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# IMPROVING THE RETENTION AND ENGAGEMENT OF VOLUNTEERS IN EMERGENCY SERVICE AGENCIES

Sustainable Volunteering Cluster

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Australian Government  
Department of Industry,  
Innovation and Science

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AUSTRALIA

# OUR APPROACH OVER THE LAST THREE YEARS

- Values alignment (Theme 1)
- Leadership (Theme 2)
- Gender and Diversity (Theme 3, discontinued)

**THEME 1**

**VALUING VOLUNTEERS**

**BETTER UNDERSTANDING THE PRIMARY MOTIVES**

**FOR VOLUNTEERING IN**

**AUSTRALIAN EMERGENCY SERVICES**

PhD thesis Bill Calcutt:

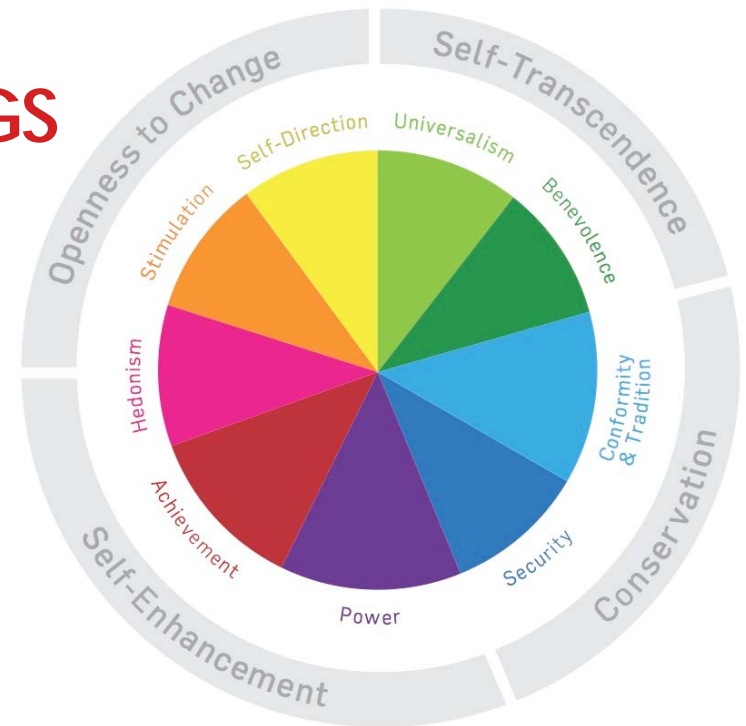
- Surveys
- Participatory action research



## THEME 1

### RESEARCH FINDINGS

- Surveys (NSW SES): strongest values of volunteers were **benevolence** and **universalism** (concern for the interest and welfare of others)
- Third dominant value was **self-direction** (representing individual creativity and freedom)
- Statistically significant differences between males and females and generations



# THEME 1

## UTILISATION

- A volunteer workforce values audit package that can be utilised by end users
- Journal articles
- Publication of PhD thesis

## THEME 2

# INSPIRE RETAIN ENGAGE (IRE)

- IRE developed in 2015/16, building on pilot program LDP, is basis of PhD research by Vivien Forner
- 72 Leaders (team leaders, controllers, regional managers and paid staff)
- 190 Members (followers of leaders who attended the IRE program)



## THEME 2

### RESEARCH FINDINGS SO FAR

- **Motivational leadership is important for job satisfaction and retention**

Members (n=190) who perceived their leader as motivational—were more satisfied in their role ( $r=.37$ ,  $p<.001$ ) and less likely to want to leave ( $r=-.38$ ,  $p<.001$ ).

- **Low experience leaders showed a greater propensity for developing their managerial orientation**

Highly experienced leaders did not change their managerial orientation.

- **46% of members reported noticing some difference in their leader**

During the period when IRE participants were applying the new learnings in the workplace.

## THEME 2

# IRE FEEDBACK

Key Theme	Example quote from follower
Followers are being given more opportunities to be involved in decision making and the direction of the unit	“He is open to feedback...he wants to identify individual and unit goals... to give people opportunity to take on new responsibilities. ...he wants to create an environment that feedback is always welcome... he is a breath of fresh air !!” - <i>VICSES volunteer</i>
Leader effectiveness in handling difficult situations	“His approach to how he manages difficult situations. Always was approachable but now he has ... more confidence” – <i>QFES paid staff</i>
Leaders appear more confident and have improved emotional regulation	“Calmer, more tolerant and more supportive.” – <i>QFES volunteer</i>



## THEME 2 UTILISATION

- The IRE course materials available at our website: <http://www.uowblogs.com/evp>

Home

News

Leadership for Volunteer Retention

Volunteer Expectations and Experiences

Contacts

- Journal articles (two in draft form)
- Publication of PhD thesis
- Workshop 6<sup>th</sup> Volunteer Leaders Forum



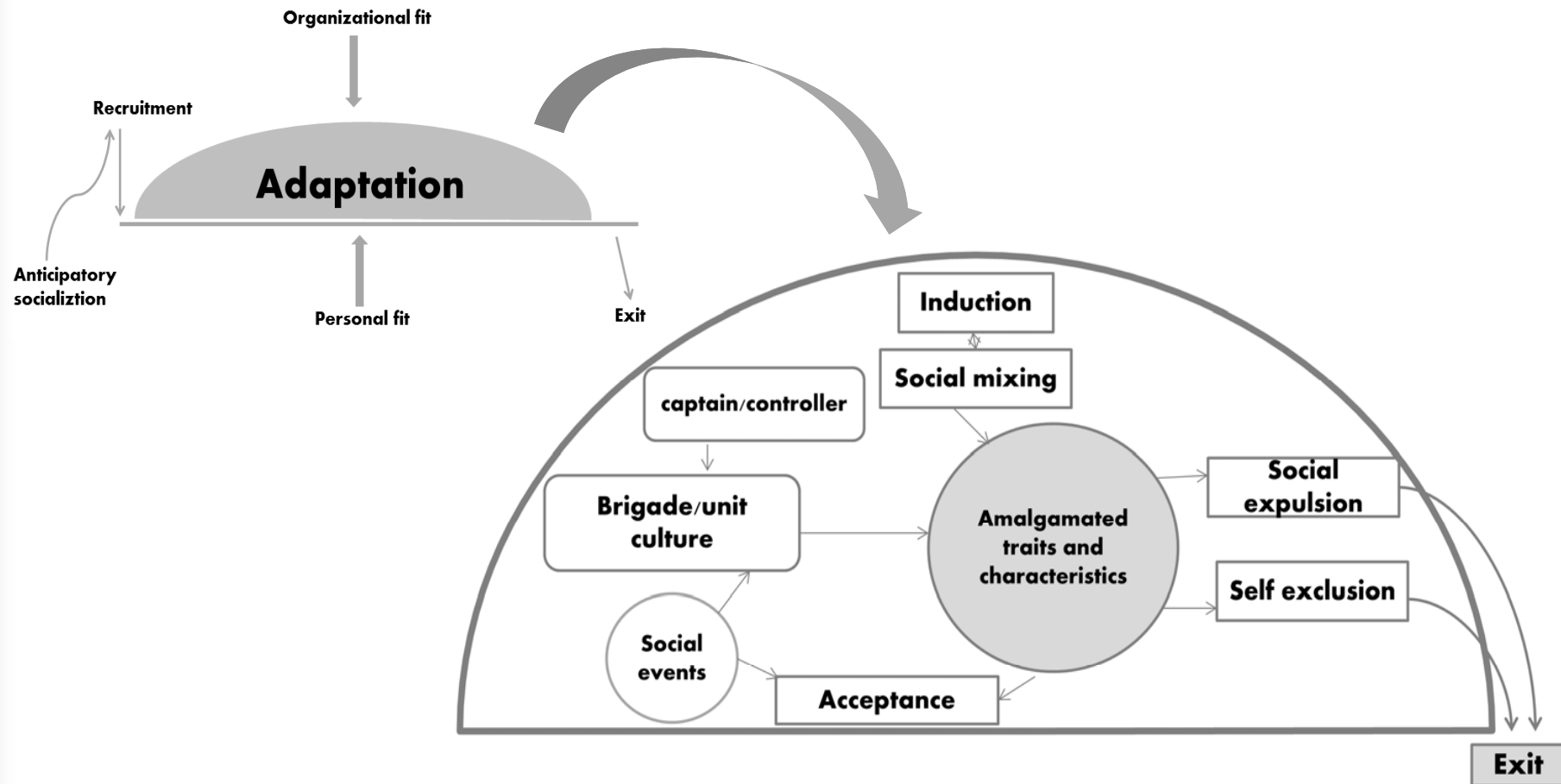
# ADDITIONAL RESEARCH (1)

## Organizational socialization of volunteers in an Australian emergency service agency

Michael Jones, Yoke Berry & Irit Alony

To be presented at AFAC2017

## Towards a model of social cohesion in volunteer units/brigades





# SYDNEY BUSINESS SCHOOL



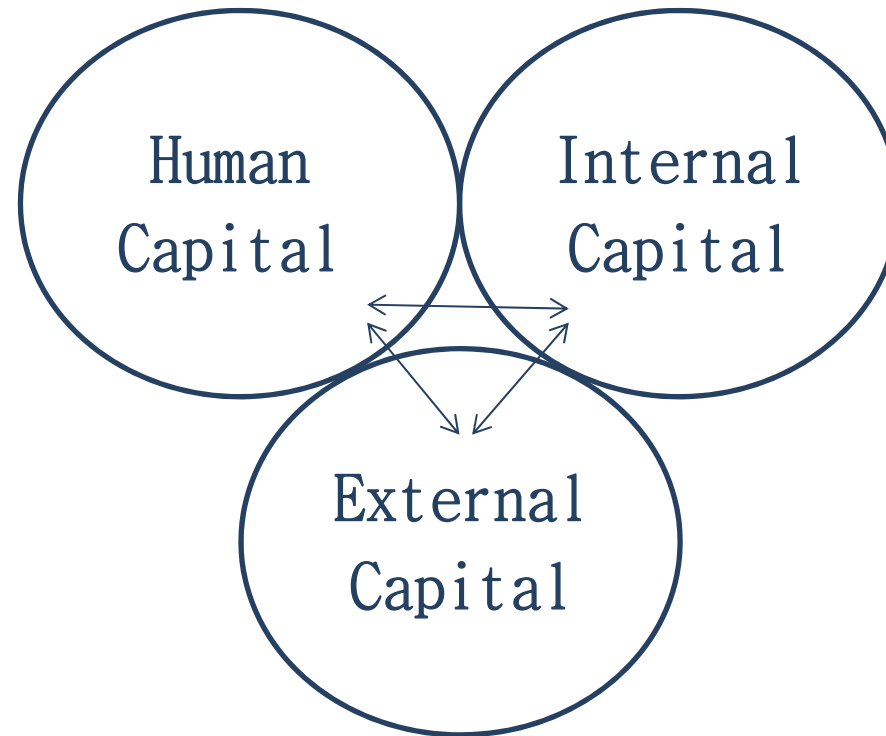
[bnhcrc.com.au](http://bnhcrc.com.au)

# ADDITIONAL RESEARCH (2)

## Disclosing volunteers as Human Capital in annual reports

Yoke Berry & Michael Jones

# INTELLECTUAL CAPITAL



The tripartite model of Intellectual Capital reproduced from Boedker *et al* (2005)

*Boedker, C., Guthrie, J., & Cuganesan, S. (2005). An integrated framework for visualising intellectual capital. Journal of Intellectual Capital, 6(4), 510-527.*

# HUMAN CAPITAL

- Knowledge
- Equal Employment Opportunity
- Gender/Diversity
- Education
- Training
- Learning and development
- Employee demographics
- Work related competencies
- Others



- To what extent is Human Capital disclosed in the annual reports of volunteer based ESAs?
- Is Human Capital disclosure similar for paid staff and volunteers?
- Can Human Capital in annual reports be a suitable tool for validating volunteers?
- How many volunteers serve in the ESAs?

# Emergency service agencies analysed in the study

1

State	Volunteer based ESA
Australian Capital Territory (ACT)	ACT Emergency Agency: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• ACT Rural Fire Service</li><li>• ACT State Emergency Service</li><li>• Maps</li></ul>
New South Wales (NSW)	NSW Rural Fire Service NSW State Emergency Service
Northern Territory (NT)	Northern Territory Police Fire & Emergency Services: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• NT Fire and Rescue Service</li><li>• NT Emergency Service</li><li>• Bushfires NT*</li></ul>
Queensland (QLD)	Queensland Fire and Emergency Service (QFES): <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Rural Fire Service QLD</li><li>• QLD State Emergency Service</li></ul>
South Australia (SA)	SA Country Fire Service SA State Emergency Service



## 2

State	Volunteer based EMA
Tasmania (TAS)	TAS Fire Service (also employs career fire fighters) TAS State Emergency Service
Victoria (VIC)	Country Fire Authority (also employs career fire fighters) VIC State Emergency Service
Western Australia (WA)	Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES): <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Bush Fire Service</li><li>• Fire and Rescue Service</li><li>• State Emergency Service</li><li>• Volunteer Emergency Service</li><li>• Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service</li><li>• Volunteer Fire Service</li></ul>

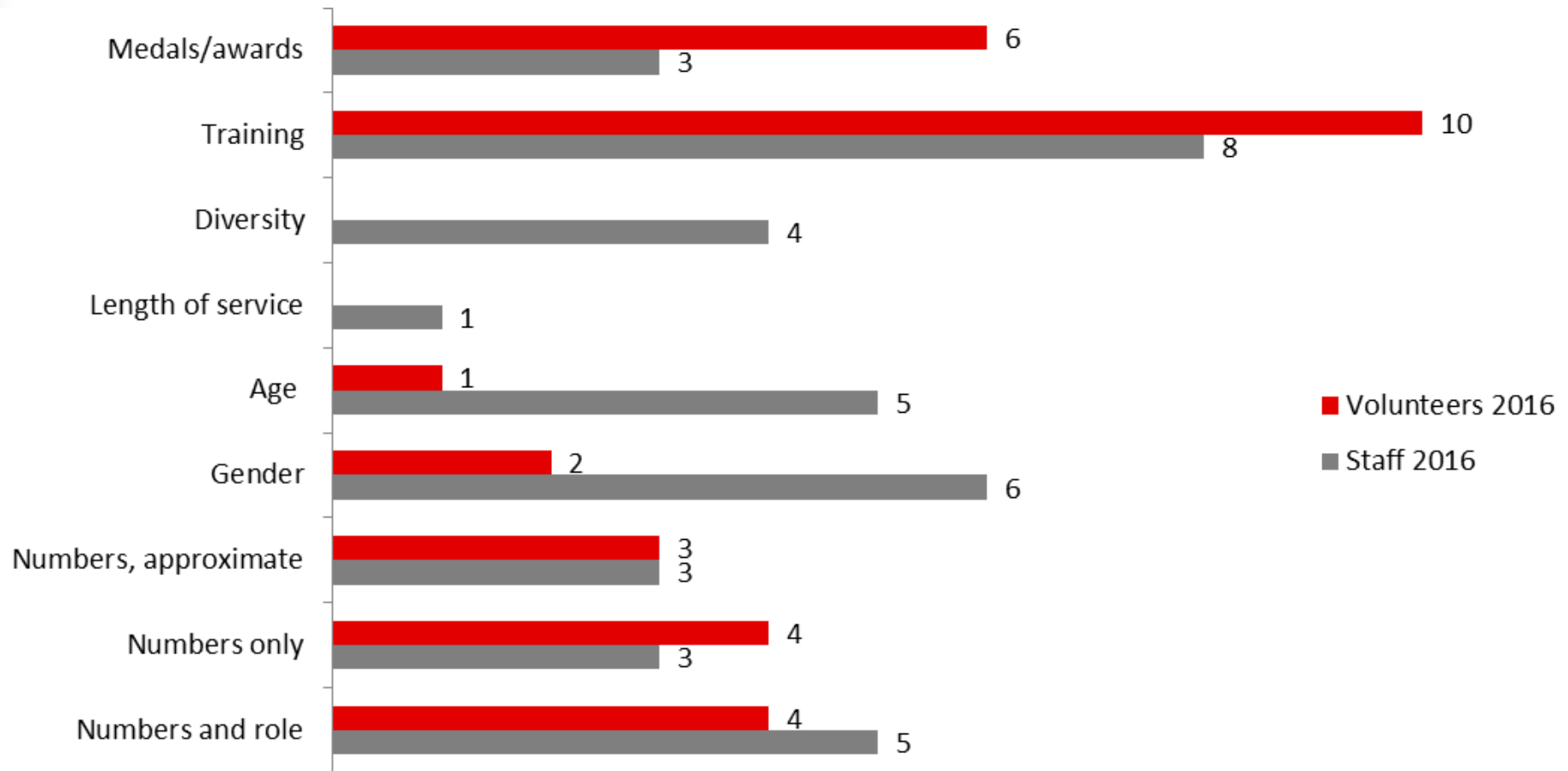
\* Bushfires NT was not compared in this study. The 22 units (~500 volunteers) are individually incorporated; annual reports are not available online.

**11 annual reports analysed over two consecutive years**

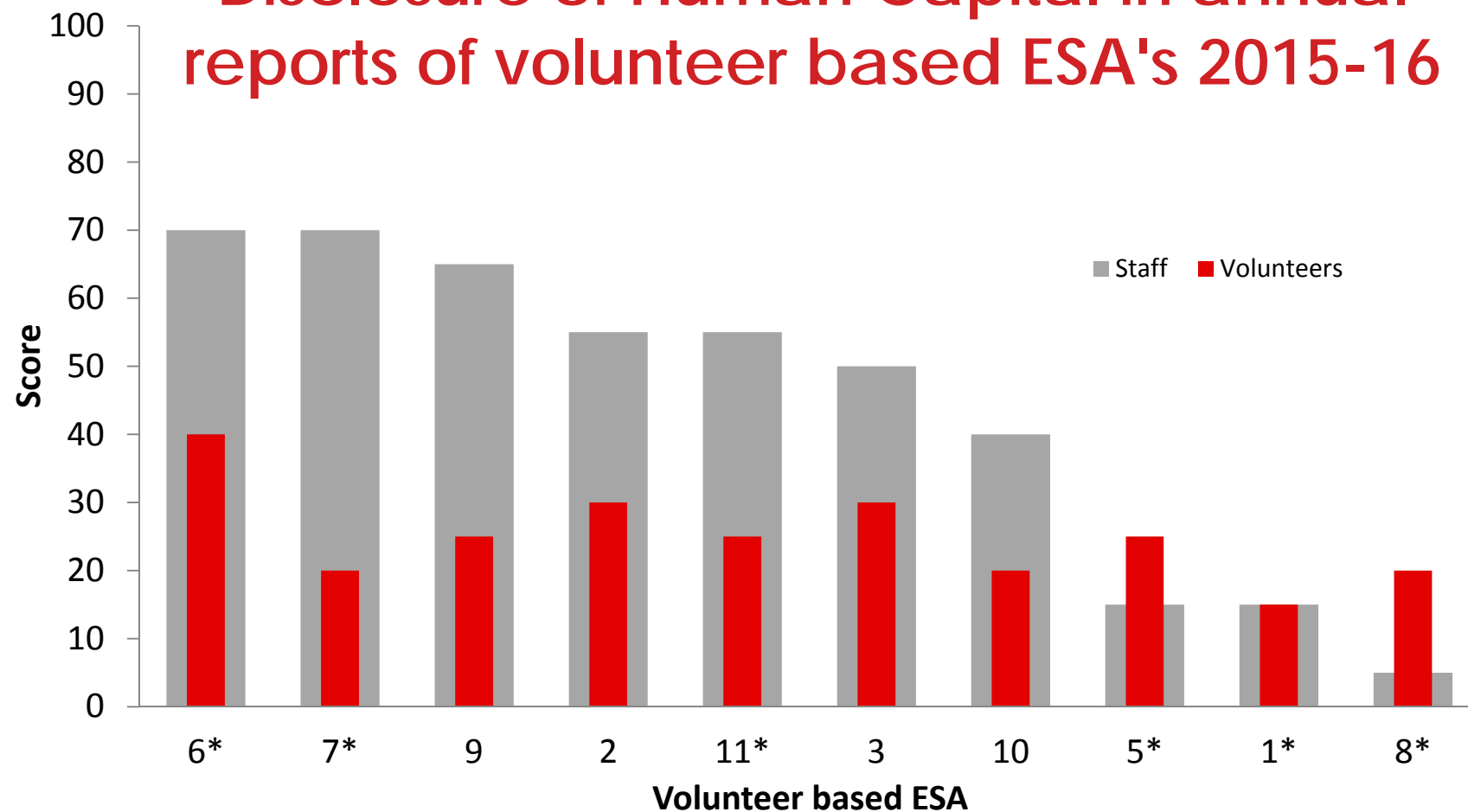
Human Capital category	Score
Staff/volunteer numbers	20
Gender analysis	10
Age profile	10
Length of service	10
Diversity: Aboriginal	10
Diversity: Disability	10
Diversity: Cultural and Linguistically Diverse (CALD)	10
Training	10
Awards	10
<b>Total score</b>	<b>100</b>

## Year 2015/16

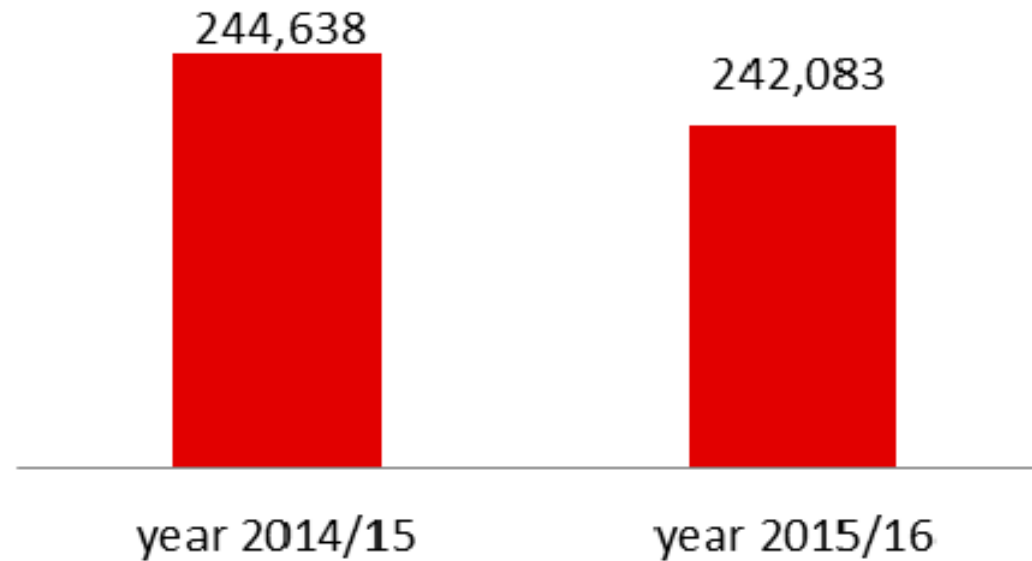
# Number of agencies that reported HC categories



## Disclosure of Human Capital in annual reports of volunteer based ESA's 2015-16



## VOLUNTEER NUMBERS IN 11 EMERGENCY SERVICE AGENCIES



Loss of **2555** volunteers (NSW and Western Australia).  
In Queensland the number of volunteers increased  
by ~1300.

## SOME CONCLUSIONS

- The annual reports praise volunteers mostly in the narrative of the report.
- The human resource sections disclose more HC about staff than volunteers.
- Omission of gender & diversity in reports (staff & volunteers).
- To give stakeholders a complete view of the organisation, HC reporting of staff and volunteers makes sense.



**A workforce, regardless of being paid employees or volunteers, would feel pride in an organisation that gives due recognition in its annual report to the sum of human endeavor that drives the common vision.**

# FEEDBACK/CONTACTS



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