



Australian Government

Department of Families,
Housing, Community Services
and Indigenous Affairs

Spontaneous Volunteer Management Resource Kit

Helping to manage spontaneous
volunteers in emergencies



Australian Red Cross
THE POWER OF HUMANITY



Introduction



Introduction

Voluntary work in Australia contributes an estimated 713 million hours to the community, which is worth approximately \$42 billion per year to the economy. Volunteering delivers a number of key social and economic benefits to a community and increases a community's resilience and capacity to respond to a disaster.

However, the large number of people who come forward to offer their time and skills when there is a disaster can be overwhelming and place an administrative burden on organisations at critical times. Previous disasters such as Cyclone Larry, the Queensland floods, the Canberra bushfires, and most recently the 2009 Victorian bushfires, have highlighted the importance of managing spontaneous volunteers for states and territories, as well as volunteer and emergency management organisations.

The *Spontaneous volunteer management resource kit* was developed in support of a project, overseen by the Australian Red Cross and funded by the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, to develop a framework for managing spontaneous volunteers in an emergency. The core principle for the effective management of spontaneous volunteers is that those affected by a disaster are the first priority. The kit offers a range of resources to help support jurisdictions, municipalities and organisations to manage potential spontaneous volunteers during emergencies.

The resource kit includes a framework and supporting materials that aim to help better manage spontaneous volunteers in an emergency, regardless of whether they are used. The framework and supporting materials have been developed through extensive national consultations with key state/territory and Commonwealth government agencies as well as non-government organisations involved in volunteer management, emergency response and recovery. To gain the best outcome from the resource kit, it is recommended that all sections be read in conjunction with one another.

The resource kit includes:

- project report
- draft framework
- draft communication strategy
- draft implementation plan
- research report into the motivations and expectations of spontaneous volunteers
- CD with:
 - literature reviews on spontaneous volunteering and emergent organisations
 - management tools, including video case studies on volunteering in an emergency
 - generic forms for use in an emergency and suggestions for briefing and debriefing volunteers.

To request additional copies of the resource kit, please email recoveryops@fahcsia.gov.au or rediplan@redcross.org.au. Alternatively, items included in the resource kit can be found at www.fahcsia.gov.au and www.redcross.org.au.

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Project Report



Section 1: Project Report

The project report provides information on the background of the project, the project methodology, and the context of why the work has been undertaken and why management of spontaneous volunteers is important. A definition of spontaneous volunteer is also given in this section. It is recommended that this section be read before Section 2: The draft framework.

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Summary

Under the auspice of the Australian Government Disaster Recovery Committee and with funding by the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Australian Red Cross has developed a framework for the management of spontaneous volunteers in emergencies.

The aim of the project is to enable consistent good practice in jurisdictions, municipalities and agencies that choose to use spontaneous volunteers as part of their emergency management responsibilities. For those jurisdictions, municipalities and agencies that do not wish to use spontaneous volunteers, the framework offers tools to manage and redirect the anticipated influx of spontaneous volunteers. For these organisations, the aim is to prevent a drain on the resources that are needed for their core business.

This report provides a summary of the project and key findings from consultations with government and non-government agencies.

Red Cross envisages that the framework could be used by the emergency management sector as a whole, by individual states and territories, and by municipalities and agencies involved in both response and recovery. The framework is intended to facilitate the effective management of potential spontaneous volunteers and their use in emergencies.

Background

Spontaneous offers of help during and following a disaster are a growing phenomenon. The amount of coverage an event receives in the media, coupled with the desire to do something for those who need help, are strong motivators.¹

After Hurricane Katrina struck New Orleans in 2005, around 8,000 spontaneous volunteers registered in the first 24 hours. Over the course of the Harris County emergency operations, volunteer coordinators received an average of 3,500 spontaneous volunteer registrations each day.² American Red Cross alone used 50,000 spontaneous volunteers.

Following Victoria's 2009 Black Saturday bushfires, more than 22,000 potential volunteers offered their help online, via the Go Volunteer website, and by a phone hotline, managed by the Victorian Government. Only a fraction were used. While most did, some received no further information or even an acknowledgment of their offer.

People's motivation to help can manifest itself in a number of ways: donating goods, donating money, and offering physical help. As the response to the Victorian bushfires demonstrated, the volume of goods donated in the aftermath of an emergency can be overwhelming. Spontaneous volunteers are often used to sort the goods donated. A separate project overseen by the Department for Families and Communities in South Australia is exploring the effective management of donated goods following a disaster. The links between the two projects could be explored at a later date.

This project aims to contribute to emergency management policy by harnessing existing knowledge, expertise and experience to develop a consistent framework and associated tools to support, where appropriate, the continuing development of arrangements and processes for the use of spontaneous volunteers.

The project builds upon work undertaken by Australian Red Cross on behalf of the Australian Emergency Management Volunteers Forum in 2008, which proposed:

- strategies for spontaneous volunteer management
- a strategic framework and a set of collaborative, sector-wide initiatives that address the issues constraining spontaneous volunteering
- a collaborative approach that seeks to strengthen the ability of agencies to simultaneously undertake core business and profit from the skills and good will of spontaneous volunteers as required.³

¹ A. Cottrell, 'A survey of spontaneous volunteers', 2010, (in section 5 of this kit).

² US Department of Homeland Security, 'Good story: Harris County, Texas Citizen Corps' Response to Hurricane Katrina', Lessons Learned Information Sharing (LLIS.gov) database, 17 November 2005.

³ Australian Red Cross, 'Managing spontaneous volunteers in emergencies: Working Together to Manage Emergencies Grant Scheme project report', 2008.

The project's aims were to:

- engage government and non-government stakeholders to inform the development of a framework for the use of spontaneous volunteers by volunteer agencies during disasters
- undertake primary research on recent emergencies where spontaneous volunteers have been used, to examine and analyse the motivations and experiences of individuals seeking to volunteer during disasters, and the agencies that work with them
- investigate and adapt, or develop, then trial, spontaneous volunteer management tools (including consideration of a database or web-based portal)
- develop and pilot a training program/workshop for emergency and volunteer management agencies on best practice spontaneous volunteer management strategies and tools
- based on the outcomes of the consultation outlined above, propose:
 - an implementation plan (including promotion and ongoing stakeholder engagement) for a framework and management tools
 - a strategy to address the advocacy issues relating to licensure, civil liability and insurance
 - a communications strategy about volunteering in disasters, including processes for coordinating recruitment, volunteer activities and deployment, and assigning roles and responsibilities.

Guidance for the project was provided by a reference group selected for their volunteer policy or direct management experience, comprising representatives from the following:

- Attorney-General's Department
- Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council
- Australian Council of State Emergency Services
- Department of Community Safety, Queensland
- Department for Families and Communities, South Australia
- Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
- Department of Health and Community Services, Northern Territory (Community and Disability Services Ministers Advisory Council, Disaster Recovery Sub-committee)
- St John Ambulance Australia
- Volunteering ACT
- Volunteering Australia
- Volunteering Queensland
- Western Australian Local Government Association.



Project methodology

In addressing the objectives of the project, and in seeking to move beyond the risks posed by spontaneous volunteers and the barriers to organisations' willingness to use them, a number of data collection activities were undertaken:

- Consultations were held in each state and territory, attended by Commonwealth Government, state/territory government, municipalities, peak bodies and agencies involved in response and recovery.
- Interviews and discussions were held with organisations with experience in managing and using spontaneous volunteers.
- Interviews and discussions were held with organisations with experience in supplying spontaneous volunteers.
- Interviews and discussions were held with jurisdictions responsible for emergency management.
- Primary research was undertaken into the motivations and expectations of spontaneous volunteers.
- A literature review was undertaken on emergent organisations.
- A review was undertaken of international best practice.

During the consultations, participants were asked for their thoughts on:

- The definition of a spontaneous volunteer.
- The requirements of a framework.
- What policies/procedures would need to be in place for a framework to be successful.
- The features needed for effective management tools.

The work undertaken by Australian Red Cross in 2008 proposed a lead agency approach and identified key tasks for a strategic lead agency, an operational lead agency and agencies accepting spontaneous volunteers. Participants were asked to review this lead agency approach and discuss its relevance to their jurisdiction.

Context

Australia has well-developed emergency management arrangements for preparing for, preventing, responding to and recovering from emergencies. A central tenet of these plans is that they apply to all hazards, that they provide for the coordination of resources to manage the emergencies, that agency roles are agreed beforehand, and that capacity capability is developed to undertake these roles.

Emergency management also relies heavily on the volunteer sector—from volunteers for response activities (e.g. fire services, rescue services and emergency services), health responses (e.g. St John Ambulance), to community recovery. These agencies have defined the roles that can be undertaken by volunteers and have clearly documented the pathways for recruitment, induction, training, retention, deployment and performance management of volunteers. This approach ensures that the agencies have an established core of trained volunteers on which they can draw in times of emergency.

Responsibility for emergencies within state/territory government is usually split, with one agency responsible for emergency response and another for community recovery. Spontaneous volunteers seem to be unaware of this division and will offer their help to whichever agency they think is appropriate.

In large-scale emergencies, the desire to assist those affected leads to a mobilisation of community support through spontaneous volunteering. This has the potential to overwhelm agencies, which have clear roles under the emergency plan to respond to and assist those affected by the emergency. A common behaviour among people wanting to assist is to ring every agency that they can until someone will take their details. This may also include ringing public information services, thus clogging the lines for more important calls. Yet spontaneous volunteers also offer skills and resources to supplement agencies' existing resources, and may bring additional skills that are required.

The desire to volunteer comes in the first week of the disaster, which coincides with the peak media coverage of disasters.⁴ The need for volunteers, including spontaneous volunteers, to aid in long-term community recovery can continue long after the media coverage has dissipated and the offers of help have dwindled.

The nature of volunteering is changing. While many people are still content to follow the traditional path of joining an organisation, there is a trend towards shorter term commitment. Individuals want to spend less time volunteering and are less likely to make a commitment to an individual agency. Affiliated volunteers remain the core of a volunteer agency's workforce for responses to emergencies. However, some agencies are recognising that spontaneous volunteers may also offer skills and additional resources to supplement existing resources. Clearly an agency's ability to use these resources is dependent upon a number of factors, including the complexity of tasks to be undertaken, and the skill and experience levels of the spontaneous volunteers.

The management of spontaneous volunteers has been variously addressed by states and territories through their emergency management plans. Some jurisdictions have a nominated agency that has responsibility for the coordination of spontaneous volunteers. Others have a clear policy position that spontaneous volunteers are the responsibility of individual agencies and are not managed at a state/territory level.

On 7 December 2009, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreed to a range of measures to improve Australia's disaster arrangements, including the establishment of a National Emergency Management Committee (NEMC) to replace the existing Australian Emergency Management Committee. This new committee will have a greater focus on recover and improved linkages with relevant existing committees. A key part of the committee's initial work will be the development of a National Disaster Resilience Strategy and a review of relief and recovery arrangements as agreed by COAG. It is within this changing landscape of relief and recovery arrangements that the draft framework for managing spontaneous volunteers has been developed.

Key themes from consultations

This section summarises the key themes emerging from the consultation sessions and individual discussions.

Definitions

A consistent theme from the consultation sessions was the difference between potential and actual spontaneous volunteers. Ringing or registering with an organisation was not thought to constitute volunteering, and it was felt that the definition should reflect this.

Potential spontaneous volunteers are 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.⁵

It was felt that people do not become spontaneous volunteers until they have undergone the relevant induction/checks for the role they will be undertaking. Until they do, therefore, they are potential spontaneous volunteers.

It is acknowledged that this definition does not take account of local spontaneous volunteers who are first on the scene, emergent groups or emergent organisations. These groups, while potentially operating outside the framework, are discussed in the implementation plan (section 4 of this resource kit) as it is important that they be given the option of engaging should they want to. It is also acknowledged that agencies and peak bodies may have their own definition of what constitutes a spontaneous volunteer that reflects their organisational needs.

⁴ A. Cottrell, 'A survey of spontaneous volunteers', 2010.

⁵ Definition based on a definition published in T.E. Drabek and D.A. McEntire, 'Emergent phenomena and the sociology of disaster: lessons, trends and opportunities from the research literature', *Disaster Prevention and Management*, July 2003.



Casual volunteers are individuals or groups of people who undergo checks and training in advance of an emergency, but remain otherwise unaffiliated with any part of the existing official emergency management response and recovery system.

Three primary spontaneous volunteer sub-groups are often referred to in literature:

- **professional:** skilled and trained but previously unaffiliated—usually from outside the disaster area
- **spontaneous within affected area:** usually motivated by community ownership—unaffiliated and may be unskilled and/or untrained
- **spontaneous out of area:** converging on the scene from outside the community—unaffiliated and may be unskilled and/or untrained.⁶

Principles

Effective management of spontaneous volunteers is based on the principle that those affected by a disaster are the first priority.

Proposed framework

Generally the proposed framework of national, state/territory and local-level strategic and coordinating agencies was well received by participants.

Requirements for the framework include:

- the need to fit into existing emergency management arrangements
- strategic and coordinating agencies at national and state/territory levels
- standards for volunteer induction and training. All agencies recognised the fact that while people wish to spontaneously volunteer, good volunteer management practices should not be bypassed, only expedited
- the need to recognise organisations that are outside of existing emergency management plans.

Advantages of using potential spontaneous volunteers

Potential spontaneous volunteers were thought to be a valuable, flexible resource. They were seen as a ready workforce, who could be used to free up existing volunteers and staff to take a more active role in either responding to the emergency or aiding with the recovery following an emergency.

Potential spontaneous volunteers can be highly skilled and may have local knowledge, an understanding of available resources and the trust of the affected community. Using local spontaneous volunteers can aid with community recovery and help build community resilience.

Effective management of potential spontaneous volunteers offers an opportunity to direct individuals towards affiliation with agencies involved in response and recovery.

Disadvantages of using potential spontaneous volunteers

Appropriateness of skills

Potential spontaneous volunteers have varying degrees of appropriate skills. Some are highly skilled, but these skills may over-qualify them for the role they are asked to undertake. This may result in their straying outside their role responsibilities—for example, a qualified psychologist offering personal support to affected people. Clear briefing on the role, including limitations and boundaries, was thought to be one way of mitigating this risk.

⁶ Australian Red Cross, 'Managing spontaneous volunteers in emergencies: Working Together to Manage Emergencies Grant Scheme project report', July 2008.

Other potential spontaneous volunteers were perceived to have skills that agencies were unable to use during the response and recovery phases of an emergency. Potential volunteers possessing appropriate skills, licences or registration, and relevant police or working with children checks were deemed more likely to be used than those who did not. Likewise, volunteers with current affiliations to volunteer organisations outside the emergency context appeared more desirable than those with no affiliation.

Credibility of skills was also perceived to be an issue. A thorough recruitment process could minimise this risk. Capturing information on skills, qualifications, licences and checks could be part of the registration process, whether online or by phone. An online system could require potential spontaneous volunteers to upload proof of their relevant qualifications and licences. Proof of checks may need to be sighted by the deploying agency. Potential spontaneous volunteers could be asked, online or by phone, for details of when they last demonstrated a particular skill, like when a job applicant is asked to demonstrate their abilities in an interview.

Skills in an emergency context

Working in an emergency context requires an understanding of the disruptive impact of an emergency, the changed emotional state of people affected, and the political and media environment. While potential spontaneous volunteers were perceived to possess a vast range of skills, usually these skills were gained outside of the emergency context. Agency training, appropriate levels of briefing and debriefing, and 'buddying' spontaneous volunteers with experienced staff or volunteers were suggested as ways of overcoming this issue.

Motivation

The motivation of potential spontaneous volunteers was also raised at the majority of consultations. Research identifies five types of spontaneous volunteers, distinguished by their motivations:

- Returnees: victims or survivors of the incident
- The Anxious: those looking to be empowered through action
- Helpers: people who are altruistically motivated
- Curious: 'disaster tourists'
- Exploiters: opportunistic individuals looking to gain recognition or, at worst, access to vulnerable individuals to exert power in any number of ways.⁷

While it was recognised that most people offer their time through a genuine desire to help in response to an event, it was also acknowledged that a small number might have ulterior motives, such as unresolved issues around needing to help, or wanting to promote a particular service that they offer. This can be managed by coordinating agencies providing clear advice to potential spontaneous volunteers about their boundaries, and by deploying agencies having clear policies on volunteer conduct and systems for supervision.

Disengagement

Frustration of unused spontaneous volunteers was perceived as a threat, because it could lead to future disengagement with mainstream volunteering. This may be overcome by an effective communication strategy that could include:

- educational messages before an emergency
- regular communications during an emergency, including information on why offers of help were not being taken up (e.g. overwhelming number of people coming forward)
- information on future volunteering opportunities in the emergency management sector.

A potential spontaneous volunteer stated,

'I could have been useful in a number of different ways. I did understand the chaos of the situation and organisational problems posed by hundreds of volunteers; however I thought it inappropriate that "volunteers" were requested and given a site to register but then being knocked back with no interest being shown in offers to help in "any way at all". How do I feel now? Wondering if there is any use in volunteering at all.'⁸

⁷ S. Lowe and A. Fothergill, 'A need to help: emergent volunteer behaviour after September 11', paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, Atlanta, GA, 2003 (citing C.E. Fritz and J.H. Mathewson, 1957)

⁸ A. Cottrell, 'A survey of spontaneous volunteers', 2010.



Communication strategy

A strong theme of the consultation sessions was the need for each state and territory, municipality and participating agencies, to have a clear and agreed communication strategy to aid with the management of potential spontaneous volunteers. Messages put out via the media regarding spontaneous volunteering were seen to be key in managing the public's expectations. It was noted that a significant risk was the time it can take to change messages in the media and the effect this can have on expectation management—for example, when agencies no longer require additional spontaneous volunteers and yet calls are still being made for people to sign up. This could lead to public frustration and damage to the reputations of agencies and the government.

In response to this issue, a communications working group was established to develop a draft communication strategy (section 3 of this resource kit) that could be adapted to the needs of jurisdictions, municipalities and agencies. The group was made up of representatives from:

- federal, state and local government
- peak bodies
- organisations involved in response and recovery
- the media
- a spontaneous volunteer.

The working group recommended that all communication strategies be based on the following principles:

- The people affected by any emergency are the first priority.
- Spontaneous volunteering is valuable and aids community recovery.
- Spontaneous volunteers can be effectively managed through intelligent communication.

This can be achieved by:

- pre-education messages encouraging the public to pre-register with agencies or an agency tasked with coordinating spontaneous volunteers
- clear pre-prepared messages approved by the relevant authority for distribution during an emergency via the media. The message should state whether there is a need for spontaneous volunteers and if required how people can register their interest. If spontaneous volunteers are not required the message should promote general volunteering opportunities or other ways to help (e.g. donating money)
- media messaging that is embedded in the state/territory public information management system
- regular messages from the coordinating agency to potential spontaneous volunteers once they have registered, updating them on current needs versus the number of spontaneous volunteers required, and helping to manage expectations
- regular messages from the coordinating agency to accepting agencies on the status of spontaneous volunteer registration processes
- an official thank you after the need for additional spontaneous volunteers has passed
- post-emergency messages to potential spontaneous volunteers—both those who were used and those who were not used—letting them know of volunteering opportunities available with agencies involved in response and recovery.

Messages put out via the media about spontaneous volunteering were seen to be key in managing the public's expectations. Any messaging should be embedded in state/territory public information arrangements, so that it is accorded priority in public messaging by key spokespeople.

Funding

In all of the consultations, it was thought that additional funding would be required for the coordinating agency in each state and territory for pre-emergency preparation. This would allow them to work effectively with agencies and municipalities in their jurisdictions to develop spontaneous volunteer plans including identifying the skills and roles they might require during an emergency. There may also need to be some capital investment for phone lines and other infrastructure.

Under jurisdictional arrangements, agencies may seek reimbursement from state responsible agencies, which in turn may seek partial reimbursement from the Australian Government through the Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements (NDRRA), if applicable. The NDRRA program provides partial reimbursement to the states and territories for natural disaster relief and recovery expenditure. The NDRRA covers a range of measures including personal hardship and distress assistance and the restoration or replacement of essential public assets.⁹ This funding would not be applicable for pre-emergency preparation. Suggestions for funding alternatives are discussed in the draft implementation plan (section 4 of this resource kit).

Where spontaneous volunteer management arrangements already exist or where the preference is to not use spontaneous volunteers, the funding requirements may be relatively low. It was also suggested during the consultation that the cost of not managing spontaneous volunteers, such as drawing essential resources away from agencies' core functions, may justify the dedication of some resources to a spontaneous volunteer management solution. This may be, for example, a case of simply implementing an agreed communication strategy, such as that recommended in section 3 of this resource kit.

Barriers to use of spontaneous volunteers

The barriers to the use of spontaneous volunteers, where agencies, municipalities or jurisdictions have decided to use them, fall under three categories:

- state/territory, municipality or agency policies
- motivations of volunteers
- operational/technical considerations.

The tables below summarise the main barriers to the use of spontaneous volunteers that were identified during the consultations. The actions suggested are not aimed at promoting the use of spontaneous volunteers. They merely recognise that offers of help following an emergency are inevitable and aim to suggest best practice in the management of any offers that are received. The actions are listed chronologically as they might occur.

⁹ Attorney-General's Department, Annual report 2007–2008, Commonwealth of Australia, 2008.

Prior to an emergency

Barrier	Enabler	Actions	Who
Agencies' policies do not recognise spontaneous volunteers	Spontaneous volunteer plan developed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skills required identified prior to emergency Job descriptions written for potential roles, including details of tasks and the skills required Induction/training plan developed Communications plan developed which includes scripts for reception, those answering the phone etc Role created for coordinator of spontaneous volunteers to be activated in emergencies Procedures for standing down spontaneous volunteers developed 	Agencies accepting spontaneous volunteers
Public acceptance of usual volunteering channels	Public education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The public are encouraged to pre-register with the coordinating agency prior to an emergency 	State/territory strategic agency
Public acceptance of usual volunteering channels	Pre-registration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People pre-register their interest People are notified of the kind of skills and checks that may be required in an emergency If interested, individuals are referred to the agency of their choice for pre-training 	State/territory coordinating agency (previously the lead operational agency)
Lead time required for training spontaneous volunteers in an emergency	Pre-training/ adapted induction training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agencies include potential volunteers/casual volunteers in their regular volunteer training programs Training is adapted for people with the appropriate skills to work within the emergency context 	Agencies accepting spontaneous volunteers
Lead time required for obtaining police and working with children checks	Pre-training and checks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individuals undertake training and obtain police/ working with children checks if relevant 	Potential volunteers/casual volunteers
Possible negative implications to organisation's reputation if potential spontaneous volunteers feel rejected or undervalued	Spontaneous volunteer plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communications plan developed that includes scripts for reception, those answering the phone etc 	Agencies not accepting spontaneous volunteers
Occupational health and safety	Risk analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Risk analysis undertaken in advance of emergency Strategies for risk mitigation put in place and written into spontaneous volunteer plan Thorough briefing of spontaneous volunteers prior to deployment to include occupational health and safety issues 	Agencies accepting spontaneous volunteers
Insurance	Strategy for insuring spontaneous volunteers in an emergency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategy developed and circulated to the sector 	Framework project team
Using spontaneous volunteers across jurisdictions	Strategy for licensure issues developed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategy developed and circulated to the sector 	Framework project team

During and following an emergency

Barrier	Enabler	Actions	Who
No central point for the registration of potential spontaneous volunteers	Registration system in an emergency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff trained in systems created for the registration of potential spontaneous volunteers • Dedicated telephone number set up • Phone scripts developed 	State/territory coordinating agency
Difficulty accessing appropriately skilled spontaneous volunteers	Need established	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agencies notify their state/territory coordinating agency of their requests for skills, checks and number of people required 	Agencies accepting spontaneous volunteers
Possible negative implications to organisation's reputation if potential spontaneous volunteers feel rejected or undervalued	Public communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Messages circulated via the media as to whether spontaneous volunteers are required and if so the registration process 	State/territory strategic agency
Possible negative implications to organisation's reputation if potential spontaneous volunteers feel rejected or undervalued	Public communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued daily communication with those who have registered and have not been referred to agencies accepting spontaneous volunteers 	State/territory coordinating agency
Difficulty accessing appropriately skilled spontaneous volunteers	Spontaneous volunteer referral	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data searched for relevant skills; pre-registered people given preference • Contact information passed to requesting agency 	State/territory coordinating agency
Spontaneous volunteer expectations of an emergency versus the reality	Spontaneous volunteer induction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteer training undertaken, to include clear briefing on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the spontaneous volunteer's role, including boundaries and limitations • the situation • the command and communication structures • occupational health and safety 	Agencies accepting spontaneous volunteers
Tracking the welfare of spontaneous volunteers	Spontaneous volunteer management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spontaneous volunteers become part of agency's normal rostering, briefing and debriefing system • Spontaneous volunteers rostered with experienced volunteers or staff where possible/required according to task 	Agencies accepting spontaneous volunteers
Possible negative implications to organisation's reputation if spontaneous volunteers feel rejected or undervalued	Spontaneous volunteer stand down	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spontaneous volunteers are notified that they are no longer required • Spontaneous volunteers are officially thanked • Spontaneous volunteers are notified of future volunteering opportunities within the organisation 	Agencies accepting spontaneous volunteers
Possible negative implications to organisation's reputation if potential spontaneous volunteers feel rejected or undervalued	Potential spontaneous volunteer stand down	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential spontaneous volunteers are notified that they will not be needed and are thanked for their offer of help • Potential spontaneous volunteers are notified of future volunteering opportunities within the emergency management sector 	State/territory coordinating agency



Draft Framework



Section 2: Draft Framework

The draft framework aims to support community recovery by aiding the effective management of spontaneous volunteers in times of emergencies, regardless of whether they are used.

The framework is designed to fit into current state and territory arrangements and is flexible and able to be adapted to meet the needs of jurisdictions, municipalities and organisations.

For a better understanding of the framework, it is recommended that this section be read after reading Section 1: The project report. For effective implementation of the framework, also read Section 3: The draft communication strategy and Section 4: The draft implementation plan.

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Introduction

The nature of volunteering in Australia within emergency management is changing. While many people are still content to follow the traditional path of joining an organisation, others seek short-term opportunities, often in response to high-profile or dramatic events.¹

Spontaneous volunteering is a phenomenon that is increasingly part of the emergency landscape. Spontaneous volunteers need to be carefully managed, from the moment of impact. In Australia's emergency management arrangements, the use of spontaneous volunteers ranges from being actively supported, to being discouraged. This is in recognition that offers of assistance can be productive, but can also overwhelm agencies attempting to assist those affected by emergencies.

The framework is designed to enable consistent good practice in jurisdictions, municipalities and agencies that choose to use spontaneous volunteers as part of their emergency management activities. For those jurisdictions and agencies that do not wish to use spontaneous volunteers, the framework offers tools to manage and redirect the anticipated influx of potential spontaneous volunteers. For these organisations, the aim is to prevent a drain on the resources that are needed for their core business.

Offers of help from the community need to be channelled in a way that does not have a negative impact on the response to an event, or the recovery from an event, regardless of whether spontaneous volunteers are required. Any approach needs to also recognise that spontaneous volunteers may not be used, or that specific skills may be called for if they are used.

A coordinated approach to the management of spontaneous volunteers will enable effective processes to be implemented. This will allow:

- agencies to have pre-identified the skills and roles they may need in an emergency and processes for the management of spontaneous volunteers
- potential spontaneous volunteers to have a more realistic view of what help may be required in an emergency through public pre-emergency education messages
- consistent communication messages to manage the expectations of the public about whether spontaneous volunteers are required from the onset of the emergency
- potential spontaneous volunteers to register their skills, interests and experience, ensuring they are more likely to be used if appropriate
- potential spontaneous volunteers to feel valued through clear and regular communication from the coordinating agency during and after an emergency.

Aim

The aim of the framework is to support community recovery by enabling the effective management of spontaneous volunteers in times of emergencies, regardless of whether they are used. This will be achieved through a range of coordinated and standardised approaches and mechanisms.

Objectives

The objectives of the framework are to:

- promote the effective management of potential spontaneous volunteers regardless of whether they are used
- identify clear processes that enable the management response to reflect the escalating or decreasing size of the emergency while fitting within existing jurisdictional emergency management plans
- identify clear pathways for potential spontaneous volunteers to offer their help if required, including registering as a volunteer on an ongoing basis
- identify clear processes for these offers to be coordinated and for spontaneous volunteers to be effectively used.

¹ A. Cottrell, 'A survey of spontaneous volunteers', 2010 (in section 5 of this kit).

Principles

The framework is based on the following principles:

- The people affected by any emergency are the first priority.
- Spontaneous volunteering is valuable and aids community recovery.
- Everybody has a right to offer their assistance and to feel that their offer has been valued.
- Jurisdictions and agencies will take considered policy positions on whether they will use spontaneous volunteers; this framework is intended to support them with processes and tools regardless of whether they decide to use spontaneous volunteers.
- Normal volunteer management processes apply in times of emergency.
- Effective management recognises that processes need to be in place to ensure that agencies are not overwhelmed with offers of support.
- Spontaneous volunteers are not always required and may not be encouraged in circumstances where existing resources are sufficient.
- Communication messages must commence at the point of impact or shortly after an emergency occurs, and be embedded in the emergency response communications arrangements.
- Arrangements for managing spontaneous volunteers should be recognised in, and where required embedded within, existing emergency management plans or operating guidelines.
- The time when spontaneous volunteers are needed may not coincide with when offers are being made. Volunteers may be needed weeks or months later.



Requirements of a framework

Fitting into existing arrangements

To ensure coordination of effort, a key requirement identified during the consultations was that the framework for managing spontaneous volunteers needs to fit into existing jurisdictional emergency management plans. This could be achieved by developing a spontaneous volunteer sub-plan or supporting plan for each state and territory emergency management plan and municipal plans, or by developing operating guidelines if a sub-plan is not considered appropriate.

State/territory emergency management plans could clearly articulate how the jurisdiction will manage spontaneous volunteers, even in jurisdictions that have a clear policy position of not using spontaneous volunteers. Jurisdictions that do agree to use spontaneous volunteers can develop a sub-plan, supporting plan or operating guidelines to document the arrangements for management. For jurisdictions that undertake this planning process, it is recommended that the process include consultation with a wide range of stakeholders across the response and recovery arena.

The sub/supporting plan or operating guidelines could be part of the existing state or territory arrangements, which include:

- West Plan
- Tasmanian Emergency Management Plan
- NSW State Disaster Plan
- ACT Emergency Plan
- SA State Emergency Management Plan
- Emergency Management Manual Victoria
- Northern Territory All Hazards Emergency Managements Arrangements
- Queensland Disaster Management Plan

It could include details of who the state/territory strategic agency and state/territory coordinating agency are, along with details of how and in what circumstances the sub/supporting plan or operating guidelines may be activated. These might include:

- requests from agencies accepting spontaneous volunteers
- offers of assistance from the public, even if spontaneous volunteers are not being used.

Governance for the state/territory strategic agency could be provided by a steering group made up of members from the state or territory emergency management committee/s.

A national strategic spontaneous volunteer working group could be created as a sub-group under current national administrative arrangements. This group could include a representative from the strategic agency in each jurisdiction and the national coordinating agency.

In terms of governance, the group could perhaps be formed under the governance arrangements of the new National Emergency Management Committee (replacing the existing Australian Emergency Management Committee). However, as the structure of any supporting sub-groups or future work plan have yet to be agreed for the committee, it is unclear if this would be appropriate.

Scalability

For local emergencies within a municipality, it is anticipated that the number of offers for help would be limited. In the East Coast bushfires in Tasmania, for instance, approximately 150 potential spontaneous volunteers offered their help and were used. It is anticipated that in this instance the strategic agency and the coordinating agency could be the same organisation, and it is unlikely that a registration website or dedicated phone number would be activated.

For emergencies that span municipalities, or generate a great deal of media interest, the state/territory strategic and coordinating agencies may be activated or assume responsibility.

Standards for volunteer induction training and management

It was suggested during the consultations that there could be core or minimum standards for spontaneous volunteer recruitment, induction training and management, which may include:

- potential spontaneous volunteer screening
- induction training:
 - context of the emergency
 - the agency's role in the emergency
 - the volunteer's role including boundaries and limitations, and expected shift patterns
 - command and control
 - self-care
 - duty of care
 - occupational health and safety
- briefing and debriefing
- ongoing support.

Clear pathways

Previous emergencies have demonstrated that if potential spontaneous volunteers are unclear about where to go to offer their help they will either offer it to whichever government department or agency they deem the most appropriate, or travel to the affected area.

A clear, central, publicised way for people to register their interest—via a dedicated telephone number or on a designated website—may help to mitigate some of the confusion following an event. This would also enable agencies involved in response and recovery to focus their resources on their designated task.

If spontaneous volunteers are not required, an early, consistent message could be put out via the media explaining why they are not needed and suggesting other ways people might offer assistance (e.g. donating money). Draft generic messages which can be tailored by jurisdictions, municipalities and agencies have been developed as part of the communication strategy (section 3 of this kit).

Organisations outside of existing emergency management plans

Community recovery is complex and can take place over an extended period of time, drawing upon a large number of agencies. Some agencies are nominated within existing emergency management plans, and others, particularly locally based agencies, will engage with local communities and deliver services or conduct activities to meet emerging needs resulting from the emergency. For some, this will involve undertaking activities outside of their normal sphere of operation.

In emergencies, these agencies' resource requirements may swell as a result of the activities that they undertake. In addition, emergent organisations are created to meet perceived local needs. A number of emergent organisations were created following Hurricane Katrina in 2005. One group, self-named the 'Robin Hood Looters', sourced food and water from deserted homes. The aim was to find and assist survivors, and to evacuate according to prearranged agreements with official rescue groups. Another group set up temporary accommodation in a school for those affected; members enforced security measures, expelling those who displayed antisocial behaviour. It was stated that 200 people had used this facility before forced evacuation.²

Such organisations may wish to engage with the framework and to access potential spontaneous volunteers. Protocols for this are suggested in the draft implementation plan (section 4).

² A. Beagrie, 'Emergent groups in disaster response', 2009 (citing Rodriguez, Trainor & Quarantelli, 2006).

Draft framework for the management of spontaneous volunteers in emergencies

In 2008, Australian Red Cross, through a project undertaken on behalf of the Australian Emergency Management Volunteers Forum,³ proposed the elements required to better manage, and where appropriate use, spontaneous volunteers. This model recognised that there were three key aspects of managing spontaneous volunteers:

- having a strategic agency with responsibility for policy development and providing the authorising environment within government
- having a coordinating agency that would coordinate, when required, any need to manage spontaneous volunteers
- acknowledging that some agencies may choose to supplement their resources with spontaneous volunteers during times of high demand or when they require specialised skills.

It was also recognised that it may be necessary to manage these three elements:

- at a national level when there is a nationwide event (e.g. Bali bombings, Indian Ocean Tsunami)
- at a jurisdictional level, given the primacy of states and territories in emergency management, and the range of jurisdiction-based legislation and policies that apply to the voluntary sector
- at a local level for a local level event.

This model was used as the basis for consultation with each of the states and territories, Australian Government agencies, and national peak bodies. From the consultations, the following framework has been developed.

National Level

National strategic working group

Prior to an emergency	After an emergency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote/contribute to the framework • Promote the implementation of the framework • Address common areas of concern across jurisdictions • Undertake projects on a national level such as the continuing development of common tools for the effective management of spontaneous volunteers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share post emergency learning across jurisdictions • Review framework • Review communication strategy

National coordinating agency

Prior to an emergency	During an emergency	After an emergency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build capacity of state/territory coordinating agencies • Promote sector-wide activities and actions facilitating spontaneous volunteering 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support and advise state/territory coordinating agency • Activate surge capacity through other state/territory coordinating agencies if required • Advise on the management of cross jurisdictional spontaneous volunteers • Liaise with/update national strategic working group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feed into framework review • Review with relevant state/territory coordinating agency or agencies the implementation of the framework in the context of the emergency

³ Funded through the National Emergency Services Volunteer Fund.

State/territory Level

State/territory strategic agency

Prior to an emergency	During an emergency	After an emergency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate for/promote/contribute to a framework • Advocate for/promote at state/territory and local levels the implementation of the framework • Coordinate collaborative actions of agencies • Coordinate public education/pre-registration communication plan • Provide a spokesperson for key media messages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fast-track volunteer checks • Trigger state/territory legislation • 'Go' on state/territory infrastructure • 'Go' on state/territory spontaneous volunteering sub/supporting plan or operating guidelines • Identify and appoint spokespeople to deliver key media messages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the implementation of the framework in the context of the emergency • Review the communication strategy • Review the effectiveness of the state/territory spontaneous volunteer sub/supporting plan or operating guidelines

State/territory coordinating agency

Prior to an emergency	During an emergency	After an emergency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build capacity of agencies accepting spontaneous volunteers to draft and use spontaneous volunteer management plans • Work with municipalities/agencies accepting spontaneous volunteers on volunteer management capacities and practices • Support and participate in sector-wide activities and actions facilitating spontaneous volunteering 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operate infrastructure • Open and coordinate spontaneous volunteer reception centres, either physical or virtual, if appropriate • Conduct ongoing liaison and monitoring of spontaneous volunteer progress with agencies • Liaise with state/territory strategic agency about communication to the public on use of spontaneous volunteers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feed into the review of the implementation of the framework • Feed into review and analysis of sub/supporting plan or operating guidelines • Report on number of offers received, number used etc • Follow up on volunteers. Register as episodic or now affiliated. Inform of future volunteer opportunities • Inform agency debrief sessions

Agencies accepting spontaneous volunteers

Prior to an emergency	During an emergency	After an emergency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write and exercise spontaneous volunteer management plan • Develop communications plan that includes scripts for reception, those answering the phone etc • Support and participate in sector-wide activities and actions facilitating spontaneous volunteering 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct potential spontaneous volunteer inquiries to relevant coordinating agency • List skills required/roles available with relevant coordinating agency • Accept potential spontaneous volunteer referrals from relevant coordinating agency • Train spontaneous volunteers and manage/support them during and after activation • Manage risks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review spontaneous volunteer management plan • Report on number of offers received, number used etc • Follow up on volunteers to encourage affiliation • Acknowledge and recognise volunteers • Feed into review and analysis of state/territory sub/supporting plan or operating guidelines

Agencies not accepting spontaneous volunteers

Prior to an emergency	During an emergency	After an emergency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop communications plan that includes scripts for reception, those answering the phone etc 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement communications plan directing potential spontaneous volunteer inquiries to relevant coordinating agency and/or recruitment process of the agency in non-emergency times 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review communications plan • Feed into review and analysis of state/territory sub/supporting plan or operating guidelines



Municipal/local level

Municipal/local coordinating agency

Prior to an emergency	During an emergency	After an emergency
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop a spontaneous volunteer plan that includes managing spontaneous volunteers who are first on the scene• Support and participate in sector-wide activities and actions facilitating spontaneous volunteering	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Operate infrastructure• Open and coordinate spontaneous volunteer reception centres, either physical or virtual, if appropriate• Liaise with state/territory strategic agency about communication to the public on use of spontaneous volunteers• Provide a spokesperson for key media messages for local emergencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Feed into the review of the implementation of the framework• Feed into review and analysis of sub/supporting plan or operating guidelines• Report on number of offers received, number used etc• Review communication strategy• Follow up on volunteers. Register as episodic or now affiliated. Inform of future volunteer opportunities• Acknowledge and recognise volunteers



Implementation of the framework

Recommendations on how the framework might be implemented are included in the draft implementation plan and draft communication strategy that have been developed as part of this project—see sections 3 and 4 of this kit.



Draft Communication Strategy



Section 3: Draft Communication Strategy

The communication strategy was developed in response to the research report (section 5) and consultations (section 1), which demonstrated the need for clear and consistent messages to be relayed to potential spontaneous volunteers during emergencies. In emergencies, effective communication is vital.

The strategy is aimed at assisting jurisdictions, municipalities and organisations to develop clear and consistent messages. This section provides examples of types of messages that can be used at each stage of an emergency.

The strategy is useful for both those who do and do not wish to use spontaneous volunteers. The strategy was designed to work with the framework, but it can also be used as a stand-alone document. For best results in implementing the strategy, also read Section 4: The draft implementation plan.

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Aim

The aim of the communication strategy is to assist in the effective management of spontaneous volunteers through the delivery of clear and consistent messages.



Context

The success of the emergency response can depend on people understanding their roles, responsibilities and chain of command. Spontaneous volunteers often arrive without the necessary equipment to perform a role or to keep themselves and others safe: they can be a distraction to agencies involved in response and recovery efforts. Their credentials cannot be proven and they may lack the necessary training and experience to perform the roles they aspire to. For these reasons they may not be used and this leaves them dissatisfied, disappointed and angry with disaster managers.¹

This dissatisfaction was echoed in the primary research undertaken as part of the project into the motivations and expectations of spontaneous volunteers.

'I felt underutilised, ignored and frustrated that my skills/time etc could have been put to use. I still feel that way, particularly when the media report on the continuing cleanup effort and the lack of progress to date.'

'I felt that applying to [the agency] was a waste of time. I was ready to do whatever was needed, and my offer was just noted, then ignored. I still feel very angry that even now, there is still so much to do in the affected areas, but I still have not been asked to do anything.'

'I was frustrated and angry that I had to wait for better organisation. In future I would go independently.'²

An effective communication strategy will help with the management of spontaneous volunteers. Clear, consistent messages stating whether spontaneous volunteers are being used and, if so, the process for registering offers of help will alleviate public frustration in the aftermath of an emergency while decreasing the pressure put on the agencies involved.

'I was politely informed that my offer had been noted, at the present all the help needed was at hand. Therefore I was at ease. The universe did not need my support right then so that's OK.'³



Principles

The communication strategy is based on the following principles:

- The people affected by any emergency are the first priority.
- Spontaneous volunteering is valuable and aids community recovery.
- Spontaneous volunteers can be effectively managed through intelligent communication:
 - Coordinated messages should be pre-agreed at all levels.
 - Messages given to the public should be consistent regardless of their source.
 - Messages given should reflect the changing nature of disaster response and recovery and be consistent with the National Principles for Disaster Recovery.
 - There will never be a general call for spontaneous volunteers. There may be a call for spontaneous volunteers with specific skill sets if required.
 - Alternatives to spontaneous volunteering will be suggested, in order to be consistent with these principles, if no opportunities arise (e.g. holding a fundraiser and donating the money).

¹ Australian Red Cross, 'Literature review: spontaneous volunteering in disasters', 2007.

² A. Cottrell, 'A survey of spontaneous volunteers', 2010 (in section 5 of this kit).

³ A. Cottrell, 'A survey of spontaneous volunteers', 2010.

Assumptions

The communication strategy is based on the following assumptions:

- There is a pre-agreed way in which spontaneous volunteers can register, if required.
- There are connections between the agency coordinating volunteer registrations, if required, and response and recovery agencies within the jurisdiction.
- There are good relationships between government/agencies and the media.
- Management tools have been developed as part of the project to assist agencies and groups outside of existing emergency management arrangements.
- Jurisdictions and agencies not using spontaneous volunteers will advise community members that they are not required.

Key messages

The messages given need to reflect the changing nature of any emergency. Broad messages have therefore been developed for each of four stages of an emergency. These have been identified as:

- **Emerging:** Immediately after an emergency, when little is known about the extent of the impact or the needs of the community, and when the story begins to feature in the media.
- **Initial response:** 12 to 24 hours after the emergency has occurred.
- **Ongoing response:** Includes ongoing response and community recovery. This is likely to be the longest communication stage.
- **Stand down:** Spontaneous volunteers are no longer required.

Stage	Broad message on spontaneous volunteering	Rationale
1. Emerging	The Emergency Services are responding to the emergency. Please assist them by staying away. Community support is appreciated. More information will be available within the next few hours. Please wait for more information.	A holding message designed to take the heat out of the situation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If no message is given people will go to the affected site or start contacting agencies, particularly those involved in the response. • The message acknowledges the invaluable support that community members give each other, but is not a call for action.
2. Initial response	The emergency has been contained. The damage is extensive. The needs of the community are being assessed. Donations of money are the best form of help (goods are not required). Specialist volunteers may be needed in the near future. See the website ... Please offer your assistance through your normal volunteer channels.	An updated holding message which acknowledges that specific skills may be needed even if they have not currently been identified: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is usually an emergency appeal. • Many people are already affiliated with a volunteering organisation or peak body. Encouraging the public to contact these organisations and offer their help diverts them away from the agencies involved in response and recovery. It also gives people an outlet for their desire to help.
3. Ongoing response	Money and some services have been offered. The needs of the community are being addressed. Thank you for your interest and support. Volunteers with specialist skills are encouraged to register on the website. Please go online to see the range of skills needed. Please assist the Emergency Services/recovery effort by continuing to stay away.	The message could be updated daily: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is important to thank those who are keen to help. • It reassures the public that the needs of those affected by the emergency are being or have been met. • It is specific about what help is required and is a reality check on the likelihood of utilisation if individuals don't have these skills.
4. Stand down	Money and services have continued to be offered. Thank you for your interest and support. The immediate needs of the community have now been met. Volunteers will be involved in the recovery effort for months to come, but additional volunteer resources are not needed at this time. If you are interested in volunteering for future emergencies ...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is important to thank those who are keen to help or have helped. • The message reassures the public that the needs of those affected by the emergency are being or have been met. • The recovery phase continues over an extended period of time. • The message seeks to strengthen agencies through new volunteer recruitment.



Sample generic messages

The following tables provide sample generic messages for a range of stakeholders. Key stakeholders were identified as:

- people affected by an emergency
- the public, including:
 - potential spontaneous volunteers
 - spontaneous volunteers
- media
- government
- agencies involved with both response and recovery
- peak bodies.

These messages can be tailored to meet the needs of the jurisdiction, municipality or agency. The messages assume that there is a pre-agreed way in which spontaneous volunteers can register, if required. They also assume that offers of help meet, or exceed, demand.

Pre-emergency messages

These might include:

- a public awareness-raising campaign delivered through the media, social networking sites and jurisdiction, municipal and agency websites
- internal communication within organisations involved in the response to and recovery from an emergency.

Target audience	Suggested message content	Rationale
The public	We know that people’s hearts open at times of disaster and they want to help by volunteering. If you want to be able to help next time there’s an emergency, you need to attend training now—don’t wait for an emergency to volunteer. There are plans in place to respond to any type of emergency, anywhere in the country. Trained personnel, including volunteers, implement these plans by responding to the emergency and aiding the recovery of affected communities. If you are interested in being involved ...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assuring the public that plans are in place to respond to emergencies. • Strengthening agencies through new volunteer recruitment.
Staff and volunteers working within existing emergency management plans	A plan has been developed for the management of people who want to volunteer in emergencies. This can be found at ... As part of the plan, messages for each stage of an emergency have been drafted. These will be circulated to all staff and volunteers in an emergency to ensure that everyone is clear on the jurisdiction’s/municipality’s/organisation’s [delete as applicable] response to offers of help.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting clear and consistent communication.

Ministerial messages

Stages	Suggested message content	Rationale
1. Emerging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trained emergency services personnel are responding to the event. The needs of the affected communities have yet to be identified. The public can best assist by staying away from the affected area and not calling agencies to offer their help. There is no call for volunteers at this time. 	<p>A holding message designed to take the heat out of the situation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If no message is given, people will go to the affected site or start contacting agencies, particularly those involved in the response. There is no call to action.
2. Initial response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We are working with affected communities to identify their needs. Please continue to stay away. Specialist skills may be required. These will be advertised on ... The best way the public can help is by donating money or raising funds through an approved activity for the emergency appeal. See the website ... for how to do this. 	<p>An updated holding message which acknowledges that specific skills may be needed, even if they have not currently been identified:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is usually an emergency appeal.
3. Ongoing response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thank you for your offers of help and your patience while the needs of the affected community/communities continue to be assessed. Specialist skills are now required. These are advertised on ... Please continue to support those affected by donating money or raising funds through an approved activity for the emergency appeal. See the website ... for how to do this. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is important to thank those who are keen to help. The message reassures the public that the needs of those affected by the emergency are being met. It is specific about what help is required and states that only individuals who have specialist skills may be used.
4. Stand down	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thank you for your offer of help [this may be a media announcement, letter or email from the relevant minister]. There is no longer an immediate need for volunteers. [The coordinating agency] now has more offers of help than can be used. If you are interested in volunteering with an agency in the future, please contact ... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is important to thank those who are keen to help or have helped. The message reassures the public that the needs of those affected by the emergency are being met. The message seeks to strengthen agencies through new volunteer recruitment.

Messages from the state/territory strategic agency to the media

Stages	Suggested message content	Rationale
1. Emerging	Our hearts go out to those affected by the disaster. The Emergency Services are currently responding to the situation. Please assist them by staying away; the danger has not yet passed. Community support is appreciated. We are assessing the situation and will give more details as soon as possible.	<p>A holding message designed to discourage the public from travelling to the affected area to try to help:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If no message is given, people will go to the affected site or start contacting agencies, particularly those involved in the response. • The message acknowledges the invaluable support that community members give each other, but is not a call for action.
2. Initial response	Our priority remains those affected by the disaster and we are working with affected communities to assess their needs. To ensure a coordinated response to offers of help from the public, a website is being set up. This will give updates on any specialist skills that may be required and will give details of how you can offer your help if you have these skills. The best way people can help is to donate or raise money for the emergency appeal.	<p>An updated holding message acknowledging public support and that specific skills may be required even if they have not currently been identified:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is usually an emergency appeal.
3. Ongoing response	<p>Thank you to all those who have generously donated money or have offered to donate their time. Our priority remains those affected by the disaster and we are working with the communities to aid their recovery. Members of the public who are interested in helping and have specialist skills are encouraged to go to [website] to view the range of skills required; these currently include carpenters and landscape gardeners. Details of how to offer your help are also on the website. If you would like to help, but do not have the skills currently required, donating or raising money through an approved activity are the best ways to help those affected. See the website for how to do this.</p> <p>Please do not travel to the affected areas to see what you can do. Those who are currently helping affected people need to focus on their work, not be diverted away to manage offers of help.</p>	<p>The message could be updated daily:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is important to thank those who are keen to help. • It is specific about what help is required and is a reality check on the likelihood of utilisation if individuals do not have these skills.
4. Stand down	Thank you to all those who have generously donated money or have offered to donate their time. The immediate needs of the community have now been met. However, community recovery is complex and takes place over an extended period of time. Volunteers will be involved in the recovery effort for months to come, but additional volunteers are not needed at this time. If you are interested in volunteering to help in future emergencies ...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is important to thank those who are keen to help or have helped. • The message reassures the public that the needs of those affected by the emergency are being met, and acknowledges that the recovery phase continues over an extended period of time. • The message seeks to strengthen agencies through new volunteer recruitment.

Messages from the coordinating agency to potential spontaneous volunteers

Stages	Suggested message content	Rationale
2. Initial response	<p><i>Message to potential spontaneous volunteers who turn up at the disaster site to offer their help.</i></p> <p>The emergency has been contained. The damage is extensive. The needs of the community are our first priority and are being assessed. The staff and volunteers currently being used have a high level of skill and training. Further volunteers are not required at this time. Donating money is the best form of help you can give (goods are not required). Specialist volunteers may be required in the near future. See the website ... Please offer your assistance through your normal volunteer channels.</p>	<p>A holding message which acknowledges that specific skills may be needed even if they have not currently been identified:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affected people are the first priority. • There is usually an emergency appeal. • Many people are already affiliated with a volunteering organisation or peak body. Encouraging the public to contact these organisations and offer their help diverts them away from the agencies involved in response and recovery. It also gives people an outlet for their desire to help.
3. Ongoing response	<p><i>Message that could be given at time of registration.</i></p> <p>We have had an overwhelming response to this emergency. As a result, your offer of help will be registered but may not be taken up. If you are needed, you may be asked to provide proof of a police check, working with children check, licences and registration if appropriate.</p> <p>This is the only place you need to register your interest for being a volunteer in this emergency. Any agency that requires additional resources will source them through [coordinating agency]. If an agency has a specific requirement, your details will be provided to them and they will contact you directly. If you are not contacted, this means that we do not require additional help at this time. Thank you for your registration and patience.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides a reality check for potential volunteers on likelihood of use. • Diverts calls away from agencies involved in response and recovery.
4. Stand down	<p>Thank you for your offer of help. The agencies involved did not require additional volunteers to help in this emergency. If you would be interested in future volunteer opportunities with these agencies ...</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is important to thank those who are keen to help. • The message seeks to strengthen agencies through new volunteer recruitment.

Messages from agencies, both accepting and not accepting spontaneous volunteers

A recorded phone message that members of the public might hear when they first ring an agency before they speak to an operator.

Stages	Suggested message	Rationale
1. Emerging 2. Initial response 3. Ongoing response	<p>Thank you for your call. If you are in immediate danger please hang up and call '000'. If you are calling to volunteer for [name of the emergency], then please call [phone number] or visit [web address]. If you are calling about something else, please hold the line.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Filtering calls that could distract resources away from the agency's main task in emergency response or recovery. • Promoting a coordinated approach to the registration and management of spontaneous volunteers.



Messages from agencies accepting spontaneous volunteers

Stages	Suggested message	Rationale
1. Emerging 2. Initial response 3. Ongoing response	Thank you very much for your offer of help. To ensure a coordinated response, all interested volunteers for this emergency need to register at ...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promoting a coordinated approach to the registration and management of spontaneous volunteers. Minimising agency resources diverted to manage offers of help.
4. Stand down	<p><i>Message to members of the public referred to the agency.</i></p> <p>Thank you for your help during this emergency. The help you have given has been much appreciated. If you would be interested in volunteering with [the agency] in future emergencies ...</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is important to thank those who have helped. The message seeks to strengthen agencies through new volunteer recruitment.



Messages from agencies not accepting spontaneous volunteers

Stages	Suggested message	Rationale
1. Emerging 2. Initial response 3. Ongoing response	<p>Thank you very much for your offer of help. To ensure a coordinated response, all interested volunteers for this emergency need to register at ...</p> <p>We are currently fortunate enough to not require additional help at this time. Should this change, we will source volunteers from [the coordinating agency]. If you are interested in volunteering with [agency name] in the future, please go to our website ...</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promoting a coordinated approach to the registration and management of spontaneous volunteers. Providing the rationale for declining offer of help. Promoting ongoing volunteering opportunities even if the agency is overwhelmed by the emergency and is unable to process new volunteer applications at the time.
	<p><i>For persistent offers of help the following message might be appropriate.</i></p> <p>Due to the nature of the work our volunteers perform, there are certain training and legislative requirements that must be met. As a result, we are unable to process new volunteers for this emergency. If you are interested in volunteering with [agency name] in the future, please register your interest with [the coordinating agency].</p> <p>To ensure a coordinated response to offers of help, all interested volunteers for this emergency need to register at ...</p>	



Social networking sites

Social networking sites provide a powerful and immediate avenue for the delivery of any message. Delivering a message about spontaneous volunteering that is consistent with messages delivered in the media and by agencies will reinforce the need for people to stay away from affected areas, while updating community members about any specialist skills needed.

In the absence of a message, or if conflicting messages are given, people are more likely to feel there is a need for their help. Feedback from the primary research reflected this scenario:

‘I thought people were desperately needed to help sort out donations etc. It was mentioned in the media, interviews etc. But I was not contacted.’

‘The media made out volunteers were desperately needed.’⁴

The immediacy of social networking sites means that messages need to be constantly updated, at least daily. The time required may appear a barrier, but it is an investment, and will assist in either seeking relevant and specific assistance or keeping the public away from affected areas and channelling their efforts into more appropriate ways of helping.

⁴ A. Cottrell, ‘A survey of spontaneous volunteers’, 2010.



Draft Implementation Plan



Section 4: Draft Implementation Plan

The draft implementation plan aims to assist jurisdictions, municipalities and organisations with adapting the framework and the communication strategy to suit their local requirements. The plan offers examples of possible roles for the national strategic working group and national coordinating agency. It also offers advice on strategic implementation, operational implementation, and the effective management of spontaneous volunteers. Recommendations on how the framework can work with existing state/territory arrangements are also given. The plan outlines steps that an organisation can take to be prepared for spontaneous volunteers in emergencies, including development of plans for before, during and after an emergency.

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Disclaimer

This implementation plan includes suggestions and discussions of a number of products and services available. Red Cross does not endorse or support any of the products or services referred to in this document and nothing in this document should be construed as Red Cross' endorsement or support of these products or services. The contents of this document have been prepared without taking account of individual or organisational objectives, situation or needs. Individuals and organisations should, before taking any action mentioned in this document, consider whether such action is appropriate having regard to their own objectives, financial situation and needs.

Aim

The aim of the draft implementation plan is twofold: firstly to explore in more detail the roles identified in the draft framework and secondly to look at the issues raised in the framework and how these issues might be overcome.

The implementation plan covers four major areas of activity:

- adoption of the framework
- governance of the framework
- operationalisation of the framework including the effective management of spontaneous volunteers
- review of the framework.

For discussion purposes, these have been divided into three sections: strategic implementation, operational implementation and the effective management of spontaneous volunteers.

This document includes a number of recommendations which would aid the implementation of the framework and the effective management of spontaneous volunteers.

Principles

The implementation plan is based on the following principles:

- The people affected by any emergency are the first priority.
- Spontaneous volunteering is valuable and aids community recovery.
- Everybody has a right to offer their assistance and to feel that their offer has been valued.
- Jurisdictions and agencies will take considered policy positions on whether they will use spontaneous volunteers.
- Normal volunteer management processes apply in times of emergency.
- Effective management recognises that processes need to be in place to ensure that agencies are not overwhelmed with offers of support.
- Spontaneous volunteers are not always required and may not be encouraged in circumstances where existing resources are sufficient.
- Communication messages must commence at the point of impact or shortly after an emergency commences, and be embedded in the emergency response communications arrangements.
- Arrangements for managing spontaneous volunteers should be recognised in, and where required embedded within, existing emergency management plans or operating guidelines.
- The time when spontaneous volunteers are needed may not coincide with when offers are being made. Volunteers may be needed weeks or months later.



Strategic implementation

Adoption of the framework

This implementation plan describes a generic process for the consistent management of spontaneous volunteers. The plan recognises that the needs of jurisdictions, municipalities and agencies are unique and each will need to decide what is appropriate to their own circumstances.

It is suggested that, in order to gain broad acceptance of the implementation of the framework, support or endorsement could be sought from strategic-level forums. Suggestions included the newly established National Emergency Management Committee (NEMC), the Ministerial Council for Police and Emergency Management—Emergency Management, (MCPEM-EM) the Community and Disability Services Ministers' Conference (CDSMC) and the Community and Disability Services Ministers' Advisory Council (CDSMAC).

The success of any plan often depends on the strength and flexibility of networks and connections within a community. The framework is deliberately broad to provide a continuum for the potential use of spontaneous volunteers. Agencies that choose to implement the framework (in whole or in part) are encouraged to do so in full consultation with all relevant stakeholders and within the existing emergency management/administrative arrangements.

Governance of the framework

It is recognised that to ensure leadership of the framework and its ongoing relevance, there needs to be agreed governance at both national and jurisdictional levels. Suggestions of how this might be structured are given below.

National strategic working group

The role of the national strategic working group could be one of advocacy and leadership.

Advocacy activities could include promoting:

- adoption of the new framework within jurisdictions that choose to use spontaneous volunteers
- updates to the framework when applicable
- the need for a public pre-emergency education/registration communication strategy.

Leadership activities could include:

- addressing common areas of concern across jurisdictions
- providing guidance for the National Coordinating Agency
- leading an annual review of the draft framework and associated communication strategy.

This group could identify areas of national collaboration to improve the management of spontaneous volunteers by supplying a forum for national debate on the subject.

Recommendation: Due to the nature of its role, the national strategic working group fits within current administrative arrangements.

State/territory strategic agency

In a jurisdiction that decides to adopt the framework and its supporting tools, the role of the state/territory strategic agency is similar to that of the national strategic working group: providing advocacy and leadership for the framework within their jurisdiction. For instance, it might be the state/territory strategic agency that is responsible for:

- activating the state/territory spontaneous volunteer sub-plan or operational guidelines
- requesting the fast-tracking of police checks for spontaneous volunteers, if appropriate
- triggering any other applicable state/territory legislation
- identifying and appointing a spokesperson to deliver key media messages about public pre-emergency education and registration
- identifying and appointing a spokesperson to deliver key media messages in an emergency
- leading the review of the spontaneous volunteer sub-plan or operational guidelines, and leading the implementation of the framework in the context of the emergency and associated communication strategy following an emergency.



Governance for the strategic agency might be provided by a steering group. This could be made up of members from the state/territory emergency management committee.

Recommendation: Due to the nature of its role, the strategic agency is housed within a relevant state/territory government department.



Review of the framework

The framework may need to be updated to take account of lessons learned from new emergencies about effective management of spontaneous volunteers. It is proposed that the framework be reviewed annually and updated as appropriate. This review could be led by the national strategic working group with input from the coordinating agencies in each jurisdiction adopting the framework.

Recommendation: The framework is reviewed annually and updated as appropriate.



Operational implementation

National coordinating agency

The role of the national coordinating agency could be one of support and advice. Prior to an emergency, it could work with state/territory coordinating agencies, individually or collectively, to help build capacity, giving guidance where appropriate. In addition, its role could include brokering agreement between the state/territory coordinating agencies as to how they might support each other in the time of emergency if surge capacity is required.

During an emergency, the national coordinating agency might offer support to the relevant state/territory coordinating agency. Its main role could be liaison, to activate surge capacity in another state or territory if required. This might occur in two instances:

- The coordinating agency in the affected state/territory is overwhelmed by the offers of help it is receiving. This might be caused by a large influx of offers, or staff being directly affected by the emergency.
- Damage to infrastructure in the location of the coordinating agency is severe. In this case, physical spontaneous volunteer reception centres may need to be set up, and interstate infrastructure assistance may be required.

After an emergency, the national coordinating agency could conduct a review with the affected state/territory coordinating agency. The results of the review could be shared with all other coordinating agencies to ensure continuous learning and best practice.

Recommendation: The national coordinating agency is an organisation with volunteer experience on a national level that does not have another role within existing emergency management plans.

State/territory arrangements

State/territory spontaneous volunteer sub/supporting plan or operational guidelines

Jurisdictions that are considering including spontaneous volunteers in future emergency response and recovery may wish to develop a spontaneous volunteer sub-plan or supporting plan to their existing emergency management plans. For some jurisdictions, standard operating guidelines may be sufficient. The sub-plan or guidelines could include the following elements.

Pre-emergency planning

- Developing a policy statement regarding the use of the plan/guidelines in emergencies—for example:
 - Will the plan/guidelines be activated for level 2 and 3 emergencies and not a level 1 emergency?¹
 - Who will activate the plan/guidelines? How will they be activated?
 - Who will decide if spontaneous volunteers are to be used? Who will be consulted?
 - If there is a call for spontaneous volunteers, what will happen? If not, what will happen?
 - When will the plan/guidelines be deactivated?
 - Who will deactivate the plan/guidelines?
 - How will the plan/guidelines be reviewed following an emergency?
- Nominating who the state/territory strategic and coordinating agencies will be and agreeing on their roles.
- Developing a communication strategy for the use or non-use of spontaneous volunteers.

¹ Level 1, 2 and 3 emergencies are defined within the Australasian Inter-Service Incident Management System. A definition is given in Annex A to this section.



During an emergency

- Activating the decision-making processes regarding the use of spontaneous volunteers.
- Activating the communication strategy.
- Activating the state/territory strategic and coordinating agencies.

After an emergency

- Activating the plan/guidelines review process.
- Updating the plan/guidelines as appropriate.

State/territory coordinating agency

The state/territory coordinating agency may have a comprehensive role before, during and after an emergency. The scope of its role would need to be agreed by the relevant government department or committee/s within each state or territory. Preferably the coordinating agency would be an organisation that has experience in managing volunteers and is seen as an exemplar of best practice among agencies/municipalities. Ideally it would be an organisation that does not have another role in the existing emergency management plan.

Funding

It is likely additional resources would be required for the coordinating agency to perform its functions. Ongoing funding may need to be sought by the coordinating agency. Potential assistance through existing funding sources may include:

- State/territory government
- Natural Disaster Resilience Program
- Australian Government
- corporate sponsorship.

Prior to an emergency

The coordinating agency's focus at this stage is on preparation. This could include ensuring that it is prepared, as well as working with agencies and municipalities on the development of their spontaneous volunteer plans, management capacity and practices. In addition, it could promote sector-wide simulations that would help agencies and municipalities test their plans.

Management of potential spontaneous volunteers will be more efficient if agencies and municipalities have identified in advance any anticipated skills/capacity shortfalls that they might have. This information, along with job descriptions for potential roles, could be held by the coordinating agency in preparation for an emergency. Some agencies may be reluctant to use spontaneous volunteers because of the amount of training required or for other reasons. In this instance, the coordinating agency could work with such agencies to prepare a communication plan for use by all staff if the agency receives offers of help.



In preparing itself for an emergency, the coordinating agency may consider the issues outlined in the following table.

Issue	Potential actions
Promoting volunteer pre-registration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication strategy developed and implemented for promoting volunteer opportunities and pre-registration process
Registering potential spontaneous volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreement reached between the coordinating agency and the relevant government department/committee on the most effective approach (web, phone and/or in person) • Coordinating agency identifies infrastructure needs (web capacity, phone lines etc) and develops back-up business continuity plans in case infrastructure fails • Coordinating agency identifies what information should be gathered from potential spontaneous volunteers through the registration process. For suggestions, see 'Registration' section on page 21
Spontaneous volunteers are not required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication strategy developed that includes media messages and scripts for staff in the coordinating agency
Potential spontaneous volunteer screening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreement reached between the coordinating agency and receiving agencies on the role of the coordinating agency. Further information is in the 'Volunteer screening and referral' section on page 23
Effective management of potential spontaneous volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective management process designed • Existing volunteer management processes reviewed to identify which are transferable and what new processes need to be developed
Resources required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Required roles identified within the coordinating agency for effective management of spontaneous volunteers and job descriptions, including skills required and tasks that will be undertaken, are developed. Individuals identified and trained to take on these roles in an emergency

During an emergency

The decision of whether to activate the state/territory spontaneous volunteer sub/supporting plan or operational guidelines will need to be made as soon as possible. The plan/guidelines may include details of the remit of the state/territory strategic and coordinating agencies.

The coordinating agency's role is likely to be one of coordination and volunteer management. It may be responsible for the registration and referral of potential spontaneous volunteers.

Review of the state/territory spontaneous volunteer plan or operational guidelines

The spontaneous volunteer sub/supporting plan or operational guidelines may become outdated as new emergencies occur and learning about effective management of spontaneous volunteers continues. It is proposed that they be reviewed annually and updated as appropriate. This review could be led by the state/territory strategic agency with input from the state/territory coordinating agency and other agencies within the jurisdiction, if appropriate.

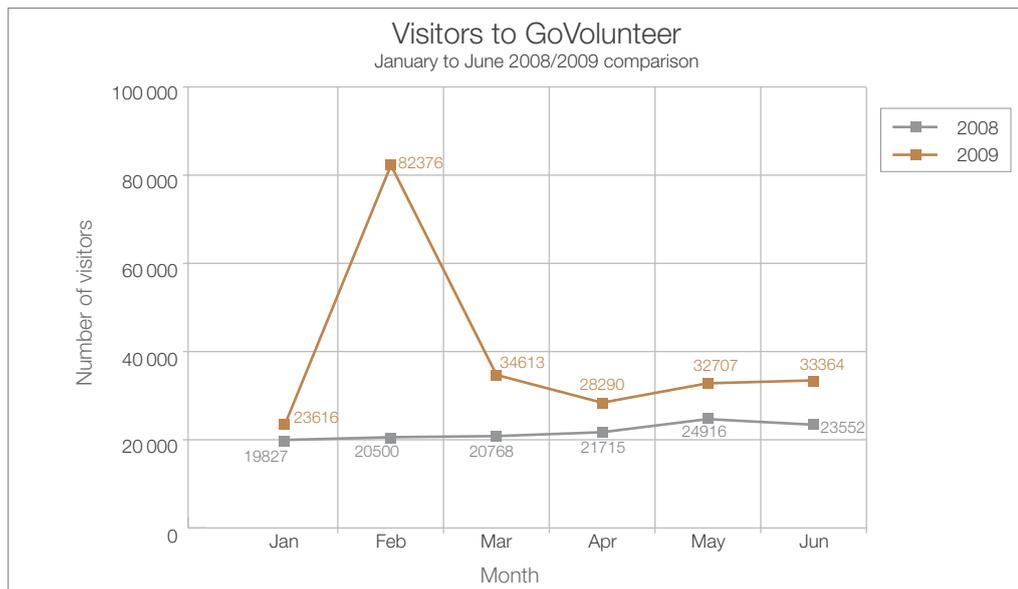
Recommendation: The sub/supporting plan or operational guidelines are reviewed annually and updated as appropriate.

Resources/infrastructure

For an indication of the resources that might be required for emergencies of different sizes it is useful to look at past emergencies.

In the immediate aftermath of the Black Saturday bushfires in 2009, Volunteering Australia was approached to host the online registration portal for potential spontaneous volunteers. Volunteering Australia's IT is outsourced, so it immediately negotiated 24-hour website support with its service provider. Individuals were designated to check the website every four hours to ensure that it was working correctly and any repairs could be made immediately to minimise downtime.

Increase in the volume of traffic on the website was significant, as demonstrated by the graph below.



The Renmark floods in 2007 caused damage to homes and properties in the area. Approximately 30 homes and 25 properties were significantly damaged. The storm impacted on an area of approximately 1,400 hectares of horticulture.² In the aftermath, the South Australian Department for Families and Communities established a physical registration point for spontaneous volunteers, and 280 individuals registered.

Following the Brisbane storms in 2008, Volunteering Queensland worked with the Department of Communities to register potential spontaneous volunteers. Volunteering Queensland rostered five to six people per day to register offers received by phone, and had the capacity to answer 15 calls at a time if demand increased. The Department of Communities received phone calls overnight, and emailed contact details to Volunteering Queensland for follow-up the next day.

During emergencies, infrastructure may be lost. It is recommended that coordinating agencies consider creating a continuity plan for this eventuality. This might include identifying:

- the risks (loss of internet/phone/office, staff absence etc)
- the impact these risks could have on the organisation's ability to effectively manage spontaneous volunteers
- how the impact of these risks could be minimised
- the actions that could be taken if the risks eventuated.

Municipalities

Many of the challenges facing municipalities will be similar to those facing the state/territory coordinating agency. It is therefore likely that municipalities will take on the coordination role in smaller emergencies. In addition to referring potential spontaneous volunteers to agencies, municipalities may use spontaneous volunteers themselves. In larger emergencies, where the state/territory spontaneous volunteer sub/supporting plan or operational guidelines have been activated, the coordinating agency may refer potential spontaneous volunteers to municipalities for onward referral to local agencies.

² State Recovery Office, Department for Families and Communities, 'Renmark storm recovery report', 2007.

The unique challenge that municipalities have is working with spontaneous volunteers who are first on the scene. In fact, most response work is done by community members who are present or nearby during a disaster. They often initiate and perform critical activities such as search and rescue and first-aid immediately following events.³ These individuals are unlikely to view themselves as spontaneous volunteers; they are more likely to think of themselves as good samaritans or simply community members.

Whether municipalities should try to incorporate these spontaneous volunteers into their structure once it is activated and, if so, how might they do this without causing offence, could be considered in the development of their spontaneous volunteer sub/supporting plan or operational guidelines.

Review of the municipal spontaneous volunteer sub/supporting plan or operational guidelines

In keeping with the recommendations for an annual review at a national and jurisdictional level, it is proposed that the municipal spontaneous volunteer sub/supporting plan or operational guidelines be reviewed annually and updated as appropriate. This could include input from volunteer resource centres, local agencies and community organisations, if appropriate.

Recommendation: The sub/supporting plan or operational guidelines are reviewed annually and updated as appropriate.

Organisations outside of existing emergency management plans including emergent organisations

Many organisations outside of existing emergency management plans play an important role in community recovery, such as church groups and sports clubs that take on a new role in the aftermath of a disaster.

In addition, emergent groups appear following an emergency. Not only do spontaneous volunteers attempt to join official bodies to become affiliated, they often self-organise to fulfil unmet needs.⁴

Requests to the coordinating agency for spontaneous volunteer referrals may come from these areas. Therefore, it is important for the coordinating agency to establish criteria for organisations to which it will refer potential spontaneous volunteers' contact details in advance of an emergency. Ensuring that the organisation receiving referrals has adequate insurance to cover spontaneous volunteers would be the recommended minimum criteria. This, though, may exclude emerging organisations, which, by their very nature, have little structure and lack procedures in the beginning. This is discussed further in the 'Volunteer insurance' section on page 18. Other criteria may include requiring organisations to be incorporated.

Recommendation: Coordinating agencies only refer potential spontaneous volunteers' contact details to organisations that demonstrate they have met minimum criteria, including having adequate insurance cover.

Communication strategy

A clear message from the stakeholder consultations and primary research was the frustration at the lack of communication with potential spontaneous volunteers following the Victorian bushfires in 2009. Initially a call was put out for spontaneous volunteers. This was followed by many being told they were not needed when they registered. Others heard nothing in response to their registrations.

'We....had no idea if our assistance was offered or disappeared into a black hole and that people who really needed it may have missed out.'

'It would have been nice to at least get a refusal for volunteering in the Victorian disaster. I realise the time was hectic and busy but it was nearly 11 months ago now. Nothing has been forthcoming either to me or to the people I know who volunteered their services.'⁵

Section 3 of this kit sets out a draft communication strategy that includes generic messages that jurisdictions, municipalities and agencies can adapt to their own needs.

³ S. Lowe & A. Fothergill, 'A need to help: Emergent volunteer behaviour after September 11th', 2003, (citing Tierney et al. 2001).

⁴ A. Beagrie 'Emergent groups in disaster response', 2009, (citing Fernandez 2007 and Quarantelli, 1997).

⁵ A. Cottrell, 'A survey of spontaneous volunteers', 2010 (in section 5 of this kit).



Effective management of spontaneous volunteers

Mapping the potential spontaneous volunteer journey from the time they register their interest to when they are stood down may help prepare for the effective management of spontaneous volunteers. A possible potential spontaneous volunteer journey, with suggested processes at each stage, is offered below.

Stage of potential spontaneous volunteer journey	Suggested processes
Before the emergency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State/territory spontaneous volunteer sub plan or operational guidelines developed and agreed • State/territory strategic and coordinating agencies appointed and their roles agreed • State/territory strategic agency agrees public pre-education/registration messages and appoints spokesperson • Municipalities/agencies review potential capacity/skills gaps and decide in what instances they might use spontaneous volunteers • Coordinating agency works with municipalities to develop a spontaneous volunteer sub-plan or operational guidelines • Coordinating agency works with agencies accepting spontaneous volunteers to develop a spontaneous volunteer plan. This could include developing job descriptions, which include the skills required and the tasks to be undertaken, to supply to the coordinating agency • Coordinating agency works with agencies not accepting spontaneous volunteers to develop a communication plan • Coordinating agency develops processes to effectively manage potential spontaneous volunteers
Potential spontaneous volunteer hears pre-emergency education messages and registers with the coordinating agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinating agency supplies potential spontaneous volunteer with information on the skills, checks etc that may be required by volunteer agencies and their training requirements • Potential spontaneous volunteer undertakes police check and agency training and becomes a casual or affiliated volunteer
Potential spontaneous volunteer hears about emergency. This could be by word of mouth or through the media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decision made to activate the spontaneous volunteer sub-plan or operational guidelines • Pre-agreed communication strategy initiated, stating whether or not spontaneous volunteers are being used. Messages disseminated via the media, government spokesperson, the coordinating agency, municipalities and agencies
If needed and requested, potential spontaneous volunteer registers their offer of help either virtually or in person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential spontaneous volunteer's registration details are lodged with coordinating agency. The potential spontaneous volunteer is thanked for their offer and given a reality check on the likelihood of being used • Coordinating agency conducts potential spontaneous volunteer screening if appropriate
Potential spontaneous volunteer is waiting to be used	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If there is a volunteering vacancy that fits the potential spontaneous volunteer's skills and experience, the coordinating agency refers their details on to relevant agency, giving pre-registered people preference • If there is not a relevant opportunity, the coordinating agency sends update messages to potential spontaneous volunteers on a daily basis thanking them for their offer and including the number of potential spontaneous volunteers registered versus number used and any other relevant information • After the emergency, if no opportunities have become available, the coordinating agency sends a final message thanking potential spontaneous volunteers, notifying them of the current situation and promoting ongoing volunteering opportunities with response and recovery agencies
Potential spontaneous volunteer is referred to agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The potential spontaneous volunteer receives a call from agency using spontaneous volunteers. The agency gives details of the role and any other relevant information. The agency conducts a telephone interview asking prepared questions. If both sides are happy to proceed, the agency invites the potential spontaneous volunteer to pre-deployment/ induction training



Stage of potential spontaneous volunteer journey	Suggested processes
Potential spontaneous volunteer attends pre-deployment/ induction training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The potential spontaneous volunteer receives training, which includes information on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the agency they will be volunteering for and the agency's role in the current emergency • the spontaneous volunteer's role, including boundaries and limitations • a situation briefing • command and communication structures • occupational health and safety • The potential spontaneous volunteer becomes a spontaneous volunteer under the agency's existing volunteer management practices • If applicable, the spontaneous volunteer receives an ID, uniform etc
Spontaneous volunteer is deployed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The spontaneous volunteer receives a briefing before each shift • The spontaneous volunteer is buddied with an experienced volunteer for at least their first shift • The spontaneous volunteer takes part in a debrief after each shift
Spontaneous volunteer is stood down	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The spontaneous volunteer contributes to the post-emergency agency debrief • The spontaneous volunteer is thanked by the agency and informed of future volunteering opportunities • The spontaneous volunteer is advised where they can seek help on occupational health and safety following the debrief, should they feel the need for further assistance

Police and working with children checks

Jurisdictions have different legislative requirements for working with children checks. Information on the legislative requirements, the difference between a police check and a working with children check, along with details of who must undergo pre-employment child safety screening can be found on the Australian Institute of Family Studies website at: <http://www.aifs.gov.au/nch/resources/police/policechecks.html>.

During the consultation process, many agencies cited the time taken to obtain a police check as a significant barrier to the use of spontaneous volunteers. Even if a potential spontaneous volunteer has a current check, it may be irrelevant if it is from another state or territory and a new one may be required. In the aftermath of the Victorian bushfires, the Victorian Police fast-tracked national police checks for volunteers, taking an average of 48 hours.

Recommendation: Fast-tracked national police checks become the norm in the aftermath of level 3 emergencies. This may require changes in working practices and legislation.

Another possibility would be for the coordinating agency to work with CrimTrac Agency either by becoming a CrimTrac accredited agency, or through an existing CrimTrac broker. CrimTrac is an Australian Government agency. Its primary role is to provide national information-sharing solutions to support the effective operation of police services and law enforcement agencies across state and territory borders.⁶ Police checks through CrimTrac take 48 hours. A list of current CrimTrac accredited agencies and brokers is in Annex B to this section. Further information can be found on the CrimTrac website at: http://www.crimtrac.gov.au/criminal_history_checks/index.html.

The Productivity Commission in its 2010 *Contribution of the not-for-profit sector report* has identified the time taken to obtain police checks as an issue. Recommendation 10.1 states:

⁶ http://www.crimtrac.gov.au/about_us/index.html.

Australian governments should introduce a system of 'Working with Vulnerable People Checks' that provides for checks to be portable between organisations for a designated time period.

Further, Australian governments should explore the feasibility of developing a consistent national system allowing portability across states and territories of police checks and the exchange of information on people deemed unsuitable for working with vulnerable people, especially children.

The ACT Government has recently sought comment on a proposed background checking system for people working with vulnerable people in the territory. The outcomes of the consultation will help inform the development of a policy on working with vulnerable people that will underpin the drafting of a working with vulnerable people checks Bill. It is anticipated that the Bill will be introduced in the ACT Legislative Assembly during autumn 2010.⁷

Recommendation: Jurisdictions investigate the value of fast-tracking police checks for spontaneous volunteers in appropriate circumstances.

Civil liability

Legislation in each state and territory protects volunteers for community organisations from personal civil liability for personal injury caused by acts made in good faith and without recklessness, in the course of carrying out community work for a community organisation. There is variation in the legislation between states and territories.

'Good Samaritans' (those who are first on a scene offering help and assistance) are also protected by the legislation in each state and territory from personal civil liability for personal injury caused by acts made in good faith and without recklessness, in the course of rendering first aid or other assistance to a person in distress.

It is not clear whether the legislation protects members of 'emergent groups' from civil liability in the same way.

Recommendation: NEMC considers reviewing the issue of differing state/territory legislation to determine if any harmonisation is required.

Taxation

The Australian Taxation Office is investigating the potential taxation implications of spontaneous volunteering for individuals and organisations. The findings will be included in the management tools.

Licensure and registration

Many occupations in Australia require individuals to be registered with or obtain a licence from a local authority in the state or territory in which they wish to practise their occupation. The occupations affected vary by state and territory. Agencies will need to ensure that spontaneous volunteers have the appropriate licence or have registered appropriately prior to engaging them.

A table showing the occupations in Australia that require a licence or registration in at least one state or territory is included in the management tools.

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) has agreed that there is a need for a national system. Agreement has been reached on seven initial occupational areas to which the national licensing system will be applied, removing the need for multiple licences. The areas are:

- air conditioning and refrigeration mechanics
- building and related occupations
- electrical

⁷ <http://www.dhcs.act.gov.au/publications/wwwpc#report>.



- land transport
- maritime
- plumbing and gasfitting
- property agents.

On 30 April 2009, COAG signed an intergovernmental agreement to establish a national licensing system for specified occupations and also agreed to the release of a regulation impact statement to inform COAG's consideration of the optimal form and structure of a national licensing system. Victoria is the host jurisdiction for legislation, and draft of legislation is nearly complete.⁸

This reform is on track and the new national licensing system is to commence on 1 July 2012.

Recommendation: NEMC considers reviewing the issue of varying licence and registration requirements to determine if any interim solution is required.

Developing an organisational sub-plan for spontaneous volunteers

Agencies that are considering including spontaneous volunteers in future responses to an emergency, may find it useful to develop an organisational sub-plan that is linked to their mission and fundamental principles, as well as being integrated with the organisational policies and procedures for general volunteer recruitment, training, deployment and over-all management, if applicable.

The sub-plan could include the following elements, many of which are similar to those in the state/territory sub-plan.

Pre-emergency planning

- Identifying potential capacity and/or skills gaps for emergency-related work and developing job descriptions for potential roles (including skills required and tasks to be undertaken). A generic spontaneous volunteer job description will be given in the management tools that are being developed as part of this project.
- Developing an organisational policy statement regarding the use of spontaneous volunteers in emergencies—for example:
 - How and when will spontaneous volunteers be used? Who will decide? Who will be consulted?
 - How does the organisation see the value and purpose of spontaneous volunteering to its activities?
- Developing a communication strategy that reflects this statement.
- Conducting a risk assessment and developing strategies for risk mitigation.
- Ensuring existing insurance covers spontaneous volunteers or obtaining the relevant insurance.
- Developing a toolkit of resources for the registration, screening, training and deployment of spontaneous volunteers, that has been branded and adapted to the specific requirements of the organisation and its activities and priorities in an emergency situation.
- Integrating consideration and decision-making processes on the use of spontaneous volunteers into the organisation's emergency activation plan, if applicable.
- Developing and adapting the organisation's training resources to include and address the issues relating to spontaneous volunteers in:
 - the training of spontaneous volunteer coordinators

⁸ COAG Progress Report Card, July 2008 – July 2009, <http://www.finance.gov.au/deregulation/coag.html>

- the training of emergency/disaster team leaders
- existing volunteer training packages, if applicable
- stand-alone modules designed for delivery to potential spontaneous volunteers.
- Developing an inventory of operational resources required for the activation of spontaneous volunteers and ensuring that these resources will be stocked and accessible when required.

During an emergency

- Activating decision-making processes regarding the use of spontaneous volunteers.
- Activating the communication strategy.

If using spontaneous volunteers:

- Activating the trained spontaneous volunteer coordinator.
- Activating potential spontaneous volunteer registration and screening if these tasks are not being undertaken by the state/territory coordinating agency or municipality.
- Activating resource infrastructure as appropriate (website, phone lines, face-to-face screening sessions, pre-deployment training).
- Integrating spontaneous volunteers into existing volunteer deployment plans, if applicable.⁹

After an emergency

- Standing down and thanking spontaneous volunteers and promoting ongoing volunteering opportunities.
- Reviewing the use of spontaneous volunteers.

Effectively declining offers of help

Giving a clear and consistent message to all potential spontaneous volunteers who offer their help will minimise any negative implications for the organisation's reputation. Having an organisation-wide communication strategy will ensure that potential spontaneous volunteers get the same message regardless of who they speak to. A sample message that could be adapted for use on the web and by any staff declining offers of help is included in the communication strategy in section 3 of this kit. Once adapted, this could be circulated to all staff prior to an emergency to ensure that everyone is clear on what they should say.

Spontaneous volunteer coordinator

It is invaluable to have one person who has an overview of the spontaneous volunteer recruitment and training needs. This person could be responsible for:

- liaising with the emergency planning team within their organisation to ascertain skills/capacity needs
- communicating those needs to the coordinating agency
- accepting referrals and conducting initial screening
- conducting spontaneous volunteer induction training
- incorporating the spontaneous volunteer into the agency's normal rostering system
- conducting spontaneous volunteer performance management.

Whether the coordinator undertakes all of the tasks themselves, or manages a team that does, will depend on the size of the emergency and the agency's capacity needs.

A sample job description for a spontaneous volunteer coordinator is included in the management tools.

⁹ Australian Red Cross, 'Spontaneous volunteer management in disasters resource toolkit', 2008.



Volunteer insurance

Many volunteering organisations will already have insurance that will cover spontaneous volunteers. Organisations may need to fulfil certain criteria, such as training, risk assessment etc, and should inquire of their insurers as they develop their spontaneous volunteer plan.

Other groups, including emergent organisations, can overcome the lack of insurance by coming under the auspices of another organisation until they become more established and are able to get their own insurance. For instance, Blaze Aid, an emergent organisation following the Black Saturday bushfires, 2009, came under the auspices of the Victorian Farmers Federation for insurance purposes. Alternatively, insurance can be gained from organisations like Local Community Insurance, which was specifically created to manage the insurance needs of clubs and community groups within Australia.¹⁰

Some emergent organisations, though, will not provide insurance cover for volunteers. Volunteering Australia has developed an e-learning program called *Be an effective volunteer*. This online training enables individuals to prepare for their volunteer experience by learning what it means to be a volunteer, as well as supporting volunteers to further their understanding in areas such as occupational health and safety and effective communication techniques. Volunteers who complete this module will be able to purchase individual volunteer personal accident insurance coverage through a national insurance scheme for volunteers that has been developed by Volunteering Australia. It is anticipated this will be available in the second half of 2010.¹¹

The Volunteer Emergency Recovery Information System (VERIS) is a web-based application that is activated in the recovery phase of an emergency. Potential spontaneous volunteers may use it to register their offer of help. Individuals registered with VERIS are covered by a last resort insurance policy provided by SAICORP.¹²

Good samaritans who are first on the scene are, by their very nature, not covered by an organisation's insurance and would need to claim on their own insurance.

Agency staff training and simulations

Staff and volunteers who may be involved in registering and managing potential spontaneous volunteers during an emergency should receive training to ensure they are fully prepared. In addition, running an annual simulation to test the preparedness of both the people and systems will help identify any cracks and improve performance. The simulation could be internal for the coordinating agency alone, or include agencies within the jurisdiction. A sample simulation will be included in the training package being developed as part of this project.

Potential roles for spontaneous volunteers

One of the barriers to using spontaneous volunteers identified through the consultation process was that agencies were unclear about what kind of roles they could ask spontaneous volunteers to undertake. In many cases in the aftermath of the Victorian bushfires, spontaneous volunteers were given basic tasks that involved little or no training. This was mainly attributed to the overwhelming number of offers of help and the lack of pre-planning to identify skills gaps/capacity needs.

An approach taken by Australian Red Cross was to use spontaneous volunteers with particular expertise to backfill, freeing up staff and existing volunteers to work in affected areas. For example, they deployed a logistics expert from Oxfam as their logistics officer in the Red Cross Incident Management Team.

Generic potential roles that spontaneous volunteers could undertake in an emergency are explored in the management tools.

¹⁰ www.localcommunityinsurance.com.au.

¹¹ For further details, contact Amanda Everton, National Manager—Education, Policy and Research, on amanda.everton@volunteeringaustralia.org

¹² www.veris.sa.gov.au

Pre-registration

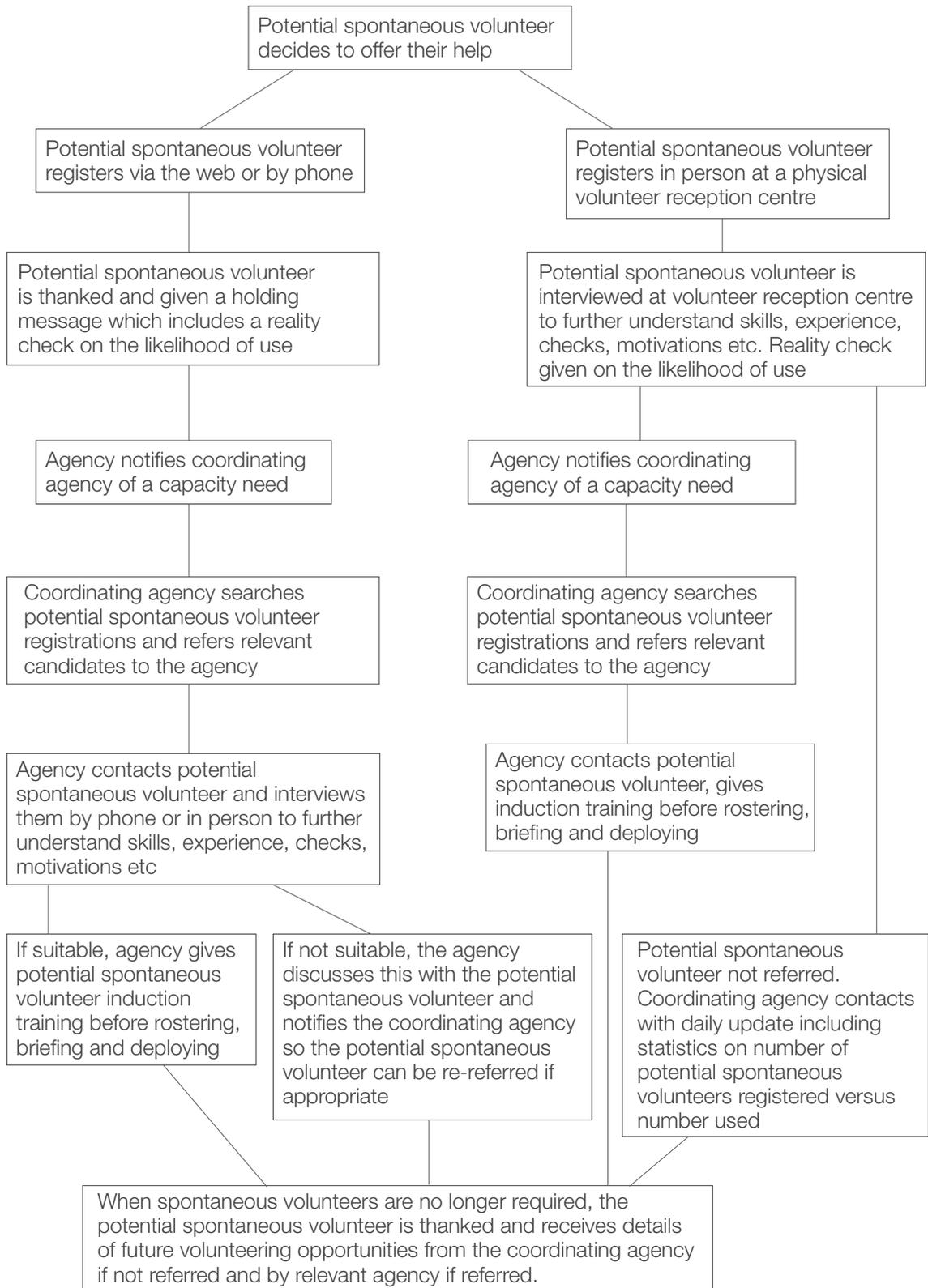
The coordinating agency could use a public awareness campaign to encourage people to pre-register their interest in volunteering in an emergency situation. This could entail a call to action at the end of existing campaigns, such as the current bushfire awareness ads. Generic communication messages are included in the communication strategy (section 3 of this kit). People who pre-register could be given information on the kind of skills and checks that may be required in an emergency. If interested, individuals could be referred to the agency of their choice for pre-training after screening, if appropriate.

Pre-registration could provide a database of available volunteer skills with information on whether individuals have current checks, licences and registration, if appropriate.

Volunteer reception centres

The method for volunteer registration could be agreed between the coordinating agency and the relevant authority or committee/s and may depend on the nature and location of the event. Experience has shown that what is important is that if spontaneous volunteers are required the public is aware of the chosen route. If people do not know how and where to register, they are more likely to go to the affected area.

Volunteer reception centres can be virtual, physical or a mixture of both. Regardless of the method, the registration process is likely to be similar and is demonstrated in the flowchart below.



There are a number of documents on the web showing how to set up a physical volunteer reception centre that coordinating agencies may find useful. The following layout is taken from 'Spontaneous unaffiliated volunteer management during emergencies', Baw Baw Shire, Victoria.



Thought may need to be given to the location of any physical volunteer reception centre. In the aftermath of the Victorian bushfires, volunteer registration was undertaken in some relief centres. Agencies working in these centres were then unclear as to whether individuals entering had been affected by the emergency or were there to offer their help.

'At times the number of potential volunteers registering far outweighed the number of affected people seeking help.'¹³

Registration

The challenge with registration, whether online, by phone or in person, is gaining enough information from potential spontaneous volunteers to effectively use their skills, if required, while not asking for so much information that this becomes a barrier.

During the jurisdictional consultations, participants were asked what information they would be interested in. The following is their wish list:

- name
- age
- gender
- ethnicity (to ensure cultural diversity within the affected community is reflected in volunteers deployed)
- location
- contact details
- emergency contact details
- availability, both immediate and long term (including date and times for immediate availability)
- travel capacity

¹³ Spokesperson, Nillumbik Shire Council.



- current occupation
- details of skills and previous expertise, particularly tasks performed recently
- details of previous emergency management experience
- languages spoken
- details of checks, licences etc
- details of any affiliations
- information on what they are prepared to do
- details of any limitations (e.g. health)
- volunteer requirements (e.g. accommodation, expenses)
- what resources, if any, could they provide (e.g. vehicles).

A sample volunteer registration form is included in the management tools being developed as part of this project.

Getting a clear understanding of people's skills and previous experience is critical. While many will not have previous emergency experience, some will.

'I have been a CFA volunteer for over 10 years.'

'Qualified current fire fighter – not utilised
Qualified radio operator – not utilised
Experienced emergency comms officer – not utilised.'¹⁴

Recommendation: Individuals have the opportunity to register online or ring a dedicated phone number in addition to registering in person, if appropriate. Scripts could be developed for staff answering the phone or registering individuals in person to ensure that consistent messages are given to the public. A sample message is included in the communication strategy (section 3 of this kit).

'There should have been an online registration process for people who are interested in volunteering spontaneously, where they can enter their details and check the website when they are available and check what sort of jobs they are skilled or prepared to do.'¹⁵

Some examples of online registrations systems are:

- Sahana is a free and open-source disaster management system. It is a web-based collaboration tool that claims to address the common coordinating problems during a disaster from finding missing people, managing aid, managing volunteers, tracking camps effectively between government groups, non-government organisations and affected people. <http://www.sahana.lk/>
- The Volunteer Emergency Recovery Information System (VERIS) is a web-based application that is used in the recovery phase of an emergency. Potential spontaneous volunteers can register online, by phone or in person at a designated centre. <http://www.veris.sa.gov.au/veris/>
- Emergencyvolunteering.com.au is a website under development by Volunteering Queensland. Individuals will be able to search and apply for volunteering opportunities following an emergency and outside times of emergency response.
- VIKTOR Online is a volunteer registration and matching database that allows volunteers to register either online or in person. It can be used to manage spontaneous volunteers in times of emergency and also allows potential spontaneous volunteers to register their interest in helping prior to an event. <http://www.volunteeringwa.org.au/>

¹⁴ A. Cottrell, 'A survey of spontaneous volunteers', 2010.

¹⁵ A. Cottrell, 'A survey of spontaneous volunteers', 2010.

Volunteer screening and referral

Referring the right potential spontaneous volunteer to the right agency saves time and potential frustration. This may involve interviewing the potential spontaneous volunteer to get a clear idea of their skills and motivations. The level of screening required may vary between agencies. If the coordinating agency is undertaking this role, it could agree with stakeholders on the level of screening undertaken to prevent duplication. During the Victorian bushfires, no screening was undertaken by the coordinating agency. In Queensland, Volunteering Queensland has agreed to undertake pre-screening. In 2009, it set up the Volunteer Recruitment Management – Multi Agency Model, for which it negotiated with individual agencies about the degree and type of screening required.

Compliance with the Privacy Act and the implications of the Act for potential volunteer referrals was expressed as a concern at some consultations. The draft sample volunteer registration form in the management tools includes a question for potential spontaneous volunteers asking if they are happy for their information to be referred to relevant agencies. This wording will comply with the Privacy Act.

Ongoing communication

Communicating regularly with potential spontaneous volunteers who have registered and have not been referred will lessen any potential negative implications to the jurisdiction, emergency sector and coordinating agency particularly if there has been a call for volunteers. Short daily updates by email or SMS, including numbers registered and numbers referred or used, could help to manage potential spontaneous volunteer expectations.

After the event, when spontaneous volunteers are no longer required, a short thank you could be sent to potential spontaneous volunteers and spontaneous volunteers promoting ongoing volunteer opportunities with response and recovery agencies.

*'I have since joined up to and become a Red Cross volunteer. Enjoy giving back to the community and hopefully making a difference.'*¹⁶

Pre-deployment/induction training

It is important that potential spontaneous volunteers have an understanding of the organisation's mission in the current emergency context as well as the role they will be undertaking. For some agencies this may be given in a briefing at the start of each shift, while for others it will involve potential spontaneous volunteers attending training. Some agencies will have an existing volunteer training package that can be rolled out, although it may need to be adapted to fit the needs of spontaneous volunteers. The training package could include:

- an overview of the organisation's mission and fundamental principles
- the organisation's mission in the current emergency
- the spontaneous volunteer's role including boundaries and limitations
- any organisational policies that spontaneous volunteers will be expected to adhere to
- a briefing on the current situation, giving the spontaneous volunteer an overview of what they might encounter as well as a factual overview
- a briefing on working with affected people
- the command and communication structures
- occupational health and safety, including self-care and available ongoing support.

The Department for Families and Communities in South Australia is developing a generic community services training package to help prepare relief and recovery volunteers for working in an emergency situation. The volunteer relief worker rapid induction program is funded by the Commonwealth Government National Emergency Volunteer Support Fund and is due to be completed by June 2010. The four-hour training package will give participants an understanding of emergency management and recovery, so they can undertake community services roles. Once completed the package will be supplied to recovery managers in each jurisdiction for implementation.

¹⁶ A. Cottrell, 'A survey of spontaneous volunteers', 2010.



Rostering

Agencies that are within existing emergency plans are likely to already have rostering protocols; others may not. It is important to plan in advance what acceptable rostering practices are. In the heat of the moment it is easy to work longer than is appropriate in an effort to help as much as possible. There is a duty of care to the spontaneous volunteer, the community in which they are working and the organisation that is deploying them. It is important to consider what an acceptable shift length is and how many shifts a volunteer can work before taking a break. Australian Red Cross guidelines, for example, state that staff and volunteers can be deployed for a maximum of five days before taking a two-day break. Each individual must have a minimum of 10 hours off between shifts.

'I, like many other volunteers, worked 7 days a week for 1 month with one day off.'

'I was concerned for a number of volunteers that were committing so many hours that their personal lives and health were affected. One had a heart attack because he was not fit for the work or the stress of being around people with extensive needs and with such loss.'¹⁷

Briefing

It is important that the spontaneous volunteer is briefed at the beginning of each shift. This ensures they have an understanding of:

- the current emergency situation
- their task for the shift
- the resources that will be required and where they collect them from
- any administration requirements
- communication and reporting lines and requirements
- occupational health and safety requirements and any safety issues.

It is also important that people have an opportunity to ask questions during or at the end of the briefing to ensure they have a clear understanding of everything that has been said.

A suggested format for a briefing is included in the management tools.

On-shift supervision

The level of supervision that is appropriate will depend on the task the spontaneous volunteer is being asked to complete and the level of previous experience they have. Regardless, it is important to buddy the spontaneous volunteer with someone who is more experienced, either with the task or the fundamental principles of the agency. This ensures that they have someone to go to if they have questions about the task, their role or working with affected people.

Some of the reasons that spontaneous volunteers may require additional supervision include:

- Spontaneous volunteers may have no previous volunteering experience.
- Spontaneous volunteers have a range of unique motivations which should be monitored in terms of risk management.
- Spontaneous volunteers are often registered and screened rapidly and little may be known about their skills and character. This could mean they are underutilised as much as overutilised.

¹⁷ A. Cottrell, 'A survey of spontaneous volunteers', 2010.

- Spontaneous volunteers are unlikely to have received in-depth training in the agency's fundamental principles. Higher levels of supervision will ensure that the agency's public image and core principles are upheld by all associated volunteers and staff.
- Spontaneous volunteers may be themselves affected by the emergency and, since spontaneous volunteers are sometimes motivated to volunteer as a coping mechanism, they may require extra, specific debriefing, depending on the emotional impact of the situation.¹⁸
- Spontaneous volunteers may step outside the boundaries of their role, particularly if they feel they would be more useful if they did something else or would prefer to do something else.
- Spontaneous volunteers may be reluctant to take breaks or finish their shift because they want to keep helping.

Debriefing

It is important to give spontaneous volunteers the opportunity to debrief at the end of each shift as well as at the end of their deployment. This allows them to reflect on what went well and what went badly and gives the agency valuable information. It is also an opportunity for the volunteers to discuss any situations they found challenging and request help or guidance. A suggested format for the end-of-shift debrief is given in the management tools that are being developed as part of this project.

When asked, 'What were the highlights of your volunteering experience?', one respondent replied,

'Having a couple of beers at the end of a shift during a debrief, usually with a tear or two but always with something to laugh about as well.'¹⁹

Performance management

As with any member of staff or volunteer, an agency has a duty of care to monitor a spontaneous volunteer's performance, both in terms of their ability to undertake the task and their emotional and physical wellbeing. The spontaneous volunteer's immediate supervisor is usually the best person to do this. However, because the supervisor may change daily, the agency needs a simple system of ensuring the spontaneous volunteer coordinator receives any relevant information at the end of each shift. A sample end-of-shift log is included in the management tools.

There may be instances where spontaneous volunteers are not performing in the role that they have been assigned. Asking the spontaneous volunteer how they think they are performing in the role is often all that is needed. Most people are aware of how they are performing. If there is a mismatch between the individual's skills and the role they have been assigned, reassignment is often the best solution. If this is not possible, it may be appropriate to stand the spontaneous volunteer down.

Volunteer stand down

Once the need for spontaneous volunteers has passed, it is important to stand down all those registered regardless of whether they have been deployed. This is an opportunity to thank them for their offers of help and the work they have done, if appropriate, and to promote future volunteering opportunities with the agency.

Ideally, the end-of-activation debrief would include all the staff, volunteers and spontaneous volunteers who have been deployed. However, it can be done with smaller groups or remotely (by email or telephone). The debrief is an opportunity to review how the agency performed, including what went well and what could be improved next time, and gives individuals a forum to talk about their experiences. A draft format for the end-of-activation debrief is included in the management tools. This will explore options for both face-to-face and remote debriefs.

¹⁸ Australian Red Cross, 'Spontaneous volunteer management in disasters resource toolkit', 2008.

¹⁹ A. Cottrell, 'A survey of spontaneous volunteers', 2010.



Ongoing support

Some spontaneous volunteers may be deeply affected by their volunteering experiences and require ongoing support. There is a range of professional and community support available that could be tailored to the needs of the organisation. It is recommended that organisations develop a plan for providing effective emotional support to their volunteers in advance of an emergency.

Recommendation: Organisations develop plans for providing effective ongoing emotional support for their volunteers.



Review

Following the final post-deployment debrief, agencies could review their spontaneous volunteer plans and make appropriate updates and improvements.



The framework in action

The Queensland State Community Recovery Committee, under the authority of the Department of Communities, is currently working closely with Volunteering Queensland to develop an implementation strategy for managing spontaneous volunteers in the state.

Volunteering Queensland is currently developing a website to support this strategy, emergencyvolunteering.com.au.

This will be the entry point for people interested in emergency volunteering in Queensland. Members of the public will be able to:

- learn about the roles agencies perform in emergencies
- search for and view volunteering opportunities both outside of times of emergency response as well as following an emergency
- apply for these volunteering opportunities online.

Volunteering Queensland will then undertake initial screening on behalf of agencies. If individuals meet the pre-agreed selection criteria, Volunteering Queensland will forward their details to the relevant agency for interviewing. If the individual does not fulfil the selection criteria, their details will be held for potential matching against future opportunities.

The website will:

- promote pre-registration and training
- provide agencies with an opportunity to promote volunteering vacancies year round
- provide an area for agencies to post media releases.



Annex A: AIIMS classification of emergency incidents

The following definitions are from *Australasian Inter-Service Incident Management System (AIIMS): A guide for Red Cross Emergency Service staff and volunteers*.

Incidents are normally categorised based upon their size and complexity.

Level 1: Small incident

Is a minor incident, usually involving one or a few local resources, and is commonly resolved within a few hours using initial resources. Issues are usually simple and few in number.

Level 2: Medium incident

Is an incident that may involve a number of local resources, and may take some hours or even one or two days to resolve. It may involve a number of issues but these are usually straightforward to resolve. The control, planning and logistics functions are managed from an emergency operations centre. This may involve limited use of units to support the respective functions.

Level 3: Large incident

This is a major incident involving many resources, usually from a number of agencies, and often over an extended period (days or weeks). They are managed using a full incident management structure where the control, planning, logistics and possible operations functions are managed.

Annex B: National Police Checking Service accredited agencies list

The agencies listed below are accredited, under a memorandum of understanding or contract with the CrimTrac Agency, to access the National Police Checking Service through the CrimTrac Agency. This list is current as at 1 April 2010.

A 'broker' providing a national criminal history checking service for and on behalf of a customer or a person may issue a 'document' on stationery that bears the 'broker's' letterhead indicating the outcome of a national criminal history check.

Commonwealth agencies

AusCheck

Australian Customs and Border Protection Service

Australian Postal Corporation

Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC)

Australian Sports Commission

Australian Taxation Office

Centrelink

Civil Aviation Safety Authority

Commonwealth Superannuation Administration (ComSuper)

Department of Defence (Defence Force Recruiting—DFR)

Department of Finance and Deregulation

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)

Department of Human Services

Department of Immigration and Citizenship

Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Department of the Treasury



State/territory agencies

- ACT Department of Education and Training
- NSW Businesslink Pty Ltd
- NSW Commission for Children and Young People
- NSW Department of Education and Training
- NSW Health Administration Corporation
- NSW Transport and Infrastructure
- NSW Rural Fire Service
- NSW State Emergency Service
- VIC Business Licensing Authority
- VIC Department of Education and Training
- VIC Department of Human Services & VIC Department of Health
- VIC Department of Justice
- VIC Department of Justice—Working With Children Check Unit
- Victorian Institute of Teaching
- The Corporation of the City of Adelaide
- SA Department of Education and Children’s Services
- SA Department for Families and Communities
- Teachers Registration Board of South Australia
- Curtin University of Technology
- WA Department of the Attorney General
- WA Department for Child Protection & WA Department for Communities
- WA Department for Child Protection—Working With Children Screening Unit
- WA Department of Corrective Services
- WA Department of Education and Training
- WA Department of Health
- Western Australian College of Teaching

Non-government entities

- Corpsec Pty Limited (AFP) (Broker)
- AIM Screening Pty Limited (NSW) (Broker)
- Anglican Retirement Villages Diocese of Sydney (NSW)
- Bupa Care Services Pty Limited (NSW)
- Catholic Commission for Employment Relations (NSW)
- First Advantage Australia Pty Ltd & First Advantage Australasia Pty Ltd (NSW) (Broker)
- Illawarra Retirement Trust (NSW)
- Insurance Australia Group Ltd (NSW)
- People Check Pty Ltd (NSW) (Broker)
- Qantas Airways Limited (NSW)
- QPL Limited (NSW) (Broker)
- The Sir Moses Montefiore Jewish Home (NSW)

Southern Cross Community Healthcare Services (NSW)

The Salvation Army (Australia Eastern Territory) (NSW)

The Uniting Church in Australia Property Trust (N.S.W.)
(T/a Wesley Mission)

TNT Australia Pty Ltd (NSW)

Verify CV Pty Limited (NSW) (Broker)

Workforce Quality Control Pty Ltd (NSW) (Broker)

Australian Red Cross Society (Vic)

Calvary Home Care Services Limited (T/a Calvary Silver Circle) (Vic)

Employrite Pty Ltd (Vic) (Broker)

Linfox Group Asia Pacific (Vic)

Mercury Search and Selection Pty Ltd (Vic) (T/a fit2work.com.au) (Broker)

Monash Volunteer Resource Centre Inc (Vic)

Origin Healthcare Holdings Pty Ltd (Vic)

Precise Background Services Pty Ltd (Vic) (Broker)

Pro Active Strategies Pty Ltd (Vic) (Broker)

Programmed Maintenance Services Limited (Vic)

Risk Group Services Pty Ltd (Vic) (Broker)

The Personnel Risk Management Group Pty Ltd (Vic) (Broker)

The Uniting Church in Australia Property Trust (Vic)

The YMCA of Victoria Inc (Vic)

GlobalX Information Services Pty Ltd (Qld) (Broker)

Oxley Group Pty Ltd (Qld)

Ruswin Vetting Services Pty Ltd (Qld) (Broker)

Skill Centred Queensland Inc.

Tricare Limited (Qld)

Uniting Church in Australia Property Trust (Q.) (T/a Blue Care) (Qld)

Anglicare SA Inc (SA)

Catholic Church Endowment Society Inc, Archdiocese of Adelaide (SA)

Community Support Inc & SA In Home Care Inc (SA)

Health Outcomes International Pty Ltd (SA) (Broker)

Lutheran Homes Incorporated (SA)

Nursing Agency Australia Pty Ltd & ASEPS Pty Limited & Alabricare (S.A.) Pty Ltd
(T/a Nursing Agency Australia)

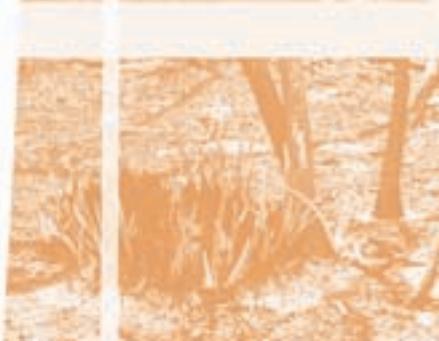
South Australian Fire & Emergency Services Commission (SA)

The Uniting Church in Australia Property Trust (S.A.)

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Research Report



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Di Jay	Australian Red Cross, ACT
Bev Johns	Kinglake Ranges Community Recovery Committee, Victoria
Andrea Johnson	Spontaneous volunteer following the Black Saturday bushfires, Victoria
Richard Johnson	Lifeline Coral Coast Capricorn, Queensland
Terry Kapeen	FaHCSIA, Queensland
Angela Kelly	Advanced Personnel Management, Victoria



Michael Kennealy	Australian Customs and Border Protection Service
Christine Kettleton	Lifeline, Tasmania
Charles King	Country Fire Authority, Victoria
Jenny Kitchin	Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services, ACT
Sarah Kocar	Volunteering ACT
Narelle Koteff	NSW Rural Fire Service
John Lane	Western Australia Local Government Association
Steve Lawrie	RSPCA, SA
Rachael Laurie	People and Parks Foundation, Victoria
Buffy Leadbeater	Murrindindi Shire Council, Victoria
Fleur Leary	Attorney-General's Department
Helen Legg	Hurstbridge Bushfire Support Centre, Victoria
Rhys Maggs	Australian Council of State Emergency Services
Yvonne Magyar	Baw Baw Shire, Victoria
Ian Mannix	ABC
Geoff Marsh	State Emergency Service, Tasmania
Sarah Martin	Murrindindi Shire Council, Victoria
Glenda Masson	Department of Communities, Queensland
Heather McAllister	St John Ambulance (SA Inc)
Cath McGee	Department for Families and Communities, SA
Annette McKail	Whittlesea Community Connections, Victoria
Ella McPherson	Department of Planning and Community Development, Victoria
Kirstie Meheux	Australian Red Cross, NSW
Peter Mitcham	State Emergency Service, Victoria
Paul Mitchell	Australian Red Cross, Northern Territory
Bev Mulvenna	Spontaneous volunteer following the Black Saturday bushfires, Victoria
Lauren Nelson	Australian Red Cross Board, ACT
Andrea Nield	Emergency Architects Australia
Veronica O'Brien	Attorney-General's Department
Geraldine O'Grady	Department of Communities, Queensland
Helen O'Keefe	Australian Red Cross, National Office
Kevin O'Loughlin	Department of Health and Human Services, Tasmania
Rob Oerlermans	Lions International
Rosalie Pace	Australian Red Cross, SA
John Parker	Victorian State Emergency Service Authority
Allison Parmenter	FaHCSIA, National Office
Carolyn Parsons	Australian Red Cross, Queensland
Jen Patience	Volunteering WA
Julie Paterson	Australian Red Cross, SA
Fiona Patterson	Department of Planning and Community Development, Victoria
Richard Patterson	Spontaneous volunteer following the Black Saturday bushfires, Victoria
Sally Paynter	Australian Red Cross, National Office
Cary Pedicini	Volunteering Australia
David Penman	Department of Planning and Community Development, Victoria
Michael Perkins	Rotary, Tasmania
Jan Peters	Palmerson Council, Northern Territory

Adrienne Piccone	Volunteering Tasmania
Will Polak	Kinglake Action Network and Development Organisation, Victoria
David Prestipino	Attorney-General's Department
Anne Preston	Anglicare, WA
Bruce Prince	Adventist Development Relief Agency, NSW
Susan Powell	Department of Health and Human Services, Tasmania
Kate Powne	Shire of Yarra Ranges, Victoria
Samara Rahman	ACTCOSS
Darryl Rice	St John Ambulance, Queensland
Toni Richardson	SAFECOM
Mark Robertson	Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services, ACT
Margaret Ryan	Centacare, Victoria
James Sadler	Volunteering SA & NT
Meg Sandercock	Whittlesea Community Connections, Victoria
Mick Sayers	Spontaneous volunteer following the Black Saturday bushfires, Victoria
Ellen Scully	RSPCA (Victoria)
John Scuric	Centrelink, Victoria
Jennifer Shelley	Australian Red Cross Board, ACT
Emma Short	Whittlesea Community Connections, Victoria
Barry Smith	St Vincent de Paul, NSW
Les Smith	Salvation Army, Victoria
Simon Smith	Salvation Army, Victoria
Greg Staple	SA Metropolitan Fire Service
Sue Sutherland	Kinglake West Uniting Church, Victoria
Stephen Sutton	Bushfires NT
Sarah Tabuteau	Australian Red Cross, National Office
Kye Lye Tan	Australian Red Cross, National Office
Angela Thomas	Lifeline, ACT
Jennifer Thompson	Volunteering Australia
Ailsa Tolcher	FaHCSIA, National Office
Jannie Turner	West Tamar Council, Tasmania
Helen Valadares	Department of Health and Families, Northern Territory
Lucas van Rijswijk	Tasmanian Fire Service
Steve Vanstan	RSPCA, WA
Raelene Vivian	Australian Taxation Office
Robert Wagner	City of Boroondara, Victoria
Chris Wain	Volunteering ACT
Jack Walhout	Fusion Australia
Jen Walsh	Australian Red Cross, Victoria
Joan Ward	Department for Child Protection, WA
Alan White	Emergency Management Queensland
Mark Whybro	NSW Fire Brigades
Robert Wiggins	ACT Ambulance
Graeme Winterton	Victorian Council of Churches
Bob Wilson	St Vincent de Paul Society, ACT
Michael Woodward	ACT Mental Health
Rebecca Wringe	Australian Red Cross, WA
Graeme Wynwood	SA State Emergency Service
Monika Zabinskas	Conservation Volunteers Australia, Victoria
Beau Zlatkovic	Department of Planning and Community Development, Victoria



