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All Good Project

Volunteering with the
All Good Peer Harm Reduction Service

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Executive summary

Background

Music festivals provide spaces of recreation, celebration, enjoyment of live music, and can contribute economic benefit to the community. However, they can also be sites of risk and risk-taking for festival patrons. People who attend festivals are at higher risk of experiencing alcohol and other drug-related harms as well as other biopsychosocial harms than the general population (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6). Harm reduction approaches, including peer-led initiatives, aim to mitigate these risks, in keeping with the broader principles of harm reduction which focuses on keeping people safe rather than on necessarily reducing alcohol or other drug use. Despite successful models operating elsewhere, there is limited public awareness of harm reduction in the Northern Territory (NT).

MusicNT's All Good Project works with live music venues and festivals across the NT to create safer spaces for staff, performers and patrons. The All Good Project aims to increase safety for patrons including minority groups, encourage equity and diversity, and contribute to ending discrimination and gender-based violence. The project comprises of harm reduction components such as policy and procedure support for music venues, social marketing campaigns, training and education for staff and volunteers, and the delivery of a peer harm reduction service in festivals. MusicNT has been operating the peer harm reduction service since 2023. The service model was first piloted and run by DanceWize at Bass in the Grass Festival in 2021, and then delivered by The Association of Alcohol and other Drug Agencies Northern Territory in 2022 before its handover to MusicNT.

In 2024 the All Good peer harm reduction service engaged 99 volunteers who undertook pre-event and onsite training and reached 13,428 festival patrons over five events. Core service activities included outreach care provided by 'rovers' (i.e. providing brief interventions, provision of resources and referrals to services where required), education and information provided in an 'education space' and sub-medical care provided in a 'wellbeing space' with referral pathways to other services where needed.

Methods

The current study aimed to develop an understanding of the All Good peer harm reduction service and its operational concerns, future improvements to service delivery and the recruitment and retention of volunteers. This report complements the report from Sub-study 1 which focuses more on the types of care provided by the service and its impact on NT service users.

- Sub-study 1: Stories of Care
- Sub-study 2: Experiences of volunteering

Both are an extension of a broader evaluation of the All Good Project (funded by Music NT) that includes both qualitative and quantitative methods to understand whether the All Good Project is meeting its stated objectives.

For the current study, we conducted qualitative interviews with volunteers focused on their experience of giving care, including the role and nature of the service, perceived impacts on patrons and festival systems and opportunities to improve the service in future delivery. Data analysis followed an inductive thematic analysis approach (25).

Findings

The qualitative interviews identified that volunteers were motivated by a mix of personal and professional interests, including harm reduction advocacy, social connection, festival access, and skill development. Overall, they reported a highly positive experience, citing strong community support, appreciation from festival patrons, and an organised, inclusive volunteer environment. While some challenges included emotional strain, physical demands, and role limitations, volunteers felt generally well supported, making them motivated to return for future events.

Recommendations

Many of the following recommendations relate to the internal operations of the All Good peer harm reduction service. Some relate specifically to the Bass in the Grass festival, but these can be extrapolated to other events in future

Recruitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Word of mouth and social media continue to be key recruitment methods for volunteer workforce. ○ Investigate opportunities to maximise recruitment of people with both lived-living experience who are studying or working in relevant fields (peer support, mental health, alcohol and drugs). ○ Continue to recruit diverse volunteers with lived-living experience of drug and alcohol and/or mental health issues. ○ Ensure that volunteers with the greatest responsibility for complex decision-making (i.e. care provided in the wellbeing space) are as experienced and prepared as is possible. This may involve tiered recruitment where those with previous experience volunteering or work/study in other care roles are approached first for wellbeing space roles with tailored training based on role.
Retention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Continue to build the program's culture of care: communicating and providing support to volunteers, team building and debriefing processes. ○ Further enhance volunteer team building through social networking outside of event deployments. ○ Communicate the impact and reach of the program to volunteers post-event as both expression of appreciation and to enhance motivation to re-engage as a volunteer.
Operational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Consider volunteer and staffing in the wellbeing space, including staffing at peak service use times, shift change over processes, and options for a mid-shift role change (wellbeing space to roving). ○ Investigate opportunities to enhance drug information and education both before and at the festival, including tangible referral resources onsite. ○ Continue the strong and growing focus on patron wellbeing and safety, including expanded provision of free water, and other free supplies. ○ Investigate options for a sensory specific space within the chill out-wellbeing space area to enable more tailored care to patron needs.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Advocate for improved harm reduction practices across the festival, with police and festival organisers, such as location of drug amnesty bins, and use of police sniffer dogs. ○ Consider providing additional debriefing opportunities post-event. ○ Consider placing volunteers in mixed-gender roving teams. ○ Continue to expand training of volunteers to include neuro-divergence related issues and its associated interactions with alcohol and other drug use. ○ Continue to expand training of volunteers to include 'patron resistance to help' issues and engagement strategies to encourage patrons towards accepting support when offered. ○ Continue to expand training of volunteers to include self-care strategies - both acute and post-event - to minimise and manage the emotional load on volunteers. ○ Continue to expand training of volunteers to include clarity around strengths and limits of sub-medical peer role - relative to other festival services - including clear referral and decision-making processes.
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Context

Harm reduction interventions focus on reducing adverse consequences of drug and alcohol use, without necessarily aiming to reduce the use itself. One approach to harm reduction in festival settings is peer-led harm reduction.

Peer-and-community led initiatives have been incorporated into harm reduction approaches both globally and nationally (7, 8, 9, 10, 11). Across a range of programs in different contexts, peers - individuals with lived-experience of drug and alcohol use - actively contribute to a variety of activities including outreach, peer care, needle distribution, education, and community-based research (8, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19). Peers have played a pivotal role in the creation, implementation, and evaluation of harm reduction services in diverse settings (20, 21, 22, 23) including in festivals and nightlife spaces. For example, in Australia, there are various established volunteer-led harm reduction services (i.e. DanceWize, ConsciousNest, Hi-Ground) that use a peer education and relational care model to provide on-site harm reduction and drug education services in festival, event and nightlife settings. These programs aim to offer brief interventions and sub-medical care, education and resources for harm reduction, health, and safety at festivals and music events. Trained volunteers offer welfare assistance, first response, triage, and referral to medical care as needed. Training is provided to volunteers to recognise and assist individuals showing signs of adverse alcohol and drug use, mental health distress or other biopsychosocial harms. These programs coordinate with existing services, develop training materials for wider implementation, and collect data for program improvement and informing event organisers.

In 2021, NT Major Events Corporation (NTMEC) piloted the inclusion of the DanceWize model at Darwin's Bass In The Grass music festival. This pilot program was coordinated through the NT Harm Reduction Advisory Group, a subcommittee of the Sexual Health Advisory Group within NT Health, which has a focus on implementing harm reduction policy in NT services. The Harm Reduction Advisory Group includes stakeholders from a range of organisations and disciplinary backgrounds with expertise in alcohol and other drugs.

For the 2021 pilot, staff from Harm Reduction Victoria and DanceWize NSW (run through NSW Users and AIDS Association) were engaged to coordinate the program with a group of local volunteers recruited to support delivery of on-the-ground services at the event. Stakeholders reported positive feedback from the pilot program (24). Following the success of the pilot program, the Association of Alcohol and other Drug Agencies NT (AADANT) formed a Darwin-based Local Drug Action Team funded by the Alcohol & Drug Foundation. Input and guidance

by the Harm Reduction Advisory Group ensured ongoing alignment with NTG priorities. Supplementary funding provided by AADANT and NTMEC assisted the Local Drug Action Team to initiate the development of a local, NT-led AOD harm reduction program with Darwin-based staff and volunteers. The project provided harm reduction and prevention support for Darwin's 2022 Bass In the Grass under shared DanceWize and the AADANT branding. In 2023, MusicNT took over operations of the peer harm reduction service under All Good peer harm reduction service which complements their All Good Project, an initiative that works with live music venues across the NT to create safer spaces for staff, performers and patrons.

A previous study reporting on the 2022 harm reduction service identified some challenges to the sustainability of the initiative, including the limited resourcing for the program which has implications for the development of a peer workforce who can be mobilised to operate the service (24). At the time (2022), the service was only funded to operate at one festival per year, with no funding available to support ongoing training and engagement with volunteers. Since early 2024, a series of small grants have enabled a year-round coordinator position for volunteers and significant energy has been invested in revising volunteer training, expanding the service's reach to multiple events and engagement with volunteers.

Given the harm reduction service relies on up to ~45 volunteers per event, understanding what drives people to volunteer for All Good (and especially repeatedly) can provide critical insights that can inform future approaches to recruit and retain volunteers. Further, volunteers can provide crucial insights on the service delivery and offer feedback that can inform service improvements that may benefit patrons receiving care, volunteers giving care and the service as a system.

Methodology

The current study aimed to develop an understanding of the All Good peer harm reduction service and its operational concerns, future improvements to service delivery and the recruitment and retention of volunteers. This report complements the report from Sub-study 1 which focuses more on the types of care provided by the service and its impact on NT service users.

- Sub-study 1: Stories of Care
- Sub-study 2: Experiences of volunteering

Both are an extension of a broader evaluation of the All Good Project (funded by Music NT) that includes both qualitative and quantitative methods to understand whether the All Good Project is meeting its stated objectives.

The sampling approach follows a purposive sampling method, aiming to obtain deep insights from people with the closest knowledge of the topic. For the current study, we aimed to follow up peer-volunteers to investigate their experience of providing care at the festival service. Information about the study was sent to all volunteers from 2024 by MusicNT, with contact details of the research team.

We conducted qualitative interviews with consenting participants between May and November 2024. Participants were invited to take part in a semi-structured qualitative interview via phone or videoconferencing (i.e., Zoom). Interviews were recorded and transcribed. These transcripts were checked for errors and imported into NVivo (v12, QSR) for further analysis. Data analysis followed an inductive thematic analysis approach (25).

Interviews captured the types of care provided and impact on festival patrons, as well as the motivations, challenges and risks associated with volunteering at the All Good peer harm reduction service. The interviews were framed to participants as being about their experiences, with the aim of improving service delivery. Volunteers were informed that their stories would be conducted by a researcher independent from All Good Project and that their information would be kept confidential.

Ethical approval was obtained from the Menzies School of Health Research Human Research Ethics Committee (2022-4267).

Participants

We interviewed ten people who volunteered with the service at the 2024 Bass in the Grass festival and other additional events. Pseudonyms have been used to protect confidentiality.

All Good peer harm reduction service 2024	Participant characteristics	Number of participants	% of total
Qualitative interview participants	Peer-volunteers	10	100%
	Wellbeing space role	3	30%

	Roving role	5	50%
	Both wellbeing space and roving role	2	20%
	Experience at Bass in the Grass 2024 only	4	40%
	Experience at multiple events	6	60%
	Total	10	100%

Results

The findings from this report focus on the experiences of volunteers, with the aim of providing insights that can inform improvements to service delivery and the recruitment and retention of volunteers.

Recruitment and retention of volunteers is often an issue for peer-based programs. Nationally, these issues are common for a wide range of volunteer projects and activities. Understanding why people are motivated to join the project, continue volunteering, the risks and benefits they experience, can support the project to continue to have a thriving volunteer base. Volunteers are also ideally placed to identify areas of improvement within the service. Hearing from volunteers about what is or isn't working well can help to strengthen the approach used in future delivery. Where appropriate, we include de-identified quotes from participants to illustrate important points while protecting confidentiality.

Recruitment

It [signing up] was just such an easy process.

Amelia

Almost all volunteers interviewed described the sign-up process as easy and many felt positive about being able to register to volunteer with existing friends. Most were recruited via social media posts on Facebook. There were some recruitments via word-of-mouth related specifically to volunteering or about the All Good Project in general, via posters in the Darwin Civic Centre, or music venue partners.

Initial motivation to volunteer

Volunteers were motivated by a combination of personal and professional interests in harm reduction, community engagement, and the desire to contribute to safer and more supportive festival environments. Several described being connected to the All Good peer harm reduction service mission, having positive experiences in similar past roles, wanting to increase social connections, gain access to the festival without cost, gain practical experience in relevant professional fields, and to make the next generation of festival goers safer.

Some volunteers were motivated by a strong connection to the mission of the All Good Project, particularly its harm reduction approach and its non-judgmental stance towards people who use drugs. Many volunteers were drawn to the opportunity to help others in a meaningful way, especially in the context of festivals, where they could assist people in staying safe and having positive experiences. Some were particularly passionate about the peer-led nature of the project and the opportunity to work in a lived-living experience context.

I definitely connected with the aim of All Good Project and that's why I decided to participate.

Delia

Several volunteers shared motivation stemming from positive experiences where they provided peer-led care as part of similar programs elsewhere. Volunteers described feeling fulfilled and proud of their previous roles supporting others. This guided their interest to be a volunteer.

One festival that I volunteered at, in the past, [...]. I was in a crowd-care kind of position. I had an experience with quite a lot of patrons where they were, quite intoxicated, like specifically people taking psychedelics and kind of freaking out. And it was a really rewarding experience.

Maisie

Half the volunteers interviewed sought to meet new people, integrate into the community, and engage in work that aligned with their values. Some were new to Darwin and sought opportunities to meet like-minded people, while others were looking for ways to engage with people who shared similar interests and values. Many mentioned their extroverted

personalities and love for socialising, attending music festivals, and meeting new people as key factors in their decision to volunteer.

I wanted to go to Bass in the Grass [...] like I'm pretty new to Australia, I didn't want to go by myself.

Adam

By volunteering I wanted to meet people.

Sally

Several volunteers had prior experiences attending festivals or using drugs, which influenced their desire to work as a volunteer. Many volunteers shared personal experiences with drug use or unsafe situations that motivated them to get involved, hoping to offer support to others who might find themselves in similar positions. One volunteer recalled a negative experience with tainted MDMA as a teenager, where they felt scared and unable to seek help, highlighting the need for accessible support in those moments. Volunteers reported that their experience reinforced their belief in the importance of services like All Good peer harm reduction service that could have made a significant difference at the time.

I thought, you know, that's a great thing to get around and just help out, because I've partied a lot in my life and I thought I'd do my part to try and help the younger generation do it safely.

Phil

I had some experiences some good and bad at festivals, you know, similar in scale and a similar type of day to Bass in the Grass, nightclubs and things like that as well. And yeah, I've been in the position of a young person who could have benefited and would have benefited from it, for quite a few years earlier.

Jerry

For some volunteers, the opportunity to attend festivals without paying for tickets was an added incentive, blending their interest in helping others with the desire to enjoy the event and see their favourite musicians. For some volunteers the conditions of the AGP volunteer role were better than other festival work or volunteer roles. Volunteers mentioned the short

length of shift, and the meaningfulness of the role as motivations for joining the team. For some the rewarding aspect of volunteering and the sense of community ultimately made the experience more fulfilling than simply attending the festival as a patron.

It cost about \$100 or \$180 for the tickets, yeah, and I didn't want to pay that much. And I was just thinking of another way I could get in and that would be fun and efficient as well.

Ari

I felt, oh, that will be pretty nice to do instead of volunteering to stand at the entrance scanning tickets or something like that, doing something that actually helps other people. [...] Of course, for me as a volunteer there are benefits as well, you're enjoying the music, and it doesn't cost me anything. I didn't buy a ticket. I didn't buy any drinks, so it was just an enjoyable evening by itself.

Bill

Some volunteers also saw their involvement as an opportunity to gain practical experience in mental health, public health, and peer work, especially those studying relevant professional fields. For one volunteer, their volunteering journey leading them to a full-time role in the peer support space.

I was studying [...] and wanted to get involved in a peer led organisation. [...] and I just thought it would be a really good organisation to be part of, which it is.

Sally

Benefits of volunteering

Volunteers expressed satisfaction from helping others and being part of something meaningful. Many described their experiences as rewarding, as they were able to provide safety, support, and guidance to festival patrons. A strong sense of accomplishment came from knowing they contributed to the well-being of others (e.g., helping intoxicated individuals, providing comfort in difficult moments). Volunteers also felt appreciated by the people they helped (with comments like "angels" and "thank you for being here").

And it's one of my most favourite volunteer roles, to be honest, the people you meet, the people you help, the impact it has, the stories you get after the festival. You get some really great stories. But just, people are so happy to see you there.

Sally

It was really rewarding. I made some really good friends. And I felt like I was part of something that I believe is really important. I think it's really important work. I also think that people deserve to have access to things like that. Yeah, that was rewarding. It was rewarding to be a part of it, yeah.

Maisie

The camaraderie among volunteers was often highlighted. Many described their teams as friendly, supportive, and like a "family." This fostered a positive work atmosphere and helped create a sense of belonging. Volunteers enjoyed socializing and connecting with others who shared similar values and interests. Volunteers appreciated the inclusive and supportive atmosphere created by the organizing team.

So I registered for the all good project and then I met this lovely bunch of people. And then I was like, I just took the right decision, even if I would buy the tickets, I wouldn't be getting this environment. Yeah.

Ari

Volunteers highlighted that volunteering in a festival harm-reduction service can be a deeply rewarding experience, offering personal growth, a sense of purpose, and the opportunity to be part of a supportive community. However, it also comes with risks (explored below). Volunteers benefited from context specific and thorough training, support from their teams, and a positive team environment, which helped to mitigate these risks and enhance their overall experience.

What drives repeat volunteering

Several volunteers had prior experience volunteering with the All Good peer harm reduction service at other events (n=6) while some first timers (without prompting) expressed desire to volunteer again at the next Bass in the Grass festival (n=2). The remaining two first-time-

volunteers expressed interest in volunteering again but appeared less committed and spoke about potential timing and availability constraints. While some sentiments were also observed by first time volunteers, volunteers who had engaged repeatedly, or explicitly discussed intention to return focused on feeling appreciated by the staff and patrons, the strong inclusive culture of All Good Project and understanding the value of their work.

Feeling appreciated

An example that a number of volunteers provided of how they felt appreciated by All Good organisers, was a post-event engagement where they were treated to pizza, drinks, and a debrief session. Volunteers highlighted its supportive feel and the facilitation of further social connection with other volunteers, to share experiences, and discuss the event, creating a positive atmosphere that encouraged them to return to subsequent Bass in the Grass festivals or volunteer at other events. Some volunteers spoke about being directly asked for feedback and believing that their feedback would lead to positive organisational change, which made them feel included and validated in the process.

They did have an event afterwards that we all went to and ate pizza and had a debrief, and it was really nice. It was nice to get that as well. We all got a free drink and a piece of pizza, I think. So that was also nice, and again it felt like we were being really supported. [...] I think most of us would be happy to come back again and do it next year.

Amelia

Many volunteers spoke about receiving appreciation directly from patrons who had used the care space, or as rovers when they engaged with the festival crowds. This reinforced the positive impact of their work. Many found that helping others made the experience rewarding and fulfilling. Ultimately, many volunteers felt that the work they were doing made a tangible difference in people's lives.

It was a really good experience because people genuinely appreciate it.

Maisie

The response was great from everyone so it was just a good energy from, you know, people saying, thanks for being here. [...] And it just felt good to be a positive presence in at a festival.

Phil

Positive culture

Many volunteers described their experience of the All Good peer harm reduction service as being like part of a family, enjoying consistent support from organisers who treated them with care and respect, fostering a fun and positive environment. Volunteers highlighted the friendly, inclusive culture of the organization, with coordinators who were accommodating and made the volunteer experience feel like a social gathering with friends rather than a job.

It's just a team, the volunteer team and also the supervisors like [AGP organisers] and everyone being they're just lovely bunch of people and they barely say no to anything and they help you out whenever you need help. And they look after you as one of their own, not as a volunteer, as a family member. I noticed that really made me more interested to go back and volunteer for them.

Ari

For some volunteers, volunteering provided an opportunity to enjoy the festival in a sober and meaningful way, while still feeling like an active participant, and contributing to a positive festival atmosphere. Other volunteers highlighted being able to share their festival experience with new or existing friends (who were also volunteering) contributed to their overall enjoyment. One volunteer shared that the casual nature of their duties—walking around, having conversations, and enjoying the music—made their shift feel quick and enjoyable, which is why they were eager to return.

For me, because I wasn't drinking or doing anything. It was just enjoying the music, walking around, it was a very chill way for me just to enjoy the festival. I had something to do. We were just walking around with the other volunteers so was also chatting amongst ourselves. [...] The whole shift was four hours, it flew by, felt like maybe an hour or two. It went very quickly, and that's why I enjoyed it so much and why I did it again.

Bill

Even though you don't catch up that regularly it feels like you are catching up with friends every time when you are doing the volunteer role and it doesn't feel like you're at work or at a job as such, you are just there having fun.

Sally

Understanding the value of their work

Many volunteers spoke about the value in their role and felt their work was an important part of event success and community care. Volunteers felt proud to be part of an organisation that supports harm reduction and fosters a sense of community, making them feel like they were contributing to something larger. For some volunteers, the effectiveness of the work and the belief in the importance of their role in festival event management and healthcare was a key motivator for returning to volunteer.

I think what kept me going back was, I saw the use, I saw the effectiveness of it and I believe it plays its role. I believe it makes up a piece of the puzzle, you know, to events and healthcare and just event management as well, you know. Yeah, I just see it as a necessary part.

Jerry

It's amazing that this project now has partnerships with a few bars around Alice Springs and in cafes and bars in Darwin. So that's really cool. Its just a really great organisation to be part of. You always get a smile and you feel part of something that is really fun. I love the All Good Project.

Sally

Risks of volunteering

In addition to asking volunteers about what they perceived the benefits of volunteering to be, we also asked about what they perceived the risks of volunteering to be in addition to capturing unprompted experiences that reflect areas to consider for future engagement of volunteers. These included emotional stress during service delivery, the responsibility of providing support without professional training, and challenging interactions with intoxicated individuals.

A demanding role

Volunteers sometimes described their roles in the roving or wellbeing space as physically demanding and emotionally taxing. Volunteers described that some of their role included uncomfortable or unpleasant tasks, such as cleaning up vomit or managing intoxicated or uncooperative individuals or witnessing distressing scenes. Some volunteers highlighted the emotional toll of seeing people in distress or not knowing what happened to someone after

they provided help. Despite these stressors, these same volunteers described their experiences as positive overall and reported receiving care and empathy from the All Good staff when negative interactions had occurred.

There was a stage that one of the people I was looking after came to, he sat up, he projectile vomited all over me. It happened really quickly. [...] and I was kind of in shock, and I was like, that wasn't in the brochure, that wasn't in the training sessions [laughs].

Sally

So I don't know what happened to her in the end. I just hope he [boyfriend of patron] looked after her, because I don't know what they took, because he refused to tell us. I still think that we helped to an extent. We got them some water. We got them, some chuck bags, things like that. But other than that, he wouldn't let us help them at all.

Clarissa

Although many volunteers described enjoying their experience, they also discussed the potential for burnout, especially with long hours for those staying on beyond their assigned shift, some had physically demanding shifts roving in hot conditions, or experienced emotionally taxing situations. Ensuring the volunteers' well-being (e.g., having breaks, offering support, checking in regularly) is essential to avoid exhaustion.

Navigating the limits of peer care

Volunteers receive training to perform their sub-medical peer-support role at festival events. They are trained to triage and refer any medical emergencies, or in-depth mental health support, to professional teams such as St Johns. Despite wanting to help, some volunteers faced limitations in what they could do, given their non-professional status (e.g. not being able to provide therapeutic support).

I don't think she [carespace patron] was doing that well, but she didn't really want to stay. And that's very hard as well, because as a volunteer it's very difficult to know exactly how they are doing. You're not a paramedic. You don't know how much they've had to drink, or if they had any drugs, or how open they were about it. So, you're just judging the situation as it is.

Bill

Challenging situations with festival patrons were often described by volunteers who were providing support at the wellbeing space. This part of the service was typically used by patrons who were experiencing heavy intoxication, sensory overwhelm, or psychosocial stress. There were no volunteers who expressed feeling out of their depth in the face of these challenges. Instead, many volunteers, unprompted, spoke about receiving relevant and appropriate training for their roles, support from staff and organisers, and confidence to navigate arising challenges. However, volunteers who had professional experience or training in mental health support, and/or previously volunteered for the service, were typically placed in the wellbeing space roles.

I'd say like a lot of the people who felt more capable of offering a lot of support in that moment, they were stationed in the tent and the people who for whatever reason, whether they didn't feel like they could provide a lot of psychosocial support or like mental health support, or if they just like wanted to go and like, enjoy the music and performances while they were working and like care for the crowd who was there, then they could do that.

Maisie

Some volunteers were able to bring their previous training and professional knowledge of alcohol and other drugs, mental health and public health issues into their current role and in doing so support their provision of care to patrons. However, one volunteer spoke about the tension between their professional and peer roles as an added layer to navigate. While, for this volunteer, the boundaries between their respective roles appeared to be clear, in a previous study reporting on the 2022 harm reduction service, unclear boundaries (particularly for medically trained volunteers) were identified as a potential issue (24).

Trying to, you know, draw the line I guess between the drug education - which I hope remains part of the program as well - but then not condoning it. Being able to give harm reduction advice but it not being in such a professional capacity to do so, I realize there's only so much our volunteers can really say - like I suppose that's a little bit tricky as well. You know sort of trying to find the perfect point between those things. You know providing information but you're not advertising and condoning drugs. And then you're not giving assistance, but we're volunteers, and not exactly drug experts.

Jerry

Although the service benefits from a highly skilled and trained volunteer workforce, future training will need to maintain a focus on setting clear boundaries between volunteers' professional and peer roles. Clearly articulating the unique role of the sub-medical service relative to other festival services (St Johns, security, police), clarify referral processes and complex decision-making processes, may also help to minimise the emotional load on volunteers and increase their confidence in the peer-care role.

Recommendations

Operational feedback to improve volunteers' experiences has been broken into pre-event, onsite and post-event engagement.

Pre-Event

When describing pre-event engagement volunteers spoke positively about the training provided and their preparation for the volunteer role. Preparation included understanding festival specific alcohol and drug and harm reduction issues, the aims of the project, the volunteer roles and responsibilities, and building a team culture before the event. Many volunteers described the training content as clear and relevant to the festival context they encountered. Some spoke about their increased confidence to be active bystanders as a result of training. Whilst still enjoying the training overall and appreciating the passion of the training team, one volunteer described some of the training videos as needing review.

I've always had an idea like I always had a really rough idea [on different types of drugs that affect you and how they affect you] but it straight up cleared everything up saying this does this, this does that.

Adam

Some of the videos probably were a bit old and outdated. Just a bit you know, daggy, I guess. But I mean that's not the worst thing. They were really good, as far as the information night we had, the meet and greet had a few different speakers, and they were all really passionate which was good to see. People had obviously spent a lot of time putting effort into this project, which I was quite impressed by, yeah

Phil

Volunteers described several challenging moments providing care at the festival. Drawing on these, below are several key insights that relate to improved preparation for the volunteer role that can be included in future training:

- Increased knowledge of neurodivergence and its interactions with alcohol and other drug use, in festival settings.
- Increased knowledge of patron resistance to help, including engagement strategies to move patrons towards accepting support when offered.
- Self-care strategies - both acute and post-event - to minimise and manage the emotional load on volunteers. Interactions can be at times challenging, and once patrons leave the care of the service, there is no way to know how the rest of the patron's night unfolds.
- Clarity around strengths and limits of sub-medical peer role - relative to other festival services - including clear referral processes and decision-making processes. Training could use decision trees or case studies to demonstrate decision making and triage processes (eg. when should person X have St Johns check them?).

Onsite

All volunteers interviewed reported that they valued the support provided by All Good peer harm reduction service organisers during the event, highlighting the organising team's responsiveness, approachability, warmth and willingness to help both new and experienced volunteers.

It's easier for you to support somebody else if someone's got your back as well.

Amelia

They [AGP organisers] were helping out where they could. They were supporting us. Yeah, they were very amazing. If you needed anything or you had any issues, just go to them and they helped you out, every time, as best as they could.

Bill

Role clarity

Many volunteers described the All Good peer harm reduction service organiser's flexibility to meet the volunteers' individual needs and interests related to the different volunteer roles. For most, these roles were clearly articulated during the pre-event sessions however one volunteer

reflected on the pre-event training and said that the wellbeing space role could be more clearly articulated.

The training was really good because it like gave people an idea of like what they might be able to do, and what might suit them.[...] So at the beginning of our shift, we all had the option. Like you can go roving or you can stay in the tent and. You can like start with one and switch to the other like. It's totally up to you. So the option was really good.

Maisie

I think just giving a clearer idea of how it is, how did people deal with people in those tents, so to have different perspectives of people who were there before. Different information to help us feel more confident.

Delia

Workload and staffing

There were clear differences in how volunteers with roving roles and wellbeing space roles described staffing levels. Several roving volunteers reported the roving team as adequately staffed saying the team were able to share the load and reduce pressure on them as an individual.

From the beginning to the end, we had different shifts, and I think we had more than enough people for every shift, which was really nice. That's why it wasn't a lot of pressure on everybody, because you can share the load.

Bill

In contrast, some volunteers in the wellbeing space spoke about needed more staffing support and clearer shift change over processes. In many accounts, volunteers in the wellbeing space demonstrated a person-centred approach to providing patron care (don't want to leave or abandon patrons or team during care). It was suggested that this approach complicated shift change overs, or volunteer intentions to swap roles during their shift. Organisers could consider facilitating clear change over process that take the emotional load off these wellbeing space volunteers and provide a structured way for them to 'tap out'.

I did get tired when I was in the tent and I knew that like leaving and roving was an option, but I didn't want to just, like, leave the people who I had been monitoring and talking to and just like give them to the other volunteers who were in there because everyone had their hands full [...] I think it would be good if there could be like a mid-shift, like an organised mid shift opportunity to change over so that we could hand people over to someone else. And know that they were being looked after and that they didn't feel abandoned.

Volunteer - wellbeing space

I think that might also be a thing of like having more hands on deck would be good.

Volunteer - wellbeing space

One volunteer suggested that gender of volunteers played a role in how roving teams engaged in bystanding and potential patron reporting of sexual harassment. This insight could have implications for planning of volunteer teams.

I noticed, for example, that when we had roving teams that were just girls, other girls were more likely to talk to them than, for example, if we were guys walking as a roving team, because of course, guys talk to guys. But if a girl is in a bad spot especially if it comes to sexual harassment, I would say they won't talk to us that quickly, as other girls.

Volunteer - roving team

Communication during event

Several volunteers described positive communication during the event.

They did have a group chat which is good, a WhatsApp group chat. So, when people were arriving and stuff they could, we could get in touch with each other that way which I thought was good.

Phil

While other volunteers reported that communication from organisers, between volunteers, and between AGP and patrons were sometimes unclear, for example issues around patrons helping themselves to water from the wellbeing tent fridges.

So, we're trying to stop people from coming in, just walking, grabbing them [water bottles] out of the fridges because we're told to stop them. But then there was other people saying, No, they can have it. So it was a little bit of confusion in that was because I was trying to keep obviously the tent free for people who are really ill. But then so many people were coming going. "We got told we can get water here. We got told we can get water here." and then I was being told to tell them "no you can't. This is for people who are in dire need."

Volunteer - wellbeing space

Meeting the needs of diverse patrons

Several volunteers observed the tension between the different needs of patrons within the wellbeing space, for example the tension between some patrons needing to de-stimulate while other patrons in the space were creating noise. For people with specific sensory needs, having a separate space to de-stimulate may be beneficial and improve inclusiveness.

The only other thing was it got really noisy in there. So when I had the young autistic lad, there were girls screaming in there, and it was just a bit tricky as I'd just got him regulated and we were just good, it had taken us over an hour to get to that stage, it had been a long process, and then the girls started screaming and swearing at one another and then he completely dysregulated again.

Volunteer - wellbeing space

A volunteer suggested that volunteers with diverse characteristics in the wellbeing space was an important factor in providing appropriate and person-centred care by the All Good peer harm reduction service.

It's a real mix of people volunteering there. There are young men and women and they're older men and women. So, I think that meant that there was someone for everyone, you know. [...] I know that there would have been people in there [wellbeing space] who I didn't interact with so much who wouldn't necessarily want to talk to a young white woman and who wouldn't really be able to feel supported by me and then they're all these other volunteers, different people. People who very much present as queer and people who maybe look more, a little bit more square. You know that really matters. Yeah.

Volunteer - wellbeing space

Resources to support brief interventions

When speaking about providing a brief intervention (alcohol and other drug service referral) to a wellbeing space patron, another volunteer highlighted the need for tangible referral support information, fact sheets or other physical or digital resources for patrons.

Resources for people to connect with services afterwards and we didn't like have anything that we could provide, and I think that that would be really good. If we had, like, a brochure and maybe like a fact sheet on like how to connect with services after the festival.

Volunteer - wellbeing space

Several volunteers reported that the provision of free giveaways were useful ways to first engage with festival patrons and facilitated active bystanding.

If you have water bottles or lollies, or something like that, it's easier to get into a conversation with somebody if you have something to give them. If you just oh, you need some water, or you need something to eat or blah blah, you ask a direct question instead of just trying to awkwardly start a conversation with somebody who is a stranger to you.

Volunteer - roving team

Harm reduction in a hostile environment

Outside of the All Good Project, one volunteer highlighted that other harm reduction initiatives by the festival, such as drug amnesty bins appeared to be in conflict with policing strategies such as police sniffer dogs.

I think on the day there's a few issues that I think could still be managed a little bit better. For example like the amnesty bins you know I had a bit of concern that this year, where you had amnesty bins, from the festival, but then police and their dogs getting people before they even reached that first amnesty bin. And you know, that didn't make so much sense to me.

Jerry

This was seen to challenge the ability of harm reduction volunteers to maximise the impact of the service. This example highlights that harm reduction initiatives are best undertaken as part of a festival-system approach.

Post-Event

Communication beyond the event

Many volunteers described post-event opportunities as an important time to reconnect with others in their team as well as provide feedback about their experiences. For one volunteer who had an uncomfortable experience with a patron in the wellbeing space, they reported that the timing of the debrief didn't allow for them to process their festival experiences fully, this volunteer suggested creating further opportunities for debriefing at later stages.

We had a meeting at the end, like a week after, to talk about things that happened during the festival, and we could, talk. I think it was too soon to make that meeting a week after, because you cannot - or at least maybe I'm a little too slow, I feel like it's hard to process things in real time.

Delia

They did have an event afterwards that we all went to and ate pizza and had a debrief, and it was really nice[...] it felt like we were being really supported. [...] So that was also really nice, that there was chance for us to get together and compare notes and talk about what we'd seen, or what we did, or how we did things, and you know, who spent their time hanging, who remembered to hand out the stickers, and who forgot to, or these little things like that. So it was nice to connect with the rest of the people as well.

Amelia

Another volunteer suggested All Good peer harm reduction service organisers could communicate with volunteers after the event on the extent of the reach of the project and how many people were helped. This kind of strategy may build on future willingness to volunteer and inspire future volunteers to be part of the All Good peer harm reduction mission.

I would have liked to see if there were any stats on you know how many people were helped and you know what interaction numbers they got and stuff like that. I don't think I saw any stats on that.

Phil

Key recommendations

Recruitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Word of mouth and social media continue to be key recruitment methods for volunteer workforce. ○ Investigate opportunities to maximise recruitment of people with both lived-living experience who are studying or working in relevant fields (peer support, mental health, alcohol and drugs). ○ Continue to recruit diverse volunteers with lived-living experience of drug and alcohol and/or mental health issues. ○ Ensure that volunteers with the greatest responsibility for complex decision-making (i.e. care provided in the wellbeing space) are as experienced and prepared as is possible. This may involve tiered recruitment where those with previous experience volunteering or work/study in other care roles are approached first for wellbeing space roles with tailored training based on role.
Retention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Continue to build the program's culture of care: communicating and providing support to volunteers, team building and debriefing processes. ○ Further enhance volunteer team building through social networking outside of event deployments. ○ Communicate the impact and reach of the program to volunteers post-event as both expression of appreciation and to enhance motivation to re-engage as a volunteer.
Operational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Consider volunteer and staffing in the wellbeing space, including staffing at peak service use times, shift change over processes, and options for a mid-shift role change (wellbeing space to roving). ○ Investigate opportunities to enhance drug information and education both before and at the festival, including tangible referral resources onsite.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Continue the strong and growing focus on patron wellbeing and safety, including expanded provision of free water, and other free supplies. ○ Investigate options for a sensory specific space within the chill out-wellbeing space area to enable more tailored care to patron needs. ○ Advocate for improved harm reduction practices across the festival, with police and festival organisers, such as location of drug amnesty bins, and use of police sniffer dogs. ○ Consider providing additional debriefing opportunities post-event. ○ Consider placing volunteers in mixed-gender roving teams. ○ Continue to expand training of volunteers to include neuro-divergence related issues and its associated interactions with alcohol and other drug use. ○ Continue to expand training of volunteers to include 'patron resistance to help' issues and engagement strategies to encourage patrons towards accepting support when offered. ○ Continue to expand training of volunteers to include self-care strategies - both acute and post-event - to minimise and manage the emotional load on volunteers. ○ Continue to expand training of volunteers to include clarity around strengths and limits of sub-medical peer role - relative to other festival services – including clear referral and decision-making processes.
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