



# EdConnect Australia Volunteer Survey 2016

Summary Report on Findings

April 2017

"Volunteers are the lifeblood of EdConnect.  
Their commitment and enthusiasm towards their role in schools is exemplary"

## Acknowledgements

Many thanks to all our volunteers who made the time to complete and return the EdConnect Australia Volunteer Survey 2016. Your role in supporting our young people is potentially life-changing providing both a safety net and springboard for our children and youth who may be struggling to realise their educational potential.

We thank you for your feedback which allows us to improve our service to schools and their students and also allows us to improve the way we interact with each of our volunteers.

EdConnect Australia would also like to acknowledge the financial assistance and in-kind support of all our sponsors and funders that allow us to continue our work with disadvantaged school students. In particular, we would like to acknowledge the support of the William Buckland Foundation, ALCOA, Roy Hill, Newmans Own Foundation, Gandel Philanthropy, The Kimberley Foundation, the John and Myriam Wylie Foundation, Sidney Myer Fund and the Myer Foundation, Bennelong Foundation, The Good Guys, The Jack Brockoff Foundation, Collier Charitable Fund, Present Group, Aurizon, Willcraft, Fairfield RSL, Fairfield City Council, Moreland City Council, City of Mandurah, Rotary of Mandurah and Hobsons Bay City Council .

We would also like to thank the Department of Education, Western Australia for providing funding to help us to help Western Australian school students.



## Executive Summary

The 2016 EdConnect Australia Volunteer Survey is issued to volunteers throughout Western Australia and Victoria to ascertain how they are faring in the schools they have been placed, how their volunteering role is impacting on their lives and if EdConnect is providing the right level of support. The survey also provides several opportunities for volunteers to provide open-ended feedback on their interactions within the school setting as well as feedback on their interactions with EdConnect staff.

There has been a marked increase in the number of volunteers from 2015 to 2016 however there has been a decline in the numbers of volunteers completing the 2016 survey.

Western Australia has the largest component of volunteers and is the only state that currently offers a mentoring program. Over 56% of volunteer respondents work in a mentoring capacity with just over 36% of volunteers assisting with learning support. Both WA and Victoria offer a Learning Support program. The remaining 20% of volunteers help out in other areas such as school libraries, gardens, breakfast clubs etc.

Volunteers rated their overall experience highly as well as their interaction with their respective Liaison Officers within EdConnect Australia. Likewise, volunteers' experience of volunteering within schools and their contact with school staff was also very positive.

A clear majority of volunteers stated that the EdConnect program was working well within schools while others stated a need for changes such as opportunities for interaction with other school volunteers, greater interaction with teachers and greater communication from schools in regards to the student participation in EdConnect programs. Only 10 volunteers stated the program was not working within the school environment.

The EdConnect program also offers clear benefits for volunteers. The majority of volunteers reported that volunteering with EdConnect has enhanced their mental and physical health and wellbeing as well as heightening their connection within their communities.

Volunteers also reported they appreciated the opportunity for professional development and the opportunity to develop new skills.

Nearly 86% of respondents stated they will return to the same school in 2017 indicating a high level of volunteer satisfaction.

## Introduction

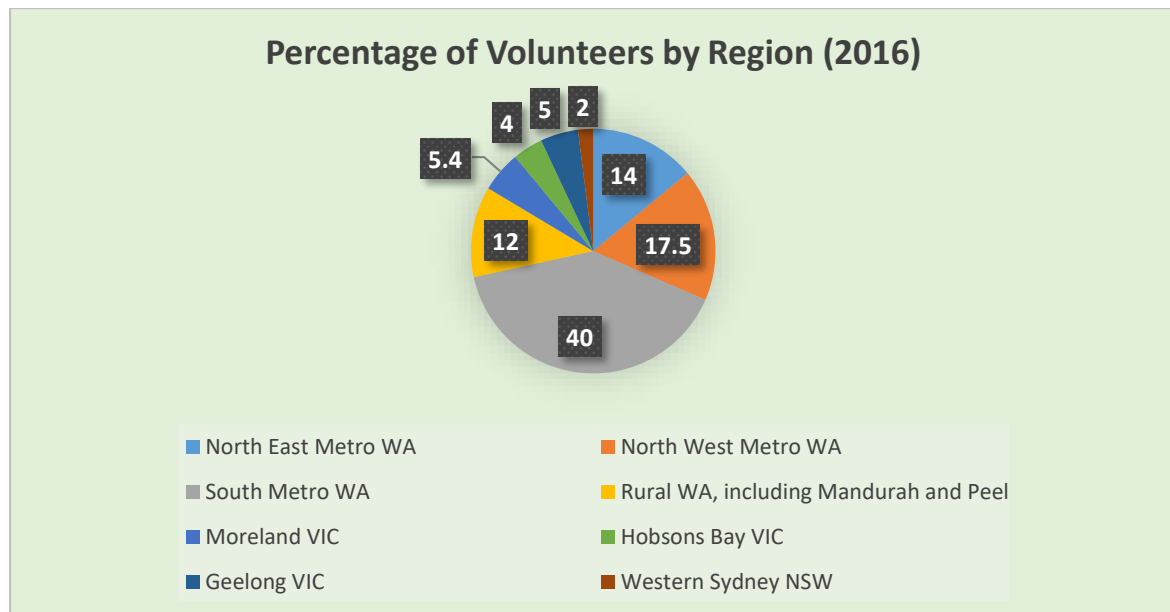
The EdConnect Australia (“EdConnect”) 2016 Annual Volunteer Survey (“the Survey”) provides a formal mechanism to allow our team of volunteers to provide feedback as to how they are supporting our young people and also how the staff of EdConnect can better support them in undertaking this very important task.

The Survey was largely conducted online using the Survey Monkey software tool with the same questionnaire being made available in paper form for those volunteers unable to complete it online. Online survey data and paper responses were then collated and analysed for the purposes of this report.

In order to identify patterns in the data and to highlight trends, the 2016 data is graphically illustrated alongside the data from 2015. Data from 2016 only is presented in the Appendices.

## Summary of Responses

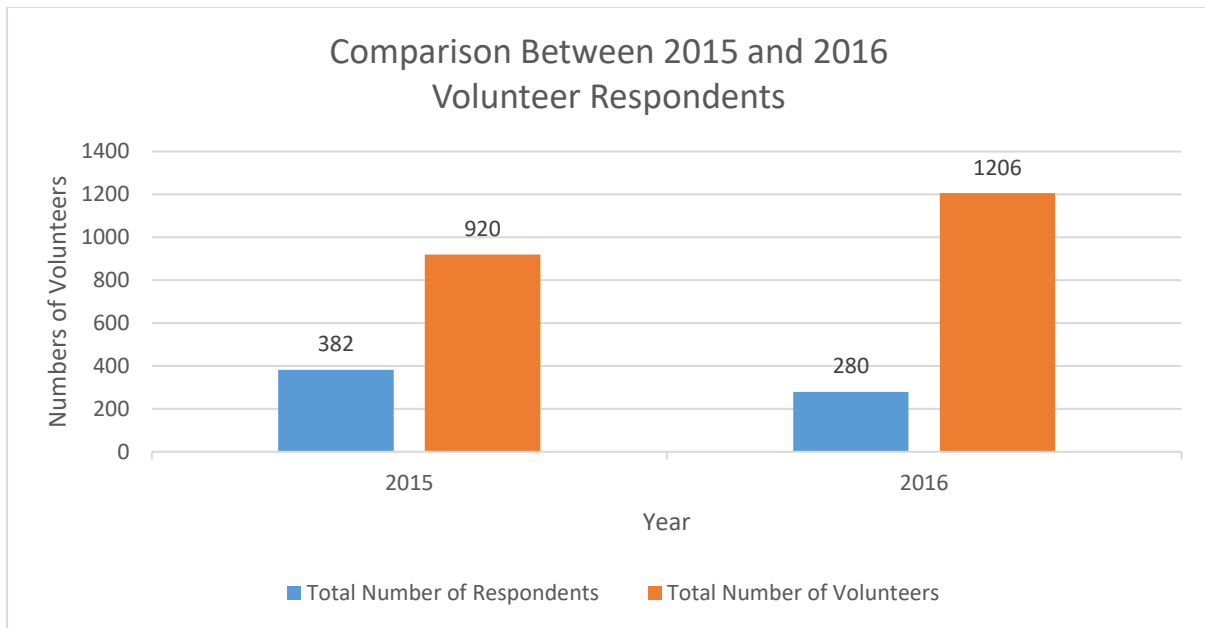
EdConnect engaged with 1206 volunteers across Australia during 2016. Western Australia had the largest component of volunteers, 1083 volunteers, whilst NSW and Victoria had 20 and 103 volunteers respectively



280 (23%) volunteers completed the 2016 Survey questionnaire. This represented a reduction in the completion rate of 18% when compared to the 2015 Survey response rate (41.5 % or 282 volunteers).

During the year, we saw an increase in number of volunteer working with EdConnect, with volunteer numbers increasing from 920 to 1206, an increase of 24%.

The table below compares the response rate from 2015 to 2016:



### The Role of the Volunteer

EdConnect volunteers engage with young people under two programs:

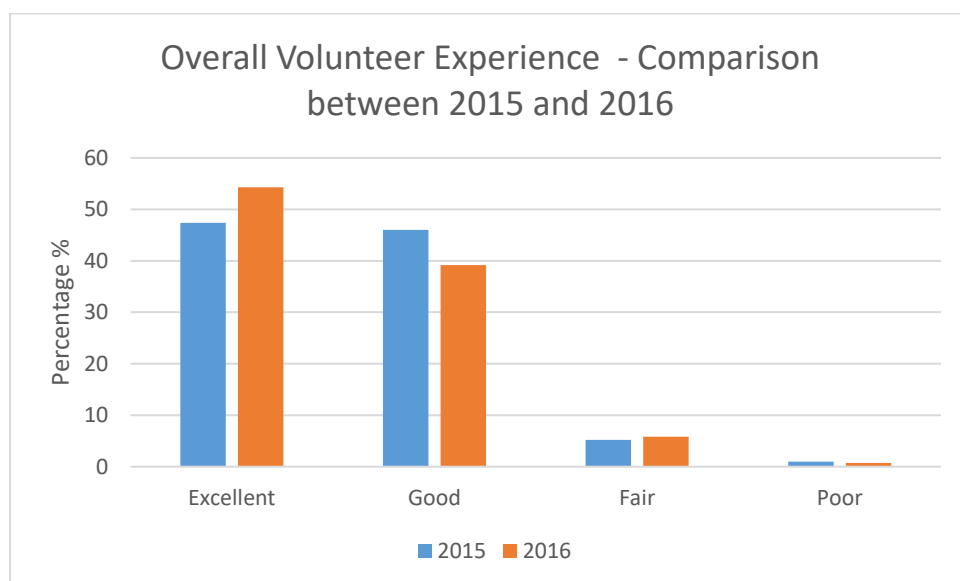
|                   |       |     |
|-------------------|-------|-----|
| Mentoring:        | 56.4% | 158 |
| Learning Support: | 36.4% | 102 |

20 volunteers (7%) indicated that they engaged in other areas of school support including working in the library, school gardens, breakfast club, assisting with sports classes and/ or excursions.

## Interaction with EdConnect Australia

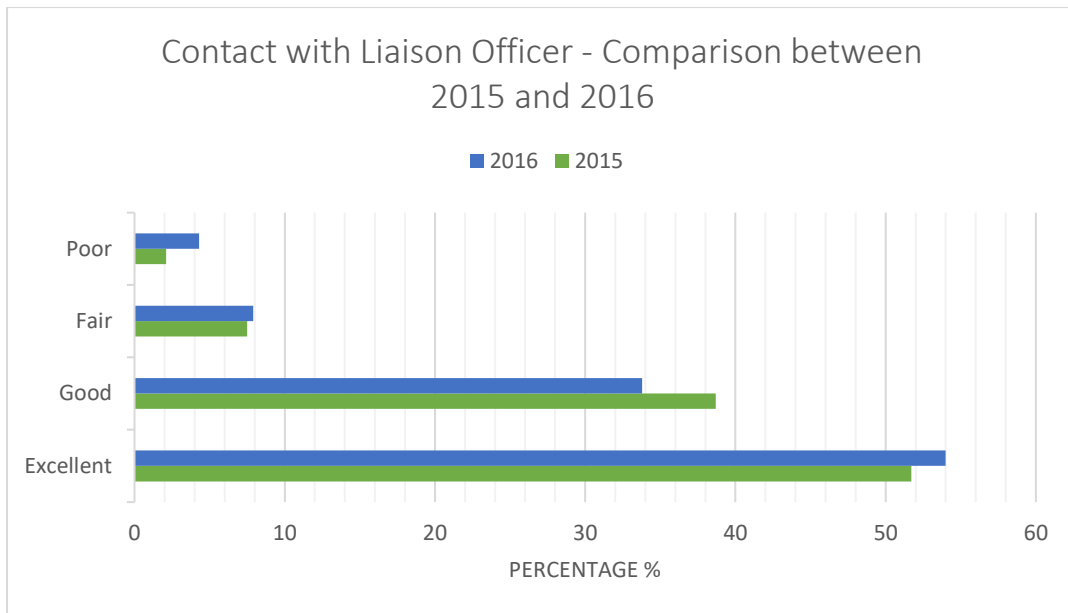
This section of the questionnaire asks volunteers to respond to three (3) questions. The first question asks the volunteer to provide an overall assessment of their interaction with EdConnect.

The table below identifies an improvement in 'Excellent' ratings with a corresponding reduction in 'Poor' ratings.



The second question asks volunteers to provide an overall assessment of their interaction with their EdConnect Liaison Office ("LO"). The 2016 Survey result identified an improvement in 'Excellent' ratings for contact with respective LO's, however it also identified a slight increase in 'Poor' ratings.

The questionnaire did not provide respondents with an opportunity to provide additional feedback where they assessed their response as 'Poor'.



The final question in the section provided volunteers with an opportunity to identify what additional resources or assistance would help them in their role. The volunteers provide a wide range of responses, examples of which are detailed below: -

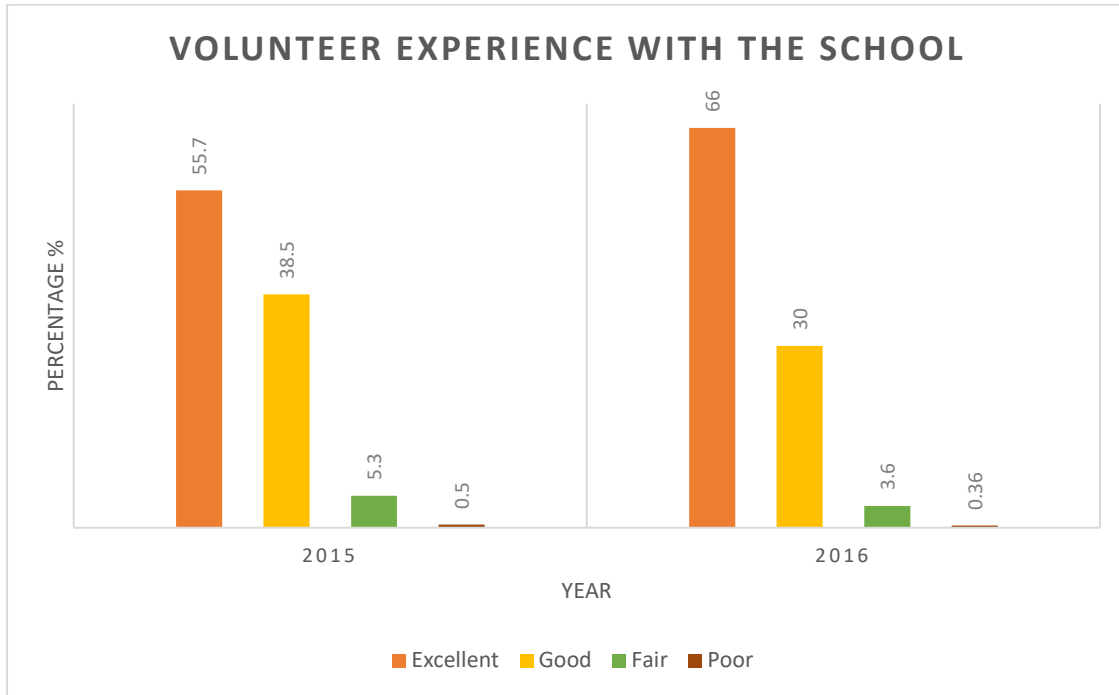
- More training;
  - “Extra training for 1:1 mentoring”
  - “Localised SOR training would be an advantage”
- More frequent and regular contact with Liaison Officer (LO) from EdConnect
- Feedback from school and/or LO on how the volunteer is working
- Feedback from the school on student/s progress
- Activity ideas for students when with volunteer
- Opportunities to meet up with other EdConnect volunteers; “feedback from other mentors, share experiences, get some tips”
- Instruction on the way that school subjects are taught:
  - “More educational sessions like the reading workshop held several months ago in the WA South Metro region.”
  - “Possibility some instruction in the way maths are now taught so that I don't confuse my children more than they are already.”
- Provision of specific resources; “material / resources suitable for teenage pupils”



The next section of the questionnaire provided volunteers with the opportunity to provide feedback regarding their interaction with the school they are volunteering with.

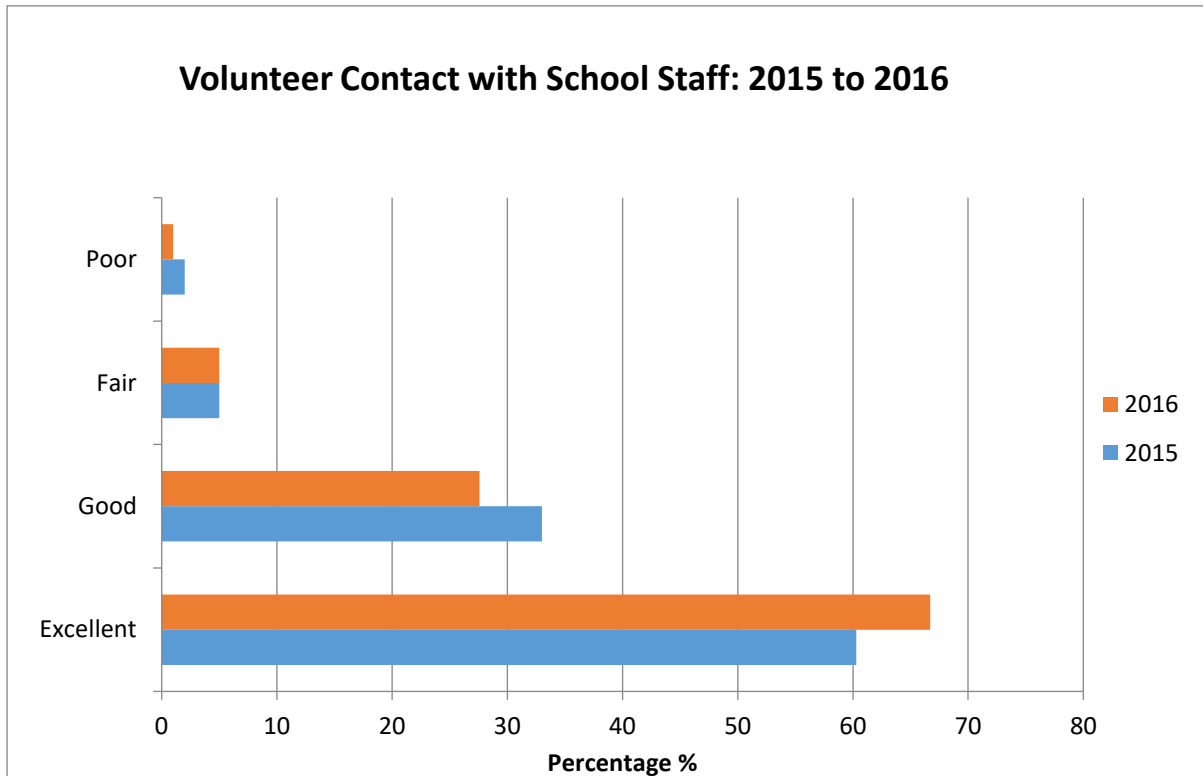
The first question asks respondents to assess their overall volunteer experience with the school. The results were as follows:

### Comparison between 2015 and 2016 – Volunteer Experience with the School



The results identify a 10% increase in 'Excellent' ratings from 2015 to 2016 with a very slight reduction in reporting of a 'Poor' experience.

The second question asks volunteers to assess their overall contact with school staff. The results are as follows-



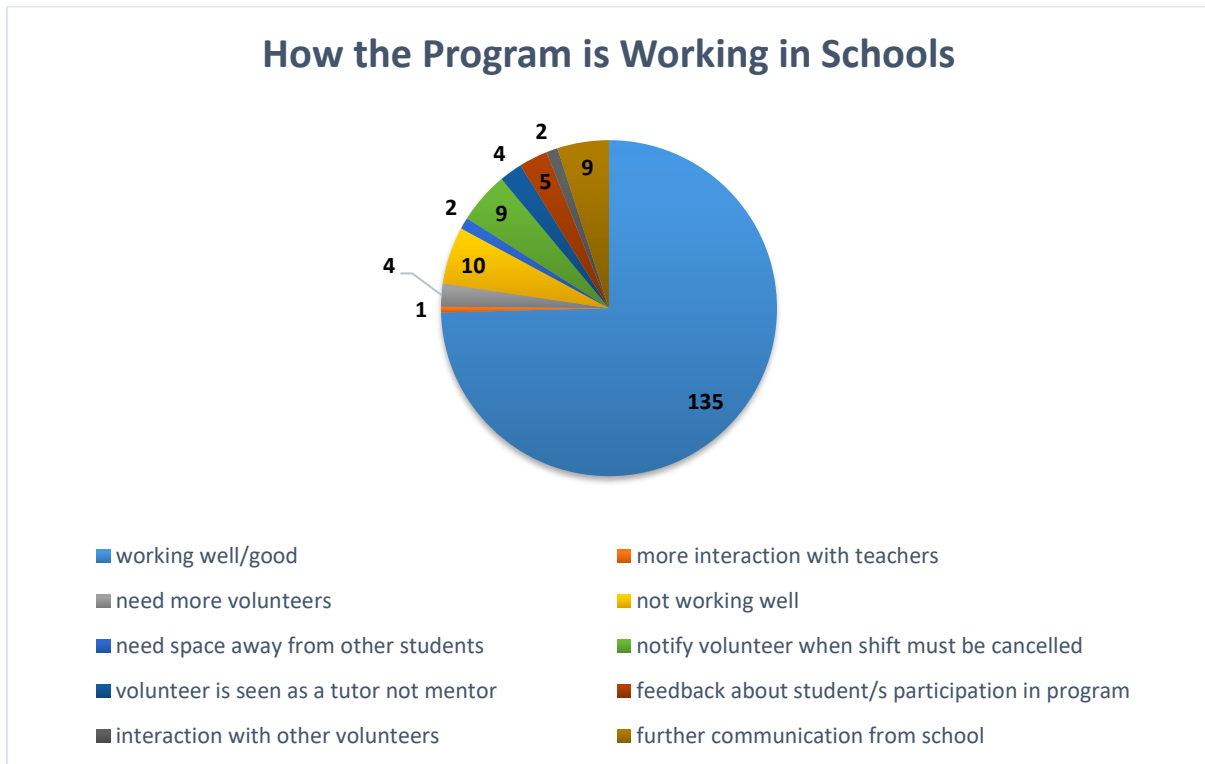
The results identify an increase in the level of satisfaction levels with an increase of just under a 10% increase in 'Excellent' ratings in 2016. There was also a very slight reduction in the 'Poor' assessment.

The final question in this section asks volunteers to comment on how the EdConnect programs were working at their school.

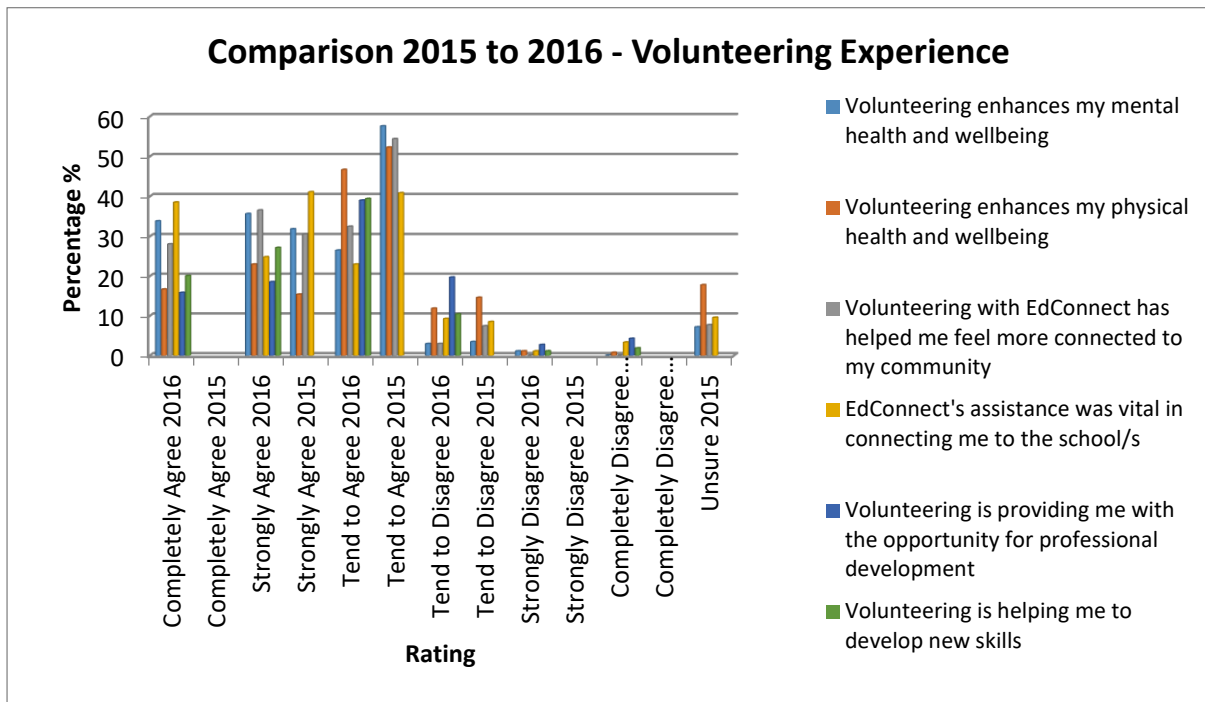
Of the 153 volunteers who responded to this question, many of them provided commentary on more than one topic of interest.

This question was written to allow volunteers to provide open-ended feedback with some common themes emerging from the analysis.

As outlined in the chart below, a substantial majority of volunteers feel that the programs are effective in their school/s. The numbers on the pie chart are the numbers of responses on that particular topic e.g. 135 respondents stated they believe the program is working well in schools.



The third section of the Survey asks respondents to rate their general experience of volunteering with EdConnect



As the chart above shows, the majority of respondents agree that their experience of volunteering has been beneficial, particularly in the areas of enhancing mental and physical health and wellbeing as well as heightening the volunteers' connections with their communities.

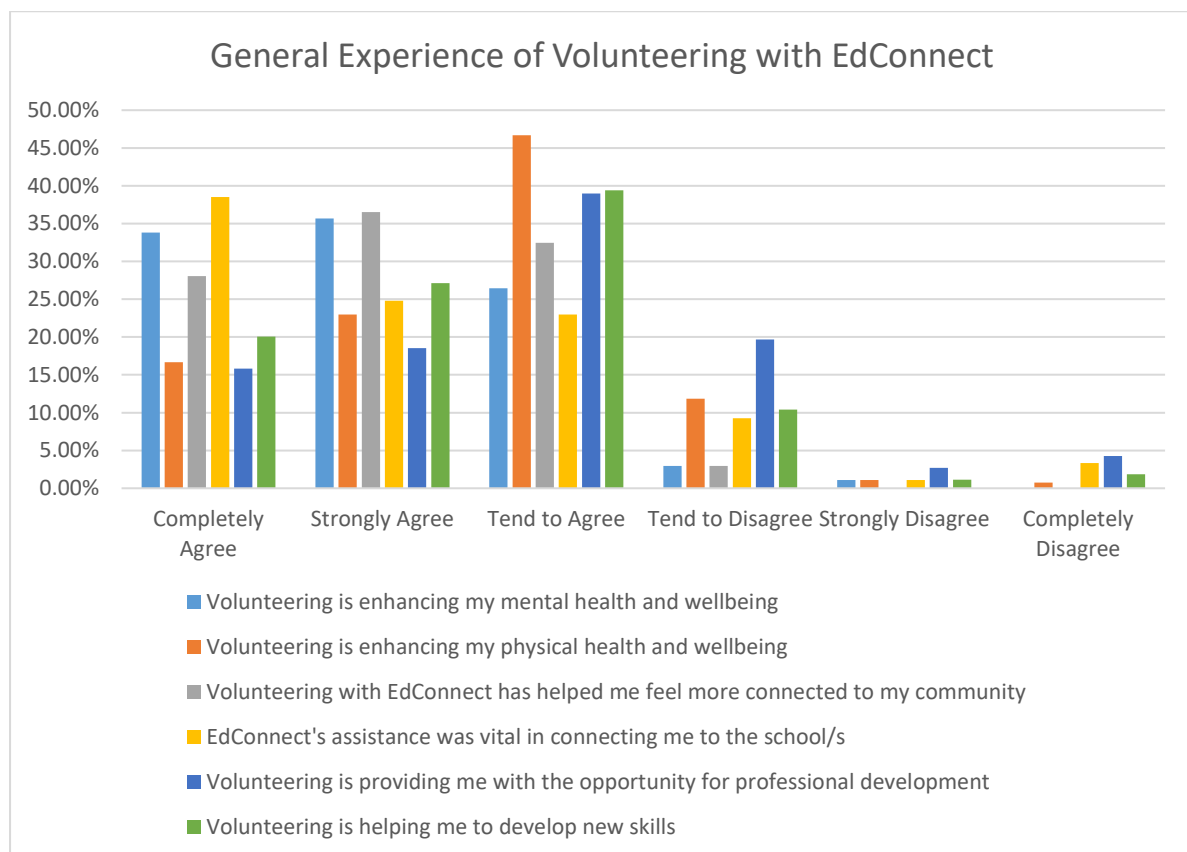
It should be noted that this question was modified in the 2016 Survey to add two additional response categories, namely:

- 1 Volunteering is providing me with the opportunity for professional development
- 2 Volunteering is helping me to develop new skills

There was also a change in 2016 Survey response categories with the range of ratings increased to include: "Completely Agree, Strongly Disagree and Completely Disagree". The response category of "Unsure" was not included in the 2016 Survey.

The two (2) new categories of ‘Volunteering is providing me with the opportunity for professional development’ and “Volunteering is helping me to develop new skills’ rated positively (either ‘Completely Agree’, ‘Strongly Agree’ or ‘Tend to Agree’) at 73.3% and 86.6% respectively.

## 2016 Survey results



The results for each volunteer measurement criteria are detailed below:

- Mental Health and wellbeing – 95.95% (‘Completely Agree’, ‘Strongly Agree’ or ‘Tend to Agree’)
- Physical Health and wellbeing – 86.3% (as above)
- More connected to my community – 97%
- EdConnect’s assistance was vital in connecting me to the school/s – 86.3%
- Provides me with opportunity for professional development – 73.3%
- Helping me to develop new skills – 86.6%

This section of the questionnaire provided respondents with an opportunity to provide feedback as to how EdConnect can enhance the volunteering experience.

The feedback is outlined in general categories as listed below.

- More communication with EdConnect
- Opportunities to meet with other EdConnect volunteers
- More training/workshops – various areas of learning e.g. reading, mentoring workshops, training for dealing with special needs, learning disabilities, mental health
- Training conducted in different locations e.g. south metro
- A mentor for volunteer mentors
- More clearly define role
- Want more hours/more time with pupils
- Feedback from teaching staff as to volunteer's performance
- More contact with EdConnect staff
- Evidence to show the work volunteers do is meaningful
- Provision of supporting materials and resources e.g. activities to do at school

Please note that the Appendix provides a complete list of responses.

The final question in this section asked respondents to comment on the “best part of being an EdConnect volunteer?”

The responses are categorised as follows:

“Making a difference in someone`s life. Education is a treasure that you hold onto for life, share your treasure with a child in need.”

### **External Benefits**

- Helping others:

“The feeling that you are enhancing the life of a young person who needs to feel positive about themselves as they make decisions for their future.”

- Seeing Improvements in attitudes of mentees
- Knowing I’m helping both the student and the teacher
- Giving something back

“Mentoring with EdConnect is one of the best decisions I've ever made for myself. Being able to connect with my mentee and making a positive impact on her life gave me a real sense of purpose and achievement. It was fantastic to know that my mentee looked forward to our weekly sessions and I realised how easy it is to make such a dramatic impact on another's life. It's a really rewarding experience to be able to give back to the community and I would gladly recommend it to anyone.”

- Helping foreign students to assimilate

### **Internal Benefits**

- Feeling valued and appreciated:

“One day he was in trouble in class and very grumpy and sulking with me. When the hour was up I was getting irritated he wouldn't go back to class. Then just before we reached the classroom he suddenly gave me a flash 1/2 second hug and disappeared into the class before I could say see you next week or lets Hi five instead. I realised I was valued.”

- Developing a friendship:

“The friendship - security, trust, guidance & mateship. My mentee wants to take me home to his place and live with him and his family.”

- Give me something to do – an interest
- Connection with the children:

"The interaction with all the staff and students is absolutely wonderful. It has been a positive experience seeing the two boys I mentor develop into friends where they respect and care for each other."

- Being part of a community

"I don't feel like an EdConnect volunteer. If I was an EdConnect volunteer, I would get a call every couple of weeks telling me to pop along to some school where there is a problem (or similar). I'm an Alinjarra Primary School volunteer."

"Being involved with the indigenous culture and actually seeing my mentee happy and more self-confident, and seeing the progress she is making in many areas unfamiliar to her :)"

- Develop an understanding of young people and youth culture:

"Working with young people helps me to keep in touch with the younger generation."

- The good relationships developing with other mentors
- Development of new skills

"As a teacher, it gives me the opportunity to carry on with my tools of trade, working with children and giving them the skills. It is also a learning curve of learning new teaching skills."

### **The Role of EdConnect**

"Volunteering to me has always been about making a difference. But in saying this, I honestly feel it starts with making that connection, that first step, which determines the tone for the whole volunteer experience. EdConnect made this journey for me one of the most welcoming, organised, connected and supportive environments I have encountered. And it is this, which I believe, makes all the difference."

"I got great training on what to expect and it has eliminated the feeling of being lost and not knowing what to do in the role."

### **Reconnection with Society**

"I get to see the real world out there and it shocks me. In the 10 years all my boys have come from broken homes."



## Conclusion

The feedback received from EdConnects' volunteers is generally very positive both towards the schools they volunteer at and towards the staff of EdConnect.

From 2015 to 2016 there has been an overall increase in volunteer numbers but a decline in numbers of respondents to the annual survey. This warrants further investigation to determine the change in response rate.

A number of the survey questions elicited a similar pattern in responses between the years 2015 and 2016 – an increase in ratings of 'Excellent' with a corresponding decrease in ratings of "Good". Generally, 'Poor' ratings declined across all questions/topic areas bar one – that of Contact with EdConnect Liaison Officer where "poor" ratings doubled between 2015 to 2016. The numbers are still low (just over 4% of volunteers described their contact with their Liaison officer as 'poor' in 2016) however further investigation might be useful to determine if this is the emergence of a pattern or a statistical anomaly. In 2016 there was considerable turnover in Liaison Officer staff across Australia however other issues could be influencing responses.

With the question on how well the EdConnect program is working in schools, the clear majority of volunteer respondents stated that the program was working well, that everything was good. However just over 10% of volunteers stated that the program was not working well within their given schools. There is no data from 2015 available for comparison.

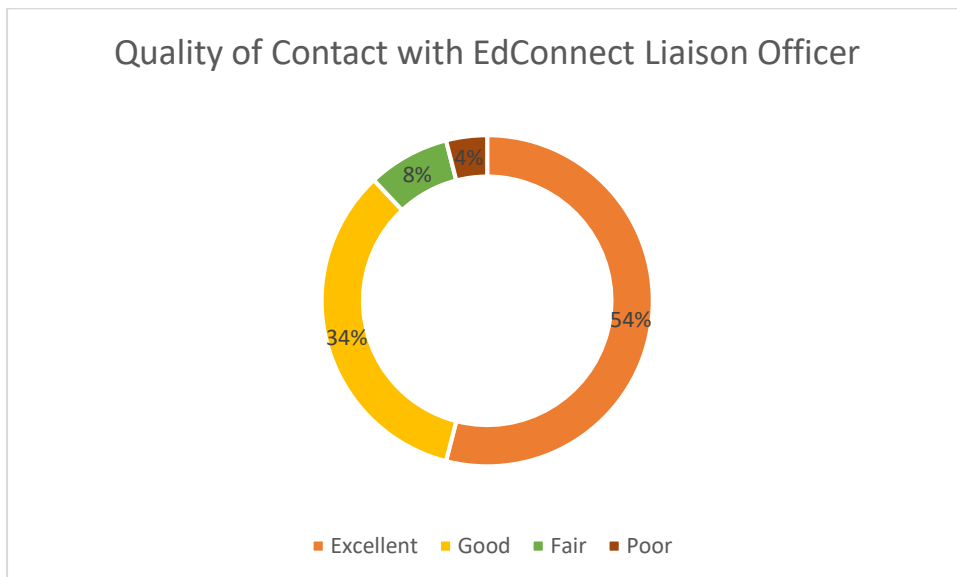
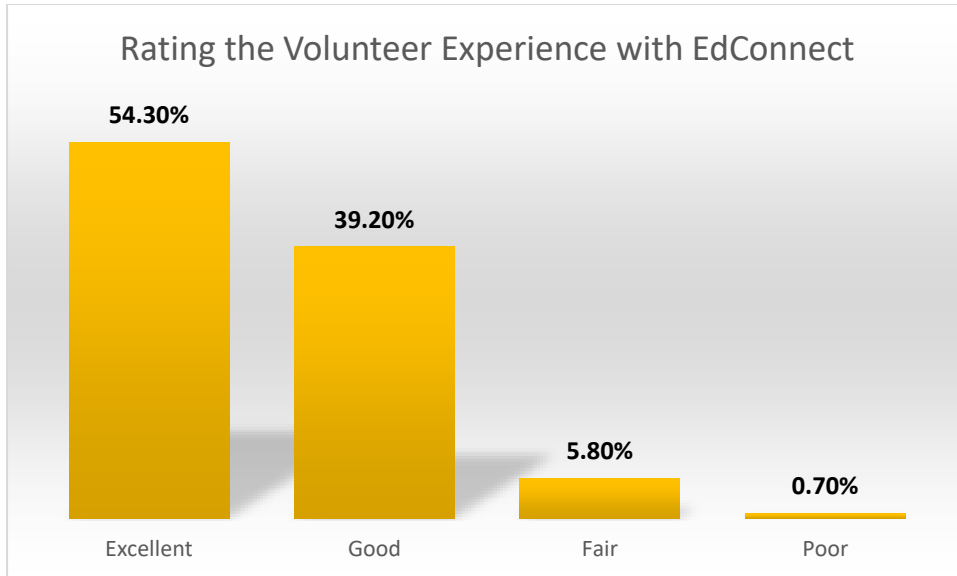
In terms of volunteer wellbeing, there has been an increase in 2016 of volunteers stating that volunteering has enhanced their mental health and wellbeing and their connection to community however there was a decline in the reporting of physical health and wellbeing. Perhaps of most significance is the marked drop in 2016 compared to 2015 of volunteers stating that EdConnect's assistance was vital in connecting them to schools. This may be attributed to high volunteer retention rates where the Liaison Officer role was not required for the seasoned volunteer/mentor rather than increased dissatisfaction with EdConnect Australia.

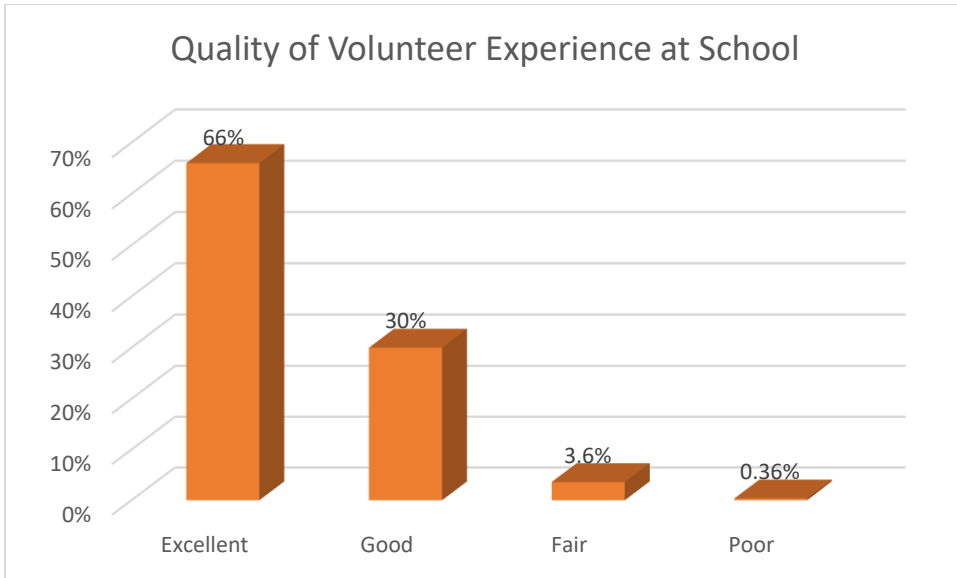
Nearly 86% or 240 respondents have stated within the survey that they will be returning to the same school/s in 2017. Only 11% stated they won't be returning in 2017. Of this 11% only 2 respondents (5.88%) stated they are dissatisfied/disillusioned with their current role.

# APPENDICES

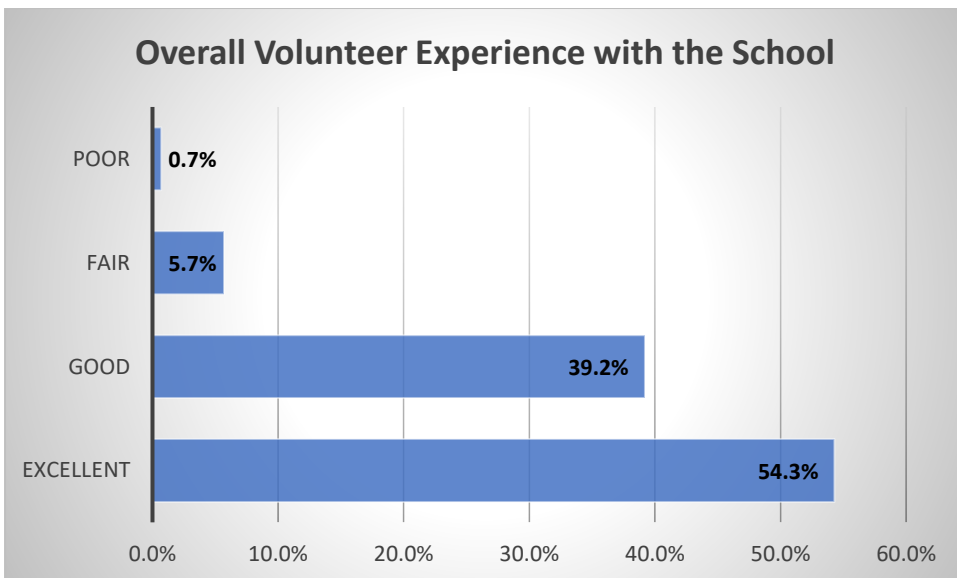
## 2016 Data

### Question Four – Overall Volunteer Experience 2016

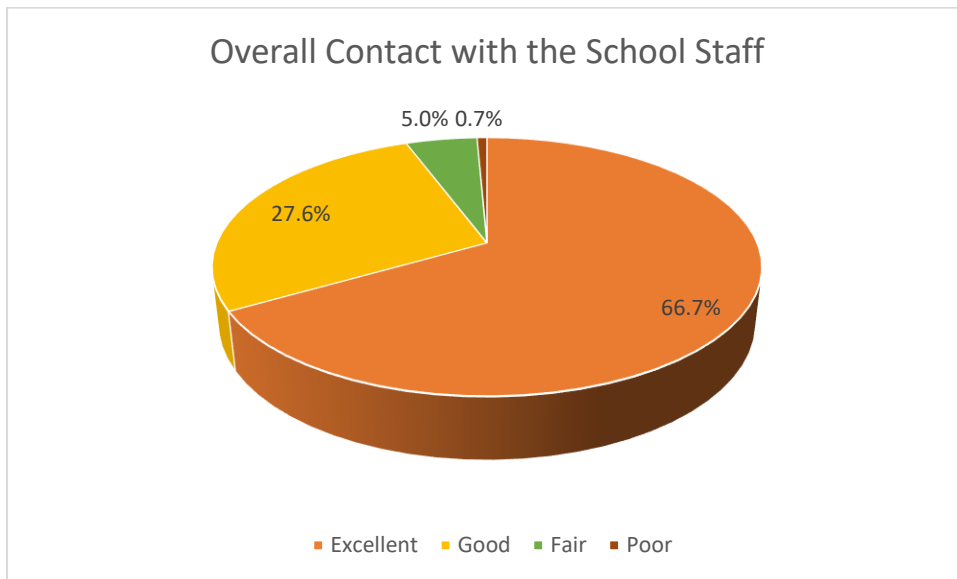




### Overall Volunteer Experience with the School



## Overall Contact with the School Staff



## Do you have any suggestions for how we can enhance your volunteering experience with us?

- Seems to be a mindset with EC that volunteers should be limited to 2 hours weekly. If volunteers are willing and able, and schools agree to it, there should be no reason for volunteers not to contribute 8-10 hours weekly. (Not necessarily at the same school)
- I would like to be given further volunteer duties - either on to one or class situation
- No. My understanding is that I am to increase the boys' feelings of self-worth and hopefully this feel good feeling will flow into his learning skills.
- Bring training to our area
- More opportunities to engage in activities outside the school environment would be beneficial to secondary students.
- Clearer definition of role with school. (teachers) It was not until I expressed to Dep Principal that I didn't feel confident to teach "S" maths next year when he said "That's not your role"
- More localised assistance would be of value to many of us.
- I did not join the EdConnect to enhance my life style or experience. I felt I may be able to help at least one child.
- I enjoyed the reading seminar I attended so maybe more of that
- The whole experience has been very pleasant.
- Not meant to sound arrogant, but I don't feel the questions relate to how I think and feel about mentoring/volunteering. I want to contribute to the community and give something back so there is that connection. I don't feel that I've learnt new skills yet although I acknowledge that I've had to brush up on some forgotten ones. I haven't really been tested in mentoring yet, so that's when new skills may be needed.
- My volunteering is a continuation of using the skills I used in my library work before I retired.
- None at the moment I have been getting all the assistance I need at present and all the way through my 15 years up in Dec 2016 at job.
- Not specifically. I'm appreciative of the opportunity to work under a well organised and professional program where I have been thoroughly screened and have support available if and when required.

- No your service is good.
- Give me some work to do. I am available 5 days a week.
- Too early to comment
- Feedback to be given by teacher to volunteer on how they are doing. There was very little communication. I believe reports are completed by the teacher re the volunteer's performance but I didn't hear anything leaving me feeling a bit unsure if I was of value especially as this was my first time.
- not really, I have developed my own system, with so far works well with in our guide lines.
- Training and meeting after work hours
- I think you already do so much. I can't think of anything else.
- To have face to face contact with EdConnect staff would be very helpful. I feel that I have been left too much on my own. To have a mutual person to talk to is sometimes needed especially when one has children who are from diverse cultures.
- Perhaps a little more encouragement that what we do is meaningful.
- At present everything is going well for me but if in the future I need any assistance I will contact EdConnect.
- To give volunteers opportunities to put them one day in primary and another in the local high school to experience challenge.
- During my specific day more time with the students and the teacher.
- I am leaving
- Being able to attend a mentoring course.
- The surveys that are sent out appear to me to be aiming at those who are mentoring primary school children. A survey that was aimed at young teenagers would be better for those working in high school.
- EdConnect keeping in touch with the volunteers / mentors is very important.
- Feedback on ideas and programs is good at about the present rate. Don't swamp us with stuff but don't make us feel ignored
- No we tend to deal directly with the school and staff

- Have to get our volunteers together and more information available.
- When you have courses, meetings or parties it would be good to have somewhere closer to go - i.e. in the southern area.
- Availability of modules and workshops in the South Metro area.
- Regular contact with other volunteers
- I would like to discuss my options of expanding my skills
- This year, due to staff changes at Ed Connect and at the nominated schools mentoring did not get organised.
- Would be interested in listening to children reading
- If possible, make more workshops available more than once in a year.
- A bit more history on the child and what personality areas the school wishes us to work on. Also was it the school or the parent (or both) that requested a mentor for the child.
- Please, how about setting the training sessions at a reasonable distant between the north and the south metro region. So that I be able to attain more sessions to improve and broaden myself.
- Rather like the idea of a mentor for us to use as a sounding board if needed. More dates for courses e.g. reading would be great as I missed them
- Please see question 6.
- Happy with the communication at this stage .... I enjoy the emails and updates I receive occasionally .
- Continue to provide training and get togethers
- Ask me to do more...
- No, the experience is completely unique and rewarding.
- I realize information is confidential but it would help if a general outline of the problems the mentor is having would be beneficial in the mentoring process.
- Better contact in this region.
- I think EdConnect is excellent, very supportive to volunteers, facilitating exchange between volunteers, and providing advice and support in challenging role.

- Volunteering in Yrs 11 and 12 requires different emphasis as to how students are assisted. Tutoring is often required and requested by students.
- No, I believe my volunteering experience has been excellent.
- Whilst I am a grumpy old man and can usually find fault with most things I am struggling here
- Maybe more individual communication during the year how volunteers are going with their student
- Just continue to support school teacher who works very hard matching us up with students and is always available to discuss problems with students.
- The suggestion about the liaison officer visiting the school has been made numerous times but there doesn't seem to be any follow up more time
- Too early in my experience to say.
- You need a proactive school with some good staff contacts. Fee like our school has been a bit like "here we don't know what to do with these students, you take them".
- I would prefer Middle school students rather than yr 12 students who are so frantically busy they sometimes forgot to come.
- feedback from other mentors, share experiences, get some tips.
- Not at this stage but it's useful to have the avenues of communication open.
- Continue with the meeting each term and a guest speaker.
- Maybe some training for mentoring children with very low IQs.
- Training, activities, resources
- Just by turning up to volunteer
- I have not had any contact with the Coordinator over the entire school year.
- Perhaps provide more support materials - suggested activities to do in school, things like that
- No suggestions. Volunteering experience is already excellent.
- By organising some events like science/IT models for students from different schools specially for weak students to participate and distribute prizes to boost them. Planning



some plays showing real world ,meaning of family & culture other stuff.

- I recommend another introductory module should be offered addressing how schools operate and offering strategies to solve the most commonly arising problems.
- I generally feel that the volunteering experience has been most enjoyable. I'm not sure I'm continuing with Mt. Duneed Primary, (there didn't seem to be an option below to say this, so I'm saying it here). It will depend upon whether the school teachers feel it has been worthwhile for them and their students. I will be continuing with Geelong High School in its CIP program as I have had very positive feedback from the teacher Ms. Catherine Yee in relation to my involvement in this program.
- Chris has been a wonderful coordinator and very willing to place me in an appropriate role. The only thing I would suggest is a bit more of a focus on safety in more difficult secondary schools like the one I was in.
- Easier access to, and communication with, the ED CONNECT Liaison Officer. More connection and follow up between ED CONNECT and the School Coordinator to see enough support is being given if needed.
- A little bit more contact with Perth office. We tend to be forgotten in the country areas.
- Give us more ideas on Mentoring children with learning disabilities
- I would encourage workshops to assist with the various areas of learning. I have always loved teaching (am a retired registered nurse) but would welcome workshops in educational areas, As a country person it would be great to take travel time into consideration of start times.
- Too early to say.
- Communicate with schools and staff about mentoring other kids.
- Refer to my answer 6. I don't feel isolated if I regularly meet with other volunteers in my area
- Suggest relevant books. Bring children's' mentors together annually to share issues, challenges etc.
- Professional development training to better equip volunteers to assist in intellectual disability, autism, at risk students, suicide, mental health first aid and so on that we come into contact with at each shift. Also some form of regular contact with EdConnect. Some form of recognition throughout the year/ term to assist us to keep up the stamina of volunteering would be a HUGE assistance
- I think that: The help being offered needs to be more clearly defined and adhered to. Teachers need to welcome the volunteer, help them get oriented and behave toward the

volunteer in a collegiate fashion. There needs to be a contact person who is willing to be responsible for the volunteers - one who helps them get settled and checks-in with them from time to time.

- More social interaction with other volunteers of other schools.
- All good