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EMERGENCY VOLUNTEERING IN AUSTRALIA: TRANSFORMING, NOT DECLINING

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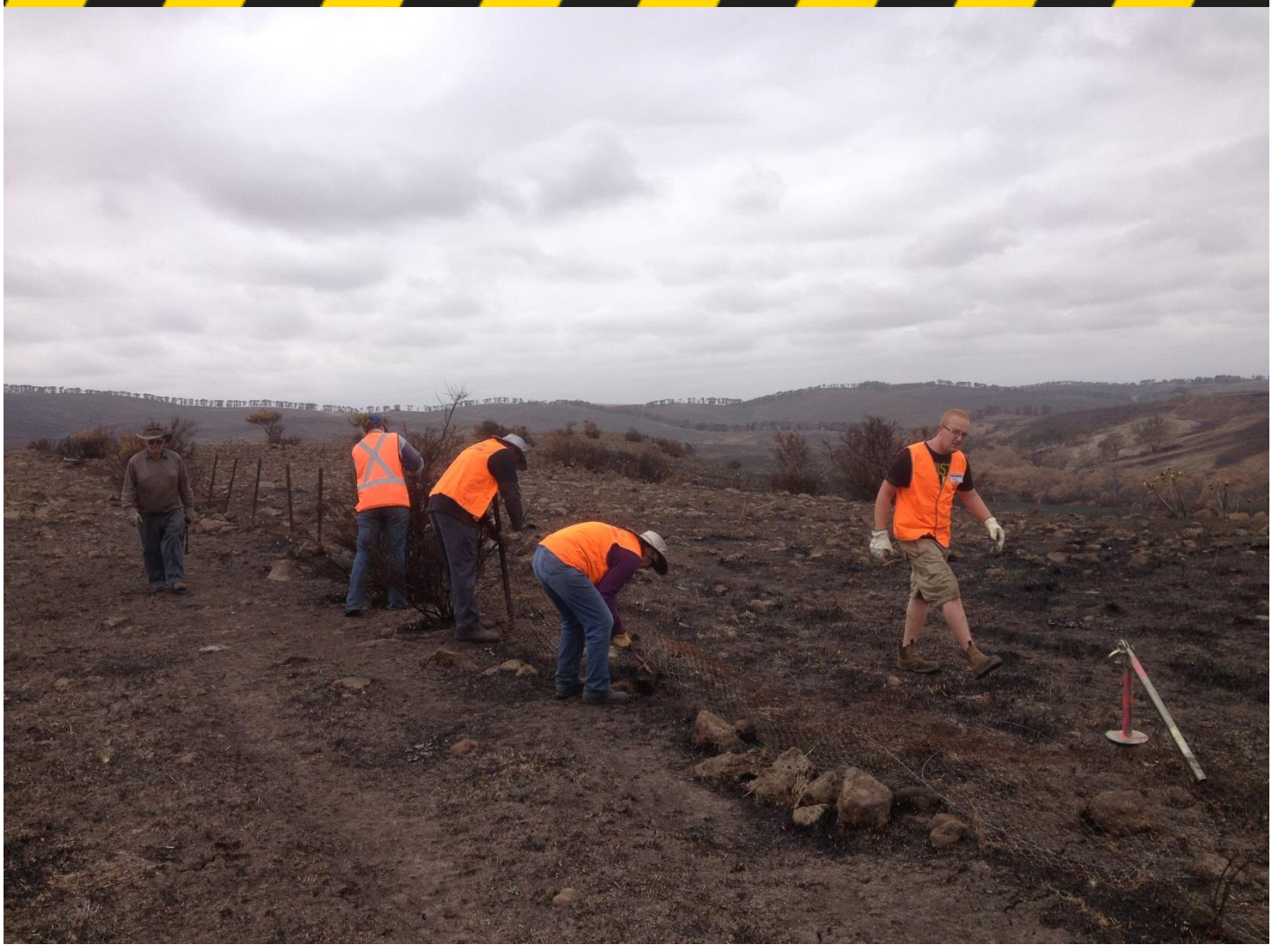

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Cover: BlazeAid volunteers helping to rebuild fences after Black Saturday in 2009. Photo by BlazeAid volunteer.

ABOUT THE RESEARCH PROJECT

This report is an output of the *out of uniform: building community resilience through non-traditional emergency volunteering* project. This three-year project is being undertaken by researchers at the Centre for Risk and Community Safety at RMIT University as a part of the research program of the Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC.
The project has three key objectives:

1. To identify how non-traditional emergency volunteering contributes to building community resilience to disasters throughout different phases of emergency management.
2. To identify ways the emergency management sector in Australia and New Zealand can promote community resilience through support of non-traditional emergency volunteering.
3. To develop and evaluate alternative models for emergency volunteering in Australia and New Zealand that are inclusive of non-traditional volunteering and volunteering organisations.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The landscape of volunteering is undergoing significant change, in Australia and internationally. Large-scale socioeconomic changes have recast the conditions under which people volunteer in the 21st Century.

With the notable exception of research into the role of digital volunteers, there has been very little research attention yet given to the impact of such changes on disaster and emergency volunteering. Within Australia, a narrow focus on shoring up and protecting the traditional volunteer base of Australian state and territory emergency service agencies against emerging challenges has drowned out awareness of emerging new opportunities. This has led to a narrative of crisis and decline in emergency volunteering that threatens to leave emergency management organisations falling behind in a changing volunteer environment.
This paper presents a more complete picture of the changing landscape of emergency volunteering. It identifies key shifts in the volunteering landscape as a whole and considers the possible implications for Australian emergency volunteering more particularly. Importantly, it includes within its purview volunteering that takes place both with and without affiliation to state and territory emergency service agencies.

The most significant shifts were identified by triangulating two sources of information: 1) international literature on trends in volunteering and 2) trends indicated directly in domestic data and research studies on volunteering in Australia. The same trends were identified in the international and domestic sources.

THE 'BIG 4' FORCES OF CHANGE

While there are numerous developments currently shaping and reshaping the nature and practice of volunteering, based on a broad review of the literature they can be justifiably distilled down to four big, interconnected forces of change. The first three of these are each associated with the recent burgeoning of new or previously uncommon forms of volunteering: episodic, corporate (and skills-based) and digital. Combined, these three fast-growing forms of volunteering are widely regarded as "the wave of the future".

The rise of episodic (shorter-term) volunteering is most directly connected to the *transformation of modern life and work in the 21st Century*. The growth of corporate volunteering reflects *growing private sector engagement* with the voluntary sector and with the societies and communities in which they operate. Meanwhile, digital volunteering is an exciting outcome of *the revolution in communication technology*, particularly the growth of interactive web 2.0, social media and mobile devices. The final trend is *greater entanglement of the voluntary sector and government* that is recasting the institutional and organisational settings in which volunteering takes place.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR AUSTRALIAN EMERGENCY VOLUNTEERING

There is no doubt that these 'big 4' forces of change will reshape the future landscape of emergency volunteering in Australia as elsewhere. However, exactly what shape this future landscape will take is unclear. In large part, it depends on how emergency management organisations, volunteer managers and volunteers themselves respond to the shifting constellation of challenges and opportunities that are developing in an unfolding "new world" of volunteering. The current narrow focus on shoring up and protecting the traditional volunteer base of Australian state and territory emergency service agencies against emerging challenges needs to be expanded to embrace new opportunities to engage with a potentially larger, more diverse, more empowered and more innovative volunteer base.

Emerging research reveals numerous benefits to organisations of engaging with *episodic volunteers*. These include accessing a larger potential volunteer base, potentially greater flexibility, adaptability and pragmatism amongst episodic volunteers compared to traditional volunteers, and the likelihood that episodic volunteers will commit more time in the shorter-term, which is of particular relevance to disaster response.
For emergency management organisations, more diverse and flexible recruitment and retention strategies are needed to tap into the potential contribution of episodic volunteers. This includes practices such as offering more diverse volunteering roles and experiences, allowing volunteers to more actively shape their own roles, engaging further with skills-based volunteering, as well as actively fostering a sense of community and building social capital amongst volunteers.

Opportunities to develop partnerships with the private sector to support *corporate and skills-based emergency volunteering* are not being taken up. Most corporate volunteering appears to be reactionary and ad hoc, while on the emergency management sector side there appears to be growing doubt over the potential role of corporate volunteering in particular. Given the influence of corporate social responsibility (CSR) strategies, the growth in employee volunteer programs, the growing time commitment expected in paid employment and the preferences of younger employees to combine their paid and volunteer work, it would be worthwhile renewing a focus on exploring models for partnering with the private sector to support emergency volunteering.

Digital volunteering has great potential to strengthen and diversify emergency volunteering; however it would require the greatest degree of change and adaptation within existing emergency management arrangements. While there is a nascent interest in digital volunteering in Australian emergency management, examples of digital volunteering have so far occurred more or less in isolation from the formal emergency management system.

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN-OCHA) lists three adaptation needs amongst traditional humanitarian organisations in order to harness the potential of digital volunteering that are also pertinent to Australian emergency management. They are to adapt to: 1) work with new data sources, 2) work with new partners and techniques, and 3)

the idea of information as a basic need in humanitarian response. The UN-OCHA report also argues that "These adaptations are not optional" and stresses that "Governments and responders will soon need answers to the questions: "Where were you? We Facebooked/tweeted/texted for help, why didn't someone come?"

The potential impacts of the shifting relationship between government and the voluntary sector on volunteering are unclear. However, there are opportunities for pursuing supportive *public-voluntary sector partnerships*. The response of volunteers and volunteer-led organisations to the new organisational and institutional contexts appears to be developing along one of two divergent paths: increased professionalization and greater informality. Professionalization may create greater potential for partnerships as non-profits take up more professional and business-like models of operation that are more familiar to and compatible with government agencies. While a growth in informal, grass-roots volunteering would be less predictable for emergency management organisations, it is well aligned with the national goal of building community resilience to disasters.

CONCLUSIONS

A key message arising from this report is that emergency volunteering is undergoing a process of transformation rather than one of decline. One thing is clear; the future landscape of emergency volunteering is going to be populated by a much wider and more diverse range of players than in the past. In order to harness the potential of this new landscape, existing emergency management organisations will need to: a) develop more diverse and flexible approaches to engage with a wider range of volunteers and volunteering styles, and b) seek out new forms of partnership and collaboration with both the voluntary and private sectors.

1. INTRODUCTION

A narrative of crisis and decline pervades thinking and writing on volunteerism with respect to emergencies and disasters in Australia. This narrative has arisen out of experience with – and research on – the growing recruitment and retention challenges facing volunteer managers in state and territory emergency service agencies (Reinholtd 1999; Ellis *et al.* 2004; McLennan and Birch 2005; McLennan 2008; Parkin 2008; Baxter-Tomkins and Wallace 2009; Esmond 2009; McLennan *et al.* 2009). The *National Emergency Management Volunteer Action Plan* released by the Attorney-General's Department, for example, states that "work-life patterns, lifestyle expectations, demographic changes, domestic migration, an ageing population and community fragmentation all provide a significant challenge for the recruitment and retention of emergency management volunteers" (Commonwealth of Australia 2012, p.6). It refers to the situation as "an issue of national importance that impacts on all levels of government and all Australian communities".

Significantly it is not just traditional emergency service volunteering that is in flux at the moment. The landscape of volunteering as a whole is undergoing significant change; in Australia and internationally. Large-scale socioeconomic and political changes have recast the conditions under which people volunteer in the 21st Century. These changes are so significant that the very definitions of volunteering used in both practice and research are being challenged (Cnaan *et al.* 1996; Hustinx *et al.* 2010; Paine *et al.* 2010; Volunteering Australia 2012).

With the notable exception of research into the role of digital volunteers (e.g. Zook *et al.* 2010; Starbird and Palen 2011; Griswold 2013), there has been very little research attention yet given to the impact of key trends on volunteering in the context of disasters and emergencies, and the implications for emergency and disaster management, in Australia or internationally. Within Australia, a focus on shoring up and protecting the traditional volunteer base of Australian state and territory emergency service agencies against emerging challenges has largely drowned out awareness of emerging new opportunities. If unchecked, this overly narrow focus will continue to feed a narrative of crisis and decline in emergency volunteering that threatens to leave emergency management organisations falling behind in a changing volunteer landscape.

This paper presents a more complete picture of the changing landscape of emergency volunteering. It adopts a broader analytical point of view, identifying key shifts in the volunteering landscape as a whole and considering the potential implications for Australian emergency volunteering more particularly. Importantly, it includes within its purview volunteering that takes place both with and without affiliation to state and territory emergency service agencies.

A key outcome of this research endeavour is to redress the current imbalance in the view of Australian emergency volunteering, which the authors hold to be overly negative. Instead, a second, contrasting narrative of transformation and opportunity is introduced, and emergency management organisations are encouraged to harness the potential of an emerging new volunteering

landscape by: a) developing more flexible strategies and approaches to engage with an increasingly diverse volunteer base, and b) seeking out new forms of partnership and collaboration between public, voluntary and private sectors.

2. A DIVIDED PICTURE OF EMERGENCY VOLUNTEERING IN AUSTRALIA

Australia's giving culture as a whole is strong and vibrant. It was ranked in the top six giving nations in the World Giving Index 2014, based on an average of three measures - the percentage of people who in a typical month donate money to charity, volunteer their time, and help a stranger". It ranked 16th out of 135 nations with respect to volunteering time. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics' (ABS) surveys of voluntary work, both volunteering rates (as a percentage of people over 18 who have volunteered in the last 12 months) and the total number of hours volunteered have risen since 1995 when the first national survey of voluntary work was conducted (see Table 1). This increase exists across all states and territories, although the rate of increase varies. Surveyed volunteer rates were higher outside of capital cities in all survey years, but increased both in and outside of capital cities over time. Volunteer rates increased over time for both men and women.

TABLE 1: FORMAL VOLUNTEER PARTICIPATION OVER TIME IN AUSTRALIA, 1995-2010

	1995*	2000*	2006, adjusted+	2006, unadjusted+	2010++
Number of volunteers	3.2 million	4.4 million	5.4 million	5.2 million	6.1 million
Volunteer rate *(% population, aged 18yrs or over)*	24%	32%	35%	34%	36%
Total annual hours of voluntary work	512 million	704 million	730 million	713 million	Not collected
Median hours of voluntary work per year	74 hrs	72 hrs	56 hrs	56 hrs	Not collected

Sources: * (ABS 2000); + (ABS 2006); ++ (ABS 2010).
Note 1: Due to methodological differences, the 1995 survey data was recalculated to improve its comparability to the 2000 survey. The recalculated data is used here. There is some indication that the methodology used in 1995 undercounted volunteers (see ABS 2000, p.38-40).
Note 2: The methodology used in the survey of voluntary work was changed again in 2006. The 2006 data was adjusted for the purpose of comparing volunteering rates to previous rates, but 2010 data was not. The 2006 adjusted (comparable to 2000) and unadjusted (comparable to 2010) data are both included here.

This picture of a strong and consistent culture of volunteerism contrasts sharply with the narrative of crisis and decline in volunteering with respect to emergencies and disasters in Australia.
Volunteers form the backbone of emergency management organisations in Australia. States and territories have statutory authority for emergency management in Australia, with support from the federal government. Most of the country's state and territory emergency service agencies rely on a considerable volunteer workforce, estimated to be around 500,000 people strong nationally (Commonwealth of Australia 2012). This reliance is historical. For example, the roots of rural fire authorities lie in the formation of community volunteer fire brigades, due in part to geographical characteristics, particularly

"large distances between population centres and sparse human settlement"(McLennan and Birch 2005, p.102).

As a 2008 report into *Issues Facing Australian Volunteer-Based Emergency Services Organisations* highlights, emergency service volunteers are crucial to Australia's capacity to respond to natural disasters:

> Australia's capacity to respond to natural disasters has been based largely on a range of specialised volunteer-based organisations, each of which relies on a small cadre of paid (or career) staff and a much larger workforce of (unpaid) volunteers who are mobilised and deployed on the basis of need in response to a particular disaster or emergency incident (McLennan 2008, p.4)

Thus, challenges in recruitment and retention of volunteers experienced by these agencies present serious threats to Australia's response capacity.

While these challenges are very real, the field of view through which they are brought into focus is a narrow one. The traditional emergency service agency volunteer – while absolutely crucial to Australia's heavily volunteer reliant emergency response capacity– is only one part of a broader and much larger emergency volunteering picture. This picture is also populated by formal not-for-profit organisations; emergent, extending and established community groups; and informal citizens responding to disaster (Whittaker *et al.* forthcoming). It also extends across the broader emergency management cycle that includes prevention, preparedness and recovery in addition to response, and increasingly includes newer forms of volunteering such as digital. This focus on the traditional volunteer base of state and territory emergency service agencies while largely excluding other new and existing forms of volunteers, volunteer organisations and volunteer activities, has emphasized the challenges for emergency volunteering over the opportunities presented by the changing volunteer landscape, leading to a narrative of decline and crisis.

This narrative of decline and crisis is further exacerbated by a dichotomy that exists in the way emergency volunteering is portrayed within Australian emergency management. Long-term, formal volunteers affiliated with state and territory emergency service agencies are contrasted against (presumed) unskilled, 'spontaneous' volunteers that are not affiliated with any part of the formal emergency response system (e.g. Commonwealth of Australia 2012). However, this dichotomy fails to acknowledge other, more diverse forms of volunteering.

Emergency Management Australia (EMA, 1998, 114) defines a 'volunteer emergency worker' as someone who 'engages in emergency activity at the request (either directly or indirectly) or with the express or implied consent of the Chief Executive (however designated), or of a person acting with the authority of the Chief Executive of an agency to which either the State emergency response or recovery plan applies'. 'Spontaneous' volunteers have been described as "individuals or groups of people who seek or are invited to contribute their assistance during and/or after an event, and who are unaffiliated with any part of the existing official emergency management response and recovery system and may or may not have relevant training, skills

or experience" (Australian Red Cross 2010, p.5). Despite the inclusion of groups in this definition, spontaneous volunteers are more commonly conceived to be people who volunteer individually rather than through the emergent community groups that have been shown to commonly arise in response to crises (Barraket *et al.* 2013, p.9). In the Australian context, spontaneous volunteers also tend to be portrayed as unskilled and as more problematic than valuable to the response effort.

As well as presenting an exaggerated and overly simplistic picture of emergency volunteering, this dichotomy is also becoming increasingly outdated given the changing landscape of volunteering. Research shows that today's volunteers are less and less likely to commit large numbers of hours over a long period to a single organisation. Organisations that hold onto a model of volunteer recruitment and retention that relies almost exclusively on this more traditional style of volunteering thus run the risk of 'falling behind the times'. If they disregard and discount the new forms of volunteering that are on the rise, they are likely to face the contraction of their current volunteer base, despite efforts to retain it, while also missing the emerging opportunities to complement and strengthen this traditional base by connecting with a much larger, but also more diverse potential base of 'new wave' volunteers.

Fortunately, there is real and growing interest amongst state and territory emergency service agencies, as well as other emergency management organisations, in seeking to engage with a broader and more diverse volunteer base. Intense and widespread end user interest in the *Out of Uniform: building community resilience through non-traditional emergency volunteering* project is evidence of this in and of itself. Changes in the national policy environment are also supportive. The *National Strategy for Disaster Resilience* (COAG 2011) and *National Emergency Volunteer Action Plan* (Commonwealth of Australia 2012) have steered government policy towards consideration of volunteering beyond emergency service agencies. It is important, however, to acknowledge that this emerging policy focus is not without its problems. In particular, growing government reliance on volunteers to deliver public services, as discussed further in section 4.4, is contributing to a difficult and competitive volunteer environment (see also Fahey 2003).

3. REVIEW APPROACH

When it comes to identifying emerging trends in volunteering, the greatest attention by far has been given to trends in volunteer participation, e.g. in the rates and shifting profiles of individual volunteers. Yet this is only a part of the picture. As Studen and von Schnurbein (2013, p.406) emphasise, it is necessary to examine factors that shape volunteering on at least three levels. The first is the 'micro-level' of "motives, sociodemographic characteristics, and personality traits" that influence "why people volunteer" and "who volunteers". This level is the focus of national volunteering surveys and also of much of the research on volunteering. The second is the 'meso-level' of the "organizational settings that affect volunteers collectively", and the third is the 'macro-level' of "societal values, government policies, and social capital". Of course, factors at these three levels interact considerably. In this paper we consider trends that cut across all three of these levels, with a primary focus on macro-level socioeconomic trends. Shifts in macro-level social, economic and cultural settings underpin changes in the 'who, how and why' of modern day volunteering.

The most significant trends were identified by triangulating two sources of information. The first was international literature on changes and trends in volunteerism and volunteering. The second was trends indicated directly in domestic data and research studies on volunteering in Australia. These two sources were then cross-referenced (e.g. international and domestic trends information). A close correlation was found between the international and domestic sources with the contextual trends shaping volunteering in Australia closely reflecting those observed in other developed nations and the international volunteerism literature in general.

The review of volunteering trends conducted for this report was limited in three key respects. The first was in regards to the type of volunteering included. Broadly defined, volunteering includes 'any activity in which time is given freely to benefit another person, group or organization' (Wilson 2000, p.215). The focus of this paper is primarily on formal volunteering, that is, volunteering undertaken in an organised context (Cnaan *et al.* 1996). Informal volunteering, conducted without affiliation to a formal volunteer-involving organisation or group is only included peripherally. This reflects the formal volunteering focus of volunteerism literature. A separate paper directly examines informal citizen volunteering in response to disasters and emergencies (Whittaker *et al.* forthcoming), which is significant and worthy of greater direct research attention.

The second limitation is a primary focus on disaster response volunteering, with only secondary consideration of volunteering in the areas of disaster and emergency preparation, mitigation and recovery. Again, this reflects the focus of the literature reviewed, this time of disaster social science literature concerned with volunteering. Where possible, literature on volunteering in the other phases of the disaster management cycle has also been included.

The final limitation derives from the broader analytical viewpoint chosen for the review. The review was designed to identify key shifts in the volunteering landscape as a whole. This approach was selected in order to expand on the

narrow focus in existing Australian emergency management research on emergency service agency volunteering to the exclusion of other forms of emergency volunteering. More particular trends that may be impacting emergency volunteering (both within and outside of emergency service agencies) are therefore not identified in this review. Any more particular trends will, however, be identified through a series of case studies currently being conducted.

Additional key terminology used in this paper requires some clarification.

We use the term *emergency service agencies* (ESAs) to refer to Australian state and territory government emergency service agencies that have primary statutory authority for public safety in the event of an emergency. We use the term *emergency management organisations* (EMOs) to refer to the wider body of organisations that make up the formal emergency management system, including governmental, non-profit and community organisations (e.g. the Australian Red Cross, the Salvation Army, local community groups) with roles in prevention, preparedness, response and recovery.

Following common Australian usage, we use the terms *disaster* and *emergency* (and hence also *disaster management* and *emergency management*) interchangeably. However, our primary focus is on emergencies arising as a result of *natural hazard events* such as bushfires, floods and major storms.

Given the focus of this paper, we use the term *voluntary sector* to refer to the activities undertaken by non-profit organisations in preference to the numerous other descriptors commonly used such as 'non-profit', 'not-for-profit', 'third', 'charitable', 'civil society' and 'community' sector.

4. THE 'BIG 4' FORCES OF CHANGE

While there are numerous developments currently shaping and reshaping the nature and practice of volunteering, based on a broad review of the literature they can be justifiably distilled down to four big, interconnected forces of change. The first three of these are each associated with the recent burgeoning of new or previously uncommon forms of volunteering: episodic, corporate (and skills-based) and digital. Combined, these three fast-growing forms of volunteering are widely regarded as "the wave of the future" (Cnaan and Handy 2005, p.33), and they will certainly contribute to the future landscape of emergency volunteering in Australia.

The rise of episodic volunteering is most directly connected to the *transformation of modern life and work in the 21st Century*. The growth of corporate volunteering reflects *growing private sector engagement* with the voluntary sector and with the societies and communities in which they operate. Meanwhile, digital volunteering is an exciting outcome of the *revolution in communication technology*, particularly the growth of interactive web 2.0, social media and mobile devices. The final trend is *greater entanglement of the voluntary sector and government* that is recasting the institutional and organisational settings in which volunteering takes place.

4.1 TRANSFORMATION OF LIFE AND WORK IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Amongst the international research on volunteerism, there is widespread acknowledgement of a significant qualitative shift occurring in the nature of volunteering as a result of a transformation in the way people live and work in the 21st Century (Wilson *et al.* 2001; Zappalà *et al.* 2001; Hustinx and Lammertyn 2003; Macduff 2006; Hustinx 2010). This is described variably as a shift from 'old', 'classic' or 'traditional' to 'new' volunteerism (Hustinx *et al.* 2010), from 'institutionalized' to 'self-organized' volunteering (Hustinx and Lammertyn 2003), 'collective' to 'reflexive' volunteering styles (Hustinx and Lammertyn 2003), from 'time-driven' to 'cause-driven' volunteering (Evans and Saxton 2005), and from 'charitable' to 'social enterprise' volunteers (Zappalà *et al.* 2001; Warburton and McDonald 2009).

Compared to more traditional 'high-commitment' volunteers, so-called 'new' volunteers are generally found to exhibit characteristics such as (see for example Hustinx and Lammertyn 2003):

- Greater interest in shorter-term, fixed duration and project-based volunteering experiences (e.g. episodic volunteering).
- Greater individualism in the way they make decisions about where, how and why they volunteer.
- Greater desire for autonomy in influencing decisions, using existing skills and forming their own solutions.
- Greater import given to personal rewards and benefits obtained from the volunteering experience.
- A lesser degree of loyalty to particular organisations in favour of greater loyalty to particular causes, projects or outcomes that are meaningful to the individual.

A portion of volunteers have always displayed these types of characteristics, and thus the narrative of a chronological shift from 'old' to 'new' volunteerism is somewhat misleading. However, the prevalence of these characteristics amongst volunteers in the 21st Century has rapidly increased such that it is not an exaggeration to speak of a 'new wave' of volunteering.

In Australia, for example, this new wave is increasingly evident in both survey data and qualitative studies of volunteering (e.g. Volunteering Australia 2012; Warburton *et al.* 2013). A steady growth in shorter-term volunteering and a decline in the median number of hours being volunteered are indicated in the ABS's national data (see Table 1).

At the same time, government and industry reports suggest that younger volunteers in particular increasingly expect more skilled and influential roles (Commonwealth of Australia 2008), as do the growing number of new retirees (Commonwealth of Australia 2010). Surveys of volunteers increasingly show that Australians are more and more motivated by the benefits of volunteering, such as developing new skills that increase their employability, and new opportunities to socialise and build social networks (Hyde *et al.* 2014).

A range of socioeconomic changes are cited as driving this shift. They include cultural globalisation, mass media and growing access to the Internet (Hustinx and Lammertyn 2003; Handy *et al.* 2006), as well as an "ageing population; unprecedented affluence; changing family and household arrangements; escalating education and delays in financial independence; mushrooming choice; the ICT revolution; and raised aspirations" (Evans and Saxton 2005, p.15; see also Rochester *et al.* 2010, p.69-83). Another factor is a generational shift in the volunteer base and subsequently in volunteer's attitudes, values and skills, both with a growth in numbers of younger 'Generation Y' or 'Millennial' volunteers (Rochester *et al.* 2010, p.131) as well as rising numbers of older, newly retiring 'Baby Boomers' (Culp 2009). Collectively, such developments have recast the conditions and values that shape people's choices about how, when, where and why to volunteer compared to the past.

There is wide agreement in academic literature on volunteering in the 21st Century (Cnaan and Handy 2005; Handy *et al.* 2006; Macduff 2006; Rochester *et al.* 2010; Holmes 2014; Hyde *et al.* 2014) as well as in government and NGO reports (CRC/SA/SJA 2008; NVPC 2008) that a rapid growth of shorter-term, episodic volunteering and an associated decline in longer-term, high-commitment volunteering is one of the most widespread changes in recent times. Episodic volunteers are simply "individuals who engage in one-time or short-term volunteer opportunities" (Cnaan and Handy 2005, p.30). Alternatively, they can be thought of as people who, for various reasons, prefer fixed-term volunteer engagements with concrete start and end dates.

Episodic volunteering is considered in much of the literature to be problematic; being associated with a decline in 'serious' and altruistic volunteering and a rise in more selfish motivations associated with personal and instrumental interests and needs (Hustinx and Lammertyn 2003). For example, Evans and Saxton (2005) refer to "selfish volunteers: people who are as interested about what they get out of volunteering, as what they put in" (p.45). However, other studies indicate that this picture is incorrect, and that "other- and self-directed impulses

are not necessarily at odds, but come to strengthen and enrich each other" (Hustinx and Lammertyn 2003, p.174). Indeed in Australia, 'helping others and the community' has remained the primary reason that people give for volunteering (Commonwealth of Australia 2008), despite changes in the way people volunteer and an increase in the importance given to the personal benefits of volunteering over time.

Rising demands and expectations of modern employment are a key factor in people's growing preferences for shorter-term volunteering engagements (Hustinx and Lammertyn 2003; Cnaan and Handy 2005; Handy *et al.* 2006; Rochester *et al.* 2010, p.69-83). Paid work has encroached on the time that people have available for volunteering in various ways: a "longer work week and fewer vacations … dual-earner households … women, especially mothers, move into the workforce at a tremendous pace, … the normative expectation of productivity per worker has increased and fierce competition in the workplace" (Cnaan and Handy 2005, p.30). Growing flexibility and diversity in employment conditions may also be altering people's expectations of volunteering roles (e.g. "part-time, flextime, job-share, consultant as worker, intermittent, telecommuting and seasonal work", see Macduff 2006, p.31).

It is important not to overstate a distinction between so-called traditional and episodic volunteering, however. For example, where the distinction lies between short-term and long-term engagement is somewhat in the eye of the beholder. This is particularly so given that episodic volunteering varies greatly across a continuum that ranges from one-off, ad-hoc activities at one end to repeated – and potentially regular and committed – but shorter- or fixed-term engagements at the other end (Handy *et al.* 2006). Indeed, studies have found that a majority of episodic volunteers actually volunteer repeatedly (Cnaan and Handy 2005), and that many so-called episodic volunteers also fulfil more 'traditional', long-term volunteering roles in the same or other organisations (Handy *et al.* 2006; Holmes 2014). Alternatively, people may oscillate between longer- and shorter-term engagements as their time commitments elsewhere change over time (Bryen and Madden 2006).

Cnaan and Hardy (2005) also recognise further limitations associated with a growing focus in volunteerism literature on the duration of people's volunteer engagements as the central, defining characteristic of volunteering:

> It gives no indications as to how many hours were volunteered, what kind of task was accomplished, to what extent the volunteer is interested and invested in the cause/organization, whether the volunteer effort [*sic*] supervised, or whether it *[sic]* done under the auspices of a formal agency, and who benefited. In other words, the distinction between episodic volunteers and other volunteers is focused on a single dimension of volunteering and categorizes volunteering as a dichotomous rather than continuous variable (p.31).

There is little direct research available on the growth of episodic volunteering in the context of emergencies and disasters. Indeed, use of the term 'episodic volunteer' is largely confined to the field of volunteerism research and it has barely penetrated into the thinking and writing on emergency and disaster

volunteering, with few exceptions (Starbird and Palen 2013; Hyde *et al.* 2014). This may not be a bad thing, however, given the limitations of the term as a useful categorization of volunteering styles.

In the context of disasters and emergencies, however, shot-term volunteering is far less novel than volunteerism literature in general suggests. A large and well-established body of research on citizen responses to disasters exists that dates back to the 1950s. It documents the normality of people converging on disaster sites to provide immediate assistance and forming emergent groups to address urgent local needs (see Whittaker *et al.* forthcoming for a review of this literature). While not framed as volunteerism, this research nonetheless demonstrates that episodic volunteering is a long-standing norm when disasters and emergencies occur. However, as much of this activity takes place outside of sustained, formal organisations, it has largely been overlooked by volunteerism researchers that maintain a narrower focus on organisationally-based volunteering.

4.2 THE REVOLUTION IN COMMUNCATION TECHNOLOGY

The second of the 'big four' forces of change is the development of new communication technology that is transforming volunteering as significantly as it is transforming other areas of social life. According to the UN's *State of the World's Volunteerism* report, "technological developments are opening up spaces for people to volunteer in ways that have no parallel in history. These developments enable people to relate to one another globally and more rapidly than ever before" (UNV 2011, p.26). While the development and accessibility of new technology is a part of the transformation of life and work in the 21st Century, its impact is so pervasive and far-reaching that it must be recognised as a force of change in volunteering in itself.

New communications technology has impacted all aspects of volunteering, including how volunteers are managed, who volunteers, what they do, where they do it and how. However, the impact that has by far generated the most excitement and attention in both the volunteerism and disaster management literatures is the incredible growth and impact of digital volunteering.

Volunteering is digital (or 'virtual' or 'online') when it is "completed, in whole or in part, using the Internet and a home, school, telecenter, or work computer or other Internet-connected device, such as a smartphone (a cell phone with Internet functions) or personal digital assistant (PDA)" (Cravens and Ellis 2014, p.1). It can be thought of as a form of telecommuting for volunteers instead of paid employees (Cravens and Ellis 2014, p.1). Beneficiaries of digital volunteering are usually non-profit organisations, grassroots community groups or community-focused government agencies such as schools (Cravens and Ellis 2014, p.2). The range of activities that digital volunteers undertake is extremely broad. It includes research, translation and transcription, design and multi-media editing, provision of expert advice, tutoring and mentoring, testing and quality assurance, fundraising, communications and marketing, facilitation and coordination, and data management and dissemination (UNV 2011, p.27; Cravens and Ellis 2014, p.2). Digital volunteering "has eliminated the need for volunteerism to be tied to specific times and locations. Thus, it greatly increases

the freedom and flexibility of volunteer engagement and complements the outreach and impact of volunteers serving in situ" (UNV 2011, p.27).

Unlike the other 'big 4' forces of change, there is a large and fast growing body of research on the impact of new communications technology and digital volunteering in the context of disasters and emergencies. This is particularly so since the massive response of digital volunteers to the 2010 Haiti earthquake: a watershed event that opened the door on 'digital humanitarianism' that is truly global in reach (Zook *et al.* 2010; Meier 2012). A volunteer-driven, real-time crisis map using the multimedia mapping platform Ushahidi was central to the Haiti digital volunteer response. The following quote from one of the people responsible for launching the crisis map highlights the extent of the digital volunteer contribution and its game-changing potential for disaster management more generally:

> Some ten days after the Haiti map was launched, the head of the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Association (FEMA), Craig Fugate, noted that the live map provided the most comprehensive and up-to-date information available to the humanitarian community. What is striking about this statement is that the map was not launched by FEMA or the United Nations (UN) or any professional humanitarian organization, for that matter. The live map was launched by student volunteers from a dorm room in snowy Boston some 1,500 miles away from Haiti. Over three thousand reports were mapped, and, according to the U.S. Marine Corps and U.S. Coast Guard, the Haiti crisis map helped them save hundreds of lives (Meier 2012, p.92)

Increasingly, digital volunteering takes place through new forms of Internet-enabled volunteer organisations, networks and communities (Jaeger *et al.* 2007; World Bank and GFDRR 2012; Griswold 2013; Reuter *et al.* 2013). Following the Haiti effort, for example, a number of new volunteering organisations and networks emerged that used web 2.0 interactivity to facilitate global collaboration amongst digital volunteers – and in many cases have also connected with on-site volunteers and professional responders. Examples include Humanity Road, the Virtual Operations Support Teams (VOST) network, The Standby Taskforce and Crisis Commons. Similarly, Sahana is another influential group that was formed by members of the Sri Lankan IT community following the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami. Some of these groups focus on immediate, direct assistance to the disaster response (e.g. Humanity Road, Standby Taskforce) while others were formed primarily to develop technology solutions to the urgent and complex information and communications needs that are unique to disaster situations (e.g. Sahana, Crisis Commons).

Digital volunteer networks are diverse in form and function, varying from the more established and structured organisations (e.g. Humanity Road) to loose and self-organising communities (VOSTs). In general, however, they tend to be "flattened, decentralised structures with decision-making and conflict resolution mechanisms that were adapted from online communities like Wikipedia and open-source software development projects" (World Bank and GFDRR 2012). More recently, the Digital Humanitarian Network (DHN 2015) and the International Network of Crisis Mappers (Crisis Mappers Net) have formed as

'networks of networks' with an aim to facilitate collaboration between digital volunteer networks and traditional disaster response and humanitarian organisations internationally (see also Capelo *et al.* 2012).

Digital volunteer efforts often emerge and self-organise online following a disaster event much like on-site volunteer efforts (Whittaker *et al.* forthcoming). A particular strength of digital volunteering comes from the enormous capacity of the Internet to enable crowdsourcing. Crowdsourcing involves outsourcing a specific task to a crowd. It can involve either an unbounded crowd (e.g. the task is open to anyone) or a bounded one (e.g. the task is limited to a small group of trusted people) (see Poblet Balcell *et al.* 2014). Internet-based or virtual crowdsourcing is the focus of a rapidly-growing body of research that brings together disaster social science and information technology communication (ICT) research. It is associated with a range of related concepts and research fields such as "computer-supported cooperative work" (Palen and Liu 2007), "distributed crowd work" (Starbird 2012), "citizen sensors" and citizens as "social computers" (Goodchild 2007; Laituri and Kodrich 2008; Poblet Balcell *et al.* 2014) and "online social convergence" (Hughes *et al.* 2008).

A particularly important type of crowdsourcing in the context of disasters and emergencies is volunteered geographic information (VGI) (Goodchild and Glennon 2010; Haworth and Bruce forthcoming). VGI "involves the sharing and mapping of spatial data … through voluntary information gathered by the general public" (Haworth and Bruce forthcoming). People can either actively and knowingly contribute information for a collaborative mapping effort, or the information can be mined from social media by a third party, such that people's volunteered contribution is more passive and unknowingly made (Haworth and Bruce forthcoming). This kind of crowdsourcing encapsulates the idea "that information obtained from a crowd of many observers is likely to be closer to the truth than information obtained from one observer" (Goodchild and Glennon 2010, p.233). Importantly, given the urgency of disaster response, VGI can produce mapped spatial information much more rapidly than traditional methods, even approaching real-time mapping. Thus "a greater number of maps can be produced in a shorter period of time, allowing scarce technical resources to be diverted elsewhere" (Zook et al. 2010, p.12). Digital and on-site volunteers often collaborate through digital networks to collect, organize and map disaster-related geographic information. For example, Ushahidi's Haiti crisis map was possible because of two kinds of crowdsourcing that took place concurrently: "Ushahidi leveraged the knowledge of a geographically dispersed "crowd" of affected people to provide raw information to their system. These SMS messages were then processed by a remote, virtual "crowd" of volunteers who verified the information and plotted it onto their publicly available crowdmap" (Starbird 2011).

Arguably the greatest contribution of digital volunteers and their networks and organisations to disaster response has been managing and disseminating large amounts of disaster information including warnings, damage and threat assessments, resource locations, calls for help, and offers of assistance (Sutton *et al.* 2008; Bruns and Burgess 2013; Reuter *et al.* 2013). In many cases this has involved real-time crisis mapping. In the Internet age, crisis events unleash what

has been described as 'big data' and a 'data deluge' that occurs across multiple platforms including social network services like Facebook, blogs, microblogging services such as Twitter and wikis, as well as photo-sharing sites like Flickr and Instagram. Managing, collating and organising very large amounts of data in near to real time is one area where digital volunteers have excelled (Jaeger *et al.* 2007). Digital "information brokers"(Hughes and Palen 2009) have been found more effective at disseminating and exchanging information than more traditional government organisations in a number of studies (Jaeger *et al.* 2007; Palen and Liu 2007).

Importantly, studies find that "traditional sources of authority remain central to crisis communication" involving digital volunteers and crowdsourcing (Bruns and Burgess 2013, p.378). The potential contribution of digital volunteers is not to replace traditional sources of authority but to harness the power of the Internet and crowdsourcing to "greatly enhance the logistical systems upon which relief efforts are ultimately grounded" (Zook *et al.* 2010,p.29-30). However, traditional command-and-control models "do not easily adapt to the expanding data-generating and -seeking activities by the public" (Palen and Liu 2007). Processes such as "improvised activities and temporary organizations" created by the public can present a considerable challenge to the traditional operation of formal response agencies (Palen and Liu 2007).

Of course, there are also challenges and risks associated with the rapid rise and significant impact of digital volunteering and new communication technology more broadly in disaster management. A recent study identified challenges and risks identified by digital volunteers themselves (Burns 2014), which included: laypeople's abilities to interpret hazard and risk information; the impact of categorising and abstracting disaster information for mapping and coding; the accuracy of crowdsourced data; and privacy and visibility concerns. The UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN-OCHA 2013) has also listed a range of areas where challenges and risks exist: accuracy and utility, bias, power inequalities, information overload, increased expectations, privacy, ethics and security (see also Poblet Balcell 2012). Issues of power inequality and social exclusion warrant particular attention, given the potential impact of a digital divide that could "further exclude and disenfranchise substantial numbers of marginalized people" (UN-OCHA 2013, p.36).

It is also important to recognise that, despite the research focus on digital volunteering, the use of new communications technology by volunteers is not limited to digital volunteers and their networks only: "Real volunteer groups fight against the effects of a crisis locally and may appear in the form of neighbourly help. They may use the internet as a potential supportive resource among many others" (Reuter *et al.* 2013, p.1). The use of Facebook groups, for example, is a cheap, easy, fast and accessible way for on-site volunteer groups to coordinate and share information. A very successful example of this was the clean-up response of the Student Volunteer Army following the Christchurch earthquakes in New Zealand in 2010 and 2011 that was mobilised and coordinated using Facebook and mobile phones (Lewis 2013).

4.3 GROWING PRIVATE SECTOR ENGAGEMENT

The involvement of the private sector in volunteering has grown enormously since the 1990s. This growth is evident worldwide but is particularly substantial in Australia, the USA and the UK (Flick *et al.* 2000; Cavallaro 2006; The Allen Consulting Group 2007). Known as corporate volunteering, private sector support of volunteering occurs through diverse avenues including structured employee volunteering programs, pro bono work by professionals and professional firms, and less-structured employer support for one-off project-based engagements undertaken by employee teams and individuals, for example through paid or unpaid release from employee duties.

It is difficult to gauge the full extent of corporate volunteering, as few companies collect data on their programs. However, some studies suggest that two-thirds to three-quarters of Australian businesses had some form of employee volunteering program by the mid-2000s (Zappalá and Cronin 2003; Cavallaro 2006). Corporate volunteering is far more prevalent amongst larger companies (over 250 employees), with the exception of pro bono work performed through small professional firms (Madden *et al.* 2006). However, smaller businesses are likely to be highly involved in their local community outside of organised volunteer programs as a matter of course (Madden *et al.* 2006; Kuo and Means 2012).

The structure and content of employee volunteering programs vary considerably (Cavallaro 2006; The Allen Consulting Group 2007; Booth *et al.* 2009). Within Australia, it appears that most programs are relatively informal, involving little more than paid (or unpaid) release time and leaving employees to decide where to volunteer (Zappalá and Cronin 2003; Booth *et al.* 2009). However, a slowly increasingly number of employee volunteer programs are being delivered through strategic, long-term partnerships between businesses and non-profits (Commonwealth of Australia 2008; UNV 2011).

On the private sector side, the expansion of corporate volunteering is driven by the adoption of corporate social responsibility (CSR) strategies (Zappalá and Cronin 2003; Lindgreen *et al.* 2009, p.152) as well as by the expectations and values of employees (Centre for Corporate Public Affairs 2008). Employee volunteering programs are fast becoming an important part of CSR strategies, with considerable benefits to companies (Zappalá and Cronin 2003; The Allen Consulting Group 2007). They can generate community goodwill (Austin and Seitanidi 2012) as well as build the skills, motivation and morale of a company's workforce (The Allen Consulting Group 2007; Austin and Seitanidi 2012). They may also contribute to team-building when employees volunteer as groups on collaborative projects (Cavallaro 2006; The Allen Consulting Group 2007).

Increasingly, employees – particularly 'Generation Y' employees – are putting pressure on companies to provide volunteering programs. In a 2006 survey of 1,000 Gen Y people in the USA, around 62% indicated that the availability of volunteering opportunities was a factor they considered when deciding where to work (Booth *et al.* 2009). There is also rising awareness amongst managers that offering volunteer programs can make all the difference when seeking to attract and retain the best staff (Twigg 2001; Austin and Seitanidi 2012). Given the increasing encroachment of paid work on people's time discussed above,

it is likely that employer support through employee volunteer programs will become increasingly important for encouraging and enabling people to volunteer.

On the voluntary sector side, a more competitive environment (see also section 4.4) has spurred larger numbers of non-profits to seek engagement with companies to access both human and financial resources (Samuel *et al.* 2013; Points of Light Foundation and Hands On Network n.d.). While there is a large literature that explores the benefits and challenges to companies of fostering employee volunteering and non-profit partnerships, very little attention has been given to exploring the benefits and challenges on the non-profit and public sides. The benefits to non-profits from corporate volunteering can be substantial. It can build and sustain capacity and transfer skills and knowledge that non-profits would be unable to acquire at market rates (Points of Light Foundation and Hands On Network n.d.). This is particularly so when the programs are skills-based (Austin and Seitanidi 2012; Points of Light Foundation and Hands On Network n.d.). It can also generate valuable social capital, reduce the cost and time of volunteer management, and increase the availability of volunteer labour (Austin and Seitanidi 2012; Samuel *et al.* 2013). Additional benefits include raising awareness of a non-profit's mission and potentially influencing a company through the exchange of values and behaviour change (Samuel *et al.* 2013).

However, realising these benefits also faces some stiff challenges. Smaller non-profits are likely to miss out as companies prefer to partner with larger organisations (Cavallaro 2006). Companies may have little knowledge of non-profit needs and capacities for taking on volunteers, and their programs can sometimes advance business interests at the expense of the goals of the non-profit (Cavallaro 2006). Thus a mismatch can occur in expectations of what a program will deliver (The Allen Consulting Group 2007). Financial dependency and power imbalances can occur (Samuel *et al.* 2013). The investment in organising employee volunteers may wind up outweighing the contributions made if the program is not well-tailored tho the needs of the non-profit (The Allen Consulting Group 2007; Samuel *et al.* 2013). These potential pitfalls are less likely to eventuate when ongoing relationships between companies and non-profits are established (Cavallaro 2006), and when non-profits have a strategy in place for coping with for-profit partners (Samuel *et al.* 2013).

Corporate volunteering increasingly overlaps with and reinforces another emerging trend in volunteering: skills-based volunteering (SBV). In the context of corporate volunteering, it involves "using individual or collective corporate expertise to support the work of a community group" (The Allen Consulting Group 2007). Pro bono work is a particular kind of skills-based volunteering where professionals and professional firms provide their core services free or below market value to NGOs (The Allen Consulting Group 2007). While individuals can volunteer their skills to non-profits directly or via the many volunteer-matching websites that are emerging, companies and professional associations are increasingly supporting skills-based volunteering directly. According to the Hands On Network in the USA, which advocates for volunteering: "Today skills-based volunteering is the new way of doing volunteering. In 5 years from now SBV and Pro Bono volunteering services will be so natural that the expression will not need to be defined anymore" (Hands On

Network 2014). However, according to the 2012 *State of Volunteering in Australia* report "skilled volunteering is a young and under-resourced area of the volunteering sector facing growing demands and increasing expectations from government not-for-profit organisations and the community at large" (p.24).

There is surprisingly little research on corporate volunteering in the context of disasters and emergencies, either in academic or 'grey' literature. Further, the small body of academic research available predominantly adopts a business-centric focus. Despite this, it is clear that private sector involvement in all phases of the disaster management cycle is on the rise (Twigg 2001; Johnson *et al.* 2011; White 2012). While volunteering is only one component of this involvement, it is a growing one, and the expansion of employee volunteer programs and partnerships with public and voluntary sector organisations creates a platform for even greater corporate volunteering in disaster management in the future (White 2012).

Globally it is not uncommon for businesses to provide volunteers with technical skills or to undertake technical consultancy either pro bono or below market rates to aid mitigation and other disaster reduction activities as part of their CSR activities (Twigg 2001, p.38). However, this type of activity is predominantly reactive and event-based in nature (Johnson *et al.* 2011). However, more enduring private-NGO and public-private partnerships are developing that promote more ongoing and predominantly skills-based volunteer engagement. Importantly, having an established employee volunteering program and prior participation in cross-sector collaboration have been shown to facilitate corporate participation in collaborative disaster relief efforts (Simo and Bies 2007).

There is some evidence internationally, for example, that public-private partnership volunteer programs developed prior to disasters striking are increasingly being used to mobilise more senior level company representatives to assist public sector bodies in areas such as "information technology, accounting, communication, supply chain management, and fundraising" (White 2012, p.17). Meanwhile, ongoing private-NGO partnerships are similarly being used to facilitate skilled corporate volunteering targeted to meet community and NGO needs when a disaster does strike. One example is the American Red Cross's 'Ready When the Time Comes' program that "trains employees from partnering corporations and mobilizes them as a community-based volunteer force when disaster strikes" (American Red Cross 2015). Another is the involvement of major logistics companies TNT and DHL in ongoing partnerships with international NGOS such as the World Food Programme, the UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies (Lindgreen *et al.* 2009).

4.4 GREATER ENTANGLEMENT OF THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR AND GOVERNMENT

An important shift with potentially large ramifications for Australian emergency volunteering is taking place in the relationship between the voluntary sector and government (Fahey 2003; Cairns *et al.* 2005; Evans *et al.* 2005; MacDermott

2008; Baines *et al.* 2011; Hustinx 2014). This shift is driven by the passing of classic welfare regimes – in which governments had a clear central role in not only funding but also providing social services – and the rise of mixed economies of welfare (Warburton *et al.* 2013; Hustinx 2014) in countries such as Australia, Canada, the UK and the United States. According to Hustinx, a leading researcher in this area:

> The system-wide coordination by the state is interchanged with modes of governance based on volatile and heterogeneous networks and partnerships with both market and third sector. The third sector is confronted with devolution of public responsibility and an increasingly competitive environment characterized by short-term contracting and demands for accountability, performance, and efficiency (Hustinx 2014, p.99)

Within an "Anglophone context" this shift involves "a departure from the classic grassroots model of voluntary associations towards a stronger entanglement with government" (p.100). The impacts of such governmental policy change on the organisational setting in which volunteers work can be summed up thus:

> This organizational change is mainly caused by a changing policy environment, involving increased public funding, processes of marketization, the emergence of a more competitive environment, a new contract culture, and new demands for professionalism (Hustinx 2014, p.100).

These changes have been evident in Australia since the late 1990s, and they have resulted in increased demands on volunteers, uncertain funding, growing government regulation of the sector, and profound changes to the institutional setting of the sector (Flick *et al.* 2000; Zappalà *et al.* 2001; Murphy 2006; MacDermott 2008; Warburton and McDonald 2009; Whelan and Stone 2012; Warburton *et al.* 2013). For example, Zappalá, Parker and Green (2001) describe how "the role of government in welfare and social policy … has been one of gradually pulling back from the direct delivery of services and relying more on non-profit organisations, and in particular, volunteers". They coined the term "social enterprise" to describe non-profit organisations that have changed core aspects of their structure and operation in response to this change to become more akin to those used by private entities. Flick, Bittman and Doyle (2000, p.30) also highlight "the professionalization of the volunteer role and increased demand for volunteers".

Meanwhile, Warburton and MacDonald (2009) describe how the voluntary sector in Australia is increasingly "embracing the values and approaches of the private market" in order to survive in a more competitive funding environment as "government funding to the sector adopts quasi-market models" (p.825). This has led to greater uncertainty of ongoing funding due to "the transition in government support from funding of organisations to funding for services, programs and individual projects" (Commonwealth 2008a, p.36) under a contract model of service delivery (Wilson *et al.* 2001; MacDermott 2008). As voluntary organisations increasingly provide public services under tightly-regulated government contracts, they are exposed to greater governmental regulation and governmental influence over the institutional and organisational settings in which volunteers work (Murphy 2006; Warburton and McDonald 2009).

While these changes have driven improvements in quality in the sector, numerous authors and commentators also warn that the impacts on volunteers and volunteering will be profound but may not be positive overall (Warburton and McDonald 2009; Warburton *et al.* 2013; Nicholson 2014). However, very little research exists examining the consequences for volunteering (Warburton *et al.* 2013; Hustinx 2014). Warburton and MacDonald (2009), for example, warn that the new environment creates "many tensions for a sector that was founded on civil society principles of collaboration and is staffed by volunteers" (p.825). Writing about the changes to volunteering associated with this shift internationally, Hustinx (2014) explains that "as organizational practices become more professional, volunteers are confronted with new roles and demands" (p.101). Warburton, Smith-Merry and Michaels (2013) warn that in Australia "the non-profit sector, and potentially the enthusiasm of volunteers, is being eroded by an ever-increasing avalanche of administration, compliance, occupational health and safety, risk management tasks, competitive tendering, fundraising, and obligatory reporting and paperwork" (p.800). Fahey (2003) sums up the developing environment as one in which a mismatch exists between government expectations of volunteers and the capacity of non-profit and community volunteers to deliver on these expectations:

> volunteering is facing a new challenge in addition to the more obvious difficulties of volunteer recruitment and retention. That threat is in the form of new government expectations of the role of volunteers, through both NGOs and communities … increasing expectations and the use of government strategies that require volunteering, such as the expectation that volunteering can and should be responsible for generating social capital and assisting mutual obligation policies, may stress and damage the culture of volunteering (p.16).

These developments and tensions are already evident in Australian emergency management. For example, pressure from an "ever-increasing avalanche of administration" etcetera, reported by Warburton and colleagues, is already impacting traditional emergency service agency volunteers and volunteer managers (Aldridge Jnr 2003; McLennan 2008). Meanwhile, growing government expectations on volunteers to build social capital and fulfil mutual obligation strategies noted by Fahey are strongly evident in the current policy language in Australian emergency management around building community resilience and advancing shared responsibility (see McLennan and Handmer 2013). While there is potential for such ideas to drive an increase in public participation and very real improvements in Australian emergency management and public safety, there is also a danger that such expectations will not be matched with a corresponding increase in resources, agency support or influence. As Fahey points out, this could stress and damage the culture of volunteering that community resilience and shared responsibility strategies are trying to foster.

5. OPPORTUNITIES FOR AUSTRALIAN EMERGENCY VOLUNTEERING

There is no doubt that the 'big 4' forces of change discussed above will reshape the future landscape of emergency volunteering in Australia as elsewhere. However, exactly what shape this future landscape will take is unclear. In large part, it depends on how emergency management organisations, volunteer managers and volunteers themselves respond to the shifting constellation of challenges and opportunities that are developing in an unfolding "new world of volunteering" (Warburton *et al.* 2013).

As already noted above, in Australian emergency management there has been a narrow focus in both practice and research on shoring up and protecting the traditional volunteer base of Australian state and territory emergency service agencies against emerging challenges. This focus is an important one and it needs to continue into the future. However, it has been so heavy that it has for the large part effectively drowned out awareness of emerging new opportunities, leading to the current narrative of crisis and decline in emergency volunteering. Yet exciting new opportunities to engage with a potentially larger, more diverse, more empowered and more innovative volunteer base do exist. Pursuing these opportunities, however, will require a considerable organisational response from existing emergency management organisations. In this final section, we consider some of the key opportunities developing for Australian emergency volunteering and what will be needed to pursue them.

5.1 EPISODIC VOLUNTEERING

Some emergency management organisations might question the value of engaging with shorter-term, episodic volunteers at all, given their ongoing needs for operational volunteers that are highly trained and the requirement to invest more financial and human resources into volunteer recruitment and retention, training and day-to-day volunteer coordination in order to respond to higher turnover and greater diversity in people's volunteering styles (Hyde *et al.* 2014). However, emerging research also reveals numerous benefits to organisations although, given the diversity of this group, generalisations about both their benefits and risks should be read cautiously.

First, the rise of episodic volunteering is associated with an overall growth of interest in volunteering (Hustinx and Lammertyn 2003; Samuel *et al.* 2013) and an increase in the size of the potential volunteer base. Furthermore, as a sizeable proportion of episodic volunteers are 'habitual', volunteering repeatedly over time, their commitment may be easier to retain by an organisation than is commonly assumed (Handy *et al.* 2006). Additionally, episodic volunteers can exhibit greater flexibility, adaptability and pragmatism compared to more traditional volunteers (Macduff 2006; Macduff *et al.* 2009). Once they choose the volunteering role they wish to fill, they can also be just as willing as traditional volunteers to take direction from an organisation and its managers (Handy *et al.* 2006). Of particular relevance to disaster response, episodic volunteers are also more likely to commit greater time in the short-term

to a project than people who engage in more sustained volunteering (Holmes 2014). Research has also found that episodic volunteers can often turn into longer-term volunteers, so offering short-term opportunities can serve as a kind of "lure" for new recruits (Esmond 2009).

There is growing attention on how to engage with episodic emergency volunteering internationally. A number of governments have begun to develop policies, strategies and guidelines for supporting and harnessing the contribution of shorter-term volunteers. Much of this has focused on so-called spontaneous volunteers (Points of Light Foundation and Network 2002; Points of Light Foundation and Volunteer Center National Network 2004; NVPC 2008; Australian Red Cross 2010). Within Australia, the Australian Red Cross oversaw the development of a *Spontaneous volunteer management resource kit* in 2010 (Australian Red Cross 2010). A Canadian resource goes further, providing advice on managing and utilising three different kinds of emergency episodic volunteer for public health emergencies (CRC/SA/SJA 2008). Non-profit organisations have a potentially large role to play in linking emergency management organisations to appropriately skilled episodic volunteers through preregistration and referral services. A key example in Australia is Volunteering Queensland's Community Response to Extreme Weather service (EV CREW) which "works to harness the strength of spontaneous and preregistered potential volunteers" by providing "safer, more coordinated referral pathways for volunteers in disaster affected communities and where there is most need of assistance" (Fitzpatrick *et al.* 2014).

For Australian emergency management organisations, more diverse and flexible recruitment and retention strategies are needed to tap into the potential contribution of episodic volunteers (Handy *et al.* 2006; Macduff 2006; Macduff *et al.* 2009) and to encourage them to 'bounce-back' (i.e. volunteer repeatedly with the same organisation, see Bryen and Madden 2006). Indeed, a key message from the volunteerism literature is that in order to engage constructively with episodic volunteers, volunteer-involving organisations need to adapt and become more flexible themselves (Macduff 2006; Macduff *et al.* 2009). This includes practices such as offering more diverse volunteering roles and experiences (Commonwealth of Australia 2008, 2010), allowing volunteers to more actively shape their own roles, engaging further with skills-based volunteering, as well as actively fostering a sense of community and building social capital amongst volunteers (Handy *et al.* 2006).

5.2 CORPORATE AND SKILLS-BASED VOLUNTEERING

The growth of corporate and skills-based volunteering also opens up further opportunities for emergency management organisations to engage with skilled episodic and longer-term volunteers. However, it appears that opportunities to develop partnerships with the private sector to support corporate and skills-based volunteering are not being taken up. The level of involvement of the private sector in support of emergency management volunteering through employee programs and pro bono work is unclear. Most involvement appears to be reactionary and ad hoc, rather than being linked to any established partnerships or programs. A review of the time companies allow their staff to give to community projects conducted in 2014 (LBG Australia and New Zealand

2014) found that employee volunteering had dropped compared to 2009-10 and 2010-11 periods because of "disaster-induced" spikes in those periods. This suggests that corporate emergency volunteering has reacted to large-scale disaster events but, due to the absence of ongoing partnerships, is not maintained beyond the immediate response phase.

On the Australian emergency management sector side, attention to private sector involvement with volunteering has largely focused on employer support for traditional emergency service volunteering amongst staff, and the development of recognition and reward programs for these employers (e.g. Esmond 2009; Commonwealth of Australia 2012). While there has been some national level support for fostering corporate and skills-based volunteering in emergency management, there appears to be growing doubt over its potential role. A 2009 *National Emergency Management Volunteer Action Plan* listed the promotion of corporate volunteering in as one of its (lower priority) actions and recommended "emergency management services to develop partnerships with businesses for sustainable and mutually beneficial corporate volunteer programs." It considered that "While it is uncertain as to the level of corporate volunteer programs that currently partner with emergency management services, the development of such programs has the potential to create significant future growth and provide 'win-win' scenarios for both the corporations and the volunteer emergency management services." However, a 2012 revision of the plan removed the action to promote corporate volunteering and instead states that "Whilst corporate volunteering could add considerable value to emergency management volunteering and could be a source of potential on-going volunteers, the roles that corporate volunteers could realistically fill (because of the nature of emergency management volunteering) may be limited" (Commonwealth of Australia 2012. p.15).

Given the influence of CSR strategies, the growth in employee volunteer programs, the growing time commitment expected in paid employment and the preferences of younger employees to combine their paid and volunteer work, it would be worthwhile renewing a focus on exploring models for partnering with the private sector. The American Red Cross *Ready When the Time Comes* program (American Red Cross 2015) is one example of a model that might be considered in Australia. Another very different model driven by professionals themselves that is already in use in Australia is the Random Hacks of Kindness (RHoK) network. RHoK matches skilled technologists with "organisations that have a social impact… to develop open-source solutions to the challenges facing society" (see http://www.rhokaustralia.org/#what-is). RHoK Australia has supported a number of community awareness and preparedness projects, for example for bushfire and king tides/sea level rises.

5.3 DIGITAL VOLUNTEERING

For its part, digital volunteering does not yet have a high profile in Australia, but that may be changing. A quick scan of digital volunteering opportunities advertised in Australia reveals them to be centred on data processing for museums and galleries, and increasingly adopted into corporate volunteering programs. There is a nascent interest in digital volunteering in Australian emergency management, and state and territory emergency service agencies

are "exploring best practices for the greater incorporation of crowdsourced information into their processes" (Bruns 2014). However, examples of digital volunteering in relation to emergencies in Australia have so far been undertaken more or less in isolation from the formal emergency management system. These examples include the Tassie Fires – We Can Help Facebook Group and network (Tasmanian Government 2013), and the Facebook-based Cyclone and Flood Update network in Queensland[1], as well as VOST Victoria[2], and the now defunct Bushfire Connect initiative; a community crowdsourcing and bushfire alerting system using the Ushahidi platform and started with assistance from RHoK Australia[3]. A recent government-supported example was a digital volunteering campaign to map damage from the Sampson Flat bushfire in South Australia in January 2015 that was launched by the Department for Communities and Social Inclusion (Williamson 2015).

Certainly, digital volunteering has great potential to strengthen and diversify emergency volunteering, however it also poses the greatest challenges to the existing emergency management arrangements. Of course, digital volunteering in times of disaster can only go so far. Digital volunteers "cannot change the material reality on the ground, no matter how much we wish they could" (Zook et al. 2010, p.29). However, digital volunteer networks are bringing "a new set of organisational designs to problems that have often become snagged in bureaucracy" and proving to be "faster than larger players in nearly all circumstances" (World Bank and GFDRR 2012). More fundamentally, they are shifting relationships of power between government and citizens, and bringing new players to the field of disaster management. A report from UN-OCHA argues that the rise of digital volunteer networks in disaster response involves:

> …not simply a technological shift [but] also a process of rapid decentralization of power. With extremely low barriers to entry, many new entrants are appearing in the fields of emergency and disaster response. They are ignoring the traditional hierarchies, because the new entrants perceive that there is something they can do which benefits others (UN-OCHA 2013, p.15).

This quote highlights how the incredible increase in connectivity between people enabled by the Internet provides "channels not just for mass dissemination but also for mass production and collaboration" (Linders 2012, p.446). It enables citizens to "contribute more resources in the form of "time, expertise, and effort" to achieve "an outcome, share more responsibility, and manage more risk in return for much greater control over resources and decisions" (Linders 2012 citing Horne and Shirley, 2009; p.446). Thus, digital volunteering gives momentum to shifts in disaster management arrangements from more government-centric, rigid and centralised processes towards more community-based, decentralised and adaptive processes. In this way, they encapsulate the ideas of community resilience and shared responsibility that are central to Australian disaster policy.

[1] See for example https://www.facebook.com/pages/Cyclone-Yasi-Update/105722036172382?sk=info&tab=page_info
[2] http://vostvic.net.au/virtual-operations-support-team-vost-victoria
[3] See http://www.ushahidi.com/2012/10/26/the-rise-and-fall-of-bushfire-connect/

UN-OCHA lists three adaptation needs amongst traditional humanitarian organisations in order to harness the potential of digital volunteering that are also pertinent to Australian emergency management. They are to adapt to: 1) work with new data sources, 2) work with new partners and techniques, and 3) the "idea of information as a basic need in humanitarian response" (UN-OCHA 2013, p.43). Their report also argues that: "These adaptations are not optional"(p. 43) and stresses that "Governments and responders will soon need answers to the questions: "Where were you? We Facebooked/tweeted/texted for help, why didn't someone come?" (p.38).

A recent and notable example of an experiment to explore how digital volunteer networks might be integrated with the established emergency management system comes from Canada. The Digital Volunteer-Supported Recovery Operation Experiment (DVSROE) involved a fictitious disaster scenario conducted on 18-20th November 2014. It was "designed to explore and develop social media capabilities to support the broader disaster management community in Canada"[4]. It involved collaboration between various Canadian and United States science, research and public safety agencies along with many other government and non-profit organisations, including digital volunteering networks Crisis Commons and CanVOST. No public reports on the experiment are yet available, but one of the reported aims was "to demonstrate how social media can enhance recovery operations" for both communities and professional responders.

5.4 PUBLIC-VOLUNTARY SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS

Given the dearth of research examining the impact of the shifting relationship between government and the voluntary sector on volunteering in general (Warburton and McDonald 2009; Hustinx 2014), there can be little certainty about its potential impact on emergency volunteering in particular. However, the response of volunteers and volunteer-led organisations to the new organisational and institutional contexts appears to be developing along one of two divergent paths (Hustinx 2014). The first is to embrace the new environment, leading to a growth in more professionalised volunteers more akin to paid employees and more professional, and more regulated non-profit organisations. The second and less remarked upon path, involves a rejection of the new environment and an associated increase in more grass-roots, informal and hence unregulated volunteering. While the first path reflects an attitude of "working with" government in a more marketised and regulated environment, the second reflects one of "working outside of" or even "in spite of" government regulation and influence.

This pattern is also emerging in Australia. A 2010 report on *Issues in Volunteering* concluded that "the overall environment in the not-for-profit sector is one where formal volunteering through not-for-profit and government organisations is becoming increasingly professionalized and volunteers are considered part of workforce capacity. At the same time, more volunteering is also taking place in informal and less structured contexts in communities" (Volunteering Australia 2010, p.5).

[4] http://www.science.gc.ca/default.asp?lang=En&n=F84B7DBC-1

Should this situation be mirrored in emergency volunteering, it raises a number of potential opportunities and pitfalls for emergency management organisations, volunteers and people affected by disasters. Potential pitfalls include problems of volunteer motivation in more marketised voluntary organisations, as well as potential to erode the grassroots, informal volunteer base in communities that supports many traditional emergency service volunteers, such as volunteer fire brigades. Opportunities include greater potential for partnerships with voluntary organisations and non-profits as they take up more professional and business-like models of operation that are more familiar to and compatible with government agencies (Kapucu 2006; Kapucu *et al.* 2011). While a growth in informal, grass-roots volunteering would be less predictable for emergency management organisations, it is well aligned with the goal of building community resilience to disasters.

6. CONCLUSIONS

A key message arising from this report is that emergency volunteering is undergoing a process of transformation rather than one of decline. The narrative of decline is the result of an overly narrow viewpoint that steers the attention of volunteer managers to challenges in recruitment and retention of traditional emergency service volunteers when greater attention needs to be paid to adapting and diversifying to respond to the changing nature of volunteering in Australian society in the 21st Century.

Importantly, the dichotomy in the way emergency volunteering is portrayed in Australian emergency management oversimplifies what is a much more diverse and multi-layered scene. It effectively separates volunteers into those that are affiliated, known, legitimate and valuable; and those who are unaffiliated, unknown, unpredictable and problematic. It also focuses attention heavily on volunteering *in response* to emergency events in contrast to other phases of emergency management. Most importantly, it has focused management and research attention heavily on resisting and responding to mounting challenges to the traditional volunteer model of emergency service agencies rather than on exploring possibilities and opportunities from engaging with a larger and more diverse – but also less-traditional – potential volunteer base. Thus there is a danger that this dichotomy will perpetuate an attitudinal and cultural barrier to advancing a more integrated and inclusive framework for supporting emergency volunteering into the future.

However, despite the need to redress the overly restrictive and negative view of emergency volunteering in Australia, it is also important not to go too far the other way and overstate or misrepresent the potential contribution of non-traditional volunteers. In particular, the nature of emergency response often requires that people in operational roles in emergency service agencies – be they paid or volunteer – have high skill levels and participate in ongoing training. Thus, long-term, high commitment volunteers will continue to be critical to Australia's emergency response capacity into the future. Emergency service agencies will continue to face recruitment and retention challenges with respect to this traditional volunteer base in the face of the changing nature of volunteering. The point here is therefore not that all the volunteer recruitment and retention challenges faced by emergency service agencies and other emergency management organisations today can be overcome by pursuing the types of strategies identified in this review. Rather, it is that a wider, more diverse and multi-layered potential volunteer landscape is out there, and that adapting and diversifying to respond to the changing nature of volunteering is necessary not only to prevent falling behind and exacerbating the existing challenges, but also to capitalize on opportunities to strengthen and improve Australia's emergency management capacity across the spectrum of preparedness, prevention, response and recovery.

One thing is clear, the future landscape of emergency volunteering is going to be populated by a much wider and more diverse range of players than in the past. In order to harness the potential of this new landscape, existing emergency management organisations will need to: a) develop more diverse and flexible approaches to engage with a wider range of volunteers and

volunteering styles, and b) seek out new forms of partnership and collaboration with both the voluntary and private sectors. The emerging literature on the 'new wave' of volunteering – especially volunteering that is episodic, corporate, skills-based and/or digital in nature – provides initial input into designing strategies to pursue these goals in emergency management. However, exactly how the shifting landscape impacts on emergency volunteering into the future will depend on the degree to which emergency management organisations, volunteer managers and volunteers themselves are able to adapt to take advantage of emerging opportunities in the "new world" of volunteering in 21st Century Australia.

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