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Management, Competitive Grant
Funding and Social Capital

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**STRINGS ATTACHED: NEW PUBLIC MANAGEMENT, COMPETITIVE GRANT
FUNDING AND SOCIAL CAPITAL**

by

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STRINGS ATTACHED: NEW PUBLIC MANAGEMENT, COMPETITIVE GRANT FUNDING AND SOCIAL CAPITAL

ABSTRACT.

This paper first investigates the impact of new public management (NPM) practices, particularly competitive grant funding, on Bushcare New South Wales (NSW), an Australian environmental volunteering organisation. Secondly, identifying such local volunteering organisations as repositories of valuable social capital, it explores the link between volunteering and social capital. Using mixed methods and institutional theory, the study reveals that an increased level of professionalism and accountability is required of Bushcare groups, and that local coordinators face a challenge in balancing local, regional and national priorities without sacrificing Bushcare's mission. These dynamics, it is proposed, have potentially serious social capital implications.

KEYWORDS: competitive grant funding process; new public management; accountability; social capital; institutional theory.

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Without the continuous reproduction and generation of social capital, not only does the community lose its capacity to maintain a practical concern for the welfare of its citizens but, in the long term, the economic and political life of the larger community is compromised (Leonard and Onyx, 2004, p. 7)

INTRODUCTION

This paper first identifies practical and mission implications of New Public Management (NPM) on local environmental volunteering organisations, specifically in relation to the competitive grant funding process. Secondly, it links those implications to broader societal dynamics with an exploration of the relationship between volunteering and social capital. The paper sets groups from Bushcare New South Wales (NSW) in their institutional environment, and, in the light of the controversial concept of social capital, examines the way in which they have responded to their increasingly competitive environment in seeking, gaining and managing grants. In 2003 the Australian Government, through the Natural Heritage Trust (NHT), made \$300 million available for competitive grants to ensure the sustainability of the Australian environment (Australian Government: Departments of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry and the Environment and Heritage, 2005). Bushcare groups, composed of local volunteers operating under the umbrella of local councils, were thereby catapulted into a new arena of operations.

The grant process reveals a great deal about the institutionalisation (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; Meyer and Rowan, 1977; and Scott, 1995) of the new competitive and accountable regime to which Bushcare groups are subject, within the context of NPM. Institutional pressures in the funding environment result in an isomorphic process, where volunteer organisations are increasingly seen as providers of services in a competitive market, threatening their mission and arguably devaluing their role as “potential repositories and multipliers of social capital” (Butcher, 2006, p. 72). This is an important issue, not only because the operation of Bushcare and other

environmental volunteering groups is vital to the achievement of the Australian Government's environmental sustainability objectives, but, at a broader level, because of its potential impact on civil society.

In recent years there has been a recognition by the Australian Government of the importance of social capital (Johnson et al, 2005; and Productivity Commission, 2003), as high degrees of "mutual trust and reciprocity" are argued to sustain "better outcomes in the economy, democracy and civil society" (Winter, 2000, p. 1). The concept of social capital is highly contested, but whatever definition is adopted, it is acknowledged that membership of voluntary organisations makes a significant contribution to the development of trust and cooperation in society, ultimately greasing the wheels of democracy and economic well being. When the dynamics of social capital are confronted with the NPM model of management and accountability increasingly adopted by western public and nonprofit sectors, it is inevitable that there will be some profound effects.

This paper first outlines the establishment and aims of Australia's NHT and introduces Bushcare NSW. Next it identifies the institutionalised NPM environment in which Bushcare NSW operates, and, following this, explores the concept of social capital, particularly highlighting the relationship between social capital and voluntary organisations. The way the study was conducted is then described, and is followed by a presentation of data about the grant funding process, focusing on the way in which local Bushcare NSW groups target, apply for and manage grants, balancing mission imperatives with funding opportunities. Finally, discussion on this data highlights the increasing competition and bureaucratisation of the grant process, identifying the effect of these practices on accountability mechanisms and the achievement of organizational

mission. It proposes that there are wider social capital implications of these practices not only for Bushcare NSW but for society as a whole.

NATURAL HERITAGE TRUST (NHT) AND THE BUSHCARE ORGANISATION

The NHT was established in 1997 after the partial sale of Telstra, the Australian government-owned telecommunications provider. With funding of \$1.25 billion over five years, it represented the largest single financial commitment by the Australian government to the environment (Centre for International Economics, 1999). The NHT's goal is to stimulate activities in the national interest to achieve conservation, sustainable use and repair of Australia's natural environment. Bushcare programs, operating since 1989, primarily under the auspices of local councils (Australian Association of Bush Regenerators (AABR), 2006), enjoyed a boost with the formation of the NHT. They make up the largest of the eighteen NHT-funded programs, which include Landcare, Dunecare and other environmental groups, all of which have been affiliated with the NHT since its inception (Commonwealth of Australia, 2003). Under the first phase of the NHT, support was provided to Bushcare organisations through the Bushcare network. The scheme originally funded one Bushcare "coordinator" in every state and territory, 50 Bushcare regional "facilitators" located across Australia, 120 support staff to help community groups with project coordination and 12 NHT indigenous land management facilitators to help Aboriginal communities.

In its 2001 Federal budget, the Government announced that the NHT would be extended for a further five years with an additional \$1 billion (Commonwealth of Australia, 2003). After this first extension, a new network of support for Bushcare programs and groups was announced, with local natural resource facilitators employed by the communities they served (i.e. the local councils) rather than directly by the Commonwealth. The second extension of the trust, with an

additional \$300 million, was announced in the 2004 Federal Budget, taking the NHT to 2007 - 08, and making it a “\$3 billion investment” (Australian Government: Departments of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry and the Environment and Heritage, 2005).

Australia’s three-tiered system of government consists of the Australian Government (at Federal level), six state and two territory governments, and a number of local councils in each of those states and territories. Income tax is levied federally, and debate about the allocation of funds to state and territory governments, which are formally responsible for issues such as education, health, law enforcement and transport, is “a perennial feature of Australian politics” (Australian Government: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2008). Constitutionally, the state and territory governments are responsible for the functioning of local governments (Australian Local Government Association, 2008), which provide local infrastructure and property services, recreational facilities, community services, cultural facilities, some limited health services and other locally based services. Local councils are funded primarily from taxation (in the form of rates on properties) (38.6%), user charges (33%), grants from the Australian Government and state (or territory) governments (9%) and other revenue such as investment and business income (Australian Local Government Association, 2008).

The Australian Government, therefore, directly funds the states and territories, and provides certain grants to local councils. Further, through the NHT, it also funds local environmental initiatives through grants to local councils to employ professional environmental workers (“officers” or “coordinators”), and through competitive grants to local Bushcare groups. Each of these groups is made up of a team of volunteers, usually with a volunteer “coordinator”, operating under the auspices of a local council¹. They receive funding from councils, in the form of allocations in the council budget through the council-sponsored Bushcare program (for

professional Bushcare workers), NHT funding and funding from other sources, such as corporate grants or sponsorships. These arrangements operate within the context of Australian society, in relation to its existing “stocks” of social capital and potential volunteers.

The mission of Bushcare is to encourage and support community participation in the conservation and restoration of local natural areas (Commonwealth of Australia, 2003). While Bushcare groups typically are affiliated with local government, they also have the characteristics of nonprofit organisations, since they do not exist to make a profit and they are mission-driven. One of a relatively small population of organisations which operate in the overlap between publicly administered and nonprofit organisations, they are subject to the institutional demands of both sectors.

NSW has more than fifty Bushcare programs, with over 90% affiliated with local councils, which contributed more than \$12 million in funding in 1999 – 2000, and provided support in the form of paid staff, training and supervision. Council funding is supplemented by competitive grants from a variety of sources, including the NHT, which makes amounts of up to \$50,000 available for local projects through its Envirofund, launched in 2002 (Australian Government Envirofund, 2006). Reliant on competitive external grants to further their mission, Bushcare organisations must remain competitive in attracting funding and volunteers, and are accountable both to local councils and to grant bodies for the way they use those resources. While it is attached to the public sector, the work of Bushcare NSW is based on a nonprofit mission and the idealism of volunteers, and, like other organisations operating across both sectors, the organisation experiences institutional pressure from two sources to adopt NPM practices.

BUSHCARE'S INSTITUTIONALISED ENVIRONMENT

In recent years, in keeping with overseas trends (Broadbent and Laughlin, 1998; Lawton et al, 2000; and Myers and Sacks, 2003) the Australian Government has implemented NPM in the public sector, with its reliance on stringent accountability and an “audit culture” (Power, 1994, p. 299). Management processes have been identified as being “at the heart of the NPM movement” (Lapsley, 2008, p. 78), particularly in relation to general managers, the advocacy of management “entrepreneurial thinking” in the change process, and increased demands for “transparency and accountability”. The 1976 Royal Commission on Australian Government Administration called for public sector organisations to operate more responsibly, effectively and efficiently (Guthrie and English, 1997), and this stimulated a change in policy. The recognition that from 1960 to 1992 Australia went from being the “third richest OECD nation to the fifteenth” led to the development of Australia’s National Competition Policy in 1995. It proposed that increased competition would “restore incentives for better performance” and lead to the “improved productivity and international competitiveness of Australian businesses” (National Competition Council, 2006).

In response to these policy decisions, structural reforms, including the adoption of NPM accountability techniques and increased professionalism (Australian Government: Departments of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry and the Environment and Heritage, 2005), have been institutionalised in public sector departments and entities, and have drastically reshaped that sector. This increased focus on *outcomes* (Hoque, 2005; and Hoque and Moll, 2001), is based on the assumption that competition will bring efficiency, since in the private sector, “the firms that existed were the ones that had survived competition” (Broadbent and Laughlin, 2005, p. 78).

These powerful institutional pressures have an isomorphic effect as organisations operating within the same organisational field take on similar characteristics (Dacin, 1997; DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; Leiter, 2005; and Scott, 1995). The establishment of the NHT has stimulated greater interactions between local Bushcare groups, particularly through the Volunteers Coordinators Network (VCN) (Australian Association of Bush Regenerators (AABR), 2006), a group for professional coordinators and facilitators of community environmental programs such as Bushcare². Inter-organisational structures and patterns of coalition have been established through VCN contacts and meetings, with NHT funding guidelines leading to an increased information load and the requirement for a more business-oriented approach as funding is increasingly tied to target-based performance (Centre for International Economics, 1999)³.

Bushcare programs and groups operate within this institutionalised environment and are dependent on both local Council and external funding. Consequently, they are susceptible to coercive pressures as they compete with each other through the grant application process, and respond to the resulting accountability requirements. Normative institutional pressures are exerted through professional networks. The increased sophistication of the operations of Bushcare programs, including competitive grant applications, and associated accountability mechanisms, means that the employment of professional Bushcare coordinators and officers is essential. Further, their training, and the development of professional contacts through the VCN, provide Bushcare professionals with access to expert advice, reinforcing professional attitudes and practices. Local groups may often have unclear or ambiguous goals, and therefore are likely to copy the activities of Bushcare groups they perceive to be successful. This mimetic institutional behaviour has been facilitated also by VCN networks and the NHT's publication of successful applicants for each round of grant funding. All of these pressures have an isomorphic

effect on local Bushcare groups, and underline the potential similar impact of grant funding practices and accountability mechanisms.

These institutional changes have at least three implications: at a practical level, as Bushcare groups struggle to accommodate new practices that involve additional administrative loads, accountability requirements and the maintenance and recruitment of volunteers; at a mission level, as groups assess the applicability of funding requirements to their mission and volunteers' satisfaction with the fulfilment of that mission; and, it is proposed, at a social capital level, which is much more difficult to assess, but related to the ability of local groups to attract volunteers and foster a community spirit of cooperation.

First, at a practical level, institutional pressures have led to changes in the management structures and processes of the reformed public sector in order to create “favourable perceptions to stakeholders of the organisation” (Vakkuri, 2003, p. 246). These have been passed on to nonprofit organisations, with more businesslike structures and organisational behaviour being embedded as a result of coercive pressures exerted by funding bodies (Alexander, 2000; and Georke, 2003), normative pressures from professional networks (Alexander and Weiner, 1998; Henderson et al, 2002; and Unterman and Davis, 1982), and mimetic pressures emanating from competition for funds and membership, as organisations seek prestige, credibility and political power (Alexander and Weiner, 1998; and Tuckman, 1998). Thus, at a practical level, tools and techniques from the business sector have been integrated into both the public and nonprofit sectors, and ultimately to voluntary organisations (Irvine, 2000; and Myers and Sacks, 2003).

Secondly, as regards mission implications of changes, the voluntary sector is “complex and heterogeneous” (Torres and Pina, 2003, p. 265), including a wide range of entities, across both public and nonprofit sectors, so that the application of a non-contextualised business model may

simply be inappropriate to their operations. As public sector entities have been subject to the introduction of NPM practices (Christensen, 2003; and Karan, 2003), they have evolved to a performance-based culture (Guthrie and English, 1997; and Josserand et al, 2006), as have nonprofits (Hall-Taylor, 2001), which, unlike private firms, usually have not been preoccupied with earnings (Torres and Pina, 2003, p. 280). This poses problems, since the “fundamental nature” of many nonprofit organisations is rather founded on “moralities, on the social and on the visibility of such non-economic considerations” (Jegers and Lapsley, 2003, p. 205), and so simply transferring business practices to this sector, without a concerted attempt to adapt them to nonprofit culture, could be interpreted as “insensitive to the motivation of the key actors within such organisations and of those who seek to support them by gift or donation” (Jegers and Lapsley, 2003, p. 207).

Viewing management as a “portable technical skill” (Townley, 2001, p. 304) and applying institutionally acceptable, rational management practices may in fact be “*incongruent with [the] overall identity and purpose*” of a nonprofit organisation (Jönsson, 1998, p. 233) and of certain public sector entities, since altruism and voluntary organisations really cannot be accounted for in a modern economy according to traditional economic theory (Gassler, 1998). While it may be appropriate to assess whether a public sector or nonprofit organisation has actually achieved its goals, a business model, with its focus primarily on earnings, will not immediately be an appropriate tool for such an assessment without carefully being tailored to the mission and goals of the public sector or nonprofit organisation. Organisations such as Bushcare, operating with an altruistic mission, will therefore face a tension between institutional pressures for conformity with a competitive, businesslike culture (emanating from the demands of both public and

nonprofit sectors) and the fulfilment of their mission. Consequently, they will need to assess the applicability of activities against organisational mission.

Thirdly, it is proposed that the adoption of institutionalised business practices by nonprofit organisations, particularly community groups, poses a challenge at a social capital level (Onyx, 2004; and Stolle, 2003). The next section explores the concept of social capital, highlights the impact of community groups such as Bushcare on the establishment of social capital, outlines the potential threat from the introduction of competitive behaviour, and sets the scene for a consideration of Bushcare's competitive grants.

SOCIAL CAPITAL AND THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR

The concept of social capital

While social capital is an abstract and contested concept (Herreras, 2003), nevertheless its importance for the effective functioning of society is widely recognised. Relying on networks of relationships founded on trust, reciprocity and cooperation (Coleman, 1988; Dasgupta, 2002; Fukuyama, 2000; Hooghe and Stolle, 2003; Mayer, 2003; Molenaers, 2003; Putnam, 1993 and 2000; and Winter, 2000), it runs parallel to concepts of financial, physical and human capital. Social capital, if abundant, results in a dense civil society, which provides a "link between economics and culture" (Svendsen and Svendsen, 2004, p. 16), and is widely acknowledged as a necessary condition for modern liberal democracy (Fukuyama, 2000). Paradoxically, effective competition also relies on the trust present in social capital, because "even to compete, in a mutually non-destructive way, one needs at some level to trust one's competitors to comply with certain rules" (Gambetta, 2000, p. 215).

A distinction can be made between "bonding" and "bridging" social capital. Bonding social capital is present when social ties are strong and dense, but local, and has a tendency to

exclusivity (Svendsen and Svendsen, 2004). Bridging social capital refers to the facilitation of new networks across boundaries where there has previously been little connection, is outward looking, and may be achieved at the risk of eroding existing networks (Leonard and Onyx, 2003). The transition from bonding to bridging social capital has been described as a transition from “getting by” to “getting ahead” (Leonard and Onyx, 2003), and implies an entrepreneurial approach consistent with NPM.

The work of Bourdieu (1986), Coleman (1988 and 1990) and Putnam (1993; and 2000) has extended awareness of social capital and the importance of voluntary associations in reducing society’s reliance on the government (de Tocqueville, 1963). In recent years there has been an acknowledgement by governments of the importance of social capital (Fukuyama, 2000; Herreras, 2003; Hooghe and Stolle, 2003; and Johnson et al, 2005), which, while it does not fit within the “utilitarian tradition” of classical and neoclassical economics with its focus on business practices and efficiency (Granovetter, 1985, p. 483), is necessary to achieve economic development and stable government (Leonard and Onyx, 2004).

Consequently, governments need to “recalibrate” their policies to ensure that they build or support social capital, rather than damaging it (Productivity Commission, 2003, p. ix). Several factors make this a problematic issue (Productivity Commission, 2003), including the ambiguity of the concept of social capital itself, the difficult task of measuring it, and the need for “multiple and mutually reinforcing policies” to enhance it (Productivity Commission, 2003, p. 58). Further, a recognition that social capital policies should be sensitive to local issues needs to be balanced against the difficulty for policy makers at other levels of government to be aware of local needs and to incorporate them into higher-level policies (Productivity Commission, 2003).

Stolle (2003) asserted that while under NPM there had been an increase in the number of voluntary organisations in the UK and Germany, their character had changed, and social capital had decreased. The State can facilitate social capital by strengthening associative networks, and facilitating trust and participation (Herrerias, 2003), thereby assisting the development of “pluralist democracy, improved physical health, self-rated happiness, public safety and enhanced economic performance and efficiency” (Johnson et al, 2005, p. 2)⁴. For community organisations to flourish, a necessary condition for the development of social capital, several conditions need to be present: flat organisational structures, voluntary work, the opportunity for networking, publicly visible work that is acknowledged and accountability to communities (Leonard and Onyx, 2004, p. 188 - 9). If NPM processes jeopardise these factors, then they may be adversely affecting social capital.

Social capital in Australia

Social capital is on the agenda of the Australian government. This was demonstrated in 1998 with the Prime Minister's⁵ Round Table discussions between business and community organisations in order to increase civic engagement through volunteering (Australian Government: Department of Health and Aging, 2006). In 2000, volunteering was put forward as a “key component” of a new “social coalition” proposed by the Prime Minister between government, business, the charitable sector and individuals, to lessen the public's dependence on the government to solve social problems. The Productivity Commission's (2003) Social Capital report highlighted the government's responsibility in setting in place policies that enhanced social capital rather than inadvertently damaging it. Even though the “rhetoric” of social capital is “well entrenched” in Australian government policy, however, it has been asserted that many policies relating to the

interface between governments and the voluntary sector have actually decreased social capital in those organisations (Butcher, 2006, p. 83).

Whatever the rhetoric, it is recognised that “voluntary work meets needs, expands opportunities for democratic participation, personal development and recreation within a community and helps to develop and reinforce social networks and cohesion” (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006, p. 3) with 6.3% of the economically active population in Australia involved in the civil society organisation workforce as paid staff or volunteers (Salamon et al, 2003, p. 17)⁶. Through local groups and the funding the Australian government has made available through the NHT, Bushcare volunteers operationalise national, regional and local environmental goals. Any threat to the effective operation of these groups or programs is therefore not merely a threat to the achievement of Australia’s environmental needs, but is a potential threat to Australia’s social capital. The institutionalisation of NPM-related practices such as competition, efficiency and the establishment of certain grant funding reporting mechanisms, in local Bushcare organisations, represents such a threat, since these practices could jeopardise the ability of local groups to enthuse and attract volunteers.

This contention was proposed by Onyx (2004), in a presentation delivered to the Sustainability and Social Science Round Table Proceedings in 2004. She identified three possible strategies for caring for the publicly owned and used resources known as the “commons”. Private ownership would take the commons out of public use, while State ownership would lead to a loss of control by local people who would then have “less incentive to care for the resource” (Onyx, 2004, p. 54). To keep the commons under the joint control of its users would require high levels of social capital, which was less and less viable in a postmodern globalised scenario (Onyx, 2004). The dilemma for the Landcare movement (an organisation identified earlier as similar to Bushcare)

was that it was driven at a grass roots level, generating substantial social capital, but was bound to the local, so focused on bonding rather than bridging capital (Onyx, 2004).

In contrast, in Australia the funding focus was on a broader national environmental agenda, accompanied by a greater degree of centralisation and “bureaucratic accountability mechanisms” (Onyx, 2004, p. 52). This resulted in the imposition of national policy on local groups, which produced an alienating effect, with local volunteers becoming more cynical and distrustful of the national machinery and consequently less motivated to action to maintain the local commons (Onyx, 2004). The solution and challenge was to develop “multi-stakeholder and multi-sector collaborations”, with regional coordinators bringing together local concerns and national funding priorities without ignoring local knowledge or destroying local social capital (Onyx, 2004, p. 52). Bushcare groups operate in a manner similar to Landcare groups, and are subject to the same funding and operational issues. Operating in an increasingly competitive, institutionalised environment, seeking grant funding and subject to its funding requirements and reporting mechanisms, they are responsible for attracting community volunteers and achieving local environmental aims.

In the context of attempts to build social capital, it has been recognised that policies at high levels of government “need either to be robust to variations in local conditions or to embody mechanisms that allow for flexibility and discretion when applied in different areas” (Productivity Commission, 2003, p. 59). This tension between the national and the local is applicable in any country, but it is especially applicable in the Australian Bushcare context, with vast distances and huge differences in climate and landscape across the Australian continent making it difficult for national grant bodies to appreciate local environmental priorities and nuances.

The relationship between social capital and volunteering is a contested issue, as are the definition and measurement of social capital. Paxton (1999, p. 90) acknowledged that there was a large gap between notions of what social capital is and ways of measuring it, with many measurements relying on “single indicators”. Instead, she attempted to develop a “multiple indicator assessment” of social capital, in response to the recurring theme in sociology that there has been “a decline in community” (Paxton, 1999, p. 88). In choosing to measure trust and associations, she asserted that volunteering is an “outcome” that is “facilitated by high levels of social capital” (Paxton, 1999, p. 101). This is the view taken by Stone and Hughes (2002, p. 2)⁷, where volunteering and community cooperation are hypothesised as an “outcome” of healthy social capital.

On the other hand, the Australian government’s Productivity Commission (2003) report on social capital outlines several policy ideas for enhancing social capital, one being “community participation and volunteering” (Productivity Commission, 2003, p. 74). It acknowledges the potential for government policy to “undermine social capital”, for example, by promoting strategies that place “onerous restrictions or obligations on community groups, and displacing or reducing community-based activities” (Productivity Commission, 2003, p. 63). An interesting question therefore is whether volunteering *contributes* to social capital or whether it provides *evidence* of social capital. There appears to be no definitive answer, except that some scholarly opinion identifies volunteering as an “indicator” of social capital (Champlin, 1999; Putnam 2000), even asserting that since social capital can be created “only by the private sector in the absence of government”, that “private charity and voluntarism are the only recourse” to improve social capital (Champlin, 1999, p. 1307).

In addition, Anheier's and Salamon's (2001) paper on global volunteering patterns maintains that a "more contextual approach" to volunteering is emerging, where greater recognition is being given to "value changes, social capital and social exclusion mechanisms at the local level"(Anheier and Salamon, 2001, p. 17). Their research revealed that the setting in which the nonprofit sector came closest to the "ideal of a 'civil society'" was the social democratic model, exemplified by Sweden and Finland, in which the nonprofit sector facilitated individual and group expression and was characterised by high levels of volunteers and membership in nonprofit organisations, i.e. a society in which social capital was abundant.

These authors take the view that volunteering is both an indicator of and contributor to social capital. If there is a high level of trust and cooperation in society, people volunteer with local community groups, but if structures and processes are adopted which disenfranchise volunteers, or compromise the mission of the organisation in which they provide volunteer services, then it can be intuited that their enthusiasm for volunteering will eventually decrease. Wuthnow (1991, p. 268) identified the danger of "ever-expanding bureaucracy" as "the greatest danger facing volunteer agencies". His study revealed that volunteers feared that "something" would be lost if the voluntary sector is either too large or "too heavily burdened" with oppressive bureaucratic demands (Wuthnow, 1991, p. 269).

This paper therefore first scrutinises the process in which Bushcare groups apply for and manage competitive grants, focusing on the implications for professional and volunteer personnel. It then questions whether the acceptance of grant funding challenges the fulfilment of Bushcare's mission. Finally, based on the findings of this research and on social capital literature, it exposes the social capital implications not only at the level of local environmental volunteering, but also at a broader societal level.

THE CONDUCT OF THE STUDY

A two-stage approach was adopted to discern how local Bushcare NSW groups operated within their institutional setting. More specifically, the study aimed to gather insight into the accountability processes and the grant funding environment in New South Wales Bushcare environmental volunteering organisations. It consisted of qualitative fieldwork, followed by the construction and distribution of a questionnaire. In both stages respondents were given the option of anonymity.

Stage one, the qualitative stage, consisted of five semi-structured interviews and two semi-structured focus groups conducted with local Bushcare professional coordinators. This stage was designed in order to gain an understanding of the operations and structure of the Bushcare organisations, the approaches to the funding system, and the environment in which these organisations operate, as well as their responses to change over the years. Specific issues of interest were organisational structure, local council affiliations, funding sources, the grant application process and the environmental regeneration practices which form the basis of Bushcare's mission. Two of the interviews were conducted by telephone and the other three in person, from a variety of regions within NSW. Focus groups were conducted in a similar manner. The face-to-face interviews were conducted with local Bushcare coordinators from the Wollongong region. They were the first point of contact with the initial project, and were chosen because of a prior relationship with the Bushcare group by another researcher. The other two interviews were conducted with a Bushcare coordinator from a Sydney Bushcare organisation, and one from Northern NSW. These two were chosen because of their lengthy experience with the Bushcare initiative, on the recommendation of local Wollongong Bushcare personnel. They had been part of the program since its inception, so were a valuable source of information about

changes that had occurred over a number of years. The two focus groups were composed of local Wollongong Bushcare workers, and explored the same issues as the interviews, but in a group context.

Based on input from the qualitative stage, a questionnaire was constructed for the second stage of the study. It was pilot tested with two industry experts (Bushcare coordinators) and nine adult respondents, who reviewed it and provided feedback about theoretical, practical, formatting and legibility issues. The two Bushcare coordinators chosen were, for accessibility reasons, from the regional zone in which the researchers resided. These coordinators were at the coalface of the Bushcare program grant process, having planned for and submitted grant applications, and coordinated and managed groups following grant success. They provided detailed information about each of these processes. Emerging themes from responses generated in the qualitative stage were analysed and formed the basis for each section of the quantitative tool⁸. In relation to organisational structure, respondents highlighted the tiers of government, and the types and sources of available funding. Respondents also specified the differences between the funding types, their experiences with the funding application process, and the nature of their operations once funding was granted.

The questionnaire was distributed to coordinators in all 54 local Bushcare programs within NSW, with a response rate of 80%. In the course of this study, a census was taken to determine the entire population of operational Bushcare NSW programs, information which had not previously been available. Data was analysed using SPSS Version 12.0.1 (LEAD Technologies Inc., 2003).

BUSHCARE GRANTS

Local Bushcare NSW programs are made up of a skeleton staff of Bushcare employees paid by a local council and a band of local volunteers. Coercive, normative and mimetic institutional

pressures (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983) were evident in the practical dynamics of grant applications and management.

Grant opportunities, applications and success

During focus groups and interviews, participants made frequent reference to the objectives of available grant funding, and the increasingly regional focus required, even at the expense of local projects perceived to be a high priority. One Bushcare worker acknowledged that while funding was plentiful, it was not always targeted at items that local groups thought were most necessary:

Bitou bush is a weed of national significance, it gives [the project] status in terms of funding. We have a Bushcare group working on Bitou bush in the area, then we can say what we are doing is of regional focus. If you don't have that, how can you say that you are just pulling out weeds and would like some money [interview with local Bushcare coordinator].

Bushcare NSW groups typically had applied for an average of 21 grants since the inception of the of the first phase of the Bushcare program, resulting in an average of just over \$168,800 in funding in the past 12 months alone and around \$357,600 per program over the years of their operation. Table 1 indicates that 85% of Bushcare groups had applied for NHT funding (including Landcare, Rivercare and Wetland schemes), with a success rate of 91%. Applications for corporate funding, requiring an entrepreneurial attitude and community networks, were much less frequent. Once applications had been prepared, success rates ranged from 80% to 100%.

[Take in Table 1]

These success rates are quite high, indicating that the issue for local groups is not simply *competition*, but the *competitive process*. This was borne out by the fact that in spite of this success, there was some dissatisfaction about the dynamics of grant funding. Bushcare NSW programs rely on volunteers, involving an average of 198 individual volunteers distributed

amongst an average of 28 groups in each local Council Bushcare program. Keeping volunteers motivated and committed is the task of the local Bushcare officers and coordinators, and depends on volunteers' satisfaction with local funding and the grant application and approval processes, on their perceptions of the group's mission, and on whether that mission is being fulfilled by the attention paid to local environmental issues. One professional coordinator noted many disincentives in the new funding system, including the practice of allocating grants from a centralised fund. A panel of judges based in Canberra, the national capital, assessed the merits of the grant application based on the paperwork submitted to them. While the coordinator acknowledged this as objective, he preferred the previous system, in which regional assessors made decisions based on extensive local knowledge. He believed that with the new centralised system, all they had to do in Canberra was "look at a few pieces of paper and judge an application on how well it's worded" [interview with local Bushcare coordinator], denoting an increase in the importance of the grant application document.

Mimetic pressures were illustrated by a consciousness of the image bestowed on Bushcare groups by success in winning competitive grants, and the publication of successful grant applicants. Table 2 indicates the respondents' perceptions of the benefits of grant success, including an image of being more "productive, active and successful" (33%).

[Take in Table 2]

Increased coercive pressures necessitated the services of environmental professionals in the preparation of a grant application, a task that took many days and required considerable expertise, not only in bush regeneration but also in creativity. These normative pressures could be identified when respondents described the grant application process as too complicated, with the words "more professional" and "like a business" mentioned frequently in focus groups and interviews.

The survey revealed that grant applications were completed by full-time (83%) or part-time (7%) paid employees, over half of whom were Bushcare coordinators. Volunteers therefore had little to do with the preparation of grant applications. While their involvement is not impossible, it is difficult for Bushcare professionals to involve volunteers in what is a complex administrative process, and may even be counter to what volunteers are actually volunteering for, which is working in the bush. The danger of dissociating grant preparation and volunteers is that grants could be out of step with volunteer perceptions.

Winning competitive grants gave local Bushcare groups the opportunity to expand their work and improve their image, vital factors in attracting volunteers. Thus while local groups have been successful in gaining grant funding, and their image has been enhanced, volunteers have little to do with the preparation of grant applications, with that role performed by environmental professionals. The reliance on paid professionals was also evident in the management of grant funding.

Grant management

Once a grant was won, there were significant practical implications in the day to day organisation of Bushcare groups, consistent with coercive pressures for accountability demanded by funders, including an emphasis on businesslike behaviour (Commonwealth of Australia, 2003; and Myers and Sacks, 2003). The quantitative data in Table 3 displays the percentage of their time that Bushcare coordinators allocated to their various responsibilities. While work directly relating to environmental regeneration practices, such as project coordination (29%) and on-site work (28%), had a high allocation of time, administrative duties (18%) and grant application management and reporting (11%) also took up a considerable proportion of coordinators' time.

[Take in Table 3]

All interview and focus group respondents observed that increased demands in accountability and reporting over recent years resulted in a change of time and responsibility allocation, with administrative duties including planning, satisfying funding requirements, and financial management now taking up most of their time. One Bushcare Coordinator stated that “most of my week is spent in the office, whereas I used to be able to spend a lot [of time] outdoors” [interview with local Bushcare coordinator]. More time spent indoors means less time is available for the coordinators to keep in touch with vegetation levels at regeneration zones and to assess what work is of high priority. Thus overlaid on a perception of what is the “real” work of Bushcare, i.e. the outdoors work of weeding and bush regeneration, is the increasing level of administrative work that accompanies grant funding. The level of professionalisation required of Bushcare employees has grown, with greater sophistication required in grant applications, grant management, grant reporting, general administrative duties, recruitment and training of volunteers, and, increasingly, the need to form alliances with other local groups to develop regional objectives, since the NHT’s emphasis is being more strongly focused on regional rather than local projects.

These requirements included increased and continuous evaluations and monitoring of sites once funding was allocated. A Bushcare Coordinator observed that “funding bodies often require more information than is usually provided to the Council ... these projects are comprehensively reported and evaluated”. Survey respondents were asked whether they had observed any changes to their organisation as a consequence of the funding being awarded. The most frequently stated changes to Bushcare NSW organisations were increased administrative duties (85%), more paperwork (78%), more opportunities (68%), and more accountability and complex accounting

(65%). Only 30% stated that they were able to attract more volunteers as a result of receiving grant funding.

Mission implications

The possibility that the mission of public sector/nonprofit organisations may be jeopardised within an institutionalised NPM environment has already been highlighted. As coercive, normative and mimetic pressures are exerted on organisations, members will need to assess the mission-appropriateness of institutionally driven practices. At issue in this case is the ability of local Bushcare organisations to balance the environmental work needed at their local sites with the type of projects specified as appropriate for grant funding, and, once funding is obtained, to manage the grant successfully. This has to be done while maintaining the interest and commitment of local volunteers, who are removed from the increasingly professional activities of grant application and management. A Bushcare Coordinator, commenting on the regional focus required in grant applications, observed that “groups are finding it harder ... requirements on projects are that they take on a regional focus ... if a site does not have the required regional focus, they tend not to get funding” [interview with local Bushcare coordinator]. This was not necessarily viewed as the best approach for local projects, since “there is heaps of funding but it is targeted at different things that won’t help, for example, a threatened species grant is required but they want to give money out for fencing” [interview with local Bushcare coordinator]. This potential deflection from the projects perceived as mission-appropriate at a local level, to those that were mission-appropriate for regional grant success, could jeopardise local groups’ ability to achieve environmental sustainability, ultimately affecting volunteer rates if projects were not perceived to be relevant to local concerns.

Nearly half (46%) of the survey respondents indicated that they found difficulty in balancing the management of grant funding with the mission of Bushcare, while a significant proportion (38%) indicated that they felt there was potential for the goals of Bushcare to be compromised in order to comply with grant funding requirements. A cross-tabulation was performed to assess whether a Bushcare's paid staff were susceptible to having their goals being compromised, using the two variables "Council pays staff" and "Potential for goals to be compromised". The cross-tabulation rendered a significant chi-square result (p-value <0.03, chi-squared value = 6.3, d.f. = 1). These results indicated that among staff paid by council, 48% saw potential for Bushcare's goals to be compromised in the grant application process. Bushcare participants were asked whether they believed they must tailor the work at regeneration sites to be eligible for funding requirements, with 59% responding positively. Of this group, 70% identified difficulty in balancing the grant management with the mission of the Bushcare program.

DiMaggio and Powell's (1983, p. 155) predictors of isomorphic behaviour asserted that the greater reliance on academic and professional credentials in choosing staff, the greater the extent to which the organisation would adopt institutional pressures and become like other organisations within the field. Bushcare paid staff are, in the majority of cases, full-time employees with a tertiary or TAFE education⁹ in environmental regeneration. They are also the ones who are responsible for choosing appropriate grants, and completing draft and final grant applications. Professional Bushcare staff are subject to pressure to operate in a professionally acceptable manner in accordance with normative institutional expectations. Consequently, they have a responsibility to uphold the requirements of their position, namely to gain grant funding to secure the future of their organisation, while conforming to the practices established in bush regeneration and managing local volunteers.

In a sense, these professionals perform a role similar to that attempted by school principals in the United Kingdom, who, faced with the demands of NPM accountability requirements and administrative changes, attempted to “ ‘buffer’ the teaching staff from the worst effects of these changes” (Broadbent and Laughlin, 1998, p. 428). As NPM was introduced into the UK, this occurred in both General Practice medical situations and schools, as either existing or new personnel absorbed “as much as possible of the ‘operational’ implications of the [NPM] changes to allow core activities to continue unaffected” (Broadbent and Laughlin, 1998, p. 429). This role puts pressure on the Bushcare employees, and the extent to which they achieve this will determine, to some extent, the level of satisfaction experienced by local volunteers. A perception of the fulfilment of Bushcare’s mission will be vital to the volunteer recruitment process. It is the difficulty in balancing these two often competing behaviours (fulfilling mission obligations while satisfying accountability requirements) that gives way to the potential for one of them to be compromised.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Over the last two decades, NPM has driven reform in the public sector world-wide, and the changes adopted as a result have been extended to nonprofit organisations, with NPM practices institutionalised in the Australian public and nonprofit sectors. These changes have had significant implications for organisations such as Bushcare NSW, which, positioned across both public and nonprofit sectors, have a mission of environmental rehabilitation in the context of local groups of volunteers. As these local groups experience institutional pressures from both sectors, and compete for an increasing pool of NHT grant funding, the strings attached to the grants become more apparent as administrative processes become more sophisticated.

Bushcare groups compete for Commonwealth/National, State and Regional, and Corporate philanthropic grant funding (Australian Government: Department of the Environment and Heritage, 2004). The NHT's Envirofund operates in a succession of grant funding rounds. By the end of 2006 it had invested over \$110 million in projects Australia-wide (Commonwealth of Australia, 2003). Increasingly, the funding has strings attached in the form of grant targeting and accountability requirements.

A review of the first phase of the NHT Bushcare Program, conducted in November 1999, emphasised the need for improved fund allocation, partnership formation with industry and philanthropic organisations to enhance funding, the importance of regional planning, and the need for more effective measures for monitoring and evaluation of outputs and outcomes (Centre for International Economics, 1999). In addition, in 2002-03 the extension of the NHT indicated a move towards strategic integrated investment in natural resource management, focusing on regional development. The impetus was for the adoption of a more "business-oriented" approach with an investment in community capacity building and institutional change, including greater emphasis on the development and use of more effective performance measures (Centre for International Economics, 1999, p. 7). Bushcare groups were encouraged to design, manage, and evaluate the success of their projects to achieve the most effective use of resources.

Three categories of implications of the professionalisation of local Bushcare groups have been identified: the practical level of applying for and management grants; the mission level as local Bushcare groups attempt to remain faithful to their aims while satisfying the guidelines for grant funding; and the wider level of social capital, as the effects of bending and professionalising the mission, as a result of the requirements of the competitive grant process, are experienced by community volunteers. As explained earlier in the paper, the link between social capital and

volunteering is contested, but, the authors believe, justified (Champlin, 1999; and Putnam, 2000). Figure 1 below displays these implications and their institutional setting.

[Take in figure 1]

Practical implications include organisational changes and adjustments that need to be made by local groups to accommodate the pressure to apply for competitive grants, with the increased sophistication required in both grant preparation and accountability mechanisms, all of which contribute to heavier administrative loads. In the majority of cases, these have been handled by environmental professionals, who, as employees of local councils, are responsible for managing Bushcare activities, for preparing grant applications and reports, and for recruiting, maintaining and training volunteers.

The competitive grant funding process also has implications for the fulfillment of Bushcare's mission. As grant funding guidelines have evolved to put greater emphasis on national and regional priorities, local groups must demonstrate an understanding of the wider issues of bush regeneration and link their local concerns to more extensive priorities. Professional Bushcare staff, typically the ones who prepare grant applications, need to be aware of the danger of tailoring local projects just to fit wider funding parameters. Some have already expressed the opinion that there is potential for Bushcare's mission to be jeopardised if local groups pursue grant funding without thinking through its implications.

While the definition and measurement of social capital is debated, "liberal individualist ideology" (Leonard and Onyx, 2004, p. 185), which has been institutionalised in the public and nonprofit sectors in the form of NPM practices involving competition and efficiency, has been identified as likely to lead to a diminution in reciprocity, trust and social agency, the hallmarks of social capital. There is an increasing awareness on the part of governments, including the Australian

government, of the importance of social capital, and of the fact that government policies can hinder or enhance it. The role of volunteers, whether volunteering is seen as an indicator of social capital or a contributing factor to the enhancement of social capital, has a powerful role to play in building a sense of local community. It has been acknowledged that “a general drive to increase bonding social capital, the internal connectedness of micro communities, might do as much harm as good in the absence of parallel attempts to increase bridging social capital” (Productivity Commission, 2003, p. 59). Increasing bridging social capital without losing bonding social capital (Leonard and Onyx, 2003; and Svendsen and Svendsen, 2004) will be a challenge for local Bushcare groups, as they will need to establish wider networks in order to achieve the priorities of grant funding, while maintaining local networks. Groups will need to be both well connected and well bonded (Leonard and Onyx, 2004).

The results of the survey are entirely representative of the population of Bushcare NSW programs, but there are fewer than sixty locally based programs in the state. This indicates a limitation of the present study, but also provides avenues for a more extensive study of Bushcare groups Australia-wide. In addition, the large-scale Bushcare program is relatively young, and future longitudinal studies might provide interesting comparisons as local groups come to terms with the impact of competitive grant funding processes, particularly as the field settles down to new modes of operation. The study took an institutional view, using mixed methods, so there were inherent assumptions about the validity and complementarity of archival, qualitative and quantitative research. The focus of the study was on the professional Bushcare workers rather than the volunteers, with the social capital implications highlighted being intuited from social capital literature and case data. The study does not claim to “prove” or “measure” social capital,

but rather to highlight the wider social issues and implications of an increasingly corporatized environment.

The institutional contextual understanding of Bushcare's operations enables conclusions to be drawn at a deeper level, with the identification of mission and social capital implications of grant funding. This suggests further avenues for research, including the monitoring of volunteer commitment at a local level, and further studies on how volunteers respond to grant funding and accountability mechanisms. It is our hope that this paper might stimulate discussion and further research on what we believe is a very important issue, and that longitudinal studies will track the impact of competitive tendering and funding on local volunteering, which has been described as both contributing to and providing evidence of social capital. While social capital is difficult, if not impossible, to measure, fruitful studies could be conducted on the way Bushcare groups look beyond their local areas to network and form links regionally and nationally, in an attempt to understand the tensions between the formation and maintenance of bonding and bridging social capital. In particular, the role professional Bushcare officers will play in this strategic process, and their ability to motivate and recruit volunteers, will be significant in the fulfilment, not only of Bushcare's mission, but of the Australian government's environmental sustainability goals. The fact that there are strings attached to grant funding does not mean that it is inappropriate, but it does mean that discernment and strategic response at a local level will be of vital importance if the pool of local volunteers is to be maintained or increased, and both bonding and bridging social capital strengthened.

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TABLES

Funding	Applied	Success rate
NHT	85%	91%
Landcare	26%	100%
Rivercare	18%	100%
Wetland	9%	100%
EPA (Environmental Protection Authority)	67%	92%
CMA (Catchment Management Authority)	65%	96%
Corporate philanthropy	15%	80%
Corporate sponsorship	38%	91%

Table 1. Grant applications and success.

Category of Responses	Percentage
Productive, active and successful	33%
Professional / business-like	17%
Recognised / known	17%
Valuable, Worthwhile & Important	15%
Legitimate / viable and credible	9%
Resourced and sustainable	9%

Table 2: Success in grant funding and respondents' opinions about Bushcare image.

Activity	Mean % of time allocated
Coordination of projects	29
On-site work	28
Administration duties	18
Grant application, management and reporting	11
Training courses	11

Table 3: Time allocated to tasks each week by Bushcare coordinators.

FIGURE

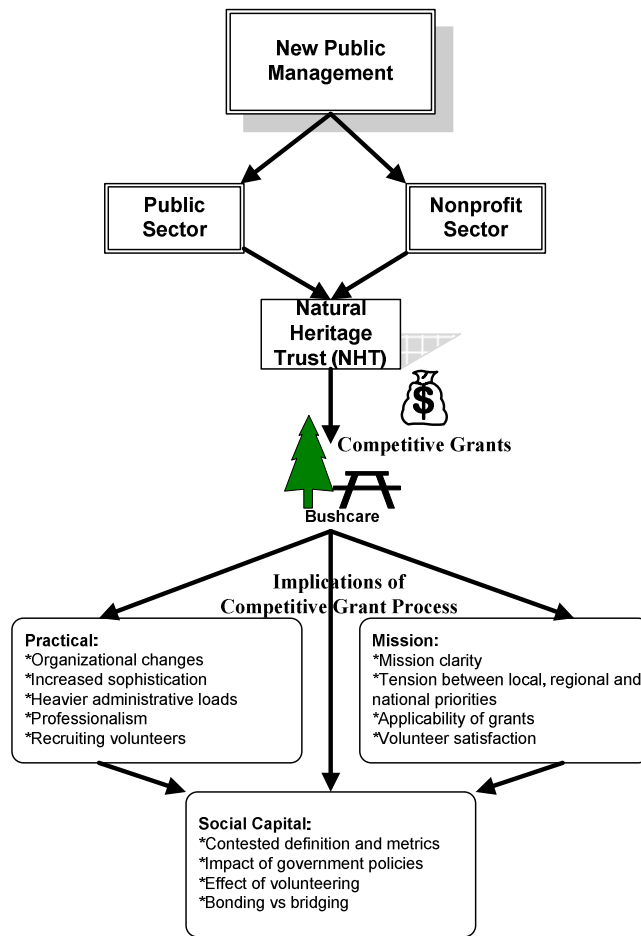


Figure 1. Implications of Competitive Grant Funding Process

17. Do you feel that it was easier for your Bushcare group to gain grant funding 5 years ago? (Please specify why below)

- Yes No

18. Do you have any plans to apply for grant funding in future?

- Yes (Go to question 21) No (Go to question 19)

19. Why will you not apply for any grant funding in future?

20. Here are a few reasons other organisations have given for not planning to apply for any grant funding in future. Please indicate which apply to you (tick as many as are appropriate).

- Too much hassle
 Will not need any additional funding
 Believe you won't be successful
 Too much paperwork
 Not the right grant for the work underway
 Not interested in only short-term funding
 Projects will not have a regional focus that is required for funding
 None of the above

21. Has your organisation applied for any grant funding in its entire existence?

- Yes (Go to question 24) No (Go to question 22)
 Not to my knowledge (Go question 50)

22. Why has your organisation not applied for any grant funding?

23. Here are a few reasons other organisations have given for not applying for any grant funding before. Please indicate which apply to you (tick as many as are appropriate).

- Too much hassle
 Do not need any additional funding
 Believe you won't be successful
 Too much paperwork
 Not the right grant for the work underway
 Not interested in only short-term funding
 Project does not have a regional focus that is required for funding
 None of the above.

Please go to question 50.

24. Approximately how many grants has the organisation applied for in the entirety of the program? _____

25. Please estimate the amount of funding that has been obtained in the last year: \$ _____

26. Please provide an estimate of how much grant funding has been obtained, in total, over the years: \$ _____

C. GRANT APPLICATION PROCEDURES

In the next section you will find a table relating to specific grants. For each of the grants listed, please indicate whether you have applied for them, whether you were successful, and how much funding you obtained?

Funding Program	Have you applied?	Was your application successful?
27. Australian Government EnviroFund- NHT	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes → <input type="checkbox"/> No (Go to question 28)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
28. LandCare	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes → <input type="checkbox"/> No (Go to question 29)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
29. RiverCare	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes → <input type="checkbox"/> No (Go to question 30)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
30. Wetland Action Grant Program	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes → <input type="checkbox"/> No (Go to question 31)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
31. West 2000	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes → <input type="checkbox"/> No (Go to question 32)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
32. Environmental Trust (EPA)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes → <input type="checkbox"/> No (Go to question 33)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
33. Catchment Management Authorities	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes → <input type="checkbox"/> No (Go to question 34)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
34. Corporate Philanthropy funding	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes → <input type="checkbox"/> No (Go to question 35)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
35. Corporate Sponsorship (please specify corporation) _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes → <input type="checkbox"/> No (Go to question 36)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
36. Other (please specify) _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes → <input type="checkbox"/> No (Go to question 37)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

Please indicate where this pressure comes from and how much is exerted...

How much pressure do you feel from...	What amount of pressure do you feel is exerted? (Please mark with a <u>cross</u> on the dotted line)
51. Volunteer groups	A little pressure -----A lot of pressure
52. Colleagues	A little pressure -----A lot of pressure
53. Professional network	A little pressure -----A lot of pressure
54. Higher up the hierarchy	A little pressure -----A lot of pressure
55. Other (please specify) _____	A little pressure -----A lot of pressure

56. Do you attend regular VCN (Volunteer Coordinator Network) meetings?
 Yes No (Go to question 61)

59. Do you feel that the VCN meetings are a forum for learning about which factors make grant applications successful or unsuccessful?
 Yes No

57. Is information about upcoming grant opportunities shared around at these VCN meetings?
 Yes No

60. Is there any other guidance given at VCN meetings as to how to apply for grants?
 Yes No

58. Do you hear about successful grant applications from other groups at these VCN meetings?
 Yes No

61. Have you adopted or copied any practices used by a group who had a successful grant application?
 Yes No

E. RECRUITMENT ACTIVITIES

62. What type of activities do you undertake to recruit new volunteers?

64. Have you ever adopted or copied any recruitment activities that have been successful for other groups?
 Yes No

65. Does your budget include an allocation for recruitment activities?
 Yes (Go to question 66) No (Go to question 67)

63. Here are a few recruitment activities that other organisations use to attract volunteers. Please indicate which of these your organisation conducts (tick as many as are applicable):
 Letter-box drops
 Direct mail from a database
 Radio Advertising
 Bushcare Newsletter
 Television Advertising
 Newspaper Advertising
 Website
 Agency Referral
 Workshops
 Word-of-mouth
 Site signage
 Brochures
 None of the above

66. Estimate what percentage of your total funding is allocated to recruitment activities (out of 100%)? _____%

67. How do you monitor the success of the recruitment activities you conduct?

Thank you for completing this survey. Your responses will remain fully confidential.

Please indicate whether you would like to receive a report of the survey findings at the end of 2005:

No, please do not send me a report.

Yes, I would like to receive a report in softcopy.
 Email (for delivery):.....

Yes, I would like to receive a report in hardcopy.
 Address for report delivery:
 Name of receiver

If any further research is to be conducted in this area, I would be willing to be contacted to participate.

NOTES

¹ Staffing arrangements vary between local councils. Some programs employ Bushcare “officers” (Ryde City Council, 2008), while others employ “coordinators” and “part-time on-site Bushcare trainers” (Shoalhaven City Council, 2008). A small number of Bushcare groups operate independently, without local council affiliation.

² The VCN is run by the Australian Association of Bush Regenerators (AABR), established in 1986 to address concerns about the continuing survival and integrity of bushland and dependent fauna. AABR is an association incorporated under the Associations Incorporation Act 1984 (NSW) and is made up of a voluntary committee, a number of sub-committees and several hundred members and subscribers from most parts of Australia. The VCN’s role is to provide a support network and means of information dissemination for bush regeneration workers.

³ A report by Bushcare Projects Field Evaluation (Department of Environment and Heritage, 2005) compared Bushcare projects before the establishment of the NHT and after the NHT’s first phase. It revealed, among other metrics, that the level and quality of project monitoring and evaluation increased significantly in all states and territories except Tasmania. The extent to which internal project evaluation systems were set up showed an increase in all states and territories except the Northern Territory and Australian Capital Territory.

⁴ The Productivity Commission (2003, pp. 76, 77) identified two ways local councils could implement policies aimed at enhancing social capital. One was the provision of “enrichment activities” for children and families (Productivity Commission 2003, p. 76) and the other proposed that “small scale neighbourhood councils with real decision making power” would boost social capital because they facilitated “greater community participation” and a higher degree of responsiveness to community needs (Productivity Commission 2003, p. 77, citing Saguro Group 2000).

⁵ Prime Minister John Howard was in office from March 1996 until December 2007.

⁶ The figure of 6.3% seems low, but refers to the percentage of the “economically active population”, not to volunteering as a percentage of the total population. However, Australia’s 6.3% *is* low relative to other developed countries, where the average nonprofit workforce (both paid and volunteer) is 7.4% of the economically active population (4.7% are paid nonprofit staff and 2.7% are volunteers) (Salamon et al. 2003, p. 18). Even taken as a percentage of the total population, Australia’s volunteering rate is comparatively low, in the 1990s being 19% of the total population, compared to an overall world average of 26.8% (Anheier and Salamon, 2001). From data gathered in the Voluntary Work Survey, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2006, p. 3) reported that in 2006, 5.2 million people (34% of the Australian population aged 18 years and over), “participated in voluntary work” to the extent of 713 million hours. Differences in record-keeping and calculation of voluntary hours between countries make it difficult to compare volunteering rates internationally. Of more concern are the trends in volunteering within an individual country.

⁷ Stone and Hughes (2002, p. 8) developed a conceptual model for measuring social capital which focused on trust and reciprocity.

⁸ Section A of the questionnaire requested information about the individual organisation in order to develop a descriptive profile of the local Bushcare organisation. Sections B and C requested specific information about the types of grants applied for and by whom within the organisation, the extent of their grant success, level of knowledge about the grant application process and the types of changes to do with competitive grant funding over the years, including questions about the belief as to whether the mission could be compromised. Section D delved into the perceptions about pressure to apply for grants, while Section E investigated volunteer recruitment activities. The complete questionnaire is included as Appendix 1.

⁹ Technical and Further Education (TAFE) courses are provided by government-run technical colleges. They are designed to provide practical, hands-on training for post-high school students.

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