



FINDINGS

The difference between a future where **emergency volunteering** struggles or flourishes rests on **leadership, resourcing, risk tolerance, cultural change, and shared learning.**

Emergency volunteering 2030: a sector-wide snapshot

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This report provides an important snapshot of how the unfolding future of emergency volunteering in Australia is viewed at the present point in time. It shares the synthesised findings from a wide-ranging Environmental Scan that captured diverse stakeholder views of the current and emerging landscapes of emergency volunteering.

Introduction

The Environmental Scan was conducted as part of a futures study that aims to support the development of greater foresight capability in the emergency management sector with respect to the design of emergency volunteering models, infrastructure, and systems. The subject of the study is any and all volunteering that supports communities before, during and after a disaster or emergency, regardless of its duration or its organisational affiliation, or lack thereof. It includes volunteering across preparedness, response, relief and recovery.

Methods

Data was collected via semi-structured interviews and qualitative questionnaires with 183 people that have deep knowledge of emergency volunteering across seven representative groups: 1) Response Organisations – Volunteerism, 2) Response Volunteers, 3) Response Organisations – Community Engagement, 4) Recovery Organisations, 5) Community Sector, 6) Local Government, and 7) Volunteering Peak Bodies.

Results

The research identified 31 key trends impacting on emergency volunteering within and beyond the sector. It developed a collective picture of current understandings of the projected future for emergency management under current trajectories, and of a preferred future (Fig. 1). It identified seven key 'big picture' issues that most need to be tackled to bring about a preferred future for emergency volunteering (Table 1), and

five underlying enablers without which progress towards that future is likely to be modest at best.

Discussion

The emergency management sector needs to start grappling with the larger and more systemic issues in the emergency volunteering landscape, and do it head on.

Currently too much is being asked of formal emergency management volunteers through systems and processes that are well-designed to fit the needs of organisations, but less so when it comes to the needs of today's volunteers. Meanwhile, the workforce beyond established emergency management organisations is not being effectively enabled.

While positive shifts are already underway in the sector, progress is likely to be modest at best unless important enabling conditions are built:

- strong change leadership at all levels;
- appropriate, inclusive, and proactive resourcing;
- a more constructive balance between the need to manage risk and the need to change (greater risk tolerance);
- cultural change to become more inclusive, open and innovative;
- Learning that is a) widely and deeply shared, and b) retained over time.

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Tables and figures

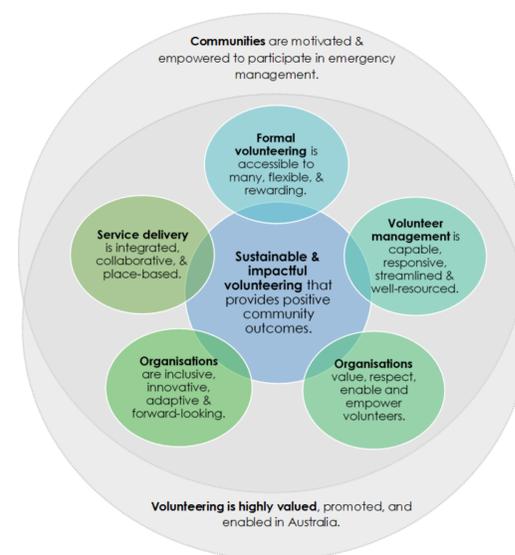


Figure 1: Collective image of a preferred future

What are the 'big picture' issues that need to be tackled?

1. **Formal volunteering** - making formal volunteering easier, more accessible and rewarding to as many people as possible.
2. **Volunteer management** - building greater capacity to manage and lead volunteers well.
3. **Organisations** - valuing volunteers more widely and deeply in emergency management organisations.
4. **Organisations** - building the resilience of all volunteer-involving organisations that contribute to emergency management.
5. **Service delivery** - enabling and designing more integrated, collaborative, and place-based services.
6. **Communities** - making greater space for community connection and participation, while also managing risks.
7. **Volunteering** - advocating the value of volunteering more effectively to communities and governments.

Table 1: Seven issues that most need to be tackled

