



Information Letter

Informal Volunteering – Volunteers

Project title: Connecting communities: Engaging informal volunteers in local contexts

Background

You are invited to take part in this research project, 'Connecting communities: Engaging informal volunteers in local contexts' because you are a volunteer. The research project aims to chart informal volunteering's character and contribution in a pilot study through Chorus Locals.

Aim of the Study

This study aims to chart informal volunteering's character and contribution in a pilot study through Chorus Locals.

Volunteering WA defines volunteering as 'time willingly given for the common good and without financial gain'. Volunteering includes both:

- Formal volunteering where someone volunteers with an organisation, association, club, corporation or government, and
- Informal volunteering where an individual is not associated with another entity but still gives time for the common good of the community.

This pilot study will explore three broad research questions:

- 1. What is the nature and extent of informal and formal volunteering in local communities?
- 2. What is informal volunteering's potential relationship with more formal volunteering activities and volunteer involving organisations?
- 3. Which practices, platforms and people facilitate informal volunteering in a local community, and what are the practice and policy implications?

Who is undertaking the research?

This research is being undertaken by Murdoch University, who is partnering with Chorus for the pilot study. The research leads are Dr Jo-Anne Kestel, Dr Anne Peachey, Associate Professor Megan Paull, and Dr Moira Watson (Adjunct), all from the Murdoch Business School.

DECLARATION: Please be aware Dr Megan Paull is a research committee member at Volunteering WA with an extensive record of research in the field and Volunteering WA and the research team have put in place protocols to ensure any conflict of interest is declared and managed. Please also be aware that Dr Moira Watson (adjunct at Murdoch) is a board member at Chorus, and the research team at Murdoch and Chorus have set up data collection to ensure that participation in data collection for this research is managed to ensure confidentiality and anonymity for participants. Dr Watson will only have access to deidentified data.

What Does Your Participation Involve?

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to complete an online survey. The online survey will take approximately 20 minutes to complete. This survey will assess how you engage in volunteering. Some participants may elect to put their name forward to be interviewed. Interviews will explore the motivations and approaches to volunteering. Individual interviews will be conducted online (Teams or

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Zoom), will take about 40 minutes each, and will be audio recorded to accurately capture the discussion. Interviewees will be given the opportunity to review the interview transcript.

Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal from the Study

It is important that you understand that your involvement in this study is voluntary. While we would be pleased to have you participate, we respect your right to decline. Your decision to participate or not will not affect any relationships you have with any organisation. If you decide to discontinue participation at any time, you may do so without providing an explanation. If your data has already been de-identified or published, it may not be possible to destroy data that you provided in the earlier stages of the research. In this instance, all your information will be attributed anonymously.

The information you provide will be deidentified. Only the research team will be able to access the raw data and are required to keep it confidential. All data and study records will be stored securely in the Murdoch Business School at Murdoch University during the study. Following completion, all study information will be held in a secure archive at Murdoch University for seven years, after which electronic data will be deleted and hard copy records destroyed using Murdoch University's confidential disposal system.

Survey responses will be held in the online Qualtrics platform and then exported to a statistics program for analysis. The qualitative interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Any information identifying you will be removed during transcription. Immediately after each interview the audio recording will be uploaded to the secure, password-protected Murdoch University server identified only via numerical code. The audio recorder will be secured in a locked drawer until the audio recording has been transcribed, after which the audio recording will be erased from the recorder. Transcripts will be identified only with a numerical code. A master list linking the numerical code to participant details will be stored securely and separately from the de-identified transcripts. Exemplar quotes drawn from qualitative data and provided to support emergent themes will be identified only with a code.

Your privacy

Your privacy is very important to us. Your participation in this study and any information will be treated in a confidential manner. Your name and identifying details will not be used in any publication arising out of the research. Following the study the data will be kept in a de-identified. The results of this research will be made available to Volunteering WA and Chorus. The research findings will be presented in aggregate statistics and qualitative themes. Any exemplar quotes provided to demonstrate the trustworthiness of the findings will be identified only with numerical codes and no identifying detail will be included. The findings of this study may also be published in peer-reviewed journals and/or conferences or meetings, however, no identifying information will be included in these presentations. By taking part, you are agreeing not to restrict the use of the information you provide. Your rights under any laws are not affected.

Possible Benefits

There may be no direct benefit to you from participating in this project. However, you may enjoy sharing your experiences of volunteering, offering your thoughts and suggestions about both formal and informal volunteering and contributing to the development of an informal volunteering model and potential improvements. If found to be effective, the volunteering model may be implemented more widely to attract informal volunteers and, ultimately, to determine how informal volunteering can be activated to build empowered local communities that work in the WA context, and which could be replicated by other organisations wanting to increase the power of volunteering.

Possible Risks

There are no specific risks anticipated with participation in this study. There are no costs to you other than your time taken in participating in the survey and potential individual interview. The researchers are independent and will not disclose your decision to participate or not, or any identifiable information you provide. If you feel discomfort when discussing your experiences during the individual interview, you can choose to postpone or abandon the interview altogether.

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Data retention:

All data and study records will be stored securely in a dedicated folder in the MU shared drive for the project. during the study. Following completion, all study information will be held in a secure archive at Murdoch University for seven years for use in later research if required, after which electronic data will be deleted and hard copy records destroyed using Murdoch University's confidential disposal system.

Survey responses will be held in the online Qualtrics platform and then exported to a statistics program for analysis. The qualitative interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Any information identifying you will be removed during transcription. Immediately after each interview the audio recording will be uploaded to the secure, password-protected Murdoch University server identified only via numerical code. The audio recorder will be secured in a locked drawer until the audio recording has been transcribed, after which the audio recording will be erased from the recorder. Transcripts will be identified only with a numerical code. A master list linking the numerical code to participant details will be stored securely and separately from the de-identified transcripts. Exemplar quotes drawn from qualitative data and provided to support emergent themes will be identified only with a code.

Questions

If you would like to discuss any aspect of this study please feel free to contact either Dr Jo-Anne Kestel on ph 9360 6041or Dr Megan Paull on ph 9360 6040. Either of us would be happy to discuss any aspect of the research with you.

Once we have analysed the information from this study, the final report will include an Executive Summary which will be available from the VWA website. A one-page summary will be available via VWA and Chorus websites.

We would like to thank you in advance for your assistance with this research project. We look forward to hearing from you soon.

If you decide you want to take part in the research project, you will be asked to provide consent by clicking on the consent button at the start of the online survey agreeing that you:

- Understand what you have read
- Consent to take part in the research project outlined in this Information Sheet
 Please make sure you read all the way to the end before clicking on the link below.

https://murdochuni.syd1.gualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV eER6RSxMUSeK6rQ

This study has been approved by the Murdoch University Human Research Ethics Committee (Approval 2025/145). If you have any reservation or complaint about the ethical conduct of this research, and wish to talk with an independent person, you may contact Murdoch University's Research Ethics & Integrity on Tel. 08 9360 6677 or e-mail human.ethics@murdoch.edu.au. Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.

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