

Title	Volunteering in Palliative Care in Rural Australia
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Abstract	<p>The complementary role of volunteers in palliative care supporting the healthcare workforce is commonly overlooked, and significantly so in rural Australia. Despite volunteers making up a large proportion of the overall palliative care workforce, research is limited in this area. The distribution of palliative care services in rural Australia is patchy with some people having limited or no access to palliative care. The aim of this paper is to explore what shapes the practices of volunteers in the provision of palliative care in rural Australia. The issues that impact on current and future volunteering in palliative care include geography, limited resources, recruitment and retainment of qualified staff, limited 24-hour service provision. The declining number of volunteers associated with an aging population, increasing demand and changing societal attitudes to volunteering is a significant issue to address. These issues are compounded in rural areas by the impact of social proximity and a lack of privacy for clients, carers, and staff in rural communities. Traditional models of volunteering may fail to recognise the challenges and diversities of different rural communities. To meet the needs of all Australians, volunteer programs of the future will need to be responsive and open to change to attract and retain new volunteers, to embrace youth and diversity while maintaining engagement with established volunteers.</p>