



Research Directions

Office of Research Services

Volunteering project wins award

Dr Melanie Oppenheimer has won the National Archives of Australia's (NAA) Margaret George Award for 2006. The Award includes \$10,000 and access to the NAA's facilities and material to research the historical perspectives of volunteering in Australia.



The project focuses on volunteering in Australia from 1945 onwards. As Dr Oppenheimer says, 'volunteering and voluntary action, the interplay between government and the non-profit sector, is a largely neglected topic in twentieth century Australian history, and yet is integral to our western democratic traditions'.

Dr Oppenheimer will research the NAA's extensive collection of photos, letters, pamphlets, legal documents and other historical material to complete her project which will be published by UNSW Press in 2008. By consulting little known and under-utilized NAA records, Dr Oppenheimer seeks to examine such issues as what impact the second world war had on volunteerism in the 1950s and beyond, and how the advent of the welfare state impacted on the voluntary sector.

It is estimated that volunteering contributes over \$40 billion a year to the Australian economy, and is an important part of the social capital and civil society of Australian communities. Dr Oppenheimer's project will explore this contribution and aims to provide a broad historical understanding of volunteerism in Australian society and government. It will also assess and explain the vital role volunteering plays in current Australian life, and explore current relations between state and federal governments and the voluntary sector.

Project Title: *Volunteering: The Australian Experience*

Funding allocated to UWS has been set at: \$10,000

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