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# EMERGENCY VOLUNTEERING 2030: VIEWS FROM MANAGERS IN VOLUNTEERISM

**Environmental Scan Report No. 1**

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RMIT University & Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC





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## KEY MESSAGES

- Volunteerism managers are concerned about the sustainability of formal emergency management volunteering into the future in the face of the changing external environment and they see a need for considerable change within the sector to ensure a sustainable emergency volunteer capacity into the future. They also see a need for the sector to address implications of the rise of spontaneous volunteering.
- In the past, activities to improve volunteer sustainability have predominantly focused on treating symptoms through programs implemented at the level of local volunteer management practices. Future strategies need to focus more heavily on addressing underlying causes that sit at organisational and sector-wide levels.
- The core elements that make up a preferred future for emergency volunteering according to volunteerism managers look very different to the present-day. Volunteerism managers depicted more accessible and inclusive volunteering; community-centric, integrated and collaborative service delivery; more agile, open and future-focused organisations with stronger volunteer cultures and volunteer management capacities; greater space in the sector for community resilience to flourish; and a society and governments that better value and enable volunteering.
- There is a need for volunteer-involving EMOs to engage more closely with the wider voluntary sector, both to learn from and to contribute to the way Volunteer Involving Organisations confront the changing environment of volunteering.
- Growing regulation, corporatisation and a rise in rule-based bureaucracy have a mounting negative impact on volunteer sustainability in the emergency management sector. Volunteerism managers see this as a key challenge to be confronted.
- A more balanced approach to risk management focused on outcomes is needed to overcome the tension between risk averse attitudes, regulation and procedures with volunteer sustainability and community resilience principles and goals.
- Current resourcing arrangements restrict the ability of the sector to adapt to the changing landscape. There is a need for wider recognition in government that volunteering is not free, and that volunteering infrastructure needs to be adequately and appropriately resourced.
- The need to change culture in the emergency management sector to be more open and collaborative is clear but change needs to be managed carefully, respecting existing strengths and identities.
- One of the most uncertain and influential factors that will shape the future of emergency volunteering is the extent to which the emergency management sector is willing and able to envision and enact change.



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We would also like to acknowledge the Traditional Owners of country throughout Australia on which this research was conducted and pay our respects to their Elders both past and present.



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**What is emergency volunteering going to look like in 2030? How (and by whom) is it going to be organised?**

**How can the emergency management sector best enable the value of volunteering for communities - before, during and after an emergency - into the future?**

This report provides answers to these questions from the perspectives of 34 managers that have responsibilities for volunteerism in Australian emergency management organisations (EMOs) working across preparedness, response, relief, and recovery. The report is one of a series of Environmental Scan reports that will be synthesised and presented to an expert panel to assist researchers in developing alternative scenarios for the future of emergency volunteering to inform today's decision making.

### Context

The modern landscape of emergency volunteering is characterised by far-reaching change, converging challenges and emerging new opportunities. In this context, a key concern within the emergency management sector today is how the changing landscape is putting pressure on the long-term sustainability of Australia's formal emergency management volunteer capacity. The changing landscape also opens doors onto new and innovative ways to enable and enhance the value of volunteering for communities before, during and after emergencies.

The emergency management sector is increasingly responding to the changing landscape, yet the pace of change across the sector overall has been slow. The need for organisations and the sector to identify and enact further – and faster – strategies to adapt to the changing landscape, and thus shape a vibrant and sustainable future for emergency volunteering, is clear and becoming ever more imperative.

### Key implications

- Volunteerism managers are concerned about the sustainability of formal emergency management volunteering into the future in the face of the changing external environment. They see a need for considerable change within the sector to ensure an adequate and sustainable future emergency volunteer capacity. They also see a need for the sector to more directly address implications of the rise of spontaneous volunteering.
- In the past, activities to improve volunteer sustainability have predominantly focused on treating symptoms through activities implemented at the level of volunteer management. Future strategies must focus more on addressing underlying causes that sit at organisational and sector-wide levels.
- The core elements that make up a preferred future for emergency volunteering according to volunteerism managers look very different to the present-day situation. Volunteerism managers depicted more accessible and inclusive volunteering; community-centric, integrated and collaborative

service delivery; more agile, open and future-focused organisations with stronger volunteer cultures and volunteer management capacities; greater space in the sector for community resilience to flourish; and a society and governments that better value and enable volunteering more widely.

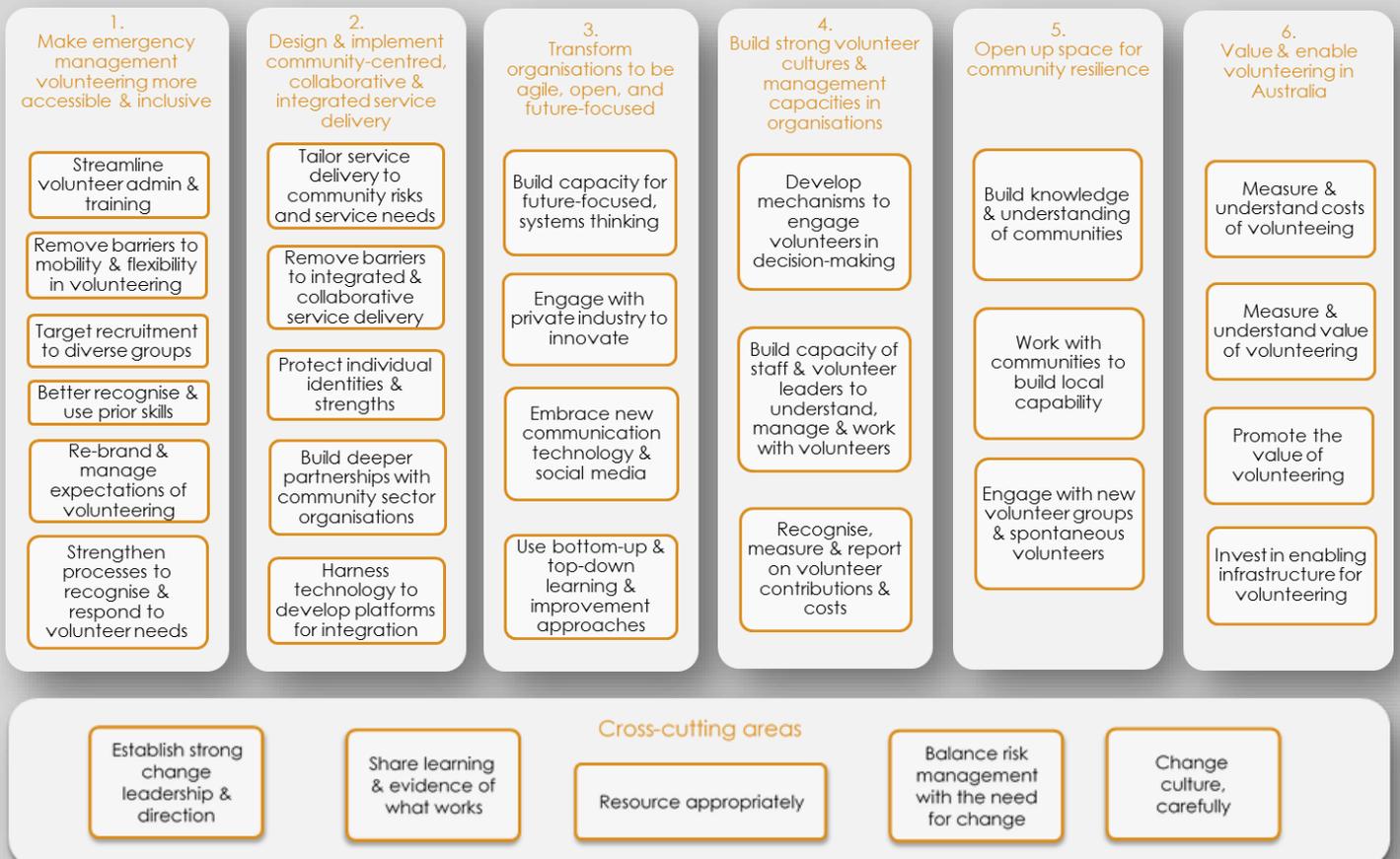
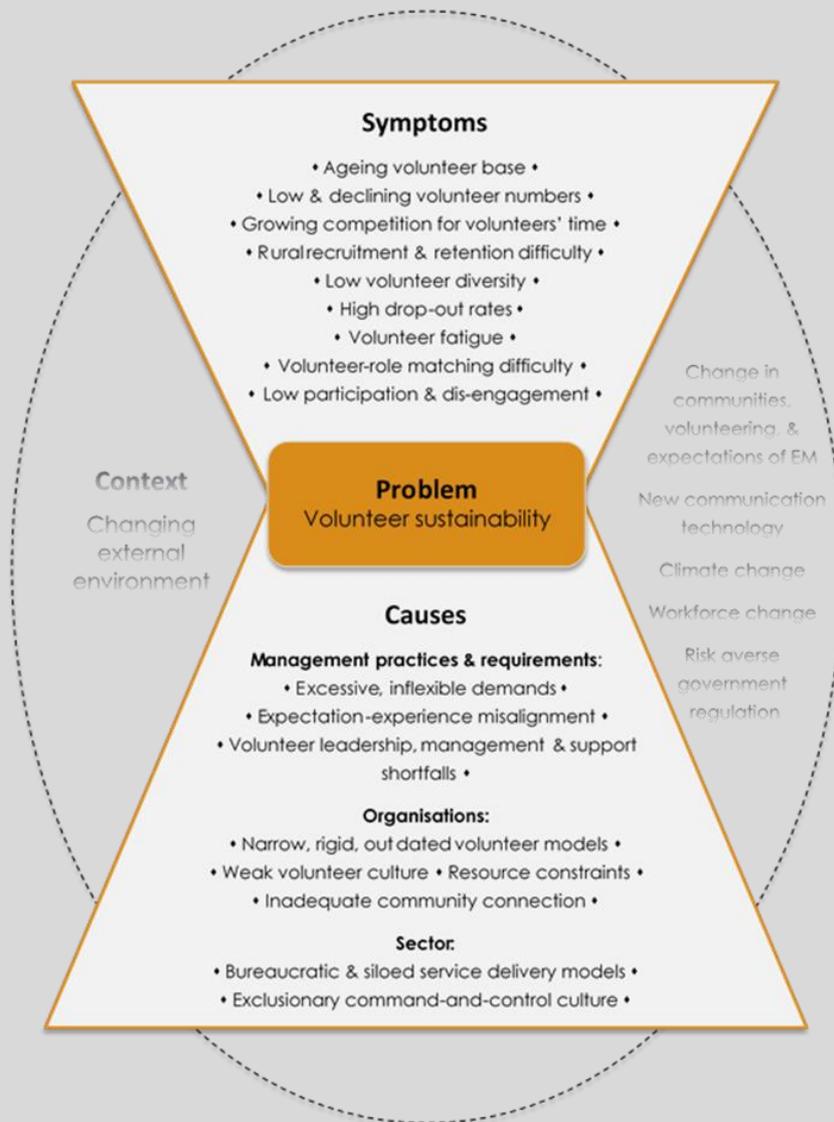
- There is a need for volunteer-involving EMOs to engage more closely with the wider voluntary sector, both to learn from and to contribute to the way Volunteer Involving Organisations confront the changing environment.
- Growing government regulation, corporatisation and centralisation is having a mounting negative impact on volunteer sustainability in the emergency management sector that will need to be addressed.
- A more balanced approach to risk management focused on outcomes is needed to overcome the tension between risk averse attitudes, regulation and procedures in the emergency management sector on one hand, with volunteer sustainability and community resilience principles and goals on the other.
- Current resourcing arrangements restrict the ability of EMOs and the sector to adapt to the changing landscape of volunteering. There is a need for wider government recognition that volunteering is not free, and that enabling infrastructure needs to be appropriately resourced.
- The need to change culture in the emergency management sector is clear. Change must be managed carefully, respecting existing strengths and identities.
- The future of emergency volunteering is uncertain. While external factors beyond the emergency management sector contribute to this, one of the most uncertain and influential factors is the extent to which the emergency management sector is willing and able to envision and enact change.

### **What volunteering issues is the emergency management sector facing?**

The core problem facing the sector today, depicted by managers, is the sustainability of formal emergency management volunteering in the face of the changing external environment. A second problem is how to address the rise of unaffiliated, spontaneous volunteering. Using the technique of a 'problem tree' researchers identified multiple underlying causes of the volunteer sustainability problem in managers' responses, shown over page.

### **What does a preferred future for emergency volunteering look like, and what needs to happen to move towards it?**

The preferred future for emergency volunteering collectively signposted by managers has six core elements, shown over page. Managers also described key areas of activity needed to bring about the six core elements of the preferred future, including five cross-cutting areas that were revealed as key enablers, and therefore priority action areas. How these areas are enacted is therefore likely to significantly influence how, and if, the sector is able to reshape itself and its relationships with others to adapt to the changing landscape of volunteering and collaboratively deliver sustainable emergency services with communities into the future.





This is the most exciting, challenging, vital, vibrant time to be alive and active in the Volunteer World. It is in transit. We are moving from the no longer to the not yet. Indeed, our arena might be characterized by these five Cs: Change, Challenge, Creativity, Choice, and Collaboration.

Schindler-Rainman, E. **1984**. Transition strategies for the volunteer world. *Journal of Volunteer Administration*, 11(3), 5-49.)

Clearly, the success and long-term viability of the emergency services will continue to depend upon the strength and commitment of volunteers. [...]

Those organisations that do not change risk their own survival and disconnection from the community. [...]

The greatest challenge now facing volunteer-based emergency services is a need to embrace prevailing change and establish priorities for action.

Reinholdt, S. **2000**. Managing change within the emergency services to ensure the long-term viability of volunteerism. *Australian Journal*



## CONTEXT

### THIS REPORT

**This report presents results of interviews with 34 managers that have responsibilities for volunteerism in Australian emergency management organisations (EMOs).** Managers were interviewed from organisations with primary response roles as well as from organisations that have important community support roles across preparedness, response, relief, and recovery. Both government and not-for-profit organisations were represented. The purpose of the interviews was to explore managers' views about changes in volunteering that have occurred in the past and are occurring now; and about their visions for a preferred future for volunteering in the emergency management sector and what needs to happen to get there.

The interviews were conducted by RMIT University researchers as part of a research study for the Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre called *Emergency volunteering 2030: Adapting the sector* (<https://www.bnhcrc.com.au/research/resilience-hazards/3533>). 'Adapting the sector' is a foresight and scenario-planning study [1-3]. It is engaging with a wide range of stakeholders to develop alternative future volunteering scenarios for the emergency management sector, and to consider implications for today's decision-making. Adapting the sector is the first Australian study to consider the complete landscape of emergency volunteering with a focus on how it is changing and what this might mean for the emergency management sector going forward.

**This report is one of a series of Environmental Scan reports being prepared through the *Adapting the sector* study that capture diverse views of the current and emerging landscape of emergency volunteering.** The Environmental scan reports will be synthesised and presented to an expert panel that will assist researchers in developing the future volunteering scenarios.

### THE CHANGING LANDSCAPE OF EMERGENCY VOLUNTEERING

**Volunteers are critical to Australia's emergency management capability and capacity.** In terms of numbers, recent estimates refer to over 250,000 fire, ambulance and emergency service volunteers across Australia [4]. This figure swells into the vicinity of 500,000 with the addition of volunteers with non-government community service organisations that provide vital support to communities when an emergency event occurs [5]. This formal volunteer capacity sits alongside a significant, but far less visible, capacity to help people before, during and after disasters in wider Australian society through informal, emergent, and 'unaffiliated' (with EMOs) volunteering [6].

**The economic and social value of this combined voluntary effort to Australian communities is immense and, to date, largely immeasurable** [e.g. 7]. Given Australia's geographic size, low population density and natural hazard risk profile; it is not feasible to provide adequate emergency preparedness, response, relief



and recovery services to communities across the country without volunteers [4, 5, 8]. It is also likely that the volunteer capacity needed in emergency management into the future will grow given predicted increases in the frequency and severity of extreme weather events in Australia due to climate change [9]. Nor would it be desirable to deliver emergency management services without volunteers, even if it were operationally and economically feasible, because of the significant psychosocial benefits of emergency volunteering for volunteers and for communities affected by emergency events [10, 11].

**The modern landscape of emergency volunteering in Australia is characterised by far-reaching change, converging challenges and emerging new opportunities** [12]. On one hand, **formal emergency management volunteering roles affiliated with EMOs are becoming more demanding**. Expectations on these volunteers by governments and organisations are rising due to impacts of growing government regulation, corporatisation and professionalisation, and an associated increase in administrative and training demands [8, 13, 14]. While these changes have brought positive outcomes for service quality, wellbeing and safety, they have also created barriers and disincentives to this volunteering.

Meanwhile, **the availability of people for this kind of formal, long-term, high commitment volunteering is declining** due to factors such as structural economic change that has increased competition between paid and voluntary work time; and demographic change, particularly an ageing population, greater participation of women in the workforce, urbanisation, and declining populations in some rural areas [8, 15-17]. Data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics shows a decline in the last few years of the number of people engaged in long-term, formal volunteering, and a decline also in the average number of hours that people dedicate to this type of volunteering [18, 19].

**At the same time, the way people choose to volunteer, and how they seek to fit volunteering into their lives, are also changing**. People increasingly eschew the traditional, formal style of volunteering that is most common within EMOs, choosing instead to engage in alternative forms that are more flexible, more self-directed and cause-driven [20, 21]. These alternatives include virtual, skills-based, spontaneous, informal, and episodic volunteering. The rise of social media and mobile technology has been an important catalyst for change in emergency volunteering, removing barriers to people's participation in all phases of emergency management and increasing people's capacity to self-organise outside of formal organisations [22, p.15]. As a result, there is a growing number of new, digitally-enabled, voluntary emergency support groups, networks and platforms that provide easier, more accessible and more flexible ways for people to help before, during and after emergencies and disasters compared to the more traditional EMOs.

In this context, a key concern within the emergency management sector today is how **the changing landscape is putting pressure on the long-term sustainability of Australia's formal emergency management volunteer capacity**. Concerns about volunteer recruitment and retention have mounted across the sector since the late 1990s due to factors such as declines in volunteer numbers and turn outs in some areas, rising volunteer turnover, and an ageing volunteer base



[5, 13, 15, 17, 23-28]. A 2012 *National Emergency Management Volunteer Action Plan* called it “an issue of national importance that impacts on all levels of government and all Australian communities” [5, p.6].

The picture is not all grim, however. **The changing landscape also opens doors onto new and innovative ways to enable and enhance the value of volunteering for communities before, during and after emergencies** [12]. Examples include access to new volunteer bases and highly-skilled skilled volunteers, as well as opportunities to increase surge capacity and harness local resources and skills in the wake of an emergency event. Volunteer Involving Organisations (VIOs), including EMOs, that can respond effectively to the changing landscape therefore have much to gain. However, developing “the capacity to adapt to changing volunteer demographics, motivations and expectations” is a significant on-going challenge [29, p.48], particularly for more traditionally-structured organisations, like many in the emergency management sector.

Fortunately, the emergency management sector is responding to the changing landscape. **To begin, the sector’s understanding of what emergency volunteering looks like and where it takes place is expanding to incorporate a wider range of volunteers, groups and organisations.** A wider view of the modern day practice of volunteering within the voluntary sector [30, 31], combined with the influence of resilience and shared responsibility concepts in Australian and international disaster policy [32, 33] have helped spur growing recognition of the contributions of volunteers and Volunteer Involving Organisations that have not traditionally been considered part of the emergency management sector. The need to extend emergency management planning and collaboration to include these wider groups and actors is an idea that is therefore gaining some traction [e.g. 34, 35, 36].

**Some EMOs are also responding to the changing landscape with new volunteer strategies, models and management practices** [e.g. 37. See also Appendix 4, 38, p.19, 39]. While the pace of change in this respect has picked up in recent years, overall it has been slow. This is despite a pressing need for change being voiced almost two decades ago [e.g. 17, see also 38]. **The need for emergency management organisations and the sector to identify and enact further – and faster – strategies to adapt to the changing landscape and thus shape a vibrant and sustainable future for emergency volunteering is clear and becoming ever more imperative.**

## EMERGENCY VOLUNTEERING AND ITS ORGANISATIONAL CONTEXTS

Given the changing nature of the emergency volunteering landscape, the focus of this report and the *Adapting the sector* study is emergency volunteering in all its guises. Researchers have adopted Volunteering Australia’s inclusive, 2015 definition of volunteering [40]: **“Volunteering is time willingly given for the common good and without financial gain.”** This definition encompasses formal volunteering with an organisation as well as informal volunteering that occurs outside the context of a formal organisation. It also encompasses short-term and project-based volunteering in addition to long-term volunteering, donation of employee time by businesses, as well as activism. This definition is therefore more

inclusive of the wider range of volunteering that occurs in modern society than older definitions that have focused more narrowly on long-term, formal volunteering only [6, 31, 41].

In line with this, '**emergency volunteering**' is used as an inclusive label that refers to **any and all volunteering that supports communities before, during and after a disaster or emergency, regardless of its duration or its particular organisational affiliation, or lack thereof** [6].

Emergency volunteering can be further distinguished by the organisational context within which it occurs (see Figure 1).

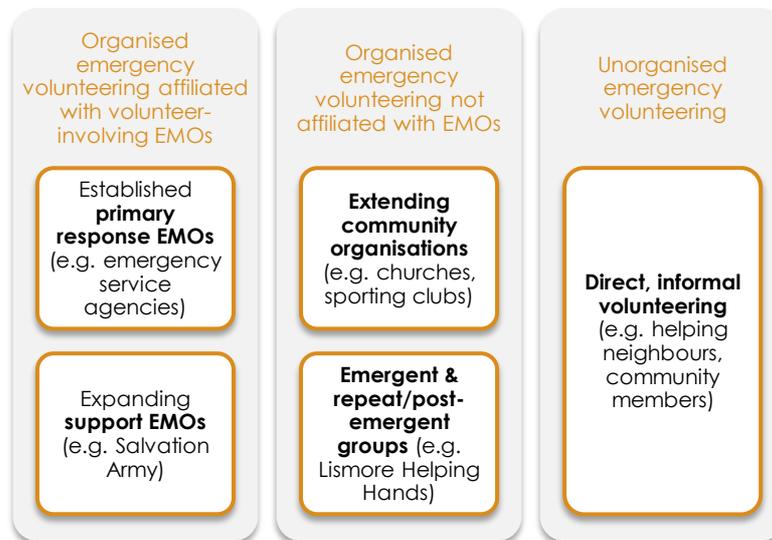


FIGURE 1: FIVE ORGANISATIONAL CONTEXTS FOR EMERGENCY VOLUNTEERING  
(BASED ON DYNES 1970, FIGURE 6-1, P. 138 [SEE 42]).

This report considers volunteerism managers' views of all types of emergency volunteering, but particularly formal volunteering affiliated with emergency management organisations (EMOs). EMOs are the government and non-government organisations that have recognised roles in relevant state and territory, district or municipal emergency management and recovery plans.

In this study, volunteer-involving EMOs are categorised into two broad types. The first are established **primary response EMOs**, which are the government and non-government organisations that are the primary responders when an emergency or disaster occurs, and for whom emergency management is their core organisational mission. They include state and territory government fire and emergency service agencies, ambulance services, Surf Life Saving Australia, coast guard and marine rescue, and search and rescue organisations.

The second type of volunteer-involving EMOs are expanding **support EMOs**. These are organisations that have wider social welfare, community service, humanitarian or environmental conservation missions that also have formally recognised responsibilities for relief and recovery, for which they plan and mobilise volunteers when needed. This category includes local governments as well as many non-government organisations such as the Australian Red Cross,



the Salvation Army, Anglicare, and state and territory volunteering peak bodies, amongst others. Through their wider missions, many of these organisations also have important ongoing roles in preparedness, and in building individual and community resilience before, during, and after a disaster strikes.

There are also three other, key organisational contexts for emergency volunteering that is not affiliated with EMOs. The first are **extending community organisations** (see also [6, p.359-60]) that do not have formal emergency management responsibilities but which build individual and community resilience before, during and after a disaster strikes in their communities [34], and which may also 'extend' their activities into emergency relief and recovery when a disaster strikes. Examples include churches, community associations, neighbourhood houses, advocacy and support groups, sporting clubs and other community sector organisations. Businesses and industry groups may also 'extend' activities into relief and recovery through corporate and other employer-supported volunteering, and pro bono services.

The second organisational context for unaffiliated emergency volunteering are **emergent groups** [6, p.359-60, 43]). These are new, self-organised groups or networks that form in direct response to an arising need when a disaster strikes, or when a risk develops or is newly recognised. They are increasingly digitally-enabled; using social media to self-organise without the need of a formal organisation to support them. They include, for example, many self-organised, informal collective responses within disaster-affected communities ("arguably the most underestimated component of human resources available to disaster managers" see [44, p.397-8, 45]), as well as emergent and self-organised informal volunteering activity undertaken by the wider public to help those in affected communities. Some emergent groups can also go on to evolve into 'repeat emergent' groups or more established community organisations in their own right. Key examples of this are the growing number of community-based emergency planning and preparedness groups and networks; and long-term, voluntary support groups such as Blazeaid, Firefoxes Australia, and the Student Volunteer Army in Christchurch [e.g. 46].

The final organisational context for emergency volunteering is the absence of any organisational context other than through existing interpersonal relationships, **or unorganised informal volunteering**. This occurs, for example, when people directly offer post-flood clean-up assistance to neighbours or other community members.

In addition, 'spontaneous volunteering' is a form of emergency volunteering that currently receives considerable attention in Australian emergency management. Potential spontaneous volunteers are described as "individuals or groups of people who seek or are invited to contribute their assistance during and/or after an event, and who are unaffiliated with any part of the existing official emergency management response and recovery system and may or may not have relevant training, skills or experience" [47]. When it occurs, spontaneous volunteering can take place within any of the organisational contexts described above, although it is arguably most embraced by emergent groups [e.g. 48].



## KEY IMPLICATIONS

The findings presented in this report have implications for policy and practice in emergency management organisations, in the wider emergency management sector, and beyond.

The implications outlined here were identified by the authors of this report. Ongoing engagement with key stakeholder groups is further considering implications and insights from this research for organisations, the sector.

**Volunteerism managers are concerned about the sustainability of formal emergency management volunteering into the future in the face of the changing external environment. They see this as the core volunteering problem facing the sector today, and they see a need for considerable change within the sector to ensure an adequate and sustainable future emergency volunteer capacity.** A second problem they see their organisations needing to grapple with today is addressing the implications of the rise of spontaneous volunteering for communities, volunteers, organisations and the sector more widely.

**In the past, activities to improve volunteer sustainability have predominantly focused on treating symptoms through programs implemented at the level of volunteer management practices. Future strategies need to focus more heavily on addressing underlying causes that sit at organisational and sector-wide levels.**

In recent years, an increasing number of EMOs have initiated more strategic approaches to volunteer sustainability that are focusing on addressing underlying causes more than surface symptoms of the problem. However, there remains a need to move even further past recruitment campaigns as the core solution, and to more widely and more comprehensively address underlying factors. Interviews with managers revealed a range of underlying causal factors that contributed to the volunteer sustainability problem in emergency management, in large part by inhibiting the ability of EMOs and the sector to adapt to changing environments. It was clear from the interviews that volunteerism managers see a need for more strategic, and more collaborative approaches to be pursued across the sector.

**The core elements that make up a preferred future for emergency volunteering according to volunteerism managers look very different to the present-day situation.** Compared to today, volunteerism managers emphasised that in a preferred future: 1) volunteering with EMOs would be more accessible and inclusive to a wider range of people; 2) service delivery would be more community-centric, integrated and collaborative with community service organisations; 3) EMOs would be more agile, open and future-focused; 4) EMOs would have stronger volunteer cultures and management capacities; 5) there would be greater space for community resilience to flourish; and 6) volunteering would be more highly valued and better enabled in Australia.

**There is a need for volunteer-involving EMOs to engage more closely with the wider voluntary sector, both to learn from and to contribute to the way Volunteer Involving Organisations (VIOs) are confronting the changing environment of volunteering.** The situation portrayed by volunteerism managers in EMOs is not specific to the emergency management sector. Many of the challenges, risks,



opportunities and impacts raised by these managers are also being experienced by VIOs and volunteer managers in other sectors. There is much that volunteer-involving EMOs can both learn from and contribute to as active members of the wider voluntary sector as it faces and adapts to the shifting landscape.

**Growing regulation, corporatisation, and a rise in rule-based bureaucracy have a mounting negative impact on volunteer sustainability in the emergency management sector. Volunteerism managers see this as a key challenge that needs to be addressed.** Managers are concerned about the impact of these shifts on volunteer sustainability, even while they also recognise the benefits brought for service quality, professionalism, safety and wellbeing. Volunteer-involving EMOs have become more bureaucratic as a result of these developments, creating ever greater imposts on volunteer time through administrative and training requirements. Managers are concerned about the barriers and disincentives this creates for emergency volunteering, and the regulatory risks and costs it creates for VIOs, which may encourage more not-for-profit organisations to forego volunteer engagement in the future. Again, this trend is not specific to the emergency management sector. It is felt by VIOs across Australia. Governments and EMOs would do well to direct attention to reducing or removing these negative impacts for volunteering in implementation as much as possible, while maintaining the intent behind these regulations and procedures.

**A more balanced approach to risk management is needed to overcome the tension between risk averse attitudes, regulation and procedures in the emergency management sector on one hand, with volunteer sustainability and community resilience principles and goals on the other.** EMO volunteerism managers see a rising tension between increasingly risk averse governmental and organisational attitudes, regulation and procedures in the sector on one hand, and community and government aspirations of volunteer sustainability and community resilience expressed, for example, through more flexible, unaffiliated and informal forms of emergency volunteering on the other hand. Indeed, risk aversion was portrayed as a key barrier to the sector's ability to adapt to the changing landscape of volunteering. Managers clearly recognised risks associated with the changes needed to adapt to the future landscape of volunteering that need to be managed carefully, particularly with respect to the coordination of spontaneous volunteering. At the same time, however, they showed concern that risk aversion could derail progress if risk management is not balanced more evenly with achieving benefits of change than it has been to date.

**Current resourcing arrangements restrict the ability of EMOs and the sector to adapt to the changing landscape of volunteering. There is a need for wider recognition in government that volunteering is not free, and that volunteering infrastructure needs to be adequately and appropriately resourced.** Resourcing issues were repeatedly raised throughout interviews with managers, those with not-for-profit organisations as well as those with government organisations. There is a clear message that current resourcing arrangements restrict what EMOs and the sector can do to adapt to the changing environment and maintain a vibrant, sustainable volunteer capacity. They argued that the costs of volunteering and



volunteering infrastructure were not well-recognised by governments, and that greater investment and funding was needed to support and enable volunteering and VIOs into the future.

**The need to change culture in the emergency management sector is clear but change needs to be managed carefully, respecting existing strengths and identities.** Managers clearly articulated a need for cultural change in the emergency management sector to become more open, more collaborative and more inclusive. This is needed to enable organisations to embrace more diverse forms of emergency volunteering, to embed volunteerism and volunteer management more deeply within organisations, and to reorient service delivery towards collaboratively working with communities and community service organisations to address community risk and meet service needs collectively. At the same time, managers were very aware that cultural change is difficult and faces resistance, and that cultural change cannot be imposed but rather needs to be embedded through difficult conversations centred on how the sector, EMOs and emergency volunteers can best serve their communities into the future.

**The future of emergency volunteering is uncertain. While there are important external factors beyond the emergency management sector contributing to this, one of the most influential, and uncertain factors is the extent to which the emergency management sector itself is willing and able to envision and enact change.** Key external factors contributing to future uncertainty raised by managers were the volatile political environment and the unforeseeable impacts of technology on communications and relationships around emergency volunteering, as well as future impacts of climate change. However, managers expressed most uncertainty about the willingness and ability of the sector to embrace and enact change. Leadership, shared learning, resourcing, balancing risk management with the need to change, and managing cultural change were seen as key factors that will impact on this. How these factors are dealt with will therefore significantly influence the sector's ability to reshape itself and its relationships with others to adapt to the changing landscape of volunteering and collaboratively deliver sustainable emergency services with communities into the future.



## RESEARCH METHODS

### Data collection

Views from managers with roles in volunteerism in EMOs were predominantly collected via semi-structured interviews conducted in late 2017 and early 2018. Views from three managers were collected via an online questionnaire circulated to community sector organisations in late 2018. Initial invitations to participate in the research were sent by the researchers via email. Potential participants were identified through the project's end user group, and via sector networks and bodies, in particular the Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council (AFAC) volunteer management technical working group (VMTG) and the Australian Emergency Management Volunteer Forum (AEMVF).

All interviews were conducted by RMIT researchers Tarn Kruger or Blythe McLennan. Two were conducted in person and the remainder by telephone. The interviews were loosely structured and followed a generic interview guide with additional probing questions used, determined on a case-by-case basis (see also Appendix 1 – Generic interview questions). The online questionnaire completed by three of the managers contained very similar questions to the interviews, and allowed open-ended, descriptive responses. The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed by the researchers or an external transcription service. Written transcripts were returned to participants to make any corrections and clarifications. A few chose to make minor changes.

### Sample

In total, 34 managers with responsibilities in volunteerism from 27 EMOs participated in the research (see Figure 3). Their responsibilities covered roles in volunteer strategy, management, coordination and support. For brevity, the participants are referred to in this report as 'volunteerism managers'. However, not all participants were responsible for direct management of volunteers. Participants were interviewed from every state and territory in Australia, with higher participant numbers from the larger and more populous jurisdictions. Four participants had national level roles.

18 participants were affiliated with 14 different **primary response EMOs**. All but one of these EMOs (Emergency Management Victoria) were Volunteer Involving Organisations (VIOs). In three jurisdictions where emergency service agencies are administered through a single government department, two people were interviewed from different areas within the same department.

16 participants were affiliated with 13 different **support EMOs**. 11 were affiliated with VIOs with primarily relief and recovery roles, and five with organisations that support or coordinate emergency volunteering but are not volunteer involving themselves. In two cases, managers affiliated with the same support EMO were interviewed in different jurisdictions. A list of all the EMOs represented in the interviews is provided in Appendix 2.

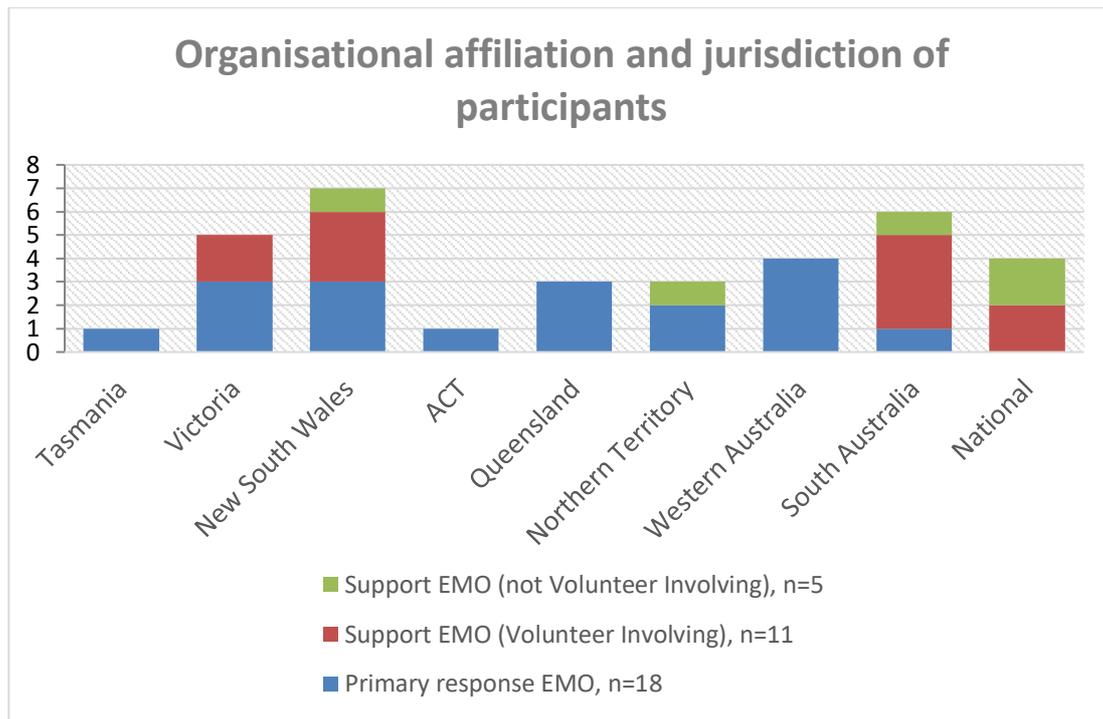


FIGURE 2: VOLUNTEERISM MANAGERS INTERVIEWED ACROSS AUSTRALIAN JURISDICTIONS, BY ORGANISATIONAL CATEGORY.

## Data analysis

Interview transcripts and questionnaire responses were thematically analysed using NVivo qualitative analysis software [49, 50]. This involved coding segments of data in each interview/questionnaire for content that related to the research questions, as well as for other, emergent themes raised by participants. Coded data was progressively organised into categories as themes emerged across participant responses. Broader, cross-cutting themes not defined by specific research questions were also identified.

An earlier version of this report was shared with the project's end user group, many of whom were also participants. Feedback indicated that the report provides a good overview of volunteerism manager views. This provided a credibility check, where a good "fit" between the participants' views and the "researcher's representation of them" were confirmed [50, p.3].

## Study limitations

This report is just one input to a wider environmental scan and thus is not exhaustive in nature. The purpose of the wider scan is to identify issues and themes from a range of stakeholder perspectives to inform the development of future alternative scenarios for emergency volunteering in Australia. The findings here reflect a broad picture of emergency volunteering in Australia **from the perspectives of managers with roles in volunteerism strategy, sustainability and support services only**. They do not provide a definitive nor complete assessment of the state of play in emergency volunteering. Additional reports will describe views from volunteer leadership, local governments, volunteering peak bodies, and community sector organisations.



Further, this report focuses on broad volunteering issues across the Australian emergency management sector. It does not comprehensively capture the diversity of situations for emergency volunteering across different jurisdictions, regions or local settings, which in some cases can be significant. It is intended that place-based scenario-planning workshops will be undertaken as a part of this project to explore implications of wider-scale future scenarios under different settings in urban, peri-urban, rural and remote areas.

While efforts were made to involve managers from a wide range of EMOs in this stage of the research, there are some gaps. No managers from volunteer marine rescue organisations, Coastguard, nor search and rescue organisations participated. There was also minimal involvement of ambulance services, and managers were not interviewed from all the state/territory offices of support EMOs that have national coverage. Input to the research from these organisations, services and jurisdictions will be sought as much as possible in future stages of the research.

## FINDINGS

The following section provides a description of key themes arising from the interviews/questionnaire responses. More detailed findings are provided in Appendix 3 in the form of tables and illustrative quotes and are referred to in text where relevant.

Findings are aggregated for the sector and focus on providing a combined view from volunteerism managers. Differences in responses between managers from primary response and support EMOs are included. Other differences (e.g. between jurisdictions and between urban and rural settings) are described where most significant, but emphasis is placed on broad issues and themes shared across the sector.

Direct quotes are used anonymously in this report to illustrate the themes identified. Participants are identified only by a unique, random number (1-34) and a letter denoting their organisational category (P = primary response EMO, S = support EMO). An exception is the examples of activity included in Appendix 4, where some organisations are identified.

### WHAT HAS CHANGED IN THE EMERGENCY VOLUNTEERING LANDSCAPE OVER THE LAST 5-10 YEARS?

All 34 volunteerism managers identified changes in the emergency volunteering landscape in the last five to ten years. They referred to changes in the external environment outside of the emergency management sector (64% of references made) more than the internal environment within the sector (36% of references).

#### External environment

External changes raised were grouped using the STEEP analysis framework (e.g. Social, Technological, Environmental, Economic and Political factors). Changes in the social environment counted for over half of all the references made to external environment changes (see Figure 3).

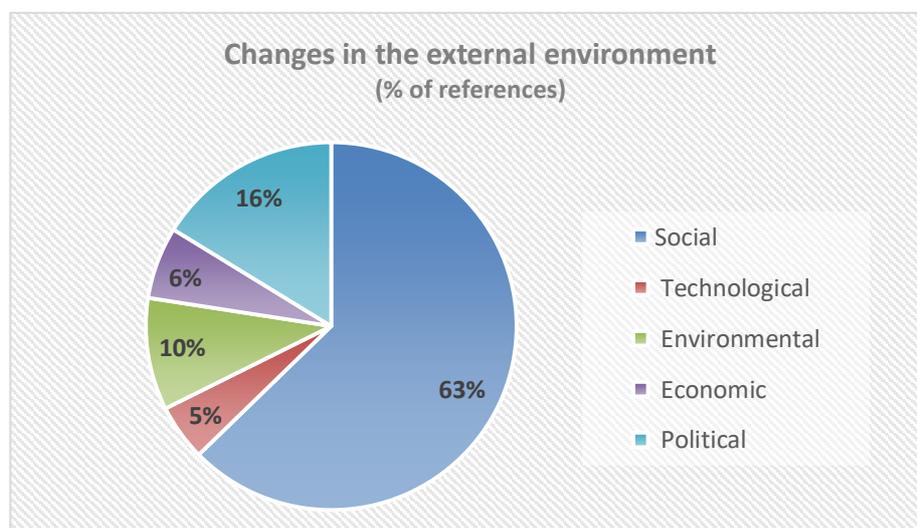


FIGURE 3: REFERENCES TO CHANGE IN THE EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT BY VOLUNTEERISM MANAGERS.



GROUPED BY MAJOR TYPES OF MACRO-ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS  
(140 TOTAL REFERENCES BY 33 PARTICIPANTS)

## Social change

Managers raised three main areas of social change (see Appendix 3, Figure 9): change in communities, change in volunteering, and change in community-emergency management sector relationships. Managers from primary response EMOs raised changes occurring within the communities they serve more often than managers with support EMOs. They emphasised people's greater mobility and transience, rural decline & depopulation, and urbanisation and regionalisation. A smaller number of managers from both groups also referred to an ageing population and growing diversity within or between communities that called for varied approaches to volunteer management. Managers' descriptions of social change also reflected some of this diversity between different locations and communities across Australia. For example, one manager described a younger rather than an ageing population in the Northern Territory, which also had implications for volunteering:

*“We have a very small retired population ... so those people who might be more inclined to volunteer with the Red Crosses that sort of thing, we have a smaller pool for the organisations to recruit from.” (Support EMO, Northern territory)*

Meanwhile, a few managers in faith-based support EMOs also described a decline in the role of the church in modern society:

*“For one reason or another people attending church or numbers of people attending church aren't necessarily increasing. So that feeder mechanism, if you like, or avenue for us to find people wishing to assist is not growing. (02S)*

Four areas of change in volunteering were raised by both groups: people having less time to volunteer and volunteering for shorter time periods, growth in new volunteer groups and informal and spontaneous volunteering, general mentions of significant change in the way people volunteer, and the increasing influence of personal development and benefits as motivations to volunteer.

Regarding community-emergency management sector relationships, managers from primary response EMOs in particular described rising community expectations of, and reliance on, their organisations and on emergency management volunteers that is unsustainable:

*“right now community expectation is going through the roof [...] Up until now the very basic discussion has been, 'I pay rates and a levy and therefore you must deliver the world to me'. But that's an unsustainable and unrealistic expectation. (27P)*

Some managers also linked rising community expectations to the impact of new communications technology. They explained how faster, easier access to information about emergencies and emergency management has exposed the sector to greater and more immediate scrutiny.

## Other external environmental change

Regarding change in other external environmental factors (see Appendix 3, Figure 10), both groups referred to digital & information technology change,



particularly the rise of social media. Regarding environmental factors, both groups referred to significant hazard events that have shaped experiences and approaches in volunteer management, and the growing impacts of climate change, particularly increasing frequency and severity of hazard events. A small number of managers also referred to economic changes, mostly from support EMOs. They noted, for example, a higher percentage of women in the workforce leading to a decline in the number of women with time for volunteering. They also mentioned a fall in government funding available to NGOs, as well as donations, which limited volunteer management capacity. A few also referred to commercial competition for some volunteer-based services and to impacts of economic downturn.

Political factors were the second most common area of external change raised. Both groups of managers emphasised a rise in risk averse government regulation that has increased administrative requirements for volunteers and managers in areas such as work, health and safety, as well as police and working with children checks. Increased political scrutiny of the sector through audits, reviews and royal commissions was another key political development raised. There was also some mention made of media scrutiny and fast-paced media cycles making the political environment more uncertain or volatile in recent years.

### **Internal environment**

The internal environment changes referred to can be categorised into the levels of volunteer management practices and requirements, the organisational context, and the wider emergency management context. Although changes across these three levels are often interlinked (i.e. changes in volunteer management practices reflect changes made at the organisational level), they are grouped here according to the level at which most managers chose to describe them. The changes referenced were evenly divided across the three levels for both groups of managers.

Four main changes were described at the level of volunteer management practices and requirements (see Appendix 3, Figure 11): increased administration and training requirements for volunteers, greater management focus on increasing volunteer diversity, including youth participation; greater management focus on improving volunteer consultation and engagement; and the centralisation of volunteer management, primarily involving the introduction of centralised databases or communication/reporting systems.

Regarding organisational context, many managers in both groups emphasised increasing corporatisation, professionalisation, centralisation and bureaucracy in EMOs as a significant development. This was linked with the increasingly risk averse government regulation already mentioned, and with the increase in administrative and training requirements in volunteer management, that some



described as an impact of a growth of rule-based bureaucracy and red tape around emergency volunteering:

*“we have certainly become more professional, [...] as we come under more pressure for audits and more governance and more aligned training to higher standards and better uniforms and more budget that comes with increased professionalism. But it also brings increased bureaucracy. On the one hand we have more professional members. [...] but I am also seeing an increase in frustration level [with the] bureaucracy and paperwork. So, the workload on volunteers is increasing as a result and it is usually paperwork. Even though we have more staff than ever, our volunteers are working harder than ever to get the job done. [...] (04P)*

*“[The organisation] is sort of shifting and professionalising and insisting you're either in and you're doing it this way or not at all. The confidence of an organisation that has to impose more rigorous rules around what was once perhaps a more casual approach. (09S)*

Managers from primary response EMOs in larger jurisdictions also mentioned organisational restructuring and increased capacity and resources for volunteer management and support. By contrast, two managers from smaller jurisdictions referred to *decreases* in capacity and resources for volunteer management.

The most common sector level change referenced was an increase in collaboration and partnerships with other organisations. It was mentioned predominantly by managers from support EMOs rather than those from primary response EMOs. However, the increase in collaboration these managers described included collaboration with primary response EMOs. Notably, much of the collaboration described was associated with planning for spontaneous volunteering. Relatedly, one manager with a recovery-focused EMO also emphasised how awareness that emergency management is about more than just emergency response has risen in recent years:

*“there has just been much more of a growing understanding about the breadth of emergency management. One of the biggest shifts is that it is not just response focused: in our conversations, in where we're putting money and in where our research and development is going. Because all of that has broadened out so much over the last 5 years or so. I think that the change is gradual and we're now seeing some of those shifts that have been in train for some time but are now much more concrete because there's a much better level of understanding in terms of emergency management as a whole rather than emergency response.” (29S)*

A smaller number of managers from both groups also referred to a growing awareness of volunteering trends, and greater experience in recent years with spontaneous volunteering. Meanwhile, a small number of managers from primary response EMOs also mentioned that influential research has occurred.

## WHAT VOLUNTEERING ISSUES IS THE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT SECTOR CURRENTLY FACING?

Volunteerism managers' views of major, current volunteering issues in the emergency management sector can be described using the tool of a 'problem tree', which depicts a core problem that has multiple symptoms or effects, and which has its roots in numerous contributing factors or causes (see Figure 4). Problem tree analysis is a common technique used in goal-oriented planning and its strength lies in "mapping out the anatomy of cause and effect around an issue" [51].

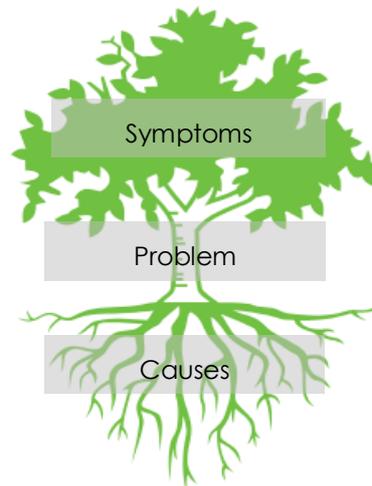


FIGURE 4: STRUCTURE OF A PROBLEM TREE

### Primary problem: volunteer sustainability in a changing environment

The core problem depicted by volunteerism managers was the sustainability of EMO-affiliated volunteering (see also Figure 6, below):

*“ Our issues are the standard ones about how do we maintain and sustain our volunteer workforce, given we can't pay them? What roles do we need them to perform? How do we match the expectations of people wanting to volunteer with the kind of roles we have available? How do we maintain motivation and commitment over time? (19P)*

*“ It's more about trying to plot a path or a direction or a vision for how we actually address this critical issue of volunteer sustainability. You can make up some new words, but I don't think you can ever get away from the fact that it is about a sustainable volunteer base. (26P)*

It was referred by almost all volunteerism managers interviewed, either directly or through managers' descriptions of its symptoms (see Appendix 3, Figure 12). At the same time, a few managers also reported that volunteer sustainability was good in some areas and services, such as metropolitan areas and in ambulance services and surf lifesaving:

*“ Actually, what we're seeing year on year is an increase in volunteer hours, increase in volunteer numbers, and increase in volunteer engagement. So, we're having a larger and larger impact in the community, and predominantly a volunteer delivered model, which has been fantastic. (32S)*

*“ Surf Lifesaving as a sport has become popular - many members join and patrol in order to compete in the surf sports competitions (minimum hours of patrolling or 'other' services required to compete). A growing number of women joining; women feeling more confident in their ability to perform rescues and contribute to water safety. Many people join because their kids are involved at a junior level and safety ratios are required. (31P)*



Despite this, the dominant overall picture painted by managers was that recruiting and retaining volunteers had become more difficult over time due to the internal and external environment changes they identified. They also raised concerns about volunteer sustainability in the near future due to the impacts of continuing trends. Some felt that, without significant changes, volunteer-based emergency service capacity would decline into the future.

The three most common symptoms of the volunteer sustainability problem raised by managers were:

- an ageing volunteer base and difficulty in attracting younger volunteers,
- insufficient and declining numbers of volunteers overall, and
- increased competition for volunteers, either with other organisations or with people's other time commitments such as work and family.

Other symptoms referred to by fewer managers included:

- difficulty recruiting and retaining volunteers in changing regional, rural and remote communities,
- low volunteer diversity,
- higher than desirable volunteer drop-out rates generally,
- volunteer fatigue due to heavy workloads, or over time across long-term recovery,
- difficulty recruiting the 'right' volunteers for the roles needed (raised by a few managers in volunteer-involving support EMOs only), and
- challenges in maintaining the active participation of existing volunteers or re-engaging disengaged volunteers.

The sporadic nature of emergency volunteering was cited as a factor that made ongoing volunteer engagement difficult, particularly among support EMOs in which emergency management is not the primary role of the organisation or its volunteers.

A few managers noted that some of the challenges to volunteer sustainability are not recent developments, but have been ongoing issues for EMOs for some time:

*“There are some things that stay the same, that are ongoing challenges, such as culture for volunteers in the organisation, cost, time, recognition and training. They're always ongoing issues. (17S)*

### Causes of the volunteer sustainability problem

Volunteerism managers were not directly asked about causes of volunteering issues, but almost all identified them in response to questions about current issues or what needs to happen to support volunteering into the future. Regarding the volunteer sustainability problem, they collectively referred to multiple underlying causes that can again be divided into the three levels of volunteer management practices and requirements, the organisation, or the sector more widely. While reported here separately, these factors interacted significantly. Notably, causal factors described at the level of volunteer management practices and requirements clearly reflected the influence of those resting at wider organisational and sector levels.



Managers tended to portray the changing external environment as the context within which the volunteer sustainability problem was unfolding rather than as the cause of it, although there were some exceptions to this. Instead, their descriptions of causes of the problem focused predominantly on how the emergency management sector was, or was not, adapting to the changing environment.

As Figure 5 shows, more causal factors were described at the level of organisations than management practices and requirements or the sector. Managers with primary support EMOs made two thirds of all the references to causal factors, and their references were more evenly spread across the three levels than managers with support EMOs. Managers with support EMOs referred to considerably more causes at the organisational level.

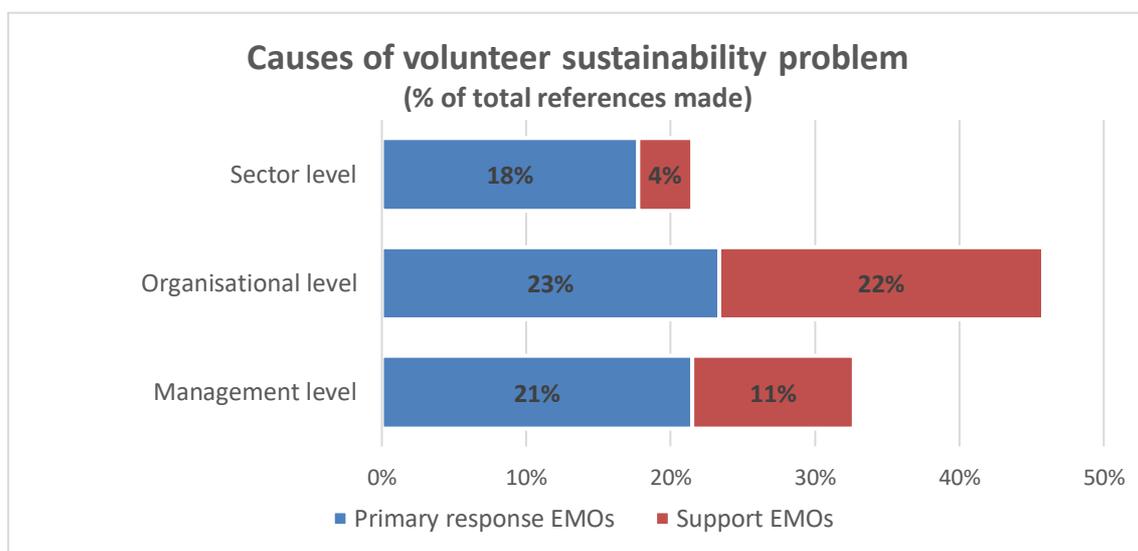


FIGURE 5: CAUSES OF VOLUNTEER SUSTAINABILITY PROBLEM RAISED BY MANAGERS, GROUPED BY LEVEL  
(107 REFERENCES MADE BY 31 PARTICIPANTS)

### Volunteer management practices and requirements

Three key causal factors described predominantly at the level of volunteer management practices and requirements were (see Appendix 3, Figure 13): excessive and inflexible demands on volunteers; misalignment between expectations and experiences of volunteering; and shortfalls in volunteer leadership, management and support.

**Excessive and inflexible demands on volunteers** by their organisations and by governments was the most common causal factor contributing to the volunteer sustainability problem raised by both groups of managers at this level. It was clearly associated by most managers with the rise in risk averse government regulation, corporatisation and growing bureaucracy in EMOs already described. In the case of primary response EMOs, training requirements for volunteers were particularly emphasised:

*“I think that's a big one. [...] The increasing demand of training requirements, as well as community safety, health and wellbeing, on our already overloaded volunteers, particularly those in senior ranking roles is a real issue. And I don't think it can be solved by recruiting more volunteers because the increasing requirements must be completed by the individual volunteer to be deemed qualified to carry out their role. It's just getting more: it's not getting less. (05P)*

Some managers acknowledged positive impacts from these changes, such as increased child protections and a rise in professionalism and service quality of volunteer-involving EMOs:

*“The changes to Child Protection are an issue that we, as an organisation, are really passionate about being on the front foot for and making sure we're operating in a child focussed kind of way. But it also equals more checks for our volunteers, and sometimes they feel like all we're ever giving them is forms to fill out rather than work to do. (15S)*

However, the majority described how the increase in rule-based bureaucracy and red tape around emergency volunteering was frustrating existing volunteers who faced expanding workloads. It was also seen to deter people from choosing or continuing to volunteer with EMOs into the future, as well as risk deterring some organisations from engaging volunteers due to growing regulatory risks and costs:

*“as a society the risk management is just becoming more and more prevalent. There are clear risks of having volunteers, particularly relatively unskilled volunteers involved in these types of things. [...] So we understand how to manage a variety of settings. We're insured to manage volunteers in a variety of settings but it's risky and I mean I've touched on before the whole issue of child safety. Those types of things I think run the risk of impacting on people's willingness to volunteer or organisations' capacities to engage volunteers in different settings because the risks are high and the penalties of getting it wrong are high. (33S)*

**Misalignment between expectations and experiences of volunteering** was identified by some managers as an issue contributing to higher than desired drop-out rates amongst newer volunteers. They described mismatches between the public image portrayed by EMOs of emergency management volunteering and volunteers' experiences. They also explained that misconceptions exist amongst potential volunteers that have not been exposed to this type of volunteering through family and community connections in the past. Additionally, a few managers explained how the initial experiences of new volunteers can sometimes conflict with their aspirations for their volunteering roles prior to joining, particularly when there are delays in induction and training.

**Shortfalls in volunteer leadership, management and support** was raised by a smaller number of managers, predominantly in primary response EMOs. Some managers recognised that there was inadequate understanding of what volunteer management entailed amongst staff, and insufficient support for volunteers in management and leadership roles. Others described a need to improve volunteer support, recognition and communication. For some organisations, particularly non-profit organisations, this was linked to a lack of resources and staff.



## Organisations

Managers also identified four casual factors that concerned characteristics and conditions of organisations as a whole (see Appendix 3, Figure 14): narrow, rigid and out-of-date volunteer models; weak volunteer culture; resource constraints; and inadequate connection with communities.

**Narrow, rigid and out-of-date volunteer models** was the most common causal factor described at this level and it was raised by managers in both primary response and support EMOs. While the casual factors described above at the level of volunteer management practices and requirements referred to practices occurring within existing volunteer models, this factor refers to the nature of organisational volunteer models and roles at more strategic levels. Some managers directly stated that current volunteer models were not sustainable into the future. Many emphasised the need for EMOs to provide more flexible volunteering opportunities. They provided a range of reasons for this, including:

- awareness of changes in the way people are willing and able to volunteer and increasing competition for volunteer's time,
- the need to appeal to a wider range of potential volunteers compared to the past, and
- recognition of the frustration felt by existing volunteers in the face of the rising administrative and training demands on them.

Another factor underpinning some managers' calls for more flexible volunteering models was awareness of the growing number of other organisations, groups and networks offering alternative, more flexible emergency volunteering experiences that are attuned to shifts in modern volunteering practices and preferences:

*“It's come from an understanding of where the national and international trends are going around sustainable volunteerism models and the emergence of new volunteerism groups and what makes them attractive. You look at that and go, 'okay, here's what we're up against. Our traditional models will not survive in this area. So where do we need to go?' (27P)*

**Weak volunteer culture in organisations** that led, for example, to volunteers feeling undervalued or disrespected was again raised by more managers with primary response EMOs. Some linked it to cultural tensions or a lack of engagement and communication between paid staff and volunteers, while others described insufficient mechanisms for volunteers to have input to the organisation and organisational decision-making:

*“The future of the organisation depends on putting frameworks in place to allow our staff to get out and talk to the volunteers. If they can't get out and openly engage and problem-solve with the volunteers on the ground, then we will continue to have the problems we've always had. (27P)*

*“The primary issue from our volunteer's perspective would be around their desire to be listened to, to be consulted, to be respected, to be acknowledged for their volunteer contribution in a way that is respectful. (18P)*



**Resource constraints** that limit the capacity of organisations to engage and support volunteers, or to develop new programs to respond to the changing environment and to improve volunteer sustainability were also raised by numerous managers. This factor was raised predominantly by managers with not-for-profit support and response EMOs but also by some with governmental response EMOs:

*“So, funding I see is something critical in order that we can provide the appropriate support and resources to our volunteers. [...] operationally within the regions we probably need additional regional offices to support our volunteers, and without that we can't grow and really meet the demands. (24P)*

**Inadequate connection with communities** was the final causal factor raised by slightly more managers with primary response EMOs than with support EMOs. These managers explained that EMOs and their volunteers were not well connected to the communities they serve, which contributed to the volunteer sustainability problem in numerous ways. It was particularly linked to low volunteer diversity:

*“A lack of community connectedness is possibly the most valuable area for a brigade to remedy. Yet the most unrecognised area that significantly influences a brigade's sustainability. Through our own research and pilot programs, we discovered that community connectedness will influence how well a brigade draws new recruits, retains members and how well they attract local funding. Most importantly, our research showed the impact it has on building membership diversity and therefore attracting new pools of people. (05P)*

### The sector

Two interconnected causal factors were also described predominantly at the level of the sector more widely (see Figure 15). Both were predominantly raised by managers in primary response EMOs:

- Overly bureaucratic and siloed service delivery models, and
- An exclusionary command-and-control culture.

Connected with the issue of narrow, rigid and out-of-date volunteer models within EMOs, several managers went further to link the volunteer sustainability problem to rigid and **overly bureaucratic and siloed service delivery models** in the sector over all. As the quotes included in Figure 15 show, they questioned the appropriateness of current service delivery models for the changing emergency management environment into the future. Several managers described the sector as overly siloed in the way it works and delivers services, despite improvements in this regard in recent years. They explained that this impeded more collaborative or integrated approaches to designing and delivering volunteer-based services, and more effective and efficient use of limited resources and volunteer capacity. Some also described how it put a greater burden on volunteers, particularly in smaller rural communities:

*“In the rural areas, I think the only way we can continue to provide support to the community in road rescue, fire response, stormwater response, the only way to do that*

*“I think that what would be fantastic is if the emergency sector could actually utilise each other's volunteers more effectively, communicate with each other's volunteers effectively, so that instead of me having my*



*is by having one volunteer approach, rather than having multiple organisations doing basically the same thing. Otherwise we are not going to survive. (06P)*

*volunteer system and [other EMOs] having their volunteer system, you had some sort of [...] mechanism where, [...] you can, you use a platform like that to mobilise people effectively and mobilise people across groups. (20P)*

Culture was again raised by several managers at a sector-wide level, through recognition of barriers to change created by **an exclusionary command-and-control culture and structures**. They described a sector that was becoming more open, but which still needed to develop a stronger culture of collaboration, openness and partnership with non-EM organisations and with communities to effectively confront the volunteer sustainability problem into the future.

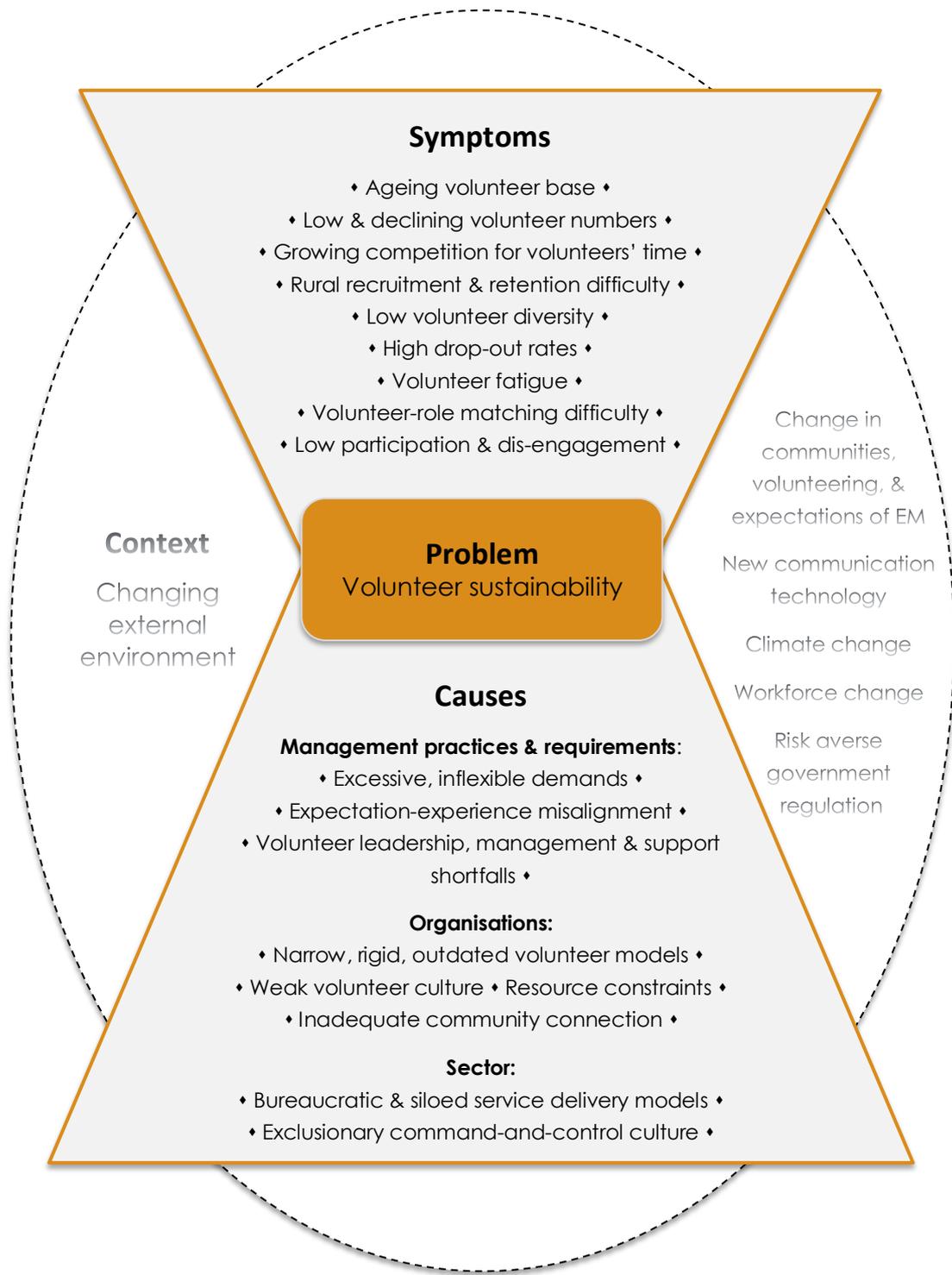


FIGURE 6: VOLUNTEER SUSTAINABILITY PROBLEM TREE FOR THE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT SECTOR, DEPICTED BY VOLUNTEERISM MANAGERS



## Second problem: Addressing the rise of unaffiliated, spontaneous volunteering

Addressing the rise of unaffiliated, spontaneous volunteering was a second current issue, or problem, raised by most of the volunteerism managers interviewed (n=24). A few managers emphasised the opportunity that exists to harness the willingness and capacity of spontaneous volunteers to support response and recovery:

*“being here and working with the organisations, there is clearly a need, we can't do it all and if the community is interested in helping then let's leverage that, let's encourage people to come out and pick up trees, or shovel mud or help do rubbish, even if it is just for a day, but again it is how we do it, that is important. (28S)*

However, most emphasised wariness within their organisations towards spontaneous volunteers. They described how difficulties of, and barriers to, managing risks and uncertainties that spontaneous volunteering may present for organisations, communities and trained responders are actively being discussed within EMOs:

*“We have a challenge around spontaneous volunteers in emergencies. We're not able to give spontaneous volunteers [roles] because of the checks that they're required to undertake, and the training for the type of role we do. But it's always a challenge kind of turning away willing people that want to help in an emergency, and we're not really set up to take on spontaneous help. (15S)*

Despite this, all managers that referenced this issue indicated that as spontaneous volunteering has become more common, EMOs now need to have systems and plans in place for it at either organisational or jurisdictional levels, or both:

*“I'd also say more use of spontaneous volunteers, but I don't know how we're going to harness them and screen them appropriately. There's going to be some that get through that we wish hadn't if we just accept volunteers that turn up at the time but that is probably the only way I can see having enough helpers in future situations. (01S)*



## WHAT IS ALREADY HAPPENING TO ADDRESS THESE ISSUES?

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### Volunteer sustainability

Managers referred to numerous areas where there is current activity to address the volunteer sustainability problem. These are again divided here into the levels of management practices and requirements, organisations and the sector (see Appendix 3, Figure 16). The below description does not reflect the entire range of activities underway among Australian EMOs to address the volunteer sustainability problem. It shows only the areas of activity that managers *most* chose to emphasise and describe in interviews.

### Changes in volunteer management practices

At this level, four key areas of current activity were referenced:

- Streamlining and targeting recruitment and training of new volunteers,
- Improving volunteer engagement and communication,
- Restructuring and tailoring training of ongoing volunteers, and
- Supporting volunteer wellbeing and reducing volunteer fatigue.

**Streamlining and targeting recruitment and training of new volunteers** (see Appendix 4, Example 1, ACT SES recruit college) was largely targeted to specific groups, particularly younger people but also women, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, and people with non-operational skill sets. Examples include cadet programs, approaching large employers (e.g. mines, factories), partnering with schools and universities, working with volunteering peak bodies, and targeting public communications to specific groups.

**Improving volunteer engagement and communication** mostly involved introduction of new technology such as volunteer portals and web-based applications. It also included introducing new two-way communication processes and relationships (see Appendix 4, Example 2, CFA Annual Brigade Review), and taking on new staff with engagement and communication skills. Additionally, there has been a focus on involving volunteers more in the design of new volunteer services (see Appendix 4, Example 3, DFES Volunteer Portal redevelopment).

Managers also described a range of different approaches to **restructuring and tailoring training of ongoing volunteers**. Examples were given of consolidating training, developing online training modules, introducing more accredited training, and making diverse and interesting training opportunities available to re-engage volunteers as part of retention strategies.

Meanwhile, a few managers also mentioned new programs focused on **supporting volunteer wellbeing and reducing volunteer fatigue**, for example closer shift monitoring, re-scoping or partitioning volunteer roles, telephone wellbeing checks after activations, and the use of field-based wellbeing officers.



## Organisational change

Managers described three key areas of activity at the organisational level:

- Designing and trialing more flexible volunteering models
- Increasing community engagement and connection, and
- Adoption of more strategic, evidence-based and future-focused approaches.

**Designing and trialing more flexible volunteering models** was the approach most referenced (half of all references to organisational level activities), particularly by managers with primary response EMOs. Especially in larger jurisdictions, numerous primary response EMOs have begun designing and trialing new or expanded volunteer models that enable greater flexibility and diversity in volunteering roles (see Appendix 4, Example 4, NSW SES Volunteering Reimagined initiative). Notably, few organisations have pursued opportunities that might be available through corporate volunteering programs:

*“the big issue is with [corporate volunteering], they only offer a day and that's not really helpful and, especially in the emergency management space, doesn't really work. (11S)*

*“We haven't really tapped into that space. We've had the conversations about corporate volunteering, but I guess we really want to give them something meaningful to do, and we haven't really pinpointed what that is. (21P)*

The second key area of activity referred to at the organisational level was increasing **community engagement & connection**. In all cases, the activities referenced were targeted to specific groups or communities. Examples include the New South Wales Deaf Liaison Unit, and activities in the Northern Territory Fire and Emergency Services to communicate and engage with indigenous communities, for example by engaging with elders and traditional owners to develop communications that are more relevant to their communities.

The third key area mentioned by a smaller number of managers from primary response EMOs in larger jurisdictions, was the adoption of **more strategic, evidence-based and future-focused approaches** towards volunteering (see Appendix 4, Example 5, QFES 2030 Strategy):

*“Our focus must be on evidence-based decision making. If we don't understand the true needs of any volunteering group how could we possibly provide targeted support to sustain and grow volunteerism? This is why we are now focusing a lot of energy implementing a new state-wide process that allows brigades to examine their own needs, brigade and community risks and determine local solutions that are personalised to suit them. Even though it's still early days, our results from implementing this process have been really positive. At a state level we can also track whether the organisation are in fact investing support and resources in the right areas. (05P)*

In addition to these more common areas of activity, a few managers also mentioned pursuing corporate sponsorship as a measure to address resource constraints.



## Sectoral change

Three areas of activity were also raised by managers at a sectoral level:

- Partnerships, collaboration and interaction beyond the traditional emergency management community,
- Integrating services and increasing collaboration among traditional EMOs, and
- Sharing learning and undertaking research.

Regarding **partnerships, collaboration and interaction beyond the traditional EM community**, managers referred to new collaborations and growing interaction with other voluntary and community sector organisations such as volunteering peak bodies, community service organisations, church groups, companies with corporate volunteers, community groups, and with new and emergent emergency volunteering groups. As already noted, much of this has focused on planning for spontaneous volunteering.

Activities that are **integrating services and increasing collaboration among traditional EMOs** were described by more primary response EMO managers than support EMOs (see Appendix 4, Example 6, Ambulance Victoria's Good SAM App). More support EMO managers instead raised growth in collaboration and partnerships between EMOs as a change in the past.

**Sharing learning and undertaking research** on volunteering issues involved a range of different projects and activities. Examples include Emergency Management Victoria's *Valuing Volunteers, Volunteering and Volunteerism* project, and research and learning activities coordinated through AFAC's volunteer management technical group and the Australian Emergency Management Volunteer Forum (AEMVF). There were also numerous mentions of direct exchanges of information and learning between managers in different jurisdictions who are involved in designing and instigating new projects and strategies for shared issues.



## Planning and collaborating for spontaneous volunteering

Arrangements for spontaneous volunteering were described as being at various stages of development (see Appendix 3, Figure 17). Over half the references made by managers to planning for spontaneous volunteering described arrangements that were in place or being developed. A third described the need for arrangements to be made, while a small number of managers from primary response EMOs in less densely populated jurisdictions noted that large numbers of spontaneous volunteers were not likely to occur outside of larger metropolitan areas.

A key area of activity in planning for spontaneous volunteering involved both primary response and support EMOs engaging with volunteering peak bodies and local governments to develop either jurisdiction-wide or local plans and approaches to manage spontaneous volunteers (see Appendix 4, Example 7, Volunteering Queensland's 'Making it happen' project). In addition, national level planning has occurred, centred on developing a national handbook as part of the Disaster Resilience Handbook Collection to provide guidance on planning for spontaneous volunteers [36].

A few support EMOs are also seeking out interest amongst other community service organisations not traditionally involved in emergency management to have their existing volunteers trained to provide surge capacity to the support EMOs for emergency relief and recovery. This was seen as a more manageable and less risky option for engaging a wider range of short-term volunteers when needed than accepting spontaneous 'walk-in' offers of assistance from unknown people:

*“ We are linking with like-minded services like community Neighbourhood Centres, because those staff [...] are involved in community and are concerned about community. And when a community is impacted a lot of their clients will be affected and so if we engage with them beforehand and provide some training, we can then call upon them for support. (O3S)*

## WHAT DOES A PREFERRED FUTURE FOR EMERGENCY VOLUNTEERING LOOK LIKE?

It is difficult to imagine a future that does not yet exist. Most managers responded to this question by identifying what they felt most needs to change compared to today to address the volunteer sustainability problem. All managers recognised that change is needed, and that the future emergency volunteering landscape cannot look the same as today. A few managers stated that the fast-changing nature of the external environment made it difficult to predict what the future might be and hence what the sector would need to look like with respect to volunteering:

*“The answer is, “I don't know” but more of the same is not going to be the answer I don't think. I think something has to change quite radically or there just won't be the volunteers to play their part as they have done in the past. (O1S)*

The preferred future for emergency volunteering collectively signposted by managers has six core elements, shown in Figure 7. All primary response EMO managers described qualities of a preferred future, while 4 support EMO managers responded that they didn't know what it would look like. More managers with primary response EMOs described the importance of accessible, inclusive EM volunteering and having stronger volunteer cultures in organisations than those with support EMOs. The latter emphasis aligns with the stronger prominence given by these managers to cultural issues as causes of the volunteer sustainability problem. Meanwhile, more managers with support EMOs referred to making space for community resilience compared to those with primary response EMOs.

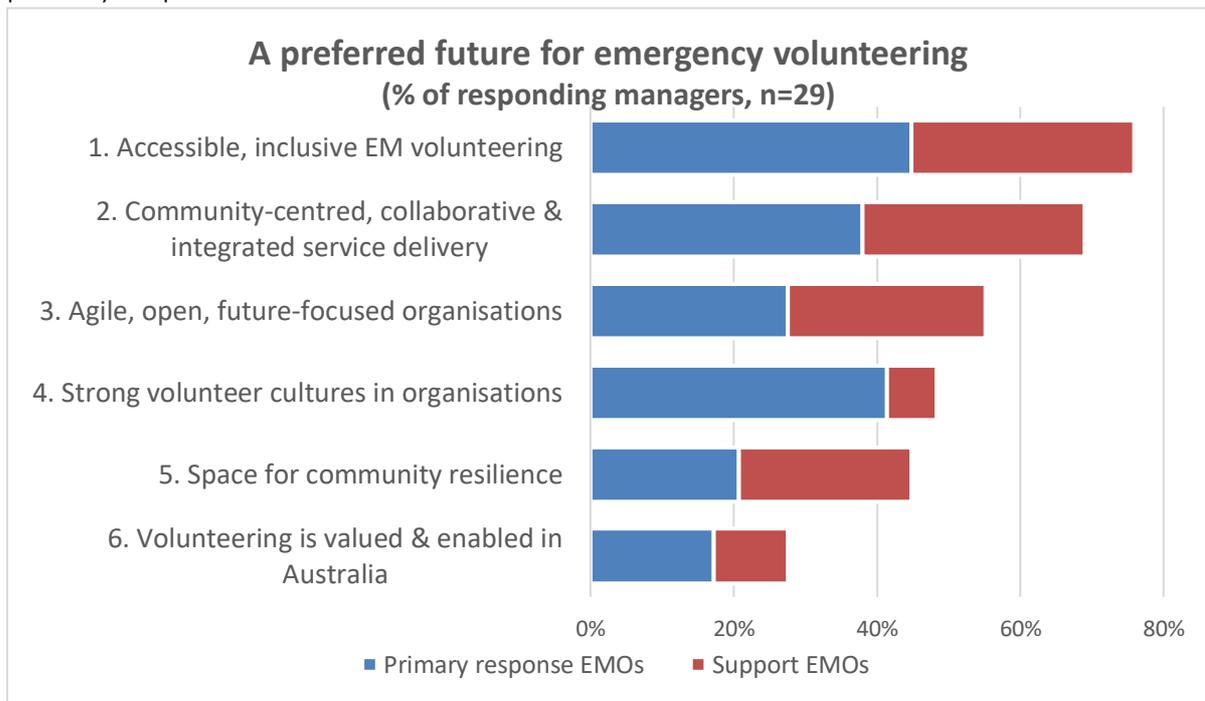


FIGURE 7: THE PREFERRED FUTURE FOR EMERGENCY VOLUNTEERING DESCRIBED BY VOLUNTEERISM MANAGERS (89 REFERENCES BY 29 MANAGERS)

## 1. Accessible and inclusive emergency management volunteering

Managers described a future where emergency volunteering was easier to begin and continue than today with reduced administrative and training burdens:

*“ There needs to be a much more pragmatic and less bureaucratic approach to the requirements for people on a personal level to be trained and maintained as emergency management volunteers. (25S)*

*“ [My organisation] has said that it would like to have in place, and it exists in other countries, that we are able to on-board a volunteer in 10 minutes. That is what should be happening in 2030. (03S)*

In particular, EMOs would be better at recognising and drawing upon volunteer's existing skills, qualifications and experiences in the future:

*“ By 2030 we would be far more sophisticated in acknowledging pre-existing skill sets. We recognise a doctor is a doctor, but I don't think we currently do that in the EM sector. In [this state] and Australia, we expect everyone to undergo training like they know nothing. (03S)*

Several managers described greater flexibility in emergency management volunteering roles that were more accessible to a wider range of people with varying skills, abilities and levels of commitment compared to today, and which had greater regard for the way in which volunteering fits into people's lives:

*“ There's a whole range of things around opportunities that volunteers could do that we haven't yet either offered or considered that is not maximising the latent potential that resides within the existing volunteer workforce or potential new volunteers. (18P)*

Inclusive emergency management volunteering, with emergency volunteers reflecting the diversity in their communities was also emphasised:

*“ My dream is for the SES to come to me and say, 'what do we have to do to get an orange coloured burka?' We haven't got to that point yet. (16P)*

Some also described a need for organisations to remain engaged with volunteers in different ways over their lifetime as their availability and commitment to volunteering changed:

*“ We should have a mindset that, as we march towards 2030, you can never have too many volunteers [...] So, engage them early and then accept that during certain times of their life there's going to be other pressures that are, being quite frank, more important than being an SES volunteer. (16P)*

Others described organisations that embraced people's increased mobility, for example through improved arrangements for recognising training across services and jurisdictions or introducing new types of membership that are less tied to specific locations, or to individual brigades, units or teams:

*“ If you do a chainsaw operator's course in Victoria with SES, it's accepted by the Rural Fire Service in Queensland. Then you don't have to retrain in that if you come to that organisation with that ticket. But because they're all state-based regulators and training goals and, you know. (25S)*

*“ at the moment to be a member of the SES you are part of a unit. Whereas we are looking in the future where members aren't necessarily part of one unit, [...] they might be a mobile worker and be in [one city] two days and spend the rest of the time in [a city in another state]. (04P)*



However, a few managers from primary response EMOs questioned the extent to which EMOs would realistically be willing or able to embrace greater flexibility in their own volunteering models in the future. They suggested that emergency management volunteering was instead most likely to become increasingly specialised and professionalised in nature:

*“I am not seeing less formalisation [of emergency management volunteering]. In the future, the ones we have will be more specialised in some things, but we will see a massive increase in spontaneous volunteering and less traditional forms of volunteering. (04P)*

*“We're marching down a pathway where volunteers themselves are going to have to become more professional and I just don't know if that's fair. The question then becomes, if we're asking people to do that then what else can we offer? What's the payoff for people to start dedicating more time to their own development? That may be the payoff, but I think what that also means is that we're going to have to be more selective in who we are putting into the volunteer services. (14P)*

## 2. Community-centred, collaborative and integrated service delivery

Numerous managers emphasised that in future, EMOs would need to shift from being service providers to communities to become partners with community to co-deliver emergency services focused on meeting specific community risks and service needs:

*“It needs to have a lot more local emphasis and flavour to actually help communities to recover. And that means emphasis on local volunteers as well. And that's going to be a challenge for government. There needs to be a lot of resilience in communities to help themselves. (17S)*

*“If we have discussions with community about: What's the risk? Here's the services we provide. Here's what's not sustainable, and this is what you can do. Then work towards the future collaboratively. That will lead to a sustainable emergency services delivery model, increased community capability against risk profile, and therefore by product, increase resilience. (27P)*

As one manager explained, this also means recognising where more traditional service delivery and volunteer models already work well for the local community context and therefore may not need to change:

*“At the end of a day for hundreds of small brigades across the nation it really is about getting a truck out the door. They're not looking for a new model or introducing flexible volunteering because there's just no need for it. Some are only turning out ten times a year.... So the traditional model is the best model for these brigade and their community. So that's why we keep coming back to: identify what the risk is and cater for their needs even if that means keeping the traditional approach. We shouldn't be trying to change it. (05P)*

Many managers also considered that greater collaboration between EMOs was needed, and greater integration of services through more combined service delivery models, cross-skilling and resource-sharing. This was particularly emphasised for rural areas. Key reasons included mounting financial restrictions, improvements in the quality of services to communities that could come from greater integration, and reducing burden and strain on small and decreasing numbers of volunteers in smaller, ageing and depopulating rural communities:

*“In the community services sector, because funding is so limited we are pitched against each other around funding and tenders and I think the same applies for the emergency management sector. It is not the best outcome for the community, whereas if we could have a collective approach, a collaborative approach, I think they would get better bang for their buck across all sectors. (03S)*

*“Whether we acknowledge it or not, we are competing for the same volunteers and it is really ridiculous and so I think all that in an ideal world needs to be stripped away and we have just one emergency service organisation and the community can choose what the risks are and what direction they want the organisation to go in. [...] At the moment there is a lot of pressure to be everything and a lot of pressure on volunteers to go above and beyond. I think we are going to be facing fatigue in the next five years. (06P)*

Some managers also emphasised the need for partnerships in delivering emergency management services to communities that extended beyond traditional EMOs:

*“We're not the only show in town. We should be partnering with other organisations and other sectors where we've got touch points at a very high level. Environmental Health Officers want strong, resilient communities. Well so do we. So, how can we share the load in an environment of diminishing resources? (18P)*

*“Say Volunteering Queensland were really embedded in QFES's work so that QFES knew they had an ally that was there to support them, and they could maybe outsource some of the logistics in emergencies to an organisation that can just pick it up. Instead of emergency services doing that themselves they can do it with other agencies. Maybe even the private sector. Start sharing the workload rather than everyone working in silos and doing it themselves. That's much more efficient economically obviously. It's being smarter because you're bringing in the brains around the issue to the table. Then I expect you'll find more opportunities to work together once you've started doing it. (09S)*

### 3. Agile, open, & future-focused organisations

Several managers stressed the need for EMOs to be more agile, open and future-focused to adapt and respond effectively to the fast-changing environment. The ability to plan and act more strategically was emphasised, particularly the need to be more aware of changes in the external environment:

*“We like doing things slowly and we have got to change. [...] things are changing so quickly now we can't really move as quick at the world is changing. (04P)*

*“Any organisation that is only internally focused will ultimately fail. [...] Our organisation needs to turn itself out again and start engaging with the community, because that will allow you to have a better finger on the pulse as well of where you need to go as an organisation. (27P)*

Some managers stressed the importance of partnerships with private industry and organisations from sectors beyond EM to design innovative solutions for responding to the volunteer sustainability problem in the future:

*“Look at the way in which a product can be built, and solutions can be built with others. So, this notion of doing it internally with ourselves [needs to change] when actually the private sector is already out there doing it sometimes or are ready to do it and all they need is some support or some direction from us. (28P)*

*“I think there's also a huge potential in the higher education space, or even the vocational space. [...] We can replicate work experience for students that is directly transferable into a paid work environment. I think partnerships between the education and training sector has a lot of potential. (18P)*

Several managers described the importance of the EM sector embracing new technology in the future to support and engage their own volunteers as well as to engage more widely with communities and new forms of volunteering:

*“I think in 2030 it will look very different. I think technology will be part of it. That is what I would like to see. Things like Uber, Amazon, eBay; they make doing business so much easier. At the moment emergency management, as a function of government, are still in the slow lane in terms of technology. I think there is a real opportunity to revolutionise what we do and bring in people in the local area and engage with them in a different way. (04P)*

#### 4. Strong volunteer cultures and management capacities in organisations

The fourth element of the preferred future was strong volunteer cultures and management capacities in organisations, which was referred to by more primary response EMO managers. Managers described how, in the future, volunteers and volunteer management would be embedded in organisation's core business, rather than be isolated as a responsibility of separate volunteer management teams only:

*“We still talk about 'volunteers' and 'paid staff' or we still talk about capability and capacity and then we say “oh, plus the volunteers.” Actually, if they're not integrated into your business then you are treating them differently to everybody else. (26P)*

*“It's a fairly new concept that our volunteers are hearing, and staff for that matter, around the culture of volunteerism and applying a volunteerism lens to everything that we do. (27P)*

In a preferred future, managers described how the contribution of volunteers would be more highly valued, and better acknowledged and resourced by their organisations as well as by the wider EM sector than they are today:

*“There needs to be a great acknowledgement of volunteers because I don't think that always happens. I think often with frontline services, yes, but not the people who work behind the scenes. You don't really get acknowledged. (11S)*

There was a strong emphasis given to having appropriate resourcing and capacity for volunteer support and management within organisations, in terms of both human and financial resources:

*“I'd like to see a higher level of capacity and capability within the organisation to actually manage volunteers. (14P)*

*“I think we really need to make sure that our volunteers are funded in a way that recognises that they are a huge part of the workforce and that we, in [this state] and indeed other states, wouldn't have an adequate response without our volunteers. (24P)*



## 5. Space for community resilience

The fifth element emphasised in managers' views of a preferred future for emergency volunteering was space for community resilience to flourish. Some managers explained that community resilience was currently restricted by risk averse regulations and processes in the EM sector, even while community resilience was promoted and emphasised by governments and the EM sector:

*“For a long time now, there's been that buzz word of resilient communities. But resilient communities and regulation are diametrically opposed. [...] The whole spontaneous volunteer thing where you can't climb a ladder unless you've had three months' training at SES. But we want people to be resilient and help their neighbour and climb up the ladder: to do it as a resilient community. (25S)*

A key component of this was greater openness in the EM sector towards enabling and interacting with community-led, emergent, and informal volunteer activity:

*“I think we'll move towards a sort of advisory service where what we want to see is people and communities being more resilient, neighbours helping neighbours. So, some of the organisational structures may not be [the] hierarchical organisations that we know and understand today. We may actually go back in to something organic and almost neighbourhood watch like in some respects. (34P)*

Some managers particularly emphasised the need for shorter-term, more episodic and emergent digitally-enabled volunteering to be embraced within the EM sector; including but not limited to spontaneous volunteering:

*“With increasing climate change that is going to cause emergency management to be busier and busier and once we reach a point where there are disasters happening more frequently this will prompt people to do this sort of stuff and develop Apps and technology and harness that sort of thing; Facebook, Twitter. They [EMOs] have sort of dabbled in this space a little bit, but they will need to move in this space more down the track, where they will support groups of spontaneous volunteers. (04P)*

## 6. Volunteering is valued & enabled in Australia

The final element of a preferred future presented by volunteerism managers concerned emergency volunteering – and volunteering more widely – being valued and enabled, not only within the emergency management sector but also across Australian governments and communities:

*“Maybe it's organisations at a state or federal government level. There needs to continue to be a really high level of value placed on volunteers in the community. Because I think without doing that, volunteers, the value of volunteering in the community won't be seen and I think it will start to sort of disappear. I mean, we in the organisation couldn't operate without our volunteer cohort and there's a lot of other organisations that are extremely reliant on volunteers, not just in times of emergency but through lots of aspects. (32S).*

Connected to this, organisations would be better at communicating the value, impact and costs of volunteering to governments, businesses and employers, and to communities:

*“We need some more recognition of what all volunteers do community-wide so they know the sacrifice the teams make across all areas. (51S)*

*“ I don't think we do enough in terms of measuring the impact of volunteer assistance. That seems to have dropped off, I think we need to do that better. When we have events and when we do it [volunteering], we need to measure that impact and communicate that better, up the line in a more strategic way. (12S)*



*“It's about putting a stronger argument and a model in there to argue that we don't fundamentally understand the value provided by volunteers. We don't understand that it directly connects to community resilience. (26P)*

Having governments better understand and address the costs of volunteer management and volunteering infrastructure was also strongly emphasised:

*“we go out to (community sector organisations) who can provide large numbers of volunteers, but you need supervisors for each group, and you need resourcing for reimbursements such as petrol money, catering...so they are not free of costs. We appreciate the support of the NGO's who assist, with various tasks like debris clean up, but they are left to cover the costs of their volunteers through donations and support from members or corporates. There is a whole lot of governance and structure around volunteer deployment that needs to be paid for. (12S)*

*“ Another one is a message for government, which is I think there's a perception that volunteers are free, [...] And so coming to a notion, or coming to an idea that a volunteer emergency service still has costs associated, and that needs to be understood. (34P)*

A third aspect of valuing and enabling volunteering raised was addressing the impact of government regulation on volunteering. As many managers described, the rise in risk averse government regulation while bringing safety, well-being and service quality benefits, also created barriers to volunteering for both volunteers and VIOs. In a preferred future, this impact would be eliminated or reduced where ever possible:

*“I heard it put forward at a conference. [...] Policies go through a set of filters to make sure the net benefit is good. It was suggested that, where deemed appropriate, policies ran through, 'how does this affect the volunteer sector?' [...] because they can make changes for the workplace that are valid and address huge workplace safety issues and all that is good. But when you apply it, particularly in the emergency management and volunteering sector, it can have negative impacts. (25S)*



## WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN TO MOVE TOWARDS THIS FUTURE?

Areas of activity that managers indicated are needed to achieve the six core elements of the preferred future are shown in Figure 8. These were raised by managers throughout the interviews, both directly and indirectly, in their responses to various questions. They are evidenced in this report by the findings already presented in the previous sections.

Most importantly, as Figure 8 shows, five cross-cutting area of activity were raised by managers:

1. Establish strong change leadership and direction,
2. Share learning and evidence of what works,
3. Resource appropriately,
4. Balance risk management with the need for change, and
5. Change culture, but carefully.

These areas are described in more detail below, as they were revealed by the interviews to be key enablers, and therefore priority action areas, for moving the sector towards a preferred future for emergency volunteering.

### Establish strong change leadership and direction

The need to establish strong leadership and direction for adapting the sector was indicated in descriptions of leadership gaps and needs to mobilise future change:

*“I think that is really important, we can talk about volunteering in a recovery context all we like, but if the people in leadership roles aren't comfortable and across our work, we are not going to get the maximum benefit and it has to be well co-ordinated and well executed. (28S)*

*“I don't think there's insurmountable challenges here at all and I think the biggest item to address is the focus and attention and priority and willingness to address the issue. (25S)*

*“Something that brings the leadership of all the EM services together and focusses on the community and supporting each other in the betterment of the community is what is needed. [...] How do we develop leadership across all those agencies to focus on the communities and therefore focus on the volunteers and how we then deliver our messaging, our response capability and our management structures into the future? (07P)*

It was also indicated in descriptions of good leadership that is mobilising change today. Three examples given were: 1) leadership support that was helping to drive the NSW SES Volunteering Reimagined initiative forward, 2) the QFES Executive that has set the direction for a far-reaching volunteerism strategy, and 3) leadership at Emergency Management Victoria that has focused on collaboration across the emergency management sector for the benefit of communities.

Notably, it was not only leadership and direction-setting within the emergency management sector that was emphasised as needed, but also greater leadership and direction from governments more broadly:

*“A government response is required through its mandated agencies to increase awareness of the volunteer role. (22P)*



## Share learning and evidence of what works

The need to more widely share learning, and to collect and share evidence of what works in adapting the sector to the changing landscape was emphasised by many managers. Although some described that greater sharing of lessons and experiences was already occurring, they clearly saw a need for further sharing to drive adaptation and innovation forward into the future and spread it more widely across the sector:

*“The stories that are based on evidence-based outcomes are going to be the ones that are going to sell in future. We need to be able to 1) better understand where those potential good stories are, and then 2) actively do those pilots or programs to demonstrate that they will work. (27P)*

*“there is a lot more work in this space, there is the work around capabilities and new issues, but in saying that, there is some commonality between us and [other organisations] and it will be wasteful if every service looks at this. We do have a little bit of collaboration, but I am sure it can be improved and having more people and each agency collaborate on some of these issues and working out what are the National Standards and what can we do nationally rather than each service tackling it in eight different ways. (04P)*

## Resource appropriately

The need for resourcing of volunteer-based emergency management services to be revisited was strongly indicated in the interviews with managers, with the majority raising resource issues in some respect (n=22). Many managers described how resource restrictions currently curtailed the capacity of their organisation, or the sector, to adapt to the future landscape and move towards a preferred future for emergency volunteering:

*“probably one of our main barriers to that is just we don't actually have the resources on the ground to be able to spend time to look into those or to even implement those types of models, and to just really commit to it and make it work because we're just treading water to be able to meet the current needs. (21P)*

In line with this, as already mentioned, there were calls for EMOs and the sector to better measure the costs and impacts of volunteering and to make these known to, and understood by, governments.

Managers from support EMOs also particularly emphasised the need for more funding to be available in preparedness and planning, rather than following emergency events:

*“ we need to find more sustainable funding arrangements for volunteer-based organisations, so they actually can both support their volunteers, but be better prepared for emergencies, and not rely on reactionary funding when an emergency happens. So, we've got to find a way to spend more money on prevention [and] in preparation for events rather than throwing money at it when it happens, which actually prevents organisations from being able to do the best job they can. (15S)*



A need for EMOs to do more to combine resources to enable collaborative and integrated service delivery was also described:

*“the Productivity Commission has identified that we need to spend more money around preparedness and mitigation, but one of the challenges we face is getting all response agencies to really combine their resources. Because community members just need to know what to do in general to prepare, whether it is a fire or a storm, the messages are so similar, so I think there has to be a willingness of the EM sector to combine their collective resources around the preparedness work. There are partnerships but to me the collaboration isn't quite there yet, to me there is a difference between partnering and collaborating. (03S)*

### Balance risk management with the need for change

A common theme expressed across managers' descriptions of the emergency volunteering landscape was the need to strike a better, more even balance in the emergency management sector between managing risk and enabling change. The need to manage risk, and also perceptions of risk, was raised in relation to both introducing more flexible forms of affiliated volunteering with EMOs, as well as supporting or engaging unaffiliated, spontaneous volunteers or emergent groups:

*“ One of our main challenges at the moment is that people see a large amount of risk with having volunteers not attending regular training, so it's working out how to best utilise those people's skills but ensuring that the risk is still low. (21P)*

*“ it's knowing as an agency that [these groups] are going to turn up. You can't hold them at arm's length, because otherwise they'll just go and find stuff to do anyway. And you need to be able to effectively engage them and therefore gainfully utilise what they have without placing them or the community at risk. (16P)*

*“ from a State Government perspective, they really need to look at it, because there are other examples – the Mud Army in Christchurch and lots of examples of spontaneous volunteers just appearing, but how do you protect community that can be adversely affected by spontaneous volunteers? (03S)*

Overall, risk aversion – including risk averse attitudes, regulations and processes – emerged as a key obstacle or confounding issue that will need to be confronted for the sector to move towards a preferred future for emergency volunteering:

*“ I think we need to not say 'no' but find better ways to regulate resilient, reactive, responsible, supportive communities. (25S)*

*“There is the risk that comes with living in contemporary Australia, we are becoming more risk averse. Our processes have to be so much tighter and rightly so, to minimise risk and ensure safety, but in doing that it also makes it harder to attract volunteers, to get them past the initial hurdles.” (03S)*



## Change culture, carefully

The need for culture change in order to move the sector forward was another theme that permeated interviews with managers, particularly with managers from primary response EMOs:

*“ I think it's going to be the attitudes and a cultural change, both at a headquarters level but also in our existing volunteers as well. We need to change to a flexible volunteering model. [The reason why] is going to have to be demonstrated and there may be people in brigades and units that attend weekly training, and then there may be some volunteers that don't attend for two months, and how to communicate that that's what the need is and that that is a fair model. (06P)*

*“ Then go to the cultural part [...] they are significant [issues] and may suggest to us some of the root causes in mapping out the future. [...] Probably culture is what it's all about. A clash of culture. A community culture versus government culture. [...] As you're trying to have this conversation about sustainability, it's this hook that keeps grabbing on to that momentum and trying to pull it back. (26P)*

Managers emphasised the need for cultural change to be very carefully managed, with attention to protecting the identities and strengths of individual services and organisations. They raised issues such as cultural change taking time, needing to be embraced or led by existing staff and volunteers, and requiring difficult conversations within EMOs, particularly response EMOs with traditionally command-and-control cultures:

*“ It's got to be an evolutionary change. The volunteers who identify with the organisation, and we see many of the volunteers have long, long histories with the organisation, so we've got to see them lead the change. It can't just be the focus from government coming in saying, 'no, you're going to do this', and 'it'll be good for you, so suck it up.' It's got to be something where we see that change in society and so the volunteers go, 'no, we can do this better by doing – through that community engagement.' So, I think that's one of the challenges there is to get that change. Be patient. (34P)*

*“ The challenge is to balance that with maintaining profile or identify I should say. The identity of those services [are] are long-running, highly valued entities whose culture and history needs to be respected and maintained. I understand all of that. But it's about 'do those entities provide service in communities: 1) how it should be? 2) in a sustainable way? and 3) to meet community expectations?' That's the discussion that needs to be had, not just 'oh yeah, but our culture is being eroded'. Yeah, I understand that and it's very important but what is going to best serve the community? (27P)*

As one manager noted, there was also a risk of 'future shock' and change fatigue when change was felt to be happening too fast. While most managers talked about cultural change that was needed, some also explained that positive change towards more open, collaborative and inclusive culture had already begun in the sector:

*“ I think we're seeing [...] a cultural change in how we're collaborating at different agencies. How we're involving communities certainly I think is moving forward. (15S)*

How these five cross-cutting areas of activity are enacted is likely to significantly influence how, and if, the sector is able to reshape itself and its relationships with others to adapt to the changing landscape of volunteering and, ultimately, collaboratively deliver sustainable emergency services with communities into the future.

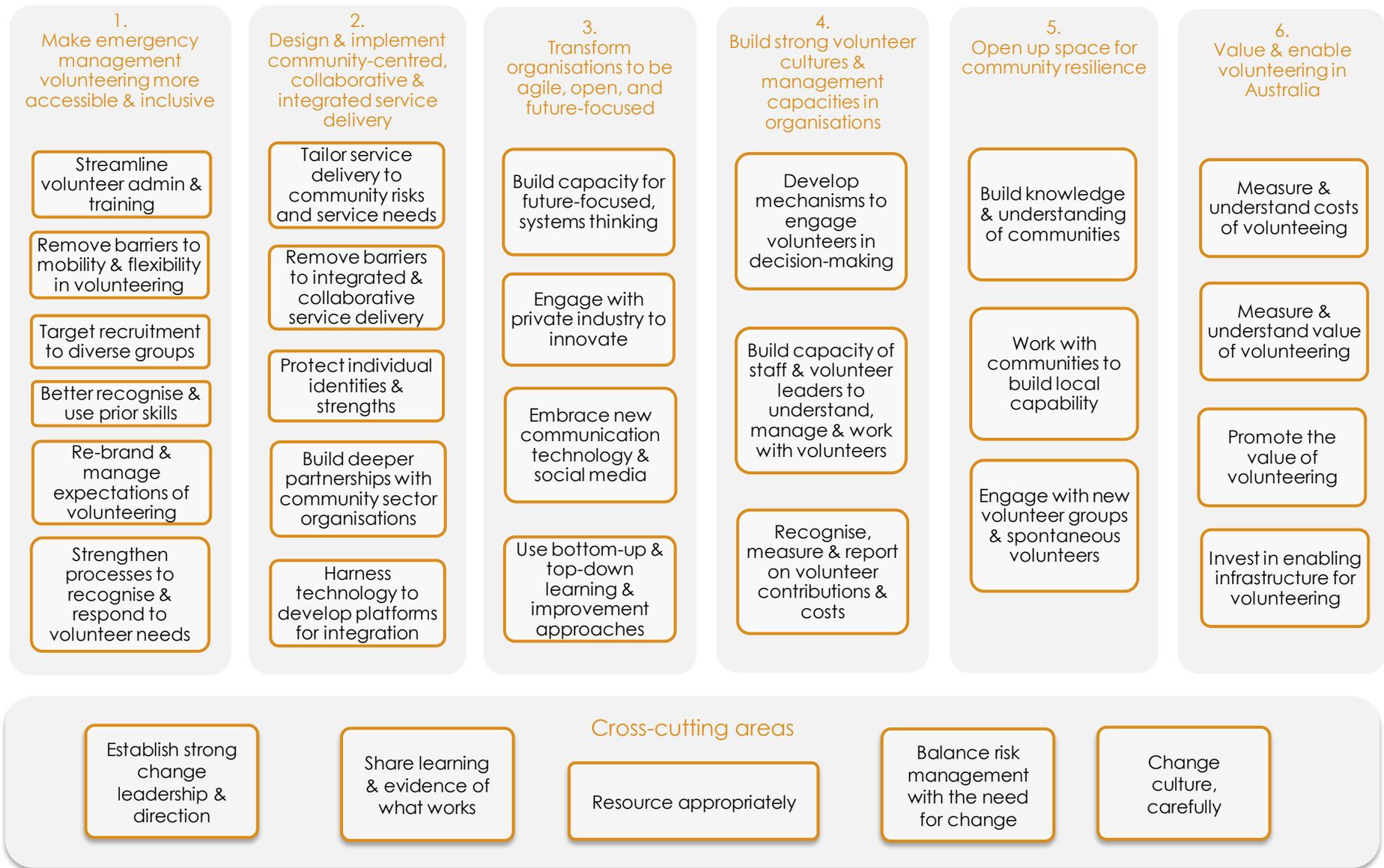


FIGURE 8: KEY ACTION AREAS TO MOVE TOWARDS A PREFERRED FUTURE FOR EMERGENCY VOLUNTEERING, INDICATED BY VOLUNTEERISM MANAGERS



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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX 1 – GENERIC INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How is volunteer support and planning structured in your organisation, and has this structure changed in the last 5 years or so? If yes, can you tell me how/why?
2. What are the key volunteering issues that your organisation/the emergency management sector is currently tackling? How is it doing this? (E.g. strategies, programs, projects, training, partnerships?)
  - a. Are any other groups/organisations/networks involved in any of these activities with your organisation?
  - b. Is your organisation currently involved in any activities or developments related to volunteering that takes place outside of the organisation?
  - c. What do you think has worked well, and what hasn't worked so well, for tackling these issues so far?
3. Thinking back over the last 5 years or so, what - if anything - has changed in the volunteering issues that your organisation/the sector is tackling? Can you tell me why this change has happened?
4. What do you think the emergency management sector needs to look like by 2030 with regard to volunteering?
5. What are the key issues that the emergency management sector will need to deal with over the next ten years to make this happen? Challenges, opportunities?
6. Are there any initiatives or developments you can describe that are doing a particularly good job of moving in this direction? (Inside your organisation, other organisations and jurisdictions?)
7. Are there any other wider trends or uncertainties that the emergency management sector needs to be mindful of in relation to volunteering in the future? (Consider social, technical, economic, environmental, political factors)



## APPENDIX 2 – ORGANISATIONS REPRESENTED IN INTERVIEWS

### Primary response EMOs

- Australian Capital Territory Emergency Service Agency
- Emergency Management Victoria
- New South Wales Rural Fire Service
- New South Wales State Emergency Service
- Northern Territory Police, Fire and Emergency Services
- Queensland Fire and Emergency Services
- South Australian Fire and Emergency Services Commission
- St John Ambulance\*
- Surf Life Saving Australia
- Tasmania State Emergency Service
- Victoria State Emergency Service
- Victorian Country Fire Authority
- Western Australia Bushfire Service (local government)
- Western Australia Department of Fire and Emergency Services

### Support EMOs

- Adventist Development and Relief Agency
- Anglicare
- Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience
- Australian Red Cross
- Council of Australian Ambulances
- Habitat for Humanity
- NSW Office of Emergency Management
- Northern Territory Department of the Chief Minister
- Salvation Army
- South Australian Department of Human Services
- St John Ambulance\*
- St Vincent de Paul
- Volunteering SA/NT

\* Note that St John Ambulance managers were interviewed in two jurisdictions; one in which the organisation has a primary response role for ambulance services and one where it has a support role.

## APPENDIX 3 – TABLED FINDINGS

*“We have to realise that people are very mobile now and change or allow for that. ... whether that could mean you are part of emergency services and can respond to fire, floods, storms throughout the country.” (04P)*

*“Changing communities is a big one for us, whether it’s growth, decline or in some instances both growth and decline faced by many coastal towns brigades, this is a growing issue brigades are facing. Even though there is a strong focus on brigades facing community decline, facing massive population growth is very overwhelming and brings a multitude of challenges for them.” (05P)*

*“The nature of volunteering is changing. Where probably 10, 15, 20 years ago people joined volunteer organisations and when they joined they’d stay to volunteer for a long time, I guess their whole lives. [...] that’s moving to people volunteering for a shorter period in their life, probably for a range of different options. Probably because people’s lives are busier, there’s more sort of options for people to do things.” (32S)*

*“traditionally emergency services put the uniform on, went out and did the job and put a barrier around and said “stand aside. We’re coming in here to do this thing”. And more and more people are wanting to assist and support and because we have access in a more immediate sense due to social media about emergencies as they are happening, people are responding as they do, as humans, and wanting to go and help.” (09S)*

*“society’s becoming more needy [...] I don’t think there’s that same level of community commitment or perhaps responsibility that there has been in the past.” (16P)*

*“major emergencies could have happened 20 years ago, and people could read about it in the paper 3 days later and now they are getting real time information streamed at them in every direction, some of it reliable and some of it not. ... so certainly that level of scrutiny wasn’t there [in the past].” (19P)*

<b>SOCIAL CHANGE THAT HAS IMPACTED THE EMERGENCY VOLUNTEERING (EV) LANDSCAPE</b>	<b>Raised by...</b>	
	Primary response EMO managers (n=16)	Support EMO managers (n=13)
<b>Change in communities</b>		
o Greater mobility and transience	GREEN	ORANGE
o Rural decline & depopulation	GREEN	BLANK
o Urbanisation & regionalisation	GREEN	ORANGE
o Ageing population	ORANGE	ORANGE
o Increased diversity within & between communities	ORANGE	ORANGE
o Decline of church role in society	BLANK	ORANGE
<b>Change in volunteering</b>		
o People have less time to volunteer; rise in short-term volunteering	GREEN	GREEN
o Growth in new volunteer groups, informal & spontaneous volunteering	ORANGE	ORANGE
o Volunteering is changing (general)	ORANGE	ORANGE
o Personal development & benefit as growing motivations	ORANGE	ORANGE
<b>Change in community-EM relationship</b>		
o Rising community expectations of, reliance on, EMOs & volunteers	GREEN	ORANGE
GREEN = MORE MENTIONS, ORANGE = LESS MENTIONS, BLANK = NO MENTIONS		

FIGURE 9: SOCIAL CHANGE THAT HAS IMPACTED THE EMERGENCY VOLUNTEERING LANDSCAPE REFERRED TO BY VOLUNTEERISM MANAGERS (87 REFERENCES MADE BY 29 PARTICIPANTS)

*“The other issue is technology in a number of areas within the volunteer environment. The agencies haven’t kept pace with the technological advances [...] a lot of that has to do with funding.” (07P)*

*“obviously with climate change we are having those large sporadic incidents, like storms and fires and they require a high magnitude of support from the volunteers.” (06P)*

*“the time availability of women is not the same as when there were more women not in full-time work and possibly not even in part-time work.” (01S)*

*“The donated dollar is becoming more difficult to locate. There are plenty of good organisations out there asking for assistance, government funding is reducing.” (02S)*

*“That was clarified in a number of external independent reviews following major incidents where the organisation’s style and approach to volunteering was cited as being an area for improvement.” (18P)*

*“It’s a significant extra thing to go through when you’re recruiting volunteers. You have to really pay attention to things like National Police checks and child safety and those types of issues. So that’s certainly been something that I would say has changed in our landscape of volunteering.” (33S)*

*“Just today’s political environment creates uncertainty. Where everything is about winning the media cycle. [...] We then work in an environment where, for example, a generational change might be required to get real results, but decisions are made that impact on it.” (27P)*

OTHER EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT CHANGE THAT HAS IMPACTED THE EV LANDSCAPE	Raised by...	
	Primary response EMO managers (n=11)	Support EMO managers (n=13)
<b>Technological</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Digital &amp; information technology change, including rise of social media &amp; mobile phone use</li> </ul>	GREEN	ORANGE
<b>Environmental</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Significant natural hazard events; climate change &amp; event severity</li> </ul>	GREEN	GREEN
<b>Economic</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commercial competition; higher percentage of women in the workforce; fall in donations and government funding; economic downturn</li> </ul>	ORANGE	ORANGE
<b>Political</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase in risk averse government regulation; increase in political scrutiny through audits and reviews; impact of media on the political environment</li> </ul>	GREEN	GREEN
<small>GREEN = MORE MENTIONS, ORANGE = LESS MENTIONS, BLANK = NO MENTIONS</small>		

FIGURE 10: OTHER EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT CHANGE THAT HAS IMPACTED THE EMERGENCY VOLUNTEERING LANDSCAPE REFERRED TO BY VOLUNTEERISM MANAGERS (51 REFERENCES MADE BY 24 PARTICIPANTS)

As an RTO the requirements to meet the regulatory standards has increased dramatically [...] New OH&S rules impact [...] more is being asked of all the volunteers as the organisations become more business focused.” (10P)

“...really trying to get diversity in our volunteer workforce, because we know that the best support is provided to a community after a disaster if your volunteers reflect all the different people within that community. But different people have different abilities to volunteer, like full time working people there's different challenges, to retirees, to younger people, and culturally diverse backgrounds.” (15S)

“Many years ago, the local fire brigade worked with the local coppers and the local St John division. Whereas now, due to just the way the industry's changed, we've had to become a lot more centralised [...] some community members feel that some of those things were taken away from them, but it's something we've had to do to ensure that we provide that level of service and that level of professionalism to ensure that we meet the community's expectations.” (30S)

“the functions and configuration of the branch that existed at that time [before the restructure] it was not well positioned to think and deliver at a strategic level and to do that strategic influencing and to ensure that volunteers and volunteerism had greater profile in our organisation-wide strategic planning.” (18P)

“I think we slowly are becoming less siloed, looking at working in partnership a lot more. And leveraging off different organisations, looking more at the community services sector.” (15S)

CHANGE IN INTERNAL ENVIRONMENT THAT HAS IMPACTED THE EV LANDSCAPE	Raised by...	
	Primary response EMO managers (n=16)	Support EMO managers (n=16)
<b>Volunteer management practices</b>		
○ Increasing administrative & training requirements	GREEN	GREEN
○ Greater focus on volunteer diversity, including youth	ORANGE	ORANGE
○ Centralisation of volunteer management	ORANGE	ORANGE
○ Greater focus on volunteer engagement & consultation	ORANGE	ORANGE
<b>Organisational context</b>		
○ Professionalisation & greater bureaucracy	GREEN	GREEN
○ Restructuring, increased capacity & resources for volunteer management & support	GREEN	ORANGE
<b>Emergency management sector context</b>		
○ Growth in collaboration and partnerships	ORANGE	GREEN
○ Greater awareness of volunteering trends	ORANGE	ORANGE
○ Experience with spontaneous volunteering	ORANGE	ORANGE
○ Influential research has occurred	ORANGE	GREEN

GREEN = MORE MENTIONS, ORANGE = LESS MENTIONS, BLANK = NO MENTIONS

FIGURE 11: INTERNAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT SECTOR ENVIRONMENT CHANGE THAT HAS IMPACTED THE EMERGENCY VOLUNTEERING LANDSCAPE, REFERRED TO BY VOLUNTEERISM MANAGERS (94 REFERENCES BY 32 PARTICIPANTS)

*“as people age and pull out of the program, you’ve got to have new ones coming in or it’s just going backward. So yes, there’s not enough volunteers really.” (01S)*

*“I think volunteering, in general, it’s either stagnant or it could be in a slight decline. What that will mean by 2030, if that continues, is that even with population growth, I can see that there will be less volunteers and more permanent positions in these areas.” (13P)*

*“We have exit surveys from our volunteers that leave the service, and some of the feedback from that is they don’t have the time to devote anymore, they’ve got commitments to paid and family work.” (21P)*

*“Also, the communities that we need to find volunteers in, they will normally be volunteers for other agencies.” (03S)*

*“the biggest challenge is how we are going to deliver our services into those regional, rural and remote communities into the future? The demographic shift, the population shift, technology. Technology means that people on the land don’t need as many people to do the work for them.” (07P)*

*[If things don’t change we will have] reduced volunteer numbers and reliance on government to provide emergency response in the rural and remote areas.” (22P)*

*“the key issue which really for everyone it’s the actual engagement of volunteers. It’s getting them to participate, and who’s participating? How many people are participating at any given time, and if they’re not participating why is that?” (20P)*

SYMPTOMS OF THE VOLUNTEER SUSTAINABILITY PROBLEM	Raised by...	
	Primary response EMO managers (n=18)	Support EMO managers (n=14)
○ Ageing volunteer base and difficulty attracting younger volunteers	GREEN	GREEN
○ Insufficient & declining number of volunteers	GREEN	GREEN
○ Increased competition for volunteer time with other organisations & commitments	GREEN	GREEN
○ Difficulty recruiting and retaining volunteers in changing rural, regional and remote communities	ORANGE	ORANGE
○ Low volunteer diversity	ORANGE	ORANGE
○ High drop-out rates generally	ORANGE	ORANGE
○ Volunteer fatigue	ORANGE	ORANGE
○ Difficulty recruiting the 'right' volunteers for roles needed	BLANK	ORANGE
○ Low volunteer participation & volunteer disengagement	ORANGE	ORANGE

GREEN = MORE MENTIONS, ORANGE = LESS MENTIONS, BLANK = NO MENTIONS

FIGURE 12: SYMPTOMS OF THE VOLUNTEER SUSTAINABILITY PROBLEM REFERRED TO BY VOLUNTEERISM MANAGERS (70 REFERENCES BY 32 PARTICIPANTS)

*“The challenge is the same for volunteers and that is recruitment and retention: that the impost on volunteer time is increasing and the trend of risk aversity is also increasing and becoming an obstacle for people to join.” (06P)*

*“The majority of our volunteers leave in the first three years. Of those people the majority leave in the first year. The implication there is we are perhaps not telling people the right things when they are coming on. Or once we’ve got them on, we’re not bringing them on the right way.” (14P)*

*“...we need to approach those people differently. They don’t have the same background that predisposes them to volunteering in our environment as our current volunteers did when they first joined [...] We are getting dropout rates in the initial stages.”*

*“many people who manage volunteers have never had really any training in managing volunteers [...] there’s not a lot of actual, articulated understanding of how volunteers fit into the organisation because they’ve always just been part of it.” (20P)*

*“We’re looking to improve our volunteer recognition work and that’s largely been hampered by just the sheer lack of staff we have to keep track of and find out all those sorts of information that you need to do the whole volunteer recognition program. We’re constantly looking to do that better.” (25S)*

MANAGEMENT PRACTICES & REQUIREMENTS CONTRIBUTING TO VOLUNTEER SUSTAINABILITY PROBLEM	Raised by...	
	Primary response EMO managers (n=13)	Support EMO managers (n=9)
○ Excessive and inflexible administrative & training demands on volunteers	GREEN	GREEN
○ Misalignment between expectations & experiences of volunteering	GREEN	ORANGE
○ Shortfalls in volunteer leadership, management & support	GREEN	ORANGE

GREEN = MORE MENTIONS, ORANGE = LESS MENTIONS, BLANK = NO MENTIONS

FIGURE 13: MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AND REQUIREMENTS CONTRIBUTING TO THE VOLUNTEER SUSTAINABILITY PROBLEM REFERRED TO BY VOLUNTEERISM MANAGERS, (35 REFERENCES BY 22 PARTICIPANTS)

*“then there is the whole model of volunteering [...] whether the whole membership model needs to be re-examined. Is there a need for us to stop focusing on the fact that there is a gateway process and you are either inside the organisation or you are outside and there is a massive gulf in between the two?” (19P)*

*“I think if we continue our old way of thinking that volunteers sign up for life, we are not going to survive. [...] Our current way of doing it is not sustainable.” (03S)*

*“culture in a lot of ways has contributed to de-skilling some of the staff in being able to work with volunteers. [...] a lot of organisations that have a volunteer workforce and a paid workforce, there’s like a line. There’s a divide. How do you break down that divide? How do you build an awareness and an appreciation of your volunteer workforce and an understanding of how you work with them?” (14P)*

*“There are plenty of challenges there. That’s not necessarily directly related to volunteering but obviously if resources are constrained and funding is constrained then that can restrict the capacity to take on more volunteers. No point in asking 100 people to come in and sit around if you haven’t got anything for them to do. Or if you haven’t got the resources or the facilities for them to use or the ability to train them.” (02S)*

ORGANISATIONAL FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE VOLUNTEER SUSTAINABILITY PROBLEM	Raised by...	
	Primary response EMO managers (n=16)	Support EMO managers (n=14)
o Narrow, rigid & out-of-date volunteer models	GREEN	GREEN
o Weak volunteer culture	GREEN	ORANGE
o Resource constraints	ORANGE	GREEN
o Inadequate connection with communities	ORANGE	ORANGE

GREEN = MORE MENTIONS, ORANGE = LESS MENTIONS, BLANK = NO MENTIONS

FIGURE 14: ORGANISATIONAL FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE VOLUNTEER SUSTAINABILITY PROBLEM REFERRED TO BY VOLUNTEERISM MANAGERS, (49 REFERENCES BY 30 PARTICIPANTS)

*“The problem that we are aware of, that has been reinforced I think out of the last 18 months of disaster events and probably before, is a disconnect between the emergency management structures [...] and what is happening in the community in both a resilience space and in recovery as well.” (29S)*

*“When we’ve got an organisation now where volunteers are openly admitting they’ve got no connection with their community, many do but there are many that don’t, then you need to look at that and go, ‘well, what are we doing here and why are we existing as an organisation?’” (27P)*

*“How do we use the resources, how do we use the fire services [...] how do we actually apply that in the smartest way, the most innovative way, but particularly, most importantly that meets the end users’ needs?” (26P)*

*I think one of the challenges I was just talking about then is the bureaucracy, because there will come a point where – and we experience that now – where emergent forms of volunteering go against the government and the risk averse attitude we have. We don’t want to take risks.” (04P)*

*“I keep hearing: ‘we are going to build a resilient community’. Well as a single agency we can’t build resilience in communities. [...] to build resilience in the community we have to partner up with other organisations [...] So what we should be doing is working with all agencies to build resilience, not independent of each other. That is the big challenge.” (07P)*

*“I think organisations need to get better at – and I think we’re really moving forward in this space - but collaborating on the small amount of resources we have for doing things collaboratively. And looking more at point of impact, rather than working in silos.” (15S)*

SECTOR-WIDE FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE VOLUNTEER SUSTAINABILITY PROBLEM	Raised by...	
	Primary response EMO managers (n=13)	Support EMO managers (n=3)
○ Overly bureaucratic and siloed service delivery models	GREEN	ORANGE
○ Exclusionary command-and-control culture & structure	GREEN	ORANGE

GREEN = MORE MENTIONS, ORANGE = LESS MENTIONS, BLANK = NO MENTIONS

FIGURE 15: SECTOR-WIDE FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE VOLUNTEER SUSTAINABILITY PROBLEM REFERRED TO BY VOLUNTEERISM MANAGERS (23 REFERENCES BY 16 PARTICIPANTS)

*[The key challenge around volunteer sustainability is] culture; changing the emergency service organisation culture to be inclusive and collaborative [...] some of this stuff around that cultural arrogance. If it hasn’t been taught by us and practiced in our environment, we don’t value it and we don’t recognise it.” (18P)*

*“We have got AIMS and the Command and Control system, but they sometimes do not allow for building capacity and working with other groups. They are very reluctant to let external organisations from beyond response in and say, “Oh we have our structure organised”. [...] How are they going to build community capacity if they keep doing exercises, training etc on their own? And who knows, the community might want to be involved and will likely be the first responders there. They are looking inward in their organisations and not acknowledging that there is a wider community that is involved and interested in learning about emergency management, resilience and recovery.” (12S)*

“Actually, one big feature of our recruitment in the last 12 months has been absolutely targeting our recruitment. We’ve also instigated some other methods of on boarding. So, we did have a sort of open flood gates kind of process [...] whereas now [...] we want people to be self-selecting out who aren’t really right for the work, [...]” (20P)

“Probably the most interesting function we’ve taken on is someone who specialises in volunteer engagement and communication. That’s had a massive impact on how we work with our volunteers but also how we can support staff to work with volunteers.” (14P)

“We’re looking at some modern software and technologies that can help engage more directly and in a better way with the wide range of volunteers that we have.” (25S)

I think we will experience a big shift in terms of some of the offering we will have. [...] in large there’ll be greater flexibility, be some new ideas, such as digital volunteers and so forth.” (34P)

“not everyone wants to stand there and look at a three-story wall of flame or bounce around on a boat in 3-metre-high waves and try to get someone off another boat and into a helicopter. How do you actually connect your community to your emergency services? Providing people with a wider range of opportunities is one way to do that.” (14P)

“We’ve seen really positive changes in things like the National Disaster Resilience Program, and the amount of funding that is being given to non-government agencies, and the amount we’re now seeing that non-government agencies are contributing to what was traditionally a really government agency sort of based sector. And I think that’s really positive, that we’re using different strengths, and we’ve got more different agencies involved.” (15S)

“At the local level there is enhanced collaboration between [the rural fire service] and SES where we pool our resources and go it together and I am seeing practical examples occurring.” (06G)

KEY AREAS OF ACTIVITY TO ADDRESS VOLUNTEER SUSTAINABILITY PROBLEM	Raised by...	
	Primary response EMO managers (n=17)	Support EMO managers (n=15)
<b>Management practices &amp; requirements</b>		
o Streamlining and targeting recruitment and training of new volunteer	GREEN	GREEN
o Improving volunteer engagement & communication	ORANGE	ORANGE
o Restructuring & tailoring training of ongoing volunteers	ORANGE	ORANGE
o Supporting volunteer wellbeing and reducing fatigue	ORANGE	ORANGE
<b>Organisations</b>		
o Introducing more flexible volunteering models	GREEN	ORANGE
o Increasing community engagement & connection	ORANGE	ORANGE
o Adopting more strategic, evidence-based and future-focused management approaches	ORANGE	ORANGE
<b>Sector</b>		
o Developing partnerships & collaboration beyond the traditional EM community	GREEN	GREEN
o Integrating services & increasing collaboration amongst traditional EMOs	GREEN	GREEN
o Sharing learning & collectively undertaking research	ORANGE	ORANGE
GREEN = MORE MENTIONS, ORANGE = LESS MENTIONS, BLANK = NO MENTIONS		

FIGURE 16: KEY CURRENT ACTIVITY TO ADDRESS THE VOLUNTEER SUSTAINABILITY PROBLEM REFERRED TO BY VOLUNTEERISM MANAGERS (89 REFERENCES BY 32 PARTICIPANTS)

*“Our role is to harness all the spontaneous volunteers as they come in. The matching process of what we do ordinarily works with the agencies involved in recovery... If there is a shortage of volunteers or a specific role they need filled, they contact us, and we work with them to find the volunteers from the list to be able to backfill or give them better capacity or capability.” (O8S)*

*“I guess one of the things that has or will work well is engaging spontaneous volunteers, because in the past it has been terrible and not coordinated as well as it could have been. So, I think that is going to be quite successful.” (O4P)*

*“how could we have a system in place where people come to help, and in a perfect world, ... all of us would identify tasks we could give to someone, spontaneous volunteers, within certain parameters and what basic sort of quick and dirty training we could provide within an hour. That is something we haven’t got in place and it is something I want to prioritise.” (O3S)*

*“Spontaneous volunteering, we really don't have the population for it, and it would be confined to the metropolitan area [...] There's not a lot of them and because they're part of the community, the volunteers generally know who they are anyway” (13P)*

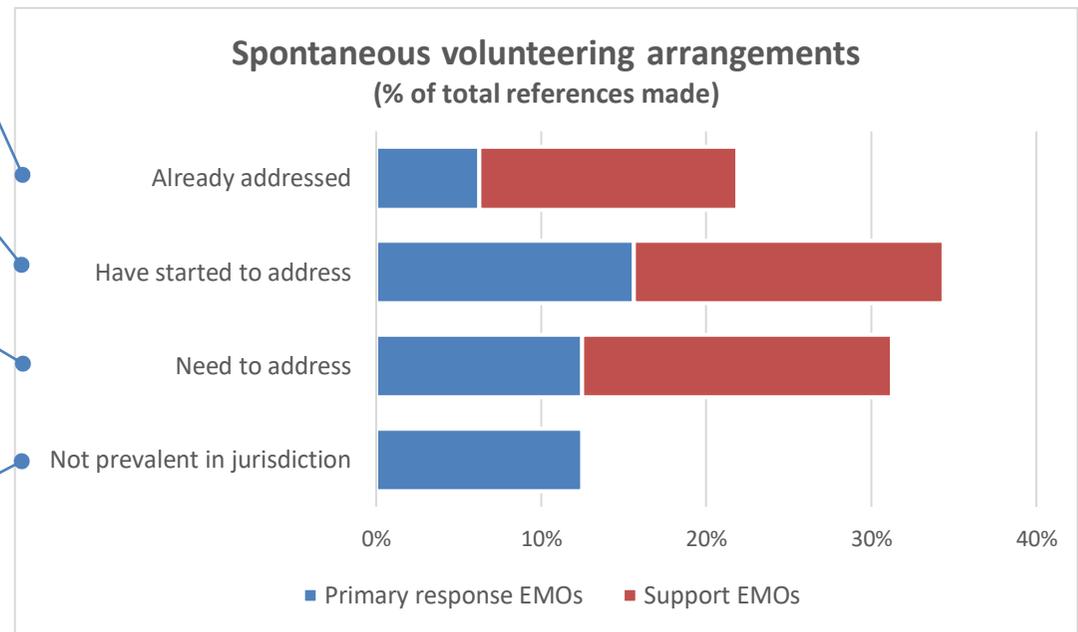


FIGURE 17: SPONTANEOUS VOLUNTEERING ARRANGEMENTS REFERRED TO BY VOLUNTEERISM MANAGERS (32 REFERENCES BY 24 PARTICIPANTS)

## APPENDIX 4 – EXAMPLES OF CURRENT ACTIVITIES

### Example 1: ACT SES recruit college

The ACT's recruit college for new SES volunteers is an example of the types of changes being adopted to **streamline and target recruitment and training of new volunteers**. Previously, induction for new volunteers was conducted by the volunteer's specific unit. In the new recruitment process induction and initial training of new volunteers is run centrally:

*“what that allows us to do is that allows us to ensure that all of the new people coming into the SES all have the same base of knowledge. And it allows us to achieve economies of scale, because we're able to draw instructors from across the SES units in the ACT to deliver particular training aspects over the course. [...]*

*It creates a cohort, and so, previously, you would just be trained in your own unit, and so you really only knew people in your own unit, whereas in the future, ... we'll actually have team leaders from different SES units that will have done their basic training together, and so they'll have that relationship and that understanding of each other from the very early days.”*

*(Volunteerism manager, ACT)*

### Example 2: CFA Annual Brigade Review

Developed over the last 3 years, CFA's Annual Brigade Review (ABR) is “a diagnostic process” that was designed to provide “CFA management, regions and brigades with a holistic view of a brigade's health”.<sup>1</sup> It is a good example of an activity aimed at **improving volunteer engagement and communication**. The process uses “facilitated and structured conversation with brigades” to capture a qualitative understanding of the “unique histories, culture, ways of communicating and aptitudes” of each brigade. These conversations capture risks and challenges beyond just operational elements, and bring the local knowledge of volunteers into the organisation's understanding of brigade strengths, challenges, risks and support needs:

*“From our experience, rolling out state-based treatments and solutions just doesn't work across such a diverse area; it just doesn't cater for the array of local challenges faced by brigades. If we are to support our brigades well, the development of initiatives needs to be locally-tailored with participation and involvement from the brigades themselves. The Annual Brigade Review intends to do this: deliver an approach that allows brigades to be fully involved, to drill down and understand the root causes of some of their challenges. And through this process, the discussions lead to the exploration of locally tailored treatments and actions. More importantly, those innovative solutions brigades are already implementing can be shared and learnt from across the state.*

*“We're trying to develop better ways to understand their initiatives and what they're doing day-to-day and connect in the reporting at all levels so that we can actually see what kind of support brigades are getting and where the gaps are.”*

*(Volunteerism manager, CFA)*

<sup>1</sup> Laurie, K. (2018). *Brigade Viability: Using Evidence-based Data to Identify Risk and Improve Service Delivery*. Paper presented at AFAC Annual Conference, Perth 5-8 September, 2018.



### Example 3: DFES Volunteer Portal redevelopment

Another example of an activity aimed at improving **volunteer engagement and communication**, this time by involving volunteers in the design of new volunteer services, is the process to redevelop the DFES Volunteer Portal:

*“We've just implemented this fantastic engagement strategy for the re-development of the volunteer portal where we essentially co-designed it with our volunteers. The prototypes are getting some really good feedback because the volunteers essentially designed it.”*

(Volunteerism manager 1, DFES)

*“[We are] trying to reshape that relationship to be one of partnership, ... Volunteers really, really want to be able to participate and make a contribution.”*

(Volunteerism manager 2, DFES)

### Example 4: NSW Volunteering Reimagined initiative

NSW SES designed its Volunteering Reimagined initiative to put the organisation on the front foot in responding to the changing landscape of volunteering in Australia.<sup>2</sup> Through the initiative, NSW SES has streamlined some of the requirements for its core SES volunteers and has introduced three new categories of SES volunteer: Community Action Teams, Spontaneous Volunteers and Corporate Volunteers:

*“What NSW SES is doing is good because they're actually thinking creatively about different ways of engaging with an outcome in mind, which is an engaged volunteer workforce, and essentially realising that it's a shared space. It's not just about using volunteers to do what you need them to do but fulfilling their needs as well as people. People having this sense of 'this is how I want to engage', so being flexible in that approach rather than dictating the terms fully. That's a good approach. I understand that's what the NSW SES model is all about: engaging the maximum number of people in a variety of ways to meet the needs that we have.”*

(Volunteerism manager, support EMO)

### Example 5: QFES 2030 Strategy

The Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES) 2030 Strategy is a key example of **future-focused planning and strategy** in an EMO. Its purpose is to “ensure [the QFES] direction considers a range of global trends and responds to the needs and expectations of Queenslanders.”<sup>3</sup> As one manager explained:

*“There's some strategy work being done to create a vision around 2030, so that we can look at, 'okay, what will the Department look like in 2030?' And if we've got agreement around that, 'how might we take what we've got today through to that 2030 period as well?' So, the 2030 Strategy will look at the full-time component and the volunteering component. It'll look at the environmental setting, or what's going to impact the change in our business of our emergency services.”*

(Volunteerism manager, QFES)

<sup>2</sup> McCullough, A. (2018). Connecting communities through volunteering: lessons learnt at NSW SES. *Australian Journal of Emergency Management*, 33(2), 11.

<sup>3</sup> State of Queensland (2018). *QFES Strategy 2030*. See <https://www.qfes.qld.gov.au/about/Documents/Our%20Strategy/Strategy-2030.pdf>



### Example 6: Good SAM, Ambulance Victoria

Good SAM is an example of **community-centred, collaborative and integrated service delivery**. It is a community responder App introduced by Ambulance Victoria in 2018, based on a UK model. It alerts nearby trusted responders when someone calls Triple Zero. It allows a trusted responder such as off-duty paramedics and fire fighters, surf lifesaving volunteers, doctors, nurses and other health professionals to administer CPR and, if possible, make use of the nearest defibrillator until on-duty paramedics arrive:<sup>4</sup>

*“...what the sector is defining as an emergency is changing. So, you know, 5 years ago, I never would have thought that there would be opportunity for a member of our organisation to be responding to a 000 call to provide CPR until the paramedics arrive. So that's an exciting opportunity for us.”*

(Volunteerism manager, St John Ambulance Vic)

### Example 7: Volunteering Queensland's 'Making it happen' project

Volunteering Queensland's Making it happen: Building Local Capability to Manage Spontaneous Disaster Volunteers project is a key example of **planning and collaborating for spontaneous volunteering**. It has used an 'action learning' approach to work with local governments to develop creative and flexible strategies for spontaneous volunteering. The project has also assisted councils to identify existing organisations and groups in communities that are “most suitable and capable to take on future roles in managing spontaneous disaster volunteers”:<sup>5</sup>

*“ We're looking at working with Volunteering Queensland [...] to engage with community groups to help local councils manage their spontaneous volunteers when disasters happen. So, we're looking at having volunteer team leaders trained to manage spontaneous volunteers that come to council. That's getting off the ground.”*

(Volunteerism manager, Support EMO)

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<sup>4</sup> See <https://www.ambulance.vic.gov.au/community/community-partnerships/goodsam/>

<sup>5</sup> Volunteering Queensland. (2018). *Making it happen: Good practice in building local capability to manage spontaneous disaster volunteers*. See <https://volunteeringqld.org.au/services/building-local-capability-to-manage-spontaneous-volunteers>