

Volunteering into the future – disaster events, local governments & communities

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Australian Government
Department of Industry,
Innovation and Science

Business
Cooperative Research
Centres Programme



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Photo - Don Butterworth
Source 'Picture This' St Luke's Innovation resources



**What's local government
got to do with it?**



Photo – Tom Rumble. Source: 'Unsplash'



Photo – Moi, TK

Photo – James Garman. Source: 'Unsplash'



Photo Source: Unsplash'



Photo Source: Visual Hunt



Photo - Moi, TK



Photo Source: Unsplash



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Photo courtesy Bushfire & Natural Hazards CRC



Photo courtesy Bushfire & Natural Hazards CRC



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Photo Source: Visual Hunt





ILLUSTRATION BY *Simon Letch*

A photograph of a person from the chest down, wearing a white dress shirt and a red necktie. The person is standing on a dark, paved street at night. In the background, there are blurred lights and what appears to be a road with lane markings. Overlaid on the lower half of the image is a large, bold, white text message.

**BEFORE A DISASTER TURNS
YOUR WORLD UPSIDE DOWN,
BE READY.**

Volunteering into the future – disaster events, local governments & communities

“It can’t look like it looks at the moment” [LG10 interviewee 2017].



What has changed in EM volunteering landscape over the last 5-10 years?

“That is my worry state government pushing things down on us without providing funding” [LG2 interviewee 2017].

“...the on-going time commitment that scares people. But I think when there is an identified serious need, then they will come out of the woodwork” [LG3 interviewee 2017].

“Council is just under so much pressure to deliver their day jobs, so it is not their focus during non-disaster time” [LG16 interviewee 2018].



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Rise in spontaneous volunteering – proactive planning

On-line provision of information and training for volunteers – challenges/limitations



What are the key volunteering issues the EM sector is currently facing?

“We don’t have disasters that often and people change and so for new officers, here is what happens in this part of the world and these are the plans we have place” [LG16 interviewee 2018].

“Obviously, we’re going to have more and more disasters and the agencies and people like the council; we just don’t necessarily have the resources to be able to support the communities” [LG4 interviewee 2018].

“It is such an oxymoron – managing spontaneous – because they are spontaneous by nature there is no way you can manage and co-ordinate ... and have a connection with all of them is going to be difficult ” [LG6 interviewee 2017].

“You lose a lot of knowledge at the drop of a hat, like the turnover of staff since the floods, so there is not a whole lot of people here who went through it ... because we are a small council and we have got so much to do, and our staff aren’t experienced in a lot of areas” [LG3 interviewee 2017].

“But it is a fact of life [social media]and it’s something that the disaster space has to start to embrace and demonstrate how they’re going to deliver on it” [LG12 interviewee 2017].

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Climate change – planning for the future impacts

Social media – the way people seek information

Challenges – All these issues are felt more strongly in rural and remote areas.



What is happening to address these issues?

“We have quite a lot of established processes to deal with volunteers, such as doing Police Checks, doing interviews, referee checks, but not in an emergency setting, that’s with our on-going volunteers. There’s a cross council working group. We had an audit, so we have been looking and continually improving our internal processes for dealing with other volunteers [in an emergency]” [LG5 interviewee 2017].

“I have a very strong belief that because these things impact the community, we probably need to start from that point, not the other way around. When we look forward as hard as it is to know, there has got to be flexibility and adaptability” [LG11 interviewee 2017].

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Planning and trialling



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Reviewing



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Planning and trialling a range of volunteer management options

Working with communities to build resilience in preparation for '*when the time comes*'

Reviewing community development processes

Exploring ways of better engaging the range of skills and capacities that lie within their community



What does a preferred future look like?

“...digital platform, so the sharing and making an offer of help on-line and having it matched with the need, that is a great opportunity. I am excited about that, because that aligns people helping out themselves” [LG6 interviewee 2017].

“When it comes to volunteers by 2030, I would like to see a much more organised structure around volunteer and plans locally and regionally and to make better use of the potential of the so called spontaneous volunteers” [LG17 interviewee 2018].

“Consistent messaging across the state about what volunteering in an emergency looks like, some of the functions or the roles might be” [LG3 interviewee 2017].



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Sufficient funding for local governments & other local organisations for volunteer management

Registration and deployment of volunteers is simple – volunteers quickly tasked to support emergency activities

Consistent messaging about volunteer involvement

Information sharing at a local level about hazards and how local people can prepare and be involved.



What needs to happen to move toward this future?

“...try to provide a system that is better than just a one size... and that’s really difficult when you’ve got so many different local governments around the state” [LG16 interviewee 2018].

“It is important to ensure volunteer processes are embedded into our emergency management plan and state-wide processes as well, so we have a co-ordinated approach” [LG1 interviewee 2017].

“One thing is the political, the lack of funding for volunteer support organisations like [our volunteering peak body], uncertain funding” [LG5 interviewee 2017].

“I think the EM sector, the volunteer sector, needs to be much more aware of its capacity to assist in the prevention, preparedness and the building of resilience of community rather than waiting for an event to happen. Much more work in the space of the preparedness of local areas than simply waiting for local areas to fall over” [LG12 interviewee 2017].



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- 3. Adaptive volunteer models and deeper connections with communities**
Cultural and organisational change. Greater use of technology to enhance communication and connection with community.

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- **Governance structures, policies and frameworks**



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- **Sufficient funding** to develop programs around preparation, response and recovery and keep pace with social and technological changes.
- Mechanisms like **state-wide databases** to support and enable volunteering.
- **Governance structures, policies and frameworks** at the national and state level to provide local governments guidance and establish consistent processes.
- **Reform in disaster funding for the recovery process** so local governments and communities have confidence in the **surety of funding in the EM space**.

The EM sector and volunteering more broadly – a preferred future

- **The sector is agile, forward-looking, and externally-focused**
- **There is deep collaboration across and beyond the sector**
- **Organisations and the sector are community-centric and service-oriented**
- **Organisational culture is inclusive and collaborative**
- **Flexible & life-cycle volunteering opportunities exist**
- **Volunteers come from all segments of society**
- **Volunteers are empowered to connect with their communities**

How might we get there?



Shared training **Flexible Volunteering** Pre-register volunteers Tiers of skills Emergent Recovery **Informal** Community resilience Resources Databases **Teams** Community-based grass roots **Formal** Employer supported **Adaptable** planning **Giving** community-led Short-term / long-term **Spontaneous Digital** Government outsourced Skills-based **Episodic Virtual \$\$ Helping** organisations, families, neighbours, friends roles affiliated communications simple quick volunteering Diversity

How might we get there?

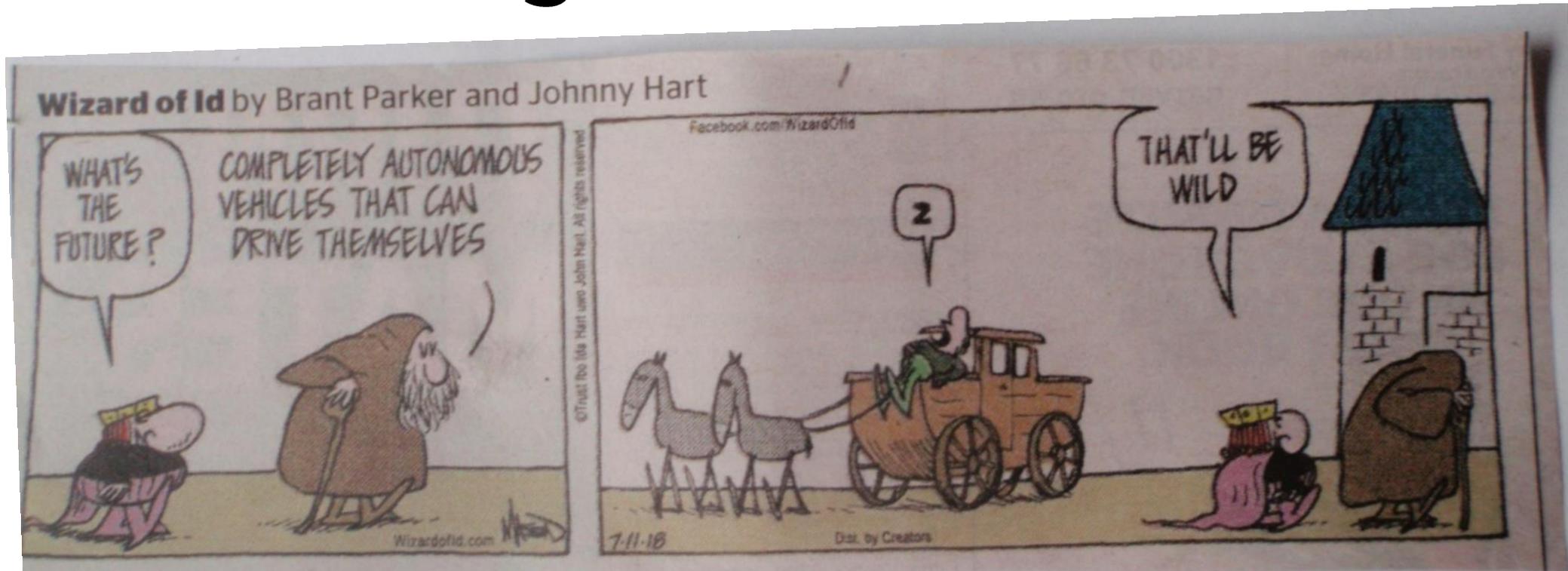
Five key issues need to be addressed for *all volunteering* to move towards a preferred future:

1. A national volunteering policy
2. Adequate resourcing for volunteering
3. Professionalisation of volunteer management
4. Promote volunteering
5. Facilitate technology to enable volunteering

“All great changes are preceded by chaos”.

Deepak Chopra

We all can imagine a future..





Thanks

