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ENABLING SUSTAINABLE EMERGENCY VOLUNTEERING

2019-2020 annual report

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

END-USER PROJECT IMPACT STATEMENT

Jennifer Pidgeon, *Strategic Volunteer and Youth Programs, Department of Fire and Emergency Services, WA*

Social and economic conditions are causing major changes in how people volunteer, and what they are expecting out of their volunteering experience. This is particularly important knowledge as understanding the challenges and opportunities that exist for volunteers will be pivotal to maintaining a sustainable volunteer base to provide essential emergency services to the community. **The research undertaken by the** *Enabling sustainable emergency volunteering* **project has provided valuable research findings, as well as practical and usable recommendations** that have supported the work being undertaken by the Department of Fire and Emergency Services. **The outcomes of this project has given us an evidence base to guide and support decisions regarding the recruitment and retention of volunteers**. We look forward to the continuing release of the work produced by the project team, and have appreciated and actively implemented the work that has come to date.

Georgina Goodrich, *Department of the Premier and Cabinet, South Australia*

As an end user of the Sustainable Volunteering project **I have found the interaction, research and opportunity to work with the team hugely beneficial**. I participated in the Delphi and have appreciated the webinars and communication updates as progress occurs**. This project is especially relevant now** that we see the emergence of community goodwill and volunteering due to cascading and compounding events across Australia.

INTRODUCTION

The *Enabling sustainable emergency volunteering* project is a three-year project being jointly undertaken by researchers at RMIT University, the University of Western Australia, and Curtin University for the Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre (BNHCRC). Now in its final year, it is the core project in the BNHCRC's research cluster on Sustainable Volunteering. The goal of this cluster is to improve the long-term sustainability of the emergency management volunteer workforce and better engage the potential of volunteering to build disaster resilience in Australian communities.[1]

The *Enabling sustainable emergency volunteering* project has two broad aims, each of which is addressed by a targeted package of work:

- o **Work package 1, Emergency volunteering 2030 - Adapting the sector**, is based at RMIT University. It aims to support the emergency management sector to adapt to the transformation of volunteering and put itself in the best position possible to enable and enhance the value of volunteering to communities – before, during, and after emergencies - into the future.

- o **Work package 2, Changing management practices,** is based at the University of Western Australia and Curtin University. It aims to support emergency management organisations (EMOs) to improve volunteer retention through effective on-boarding, and potentially through adapting volunteer roles and pathways, and to measure progress towards building a culture of inclusion amongst their volunteer base that supports effective on-boarding. concern

The project complements other active BNHCRC research projects, especially in the emergency management capability cluster (e.g. *Diversity and inclusion: building strength and capability* and *Catastrophic and cascading events: planning and capability* projects).[2] It also draws from work in two completed projects: the Bushfire CRC *Volunteerism* project (2003-2010) undertaken by researchers at La Trobe University (Birch, 2011) and the BNHCRC *Out of uniform*: *building community resilience through non-traditional volunteering* project (2015-2017), which was a precursor to the *Enabling sustainable emergency volunteering* project based at RMIT University (B. J. McLennan, Kruger, Handmer, & Whittaker, 2017; B. J. McLennan, Whittaker, Kruger, & Handmer, 2017).

This Annual Report communicates the key activities and achievements of the *Enabling sustainable emergency volunteering* project in the 2019-2020 financial year. This was the third year of the project (see also B. J. McLennan et al., 2018). The research phase of the project is due to end in December 2020.

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[1] See https://www.bnhcrc.com.au/research/cluster/sustainable-volunteering

[2] See https://www.bnhcrc.com.au/research/cluster/emergency-management-capability

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BACKGROUND

THE EMERGENCY VOLUNTEERING LANDSCAPE IN AUSTRALIA

An inexorable link exists between volunteerism and community capability and resilience with respect to disaster risk. Communities and governments increasingly expect emergency management organisations (EMOs) to actively enable and enhance the value of volunteering for communities with respect to building community capability and resilience. This is strongly reflected in disaster management policy in Australia, embodied in the National Strategy for Disaster Resilience (COAG, 2011). It is also evident in the United Nation's Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction that calls on Nations to encourage "Civil society, volunteers, organized voluntary work organizations and community based organizations to", amongst other things, "advocate for resilient communities and an inclusive and all-of-society disaster risk management that strengthen synergies across groups" (UNISDR, 2015, p.23).

At the same time, the landscape of emergency and disaster volunteering is transforming (B. J. McLennan, Whittaker, & Handmer, 2016). Socioeconomic changes in areas such as the nature of paid work, lifestyles and values, and the social impact of new technology have led to a decline in the 'traditional' model of formal, long-term, high-commitment volunteering with a single organisation that currently forms the foundation of emergency management volunteer models (Hustinx & Lammertyn, 2003). Alongside this decline there is a rise in 'new' or 'non-traditional' styles of volunteering that are more diverse, fluid, episodic and digitally-enabled. There is also a corresponding increase in self-organised emergency and disaster volunteering that is not formally affiliated with, or directly managed by, EMOs (Whittaker, McLennan, & Handmer, 2015).

This situation presents significant challenges to current volunteer management practices, particularly in recruitment and retention (Birch, 2011). The 2012 National Emergency Management Volunteer Action Plan, for example, stated that the changing landscape presented "a significant challenge for the recruitment and retention of emergency management volunteers", and labelled it "an issue of national importance that impacts on all levels of government and all Australian communities" (Commonwealth of Australia, 2012, p.6). More recently, a 2016 report for the Australian Emergency Management Volunteer Forum reconfirmed five key recruitment and retention challenges related to time, training, cost, recognition, and people (Esmond, 2016). It included recommendations that EMOs pursue more flexibility in their volunteer involvement and training and develop more inclusive cultures and increase the diversity of their volunteer base.

In this context, EMOs experience increasing difficulty in both attracting and retaining volunteers under their current volunteer management models and within existing organisational cultures (J. McLennan, 2008; J. McLennan, Birch, Beatson, & Cowlishaw, 2007) and are expending significant human and economic costs trying to market a value proposition that is outdated, narrow, and does not attract diversity. Some EMOs experience greater difficulty than others. For example, nationally, the SES estimates a yearly turnover of 20-25%. This presents considerable challenges for volunteer sustainability.

Volunteer managers report that much of their volunteer turnover occurs with newer recruits. Often early turnover can be a sign that the expectations of incoming recruits fail to match with their on-the-job experiences. In many organisational settings, research suggests that a mismatch between expectations held by new recruits and their actual experiences can trigger a breach of the 'psychological contract', leading to disillusionment among new recruits; the ultimate result of this is that new recruits will likely leave shortly after being recruited. Importantly, a psychological contract can be formed and re-evaluated in all stages of the volunteers' experiences, from pre-recruitment (e.g., via role stereotypes), recruitment (e.g., recruitment materials), socialisation (e.g., training, induction), in-role activities (e.g., deployment), to evaluations (e.g. Kragt, Dunlop, Gagne, Holtrop, & Luksyte, 2018).

Importantly, the transformation of the volunteering landscape also presents new opportunities for the emergency management sector to adapt and better position itself to enhance volunteer sustainability and to enable the value of volunteering for communities - now and in the future. However, as volunteer managers and workforce planners in the sector recognise, prevailing volunteer models tend to be overly rigid and resist activities that can capitalise on the emerging opportunities (BNHCRC, 2017). The sector therefore needs to consider more agile and community-centric strategies and management practices that are: a) more reflective of the new 'face' of volunteering and the diversity of communities, and b) more able to respond to future changes and opportunities in volunteering. EMOs will need to adapt internal organisational structures, procedures and cultures to transform these approaches into practice. Failure to adapt could lead to EMOs being left behind while new voluntary and community-based organisations pursue their own ways to get involved in disaster management without the support of established EMOs.

There is also an opportunity to improve EMOs' capacity to understand and respond to the reasons for early turnover of volunteers within the wider context of the changing landscape of volunteering in Australia. Opportunities also exist to develop capacity to measure EMOs' progress towards building cultures of inclusiveness that can support more diverse volunteers, volunteering styles, and volunteering roles. This will support and strengthen initiatives being pursued by EMOs to improve volunteer sustainability into the future.

Notably, more recent volunteer strategies acknowledge the need for more flexible and responsive volunteer models and management approaches for the emergency management sector and EMOs through which capability to engage volunteers with more diverse and dynamic demographics, motivations, expectations, skills and volunteering styles can be built (see for example CFA, 2015; DFES, 2016; Esmond, 2016; McCullough, 2017; QFES, 2018; Victorian Volunteer Consultative Forum, 2015). However, while identifying the need for more flexible and diverse strategies is a positive development, the sector still has a long way to go in designing and implementing such strategies. Fostering the structural, cultural and management change needed to support this development is acknowledged in research and by managers as a key challenge to be faced over coming years (BNHCRC, 2017; B. J. McLennan et al., 2016; Whittaker et al., 2015).

RESEARCH APPROACH

An overview of the project-wide governance structure is provided in Appendix 1.

Work package 1 – Emergency volunteering 2030: Adapting the sector

Work package 1 aims to be a catalyst for change in the emergency management sector to adapt to the transformation of the volunteering landscape into the next decade.

The project is finding and sharing answers to key questions that are being asked – and debated - across the sector:

1. *What will (and should) volunteering - before, during and after disasters - look like in the future?*

2. *Who will be volunteering in the future and how, and by whom, will emergency volunteering be organised?*

3. *What can the emergency management sector do to best enable the value of this volunteering for communities over the next decade?*

Research is being guided by the following underlying principles and assumptions:

Principles - Community centric / Forward looking / Place based / Values oriented / Outcome focused / Co-designed / Sector focused

Assumptions - Volunteering is transforming, not declining / Communities value activities that build community capability and resilience / There are multiple pathways through which volunteering provide value to communities, not all run through EMOs / Sectoral and organisational change is needed.

Adapting the sector is a foresight study (Constantinides, 2013; Hines & Bishop, 2013; Volkery & Ribeiro, 2009). Foresight is both an output – "insights into how and why the future could be different than today" [48, p.1099], and a process – the approach of considering the future in today's decision-making. As Riddell and colleagues explain:

> *...foresight can be considered as a process of strategic thinking that looks to challenge common perceptions of what will happen and allow for an expanded range of strategic options to be considered in a planning process. In an organisational setting, foresight can enable decision makers to see the future with different perspectives, and improve understanding of the implications of various trends in society. (Riddell, van Delden, Maier, & Zecchin, 2020, p.2)*

This type of expanded, future-oriented thinking can inform the development of volunteer strategies and models that are as well-placed as possible to support a sustainable and impactful future for emergency volunteering.

Ultimately, the project is developing and exploring alternative future emergency volunteering scenarios and considering their implications for today's decision-making and policy options. Along the way, it has captured, communicated and synthesized diverse stakeholder perspectives of the current, emerging, and

future landscapes of emergency volunteering. An overview of the research design is provided in Appendix 2.

The key contribution of this project is to inform understanding and assessment of new and emerging opportunities and challenges in volunteer management and engagement, and support practitioners to design and develop strategies and pathways to adapt to these opportunities and challenges.

Work package 2 – Changing management practice

Work Package 2 seeks to understand the reasons for voluntary turnover of new recruits by investigating and mapping the whole volunteer experience.

This includes the first time a person has an interest in joining an EMO, experiences they have whilst applying to join and EMO, experiences during socialisation, and their leaving / staying cognitions and decisions throughout. Throughout this investigation, we also investigated how a culture for inclusiveness within EMOs can affect the outcome of this process. We investigated the above through the three inter-related lenses:

1. Attraction and recruitment practices that shape potential volunteers' perceptions of an EMO (the brand) and what life as a volunteer therein might entail; what does the EMO promise a potential volunteer and what is reality once they are members

2. Volunteer socialisation processes (e.g., induction, training) within EMOs and how these impact on the fulfilment, or breach, of volunteers' psychological contracts;

3. Volunteers' demographic and cultural backgrounds (e.g., gender, age, ethnicity), and how these influence their experiences within brigades, groups and units (BGUs) and the extent to which BGUs are building a culture of inclusiveness

The diagram in Appendix 3 schematically displays the research proposed in this work package. This diagram distinguished two research streams.

1) **Developing a Cultural Assessment Tool (CAT):** The CAT will be in the form of a structured questionnaire and was developed through extensive review of the academic and applied literature. It was used initially by the research team as a means to quantify the baseline standing of BGUs' cultures, as well as to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions (e.g., new recruitment strategies, changes to the volunteer training regime). Thus, the content of the CAT will be driven by a combination of the researchers' needs and the interests of the EMOs.

   o The research will identify a culture of inclusiveness within a set of urban, rural and remote BGUs of the Department of Fire and Emergency Services in Western Australia. The content of the CAT will be informed by a number of interviews with volunteers and managers throughout the key agency partner and a review of the scientific and grey literature. After which the research team will design and pilot the first version of the tool in various BGUs, discuss its results with the end users and adjust accordingly for one more trial. After finalising the CAT, user instructions will be designed and

the tool will be made available to EMOs. Ultimately, the CAT will form the 'backbone' for the other stream of this work package as it will be used to take snapshots of the cultures within the BGUs, both before and after new interventions are implemented.

2) **Improving the Volunteer Experience in EMOs volunteers.** In this research, we will build on and extend existing research into EMO volunteer recruitment, by investigating the effective on-boarding of volunteers through the aforementioned three lenses:

   o **First**, we will interview and survey managers and new volunteers on their experiences with current recruitment materials and strategies at our partner organisation, DFES. We will then compare the interview results and the volunteer recruitment materials and strategies to scientific and grey literature to identify points for improvement. Following the development of new recruiting materials, the research team will evaluate the effectiveness of the new materials on the retention of new volunteers. The CAT (described in the previous stream) will assist in this evaluation.

   o **Second**, we will integrate literature on volunteer marketing and turnover, training and socialisation tactics, and induction effectiveness to identify strategies for successful volunteer induction that are appropriate for new styles of volunteering. We will compare these findings to current practices at DFES and produce a gap analysis.

   o **Third**, we will create an understanding of the implications of volunteer diversity on the experiences of new recruits, and how this relates to new ways of volunteering. For example, do younger people enter with the same expectations as the older volunteers? Can volunteer roles be redesigned so that they allow for greater flexibility, accessibility, and value propositions for diverse pools of potential recruits? The CAT will be used here to capture the culture of inclusiveness and will be useful to measure both the status quo and offer insights on how to implement and monitor the effects of changes to the recruitment and socialization.

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KEY MILESTONES

WORK PACKAGE 1 – EMERGENCY VOLUNTEERING 2030: ADAPTING THE SECTOR

Key Milestone 1: Environmental scan synthesis

A key milestone for work package 1 was completion of an Environmental Scan and production of a synthesis report.

The purpose of the Environmental Scan was to explore stakeholders' views about key trends impacting on emergency volunteering, the most likely future under current trajectories (based on present day knowledge and assumptions about the future), what a preferred future for emergency volunteering looks like, and the central 'big picture' issues that need to be tackled to move towards that preferred future. A series of four completed Environmental Scan reports captured deeper detail on the concerns, expectations and hopes for the future of stakeholders from five key representative groups. A synthesis report brought the results in these reports together, along with some additional interviews, to provide a broad-brush overview of major themes with significance at a sector-wide level.

Consistent with the goal of the *Adapting the sector* study to consider all forms of emergency volunteering that can provide value to communities irrespective of organisational affiliation, the scope of the Environmental Scan was broad. It brought together commentary from 183 representatives across seven key representative groups who spoke to a wide range of volunteer-based services contributing to emergency preparedness, response, relief, recovery as well as to broader community resilience[3] (see, Appendix 2 – Work package 1 – Research design and participants). This included both formal, 'affiliated' emergency management volunteering as well as community-led, emergent, spontaneous and informal forms of volunteering.

The synthesis report paints a rich picture of how the shifting landscape of emergency volunteering is currently viewed by those who know it best. The picture is a point-in-time snapshot, based on current understandings and assumptions about trends shaping volunteering today. Given the wide-ranging nature of the issues covered in the Environmental Scan, numerous implications can be drawn of relevance to diverse audiences, from volunteer leaders to government policy makers.

Key Milestone 2: Delphi and draft scenario development

The second key milestone for this year, was completion fo a Delphi and development of draft future scenarios for emergency volunteering. In the Delphi, an expert panel was engaged in an online process to collectively pinpoint the most critical trends and uncertainties likely to shape the future of emergency volunteering (Nowack, Endrikat, & Guenther, 2011). 86 people with a wide range of backgrounds participated (see Appendix 2).

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[3] See Glossary for definition.

The Delphi involved two rounds of questionnaires. In Round 1, the panel was asked to rate the importance and certainty of 50 potential drivers of change in the future of emergency volunteering to 2030. The initial input list of drivers was compiled from results of an Environmental Scan involving input from almost 200 stakeholders.

In Round 2, the panel reviewed and responded to the Round 1 results, including qualitative comments from other participants. They were then asked to consider these results to shortlist ten of the most important trends and ten most important uncertainties. They then weighted items from their shortlist according to their relative importance.

There are three main outputs from the Delphi process: a list of agreed contributing drivers, a set of major trends and scenario drivers, and four draft future scenarios (subject to further refinement with additional end user feedback). Each scenario reaches beyond the current situation for emergency volunteering to depict a possible future that could unfold by 2030 departing from the present day. Each scenario is also grounded in actual events and conditions. They reflect various, different elements of existing, present-day activities and developments. The point of the scenarios is to assist decision makers in volunteer-involving organisations and governments to consider the implications of alternative futures for today's strategic planning, and hence expand the range of strategic options under consideration.

The underlying trends and uncertainties (scenario drivers) contributing to the scenarios are clustered into seven main areas:

Major trends (widely agreed, more predictable trajectories)

- **Shifts in volunteering rates and styles**,

- **Demographic and community change**, particularly rural depopulation and ageing,

- **Rising expectations** (of volunteering, voluntary and emergency management organisations), and

- **Climate change and rising risk**.

Major uncertainties/scenario drivers (less agreement over trajectory and impacts on volunteering)

- **Societal involvement (deep or shallow)** - Includes inclination and capacity of people to engage in emergency volunteering and openness of the sector to collaborate with non-traditional stakeholders and make space to involve community more actively.

- **Enabling leadership (strong or weak)** – Multi-level leadership and support/resources to build capacity & adapt the sector to the changing landscape.

- **Technological change (disruption or evolution)** - Technological change may lead to more gradual, incremental changes for volunteering, or more disruptive and transformative change.

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WORK PACKAGE 2 – CHANGING MANAGEMENT PRACTICE

Key Milestone 1: Administration and analysis of the follow-up Cultural Assessment Tool (CAT) survey

A key research activity in the third year of this project has been the development, administration, and analysis of the follow-up Cultural Assessment Tool (CAT). From September 2018 to February 2019, the University of Western Australia (UWA) collaborated with the Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES) to gather information on the current state of volunteering in Western Australia (WA). This was administered via the CAT that took the form of an online survey. This survey focused on State Emergency Service (SES) volunteers and was intended to obtain information on how to improve volunteer recruitment, retention, wellbeing, and diversity within the overall SES volunteering journey. The key findings were reported to DFES to help inform and improve current volunteer management practices.

The findings of the 2018-19 (18-19) survey were then used to inform the design of the follow-up CAT survey conducted in 2019-20 (19-20). The key purpose of the 19-20 survey was to assess the current state of volunteering within the SES in 2019 and 2020, in addition to tracking changes in the SES volunteering experience over the last 12 months. The CAT 18-19 findings served as the basis for comparison, such that the 19-20 survey was used to investigate which areas of the volunteering experience have remained the same, improved from the previous year, or have room for improvement.

In the initial CAT 18-19 survey, participants were asked to supply their email addresses to be contacted for future research. Of the 398 participants from the 18-19 survey, 307 gave their email addresses. These volunteers were invited to participate in the 19-20 survey and were given three reminders to complete it. The survey was also launched at the Western Australian Fire and Emergency Services (WAFES) conference in September 2019. The survey was later promoted through stakeholder meetings and online means (i.e., volunteer e-newsletters, the DFES online volunteer portal, and Facebook).

The survey stayed open from the beginning of September 2019 till mid-February 2020. Within that time, a total of 226 volunteers completed the survey, with a response rate of about 11% across WA. Volunteers from the majority of the SES units (52 out of 66) participated, thus providing a fair representation from metropolitan, regional, and remote units. Overall, survey results indicated that SES volunteers in WA are fairly satisfied with their volunteering experience, however there are potential areas that could be improved for the benefit of their volunteering journey.

The critical findings from the analyses were written in a comprehensive report. The report discussed the current state of SES volunteering in WA, in addition to comparing the findings between the CAT 19-20 and 18-19 surveys. The executive summary from this report can be found in Appendix 4. A draft of the report was emailed to a key end user, of which the end user was requested to review the report, give feedback, in addition to providing an end user statement to be included in the finalised report. Overall, the report received positive feedback,

and minor amendments to the report was made based on end user feedback. The report has since been submitted and approved by the CRC. We expect this report will be made publicly available on the CRC website by July/August 2020. It is with hope that the survey findings and its implications on emergency services organisations in Australia will inform emergency management organisations on how to better their practices to improve the overall volunteering experience.

Key Milestone 2: Presentation of the results of the new volunteer recruitment materials to end users

A major undertaking for the project researchers this past year was the presentation of the new volunteer recruitment materials to the end users. In the previous year, the project researchers tested 109 quotes and 40 pictures as potential recruitment messages. These potential recruitment messages were first road-tested with 112 current SES volunteers to ensure that the messages were attractive to potential recruits, in addition to being representative and accurate of the SES volunteering experience. We then decided to further expand the recruitment messaging study and conduct additional testing that was previously not included in the scope of the project. To further study the attractiveness of the recruitment messages, and more importantly, what expectations the recruitment messages project about the volunteering experience, a community sample representative of the Australian population was used. A sample of 453 community members (i.e., potential volunteers) rated how attractive the recruitment messages were, in addition to acknowledging what expectations they have about the volunteering experience (from a pre-selected list of expectations) based on the recruitment messages they viewed (e.g., based on this picture/quote, I expect to *learn new skills*, *help the community*, or *be part of a team* if I were to become a volunteer).

Overall, 61 quotes and 28 pictures were rated as being accurate by current volunteers, and attractive by both current and potential volunteers. To present these results to end users, an Emergency Services Volunteer Recruitment Messaging Toolkit, known as the "Volunteer Attractinator," was built in Microsoft Excel. The purpose of this tool is to allow end users (e.g., volunteer leaders or recruitment officers) to select recruitment messages to include in their volunteer recruitment campaigns that are attractive and appealing to potential recruits, accurate in representing emergency volunteer experiences, and setting the right expectations based on what their individual groups and units can offer. The recruitment messaging toolkit was presented at the Western Australian Fire and Emergency Services (WAFES) 2019 conference. The results of the two studies were presented and a live demonstration was given with the recruitment messaging toolkit. The presentation was attended by at least 50 volunteers, some of which were volunteer leaders. Instructions on how to the use the tool, and where to find it (via QR code and website link), were printed out and distributed at the presentation. Feedback from the conference presentation was positive, and the volunteer leaders did approach the project researchers to obtain print-outs of the tool instructions, thus leading researchers to believe that the recruitment messaging toolkit is of demand and will be of value to volunteers in their quest to improve recruitment and retention in their own individual units.

Project researchers sought to further develop the recruitment messaging toolkit to be more applicable to different emergency services across different states. A proposal was submitted to the CRC for utilisation funding in order to further develop what project researchers believe to be a valuable tool for end users who are responsible for the effective recruitment of emergency volunteers.

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UTILISATION AND IMPACT

SUMMARY

Below we outline four main potential sources of further research utilisation from Work Packages 1 and 2. These include (1) Environmental Scan and Delphi results/scenarios, (2) the CAT 2019-20 survey results, (3) the SES recruitment messaging toolkit, the 'Volunteer Attractinator', and (4) the Workforce 2030 utilisation project.

1) WORK PACKAGE 1 – ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN AND DELPHI RESULTS/ SCENARIOS

Output Description

The results of the Environmental Scan are captured in a series of reports.

- McLennan, B. J., & Kruger, T. (2019*). Emergency volunteering 2030: Views from managers in volunteerism.* Environmental scan report 1. Melbourne: RMIT University and Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC. https://www.bnhcrc.com.au/publications/biblio/bnh-5415

- Kruger, T., & McLennan, B. J. (2018). *Emergency volunteering 2030: Views from local government managers.* Environmental Scan report 2. Melbourne: RMIT University and Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC. https://www.bnhcrc.com.au/publications/biblio/bnh-5195

- Kruger, T., & McLennan, B. J. (2019). *Emergency volunteering 2030: Views from the community sector.* Environmental Scan report 3. Melbourne: RMIT University and Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC. https://www.bnhcrc.com.au/publications/biblio/bnh-5773

- McLennan, B. J. (2020). *Emergency volunteering 2030: Views from emergency response volunteer representatives.* Environmental Scan report 4. Melbourne: RMIT University and Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC. (Available online soon)

- McLennan, B. J. (2020). *Emergency volunteering 2030: A sector-wide, snapshot view.* Environmetnal Scan synthesis report. Melbourne: RMIT University and Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC. (Available online soon)

Building on the Environmental Scan, the Delphi results, including draft future future scenarios, are captured in an internal report that will be circulated to end users and Delphi participants to share results and gather feedback to adjust and refine the scenarios.

Extent of Use

- Environmental Scan reports have been used by staff in emergency management organisations to inform development of new volunteerism

strategies. For example, Bushfires NT,[4] and DFES in Western Australia[5], where a new volunteerism strategy is currently in development.

- Environmental Scan reports are also being used by various organisations to inform public submissions to government inquiries and reviews, and position papers. For example, Volunteering Australia's submission to the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements[6], and position paper on Australian Government Compensation Scheme for Emergency Service Volunteers[7], VCOSS's submission the the IGEM review of ten years of emergency management reform.[8]

Utilisation Potential and Impact

- Utilisation potential is indicated in the commentary of some participants in the Environmental Scan, see Box 1 over page. Participants described potential for the study to help mobilise discussions about new volunteering models (participant 1), assist end users to influence change (participant 2), help reveal a way forward towards a more imaginative and preferable future (participant 3), and to draw solutions together from a wider base (participant 4).

- The Delphi results will be used to develop an accessible industry communication report outlining the major trends and uncertainties, and future scenarios and their implications.[9] Feedback from AFAC

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[4] Bushfires NT. (2019). *Volunteerism strategy 2019-2022*. Retrieved from Darwin,: https://denr.nt.gov.au/bushfire-information-and-management/publications-and-other-resources/bushfires-nt-volunteer-strategy

[5] J. Pidgeon, personal communication, 6th July 2020.

[6] Volunteering Australia. (2020b). *Submission to the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements*. Retrieved from Canberra: https://naturaldisaster.royalcommission.gov.au/publications/nnd00101366

[7] Volunteering Australia. (2020a). *Position Paper: Australian Government Compensation Scheme for Emergency Service Volunteers* Retrieved from Canberra: https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/wp-content/uploads/February-2020-Position-Statement-Australian-Government-Compensation-Scheme.pdf

[8] VCOSS. (2019). *Submission to the IGEM review of ten yesars of emergency management reform*. Retrieved from Melbourne: https://vcoss.org.au/policy/10-years-of-emergency-management-reform/

[9] Examples of this style of report include: Brown, J., Gosling, T., Sethi, B., Sheppard, B., Stubbings, C., Sviokla, J., & Zarubina, D. (2017). Workforce of the future: The competing forces shaping 2030. *London: PWC*. Retrieved from https://www.pwc.com/gx/en/services/people-organisation/publications/workforce-of-the-future.html; Boston Consulting Group. (2018). *Scenarios for the Australian Public Service in 2030*. Retrieved from Canberra: https://www.apsreview.gov.au/resources/scenarios-2030, Boehm, K., Esser, R., Lee, P., & Raab, J. (2018). *The future of the TV and video landscape by 2030*. Retrieved from https://www2.deloitte.com/global/en/pages/technology-media-and-telecommunications/articles/gx-future-of-tv-video.html.

representatives indicated in-principle support for conducting scenario planning workshops to consider future uncertainty and its strategic implications for volunteer models in response agencies. However, agencies are unlikely to be able to participate in such workshops until after August 2020 when the various government inquiries into the 2019/2020 bushfire season have concluded.

- There are further potential utilisation streams currently being discussed with the AFAC Volunteer Management Technical Group. A facilitated workshop on sustainable volunteering was held with the VMTG on 28th May. A key part of the workshop discussion was focused on identifying potential roles the VMTG might have in progressing or facilitating action on key sector-wide issues. The workshop discussion was documented, and further meetings are planned with the VMTG to refine options and explore how the research in work package 1 can best inform and support future VMTG and AFAC initiaitvies and activities.

- Feedback from various end user meetings and from research participants (see B. J. McLennan, 2020, p.65-66), have indicated that collated research in accesible formats on key topics would be helpful for those industry actors currently grappling with changes and challenges for volunteer models and programs. With this in mind, a next step for utilisation will be to prepare short Issue Briefs on targeted topics of most relevance to end users, drawing on the considerable data gathered through the Environmental Scan. An Issue Brief is a "short summary, usually one to two pages, of the knowledge surrounding an issue or problem.[10]

Utilisation and Impact Evidence

- See footnotes in above sections.

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[10] "See https://sites.nicholas.duke.edu/studio/genre-handouts/issue-brief/, and https://www.cdc.gov/policy/polaris/training/policy-resources-writing-briefs.html

Box 1: Environmental Scan participant feedback on potential utisliation and impact

- *"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 focussing 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? I don't know there is a lot of awareness of that within our organisation and **that is probably something in terms of your research that probably needs to be, it is going to be useful in terms of getting the discussion going.**"* (Participant 1, Response organisation)

- *"Some of the feedback from [volunteers] is they don't have the time to devote anymore. They've got commitments to paid and family work, so it's about utilising that information and how we can change our recruitment methods. **Obviously, this project is really good for us because [our arrangements] makes it difficult in some circumstances to influence change.**"* (Participant 2, Response organisation)

- *"That's **why this particular piece of research is so important because I just don't think there's anything out there that's really showing the way.** […] Anything we can do to reinforce or support that concept of looking to the future and imagining the future state. Otherwise we'll just get stuck in the conversation about today and not take the opportunity to have those imaginative futures."* (Participant 3, Response organisation)

- *"I'll be really interested to see what other ideas you are able to draw together from the people you're interviewing. Hopefully some have more positive, constructive suggestions for the future but yeah, I think we've been a sector constantly trying to do that as we go along **but I'm all for looking for solutions that can be drawn together from a wider base. I'll look forward to hearing or reading about what you come up with.**"* (Participant 4, Recovery organisation)

2) THE CAT 2019-20 SURVEY RESULTS

Output Description

The quantitative results of the second (2019-20) CAT survey have been summarised in a report and shared with a key end user. Some more detailed analysis of the impact of the climate for inclusiveness on volunteer need satisfaction was intended to be shared at the AFAC 2020 conference. However, an AFAC poster summarising key findings from the CAT 2019-20 survey, as well as the climate for inclusiveness was submitted to be included in the AFAC20 poster book collection. Moreover, analysis of the qualitative responses, and further analysis of the quantitative analysis is currently underway for future publications.

Extent of Use

- The report is expected to be released in July/August 2020 and thus the extent of use is currently unknown and most likely limited. However, we anticapte that utilisation outcomes, for example recommended changes to practice, will emerge in 2020-2021. These will be achieved through consultation with the end user groups and other groups such as VMTG.

Utilisation Potential

- We received feedback from a key end user, who believes that this piece of research helps to reaffirm areas of focus for their work with the SES and the broader volunteer emergency services. They believe this project to be "extremely important for the sustainability of the volunteer workforce," and believes the results in the report to be informative as to what challenges and opportunities there are for improving the overall SES volunteering experience. A proposal was submitted for utilisation funding in order to develop a 'CAT platform,' which would help end users to facilitate their own data collection and reporting. However, this is currently being discussed with the AFAC Workforce Management Group and is currently waiting for a decision to be made.

Utilisation Impact

- This will emerge in 2020-2021 as the results of the CAT are discussed amongst the end user group.

Utilisation and Impact Evidence

- Key evidence of the impact of this research comes directly from written end user testimonials.

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3) THE SES RECRUITMENT MESSAGING TOOLKIT, THE 'VOLUNTEER ATTRACTINATOR'

Output Description

As part of Work Package 2, the research team undertook a quantitative experimental study of messages and visual media for potential use in the recruitment of SES volunteers. The messages were collected through interviews with volunteers and the visual media was shared by DFES. The goal of this work was to identify messages that are attractive, accurate in representing the SES volunteering experience, in addition to being able to set the correct expectations of what the volunteering journey will be like. From the 109 quotes and 40 pictures tested as potential recruitment messages, 61 quotes and 28 pictures were rated as being accurate by current SES volunteers, and attractive by both current and potential volunteers. As a result, these recruitment messages were included in the building of a recruitment messaging toolkit, that would allow end users (e.g., volunteer leaders or recruitment officers) to select recruitment messages that are attractive, realistic, and able to set the right expectations based on what their individual units can offer. This toolkit, built in Microsoft Excel, was presented and shared with volunteer leaders at the Western Australian Fire and Emergency Services (WAFES) conference in September 2019. Audience members were given a live demonstration of how the tool works, in addition to receiving printouts of how to use the tool, and where to find it (via QR code and website link).

Extent of Use

- While the extent of how much the toolkit was used cannot be determined, there is support that the toolkit was potentially used. The website containing the toolkit was visited 47 times, based on statistics received from the bit.ly link that was created. However, the extent in which this toolkit was used to select messages to be included in volunteer recruitment campaigns is less known.

Utilisation Potential

- If the data indicates that the tool is beneficial to the effective attraction and recruitment of new volunteers, then we would advise making the tool freely available to SES unit managers and recruitment officers. However, a proposal has been submitted for utilisation funding to further develop the recruitment messaging toolkit to be more inclusive of different emergency services across different states. This proposal is currently being discussed with the AFAC Workforce Management Group and is waiting for a decision to be made.

Utilisation and Impact Evidence

- Again, this will depend on the evidence, but the potential impact will improve recruitment outcomes, which would include a reduction in early volunteer turnover.

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Utilisation and Impact Evidence

- Key evidence of the impact of this research comes directly from written end user testimonials.

4) WORKFORCE 2030

Workforce 2030 is a new utilisation project associated with the Enabling Sustainable Emergency Volunteering project that begun in June 2030 (see Appendix 5).

The CRC Workforce 2030 Research Advisory Forum held in 2019, highlighted that a 'big picture' synthesis of current research and how that research can influence workforce development is required to inform future-focused workforce problem solving in emergency services. The forum demonstrated that although the CRC has a number of discrete workforce related projects each with their own end users and utilisation and providing high quality research, there is scope to improve cohesion between projects. An overarching project that will provide the sector with the cumulative benefits of bringing these projects together would be of benefit but is significantly outside of what was originally envisioned for the any of the projects and/or their utilisation.

The purpose of this proposal is to provoke action in the sector by bringing together a range of CRC workforce related research and the Future of Work Institute at Curtin University to develop a synthesised research report that provides a complete picture of the state of current research on emerging workforce challenges and opportunities likely to face emergency service organisations over the coming decade, and a series of tools that will enable the sector to confront this uncertain future.

Project Deliverables

1. A scoping paper

2. A report (or series of themed reports) that covers the topics described above with an executive summary, that collectively provide a vision of the workforce of the future

3. A set of communication products tailored to audience needs, to be determined with Steering Committee. Likely to include some of the following: Infographics that support the paper and can serve as stand-alone media; Vignettes describing people in the future roles of the Emergency Services; An animated video that summarises the report in under five minutes; and Workshops mapping key findings against current practice.

Workforce 2030 is endorsed by the AFAC Council, and is being overseen by a Steering Committee comprised of represnetatives of a range of AFAC groups including the Workforce Management Group, the Volunteering Management Technical Group, and the Diversity and Inclusion Group.

NEXT STEPS

The upcoming activities for this work package in the near future are as follows:

WORK PACKAGE 1 – EMERGENCY VOLUNTEERING 2030: ADAPTING THE SECTOR

Present and participate in the AFAC 2020 conference *(Sep 2020)*

Submit journal article on looking to the future of emergency response volunteering *(Jul 2020)*

Deliver a scenarios report *(Sep 2030)*

Produce Issue Briefs on key topics of strategic interest from the research *(Sep-Dec 2020)*

Submit journal article on community sector volunteering for emergency management goals *(Nov 2020)*

Deliver final project report *(Dec 2020)*

WORK PACKAGE 2 – CHANGING MANAGEMENT PRACTICE

Present and participate in the AFAC 2020 conference

Deliver final CAT and user guide instructions

Produce integrated report on effective on-boarding

Submit journal article on the recruitment of emergency volunteers

Deliver final project report

PUBLICATIONS LIST

(**NB**: Outputs delivered in the 2019/2020 financial year have author names in **BOLD**)

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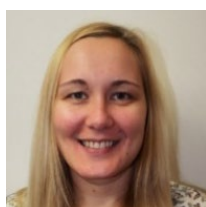
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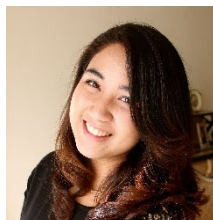
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Lead end users

(NB: Due to role changes, the lead end user team will change.)

- **Paul Davis**, Emergency Management Victoria
- **Troy Davies**, Queensland Fire and Emergency Services
- **Deb Parkin**, Inspector-General for Emergency Management, Victoria

Work package 2 partners

- **Nancy Appleby** & **Jennifer Pidgeon**, Department of Fire and Emergency Services, Western Australia

CRC end user group

- **Kerrie Laurie** & **Ali Martin**, Country Fire Authority
- **Annabelle Kirwan** & **Kendra Clegg**, State Emergency Service Victoria
- **Andrew McCullough**, State Emergency Service New South Wales
- **Diana Bernardi**, Australian Red Cross
- **Georgina Goodrich**, Department of Human Services, South Australia
- **Nancy Appleby** & **Jennifer Pidgeon**, Department of Fire and Emergency Services, Western Australia
- **Kristine Wendtman**, NSW Rural Fire Service
- **Lisa Grieg**, South Australian Fire & Emergency Services Commission
- **Catriona Freeman,** Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council

AFAC Volunteer Management Technical Group (VMTG)

- The project has enjoyed ongoing engagment with the AFAC VMTG throughout its duration, participating by invitation in many VMTG meetings, and receiving considerable VMTG feedback and insights on the research.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 – PROJECT GOVERNANCE AND RELATIONSHIPS
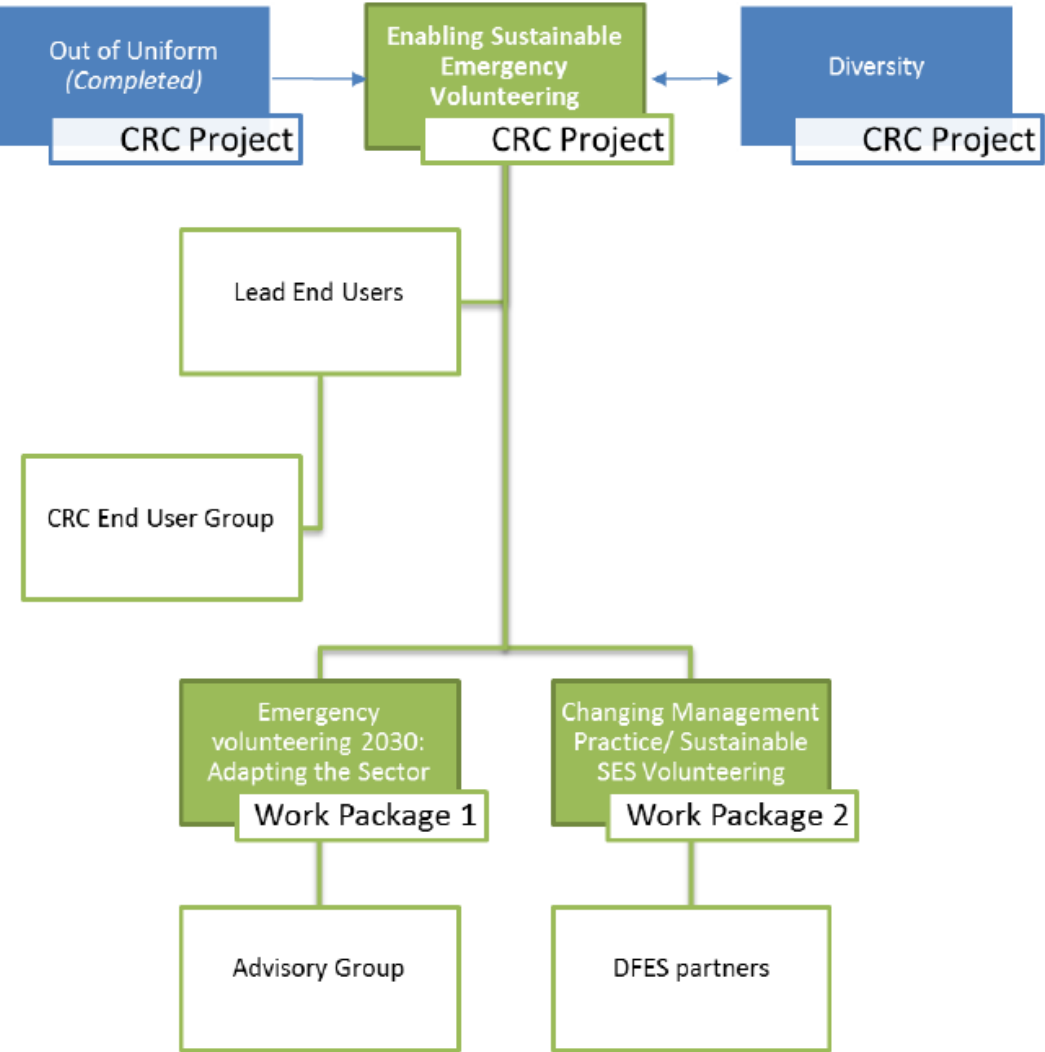
(Green = project components - Blue = related CRC projects)
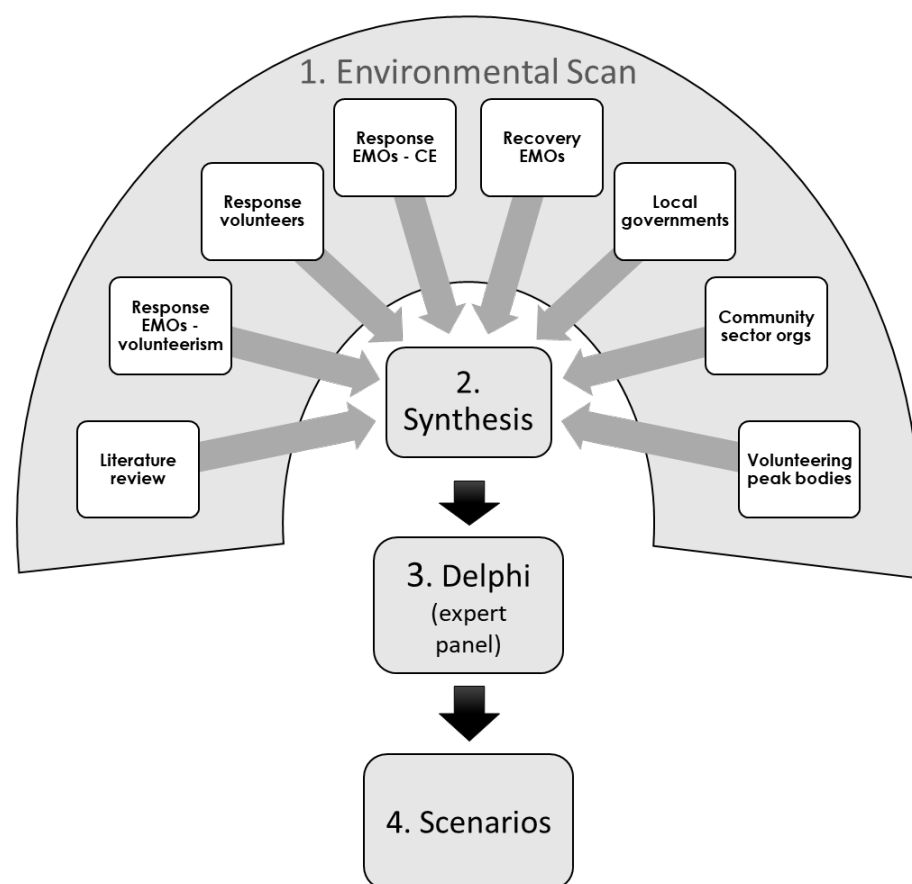
Environmental scan (individual views)

Representative groups	Interviews	Qual survey	Total
Response EMOs -volunteerism	18	-	18
Response volunteers	1	71	72
Response EMOs - CE	6	-	6
Recovery EMOs	16 (11)	-	16
Community sector orgs	2	46	48
Local government	17	-	17
Volunteering peak bodies	6 (group)	-	6
Total	66	117	183

Delphi (collective view)

Representative groups	Rnd 1	Rnd 2	Rnd 1 & 2	Total
Research	4	1	24	29
Response volunteers	3	1	12	16
Response EMO - workforce	5	1	10	16
Recovery EMO	2	0	4	6
Other EMOs	2	1	4	7
Community sector orgs	1	0	3	4
Local government	1	0	2	3
Volunteering peak bodies	1	0	2	3
Individual	1	0	1	2
Total	20	4	62	86

APPENDIX 3 – WORK PACKAGE 2 – RESEARCH DESIGN

Key Research Activities

- Literature review and consultation with DFES
- Interviews with SES volunteers and managers
- Design Cultural Assessment Tool (CAT)
- Data collection using CAT
- Develop new recruitment materials
- Volunteer manager workshops
- Gap analysis of current practices
- Evaluation

Key Research Questions

Recruitment
What does it take to become an SES volunteer?

Retention
What keeps SES volunteers coming back for more?

Wellbeing
How makes SES volunteers happy?

Diversity
How do we get more people to volunteer for SES?

APPENDIX 4 – EXECUTIVE SUMMARY FROM CAT 19-20 REPORT

Between September 2019 and February 2020, The University of Western Australia and Curtin University collaborated with the Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES) to conduct a follow-up survey to obtain information on the current state of volunteering in Western Australia (WA). Comparing the results with the initial survey conducted in 2018-19, we intended to gain more insight into changes in practices regarding volunteer recruitment, retention, wellbeing, and diversity within the State Emergency Service (SES). The key survey information and findings are presented below:

Key Survey Information

Survey themes:

Reasons to Stay	Volunteer Needs	Volunteer Role and Identity Fit
Volunteer Wellbeing (E.g., role satisfaction)	**SES Unit Environment** (E.g., climate for inclusiveness)	**Intentions to Remain**

Responses:
- **226** SES volunteers across WA.
- Approximate response rate of 11% from all SES volunteers across WA.

Participant Demographics

	2018-19	2019-20
Number of respondents	398	226
Average age	46.1 years (SD=15.5 years)	46.9 years (SD=14.5 years)
Gender breakdown	Male volunteers (61.6%) Female volunteers (37.4%)	Male volunteers (55.1%) Female volunteers (43.0%)
Born in Australia	70.4%	71.9%
Average tenure	**SES:** 9.0 years (SD=9.8 years) **Current unit:** 7.2 years (SD=8.3 years)	**SES:** 10.0 years (SD=10.2 years) **Current unit:** 10.0 years (SD=10.2 years)
Volunteer roles	Unit Managers (11.6%) Non-managers (88.4%)	Unit Managers (16.4%) Non-managers (83.6%)

KEY FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

Based on the survey findings, the list of key implications is presented below:

Key Areas of Strength	Key Opportunities to Improve
- Volunteers are thriving through their learning experiences in the SES. - Volunteers overall felt valued and respected for their individual differences. - Unit leaders are seen very positively in their behaviours towards volunteers, both during and outside of call-outs. - Volunteers indicated that they had strong social support from team members who are non-leaders.	- Investigate targeted recruitment to attract members from specific groups. - Facilitate activities to allow more autonomy in tasks for volunteers. - Improve volunteers' identification with DFES. - Increase how energetic volunteers feel about their roles. - Improve levels of psychological safety for women and volunteers who are non-leaders. - Improve volunteer inclusivity in unit decision-making processes. - Focus on improving how competent and autonomous women and non-leaders feel in their volunteering roles.

KEY COMPARISONS BETWEEN THE 2018-19 AND 2019-20 SURVEY RESULTS:

Comparing the data from both 2018-19 (18-19) and 2019-20 (19-20) CAT surveys, we have listed below which areas of volunteering in the SES have improved, have stayed relatively the same, in addition to highlighting which areas are in need of some work.

Key Areas that were Maintained	- Overall, volunteers reported feeling as competent and socially connected with other volunteers in the SES in 19-20, as they did in 18-19. - Volunteers identied equally as strongly with their volunteering role and with their SES units. - Volunteers similarly had high levels of role satisfaction across both years. - Leader behaviours were generally rated as being rather positive during and outside of call-outs. - Volunteers also felt similarly across both years that their differences were rather valued and respected by other volunteers in their unit.
Key Areas that Improved	Volunteers indicated four motives that strongly influenced their decision to continue volunteering in 19-20, more so than it did in 18-19; reputation as an

	emergency volunteer, using existing skills, learning new skills, and meeting new people. • Volunteers identified more strongly with DFES in 19-20 than 18-19. • Volunteers reported more learning and developing in 19-20 than in 18-19 (though still high at that time). • Volunteers were more likely to recommend SES as a place to volunteer to others in 19-20 than in 18-19.
Key Opportunities to Improve	• Overall, volunteers indicated low levels of autonomy in 19-20 and 18-19. • Volunteers also reported that they did not feel energetic about their roles. • Volunteers generally felt relatively low levels of 'psychological safety' (i.e. that it was safe to speak one's mind) across both surveys. • Inclusion in decision-making was also reported to be low, and should be a key area to improve on.

UTILISATION

Workforce 2030: A utilisation project from the Enabling Sustainable Emergency Volunteering research stream
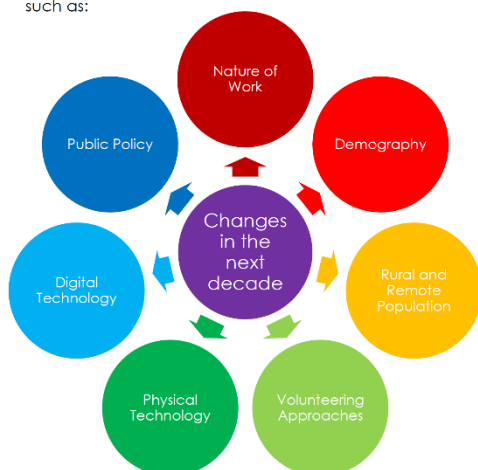
Enabling sustainable emergency volunteering

Dr Blythe McLennan[1], Assoc/Prof Patrick Dunlop[2], Jane Chong[2], Prof. Marylène Gagné[2], Dr Darja Kragt[3], Hawa Muhammad Farid[2], Prof. Mark Griffin[2], Assoc/Prof. Alex Luksyte[4], Loriana Bethune[5]

[1]School of Global, Urban, and Social Studies, RMIT University; [2]Future of Work Institute, Curtin University; [3]School of Psychological Science, University of Western Australia; [4]Business School, University of Western Australia; [5]Utilisation and DELWP Program Manager, BNHCRC

In the backdrop of significant environmental, economic, and technological changes, this project aims to provoke action in the sector by bringing together a range of CRC workforce related research and the Future of Work Institute at Curtin University to develop a report that provides a picture of the state of current research on emerging workforce challenges and opportunities likely to face emergency service organisations in the coming decade, and a series of tools that will enable the sector to confront this uncertain future. The project comprises three phases, with the large project team contributing expertise in 8 focal areas.

Phase 1 – The Changing Landscape in the 2021-2030 Decade

The project will commence by making sense of the changing landscape (external environment) that emergency management organisations operate in and which will shape workforce capability required over the next decade. The exact scope and content will be determined in discussion with the Steering Committee, however it will consider factors such as:

- Nature of Work
- Demography
- Rural and Remote Population
- Volunteering Approaches
- Physical Technology
- Digital Technology
- Public Policy

Changes in the next decade

Phase 2 – The Eight Focal Research Areas
Implication for Volunteers and Paid Workers

1. Recruitment and Selection Practice
What are the new roles? What talent is required? How do we attract it?

2. Socialisation and Training
As workers and volunteers' expectations change, how can new members be better inducted and trained?

3. Work Re-Design
As technology changes, how can we design better work to ensure human-system interaction is optimised?

4. Diversity and Inclusiveness
As Australia's demography changes, how do we ensure members from all communities feel welcome both as members and customers of the services?

5. Managing Mental Health
How do we ensure volunteer and workers' mental health is sustained while in the service?

6. Leadership
How do we instil leader skills that are adaptive to changing demographics, work roles, expectations, and performance requirements?

7. Change Management
How can we improve change management in the service?

8. Managing an Ageing Workforce
How do we engage an older workforce and create opportunities for younger workers and volunteers?

Expected Outputs

- Scoping Document
- Vision 2030 Report
- Workforce 2030 Stories
- Infographics
- Animations and Vignettes

End User Engagement

At the time of printing, the team was recruiting a Steering Committee from member s of the AFAC Workforce Management Group and Volunteer Management Technical Group.

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Australian Government
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Business
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THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA