

Strategic Priorities for Emergency Management Volunteering in Victoria

Developed by the
Volunteer Consultative
Forum (VCF)

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From the Emergency Management Commissioner and Chair, Volunteer Consultative Forum



Victoria's emergency management arrangements rely heavily on an integrated, highly trained, effectively deployed and optimally utilised volunteer workforce.

Volunteers can and want to undertake the full breadth of roles in emergency management, from frontline to senior leadership. We, as leaders, must remove the

barriers that are stopping optimal volunteer utilisation. The recognition of the qualifications, the professionalism and the broad experience that exist amongst our volunteers improves our overall public value to Victorian communities.

In recognition of the fundamental importance of volunteers, the Volunteer Consultative Forum (VCF) was established in 2013 to facilitate the Victorian Government's commitment to consult and engage with emergency management volunteers and their representative bodies on matters that affect them, and reform as outlined in the Victorian Emergency Management Reform White Paper.

The VCF is chaired by the Emergency Management Commissioner (EMC), with Emergency Management Victoria (EMV) providing support.

The key objective of the VCF is to give emergency management volunteers a voice to the Minister for Emergency Services and government, and to provide advice on volunteer-related issues and the broader emergency management reform agenda. The VCF complements, rather than replaces, existing arrangements within the emergency management sector.

The VCF membership comprises representatives from Ambulance Victoria, Australian Volunteer Coast Guard, Country Fire Authority, Life Saving Victoria, Red Cross, Salvation Army, St John Ambulance, Victoria State Emergency Service, Victorian Council of Churches, the Victoria Emergency Service Association, and Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria.

In early 2014, the VCF, with support from EMV, completed two key pieces of foundational work as part of its establishment phase and to inform initial direction.

Two key documents were developed; the first identified the common barriers and enablers to volunteering across the sector from a volunteer's perspective, and the second detailed a range of successful volunteer initiatives that may be applied or used in other agencies.

The information and insights from this work were then used to create the Strategic Priorities for Volunteering in Emergency Management. The Strategic Priorities identify thirteen common volunteer needs, and their value to volunteers.

These priorities are a strategic and business planning instrument for emergency management agencies across the sector, and to assist government. The priorities are informed directly by volunteers and identify needs that require additional focus across the sector, some things that need to be done better and some things that require a new approach if we are to realise the shared goal of a sustainable emergency management system.

This instrument demonstrates the need for a more strategic focus toward sustainability and the fundamental importance of volunteers to the delivery of emergency management. This has become the unifying purpose that has driven the VCF to focus on the strategic needs and issues that are important to a sustainable emergency management system and developing a motivated, valued and engaged volunteer capability.

For the community to realise the full benefits of our integrated workforce, we have the responsibility to address these priority needs that will improve volunteer satisfaction and in turn, public safety in Victoria.

Craig Lapsley PSM

Emergency Management Commissioner
Chair, Volunteer Consultative Forum

	Need	Value to volunteers
Training, skills development, acquisition and maintenance	Better access to training, induction and information including the use of online systems/tools.	It will be easier for volunteers to undertake training at a time convenient to them, and will remove the need for travel to a location. This will reduce the time commitment for volunteers, and will increase opportunities to enhance effective delivery by agencies and organisations to share systems or design resources.
	Broader and structured development pathways and plans for volunteers.	Volunteers are enabled to expand their knowledge and experience within their agency, within the community or across the sector leading to greater personal challenge, motivation and satisfaction.
	Transportability of skills and accreditations between emergency management organisations.	Streamlining and simplifying will reduce the burden on volunteers needing to re-train while enabling transfer to another agency more suitable to lifestyle, choice, location or available time. The significant initial investment in training volunteers in one agency can then be applied to another agency without losing skills, knowledge and experience.
Recognition, respect and valuing of volunteering	A modern and robust strategy to enhance community, government and business knowledge, understanding and respect for EM Volunteers while strengthening Victoria's culture of emergency volunteering and community service.	The community will have a better understanding and appreciation of the fundamental importance and essential nature of volunteering before, during and after emergencies in Victoria, and will increase their support, recognition and investment in volunteering. The community will have increased confidence in the service provided by volunteers.
Systems, policy and process	Modern and effective recruitment systems, services and processes that are timely, two way, cost effective and efficient for potential volunteers.	Efficient ways for people to express interest and seek information about EM volunteering, with more people receiving the information they need to make a decision to progress or opt out, and data captured to inform continuous improvement.
	Systems, processes and leadership tools and arrangements to enable better use of the volunteer's time and capability, through flexible service delivery and modern two-way engagement channels.	Volunteer's time is used more effectively by designing more flexible ways for the volunteers, based on their needs, to be tasked, trained, supported, rostered, activated, surveyed and communicated with.
	Policy, systems and processes to reduce out-of-pocket expenses on volunteers.	The tools, resources and support for emergency management volunteers should not come at a financial cost to an individual volunteer.

	Need	Value to volunteers
Youth engagement	Strategic and future focused plans for the recruitment and retention of youth.	An increase in youth engagement and involvement through propositions to youth, that reflect their specific needs and how they will gain value from volunteering.
Workforce design	Flexible volunteering models that offer different roles to suit an individual's changing needs and lifestyle, and emerging categories of potential volunteers.	People are increasingly looking for organisations with flexible opportunities where volunteering can be integrated with work, study, family and recreation. Access and use of digital and mobile products offer enormous benefit in enabling volunteers to integrate volunteering into their lifestyle and for agencies and organisations to design smart products and services to support them and use their time wisely.
	Casual volunteers trained to provide additional support for significant or extended emergencies, in roles appropriate to their skills and experience level.	Designing new roles to integrate into the service delivery arrangements adds overall capability and capacity and supports the workload drain on first responders.
	Modern workforce management arrangements consistent with the needs of volunteers.	Aligning the role definition, capability frameworks, role statements, organisational design principles, performance management systems and training of paid staff with the need to support, empower and effectively utilise volunteers, ensuring their skill and training is fully recognised.
Employers	Effective arrangements to reduce the impact on employers when their people are engaged in emergency volunteering.	A better understanding and appreciation of what employers of volunteers contribute to emergency management is critical to recognising, valuing and supporting employers to continue to release volunteers.
Funding	Sustainable funding and investment toward the community-based service delivery model that operates before, during and after emergencies.	Investment will be required to support agencies, communities and volunteers to plan for and execute strategic and organisational change, and prepare for the needs of new groups of people that want to volunteer. Taking advantage of emerging types/groups of volunteers and trends in volunteering will assist to successfully navigate challenges and build a sustainable foundation for service delivery in communities.



Implementation

The Strategic Priorities express common needs across emergency management volunteering and describe the direct value to volunteers.

The priorities are designed to drive, guide and inform strategy, investment planning, decision-making and focus across the sector, in agencies, organisations, government and EMV.

The Strategic Priorities contain themes that address common needs in:

- › Training, skills development, acquisition and maintenance
- › Recognition, respect and valuing of volunteering
- › Systems, policy and process
- › Youth engagement
- › Workforce design
- › Employers
- › Funding.

Implementation will vary across agencies and the sector depending on strategic direction, capability and current work being undertaken, with the VCF being the body to provide advice and direct input on implementation, application and impact.

It is anticipated that as the planning processes mature these Strategic Priorities will be revisited and improved by the VCF, using available information, insights and evidence from volunteer surveys, program reporting, research, plans and strategy.

Accountability

The VCF is a forum that provides advice to the Minister for Emergency Services and input on issues related to volunteering, volunteers and volunteerism in Victoria's emergency management sector.

The Minister is supported by the EMC (also the Chair of the VCF) and EMV in fulfilling government's commitment to the VCF. The Emergency Management Act 2013 sets out the expectations of the EMC and EMV 'to have regard to the fundamental importance of the role that volunteers play in the performance of emergency management functions in Victoria'.

For the Strategic Priorities to realise the full benefits of the volunteer input that informed them, it requires executive leadership, stewardship and investment within agencies across the sector, within governance arrangements and at all levels of strategic and business planning.

Relationship to the Strategic Action Plan

There is a clear and important relationship between the VCF Strategic Priorities and the Emergency Management Strategic Action Plan 2015-2018 (SAP). The SAP steers the overall vision, strategic priorities, investment and principles for government and the emergency management sector.

The VCF Strategic Priorities complement the SAP by adding additional depth and clarity about the specific needs and value of reform to volunteers, sustainable volunteering and how the community understands and values emergency management volunteerism in Victoria.

Monitoring and continuous improvement

Monitoring the application and utilisation of the VCF Strategic Priorities will be embedded in SAP processes, as opposed to creating separate processes and systems. Overall responsibility for monitoring of progress and the linking of SAP Actions to the VCF Strategic Priorities is to be coordinated by EMV.

EMV will coordinate the monitoring of implementation and application of these priorities within SAP actions and outcomes. Regular feedback and advice on the application and impact of these priorities will be provided to the VCF and sought from the VCF.

EMV will coordinate the information required for the sector to undertake their responsibilities in reporting on and monitoring the delivery of the actions within the SAP. Reports on progress will be provided to the Minister for Emergency Services, SCRC, IGEM and the community through the EMV website. IGEM will monitor and report to the Minister for Emergency Services on the implementation of the SAP.

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Working in conjunction with Communities,
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