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## **Sample essays: Analysing argument**

### **Sample #2 - 2015 VCAA Exam**

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Link to the exam:

<https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Documents/exams/english/2015/2015english-w.pdf>

Link to the examiner's report:

[https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Documents/exams/english/2015/english\\_examrep15.pdf](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Documents/exams/english/2015/english_examrep15.pdf)

## Essay:

There are a large number of volunteer organisations in Australia, and at an award ceremony sponsored by 'big splash', a financial institution, these organisations are recognised for their work throughout the year. In her speech at the Australian Volunteers Award ceremony, Stephanie Bennett (big splash's CEO) discusses the efforts of volunteers around the country, and contends that their contributions to society are currently being undervalued. In an [enthusiastic] tone, she explains to an audience of volunteer workers and organisation representatives that big splash commends the work they have done. In a subsequent acceptance speech, Mathew Nguyen states in a humble tone that Tradespeople Without Borders are grateful about being recognised, but in the end, volunteering is its own reward.

Bennett begins her speech by highlighting the 'strong commitment' they have to communities around Australia, and that their goal is to provide a 'helping hand' to the organisations who contribute so much to the country. These statements encourage the reader to see that big splash cares deeply about the work that volunteer organisations do - and the emphasis on a '\$100,000 donation' they provide indicates that their support has significant substance. The fact that big splash supports 'over 200 such organisations' is likely to demonstrate to the reader that their work covers a sizeable part of the volunteering community in the country. Bennett affirms that big splash is 'truly inspired' by what she has seen from the award submissions, and considering all the effort they have put into this function, the reader is positioned to feel that her words are sincere and genuine. The banner on stage contains the event's logo - where 'volunteers' is bolded, to highlight the focus of the night - and placed at the bottom-middle is an image of two hands holding each other. This symbolises the volunteers themselves, and the fact that their goal is to lift people up; to help those in need.

Bennett continues on by explaining the work these organisations do on a day-to-day basis, and she provides numerous pieces of specific evidence pertaining to the value of such work. Firstly, however, she discusses how many volunteers there are - that they are 'undervalued and under-recognised' and consist of 'a quarter of the ... population'. This demonstrates to the reader that volunteers are large in number, and that such a robust contribution to society should be more highly regarded. These volunteers work roughly '713 million' hours, according to Bennett, and the value of this time and effort amounts to 'billions of dollars' in unpaid wages. The reader is therefore positioned to see that

there is concrete monetary value in what volunteer workers are doing - that their 'kindness to strangers' is not only charitable, but represents a serious financial benefit to the citizens of Australia. She stresses that we are 'becoming more and more dependent' on these volunteers, implying that without them, society would struggle to function. She believes that volunteers '[stitch] together the social fabric', [demonstrating] to the reader how much they truly do, and how important they truly are.

In his acceptance speech, Mathew Nguyen is very humble, and he describes his feelings as 'blown away' and 'really grateful'. These words encourage the reader to see that Nguyen - and Tradespeople Without Borders - are self-sacrificing, and that above all, they care about the welfare of Australians in need. He continues on by describing the reason started his foundation - namely that he 'realised how hard' it was for certain people to solve simple issues such as affording a plumber. This emphasises to the reader how caring Nguyen is, and that he truly believes his contention that volunteering is not about fame or recognition. He provides reasons for why such help is needed, explaining why he was so eager to 'go overseas to dig toilets' - the reason being that there are '2.5 billion people' in dire need of help. The reader can thus appreciate that Nguyen's focus is on those around him, and that there is no time to worry about accolades when people cannot even access things like proper toilets. Nguyen ultimately believes that people 'have a right' to help when they need it, and that volunteer organisations 'shouldn't ask for praise'. Their dedication to unity is symbolised by the picture accompanying their application, which depicts a number of hands placed on top of each other. This image evokes togetherness, as hands joined together are a universal sign of peace and friendship.

Bennett concludes her speech by stating 'we should never forget or overlook [volunteer organisations]', and she thanks Nguyen and Tradespeople Without Borders for the work. These concluding words show that she wants to shine light on what Nguyen has done, and although Nguyen believes they should not be thanked, he still recognises that other organisations are doing great work. He finishes by saying 'thanks to all the members' of his organisation, and he also congratulates the other finalists.