

# **EXPLORING THE ANTECEDENTS, EXPERIENCES, AND CONSEQUENCES OF RURAL VOLUNTEERING PARTICIPATION IN AUSTRALIA**

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Shortage of volunteers is a critical challenge for rural sustainable development in Australia. In fact, volunteers underpin a broad range of essential services in rural Australia, including emergency services, health care, sport and physical recreation, and education (among others). However, according to the data collected by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), there has been a long-term decline in volunteer participation across Australia, resulting in potential shortages of volunteer labour. In addition, there has been limited research examining the volunteering experience in rural Australia despite satisfactory volunteering experiences being critical to volunteer retention. This research aims to explore the antecedents, experiences, and consequences of rural volunteering in Australia, with a focus on in-situ volunteering experiences in rural areas. A mixed-method design, combining in-depth semi-structured interviews and a questionnaire, will be adopted. This proposed research is expected to provide critical insights into the future sustainability of the rural volunteering workforce.

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