



ENABLING SUSTAINABLE EMERGENCY VOLUNTEERING

Final project report

Dr Blythe McLennan^{1,4}, Dr Patrick Dunlop^{3,4}, Dr Darja Kragt^{2,4}, Dr
Djurre Holtrop^{3,4}, Dr Marylène Gagné^{3,4}, Dr Alex Luksyte^{2,4} & Hawa
Muhammad Farid^{3,4}

¹RMIT University, ²University of Western Australia, ³Curtin University &
⁴Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC





Version	Release history	Date
1.0	Initial release of document	02/08/2021



Australian Government
 Department of Industry, Science,
 Energy and Resources

AusIndustry
 Cooperative Research
 Centres Program

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Publisher:

Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC

August 2021

Citation: McLennan B, Dunlop P, Kragt D, Holtrop D, Gagné M, Luksyte A & Farid HM (2021) Enabling sustainable emergency volunteering – final project report, Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC.

Cover: Source: NSW SES



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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

WORK PACKAGE 1 – EMERGENCY VOLUNTEERING 2030

I would like to thank the many people that participated in the *Emergency volunteering 2030* study for their willingness and generosity in sharing their experiences, knowledge, and insights. The findings from this study reflect the significant collective wisdom and experience of all these people, without whom the study, and the sharing of this collective knowledge and insight, would not be possible.

I also wish to acknowledge my colleague at RMIT, Dr Tarn Kruger, who was an integral part of the Emergency Volunteering 2030 study research team in the first two years of the project.

WORK PACKAGE 2 – CHANGING MANAGEMENT PRACTICE

Thank you so much to Jennifer Pidgeon, Kathryn White, the Volunteer Association representatives in Western Australia, and the hardworking and considerate emergency services volunteers who took the time to sit with us and share their volunteering stories and experiences. Our research would not have been possible without your help.

This research project has benefited from the generous support of too many people to name here individually. The depth and breadth of support received is testament to the crucial value of volunteering in Australian society and in emergency management. Special acknowledgement is due to the project end-users for their support and input over more than three years. Thanks also go to the many individuals who assisted us with contacting participants, collecting data, reviewing and communicating results, and much more.

We are very grateful for the ongoing financial and research support this project has received from the Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Centre, including for several follow-on utilisation projects that are now in progress.

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, past, present, and emerging.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The *Enabling sustainable emergency volunteering* project was jointly undertaken by researchers at RMIT University, the University of Western Australia, and Curtin University for the Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre (CRC). It was the core project in the CRC's research cluster on Sustainable Volunteering from 2017-2020. The goal of this cluster of projects was to improve the long-term sustainability of the volunteer workforce, and better engage the potential of volunteering to build disaster resilience in Australian communities.

The project comprised two work packages:

- *Work package 1 - Emergency volunteering 2030*, based at RMIT University and led by Dr Blythe McLennan.
- *Work package 2 - Changing management practice*, based at the University of Western Australia and Curtin University, and led by Dr Patrick Dunlop.

CONTEXT

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. At the same time, socioeconomic changes and the changing nature of modern-day volunteering are presenting new challenges and opportunities for volunteer-involving emergency management organisations.

This situation presents significant challenges to current volunteer management practices, particularly in recruitment and retention. It 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.

WORK PACKAGE 1: EMERGENCY VOLUNTEERING 2030

The first work package in this project was a foresight study that systematically examined stakeholder's present-day understandings of potential futures for emergency (also disaster) volunteering and of the forces shaping those futures. Foresight, also called 'strategic foresight', is "the discipline of exploring, anticipating and shaping the future" [28, p.3]. Foresight studies are used to inform and enable strategic decision making and planning despite conditions of uncertainty. The development of multiple, alternative scenarios at a specified point in time is used to bound the terrain of what the future could possibly look like in light of the way major trends and uncertainties are understood at the point in time when the scenarios are built.

The study had three major stages.

- Stage 1 was an Environmental Scan that sought views from 183 stakeholders across the sector about key trends and major sources of



uncertainty impacting on emergency volunteering, the most likely future under current trajectories, what a preferred future would look like, and the central issues that need to be tackled to move towards a preferred future.

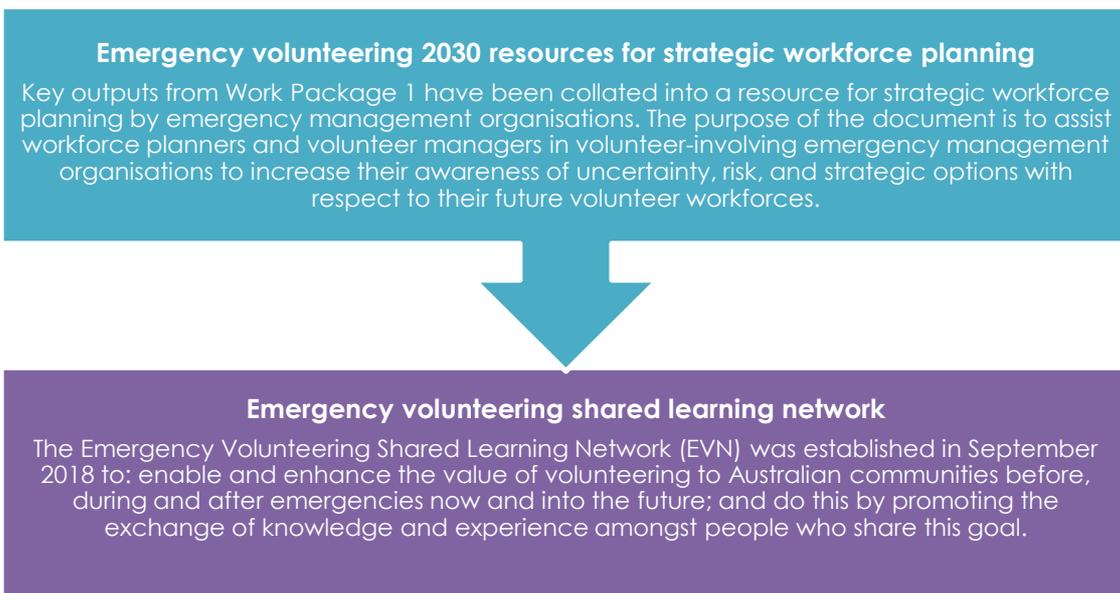
- Stage 2 brought together a panel of 86 experts to review the Environmental Scan results and collectively determine the most critical trends and uncertainties.
- Stage 3 used the Delphi outputs as a guiding framework to develop four alternative future scenarios for disaster volunteering in 2030 based on key areas of uncertainty.

Key research activities and findings

Phase	Key Research Activity	Key Findings
1	Environmental Scan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insights into the ways in which key stakeholder groups currently view the state of play for emergency volunteering, key challenges, and the emerging future for this volunteering. • Identification of drivers of change in the future state of emergency volunteering that are widely agreed across the sector. • Descriptions of how stakeholders collectively see a) the baseline or most expected future state for emergency volunteering, b) the preferred future state, and c) the most widely agreed areas where action or change is needed to enable the sector to move towards a more preferred future
2	Delphi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A catalogue of 47 potentially significant drivers of change in the future state of emergency volunteering by 2030. • Four alternative future scenarios that depict a possible future that could unfold by 2030, including major underlying trends and areas of uncertainty: 'Many hands', 'Techno-proficiency', 'Too many cooks', and 'Falling short'.

Key utilisation outputs

Two main utilisation outputs associated with this work package are:





All documents and tools associated with these activities will be freely available for download at <https://www.bnhcrc.com.au/driving-change/future-workforce>.

WORK PACKAGE 2: CHANGING MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

The second work package sought to understand the reasons for voluntary turnover of new recruits by investigating and mapping the volunteer experience from the first time a person has an interest in joining an EMO, experiences they have whilst applying to join an EMO, experiences during socialisation/onboarding, 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 four inter-related lenses:



Key research activities and findings

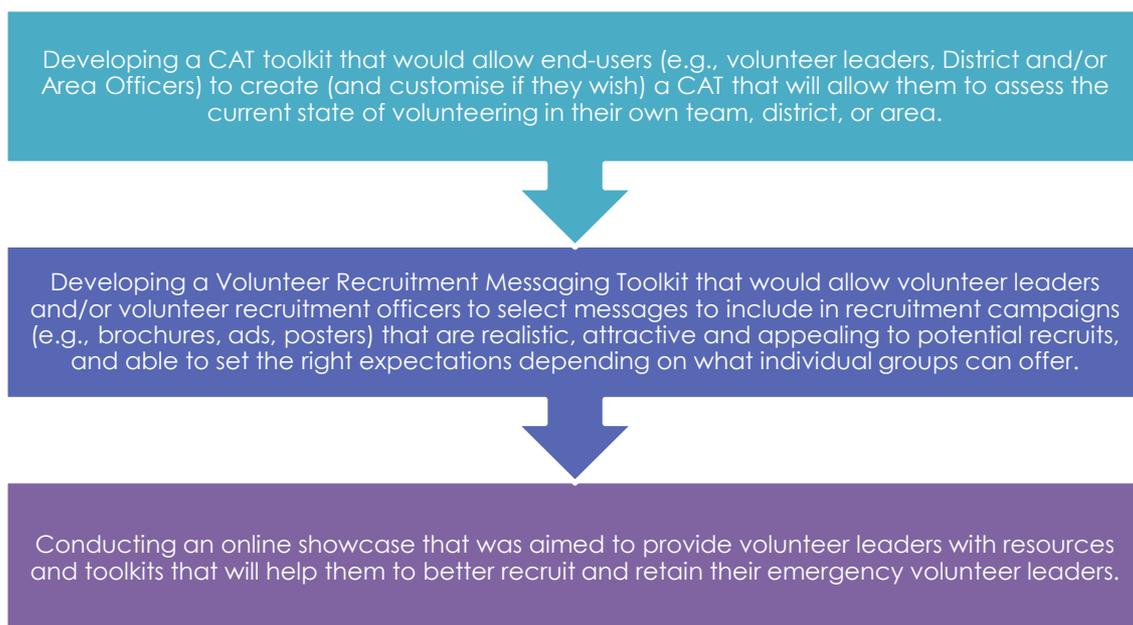
Phase	Key Research Activity	Key Findings
1	Analysis of First Year Volunteer Survey Data from DFES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are 3 distinct profiles of first-year emergency services volunteers: Focused, overenthusiastic, and lost. • Realistic initial volunteer expectations (relative to the actual experiences of volunteering) lead to reduced turnover.
2	Interviews with 70 SES Volunteers and Volunteer Managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitment to community was a key motivator that explained why volunteers continued volunteering. • Through volunteering, volunteers experienced both positive and negative emotional experiences, with various factors contributing to each. • Key recommendations of improvement included: targeting recruitment, managing initial expectations, recognising prior skills, improving flexibility in training, and allowing volunteers the autonomy to design their roles.
3	The Development, Administration, and Analysis of the Cultural Assessment Tool (CAT)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall, the CAT results indicated that volunteers were fairly satisfied in their volunteering experiences in 2019-20, as they were in 2018-19. • Irrespective of volunteers' cultural identity, creating an inclusive climate satisfied the psychological needs (i.e., autonomy, competence, relatedness) of all volunteers, which resulted in better thriving (i.e., volunteers feeling like they are energised and continuously learning). • Key findings also suggested that older volunteer benefited from initiating structure leader behaviours, whereas younger volunteers benefitted from considerate behaviours. • We also identified seven primary reasons as to why volunteers considered leaving (e.g., lack of fit, lack of inclusion), but found that actual turnover was most strongly associated with 'personal commitment and circumstances.'



4	Experimental Evaluation of Volunteer Recruitment Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To improve recruitment messaging, 109 quotes and 40 photos of SES volunteers in operational and non-operational scenarios were tested for their accuracy and attractiveness, for which 61 quotes and 28 pictures were rated as such by 112 current SES volunteers and 453 community members (i.e., potential volunteers). Our experimental evaluation of volunteer recruitment practices also revealed that it is the experience given on the first day, not the initial expectation created through recruitment materials, that matters most for volunteer retention.
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Key utilisation outputs

Altogether, we developed three key utilisation outputs, which involved:



All documents and tools associated with these activities will be freely available for download at <https://www.bnhcrc.com.au/driving-change/future-workforce>.

NEXT STEPS

The *Enabling sustainable emergency volunteering* project has given rise to several follow-on utilisation activities that are underway or set to begin in early 2021:

- Workforce 2030** (July 2020- June 2021) is developing a synthesised research report that provides a complete, high level picture of the state of current research on emerging workforce challenges and opportunities likely to face emergency service organisations over the coming decade.
- Scoping a volunteer sustainability blueprint** (Feb – June 2021) will conduct a scoping consultation with key stakeholders in the sector about a national volunteer sustainability blueprint and develop an agreed plan for next steps.



- **Further development of the SES recruitment messaging toolkit** (Jan – June 2021) to expand the usability of the tool to fire services and the SES in other jurisdictions.
- **Development of an online training package for emergency volunteer managers** (Feb 2021- June 2021) that will provide volunteer leaders with tools and resources for recruiting, onboarding, and managing emergency volunteers.

GLOSSARY

Community resilience	The National Strategy for Disaster Resilience [1, p.5] describes characteristics of disaster resilient communities, individuals and organisations as: “functioning well while under stress; successful adaptation; self-reliance; and social capacity”.
Community sector	“those organisations that are not for profit, rely on high levels of volunteerism, and broadly respond to welfare needs. [...] They comprise small informal community groups through to large incorporated organisations [2].
Emergency management organisations (EMOs)	Government and non-for-profit organisations with recognised roles in formal emergency management and recovery plans. It includes emergency response organisations, local governments and not-for-profit, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) involved across preparedness, response, relief, and recovery.
Emergency management volunteers	Formal, accredited volunteers affiliated with any emergency management organisation (EMO) usually in ongoing, high-commitment roles (includes emergency response volunteers).
Emergency service/response organisations	Organisations with primary responsibility for delivering emergency response services, including fire, SES, ambulance, life saving, coast guard and marine rescue. In Australia, most are public sector organisations.
Emergency service/response volunteers	Formal volunteers affiliated with primary emergency response organisations.
Emergency/disaster volunteering	All volunteering that supports communities before, during or after emergency and disaster events, irrespective of its duration and type of organisational affiliation, or lack thereof.
Emergent groups	New groups that form in response to a disaster event, usually informal in structure and often involve informal volunteering [3]. Increasingly digitally enabled [4].
Emergent volunteering	Volunteering in response to a disaster event, usually informal in nature (see also ‘spontaneous volunteering’).
Formal volunteering	“Time willingly given for the common good and without financial gain, taking place within organisations (including institutions and agencies) in a structured way” [5].
Informal volunteering	“Time willingly given for the common good and without financial gain, taking place outside the context of a formal organisation” [5].
Spontaneous volunteering	“people who offer assistance following a disaster and who are not previously affiliated with recognised volunteer agencies and may or may not have relevant training, skills or experience.”[6] (See also ‘emergent volunteering’)
Volunteer Involving Organisations	“Any organisation that engages volunteers may be known as a Volunteer Involving Organisation (VIO)” [5].
Volunteering	“Any activity in which time is given freely to benefit another person, group or organisation” [7]. “Time willingly given for the common good and without financial gain” [5].



END-USER PROJECT IMPACT STATEMENT

Trina Schmidt, *Executive Director – People & Strategy, NSW RFS, Chair – AFAC Volunteer Management Technical Group (VMTG)*

Sandra Lunardi OAM, *Director, Industry Workforce Management, AFAC*

Catriona Freeman, *Senior Coordinator, Emergency Management Professionalisation Scheme and Volunteers, AFAC VMTG*

Enabling sustainable emergency volunteering is an important research project for the AFAC Volunteer Management Technical Group (VMTG). It has investigated key aspects of volunteering and volunteer management that are core areas of activity for VMTG members. The VMTG has been pleased to have a close relationship with the research team throughout this project, with multiple presentations of research at group meetings and opportunities to inform various stages of research. The researchers have engaged frequently with AFAC members, both through the VMTG and individually. They have always been available to help members ensure that their planning and design of programs are well informed by the latest research. The research outputs have provided members with evidence and knowledge to inform strategic planning activities as well as the design of recruitment and engagement practices.

Most recently, AFAC through the VMTG has partnered with Blythe at RMIT to undertake a utilisation project, funded by the BNH CRC and due to end in July 2021. The project is gauging the level of stakeholder support for developing a National Volunteer Sustainability Blueprint for the emergency management sector. It involves a scoping consultation informed by a discussion paper heavily based on key findings from one of the work packages in the project -Emergency volunteering 2030: adapting the sector. This initiative is an outcome of a VMTG workshop on volunteer sustainability that Blythe facilitated for the members. The VMTG sees a huge benefit in developing a blueprint that can provide strategic guidance for national-level and collaborative actions to tackle big picture volunteering issues in the sector. This consultation is a first step towards what we hope will be stronger support for strategic and collaborative approaches to support volunteer sustainability.



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

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 have given us an evidence base to guide and support decisions regarding the recruitment and retention of volunteers. We have appreciated and have actively implemented the work that has come to date.



PRODUCT USER TESTIMONIALS

Kate White, *Senior Coordinator Volunteer Capability and Sustainability, Department of Fire and Emergency Services*

The research undertaken by the team at Curtin University has provided DFES with a deep understanding of our emergency services volunteer cohort and the foundation for the development of essential resources.

The credibility that arises from the research and the in-depth analysis of the issues and circumstances being experienced by volunteers is critical for us when working with volunteer teams and staff who work with them. It enables us to provide meaningful evidence-based information to support the embedding of good volunteer recruitment and retention practices and has also formed the basis of complementary bespoke resources, that use real life, local examples of good practice and success stories other volunteers and staff can follow.

The benefit of the research and the knowledge it has provided us as end-users cannot be overstated and it continues to inform day-to-day and strategic decisions.



INTRODUCTION

The *Enabling sustainable emergency volunteering* project was jointly undertaken by researchers at RMIT University, the University of Western Australia, and Curtin University for the Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre (CRC). It is the only core project in the CRC's research cluster on Sustainable Volunteering that is in active research phase. The goal of this cluster was to improve the long-term sustainability of the volunteer workforce, and better engage the potential of volunteering to build disaster resilience in Australian communities.¹

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

- **Work package 1, Emergency volunteering 2030 - Adapting the sector**, was based at RMIT University. It aimed 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.
- **Work package 2, Changing management practices**, was based at the University of Western Australia and Curtin University. It aimed to support 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.

The project complemented other active CRC 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 drew from work in two completed projects: the Bushfire CRC *Volunteerism* project (2003-2010) undertaken by researchers at La Trobe University [8] and the Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC *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 [9, 10].

This Final Report communicates the key activities and achievements of the *Enabling sustainable emergency volunteering* project in its entirety from July 2017, up to March 2021. It also describes a range of follow-on utilisation activities being undertaken from July 2020 to June 2021.

¹ See <https://www.bnhcrc.com.au/research/cluster/sustainable-volunteering>

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



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 [1]. It is also evident in the United Nation's Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction that calls on Nations to encourage "Civil society, volunteers, organised voluntary work organisations and community based organisations to", amongst other things, "advocate for resilient communities and an inclusive and all-of-society disaster risk management that strengthen synergies across groups" [11, p.23].

At the same time, the landscape of emergency and disaster volunteering is transforming [12]. 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 [13]. 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 [14].

This situation presents significant challenges to current volunteer management practices, particularly in recruitment and retention [8]. 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" [15, 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 [16]. 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 [17, 18] 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, the WA 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 [19]. 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. 20, 21].

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 [22]. 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 16, 23, 24-27]. 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 [12, 14, 22].



RESEARCH APPROACH

WORK PACKAGE 1: EMERGENCY VOLUNTEERING 2030

The first work package in this project was a foresight study that systematically examined stakeholder's present-day understandings of potential futures for emergency (also disaster) volunteering and of the forces shaping those futures. For this study, emergency volunteering refers to any and all volunteering that supports communities before, during or after emergency and disaster events, irrespective of duration and organisational affiliation, or lack thereof. This includes formal volunteering with emergency response organisations and recovery NGOs, as well as wider community sector volunteering and informal, emergent and spontaneous volunteering³.

Foresight, also called 'strategic foresight', is "the discipline of exploring, anticipating and shaping the future" [28, p.3]. Foresight studies are used to inform and enable strategic decision making and planning despite conditions of uncertainty. As Riddell et al. (2020, p.2) 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.

Foresight studies use many and varied methods to generate insights about the future. However, two common, shared features are horizon scanning and scenario development. Horizon scanning is "the systematic examination of potential threats, opportunities, and likely future developments which are at the margins of current thinking and planning. Horizon scanning may explore novel and unexpected issues, as well as persistent problems or trends" [DEFRA 2002, cited in 29, p.55].

The development of multiple, alternative scenarios at a specified point in time is used to bound the terrain of what the future could possibly look like in light of the way major trends and uncertainties are understood at the point when the scenarios are built (see Figure 1, over page).

³ See Glossary for definitions of key terms and labels used in this report.

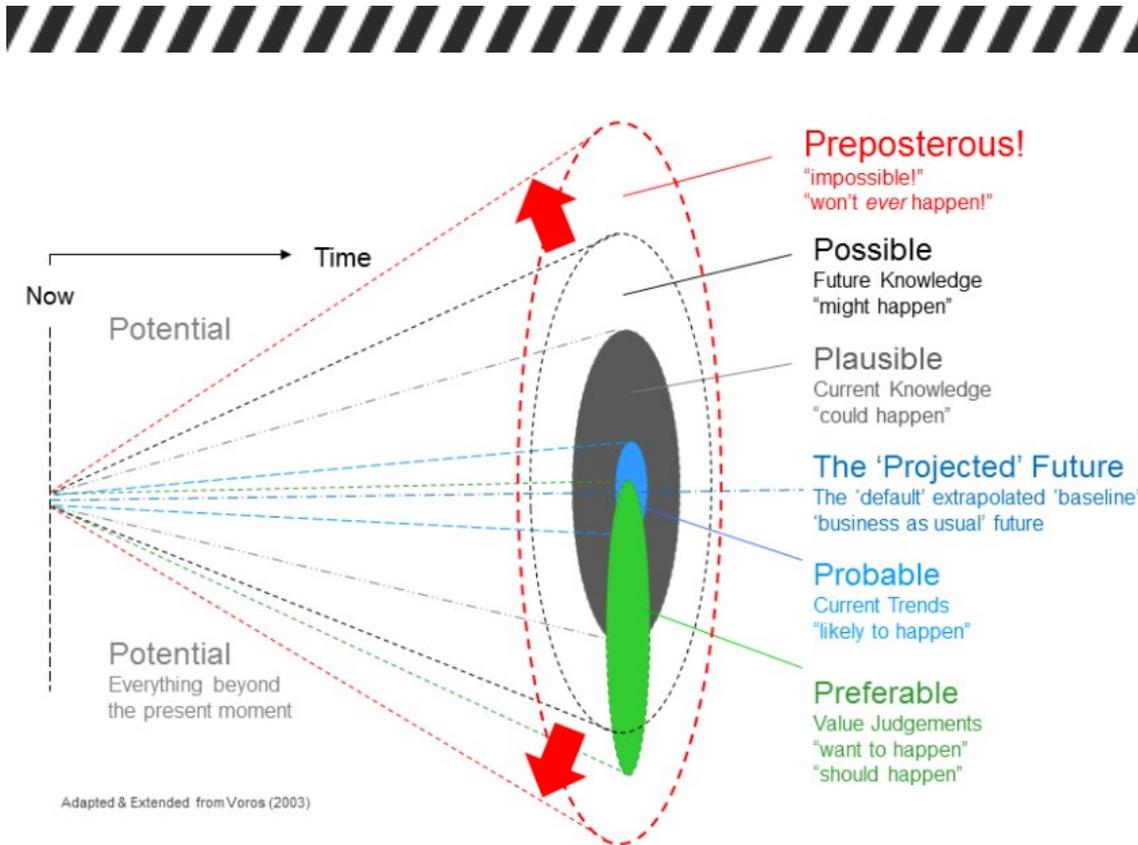


FIGURE 1: THE FUTURES CONE. SOURCE: [HTTPS://THEVOROSCOPE.COM/2017/02/24/THE-FUTURES-CONE-USE-AND-HISTORY/](https://thevoroscope.com/2017/02/24/the-futures-cone-use-and-history/).

The *Emergency volunteering 2030* study adopted a qualitative, exploratory approach. While foresight approaches can be quantitative, qualitative or a combination of both, a qualitative approach was used because it enabled the researcher to elicit the knowledge, perceptions and opinions of stakeholders in order to embed these within the resulting scenarios. Embedding stakeholder views into the process is recognised as a key way to improve the policy relevance of foresight studies [30, 31] The study developed exploratory scenarios, which are “explorations of what might happen in the future [...] based on identifying critical uncertainty factors and on different expectations of technical and/or policy developments over the near- to medium term” [30, p. 3].

The study had three major stages (see Appendix 1).

- Stage 1 was an Environmental Scan that encompassed horizon scanning.
- Stage 2 brought together a panel of experts to review the Environmental Scan results and collectively determine the most critical trends and uncertainties.
- Stage 3 used the outputs as a guiding framework to develop four alternative future scenarios for disaster volunteering in 2030.

The study was approved and overseen by the RMIT University Human Ethics Advisory Network (project number CHEAN B 21057-08/17).

Stage 1: Environmental scan

The Environmental Scan involved posing the same set of broad, open-ended questions to participants from seven representative groups in interviews and via



a qualitative (open ended questions) questionnaire (see Table 1). It sought current stakeholder views about key trends and major sources of uncertainty impacting on emergency volunteering, the most likely future under current trajectories (based on present day knowledge and assumptions), what a preferred future would look like, and the central issues that need to be tackled to move towards a preferred future.

Representative groups	Recruitment method	Interviews	Questionnaire	Total
Emergency services – workforce management	Direct individual invitation	18	-	18
Emergency service volunteers	Direct individual invitation / Indirect group invitation	1	71	72
Emergency services - community engagement	Direct individual invitation	6	-	6
Not-for-profit recovery	Direct individual invitation	16	-	16
Wider community sector	Indirect group invitation	2	46	48
Local government	Direct individual invitation	17	-	17
Volunteering peak bodies	Direct group invitation	6 (group)	-	6
Total		66	117	183

TABLE 1: ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN PARTICIPANTS AND DATA COLLECTION METHODS OVERVIEW.

Interviews were used predominantly at the initial, exploratory stage of data collection. Questionnaires were used in the later stage to search for contrasting or divergent views among additional stakeholder groups. They were also chosen over interviews with two particularly diverse representative groups to increase the number of participants – emergency service volunteers and wider community sector representatives.

Data was analysed separately for the main representative groups [32-35]. It was also synthesised into a combined picture [36].

Stage 2: Delphi

The results of the Environmental Scan were used to prepare a list of 50 potential drivers of change in emergency volunteering. It was then presented to a panel of experts to review in two rounds of questionnaires using the Delphi technique. This is a method for conducting a structured, group communication process to address a complex problem [37, 38]. Key qualities of a Delphi are anonymity, iteration through a series of moderated feedback 'rounds', and the participation of experts [37]. It is commonly used in foresight studies to engage the input of experts, especially when a wide range of different forms of expertise and points of view are relevant.

More information about the conduct of the Delphi is available in McLennan [39]. It involved 86 participants with various relevant backgrounds from across research, the emergency management sector, and the community and voluntary sector (see Table 2). 82 people participated in Round 1 and 66 in Round 2. Panel members were invited to participate due to their practical and/or subject matter expertise in key areas of emergency volunteering or in areas identified in the Environmental Scan as likely to impact on disaster volunteering.



Representative category	Round 1 only	Round 2 only	Rounds 1 & 2	Total
Research institution or university	4	1	24	29
Emergency service volunteer representative group	3	1	12	16
Emergency service organisation	5	1	10	16
Disaster welfare, relief or recovery organisation	2	0	4	6
Other emergency management sector organisation	2	1	4	7
Other community service organisation	1	0	3	4
Local government	1	0	2	3
Volunteering support service or peak body	1	0	2	3
N/A - participated as an individual	1	0	1	2
Total	20	4	62	86

TABLE 2: DELPHI PANEL OVERVIEW BY REPRESENTATIVE CATEGORY (NB: SOME PEOPLE HAVE MULTIPLE AFFILIATIONS BUT ARE ALLOCATED TO ONE PRIMARY AFFILIATION).

In Round 1, the panel rated the importance and certainty of the 50 potential drivers of change compiled from the Environmental Scan. Of the 82 participants, 67 people chose to rate drivers of change in volunteering practice and volunteer management, 41 chose to rate drivers of change in the emergency management sector, and 42 chose to rate drivers of change in the external environment outside of the sector. Of the 67 people that rated drivers of change in volunteering practice and volunteer management, 38 indicated they were referring to emergency service volunteering and 29 to a form of community sector volunteering or volunteering in general. Participants were encouraged to provide qualitative comments to explain their ratings. The results were organised into a provisional list of important and somewhat important trends, important and somewhat important uncertainties, and areas of high disagreement.

In Round 2, panel members reviewed and commented on the provisional ratings and qualitative comments from Round 1. They then selected a shortlist of up to ten each of the most important trends and most important uncertainties before weighting items from their shortlists according to their relative importance by scoring them between 0-100.

Following Round 2, the provisional Round 1 rating results were reviewed by the researcher and revised to best represent panel input across the two rounds. Results were also broken down by representative group and type of volunteering referred to, to determine if the ratings applied equally to all emergency volunteering, or to one of emergency service or community sector volunteering.

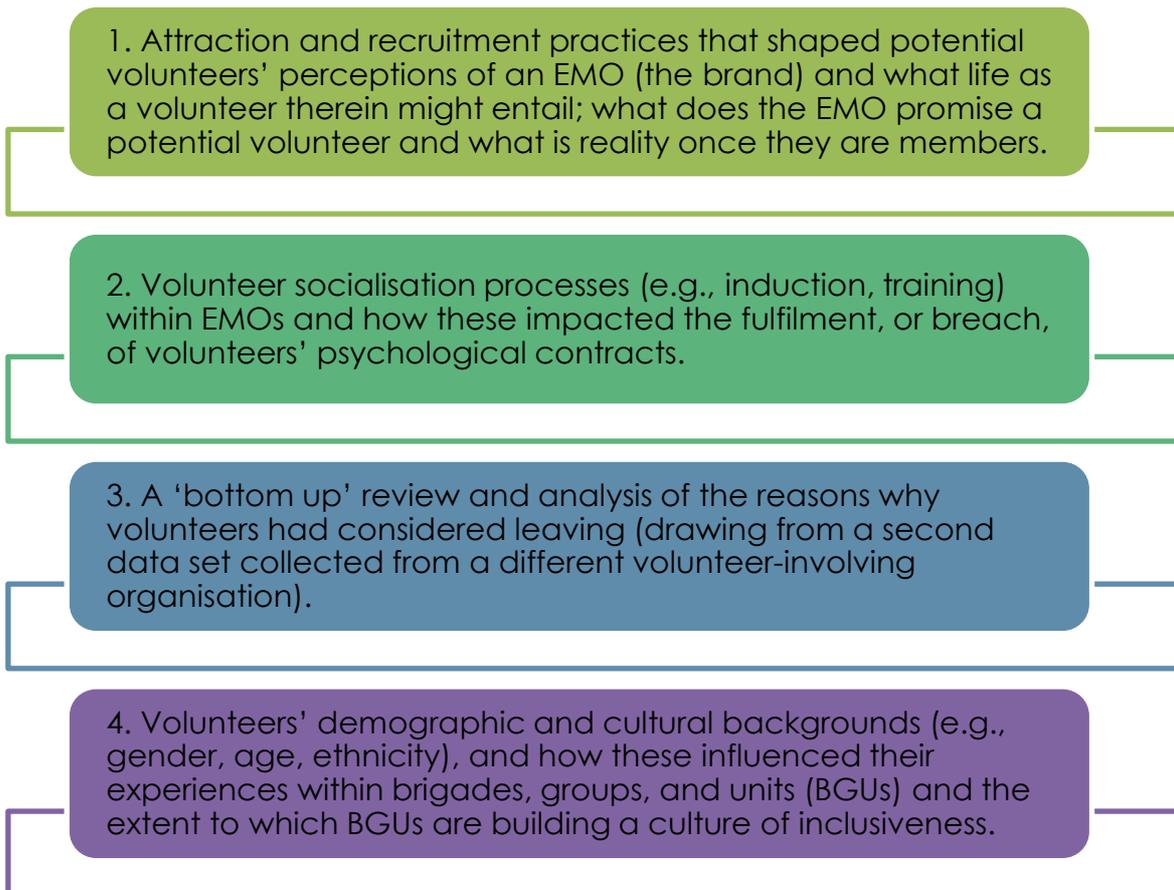
Stage 3: Scenario development

Scenarios were developed for the Delphi results in two steps. First, the weighting results from Round 2 were consulted to determine which of the rated trends and uncertainties were deemed the most critical by the panel.

In the second step in this stage, the three major areas of uncertainty identified from the Delphi were therefore used as the primary variables (i.e., 'scenario drivers') structuring a set of four alternative futures for emergency volunteering that reflected the scope of what stakeholders currently see as possible by 2030.

WORK PACKAGE 2: CHANGING MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

The second work package sought to understand the reasons for voluntary turnover of new recruits by investigating and mapping the volunteer experience from the first time a person has an interest in joining an EMO, experiences they have whilst applying to join an EMO, experiences during socialisation / onboarding, 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 four inter-related lenses:



The diagram in Appendix 2 schematically displays the research that was proposed in this work package. This diagram distinguishes four research phases.

Phase 1: Analysis of First Year Volunteer Survey Data from DFES

Upon commencement of the project in 2017, an opportunity to engage with the existing volunteer data collected by the Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES) was identified in collaboration with DFES volunteer managers. The survey was distributed in 2015-2017 to all new DFES volunteers after approximately 12 months of joining the service. In total, 539 valid responses were received. These responses represented all volunteer emergency services under DFES, including Bushfire Service, State Emergency Service (SES), Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service, and so on. The aim of the analyses was to identify the expectation profiles of first-year emergency services volunteers and examine how these relate



to their intentions to remain with a service. A psychological contract perspective was applied in analysing the data.

Phase 2: Interviews with 70 SES volunteers and volunteer managers

The second research phase conducted in the first year of this project was the undertaking, analysing, and reporting on semi-structured interviews with SES volunteers in Western Australia (WA). Overall, 70 volunteers and unit managers from 17 different units were interviewed. Ten of these were located in the regional or remote area of WA (59%) with volunteers from 9 out of 12 regions interviewed. Twenty-five interviewees were female (36%), which is representative of the proportion of female volunteers in WA SES overall (37%).

The interviews were a major component of the research project and served as an input into the design of the CAT that will be discussed in Phase 3 of this section of the report. The purpose of the interviews was to examine volunteers' personal experiences with the service and views on the current recruitment and retention practices being conducted within their unit. An overview of interview topics and questions is provided in the table below.

Interview section	Sample question(s)
Background	What is your current role with the SES? When did you join? How long have you been with the service? Have you had other roles in the service?
Recruitment	What attracted you to become an SES volunteer?
Induction and training	What was your first day with the SES like? What happened?
Expectations	What did you expect as an SES volunteer, when you joined? How would you describe an 'ideal' SES volunteer? What does it take to be an SES volunteer?
Emotional experiences	What was the most exciting experience you had as an SES volunteer? How did you feel?
Wellbeing	What do you enjoy about volunteering with the SES? What makes you happy?
Retention	How long do you intend to volunteer with SES? Why do you think some people leave the SES?
Unit characteristics	Do you feel included in your unit? Does your unit have strong relationships with other parties: community, local government, DFES, others?

Phase 3: Development, administration and analysis of the Cultural Assessment Tool (CAT)

Phase 3 comprised of the development, administration, and analysis of the Cultural Assessment Tool (CAT). The CAT is a structured questionnaire that includes validated research scales that were used to measure constructs related to volunteer expectations, identity, wellbeing, psychological safety, and so on. A number of open-ended questions were also included. The list of constructs and a brief explanation for each of them are presented in the table below.



The content of the CAT was informed through extensive review of the academic and applied literature, and through consultation with the qualitative information collected from interviewing volunteers and managers throughout the key agency partner in the previous phase. The CAT was used initially by the research team to quantify the baseline standing of climates across urban, rural, and remote BGUs, as well as to identify where changes have occurred. Thus, the content of the CAT was driven by a combination of the researchers' needs and the interests of the EMOs. The CAT focused solely on SES volunteers in WA and contained questions intended to obtain information on how to improve volunteer recruitment, retention, wellbeing, and diversity within the overall SES volunteering journey.

Construct	Description
Met expectations	To what extent volunteer expectations of the role were met
Needs-supplies fit	To what extent volunteers' needs are fulfilled by their volunteering role (are they getting what they need?)
Reasons to join	What are the reasons that motivated volunteers to join the service?
Reasons to remain	What are the reasons that motivate volunteers to continue with the service? How are these different from reasons to join?
Volunteer identity	To what extent volunteers identify with their role
Demands- Abilities Fit	To what extent volunteers' perceived abilities meet the role's demands (are they able to perform and does performing well draw from their abilities?)
Needs satisfaction	To what extent the volunteering role satisfied individuals' basic psychological needs of autonomy, competency, and relatedness
Job satisfaction	To what extent volunteers are satisfied with their role as a whole
Thriving	Learning and vitality in a volunteering role
Psychological safety	To what extent do volunteers perceive their unit to have a safe climate for communication (e.g., raising concerns)
Climate for inclusiveness	To what extent the unit encourages diversity in opinions and problem-solving
Identification with a unit	To what extent volunteers identify with their unit
Unit manager behaviours	To what extent unit managers demonstrate task- and relationship-orientated behaviours in everyday situations vs. during call-outs
Identification with organisation	To what extent volunteers identify with their organisation (i.e., DFES)
Intention to remain	How long volunteers plan to stay with their unit/organisation
Demographics	Age, gender, location, etc.

After piloting the survey and receiving feedback, the CAT was finalised and launched at the Western Australian Fire and Emergency Services (WAFES) 2018 conference. In collaboration with DFES, communication was sent out to all SES volunteers in WA via a volunteer newsletter, a personalised e-mail campaign,



and through Facebook. This survey was also endorsed by the SES Volunteer Association in WA.

The survey stayed open from the end of August 2018 till February 2019. Within that time, the survey was attempted by over 500 volunteers. However, due to incompleteness, a total of 398 volunteers completed the survey, with a response rate of about 21% across WA, which was considered a massive accomplishment for the team. Volunteers from the majority of the SES units (53 out of 66) participated, thus providing a fair representation from metropolitan, regional, and remote units.

After the findings from the CAT were discussed with the end-users, the CAT was refined and adjusted accordingly for one more trial. The second CAT was administered from September 2019 to February 2020 and was completed by 226 volunteers (response rate of about 11% across WA). The key aims of the second CAT was to assess the current state of volunteering within the SES in the years of 2019 and 2020, and track changes in the SES volunteering experience over the last 12 months. Using the first CAT as the baseline for comparison, the findings across the 2 CATS were compared and used to investigate which areas of the SES volunteering experience have remained the same, improved from the previous year, or have room for improvement. Both reports for the first and second CAT can be found in the 'Publications' section on our project page here: <https://www.bnhcrc.com.au/research/resilience-hazards/3533>

After finalising the second CAT, a CAT toolkit was designed and is now freely available to EMOs. The CAT toolkit is designed to allow end-users (e.g., volunteer managers, District Officers) to create (and customise if they wish) a CAT of their own to assess the volunteering experiences within their own team, district, or area. The toolkit contains instructions on how to reproduce the CAT faithfully, and an Excel workbook that can interpret and automatically score 'raw' data from a CAT that is administered by the end-user. The CAT formed the 'backbone' for the other streams of this work package as it was used to take snapshots of the cultures within the BGUs, both before and after new interventions were implemented.

The results from the CAT have also informed the development of three manuscripts:

1. One focused on the relationship between a culture of inclusiveness and how it affects volunteer thriving through the satisfaction of volunteers' psychological needs (i.e., autonomy, competence, relatedness). This paper also examined how these relationships affect volunteers of different nationalities. That paper was submitted to AFAC 2020 but was not presented due to the cancellation of the conference. It will be submitted to a peer-review journal.
2. The second manuscript focused on leader behaviour within the BGUs and identifies the difference between younger and older volunteers in how they react to leaders' initiating structure and individual consideration behaviours. That paper was submitted for peer-review.

A third manuscript focused on a single question from the CAT that asked volunteers to indicate whether there was a time they considered leaving the



service, and if so, what the reasons were. We combined all the responses to that question with responses to a similar question from participants in another volunteer organisation and undertaken a qualitative analysis of both sets of data.

Phase 4: Experimental evaluation of volunteer recruitment practices

In the fourth phase, researchers conducted an experimental evaluation of volunteer recruitment practices. In this phase of the research, we built from the findings of the DFES first-year survey (Phase 1) to design a series of studies that aimed to provide an evidence base for messaging during volunteer recruitment. As noted above, the first-year survey analysis identified volunteer expectations as a potential source of engagement and withdrawal, and thus this part of the research was framed within the lens of the met expectations hypothesis. The met expectations hypothesis sits within the broader psychological contract theory and pertains to the correspondence between a volunteer's expectations pre-entry and their experiences post-entry. In broad terms, the goal of this phase was to build a bank of messages (i.e., short testimonials from volunteers, or photographs of volunteers in action) that were accurate in representing the volunteering experience, likely to appeal to non-volunteers, whilst being able to ascertain what expectations those messages were setting.

Prior to any experimentation, volunteers were surveyed on their experiences with current recruitment materials and strategies at our partner organisation, DFES. We then compared the interview results and the volunteer recruitment materials and strategies to scientific and grey literature to identify points for improvement. The CAT (described in the previous stream) assisted in this evaluation. Following the development of new recruiting materials, the research team conducted experimentation with potential recruitment materials in two stages.

Stage 1: Developing and testing recruitment messages for accuracy and attractiveness

The first stage involved gathering a collection of messages that could feasibly form part of a recruitment campaign. To that end, we consulted the transcribed responses to the interviews from Phase 2, and sought to identify quotes from volunteers that described reasons to become a volunteer or remain a volunteer with the SES, and other stories that were strikingly positive. We also received a set of photographs from DFES of SES volunteers in operational and non-operational scenarios. The quotes and photos were then reviewed via an online questionnaire by a panel of 112 SES volunteers who rated each message in terms of its accuracy (i.e., how realistic it was) and attractiveness. We also asked a set of 453 community members from rural, regional, and metropolitan Australia to review the messages, rate their attractiveness, and identify the expectations the messages had set.

Altogether, data we collected through these two samples were analysed, and a pool of attractive but realistic messages were identified, along with an estimate of the expectations these messages would set among non-volunteers about the likely volunteer experience at the SES. That information has now been consolidated into a draft form of the "Volunteer Recruitment Messaging Toolkit" which is a tool designed for SES group leaders to identify suitable recruitment



messages. An extended version of this tool, which will include messages appropriate for Fire services volunteers, will be developed as part of a utilisation project (see the *Utilisation and Impact* section of this report for more information).

Stage 2: Testing recruitment materials using the met expectations hypothesis

In the second stage of this research, we undertook an experimental test of the met expectations hypothesis in the volunteer recruitment context using a subset of the messages. In this study, we used a randomised experimental design with 1627 Australian participants, to examine:

- a. How volunteer recruitment posters can set expectations about the volunteer experience,
- b. How a volunteer's 'first day on the job' experience can affect satisfaction and the intention to return, and
- c. How the correspondence between expectations and experiences can shape the willingness to return.

In this experiment, we also asked participants whether they would like to receive information about joining the SES (i.e., joining outside of the experimental context), and over 300 expressed an interest, suggesting that to an extent, the materials were influential in attracting potential recruits. The key findings of this experiment, as well as the research conducted in other project phases, will be discussed in the section after next.



KEY MILESTONES

		EMERGENCY VOLUNTERING 2030	CHANGING MANAGEMENT PRACTICE
YEAR 1	Sep 2017	Project set up and ethics approval	Project set up and ethics approval
	Dec 2017	Data collection begun	Data collection begun
	Mar 2018		
	June 2018	Journal manuscript – Volunteer co-production	Interviews completed Cultural Assessment Tool (CAT) developed
YEAR 2	Sep 2018	Interviews completed	Cultural Assessment Tool (CAT) launched
	Dec 2018	Environmental scan report – Local Government	Journal article – First year volunteer profiles
	Mar 2019	Environmental scan report – Volunteerism Workforce Managers Qualitative surveys completed	1 st CAT survey completed Online workshop – Effective on-boarding of new recruits Volunteer recruitment materials developed and tested
			Journal manuscript – Australian volunteering research
	Jun 2019		
YEAR 3	Sep 2019	Environmental scan report – Community Sector	Report - Analysis of the results from the 1 st CAT Toolkit – Developed recruitment messaging toolkit Developed and launched the 2 nd CAT
	Dec 2019	Delphi completed	
		Journal manuscript – Environmental scan prelim results	
	Mar 2020		
	Jun 2020	Environmental scan report – Emergency Service Volunteers Environmental scan report - Synthesis	Journal manuscript - Inclusion, gender, and age Report - Integrated findings from 1st and 2nd CAT surveys
YEAR 4	Sep 2020	Book chapter - Community participation and volunteering	
	Dec 2020	Journal manuscript – Scenarios for disaster volunteering * Resource for workforce planning * Joint final project report	Online showcase – Volunteer Management Resources Toolkit – Final CAT and User Instructions Report – Effective onboarding of volunteers * Journal article – Effects of COVID-19 on volunteering * Journal manuscript – Leadership and age * Journal manuscript – Volunteers’ reasons for turnover * Journal manuscript – Volunteer recruitment * Joint final project report

* These milestones were submitted in following quarter due to COVID-19 impacts.



KEY FINDINGS

WORK PACKAGE 1: EMERGENCY VOLUNTEERING 2030

Environmental Scan

A first key finding from the Environmental Scan was **insights into the ways in which key stakeholder groups current view the state of play for emergency volunteering, key challenges, and the emerging future for this volunteering**. A series of reports documents these views for: Emergency managed organisations volunteerism managers [e.g. managers in volunteer workforce strategy and development for emergency response agencies and recovery NGOs, see 32], Emergency response volunteer representatives [35], local government managers [33], wider community sector representatives [34]. Views from community engagement managers with emergency response organisations and volunteering peak body representatives are also included in a summary of overview stakeholder views [36].

A second key finding from the Environmental Scan was the **identification of drivers of change in the future state of emergency volunteering that are widely agreed across the sector** [36]. As these drivers were subsequently revised in the Delphi, they are not reported here.

Additional key findings were **descriptions of how stakeholders collectively see a) the baseline or most expected future state for emergency volunteering, b) the preferred future state, and c) the most widely agreed areas where action or change is needed to enable the sector to move towards a more preferred future**.

Baseline future

The baseline, or projected, future in 2030 is the scenario expected to unfold if current trends continue predictably over the next ten years [40]. However, the baseline future is not likely to eventuate completely intact as something almost always intervenes to change the trajectory of one trend or another such that the actual future turns out looking somewhat different. Understanding the baseline future is important, however, as a place to begin thinking about the future. It represents a 'surprise-free default future' [40, p.37], and can show how closely (or not) current trends, interventions etcetera are tracking towards a more preferred future.

Representatives' collective views of a baseline future for emergency volunteering were not overly optimistic (see Table 3). Many people described a future in which challenges to formal volunteer sustainability have intensified further. However, views of how severely these trends will impact volunteering by 2030 did vary, largely due to differences in people's expectations and assumptions about how well the emergency management sector and organisations will adapt and respond.

Summary of baseline future descriptions

DOMINANT PICTURE

- Ongoing decline in numbers of formal response volunteers, greater competition for volunteer time, further ageing of volunteers, growing levels of volunteer fatigue and burnout. Declines in the levels of emergency response service for communities as a result.
- More paid roles in emergency management, inflated costs for governments and communities.
- Community sector organisations and local governments struggling with low volunteer numbers and low capacity to support communities, leading to declines in services.
- Complications for volunteering and community resilience from risk averse regulation, professionalisation and corporatisation have not been resolved.
- A widening gap exists between the values, goals and priorities held by response volunteers and those held by response EMOs.
- More people choose to assist communities outside of traditional volunteer-involving organisations across preparedness, response and relief/recovery.
- Informal, spontaneous, and emergent styles of volunteering are poorly integrated with the formal emergency management system, with possible negative outcomes for volunteers and communities.
- Impacts of climate change have intensified, leading to greater need for volunteers to respond, formally and informally, to more severe and longer hazard events, further increasing volunteer fatigue and burnout as a result.
- Community expectations of emergency management organisations, volunteers, and government have grown further.

Many of the above effects are expected to be greater in rural communities.

ALTERNATIVE PICTURES

- Formal response volunteering will continue to provide effective services for communities.
- Positive impacts have accrued from some of the emerging trends in the volunteering landscape, e.g. social media, youth engagement, volunteer empowerment, ageing population.

TABLE 3: SUMMARY OF BASELINE FUTURE DESCRIPTIONS [MORE CONTEXT REGARDING DIFFERENCES IN VIEWS IS AVAILABLE IN 36].

Preferred future

A preferred future is an image of a potential future scenario that creates “an attractive mental picture of an outcome that people can strive for” [40, p.45].

Not everyone consulted in the Environmental Scan was able to see a clear picture of a preferred future for emergency volunteering. However, almost all representatives expressed that the future needs to look different from the present.

The images of a preferred future for emergency volunteering depicted by the seven representative groups contained some differences in substance and emphasis. When overlapped, however, these images are highly complementary with no major areas of conflict or contradiction.

Sitting at the centre of a preferred future is **sustainable, and impactful volunteering that provides positive outcomes for communities across preparedness, response, relief and recovery**. Seven core elements were also described as underpinning this (see Figure 1).

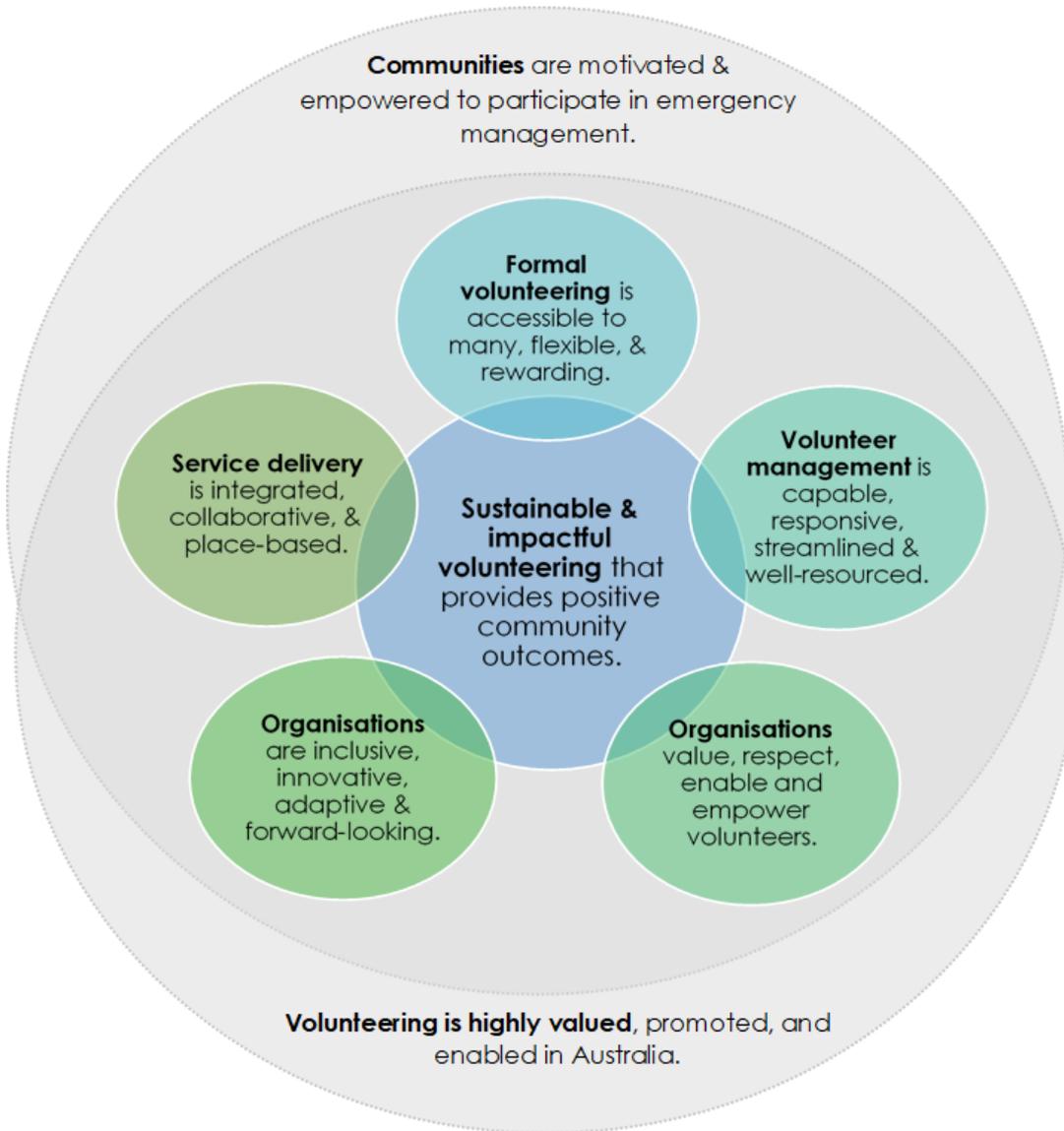


FIGURE 1: COMBINE PICTURE OF A PREFERRED FUTURE STATE OF EMERGENCY VOLUNTEERING IN AUSTRALIA.

Key action areas

Representatives were asked what most needs to happen to move the sector towards a preferred future for emergency volunteering. Many areas of action and change were described. When brought together, they coalesced into seven 'big picture' issues that most need to be tackled given current understandings of trends and challenges in the landscape (see Table 4). These are broad issues with sector-wide significance. They align with the seven major elements that featured in people's descriptions of a preferred future.

Clearly, these issues manifest differently and with varying importance and salience across diverse jurisdictions, geographies, communities, organisations and services around Australia. More information on specific actions identified by stakeholders under these categories is available in the Environmental Scan synthesis report [36].



These issues are well known to many within the emergency management sector. For some of them, there has been considerable, although not yet sufficient, action seeking to address them. By emphasising the importance given to these areas amongst stakeholders, the Environmental Scan outputs can provide extra weight to proposals for change put forward by change agents within the emergency management sector who seek to mobilise action in these areas.

Delphi

Drivers of change catalogue

A key output from the Delphi is a list of 41 potentially significant drivers of change in the future state of emergency volunteering by 2030 (see Appendix 3). The drivers were identified by stakeholders in the Environmental Scan and were then rated by the Delphi panel according to their certainty and their importance.

Significantly, none of the initial list of drivers presented to the Delphi were excluded as being clearly unimportant. However, some were merged, split or otherwise altered in response to Delphi input. Further, while most drivers were considered relevant for all forms of emergency volunteering, some were considered more relevant for either emergency response volunteering or community sector emergency volunteering (i.e., that supports communities across preparedness, resilience building, relief, recovery).

The drivers included in the catalogue are high level trends and uncertainties evident at a sector wide scale. At smaller scales, there will be notable differences in which drivers are most important for the future of emergency volunteering in specific locations and settings, e.g., rural communities compared to urban centres, eastern compared to western Australian settings, response compared to other phases of emergency management.

The list provided in Appendix 3 is therefore **a catalogue of items that workforce planners may need to consider in determining future workforce strategies and plans, depending on the way the items unfold or interact within different local and organisational contexts.**

The drivers were broken into the following four categories:

- **Volunteering** - Change in volunteering practices
- **Management** - Change in volunteer management approaches
- **Sector** - Change in the wider emergency management sector
- **External** - Change in the external environment outside the emergency management sector including social, technological, environmental, economic, and political (including legal and regulatory change) factors.

The drivers were rated through the Delphi process as follows:

- 15 **important trends** and 7 **somewhat important trends** –panel agreed the driver is likely to unfold as described, and is of high or medium importance,
- 19 **important uncertainties** and one **somewhat important uncertainty** – either: a) the panel agreed there is low certainty in how the driver will



unfold or, b) there was high disagreement about certainty. In both cases panel agreed it is of high or medium importance.

- six **areas of high disagreement** – had high degree of panel disagreement about both certainty and importance.

Most of the 21 trends concern changes in volunteering practice (6) and in the external environment (12) and all are well-established, having been observed for some time. There were few trends amongst drivers of change at the level of the emergency management sector (1) and in volunteer management (2). Instead, these categories of drivers form most of the uncertainties (9 and 4 respectively) along with some areas of external environmental change (5). Meanwhile, areas of high disagreement were predominantly in the external environment (4).

Alternative future scenarios and the forces shaping them

Each of the four alternative future scenarios described in Figure 2 reach 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.

These scenarios are not predictive. It is unlikely that the actual future will closely resemble one or other of them. Rather, it is more likely that the actual future will include elements of each scenario, but which ones is uncertain. 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. The scenarios do not include descriptions of volunteer management and engagement approaches and practices within organisations, as this is the area within which stakeholders can implement developments to affect the future.

The scenarios can help decision makers consider answers to the following types of questions:

- What would this scenario mean for volunteer recruitment and retention in this organisation?
- What opportunities and threats does this scenario present for this organisation and its workforce, and for the communities and groups to whom your organisation provides services?
- What are this organisation's current strengths and weaknesses for the conditions under this scenario?
- What needs to happen to encourage or avoid this scenario? Who can influence these developments and activities?
- What could this organisation set in place now to best prepare itself to flourish under this scenario? Which of these actions or undertakings could put the organisation in a better standing for all four alternative scenarios?



Scenarios	Major areas of uncertainty			Description
	Societal involvement	Enabling infrastructure	Technological disruption	
Many Hands	DEEP	STRONG	LOW	Volunteering is widely celebrated, deeply valued, and well-resourced. Community and businesses are highly engaged in emergency management through a wide range of activities and organisations. Emergency management service delivery is collaborative, community-centric, and well-integrated.
Techno-Proficiency	SHALLOW	STRONG	HIGH	Emergency management services are delivered by a targeted workforce that is highly professional, well-resourced, and technology enabled. Government and community expectations of services are high.
Too Many Cooks	DEEP	WEAK	HIGH	The emergency management sector is insular and bureaucratic. Emergency response organisations struggle to provide services with low volunteer numbers. Many, diverse, self-organised groups have formed with mixed capacity to deliver on community needs.
Falling Short	SHALLOW	WEAK	LOW	Emergency management is falling short of public and government expectations. There is high discontent amongst a shrinking & ageing formal volunteer workforce due to lack of support and burnout. Private property protection services are increasingly contracted by the few who can afford it creating high inequality in community coping capacity & resilience.
Major underlying trends Shifts in volunteering rates and styles Changing community and government expectations Demographic and community change Climate change and rising risk				

FIGURE 1: ALTERNATIVE FUTURE SCENARIOS FOR EMERGENCY VOLUNTEERING IN 2030.

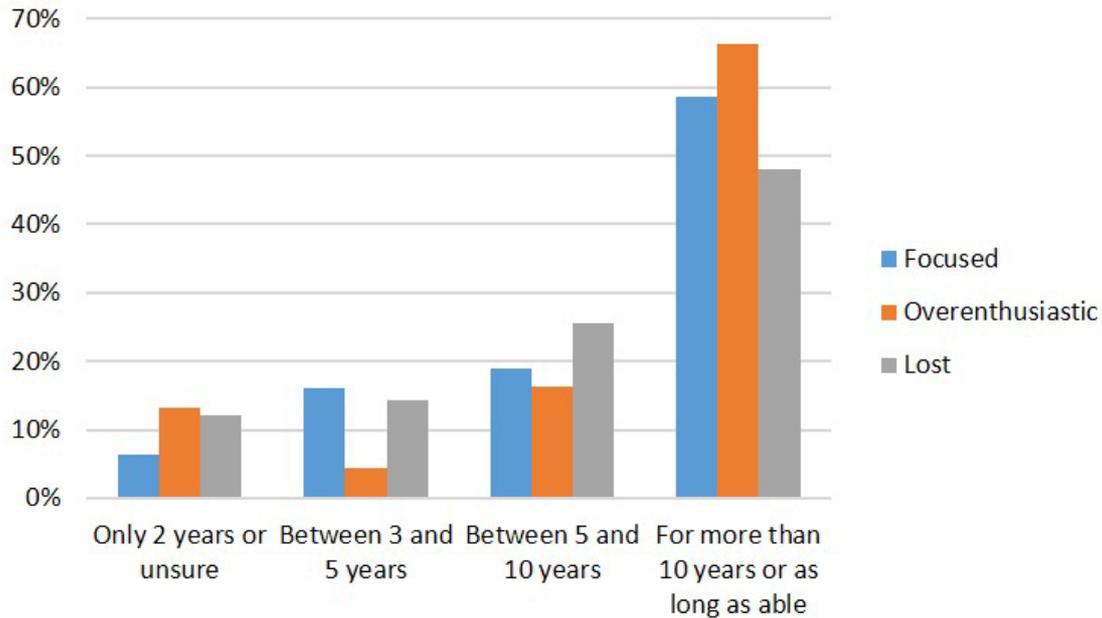
WORK PACKAGE 2: CHANGING MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Analysis of First Year Volunteer Survey Data from DFES

Three distinct profiles of first-year emergency services volunteers—focused, overenthusiastic, and lost—were identified. These profiles primarily differed in the number of activities volunteers expected to be involved in and the number of motives they expected to satisfy by joining. The focused volunteers had a well-defined set of expectations about the activities they would undertake and the reasons for joining the service. Whereas the lost volunteers had relatively few expectations, the enthusiastic volunteers were expecting many things. Having a



well-defined set of expectations, focused volunteers also reported better experiences in their first year with the service and were intending to continue volunteering for longer. This is consistent with the psychological contract perspective where realistic initial volunteer expectations (relative to the actual experiences of volunteering) lead to reduced turnover. However, there is a potential danger in that the focused volunteers might be too rigid in their expectations and lack the flexibility required to deal with the unexpected demands of the volunteering role. The figure below depicts volunteers' intention to remain with the service by profile.



The results of the analyses were accepted for publication by the *Australian Journal of Emergency Management*, and a journal article was released in October 2018. In addition, these findings were presented at the ANZ Disaster Management Conference in April 2018, among others.

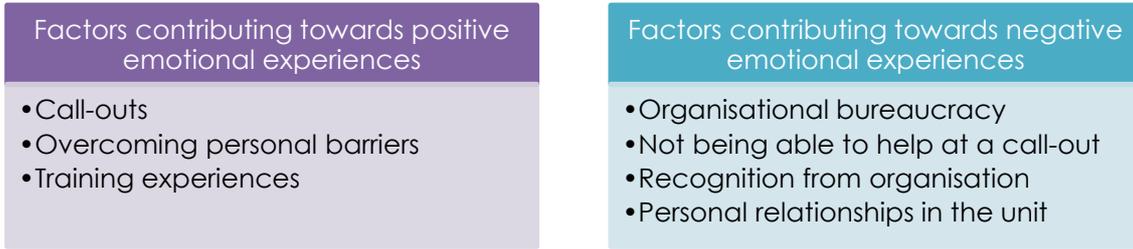
Interviews with 70 SES volunteers and volunteer managers

A key finding from the SES volunteer interviews was that **commitment to community was a key motivator that explained why volunteers continued volunteering**. Community was defined in two ways; the first is the broader community (e.g., town, state), and the second referred to the smaller community of SES volunteers (i.e., the individual SES unit). Through volunteering, volunteers were able to help the community where they lived and be a part of the SES community, for which they regard their unit members to be like family. An example quote supporting this finding is:

“[Being a volunteer means] to [be a] member of the community and just sort of, just do your part generally. You come in, you work with your team. They've got your back, you've got their back. You go out and you sort of, you see some terrible stuff. But you also see some really great stuff.”



Through volunteering, **volunteers experienced both positive and negative emotional experiences.** Factors contributing to positive and negative emotional experiences include:



Volunteers were also asked questions regarding the volunteer recruitment and retention practices conducted within their individual SES units. Based on the findings, key recommendations on how to improve volunteer recruitment and retention include:



For a more detailed understanding of the interview results, please see the Hazard Note summarising the results of these interviews that was released in October 2019.

Development, administration and analysis of the Cultural Assessment Tool (CAT)

The findings from the initial CAT conducted in 2018-19 indicated that SES volunteers in WA were fairly satisfied with their volunteering experience, but there were potential areas that could be improved for the benefit of their volunteering journey. A one-page infographic containing key findings and implications from the first CAT can be found in Appendix 4. The critical findings from the analyses were presented at the volunteering Research Utilisation Forum (RUF) in Melbourne in May 2019. The results of the CAT analyses were also discussed with the end-users at a teleconference that was conducted on the 16th of May 2019. Prior to the teleconference, the one-page infographic and a draft of the survey report were circulated to all end-users for their viewing and reference. During the teleconference, the infographic was used as a basis for discussion and feedback was encouraged from all end-users. After the teleconference, end-users were sent an email with the survey report draft and were asked to provide feedback. Based on the feedback received, the comprehensive report was finalised and published on the *Enabling sustainable emergency volunteering* project page in September 2019.



Continuing with this line of research, the CAT was further refined, and the findings from the 2018-19 CAT were used to inform the design of the follow-up CAT conducted in 2019-20. The key purpose of the 2019-20 CAT was to assess the current state of volunteering within the SES in the years of 2019 and 2020, in addition to tracking changes in the SES volunteering experience over the last 12 months. Overall, survey results indicated that SES volunteers in WA were fairly satisfied with their volunteering experience in 2019 and 2020, as they were in 2018 and 2019; however, there are potential areas that could be improved for the benefit of their volunteering journey. The critical findings from the analyses of the second CAT 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 2019-20 and 2018-19 CATs. A one-page infographic summarising key findings from this report can be found in Appendix 5. Overall, the report received positive feedback, and minor amendments to the report was made based on end-user feedback.

In October 2020, the CAT toolkit was created, with the intention of providing end-users (e.g., volunteer leaders, District Officers, Area Officers) with the means to create (and customise if they wish) a CAT of their own to assess the volunteering experiences within their own team, district, or area (more on this will be discussed in the *Utilisation and Impact* section of this report).

Key findings from the manuscripts developed from the results of the CATs

The results from the CAT have also informed the development of three manuscripts. The key findings for each manuscript are described below:

1. The first manuscript focused on the relationship between a culture of inclusiveness and how it affects volunteer thriving through the satisfaction of the volunteers' psychological needs (i.e., autonomy, competence, relatedness), and how these relationships affect volunteers of different nationalities. Findings suggest that, irrespective of race, integrating individual differences and inclusion in decision-making is critical for satisfying the needs of all volunteers, which resulted in better thriving (i.e., volunteers feeling like they are energised and continuously learning). For Australian volunteers, an inclusive climate was particularly important for thriving due to an increased sense of relatedness with other volunteers.
2. The second manuscript focused on leader behaviour within the BGUs and identified the difference between younger and older volunteers in how they react to leaders' initiating structure and individual consideration behaviours. Key findings suggest that older volunteers benefited from initiating structure, whereas considerate behaviours were more welcomed by younger volunteers. The preferred leadership behaviours received by the respective cohorts also resulted in better thriving and stronger intentions to remain.
3. The third manuscript focused on a single question from the CAT that asked volunteers to indicate whether there was a time they considered leaving the service, and if so, what the reasons were. Combining those responses with those collected from participants in another volunteer organisation, the analyses identified seven primary reasons why volunteers consider



leaving: conflict, high demands and/or low resources, lack of fit, lack of inclusion, personal commitments and circumstances, poor communication and organisational practices, and poor leadership. We further found that actual turnover was most strongly associated with the ‘personal commitment and circumstances’ reason to consider leaving.

Integrated report on effective onboarding practices

In July 2020, a comprehensive analysis was conducted on the on-boarding practices being conducted in BGUs and the extent of their effectiveness. To investigate this, data on volunteer induction, training, and support practices were taken from three sources:

- 1) Quantitative and qualitative data from the 2018-19 and 2019-20 CATs,
- 2) Qualitative data collected from the 70 volunteer interviews from the current CRC project, and
- 3) Volunteer interviews completed during a DFES-funded placement that was dedicated to investigating current on-boarding practices being conducted within DFES volunteering groups.

Amalgamating these findings, effective on-boarding practices were reported based on research-based evidence, as well as effective practices being conducted within volunteer BGUs. Practical recommendations for volunteer leaders and EMOs were shared in the report for implementation.

A summary of key recommendations can be found below.

On-boarding step	Key recommendations
Registering new volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be welcoming and informative to newcomers. • Process the new volunteers' registration forms as soon as possible. • Provide confirmation that the new volunteers have been formally registered with the organisation.
Inducting new volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give new volunteers a formal induction that outlines what their volunteering pathway will look like. • Provide new volunteers with all the information they need to know about their role, the BGU, and the organisation. • Communicate effectively with new volunteers and clarify any questions or concerns that they have. • Ask new volunteers questions about their skills and interests, to see if there are alternative and/or non-operational ways that they can contribute to the BGU.
Supporting new volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a formal social support system through the introduction of a support individual (i.e., a mentor, buddy, and/or volunteer coordinator).



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote a positive help-seeking culture with volunteers and their respective families.
Training new volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess training requirements for each individual role. Communicate training requirements early. Create learning opportunities through informal training sessions. Create flexible arrangements to accommodate different types of volunteers. Encourage "shadowing"/observational learning. Exchange constructive feedback.
Engaging new volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acknowledge and recognise the contributions and efforts that the new volunteers have made in the BGU thus far. Effectively communicate what are the next steps for new volunteers once they have completed their basic training, and are able to function as operational and/or non-operational volunteers. Inquire as to what volunteers would like to do next, and plan for those needs accordingly.
Putting new volunteers through probation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicate what is expected of new volunteers and provide them with relevant and clear information about their probationary period and role. Provide emotional and informative support. Give new volunteers the means they require to complete basic training. Use this period as a time to assess fit and suitability between the new volunteers and their roles.

Recruitment materials developed and tested with current and potential volunteers

A major undertaking for the project researchers in the last two years of the project was the development of recruitment materials, and the design and administration of the associated studies. Extracting verbatim recruitment messages from volunteer interviews, 109 quotes were considered as recruitment messages, alongside 40 photos depicting volunteers in operational and non-operational roles that were selected by DFES. With the help of 112 current SES volunteers and 453 community members (i.e., potential volunteers), 61 quotes and 28 pictures were rated as being accurate by current volunteers, and attractive by both current and potential volunteers. The common expectations set by accurate and attractive quotes include:

Being part of a team

Learning new skills

Helping the community

Doing something useful/worthwhile



Example of attractive and accurate quotes and pictures can be seen below:

"I really appreciate the great mateship that I have formed here."

"Volunteering here has given me a chance to give something back to the community."



To present these results to end-users, a "Volunteer Recruitment Messaging Toolkit", was built in Microsoft Excel to help end-users (e.g., volunteer leaders or recruitment officers) select recruitment messages that are attractive, realistic, and able to set the right expectations based on what individual units can offer (more on this will be discussed in the *Utilisation and Impact* section of this report).

To develop a journal article fit for publication on the use of effective messages on volunteer recruitment and retention, two further studies were conducted. The first study used the messages that were agreed upon by current and potential volunteers as being accurate and attractive. Using selected messages, in the form of three pictures and one central quote, a mock-up recruitment poster was created for four expectations (i.e., *be part of a team*, *learn new skills*, *help the community*, and *do something useful/worthwhile*). Qualitative data was then collected from almost 200 individuals to help ascertain whether or not the posters were setting the expectations it was intending to set. Out of the four posters, two of them, representing the *learn new skills* and *be part of a team* expectations, was selected to be included in the following study as the researchers noted that each poster did not set the expectation of the other poster, and thus provided a good contrast between the two expectations.

Using the two selected posters, a sample of 1627 community members (i.e., potential volunteers) was employed to quantitatively investigate if the posters were indeed setting the expectations they were intending to set, and to rate the extent in which their expectation (i.e., *learn new skills*, or *be part of a team*) was fulfilled based on a series of vignettes detailing what a first day could potentially look like for a volunteer. Based on the participants' responses to the vignettes, volunteer retention outcomes (e.g., intentions to return to future volunteering sessions) were assessed. Preliminary findings suggest that expectations were set by advertising, and were distinguished between the two expectations. The teamwork experience, as crafted in the vignettes, was shaped as expected by the nature of the first day experience, however, the learning experience was entangled with the teamwork experience. Overall, our preliminary findings suggest that it is the experience, not the expectation, that matters most for



volunteer retention, although a small effect of meeting expectations was observed. A draft of the journal article detailing all of the studies conducted within this project on volunteer recruitment is expected to be submitted to the CRC for approval by January 2021, for later submission to an academic journal.



UTILISATION AND IMPACT

Below we outline six main current and potential sources of further research utilisation from Work Packages 1 and 2. These include (1) An Emergency Volunteering 2030 Workforce Planning Resource, (2) the Cultural Assessment Tool (CAT) and User Guide Instructions, (3) the SES Recruitment Messaging Toolkit, (4) Emergency Volunteering Shared Learning Network, (5) the Workforce 2030 utilisation project, and (6) the Online Showcase presenting the recruitment and retention toolkit for volunteer leaders.

Note that all documents and tools associated with these activities will be freely available for download at <https://www.bnhcrc.com.au/driving-change/future-workforce>.

1) EMERGENCY VOLUNTEERING 2030 – WORKFORCE PLANNING RESOURCE

Output description

Key outputs from Work Package 1 have been collated into a resource for workforce planning by emergency management organisations. The purpose of the document is to assist workforce planners and volunteer managers in volunteer-involving emergency management organisations to increase their awareness of uncertainty, risk, and strategic options with respect to their future volunteer workforces.

It includes:

- A catalogue of 41 drivers of change identified by stakeholders as having strong potential to shape the future of emergency volunteering (21 trends and 20 uncertainties),
- Four alternative future scenarios for emergency volunteering in 2030, and the major forces underpinning them (see Figure 1).
- A catalogue of the wide range of activities that stakeholders described as being needed to move the sector towards a preferred future for emergency volunteering.
- A list of additional resources to aid in using the resource for strategic workforce planning, including:
 - Key research outputs from the Emergency volunteering 2030 study,
 - Selected further reading on foresight and strategic workforce planning, and
 - Selected further reading and sources of information on major underlying trends and areas of uncertainty, where available.

While the document's primary intended audience is planners and managers with emergency service agencies, it is likely to be useful for other volunteer-involving organisations that are active in supporting communities through any phase of emergency management.



Extent of use

- The document was recently compiled as a final output of this project and will be made publicly available as an additional resource supporting the Workforce 2030 report to be released in March 2021, see below under Next Steps).
- An indication of the utility of the resource comes from the way organisations are already making use of research outputs to date:
 - 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 Australia⁵, 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 Arrangements⁶, and position paper on Australian Government Compensation Scheme for Emergency Service Volunteers⁷, VCOSS's submission to 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).
- Feedback from AFAC representatives has indicated in-principle support for conducting scenario planning workshops to consider future uncertainty and its strategic implications for volunteer models in response agencies.
- The resource will be a key input into the *Scoping a volunteer sustainability blueprint* utilisation activity, see item 7) below.
- Feedback from various end-user meetings and from research participants [see 36, p.65-66], have indicated that collated research in accessible formats on key topics would be helpful for those industry actors currently

⁴ 41. Bushfires NT, *Volunteerism strategy 2019-2022*. 2019, Northern Territory Government, Darwin.

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

⁶ 42. Volunteering Australia, *Submission to the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements*. 2020, Volunteering Australia, Canberra.

⁷ 43. Volunteering Australia, *Position Paper: Australian Government Compensation Scheme for Emergency Service Volunteers 2020*, Volunteering Australia, Canberra.

⁸ 44. VCOSS, *Submission to the IGEM review of ten years of emergency management reform*. 2019, Victorian Council of Social Services, Melbourne.



grappling with changes and challenges for volunteer models and programs.

Utilisation and impact evidence

- See footnotes in above sections.

Box 1: Environmental Scan participant feedback on potential utilisation 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 CULTURAL ASSESSMENT TOOL (CAT) AND USER GUIDE INSTRUCTIONS

Output description

The quantitative results of the first (2018-19) and second (2019-20) CATs were summarised in individual reports and shared with the end-user group. Detailed analysis of the impact of the climate for inclusiveness on volunteer need satisfaction was shared at the 2019 AFAC conference. Detailed analysis of the findings from the second CAT was intended to be shared at the AFAC 2020 conference, however, due to the circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic, this was unable to be completed. Instead, an AFAC poster summarising key findings from the 2019-20 CAT, 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.

From the two CATs, a CAT toolkit was created in mid- to late 2020, with the intention of helping end-users (e.g., volunteer leaders, District and/or Area Officers) to create and customise a CAT of their own to assess the current state



of volunteering within their own team, district, or area. The CAT toolkit contained three products: 1) The full CAT as it was presented to the SES volunteers, 2) User guide instructions that would help end-users to customise and administer a CAT of their own, and finally, 3) A Data Analytical Tool that will help end-users to analyse and interpret their CAT results, in addition to providing recommendations for improving the overall volunteering experience.

Extent of use

- The reports were released at the end of the 2018-19 and 2019-20 fiscal years. However, the extent of use is currently unknown and most likely limited.
- The CAT toolkit however, is expected to be released in early 2021. We anticipate that utilisation outcomes, for example implementation of the recommended changes of practice from the CAT reports or tool, will emerge in 2021, and will be achieved through consultation with the end-user groups and other groups such as VMTG.

Utilisation potential

- We received feedback from end-users, at the RUF, that they would find it useful to be able to access data on the psychological experiences of emergency services volunteers in close to 'real time' or 'on demand', much like what the CAT delivers but in real time. To this end, a concept for a 'CAT platform' which would facilitate both data collection and reporting was proposed at the RUF. The feedback we received was that the platform would be too difficult to integrate in emergency services organisations, thus the CAT package was instead created to help fill that void, as the proposed platform did receive some signs of interest from SA and WA.
- With regards to the CAT reports, we received feedback from a key end-user, who believed that this piece of research helps to reaffirm areas of focus for their work with the SES and the broader volunteer emergency services. They believed this project to be "extremely important for the sustainability of the volunteer workforce," and believed the results in the reports to be informative as to what challenges and opportunities there are for improving the overall SES volunteering experience.

Utilisation impact

- This will emerge in 2021-2022 as the results of the CAT reports are discussed amongst the end-user group, and the CAT toolkit is potentially used by the intended end-users in the upcoming years.

Utilisation and impact evidence

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



3) THE SES RECRUITMENT MESSAGING TOOLKIT

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 the qualitative responses in the 2018-19 CAT, interviews with volunteers, and the visual media 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 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, and received printouts of how to use the tool, and where to find it (via QR code and website link). The tool received positive feedback at the conference, 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.

Extent of use (anticipated)

- 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 56 times, based on statistics received from the bit.ly link that was created and shared at the WAFES 2018 conference. 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 was submitted for utilisation funding to further develop the recruitment messaging toolkit to be more inclusive of fire services and the SES across different jurisdictions. This proposal has been granted approval and is currently being discussed with the CRC and partnering organisations. If the utilisation grant application detailing the research plan is accepted by all parties, the research should begin in early 2021, and will ideally be completed by June 2021.



Utilisation impact

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

Utilisation and impact evidence

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

4) ONLINE SHOWCASE: RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION TOOLKIT FOR EMERGENCY VOLUNTEER LEADERS

Output description

The online showcase was conducted on the 9th of October 2020 and was used to present a recruitment and retention toolkit for emergency volunteer leaders. The toolkit was the product of extensive research conducted by the research team across Curtin University and UWA, in partnership with DFES and the Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC. The research explored ways that emergency services can improve and tailor their practices to better recruit, support, manage, and most importantly, retain current and future volunteers in their BGUs.

Together with Jennifer Pidgeon and Kathryn White from DFES, Patrick Dunlop and Hawa Muhammad Farid guided the audience through a collection of resources tools that were developed to help emergency services agencies, including:

- **Recruiting Volunteers for the Emergency Services** – A resource to support BGU volunteer recruitment,
- **Supporting New Volunteers** – A resource on how to successfully on-board and socialise new emergency service volunteers,
- **Volunteer Management Toolkit** – A resource on how to motivate and manage emergency service volunteers effectively,
- **The Emergency Volunteer Recruitment Messaging Toolkit** – A practical tool to assist in tailoring recruitment messages for volunteer recruitment campaigns, and
- **Volunteer Succession Planning** (currently under development) – A resource to support the identification and development of new leaders, as well as support the transitioning of experienced leaders into meaningful roles in volunteer BGUs.

Audience members were able to learn more about what these resources are, the research-driven approach used to create them, and why and how these resources can be used to improve volunteer management and retention at their agencies. Generous amounts of time was dedicated to open discussion between speakers and participants, to ensure that everyone knows how to get the most out of these useful and exciting resources.



Extent of use

- A total of 60 people attended the online showcase, representing various emergency services agencies across different Australian states. Additionally, the bit.ly link that was given to the audience containing the toolkit and resources was visited 63 times. However, the extent in which the toolkit was used to improve volunteer recruitment and retention is less known.

Utilisation potential

- As the toolkit received positive praise from end-users, we submitted an application for utilisation funding from the CRC to further develop the toolkit into an online training course for volunteer leaders. The course will comprise of three modules to guide volunteer leaders on how to better recruit, manage, and onboard their volunteers. The utilisation application has been approved by the CRC. The project commenced in January 2021 and is expected to be completed by June 2021.

Utilisation impact

- This will depend on the evidence, but the potential impact will improve volunteer recruitment, management, and socialisation outcomes, which is likely to result in a reduction in early volunteer turnover.

Utilisation and impact evidence

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

5) EMERGENCY VOLUNTEERING SHARED LEARNING NETWORK

Output description

The Emergency Volunteering Shared Learning Network (EVN) was established in September 2018 to: enable and enhance the value of volunteering to Australian communities before, during and after emergencies now and into the future; and do this by promoting the exchange of knowledge and experience amongst people who share this goal.

Key activities included 1) circulating monthly e-newsletters, 2) conducting live webinars, and 3) setting up and maintaining an online resource sharing space. In addition, an EVN home page was set up to give members a single location to access the learning resources produced by these activities. Two surveys were also conducted: A New Member Survey, and a Member Feedback Survey at the end of the pilot period, and a report on lessons learned through the EVN was prepared in April 2019. In August 2019, the EVN was put into hibernation when human resourcing for this work package was reduced.

Extent of use

- By the end of March 2019, the network had 201 subscribed members. 37% of members identified as a volunteer, 35% as a volunteer



manager/coordinator, and 30% as someone who worked with volunteers. 65% worked or volunteered with an emergency service agency, and 23% with a not-for-profit. Over 40% of EVN members lived in Victoria, 20% in NSW, 18% in Queensland.

Utilisation potential

- Regarding potential of the EVN, one of our EVN members said it better than we can:

"I think there is an important role the EVN can fill in providing a "broad church" as such, which communities and the EM sector can tap into, that provides access to latest learning, contacts for specialists in areas of interest etc. In particular I think that RMIT's longevity in the studies and information-sharing of disaster/emergency related knowledge places it as an institution in a unique position of authenticity to continue this work in ways in which grassroot volunteers feel they can engage.

By maintaining the current approach of a "network" this sharing of knowledge will grow in its ability to be a two-way conduit for learning. As such, grassroots volunteer endeavours and experiences will be available to the research world without the need to activate selective research projects to seek out that insight, while volunteers and those who work with them will have access to insights on best practice which may be outside of their normal sources of internal updates."

- Volunteer, emergency service agency.

Utilisation impact

- The EVN had made a wider range of people across the EM sector aware of research, new knowledge, and best practice in emergency volunteering. EVN members reported that the EVN had performed best in four areas: updating people on relevant research, updating them on emergency volunteering developments, enabling them to learn about topics of interest, and enabling them to learn about new ideas, innovation, and best practice. Members reported that the information shared through the EVN was valuable for people in paid roles supporting volunteers, as well as for volunteers with key roles supporting volunteer teams.

Utilisation and impact evidence

- EVN Pilot Report: McLennan, B. J. (2019). *Emergency volunteering shared learning network: Pilot report*. Melbourne: RMIT University & Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC.

<https://www.bnhcrc.com.au/publications/biblio/bnh-5610>.



NEXT STEPS

The *Enabling sustainable emergency volunteering* project has given rise to a number of follow-on utilisation activities that are underway or set to begin in early 2021. These are: 1) Workforce 2030, 2) Scoping a volunteer sustainability blueprint, 3) Further development of the SES recruitment messaging toolkit, and 4) Development of an online training package for emergency volunteer managers.

1) WORKFORCE 2030 (JULY 2020 – JUNE 2021)

Workforce 2030 is a utilisation project that begun in June 2020 (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 utilisation project 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.

Key project deliverables

- a. A scoping paper
- b. 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
- c. 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 representatives of a range of AFAC groups including the Workforce Management Group, the Volunteering Management Technical Group, and the Diversity and Inclusion Group.



2) SCOPING A VOLUNTEER SUSTAINABILITY BLUEPRINT (FEBRUARY – JUNE 2021)

In May 2020, the AFAC Volunteer Management Technical Group (VMTG) invited Blythe McLennan to facilitate an interactive workshop on sustainable volunteering. The purpose of the workshop was to identify wider sustainable volunteering issues and gaps, and to identify options for the VMTG to progress or facilitate action on the most important issues. The final discussion at the workshop centred on next steps where it was agreed that there was a need for a national blueprint for change to guide strategic, collaborative action to support volunteering sustainability over the next decade, and processes to deliver action on big picture issues. This utilisation activity has arisen out of that discussion. It was approved for funding by the CRC in January 2021.

The purpose of this activity is to conduct a scoping consultation with key stakeholders in the sector about a national volunteer sustainability blueprint and develop an agreed plan for next steps. The primary utilisation outcomes of this application are therefore:

- Progressing a national-level, strategic conversation within the sector, and
- Key stakeholder agreement on next steps towards a national blueprint and roadmap for change, and a plan to enact those steps.

Project deliverables

April 2021

- *Discussion paper* - based on research to inform and guide the initial consultation
- *A consultation plan* – to identify who needs to be involved and how.

June 2021

- *Scoping consultation completed* - Key stakeholders in the sector consulted per consultation plan
- *Proposed plan for next steps* – A proposed plan for the next steps in developing a fuller national conversation on volunteer sustainability.
- *Issues briefs/Guidance Notes* - A series of short, targeted briefs or guidance notes to communicate aspects of volunteer sustainability highlighted in the consultation.

3) FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF SES RECRUITMENT MESSAGING TOOLKIT (JANUARY – JUNE 2021)

In 2020, researchers from Work Package 2 submitted a proposal for utilisation funding to further develop the SES Recruitment Messaging Toolkit that will allow end-users (e.g., volunteer managers, volunteer recruitment officers) to identify messages to include in volunteer recruitment campaigns (e.g., brochures, ads, posters) that:



- Are attractive and appealing to potential recruits,
- Accurate in representing the emergency volunteering experience, and
- Are able to set the right expectations (e.g., learning new skills, helping the community, being part of a team) based on what the individual BGU can offer.

The proposal to further develop the tool was submitted to the CRC with the intention of expanding the usability of the tool to fire services and the SES in other jurisdictions. The research plan as detailed below has been submitted to the CRC for approval. Should the affected parties agree to the proposed arrangements and activities, the utilisation project is expected to commence in January 2021, with the expectation that the utilisation project will be completed by the end of June 2021.

Stage 1: Desktop research and end-user consultation

- Conduct desktop research on similar recruitment message tools that are currently in use and determine what is best practice in the area of volunteer recruitment and designing advertisements for volunteer recruitment purposes.
- Interview relevant stakeholders (e.g., EM staff members, Fire and SES – ANZ volunteer recruitment officers, volunteer leaders) to ascertain needs and a shared understanding on delivery format.
- Obtain recruitment materials from fire services (e.g., photos, volunteer stories).

Stage 2: Road-testing the recruitment messages with volunteers and a community sample

- Road-testing the recruitment messages with fire services volunteers and SES volunteers from other jurisdictions.
- Road-testing the messages with a community sample.

Stage 3: Finalising the content of the recruitment messaging toolkit

- Finalise the content in the recruitment messaging toolkit.

Stage 4: Feedback and final toolkit amendments

- Obtain feedback from end-users, and make final amendments to the recruitment messaging toolkit.
- Produce a final project report.



4) DEVELOPMENT OF AN ONLINE TRAINING PACKAGE FOR EMERGENCY VOLUNTEER MANAGERS (FEBRUARY – JUNE 2021)

A second proposal for utilisation funding was also submitted by the research team from Work package 2 and approved by the CRC to create an online training package that was targeted towards emergency volunteer managers. The online training package aims to provide volunteer leaders with the tools and resources on how to recruit, onboard, and manage emergency volunteers. The tools and resources were previously created with DFES and have received positive feedback in its implementation with emergency volunteers in WA. A webinar showcasing these resources was conducted on the 9th of October 2020 in collaboration with DFES and the CRC, and since then, the link sharing the tools and resources have been visited a total of 63 times.

Combining these resources with the research findings within this project, the proposed activities and arrangements would help create a volunteer training package that was heavily based on academic research and real-life volunteer case studies extracted from quantitative and qualitative data collected by the project researchers. The proposed activities and arrangements for the online training package is currently being discussed, and if approved, will commence in early 2021, to be completed by June 2021.



OUTPUTS LIST

PEER-REVIEWED

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CONFERENCE EXTENDED ABSTRACTS

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- 84 McLennan, B. J. Beyond the blue lights: Enabling community sector volunteering for disaster management in Australia. [For submission as a peer-reviewed article in an academic journal].



TEAM MEMBERS

RESEARCH TEAM

Work package 1: Emergency volunteering 2030



Dr Blythe McLennan (Chief Investigator)

School of Global, Urban and Social Studies, RMIT University
T: 03 9925 1164 E: blythe.mclennan@rmit.edu.au



Dr Tarn Kruger

School of Global, Urban and Social Studies, RMIT University
(July 2017 – Aug 2019)

Work package 2: Changing management practice



Dr Patrick Dunlop (Chief Investigator)

Future of Work Institute, Curtin University
T: 08 9266 4824 E: patrick.dunlop@curtin.edu.au



Dr Darja Kragt

School of Psychological Science, University of Western Australia



Ms Hawa Muhammad Farid

School of Psychological Science, University of Western Australia



Dr Djurre Holtrop

Future of Work Institute, Curtin University



Dr Alex Luksyte

Business School, University of Western Australia



Prof Marylène Gagné

Future of Work Institute, Curtin University



END-USERS

End-user organisation	End-user representative	Extent of engagement
Emergency Management Victoria	Paul Davis	Lead end-user
Queensland Fire and Emergency Services	Troy Davies, Peter Jeffrey	Lead end-user / CRC end-user group
Inspector-General for Emergency Management (Vic)	Deb Parkin	Lead end-user
Department of Fire and Emergency Services (WA)	Karen Roberts, Jennifer Pidgeon, Nancy Appleby	Research partner – Changing management practice / CRC end-user group
NSW SES	Andrew McCullough	CRC end-user group
Department of Human Services (SA)	Georgina Goodrich	CRC end-user group
Country Fire Authority (Vic)	Ali Martin, Kerrie Laurie	Lead end-user / CRC end-user group
NSW Rural Fire Service	Kristine Wendtman, Kevin White	CRC end-user group
Victorian SES	Annabelle Kirwan, Kendra Clegg	CRC end-user group
SA Fire & Emergency Services Commission	Lisa Grieg, Adelaide Cooper	CRC end-user group
Australian Red Cross	Diana Bernardi	CRC end-user group
AFAC	Zoe Kenyon, Catriona Freeman	CRC end-user group



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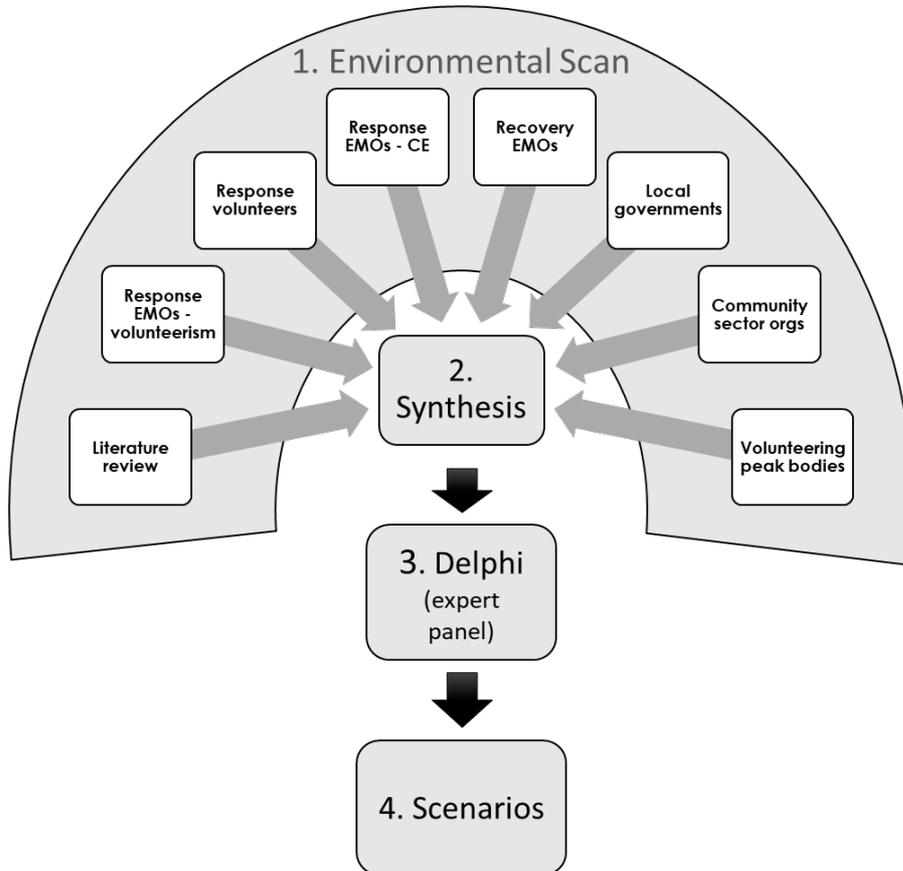


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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 – WORK PACKAGE 1 RESEARCH DESIGN





APPENDIX 2 – WORK PACKAGE 2 RESEARCH DESIGN

Key Research Activities

Researchers conducted four research phases comprising of the following activities:

Phase 1: Analysis of First Year Volunteer Survey Data from DFES

- Analysed the responses of 539 first-year DFES volunteers to identify volunteer expectation profiles, and examined how these relate to their intentions to remain with a service.

Phase 2: Interviews with 70 SES volunteers and volunteer managers

- Interviewed 70 SES volunteers and volunteer managers to examine volunteers' personal experiences with the service, and their views on the current recruitment and retention practices being conducted within individual units.

Phase 3: The Development, Administration, and Analysis of the Cultural Assessment Tool (CAT)

- Developed and launched the first CAT to obtain information on how best to improve volunteer recruitment, retention, wellbeing, and diversity within the overall SES volunteering journey.
- Refined the CAT and launched the second CAT to track what volunteering areas have improved, remained the same, or require improvement.
- Developed a CAT toolkit that allows end-users (e.g., volunteer leaders, District Officers) to create (and customise if they wish) a CAT of their own to assess volunteering experiences within their own team, district, or area.

Phase 4: Experimental Evaluation of Volunteer Recruitment Practices

- Developed new recruitment materials using quotes collected from Phases 2 and 3.
- Tested new recruitment materials for their accuracy and attractiveness with current and potential volunteers.
- Through experimentation, evaluation was conducted on the effectiveness of potential recruitment materials in setting expectations, and the extent in which expectation fulfillment influenced retention outcomes (e.g., likelihood to return to future volunteering sessions).



Key Research Questions

What does it take to become an SES volunteer?

What keeps SES volunteers coming back for more?



Recruitment



Retention



Wellbeing



Diversity

What makes SES volunteers happy?

How do we get more people to volunteer for SES?

APPENDIX 3 – KEY FINDINGS FROM THE 2018-19 CAT

Cultural Assessment Tool (CAT)

2018-19 Survey Findings

In 2018, the University of Western Australia collaborated with the Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES) to obtain more information on the current state of volunteering in Western Australia. This survey focused on State Emergency Service (SES) volunteers and investigated on 4 key areas; **recruitment, retention, wellbeing, and diversity**.

Participant Information



- Number of Participants:** 398 (20.6% response rate)
- Average age:** 46.1 years
- Gender breakdown:** Males (62%), Females (37%), Undisclosed (1%)
- Ethnicity:** 79.1% identified as Australians
- Average SES tenure:** 9.0 years
- Average tenure in current unit:** 7.2 years
- Different roles:** Unit Managers (11.6%), Non-managers (88.4%)

Survey Themes:

- Meeting Expectations
- Reasons to Join and Stay
- Volunteer Needs
- Volunteer Role and Identity
- Wellbeing
- SES Unit Environment
- Intentions to Remain

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

Key Areas to Maintain

- Continue to manage expectations upfront,
- Continue to provide learning and development opportunities for volunteers to thrive in, and
- Encourage leaders to maintain positive behaviours towards volunteers, whether it be during or outside of call-outs.

Key Areas of Improvement

- Better target recruitment to specific groups,
- Facilitate activities to allow more autonomy for volunteers,
- Improve volunteers' identification with their current SES unit and with DFES,
- Improve psychological safety for women and volunteers who are non-leaders,
- Improve inclusivity of metropolitan volunteers in decision-making processes, and
- Focus on retaining younger volunteers as they are most at risk of leaving their current unit and SES overall.

****Note:** The complete survey report was released in September 2019.



APPENDIX 4 – KEY FINDINGS FROM THE 2019-20 CAT, AND COMPARISONS WITH THE 2018-19 CAT

Cultural Assessment Tool (CAT) 2019-20 Survey Findings

From September 2019 to mid-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). The survey focused on State Emergency Service (SES) volunteers and investigated on 4 key areas: **recruitment, retention, wellbeing, and diversity.**

Participant Information



Number of Participants: 226 (11% response rate)
Average age: 46.9 years
Gender breakdown: Males (55%), Females (43%), Prefer not to say (2%)
Ethnicity: 64.2% identified as Australians
Average SES tenure: 10.0 years
Average tenure in current unit: 10.0 years
Different roles: Unit Managers (16.4%), Non-managers (83.6%) across 52 SES units in WA

Survey Themes:

- Reasons to Stay
- Volunteer Needs
- Volunteer Role and Identity Fit
- Volunteer Wellbeing
- SES Unit Environment
- Intentions to Remain

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

Key Areas of Strength

- Volunteers are thriving through their learning experiences,
- Volunteers overall felt valued and respected for their individual differences,
- Unit leaders are seen very positively in their behaviours towards volunteers, during and outside of call-outs,
- Volunteers had strong social support from team members who are non-leaders.

Key Opportunities to Improve

- Investigate targeted recruitment to attract members from specific groups,
- Facilitate activities to allow more volunteer autonomy,
- Improve volunteers' identification with DFES,
- Improve feelings of psychological safety, autonomy, and competence for women and volunteers who are non-leaders,
- Improve volunteer inclusivity in unit decision-making processes, and
- Increase how energetic volunteers feel about their roles.



Findings from the CAT 2019-20 survey was also compared to findings from the 2018-19 survey to assess which volunteering areas have improved, are in need of improvement, and which areas have stayed relatively the same:

Key Areas Maintained

- Volunteers across both surveys;
- Felt equally as competent and as socially connected with other volunteers,
 - Identified strongly with their role and SES unit,
 - Had high levels of role satisfaction,
 - Perceived their leaders' behaviours rather positively, and
 - Felt valued and respected for their individual differences.

Key Areas that Improved

- Volunteers indicated improvements in;
- Their motivations to continue volunteering (e.g., volunteers felt that they were learning new skills),
 - Their identification with DFES,
 - Their learning and development (although it was still high the previous year), and
 - How much they would recommend the SES to others as a place to volunteer.

Opportunities to Improve

- Volunteers across both years;
- Indicated low levels of autonomy,
 - Reported that they did not feel energetic about their roles,
 - Had relatively low levels of psychological safety (i.e., not feeling safe about speaking up), and
 - They did not feel included in unit decision-making processes.

****Note:** The complete survey report will be released on our project page (scan QR code) in August 2020.



APPENDIX 5 – WORKFORCE 2030 POSTER

UTILISATION

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

Enabling sustainable emergency volunteering

Dr Blythe McLennan¹, Assoc/Prof Patrick Dunlop², Jane Chong², Prof. Marylène Gagné², Dr Darja Kragt³, Hawa Muhammad Farid², Prof. Mark Griffin², Assoc/Prof. Alex Luksyte⁴, Loiana Belhuna⁵
¹School of Global, Urban, and Social Studies, RMIT University; ²Future of Work Institute, Curtin University; ³School of Psychological Science, University of Western Australia; ⁴Business School, University of Western Australia; ⁵Utilisation 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:

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 to 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 instill 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 members of the AFAC Workforce Management Group and Volunteer Management Technical Group.

To engage with us, please contact:
blythe.mclennan@rmit.edu.au or
patrick.dunlop@curtin.edu.au

Australian Government
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Energy and Resources

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