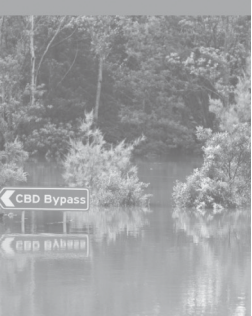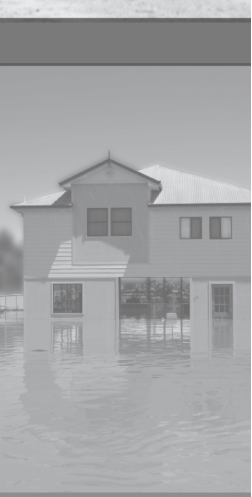# Section 2: Draft Framework

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.

Contents

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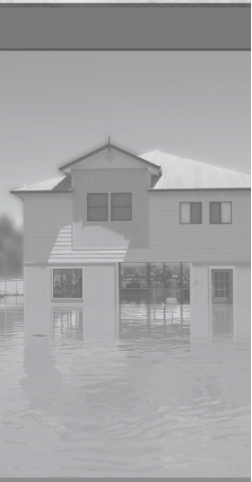
This model was used as the basis for consultation with each of the states and territories, Australian Government agencies, and national peak bodies. From the consultations, the following framework has been developed.
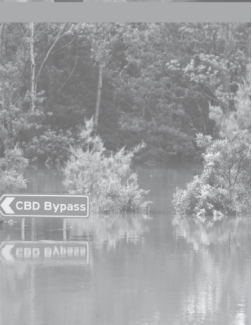
National Level

National strategic working group

Prior to an emergency	After an emergency
• 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	• Share post emergency learning across jurisdictions • Review framework • Review communication strategy

National coordinating agency

Prior to an emergency	During an emergency	After an emergency
• Build capacity of state/territory coordinating agencies • Promote sector-wide activities and actions facilitating spontaneous volunteering	• 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	• 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
• 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	• 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	• 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
• 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	• 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	• 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
• 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	• 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	• 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
• Develop communications plan that includes scripts for reception, those answering the phone etc	• Implement communications plan directing potential spontaneous volunteer inquiries to relevant coordinating agency and/or recruitment process of the agency in non-emergency times	• 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
• 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	• 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	• 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.