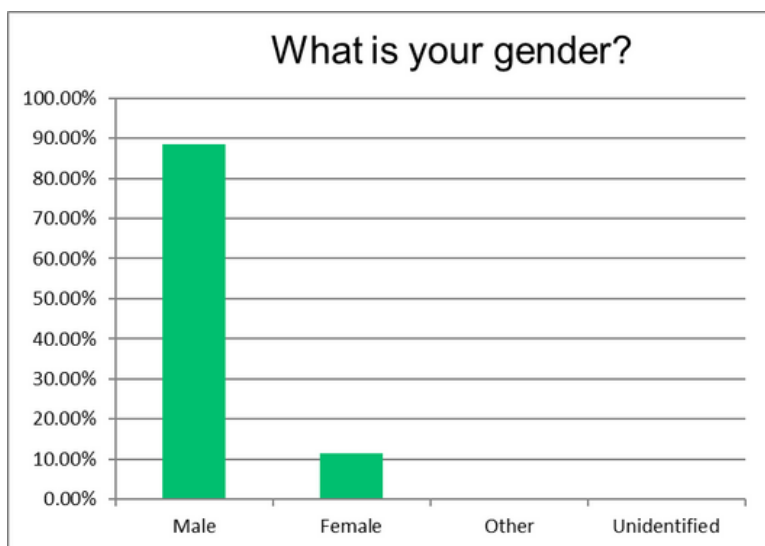
# Demographics

The majority of volunteers responding were men in the 65+ bracket but a small percentage of younger volunteers helps to make the responses more representative.



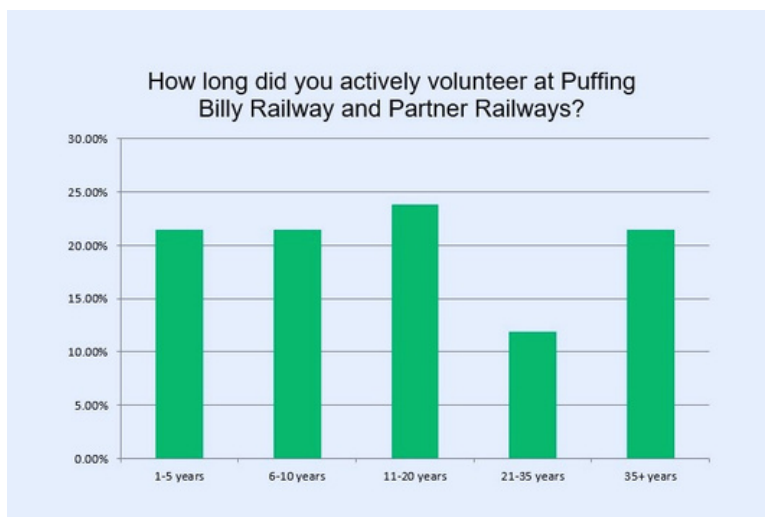
In looking at length of service by age, a third [31%] of the 65+ age group had volunteered for over 35+ years, a third [31%] had volunteered between 11-35 years and the remainder [23%] 6-10 years. These are very long term committed volunteers to PBRPR.

In looking at the younger age groups a third of 55-64 yr olds had volunteered for 11-20 years and a fifth [22%] 21-35 years. 45-54 year olds split equally between volunteering for 1-5 yrs or 6-10 yrs. Half of the 25-34 age group had volunteered for between 11-20 years, the remainder for less than that.



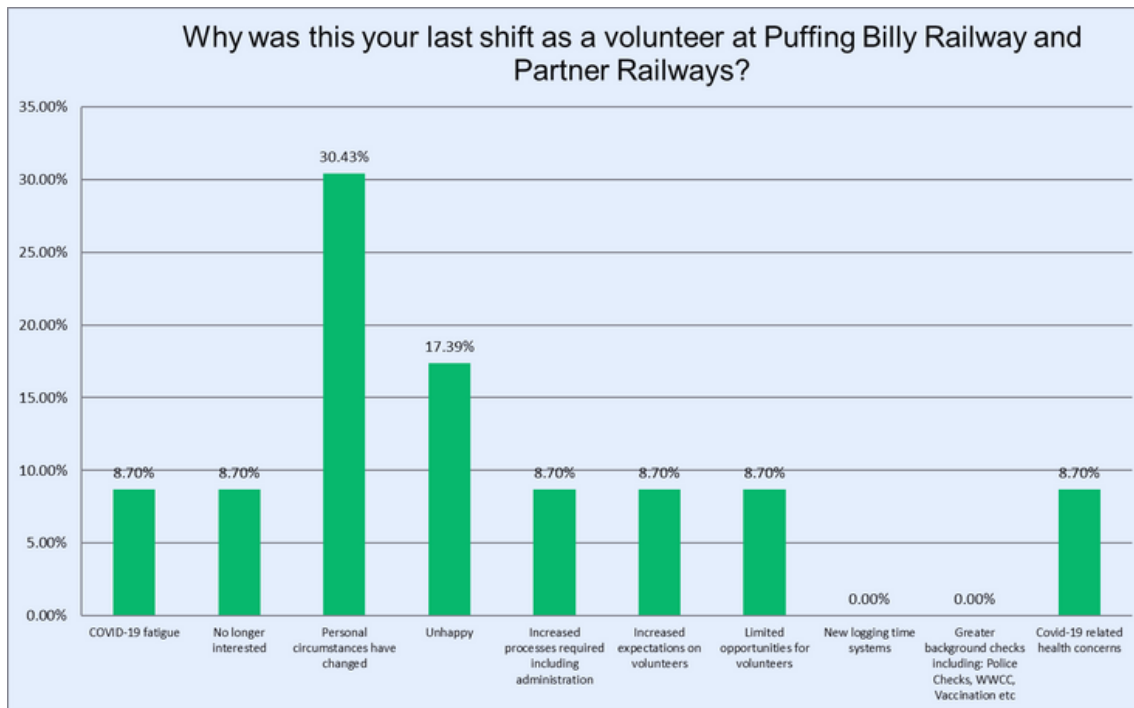
Looking at responses from women, 5 women answered the survey each from the age brackets 25+ yrs. Half of them had served for 11-20 years, the rest less than that.

The survey results reflect the views of long standing volunteers of PBRPR who have chosen to disengage. These volunteers are mostly older men and without the current profile of volunteers we cannot comment on how representative these views would be of the current cohort of volunteers.



**44 of 78 [56%] people invited to participate responded to this survey**

# Why have volunteers disengaged?



A third of volunteers had personal circumstances change. Just over half [58%] of these were men over 65yrs. A third [29%] were men aged 25-34 yrs. They had volunteered for less than 10 years in the main and from their comments health issues and travel to PBRPR were the reasons.

Of the other reasons which are difficult to control, COVID 19 did not have a significant impact on disengagement. Unhappiness did. Of those who were unhappy, three quarters [75%] were men aged over 55yrs, the majority who had volunteered 11-20 years. Only a third of those who said they were unhappy were long term volunteers i.e 35+ yrs. Compliance requirements and government takeover were the chief reasons listed for being unhappy. Two people listed increased processes as their reason for disengaging, both volunteers for 11-35yrs. They noted however that they are still volunteering in railway related roles. In analysing the other reasons, increased expectations revolved around the requirements on a volunteer to report issues and again the theme of government takeover of process.

Those who responded as limited opportunities cited automation of processes as the cause. There are two major themes emerging here - change management on issue of increased compliance and risk management and managing the volunteer experience and journey.

# Why have volunteers disengaged? Their voice.

"Sick of working for free for Victorian Government"

"Unhappy, increases processes including admin, increased expectations on volunteers greater background checks"

"Incompetent staff & training issues. Badly handled training issues from paid staff".

"Increased expectations on volunteers"

"Covid shut down of railway over 65s sent letter high risk not to attend, medical certificate Cat2 had expired"

"My spouse was ill".

"Unhappy, Increased processes required including administration, Government takeover, introduction of corporate culture - complete loss of volunteer purpose"

"Increased processes including administration"

" Limited opportunities for volunteers"

"Increased expectations on volunteers"

"Commute time and associated fatigue management another factor".

"Not busy enough on the day (Wednesdays) so basically bored and other interests prevailed".

"Unhappy with the current management and their attitude to volunteers"

# Volunteer Experience

88% of the volunteers rated their experience whilst at PBRPR or related railways as satisfying to very satisfying. Just below half [49%] were very satisfied. When asked why, the people/social interaction and connection was the most referenced followed by the technical and heritage aspects of the work, the valuing of volunteers and finally the community facing service role of volunteers.

There were some comments though about it having gone downhill after the "government takeover". Of those who were not satisfied the general themes were significant anger at the current governance and management structure and limited opportunities to progress.

Overall volunteers have been very satisfied with their experience but the changes implemented following the Ombudsmen's report to strengthen governance, management and child safety have clearly had an impact on some volunteers. These are men over 55 yrs of age who have volunteered long term with PBRPR.



# Viewpoints on Experience

The work is challenging and informative.

I was fully engaged and took a great deal of pride in what I was doing

I enjoy my times on the railway & I'm pleased to pass on my railway experience to others

"Found getting started was very difficult, i had to keep contacting the volunteer group often as i was told that the relevant people would contact me to start and this did not happen"

Saved Puffing Billy !! Made lifelong friendships.

I enjoyed over fifteen really good years where we worked hard, put in a lot extra, worked with some fantastic people, had a lot of fun and all the while feeling that we were as genuine as possible a showcase of Victorian Railways heritage: whey they did and how they did it in the era of significance.

As long as you have a good crew you have a good day

Because it was our railway before it was taken over. What is 'Partner Railway' as far as i know PB does not have a "Partner Railway" least of all one that i volunteered at!!! sounds like consultant double speak!

"As indicated. Im expected to do it for nothing when everyone around me is on the paroll"

"Was very satisfying to start off with and then went downhill"

"First few years were wonderful. Hated the last year".

"Until takeover - volunteers were valued (genuinely) and passion for the railway was listened to. Great positive community spirit".

The professionalism of the volunteer management has only increased while I have been a volunteer.

"I was fully engaged and took a great deal of pride in what i was doing"

Enjoying happy tourist groups and passengers at the railway

Friendly environment and interaction with passengers

Am a steam loco enthusiast. VGR was a very friendly railway of the type that I like.

I have not been impressed with the attitude of the ETRB management to the Puffing Billy Preservation Society and its members.

# What Volunteers Enjoyed

Volunteers enjoyed working for PBRPR because of: [ in order of priority response]. See Appendix 1 for full responses.

- 1.The heritage and technical aspects of the work and involvement. There is a strong sense of contributing to the heritage of the community in maintaining and promoting PBRPR.
- 2.The people and social connection made whilst volunteering.
- 3.The team work which is a different aspect to the above. team work is about how the volunteer and paid workforce work together and promote a sense of unity of purpose.
- 4.Service the community. This entails the delivery of a service to the customers of PBRPR.
- 5.Being valued as a volunteer.
- 6.Opportunity to develop new skills and share skills.



# Challenges Volunteers Experienced

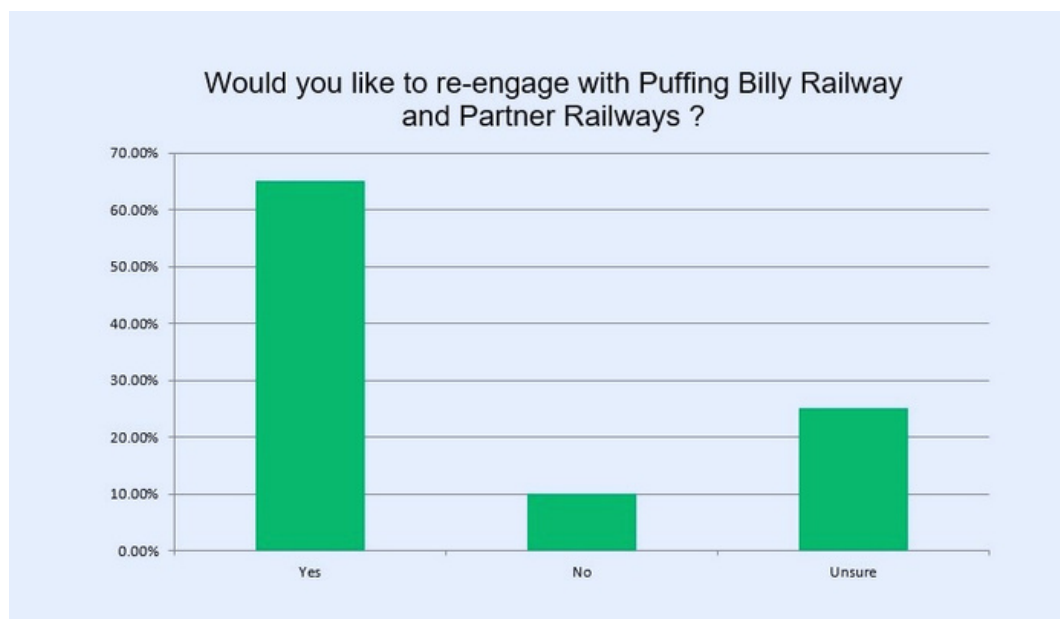
The challenges can be categorised into the following themes: [Refer Appendix 2 for full comments]

1. Issues with staff and management.
2. Expectations of the volunteer role specifically training, compliance, hours and travel. Decrease in feeling valued as a volunteer.
3. Change management- which can be linked to issues with staff and management. Technical or heritage related challenges.
4. Concerns about safety.

In analysing results for responses which cited staff, management and change as challenges three quarters were men, the majority of these were over 65 yrs [67%] and the remainder in the 55-64 yr age bracket. 50% had said they were unhappy as their reason for disengaging whilst a third cited distance / moving away. Of the women one was in the 45 yr bracket and one in the 25 yr bracket. They cited being unhappy and lack of support as their reasons for disengagement. Neither were longer term volunteers ie over 20 yrs .

Whilst the sample is small the voices of volunteers are loud on some issues. There is a disconnect for some between staff and management in the wake of the governance and management changes experienced following the Ombudsmen Report. The relationship with the Puffing Billy Preservation Society was cited by some as an area of concern. This can be interpreted as a cultural issue with the need for change disrupting existing and embedded culture and it can be seen as a change management issue which has resulted in some people choosing to disengage. This however should not be discounted as just part of the normal process of change and evolution. Many comments went to how PBRPR manages its volunteer workforce and raised the issue of whether it was valued and integrated enough with its paid workforce.

# Do people want to re-engage?



More than half of the people said they did want to re-engage with PBRPR (65%), a quarter were unsure and were predominantly older males (60% were in the 65+ age group). A substantial proportion however had disengaged because they were unhappy (43%) and many had been volunteering for less than 10 years (40%). This suggests that some of those embedded culture issues were not impacting them in the same way.

Interestingly, none had rated their experience as unsatisfying and overwhelmingly, most [90%] had rated it satisfying or very satisfying. Most cited the teamwork, people connection as the thing they most enjoyed and were split in their views on challenges which included the change management, feeling valued, technical issues and expectations.

Of those that said no they were not interested, all were men aged over 65yrs. Half of them had worked for over 35yrs whilst the other for less than 10 yrs. Three quarters had rated their experience as satisfying to very satisfying. All of this cohort were volunteering elsewhere in a formal volunteering role. When assessing their comments there was very strong views about the relationship between PBRPR and the Preservation Society expressed and the valuing of volunteers.

Of those who wish to re engage over half are over 65 yrs of age [60%] , close to a quarter 55-64yrs [23%] and the remainder under 35 yrs. Mostly male. 42% had disengaged because of personal circumstances, 17% because of COVID fatigue and 17% because of compliance issues. Well over half [70%] had previously volunteered for under 20yrs and of these over half [60%] of them had rated their experience as very satisfying. The majority of those who wished to re engage said they wanted to return as a volunteer [89%] with the rest citing Puffing Billy Railway Guild. Over half of these volunteers [60%] were also volunteering elsewhere the majority in formal roles [60%] and the remainder in casual roles.

# Have volunteers moved on to other opportunities?

People were asked to indicate if they had moved to other volunteering opportunities. The profile was:

1. Over half [60%] of disengaged volunteers are currently volunteering elsewhere with most of this being in formal volunteering roles [60%], the remainder in casual roles.
2. Some moved to the Puffing Billy Preservation Society and some to the CFA. Others to interests they already had been pursuing. What attracted them was primarily same role different organisation and less travel for some.
3. What keeps them engaged in this new role is the social connection followed by proximity to home.

These results show us that disengaged volunteers have not primarily disengaged with the theme of railway and heritage volunteering. Like many volunteers PBRBR had not been the only volunteering role or interest they had and some re prioritised.

Understanding why people disengage and having strategies in place to manage re-engagement will be important into the future. Many of these volunteers want to come back but issues with change management, integration of paid and volunteer workforces and valuing the journey of volunteering need to be addressed.

# Key themes & recommendations

Overall, volunteers were satisfied with their time at PBRPR and COVID had not emerged as a major reason for disengagement. Certainly COVID has impacted volunteering participation nationally and volunteering patterns are slow to recover, however PBRPR has a unique value proposition in its heritage and technical volunteer roles but is more likely to see the impact of COVID on volunteering in the more normative roles in retail and customer service.

When addressing barriers to participation in volunteering and the issue of reactivation it is necessary to understand what the problem / issue was in the first place. The results here tell us something about the issues / problem related to the disengagement of PBRPR volunteers.

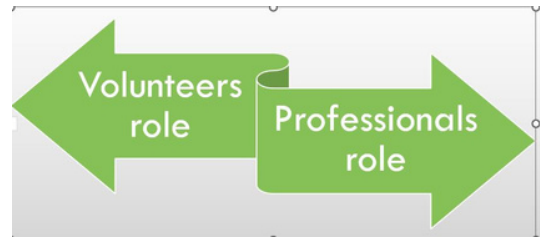
1. Most disengaged volunteers were satisfied with their prior volunteering in line with national research and 60% were interested in returning to volunteer with PBRPR.
2. The main motivations for volunteering is certainly the people connection and the technical and heritage aspects of the work which PBRPR offers. This is closely followed by the motivation to serve the community well as a tourist attraction.
3. Many disengaged volunteers are very long term volunteers, male over the age of 65yrs.
4. Some of these volunteers have not responded positively to the necessary changes needed in the governance and management of PBRPR and to the increased compliance requirements which are impacting most formal volunteer roles. The obvious cultural change to an embedded culture is expected to disrupt.
5. There is deep concern from some about the impact of change on the heritage and place of PBRPR in the community psyche. This is associated with strong feelings and voice.
6. There are issues in the integrated workforce between paid staff and volunteers and between volunteers - which tends to be a cultural and management issue about how workforces are managed and integrated as one. Worryingly, there were also voices about bullying and harassment being experienced.
7. Reward is in the work and the contribution to heritage that volunteers make and this needs to be the focus of reward systems.
8. Valuing of the volunteer and the PBRPR processes of managing the volunteer journey were recurring themes. The volunteer journey does not have to be linear and continuous so a focus on engagement and re engagement over the life cycle may benefit PBRPR.
9. There appears to be an issue for some in the relationship between the Public Entity and the PBRPR Preservation Society. This is outside the remit of this report but may need attention.

Actions to re-engage volunteers therefore need to address the key themes of:

- Managing the volunteer journey as part of an integrated workforce
- Contextualising the volunteer role within the PBRPR culture
- Disengagement is about organisational culture and governance beyond the remit of volunteer managers

## Theme 1: Managing the volunteer journey as an integrated workforce

Many organisations see their volunteer workforce as different and distinct from their paid workforce. Yes volunteers are different to paid staff but they need to operate as an integrated workforce seen and managed by management as such. Each component of the workforce has differing expectations and management requirements but they are part of the whole as below:



This report was not intended to nor did it look at the management of volunteers in PBRPR. This aspect however is important to consider as part of the overall engagement and retention of volunteers moving forward. What are the roles volunteers should fulfill, where and what are the competencies required for the role? How can the role be delivered ie virtual, in person, time limited? What are the roles professional or paid staff should fulfill - they usually have a robust HR structure around them. How do you create the culture of integration among all of these roles? How do you ensure the workforce as a whole understand and respect this integration?

There is a strong history of very long term volunteering in PBRPR. This has both rewards and challenges. Long term volunteering can embed cultures which fail to evolve with the times but it also brings highly experienced competencies and passion to the work. The changing ways people want to volunteer moving forward and the increasing need for time limited volunteering will impact the supply of volunteers over the coming years. PBRPR however has a unique value proposition for many volunteers. Establishing your volunteer profile and evaluating annually against the market will allow PBRPR to offer a diversity of roles which appeal to the widest range of people wanting to volunteer. This will allow for replenishment as well as re engagement to occur.

The commitment volunteers have to the PBRPR heritage and place in community really lends itself to an ongoing re engagement of people as their circumstances change and their capacity to volunteer increases and wanes as they age. Bringing together younger and older volunteers in a supported and safe workplace will assist PBRPR to replenish its workforce over time, if it has its management structure and culture right to support this. Supervision and support of older volunteers in mentoring younger ones will assist in bringing the different generations and their expectations to together. Targeting a planned program of recruiting young people into a mentoring program run by older volunteers would be worth funding and testing. Managing gender equity and generational divides will also be necessary.

Focusing on the contribution volunteers make to the maintenance of important heritage in the community should be the focus of reward systems. People are there to contribute and are passionate about their contribution. Involvement of volunteers in events and communications which reinforce this is also key. This should come from the organisation as a whole and not just volunteer managers as a separate entity. Opportunities should be used to celebrate this contribution in Volunteer Weeks or days or other events held to celebrate PBRPR annually. The focus should be on serious contribution.

People also want connection and camaraderie from their participation and in fact this is not very different to what employed people want. They want to work in an environment that values them, is safe for them and inclusive and where they can make friends and connections. This is more about the culture of PBRPR than any specific actions however reinforcing this culture requires training for all the workforce on inclusion, respect, anti-bullying and harassment policies and expectations, supervision of all workers consistently and understanding the skills and competencies of the workforce. The idea of skills mapping volunteers (and beneficial for paid staff) provides the opportunity for PBRPR to utilise the wealth of skills and knowledge it has in its workforce. Conscious use of these skills will reinforce the valuing of the volunteer.

Establishing the expectations through good on-boarding is critical and it is noted that some of the commentary was about the introduction of new compliance processes and training which are non negotiable. Re engaging people who have withdrawn because of expectations means contextualising why these processes are important and what the consequences of not following them are. It is recognised that the concept of volunteering is changing especially in the community sector where the withdrawal of government funding has increased reliance on volunteers to deliver services. Volunteers need to understand this context and what it means for them. Their contribution does require some structure. Most understand this and those who don't can choose to re engage or not.

Understanding what disengagement means to the skill sets needs to continue as service delivery is critical. Do you need them to re engage as they serve a unique role for PBRPR? How vulnerable are these roles and if they are vacant how much does it impact the business? These sort of key roles need to be paid workforce to reduce the risk to the organisation. That also helps to re engage people into roles which work for their needs and expectations.

It is important that paid staff actually understand and get the roles of volunteers and don't see them as a lesser being or gap fillers. They can often create a local culture that disengages volunteers. There appears to be some of that in survey responses.

### Recommendations for Contextualising the role of the volunteer in PBRPR

- Include all compliance requirements and the reasons for them in a Wanting to Volunteer at PBRPR Kit and embrace the Ombudsmen's report and recommendations.
- Provide an overview of the Public Entity and other structural /organisational maps so a prospective volunteer understands the organisation in full.
- Ensure induction covers the Public Entity context of the organisation and what that means for governance and the workforce. Locate the volunteer workforce in this discussion so individuals understand how they fit in.
- Develop a Re Engagement Form for returning volunteers which leverages the alumni program and the Volunteer Plan. Develop a re engagement plan with each volunteer which maps their expected journey through PBRPR as per any other volunteer.
- Monitor local workplace culture through complaints/grievances, turnover data which is provided to managers and volunteer team to review quarterly with senior management.
- Explore self guided training options with more traditional in person forms. Explore online training and induction modules which can be monitored for compliance.
- Tailor training to areas of work and combine training with paid workforce wherever relevant and possible.

### Theme 3: Organisational and Governance Culture

There are some key re engagement issues that the managers of volunteers can implement to re engage their volunteers but this cannot address the organisational culture issues which volunteers have identified in this survey. These are not the responsibility of, nor are they in control of the managers of volunteers and it will take executive management focus on the aspects identified in this report to influence the culture which will retain volunteers. It is recognised that many of these issues are change management related as discussed above but moving forward with a culture that reinforces good management of the workforce to deliver quality service should be considered.

### Recommendations for Organisational and Governance Culture

- Written commitment to integration of the workforce from Board and management which all members of the workforce receive through formal induction.
  - Accept some volunteers need to move on as part of the cultural change in PBRPR.
  - Integration of volunteer management in usual management structures of PBRPR.
- Equitable resourcing of the paid and volunteer workforce supports.

Interestingly the PBRPR volunteers did not value their own well-being specifically as a motivation but this well-being comes from the social connections they make. Managing the balance between volunteers delivering service and their need for social connection is not too different to managing staff on this issue but how you do this is. It would be worth looking at the supervision structures in place for volunteers and the support given to supervisors and managers in coaxing a focus on service delivery whilst offering a flexible workplace for connection. How is this done consistently across the organisation?

### Recommendations for managing the volunteer journey as an integrated workforce.

1. Written commitment to integration of the workforce from Board and management which all members of the workforce receive through formal induction.
2. Annual survey of what volunteer roles are required, skills and competencies and job descriptions. Annual profile developed to drive recruitment and placement.
3. Ensure a diverse range of opportunities to volunteer eg virtual, project based, short term.
4. Induction to PBRPR should be integrated for paid and volunteer staff and cover at minimum;
  - a. How paid and volunteer workforces are to work together
  - b. Expectations of team work
  - c. Managing a changing volunteer workforce
  - d. Expectations of the difference in roles between a paid and volunteer role
  - e. Anti bullying and harassment policy and mechanism for complaint
  - f. Child Safe Standards and recognising grooming
  - g. Need for increased compliance for the entire workforce
  - h. Managing generational divides
  - i. Culture and values of PBRPR
5. All volunteers to complete a My PBRPR Journey Form and be interviewed on the following issues:
  - a. What do I want to get out of volunteering here?
    - i. Link pathways of volunteering to what people want to do eg employment, contribution to community, front of house customer service.
  - b. What skills do I have to share with PBRPR
  - c. What skills do I want to develop?
  - d. How long do I have to commit? Will I recommit later and how will I stay in touch?
  - e. Are there things I need my workplace to understand so I am safe?
6. Develop volunteering pathway plan for each volunteer and have managers/supervisors sign off on implementation. Evaluate this with the volunteer and supervisor every 6 months in the first year and then annually thereafter in the same process as annual staff appraisals.
7. Integrate processes such as complaints, grievance, compliance for the paid and volunteer workforce. Have one system of workforce management.
8. Focus reward systems and messaging around contribution made to heritage and community. Recognise workforce contribution and not just volunteers.
9. Investigate funding of a mentoring program to address any issue in generational divide among workforce and provide a pathway for younger volunteers in PBRPR.
10. Do not rely on volunteer managers to manage the entire volunteer workforce. Integrate and support management of workforce across the different functions / departments of PBRPR.
11. Establish an alumni program which connects with all ex volunteers via newsletter and invite them back for celebrations.

### Theme 2: Contextualising the role of the volunteer in PBRPR

It is inevitable in times of significant need for change that some people are not going to come along for the ride. There is an element of this in the volunteers that responded to the survey. This however does not negate their voice. Understanding that change is difficult and that the context within which the work is undertaken is not stagnant nor predictable is part of inducting the volunteer into working in a community organisation like PBRPR.

# Case Examples

Kent was very positive about his overall experience and not wanting to complain, he was very measured in his comments. Limited opportunities are a recurring theme here. From the discussion it appears that there are a few core issues:

- Management turns over very regularly and it feels like volunteers have to start afresh with each new manager – there is no sense of handover of who the volunteer team are and their skill capacity
- Volunteers work alongside paid staff doing the same role, but there is limited understanding of how this can occur – why are some paid and not others – “I understand that that is the concept of volunteering, however their seems to be a level that volunteers can raise to, regardless if they have the skills or technical background or not”
- There are real mixed messages regarding the value of volunteers – often given the most menial of tasks to complete. “ Having the same technical skills, working alongside paid staff in same roles, but not being able to progress is just confusing”
- Very positive about - great people, good people working really hard to get happening, you're actually doing something and when the train is running or we are practising it is good  
Kent has reengaged

Percy has been with PBRPR since the 1950's

Has a rich history to tell of a life where the railway was a shining light from selling lollies as a young boy onwards.

Has made lifetime friendships

Lost interest when society was split off

Bad communication from leadership

There needs to be a repair between the board and the society – there may need to be personnel change on the board to allow for this to occur.



# Appendix 1: What volunteers enjoyed

- Volunteers working on a common purpose
- Keeping people safe, positive interaction with passengers. Being part of PBRPR. Connecting positively with other volunteers.
- Volunteer teamwork, camaraderie, importance, genuinely valued, ability to achieve something Gov could not (nor can any big business)
- Fellow volunteers friendship
- Being a guard on weekends.
- Signaller
- Engine cleaning
- Night trains
- Being part of a team
- Learning new skills
- Volunteers were mostly good people
- Working on a narrow gauge steam railway.
- Being part of 'PBRPR Family' (which seemingly now doesn't exist)
- Working with people who then became friends
- Seeing people have a good day out, and helping in training programs.
- I enjoyed the professionalism of the railway.
- Working with a diverse friendly group of people
- Being able to interact with passengers, by answering questions and pointing out points of interest on the journey were the highlights. One of the reasons I took a break was because the rules had changed at that point in time, where I could not travel in the carriages with passengers anymore due to Covid (I had to travel in the guard's van), so I couldn't interact with passengers, which made it far less enjoyable.
- I also liked chatting to the other volunteers, and helping put smiles on faces of everyone.
- The other volunteers are just fun to talk to
- The feeling that we were a showcase of another era, a different era while having fun with like-minded enthusiasts.
- Mixing with knowledgeable and enthusiastic people who were keen to share their time to explain the intricacies of steam locomotives.
- Seeing and riding on/behind the steam engines, old wooden carriages through the sticks. Friendly people. Satisfaction at keeping heritage branch line working.
- I enjoy the work restoring the old carriages
- Ability to share my knowledge and experience
- Social interaction with other volunteers
- Being able to access and be involved in real working railways
- Railway operations. Seeing trainees develop their skills and being a part of the training activity
- I love helping the families with their children, seeing them enjoying the day out with Thomas.
- I like seeing the train and travelers enjoying themselves doing something quite unique.
- Being a part of operating a heritage railway and doing my bit in ensuring heritage integrity.
- That fact that we all did it because we loved OUR railway. Not the government's run by overpaid corporate types!
- Contact with the general public

# Appendix 2: Challenges Volunteers experienced

- Until Government takeover - Nothing
- The expectations for training, online problems - lack of confidence with certain staff members
- Ensuring passengers were safe
- Government bureaucracy, incompetence, waste, introduction of ridiculous micro-management & paranoid safety culture.
- After 60 years of incredible volunteer success, we are left disenfranchised with just meaningless PR consultants 'spin' and re-inventing of history distortion.
- Feeling of volunteer status eroded by new expectations
- Timetable running when driver experiences
- Trains operating
- The number of administrative courses expected to qualify in as a volunteer and re-qualification of duties you perform constantly
- Trying to get promoted along publishers guidelines which were not adhered to.
- Bullying & Harassing went unchecked despite policies stepping in.
- As a safeworker (guard, signalman) keeping your wits about you (no 2 days the same)
- Working on cold/wet weather
- The long hours as a head conductor 9am - 5:30pm
- Long shifts (Too long). Travel- now an arduous journey to & from the railway. I'm not disengaged!
- Unfriendly new management
- Unhappy staff and volunteers
- Managing large groups of people, especially at Lakeside where everyone comes to you to ask questions about where to go for lunch and what to do. Making sure everyone is back on the train in time for it's departure. Making sure the passengers are on their own allocated carriage
- Keeping the track formation clear of young trees, Blackberry bushes and generally keeping the railway clear of obstructions.
- Distance
- Being judged and harassed by the older volunteers on Saturday. Needed to change to Sunday crew to be accepted
- For PBRPR, it is the distance from home. I do have concerns at the increasing corporatisation of the operation and increased number of paid staff. The lack of input from volunteers via Puffing Billy Preservation Society in the management is disappointing.
- Trying to suggest better ways to do things
- Lack of volunteer support, revolving door of management,
- The change in focus on the business where the volunteers became an asset to be exploited rather than a partner
- Cost of travel is a challenge
- Running up against opposition to applying heritage policy.
- Lack of understanding and support by the management

# Appendix 3: Open Comments

- The railway as we knew it ceased to exist before COVID. The insulting take over by the government, after good people built and operated the railway for 50 years, destroyed any reason to volunteer
- Very disappointed that the railway doesn't make more of the historical stations along the journey. Selby, Clematis, Emerald & Dog's grave. These would add to the story along the way. A pamphlet could be printed to give to passengers describing the significance of the places.
- Government must get out of way if PBRPR is going to survive as a volunteer based operation
- The demands placed on volunteers has taken the enjoyment out of the role. Volunteers are educated to report any slip up that may happen. "VOLUNTEERS NOT EMPLOYEES"
- I am disappointed at the lack of personal communication from PBRPR to show that our contribution is appreciated and that our services in the future are wanted and what is required to re-engage in our volunteering role.
- Paid staff mostly have scant regard for volunteers who are actively discriminated against. PBRPR treatment of PBPS has been totally disgusting and unwarranted. Long term volunteers are treated poorly.
- I still wish to continue receiving all PBRPR safeworking etc notices (traffic branch) as previously arranged. I am currently classified as an inactive volunteer as I have completed the volunteer induction. I am considering volunteering as a safeworker again (last time was 2017)
- I don't like the electronic sign-on, much prefer manual, pen to paper. Need to be careful to ensure that volunteers are not overwhelmed by bureaucracy.
- Why is the ETRB so down on the PBRPR Preservation Society. This organisation restored the railway to Menzies Creek and operated and continued to restore the railway for the public of Victoria.
- S&T is managed well and is a group of like minded people with old fashioned values.
- Paid management and government regulations have just got to cut some slack..... a lot of slack!
- The modern corporate model WILL NOT WORK with this technology.- This technology cannot function economically without a large commitment from skilled but unpaid individuals. Volunteers will not work under the corporate model.
- Railway heritage volunteers are not interested in certificates, badges, pots of free soup or other feel-good bribes. Only people who lack empathy for why we do it would come up with irrelevant ideas like these (and then wonder why they don't work!). We do it to be as authentic as possible a showcase of Victorian Railways heritage and if management crap makes us feel like cheap labour for a government tourist enterprise then we will "speak with our feet". The fallout from the changes of a few years ago along with the arrival of some new managers led to the disenfranchisement of many people who have put their hearts and souls into that railway to end up having themselves and their values treated like dirt.
- I enjoy the industrial technology that is being preserved. PBRPR has usually been a positive experience and you can stay out of the politics. There are some people in every volunteer organisation who get too involved! The CEO has worked very hard to get the Railway back on track and improve communication.
- I have always wondered why PBRPR does not have a register of the skill sets of the volunteers that work here, so if a special skill is needed it would make sense to contact them to see if they can help
- Need to be less politics and HR and paperwork.
- I believe there has been a gradual loss of focus by management about the importance of volunteers in the success of the enterprise. But, this is not confined to the tourist railways. CFA, SES, Scouts and Church groups face a similar dilemma with recruiting new volunteers.
- This is a volunteer organisation, not a government department.
- I think our interpretive information has been significantly lacking for many, many years (although has improved in recent years), so would love to see more done to inform and educate, along with continuing to see PBR improve its commitment to authentic heritage presentation across all aspects of the railway (i.e., not simply the locomotives and carriages).

# Acknowledgements

Thankyou to those volunteers who provided their voices to this survey and for the benefit of PBRPR.

Thanks also go to:

Kim Dunstan- PBRPR

Adele Horkings - PBRPR

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