



Issues Facing Australian Volunteer-Based Emergency Services Organisations: 2008 – 2010

**A Report Prepared For Emergency Management Australia (EMA)
as a Response to a Request by the Ministerial Council for Police
and Emergency Management**

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Table of Contents

PART I: Issues Facing Australian Volunteer-Based Emergency Services Organisations: 2008 – 2010: Report Following a Literature Review.	4
Research gaps.	12
PART II: Summaries of Reports	15
Section 1: Background: Volunteering and Threats to Volunteer-based Emergency Services Organisations.	15
1.1 The Broad Context of Volunteering in Australia.	15
1.2 Threats to Australia’s Volunteer-based Emergency Services.	17
Section 2: Recruiting Emergency Service Volunteers.	22
2.1 How and Why People Become Emergency Services Volunteers.	21
2.1.1 Volunteer-based fire services	21
2.1.2 Volunteer-based State Emergency Services	24
2.1.3 Volunteer ambulance services	25
2.1.4 Volunteer-based emergency and disaster relief and recovery organisations	26
2.2 Barriers to Emergency Services Volunteering.	27
2.2.1 Volunteer-based fire services	27
2.2.2 Volunteer-based emergency services other than fire services	28
Section 3: Retaining Emergency Services Volunteers.	30
3.1 Positive Aspects of Emergency Services Volunteering.	30
3.2 Negative Aspects of Emergency Services Volunteering.	31
3.3 Why People Resign From Volunteer-based Emergency Services.	34
3.3.1: Volunteer-based fire services	34
3.3.2: Volunteer-based State Emergency Services	36
3.4 Why Volunteers Remain.	36
Section 4: Selected Specific Issues	39
4.1 Economic contributions of volunteer-based emergency services.	39
4.2 Costs associated with being an emergency services volunteer.	40
4.3 Recognition and recompense of emergency services volunteers.	41
4.4 Gender and emergency services volunteering.	42

4.5 Emergency services volunteers from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds.	43
4.5.1 Enhancing diversity	43
4.5.2 Indigenous volunteering	44
4.6 Volunteer/career staff relations.	46
4.7 Emergency services volunteering and work.	47
4.8 Emergency services volunteering and the families of volunteers.	52
4.9 Increasing pressures and demands on emergency services volunteers.	52
Methodology	54
References	55
Appendices	59
Appendix A: Volunteer-Based Emergency Services Organisations: Volunteer Numbers	
Appendix B: Fire Note #10, January 2007: Recruiting Younger Fire Service Volunteers	

PART I: Issues Facing Australian Volunteer-Based Emergency Services Organisations: 2008 – 2010: Report Following a Literature Review

1: Introduction

1.1 Aims and Scope of the Review

The Australian Ministerial Council for Police and Emergency Management, at a meeting in early 2008, requested that the Attorney General's Department arrange for an analysis of recent research concerning emergency services volunteering. The present review aims to: (a) provide an analysis of recent research concerning issues involved in recruiting, supporting, and retaining emergency services volunteers; and (b) identify gaps in existing research-based knowledge relating to emergency services volunteering in Australia.

The findings are intended to be used by Emergency Management Australia (EMA) to assist in developing strategies to more effectively recruit; support and recognise; and retain Australian emergency services volunteers.

No new research data gathering was carried out during preparation of the report. Time constraints meant that the report was based on readily-available published accounts of research and other information relating to recruitment and retention of volunteers by Australian volunteer-based emergency services organisations. Note that almost all the recent available Australian research has focused on volunteer-based **fire services** and comes from the work of the Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre Volunteerism Project team. There is very little research available which involves other volunteer-based emergency services. This lack of research on volunteer-based emergency services organisations **other than** fire services constitutes a major research gap.

Research Gap 1: There is a serious dearth of research concerning recruitment and retention in volunteer-based emergency services other than fire services.

1.2 Australia's Volunteer-Based Emergency Services

Australia covers 7.69 million square kilometres. It is the sixth largest country in the world. However, it is sparsely populated. With a population of more than 20 million, 80 per cent of people live within 100 km of the coast (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2005).

Historically, the country has proved to be particularly vulnerable to four kinds of natural disasters: tropical cyclones, severe storms, floods, and wildfires (Ellis, Kanowski, & Whelan, 2004). Because of the country's large size, sparse population density outside capital cities and major regional centres, and varied land use patterns, Australia's capacity to respond to natural disasters has been based largely on a range of specialised volunteer-based organisations, each of which relies on a small cadre of paid (or career) staff and a much larger workforce of (unpaid) volunteers who are mobilised and deployed on the basis of need in response to a particular disaster or emergency incident. Recently, volunteer disaster relief and recovery organisations in particular have responded to overseas earthquake and tsunami disasters, and have had to prepare for possible pandemics.

Recent examples of natural disasters and emergencies which have seen large-scale deployments by volunteer-based emergency services agencies include:

- Sydney-Hobart Yacht Race storm and sinkings, 1998
- NSW and Victorian Alpine fires, 2003
- SA Lower Eyre Peninsular fires, 2005
- Cyclone *Larry* in far North Queensland, 2006
- Sydney hail storm, 2007
- Victorian Great Divide fires, 2007
- South East Queensland floods, 2008.

Beyond these dramatic events, it is emergency services **volunteers** who provide 24-hour, 365 days per year emergency protection to the majority of the population over most of Australia.

There has been some debate about what constitutes a volunteer-based **emergency services** agency or organisation. There is no disagreement that volunteer fire, rescue (including SES, coastguard, and marine), and ambulance services qualify. There has been some (informal) discussion about whether the various state lifesaving organisations belong; and some doubt has been expressed (again, informally) that organisations such as ANGLICARE and the Salvation Army could be considered emergency services agencies—despite a long tradition of both these (and other similar) organisations being heavily involved in emergency and disaster relief and recovery work.

The present report takes a simple approach to issues of definition by using the list of member-organisations which comprise the Australian Emergency Management Volunteer Forum (AEMVF) as defining the field of Australian volunteer-based emergency services organisations. The following is a list of the current member organisations of AEMVF, and each has been categorised (broadly), on the basis of web site self-descriptions of their purposes or “missions”, as falling into one of two types of volunteer-based emergency services provider organisations:

I: Emergency Response and Community Safety Organisations:

- Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council, representing its constituent state and territory volunteer-based fire services.
- Australasian Assembly of Volunteer Firefighters Association, representing its constituent volunteer firefighter members.
- Australian Council of State Emergency Services, representing its constituent state and territory SES agencies.
- State Emergency Services Volunteer Association, representing its constituent SES volunteer members.
- Volunteer Ambulance Officers Association, representing its constituent membership of state and territory ambulance services volunteers.
- Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol.
- Australian Volunteer Coastguard.
- Volunteer Rescue Association.
- Surf Lifesaving Australia.

II: Emergency and Disaster Relief and Recovery Organisations:

- St Vincent de Paul Society
- St John Ambulance Australia.

- Australian Red Cross.
- ANGLICARE.
- The Salvation Army.
- Adventist Development Relief Agency (ADRA).

[---To which is added:

III: Federally-supported Policy, Training, and Infrastructure Organisations

- Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
- Volunteering Australia.
- The Australian Institute of Emergency Services.
- Emergency Management Australia (EMA)].

Table 1: Number of Emergency Services Volunteers Nationally

Organisation	Total Number of Volunteers – Operational and Support Roles	Notes
Emergency Response and Community Protection Agencies		
Volunteer Fire Services	220,893	
SES	44,514	The claimed SA SES figure of 18,000 SES volunteers is not supported by other material in their Annual Reports
Surf Lifesaving Australia	37,000	This is the figure given by SLA for the number of volunteers who patrol beaches
Volunteer Coast Guard	9,000	
Rescue - Other	5,362	
Ambulance	4,137	
Sub total	320,906	
Disaster Relief and Recovery Agencies		
St John Ambulance	12,631	
Red Cross	10,000	
St Vincent de Paul	?	Web site states 20,000 volunteers, but no information on the number involved with relief and recovery activities
Salvation Army	?	
Anglicare	?	The Sydney Diocese gives a figure of 2,000 volunteers but does not say how many of these are involved in disaster relief and recovery activities
ADRA	?	
Sub total	?	
TOTAL	?	

The AEMVF web site gives the total number of emergency services volunteers as “more than 500,000”. However, this figure seems unlikely based on the (incomplete) information above. It appears that the AEMVF number is inflated by having included total numbers of volunteers in non-government organisations which, among other charitable works, provide emergency and disaster relief and recovery assistance, rather than including only numbers of volunteers involved **specifically** in emergency and disaster relief and recovery activities. The AEMVF figure of 500,000 is very different from the total of 175,000 provided by Australian Bureau of Statistics’ report *Voluntary Work Australia, 2006; 4441.0*. However, the ABS total is appreciably less than what figures from web sites of volunteer emergency response and community protection agencies alone indicate (See Table 1: about 320,000). There is clearly a discrepancy. On the basis of additional information provided by ABS, it seems that the discrepancy may be partly artifactual—a product of the statistical methodology employed by ABS. The report was generated by a sample of households across all states and territories (it was NOT part of the 2006 Census of all private dwellings). The findings from the sample were then weighted to reflect state and territory populations in order to generalise the findings to the total Australian population. This procedure generated the notional figure of 175,000 Australian emergency services volunteers, plus or minus 17,500 volunteers. That is, there is a standard error of 17,500 (+/- 10% of the notional value), meaning that the number of Australian emergency services volunteers was probably somewhere between 157,000 and 192,000 on the basis of the ABS survey. However, the estimated ten percent margin of error depends on the characteristic of interest (in this instance, percentage of emergency services volunteers) occurring in the Australian population with a frequency of at least 10 percent. The estimate found by ABS was that emergency services volunteers make up only about one percent of the Australian population. So the actual error of estimate could perhaps be as much as +/- 25%: meaning that the number of Australian emergency services volunteers (as estimated by ABS using this particular survey) could be as low as 131,250, or as high as 218,750.

Appendix A shows volunteer-based emergency services organisations’ volunteer numbers, on a state and territory basis, to the extent that these could be obtained readily. The most obvious feature of Appendix A is the incompleteness of information readily available about non-government emergency and disaster relief and recovery organisations, which suggests a research gap.

Research Gap 2: There is a need for a comprehensive data base which is readily available to researchers, policy makers, and planners which records the annual numbers of emergency services volunteers in AEMVF participating agencies. [The available information for agencies which are government instrumentalities—particularly fire and SES—seems reasonably comprehensive. However, there is an obvious need for a more complete and informative data base showing the numbers of volunteers (both operational and support) across the spectrum of volunteer-based emergency services organisations so researchers, planners, and policy makers can understand the size and nature of Australia’s emergency services volunteer work force on an organisation and state and territory basis. Over time, the data base would provide information on emergency services volunteer number trends—which information is conspicuously lacking at present].

2. Threats to Volunteer-Based Emergency Services Organisations.

The current situation with overall volunteer numbers in relation to volunteer fire services is as follows:

- While there were undoubtedly declines in overall volunteer numbers over the period 1995-2003, the poor quality of agencies' record keeping and data base management made it impossible to quantify the declines.
- At least some apparent sharp declines were 'book keeping' losses as long-time inactive members were removed from 'cleaned up' data bases.
- Before 2003, there was no evidence that agencies had a soundly based model for estimating how many volunteers were actually needed to meet their community safety and protection responsibilities—the operating principle seemed to be “the more volunteers the better”.
- As agencies have taken steps to recruit volunteers more effectively since 2005, reported declines in overall numbers have halted (with the possible exception of Queensland), and in large agencies such as CFA and NSW RFS earlier declines have been reversed somewhat.
- The major operational problems currently facing volunteer-based fire services are: (a) shrinking brigade memberships in many small remote rural (and ageing) communities—in parts of South Eastern Australia this is likely to be exacerbated by climate change and declining agricultural production; (b) static brigade memberships in new population growth centres; and, (c) lack of volunteers able to turn out to emergencies during business hours—especially in growing urban/rural fringe communities.

There is insufficient information available to draw specific conclusions about other volunteer-based emergency services. It is likely that the above difficulties are being experienced to some degree by SES and volunteer ambulance services.

The most important long term threats to the viability of Australian volunteer-based emergency services have two sources: economic and demographic.

Economic Factors: Developments in the global economy have had profound effects on the structural nature of industry and work activity in Australia. These changes include: declines in the manufacturing and agricultural sectors; and an increase in the proportion of the workforce who are self-employed, employed on contracts, or in part-time or casualised employment. One consequence appears to be a general decline in perceived income security. There is some evidence that financial imposts associated with volunteering (notably rising fuel costs) are a deterrent to volunteering, especially in rural areas. Another consequence of changed economic factors is an increased reluctance by employers to release employees who are emergency services volunteers to attend incidents during working hours. The impact of these, and related, economic changes is to make it more difficult for many to become (or remain) emergency service volunteers, regardless of how strongly motivated they might be to volunteer. The impacts of changes to the Australian economy have been particularly severe in many rural communities, with younger people leaving and moving to large population centres to seek

employment. The effect of this is that some rural regions are shrinking in population and, effectively, ageing faster than the general population. In parts of South East Australia, this is likely to be exacerbated by climate change and consequent decreased agricultural production.

Demographic Factors: The Australian population is ageing as a whole due to low birth rates over the previous 30-40 years. This poses problems for those volunteer-based emergency services which involve demanding physical activity and thus require an adequate pool of fit healthy volunteers able to undertake the activities required. Australia has benefited from immigration. However, individuals from non-Anglo cultural backgrounds are dramatically under-represented in volunteer-based emergency services. The reasons are complex, but one important factor appears to be that in many countries of origin there is no tradition of formal, organised, emergency services volunteering—with the military normally responsible for emergency and disaster response. An increase in the proportion of single-parent households has also probably reduced the available pool of potential emergency services volunteers.

3. Why People Join Volunteer-based Emergency Services

While most of the published research has been concerned with volunteer fire services (and to a lesser extent volunteer ambulance and SES), the overall picture for emergency services volunteering seems reasonably clear, at least for emergency response agencies. Individuals volunteer because of three broad clusters of motivational factors:

Community contributions motivations. These are essentially altruistic and involve some sense of obligation to put something back into the local community and/ or the greater society.

Self-oriented motivations. These are essentially self-enhancing and include self-development, career enhancement, social contact, and keeping active.

Domain-specific safety/risk interest and/or awareness. Thus, fire service volunteers tend to have an awareness of the risks posed by fires, ambulance volunteers are interested in medical issues and first aid, SES volunteers are interested in tool use and practical problem solving, and presumably (although there is no hard evidence) coastguard volunteers are interested in boating and navigation.

Younger potential volunteers (18-34 years) are relatively more likely to be attracted by the opportunities available for self-enhancement and self-development through volunteering.

Alongside these ‘predispositions’ to volunteer for particular kinds of emergency services, people volunteer when (a) they are aware that there is a need for their services; and, (b) when they know what they have to do in order to actually join a particular volunteer organisation. The quality and usability of agency web sites will become increasingly important as a determinant of volunteer recruiting effectiveness.

Recent experiences of Australian volunteer fire services (and anecdotally SES) suggests that, at the present time (and not necessarily in the longer term) recruiting new volunteers is less problematic than hitherto feared: recruitment campaigns which, at state-wide and regional levels emphasise both (a) the need for, and importance of volunteers, and (b) the benefits associated with being a volunteer; and, (c) make it clear how to volunteer, will generate interest in volunteering. If this interest is then capitalised upon at local levels, then volunteers will come forward.

4. Barriers to Volunteering

There is little published Australian research into why people do **not** volunteer. The limited information available (NSW Rural Fire Service, and overseas, research) suggests that six major clusters of factors operate to inhibit individuals from volunteering with emergency services organisations.

- **Time/Priorities.** When asked, the most common reason given by individuals as to why they do not volunteer is ‘lack of time’. However, this is obviously only partly true—a more complete answer is that volunteering is not seen to be sufficiently important, compared with other activities which need to be undertaken in the time available. Work and family are the two major ‘competitors’ with emergency services volunteering, particularly for individuals aged 35-44 years. Individuals in this age range are less likely to be interested in becoming volunteer firefighters compared with those from older or younger age groups. There is some evidence that they are also more likely to resign from a volunteer emergency service agency because of work/family demands.
- **Reluctance to commit to the strictures of formal volunteering.** Emergency services volunteering imposes stricter demands than many other types of volunteering in terms of (a) obligation to respond when called upon, and (b) adherence to procedures to ensure that tasks are performed safely and effectively.
- **Self-perceived unsuitability for the demands of formal volunteering:** Age, infirmity, ill-health, emotional vulnerability.
- **Fear of adverse consequences of volunteering:** Death, injury, loss of income, legal action.
- **Opposition from employer.**
- **Restrictions due to child care needs.**

There is evidence that perceived financial imposts associated with emergency services volunteering constitute a barrier to volunteering, particularly in rural areas. There is also evidence that: (a) concern about possible risks involved in volunteering with fire agencies is a deterrent to volunteering; and (b) most agencies do a poor job of informing members of the public, who might be potential volunteers, about how agencies protect their volunteers.

Individuals who become fire service volunteers report overwhelmingly that what would have made volunteering easier was more, and better, information about: (a) what volunteering would entail; (b) the personal benefits, and importance to the community, of being a volunteer; and, (c) how to go about joining the organisation.

Compared with other emergency response services, women are under-represented in volunteer firefighter ranks; and (b) very under-represented among the ranks of operational (as distinct from support role) firefighters. There is evidence that these gender imbalances are slowly diminishing as agencies take active steps to (a) attract women volunteers; and (b) support them more effectively.

There is evidence indicating that individuals from non-Anglo (culturally and linguistically diverse—CALD) backgrounds are greatly under-represented in emergency response services. There is some evidence that volunteer fire services are dominated by Anglo traditions and stereotypes, and that current volunteers see little need for a more culturally diversified membership. There is concern that indigenous Australians are under-represented in local emergency response agency units in communities where a significant proportion of the local population is indigenous.

4. Retaining Emergency Services Volunteers

Resignations rates for fire service volunteers range from about six percent to ten percent annually. It has been suggested that annual resignation rates for SES volunteers are about 20% (although Tasmania SES has reported resignation rates less than 7%). No other information on emergency service volunteer resignation rates could be located.

The most frequently nominated benefits derived from being an emergency response volunteer, as reported by (a) new CFA volunteers after 12 months, (b) NSW Rural Fire Service volunteers, (c) FESA WA SES volunteers, and (d) ambulance volunteers were:

- Contributing to community protection.
- Learning and applying new skills.
- Feeling a valued member of the community.

It appears that men and women do not differ overall in the pattern of their responses. There do not appear to be overall age-related differences in sources of satisfaction.

For most fire service volunteers, volunteer ambulance officers, and SES volunteers, few negative aspects of being an emergency response volunteer are associated with the actual ‘work’ of the volunteer. The most pervasive ‘negative’ is what has to be sacrificed as a result of volunteering, namely opportunities to: (i) spend time with family; (ii) pursue career/business development and income generation; and (iii) enjoy recreation and personal development activities. Beyond these—perhaps inevitable?—drawbacks to being a volunteer, most of the other reported negatives are associated with: (a) perceived organisational failures to support the volunteering endeavour; and (b) and poor relationships among members of the brigade or unit—usually associated with poor leadership and management of the brigade or unit. In turn, this poor leadership/management may stem from: (1) poor leadership skills of volunteers in leadership roles, and/or (2) poor management skills of career staff in roles involving supervision of volunteer brigades or units.

Reasons why volunteers resign can be roughly classified as (relatively) (a) unavoidable or (b) avoidable, from an organisational perspective. The limited evidence (mostly from volunteer fire services) suggests four clusters of reasons why emergency response agency volunteers resign:

- Leaving the area and moving somewhere else, usually because of employment or family related issues.
- Age, infirmity, illness, disability.
- Competing work/family pressures.
- Dissatisfaction with the volunteer role.

There is little of substance that agencies can do about the first two. The third can be addressed to some extent by agencies introducing measures which: (a) minimise unnecessary demands on volunteers' time; (b) reduce avoidable conflicts between volunteering and family and work life; and, (c) more effectively support employers of volunteers and families of volunteers. However, socioeconomic pressures on volunteers and their families cannot be addressed significantly by agencies in the absence of government policy initiatives. The fourth can be addressed by agencies 'lifting their game' and improving the effectiveness of their volunteer support, supervision, and management arrangements for their brigades or local units. There are indications that relationships between volunteers and career (that is, paid) staff may sometimes be problematic, contributing to resignations.

There is evidence that many employers of volunteers are increasingly reluctant to readily authorise employees to take time off work to respond to emergencies. This reluctance does not appear to be 'ideological'—rather it stems from uncertain profit margins and an unwillingness to jeopardise core business activities through staff absences. The recently released Australian Government (2008) *National Employment Standards* discussion paper proposes that emergency services volunteers should receive community service leave to attend emergency incidents, travel to emergency incidents, and recover from attending emergency incidents.

There is some evidence that financial imposts associated with emergency services volunteering are likely to be a factor in volunteer resignations. However, volunteer-based fire agencies have not collected detailed information on this topic—none participated in the AEMVF-sponsored 2006 study of costs associated with volunteering.

There is some evidence that administrative, or "bureaucratic", aspects of being an emergency response volunteer are "negatives", possibly contributing to resignations: the demands of regular formal training and credentialing; requirements to observe Occupational Health and Safety standards; and requirements to keep accurate records and complete administrative forms; are likely to be criticised by some volunteers. However, these seem to function as irritants rather than as major determinants of resignations.

5. Significant Research Gaps

The following list of research gaps emerges from a review of previously published research reports.

5.1: There is a serious dearth of research concerning volunteer recruitment and retention in volunteer-based emergency services other than fire services.

5.2: There is a need for a comprehensive data base which is readily available to researchers, policy makers, and planners which records the annual numbers of emergency services volunteers in AEMVF participating agencies.

5.3: The level of need to introduce financial incentive schemes for emergency services volunteers, and the scope and best form(s) of such scheme(s). Forms of non-financial recognition which are valued by volunteers.

5.4: Ways in which more volunteers can be recruited and retained who come from cultural and linguistic backgrounds other than Anglo-Australian.

5.5: Ways in which links between local emergency services units and Indigenous Australians can be strengthened.

5.6: Training needs of staff in order to improve the effectiveness of volunteer supervision, support, and management.

5.7: Training needs of volunteers in order to improve the supervision, leadership and management of local volunteer emergency services units.

5.8: Development of 'best practice' models for emergency services organisations to: more effectively manage and support their volunteers; and recognise and support employers of their volunteers and families of their volunteers.

5.9: Development of new models of emergency response volunteering better suited to current social and economic realities than is the present 'for life, 24 hours and 365 days a year' model which operates in practice.

5.10: Ways in which burdens on employers of emergency response volunteers can be eased. Forms of recognition of employers of volunteers which assist in marketing their goods and services to customers.

The above list, 5.1 to 5.10, is in the order in which issues were identified. In order to re-arrange these in some order of priority, probably two factors need to be taken into consideration: (a) the severity of the problem in relation to maintaining adequate numbers of emergency services volunteers; and (b) the ability of agencies and/or governments to implement timely and effective intervention strategies.

Gap **5.1** (increased research in emergency services other than fire services) could be viewed as a global gap to be addressed in relation to identified priorities. Gap **5.2** (data base comprehensiveness) could be viewed as a largely 'administrative' task. The remainder have been re-ordered according to suggested priority:

HIGH

5.3: The level of need to introduce financial incentive schemes for emergency services volunteers, and the scope and best form(s) of such scheme(s). Forms of non-financial recognition which are valued by volunteers.

5.6: Training needs of staff in order to improve the effectiveness of volunteer supervision, support, and management.

5.7: Training needs of volunteers in order to improve the supervision, leadership and management of local volunteer emergency services units.

5.10: Ways in which burdens on employers of emergency response volunteers can be eased. Forms of recognition of employers of volunteers which assist in marketing their goods and services to customers.

INTERMEDIATE

5.8: Development of ‘best practice’ models for emergency services organisations to more effectively: manage and support their volunteers; and recognise and support employers of their volunteers and families of their volunteers.

5.9: Development of new models of emergency response volunteering better suited to current social and economic realities than is the present ‘for life, 24 hours and 365 days a year’ model which operates in practice.

MODEST

5.4: Ways in which more volunteers can be recruited and retained who come from cultural and linguistic backgrounds other than Anglo-Australian.

5.5: Ways in which links between local emergency services units and Indigenous Australians can be strengthened.

PART II: Summaries of Reports

Section 1: Background: Volunteering in Australia and Threats to Volunteer-based Emergency Services Organisations.

1.1 The Broad Context of Volunteering in Australia.

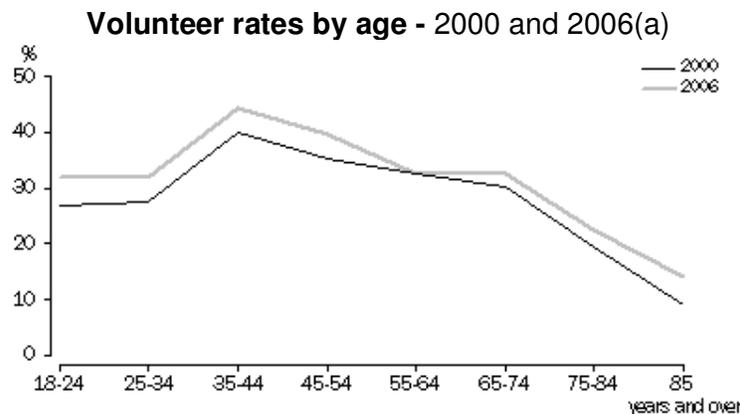
The most recent ABS survey found that in 2006, 5.2 million people, 34% of the Australian population aged 18 years and over, participated in voluntary work. Overall, 32% of men and 36% of women were volunteers. The following material has been reproduced from Australian Bureau of Statistics (2007) Report 4441.0 - *Voluntary Work, Australia, 2006*.

Volunteer rates varied across different groups in the population. Women volunteered more commonly than men (36% compared to 32%) and, with few exceptions, this was the case regardless of birthplace, family status, labour force status or the areas in which they lived.

The pattern of volunteering varied with life stage. People aged 35-44 years were in the age group most likely to volunteer (43%). This age group includes a large number of parents with dependent children. Their higher than average volunteering rate reflects their family commitments, most markedly for women. Thus, female partners with dependent children had a volunteer rate of 50% compared with 32% for female partners without dependent children.

People born in Australia were more likely to undertake voluntary work than those born elsewhere, 36% and 29% respectively. Those born in the main English-speaking countries had a higher rate of volunteering (34%) than those born in other countries (26%).

When adjusted to be comparable with the 2000 voluntary work survey, the number of volunteers aged 18 years and over in 2006 was 5.4 million, **35%** of the population of the same age. In 2000 there were 4.4 million volunteers, **32%** of the population. In 1995, the 3.2 million volunteers represented **24%** of the population. Between 2000 and 2006, increases in volunteer rates occurred for both sexes and most age groups.



The four most common types of organisation for which people volunteered, namely sport and physical recreation, education and training, community/welfare and religious groups, accounted for three-quarters (74%) of volunteering involvements.

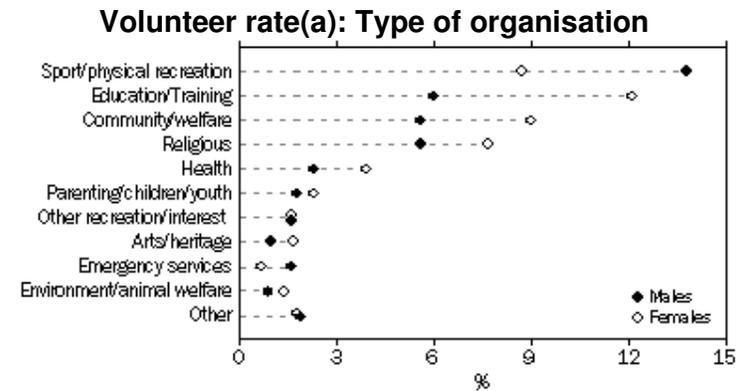
Volunteers in emergency service type organisations such as those concerned with surf lifesaving and other forms of rescue, fighting bushfires or helping people affected by floods or severe storms provide essential services in times of risk or crisis. In 2006, 175,000 people, **one per cent** of the population aged 18 years and over, volunteered for emergency service organisations, giving 26 million hours, an average of close to 150 hours per year for each volunteering involvement.

[Note that the number of those involved in emergency services volunteering given above (175,000) is wildly at variance with the figure of “more than 500,000” given on the AEMVF website. The definition used in the ABS report *Voluntary Work Australia, 441.0 2006* (page 42) is as follows:

Emergency services

Refers to those emergency services involved in protection against fire and flood, search and rescue and disaster relief (not including emergency medical services). While emergency rescue may involve medical attention the overall aim is search and rescue. Similarly, while disaster relief can include a range of services (material assistance, accommodation, counselling), the broad focus of the organisation is disaster relief. Included are Red Cross Disaster Recovery Services and Salvation Army Disaster Services. First aid is included under health, not emergency services.

It appears that the number cited on the AEMVF website is inflated by use of total numbers of volunteers in volunteer-based disaster relief and recovery organisations, rather than the smaller totals of those volunteers involved **specifically** with disaster response and relief activities. However, the ABS total seems to be appreciably less than what figures from web sites of volunteer emergency response and community protection agencies alone indicate (about 320,000; Appendix A). There is clearly a discrepancy. I contacted ABS. It seems that the apparent discrepancy may be partly artifactual—a product of the statistical methodology employed by ABS. The report was generated by a sample of households across all states and territories (it was NOT part of the 2006 Census of all private dwellings). The findings from the sample were then weighted to reflect state and territory populations in order to generalise the findings to the total Australian population. This procedure generated the figure of 175,000 Australian emergency services volunteers, plus or minus 17,500 volunteers. That is, there is a standard error of plus or minus 10 percent, or 17,500, meaning that ABS found that the number of Australian emergency services volunteers is somewhere between 157,000 and 192,000. However, the ten percent estimated margin of error depends on the characteristic of interest (in this instance, percentage of emergency services volunteers) actually occurring in the Australian population being at least 10 percent. The estimate found by ABS was that emergency services volunteers make up only about one percent of the Australian population. So the actual error of estimate could perhaps be as much as 25%: meaning that the number of Australian emergency services volunteers (as estimated by ABS using this particular survey) could be as low as 131,250, or as high as 218,750.]



(a) Volunteers for each type of organisation as per cent of all males/females aged 18 years and over.

Male volunteers were most likely to be involved in sport/recreation organisations. For females, education/training organisations were most common. Although there were more female than male volunteers overall, there were many more male involvements than female in the fields of sport/recreation and emergency services.

1.2 Threats to Australia's Volunteer-based Emergency Services

1.2.1 Volunteer-based fire services

All state and territory volunteer fire services reported declines in volunteer numbers over the period 1995 to 2003. For example, the South Australian Country Fire Service reported in 2003 that during each of the previous five years, about 400 more volunteers left than joined, resulting in a decline of about 14 percent over the period 1998-2002 (Palmer, 2003). The Victorian Country Fire Authority (CFA, 2001) estimated that the size of its volunteer membership declined by about 30 percent over the period 1988 to 2001. Recent improvements in agency volunteer data base recording and reporting systems make it difficult to quantify the magnitude of the overall decline in volunteer numbers with any precision (McLennan, 2004a). Annual reports of fire services indicate that, for most, previous declines in total volunteer numbers have been halted and in several agencies reversed.

A problem of declining volunteer firefighter numbers is not unique to Australia. In a paper presented at the United States *2000 National Volunteer Fire Summit*, Bush (2000) noted that the number of volunteers had declined by 12.5 percent since 1983, while most volunteer fire departments had experienced a dramatic increase in workload over the same period:

Fire departments can no longer count on the children of current volunteers following in their parents' footsteps. Nor can they count on a continuous stream of local people eager to donate their time and energy to their volunteer fire department. Departments cannot even rely on members staying active in the volunteer fire service for long periods of time. (p. 17)

The paper identified 11 "root problems" facing volunteer fire departments in the US:

1. Increased time demands: two-income family and working multiple jobs; increased training time; higher emergency call volume; increased job demands (fund raising, administration).
2. Training requirements: higher standards; more time required.
3. Increasing work load: wider response roles.

4. Changes in the nature of the job: abuse of the service by members of the public; loss of the social aspects of volunteering.
5. Changes in the community--urban: transient populations; loss of a sense of community and community pride; generational changes in values.
6. Changes in the community—rural: employers less willing to allow time off to respond.
7. Leadership problems: poor leadership—authoritarian, failure to manage change.
8. Federal legislation and regulations: Fair Labor Standards Act; OSHA ruling that four firefighters had to be on scene before entering a hazardous environment; EPA live-fire burn restrictions.
9. Increasing use of combination departments: disagreements between service/department chiefs; friction between volunteer and career members.
10. Higher cost of housing: volunteers can no longer afford to live in their community.
11. Ageing communities: more older people; lack of economic growth in some towns.

Australian research suggests that Australian volunteer fire services have experienced issues similar to those reported by US volunteer fire services.

Apart from declines in overall numbers of volunteers, all Australian volunteer fire services report a common 'triad' of immediate operational difficulties:

- Declining numbers of brigade members in small remote rural communities, as well as static or declining community population sizes and increases in the percentage of the population aged 55 years or more.
- Low volunteering rates in newly established housing developments on the fringes of capital cities or large regional centres in what were previously rural communities.
- 'Busy' brigades in urban-rural fringe areas where it is difficult to assemble a crew to respond to emergencies during business hours on weekdays.

Several investigations of these, and related, difficulties experienced by volunteer fire services have been undertaken (see McLennan, Acker, Beatson, Birch, & Jamieson, 2004). When examined in the light of discussions of recent trends in volunteering generally (McLennan & Birch, 2005) the various accounts indicate that two sets of factors pose threats to the future of volunteer fire services in Australia, as well as impacting negatively on current volunteer numbers. The first set involves factors which are broadly economic. The second involves factors which are broadly demographic. The two sets of factors are related, and they are discussed below, based on the account provided by McLennan and Birch:

I: Economic Changes

Many have commented on the profound changes in the global economy over the past decade. In Australia, a major impact of these changes has been to alter the structural nature of work and industry. Changes in public policy by governments have resulted in reductions in levels of tariff protection of locally produced goods, deregulation of the finance sector, and the replacement of government-owned utilities with privatised or corporatised entities. There have been declines in activity in the manufacturing and agricultural sectors of the economy, and an increase in activity in service industries. There has been an increase in the proportion of the workforce in part-time and casual employment. Many of those in full-time employment are working longer hours than previously. There has been an increase in the proportion of the workforce which is self-employed. There has been an increase in the number of households where both partners work (The Treasury, 2003). Finally, there is evidence that some employers

are increasingly reluctant to release employees who are fire service volunteers to attend emergencies during working hours because of business profitability and safety concerns.

[To the above can probably be added: recent rises in the cost of living associated with drought and rising fuel prices. Rising fuel costs are likely to have serious impacts on emergency services volunteering in more remote rural areas].

A CFA (2001) submission to the Economic Development Committee of the Parliament of Victoria argued that the above effects of structural changes to the economy were such as to make it more difficult for its current volunteer membership to remain with the agency, and more difficult for the agency to attract new volunteers, regardless of individuals' motivations to be a volunteer (CFA, 2001). There seem to be no grounds to suppose that the above trends are likely to be reversed in the foreseeable future.

II: Demographic Changes:

There is general agreement that the impacts of structural change in the economy have been particularly negative in rural regions. A disproportionate reduction of regional and rural employment opportunities has resulted in population shifts away from smaller rural communities to capital cities and large regional centres—this is particularly so for people aged 15-35 years. This population 'drift' has meant that many rural regions are, effectively, ageing faster than the overall population. Climate change, and reduced agricultural production, is likely to exacerbate the population drift away from some rural areas in South East Australia.

The Australian population, like that of many OECD countries, is ageing overall. In 1970/1971 31 percent of the population was aged 15 years or younger. By 2002/2003 this figure had dropped to 22 percent. The percentage of the Australian population aged over 65 years has grown from 8 percent in 1970/1971 to 13 percent in 2001/2002. It is predicted that over the next 40 years, the percentage of the Australian population aged over 65 years will almost double to approximately 25 percent. At the same time growth in the population of the traditional workforce age (18-60) will slow to almost zero: "This is a permanent change. Barring an unprecedented change in fertility rates, the age structure of the population is likely to stabilise with a far higher proportion of older Australians" (Social Policy Division, The Treasury, 2004, p. 18).

As Layton (2004) noted, one likely effect of the above mentioned demographic changes will be for members of the workforce aged 25-35 years to become a highly valued resource for employers (such as those in the mining sector) who require physically fit and active employees. This, in turn, will reduce the likelihood of emergency services volunteers being able to be recruited easily from this age group in the future in some regions.

The likely impact of these demographic changes is an ageing of the volunteer-based fire service "workforce". Data provided by Victoria's CFA illustrates this. In 2001, the median age of CFA volunteers was **41** years. In 2006, the corresponding statistic was **46** years. Figure 1 shows the ageing of CFA volunteers over the period.

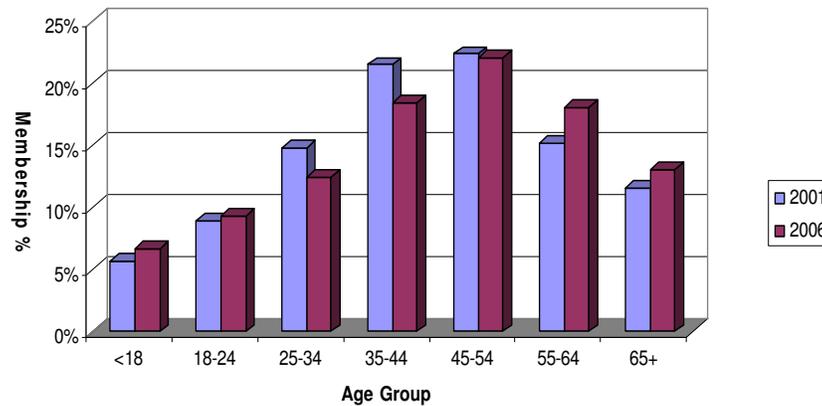


Figure 1: Age Profiles of CFA's Volunteers 2001 and 2006.

Paul (2001) noted that in Australia, two age-related groups had increased their rate of volunteering significantly, as indicated by the Australian Bureau of Statistics surveys of 1995 and 2000 (note that this trend was also evident in the 2006 ABS data). For younger people aged 18-24 years, the rate of volunteering increased from 17 percent to 27 percent. For those aged 55 to 65 years, the rate of volunteering increased from 24 percent to 33 percent. Paul proposed that these two age groups will represent the main 'feeder' groups into volunteering in the future. However, it is unlikely that either group will contribute significantly to boosting the number of emergency response volunteers—especially in rural areas. Younger people are disproportionately more likely to move away from small rural communities in order to gain employment. In addition, reports by Volunteering South Australia (2004) and Volunteering Victoria (2002) propose that there are several barriers to volunteering by younger people with agencies such as emergency services—notably competing claims by education and training commitments, employment obligations, and social and recreational interests. These do not fit well with the current training and operational requirements of volunteer emergency services.

While the pool of potential volunteers in the 55-65 year age group seems certain to increase, the decline in fitness and health associated with increasing age means that only a small proportion of these individuals will be physically able to meet the requirements of operational emergency responding—although many would be capable of taking on non-operational or support roles. However, a report prepared by the Western Australian Department of Premier and Cabinet (2002) suggested that early retirees (age 55 and over) are likely to have quite specific expectations of the nature of the volunteering activities which they are prepared to undertake. These expectations are likely to involve restrictions on the amount and frequency of time they are prepared to donate, and an unwillingness to commit themselves to long-term volunteering obligations. Such expectations do not fit well with the current needs of emergency services organisations such as rural fire agencies.

Apart from the age-related factors discussed above, it has been noted that marital instability is likely to lead to an increase in the number of single-parent families (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2005). A likely increase in child-care needs among members of the potential volunteer 'pool' is thus likely to be an additional barrier to fire service volunteering.

A recent Victorian discussion paper (Office of the Emergency Services Commissioner, 2008) proposed that climate change will be a new factor threatening emergency services volunteer

numbers in South Eastern Australia—especially Victoria. The paper notes that predictions are for longer fire seasons, more big fires, and more frequent extremes of weather. This is likely to increase demands on response-agency volunteers (fire, SES, Volunteer Coast Guard,) probably resulting in higher volunteer turnover rates.

1.2.2 Other volunteer-based emergency response and community safety organisations.

No report comparable in scope to that of McLennan and Birch (2005) concerning volunteer-based emergency response and community safety organisations other than fire services could be located. McLennan and Birch's account of threats facing volunteer-based fire services can probably be applied to most other volunteer-based emergency response and community safety organisations to some degree—especially SES and volunteer ambulance services. There are no indications that surf lifesaving organisations face similar threats (O'Connell, 2006), probably because of the important youth, family, and recreational dimensions of lifesaving organisations. Any threats to their future viability probably resemble those facing Australian volunteer-based organisations more generally—as noted below in 1.2.3.

1.2.3 Volunteer-based emergency and disaster relief and recovery organisations

No detailed descriptions of threats facing these types of organisations could be located. In the absence of agency-specific accounts, we can only fall back on examining information available about Australia's patterns of volunteering in general, and assume that trends identified will apply to volunteer-based emergency and disaster relief and recovery organisations to some degree.

The main trends likely to impact on Australian volunteer-based emergency and disaster relief and recovery organisations seem clear, based on two ABS surveys (2001, 2007) discussed in 1.1; and those broad socio-economic and demographic developments noted in 1.2.1: the number of potential volunteers available may rise slightly, but most of the increase will be among those aged under 25 or over 55 years. There will be proportionally fewer people in the workforce aged 25-35 and competition for this demographic among some employers and some volunteer-hosting organisations will be keen. Changes in the nature of the global economy, and thus work, will probably continue along their present trajectories: more people will be involved in casual and part-time work, and more people will be self-employed; there will be greater income insecurity; and more privatisation of services traditionally provided by governments. Emerging changes in family structure will continue: more single-adult households; more blended families; more single-parent households. These changes in the nature of work and families are likely to make it more difficult for individuals aged 25-45 years to engage in voluntary work of all kinds, regardless of their motivation to do so. **Competition among** volunteer-based organisations for both volunteers and financial resources—including government, private, and public funding—is likely to increase significantly.

Section 2: Recruiting Emergency Service Volunteers.

2.1 How and Why People Become Emergency Services Volunteers

2.1.1 Volunteer-based fire services

Australian communities rely on about 220,000 volunteer firefighters (occupying operational roles or support roles) from eight state (6) and territory (2) volunteer-based fire services. In 2004, three studies had been reported concerning the reasons people became volunteer firefighters. Table 1 summarises the findings from these studies, as presented originally by McLennan (2004b).

TABLE 1: Summary of Research Findings on Reasons For Becoming a Volunteer Firefighter: 2000-2004.

Initially, there were suggestions that research involving surveys of volunteers was needed to find out why individuals had volunteered to join rural fire services. However, while only three Australian surveys have been reported, the findings provide a reasonably consistent picture of reasons for volunteering, notwithstanding differing methodologies having been employed. Table 1 summarises the findings from these three surveys.

Table 1 Summary of findings from three surveys of volunteer firefighters' reasons for volunteering.

Aitken (2000) (N = 542)	Palmer (2000) (N = 376)	Clancy and Holgate (2004) (N = 110)
Sense of community (50%)	Serve community (84%)	Serve community (39%)
Social/mateship (13%)	Meet community need (82%)	Community involvement
Novelty/new skills (9%)	Interest/satisfaction (61%)	/mateship (14%)
Competitions/training (6%)	Community obligation (60%)	Challenge/self-
Duty (6%)	Learn new skills (56%)	development (12%)
Interest (6%)	Meet new people (38%)	Self-protection/job
Help others/protect		prospects/gain skills (12%)
lives and property (6%)		Excitement (8%)
		Friends joined (4%)

In all three studies, participants could nominate more than one reason for volunteering and many did so. Inspection of Table 1 indicates (following Palmer, 2000) the influence of a mixture of community-oriented and individually-oriented motives, with community-oriented motives dominating and providing a context for individually-oriented motives being fulfilled. This suggests that a key to volunteer recruitment is to first activate a personalised sense of community responsibility in individuals and to subsequently channel this into the action of joining a local brigade.

All three studies summarised in Table 1 above suffered from a major methodological shortcoming: they were based on surveys which sampled total agency volunteer memberships, without regard for the length of time respondents had been volunteers. Thus, motivation for **joining** was confounded with motivation for **remaining**.

To overcome this potential problem, and to explore why and how people became fire service volunteers in more detail, a study was conducted in collaboration with Victoria's CFA commencing in 2005. The New Members Tracking Project involved surveying all new CFA volunteers who joined during the period April 2005 to March 2006. All members of this entry

cohort were surveyed after they had been CFA volunteers for six months, the response rate was 32%. Findings (McLennan & Birch, 2006) included:

Important prompts (or “triggers”) for joining

	Men	Women
Approached personally	36%	32%
General CFA publicity	30%	32%
Friend/relative joined	25%	31%
A recent fire/other incident involving CFA	20%	32%
Advertising for CFA volunteers	16%	15%
Brigade display	9%	10%
The CFA web site	6%	5%

Clearly “the personal touch” is very important, but general publicity is also important in fostering favourable community attitudes toward CFA volunteering. The CFA web site clearly needed to be evaluated and revised so that it made a greater contribution to the recruitment process. A report by Acker (In McLennan et al., 2004) suggests that younger people (aged under 25) are increasingly likely to use web-based materials to make decisions about life activity choices, especially those related to work and career.

Important motivating factors

	Men	Women
Protect community	65%	63%
Contribute to the community	62%	68%
Learn new skills	55%	55%
Knew local brigade needed members	49%	41%
Enhance protection of own property	47%	40%
Feel more secure knowing someone doing the job	40%	38%
Wanting new challenges	35%	31%
Family members/friends CFA volunteers	35%	48%
Social interactions/camaraderie	27%	25%
Career enhancement	22%	16%

There is little indication that the self-reported motivational factors for volunteering with CFA differ greatly between men and women volunteers. However, women are rather more likely to be influenced to volunteer if family members or friends are CFA volunteers. The importance of “learning new skills” as an aspect of CFA volunteering warrants being highlighted in future marketing campaigns.

Age and motivations for joining

Further analyses of responses to the above list of possible motivating factors showed that these grouped in three clusters:

- Community contribution motivations (contribute to the community; protect the community)
- Fire threat and safety awareness motivations (knew the local brigade needed members; protect own property; family and friends are CFA members; feel more secure knowing someone is doing the job)

- Self-enhancement motivations (learn new skills; wanting new challenges; social interactions/camaraderie; career enhancement).

The new volunteers were grouped according to age (18-34 years; 35-44 years; 45+years) and the groups were compared on mean importance scores on the three clusters of motivations. There were no differences among the groups on mean scores on Community contribution motivations, and Fire threat and safety awareness motivations. However, the 18-34 years age group reported significantly more importance of Self-enhancement motivations. (Note that men and women did not differ on mean levels of motivation clusters).

Note that similar surveys of new volunteers after 6 months were carried on SA Country Fire Service volunteers (Birch & McLennan, in preparation) and on WA FESA Bush Fire Brigades volunteers (McLennan & Birch, 2007a), and similar findings resulted. This suggests that the findings concerning motivations to become a fire service volunteer are robust: (a) individuals are motivated to become fire service volunteers by a mix of community contribution motivations; fire threat and fire safety awareness motivations; and self-enhancement motivations; and, (b) for people aged 18-34 years, self-enhancement motivations are especially salient.

Evaluation of a CFA recruitment and marketing campaign which took account of findings from the New Volunteers Tracking Project found, among other things, that younger potential volunteers (<35 years) were much more likely to make use of web-based material compared with older potential volunteers. A report of the evaluation findings is at Appendix B.

2.1.2 Volunteer-based State Emergency Services

Australian research concerning motivational aspects of being an SES volunteer is sparse.

Moran, Britton, and Correy (1992) surveyed 23 volunteer members of the NSW State Emergency Service (SES) from two regional centres. The most common reasons for being an SES volunteer were, in decreasing order of importance:

- To help others.
- Personal concern for others.
- Opportunities to learn new hands-on skills through training with the SES.
- Learning how to deal with people.
- Making new friends.

Half the respondents indicated that the good standing of the SES in the local community was also influential in their decision to join.

Moran et al. (1992) concluded that there was no evidence that the volunteers joined the SES to escape from, or to compensate for, impoverished or unstimulating activities elsewhere in their lives: most rated themselves as content with their home life and their current employment. The majority indicated that their current jobs were stimulating. One third of the respondents belonged to other voluntary organisations (rural fire brigades, sporting groups, children's groups).

McLennan and Birch (2007a) reported a survey of new WA FESA SES volunteers, who joined during the 12 months June 2005 to July 2006. They were surveyed six months after joining (N = 60; return rate 30%; men 46%, women 54%). Findings included:

Important Prompts for Joining

	Men	Women
Advertising for FESA SES volunteers	50%	20%
Friend/relative joined	48%	39%
Unit display	48%	17%
General FESA publicity	41%	67%
The FESA web site	41%	9%
Approached personally	39%	42%
A recent fire/other incident involving FESA SES	33%	44%

There appear to be important differences between men and women in the relative importance of prompts or triggers to consider becoming an SES volunteer. For men, the top three prompts were Advertising for SES volunteers; Friend/relative joined; SES Unit display. For women, the top three were: General FESA publicity; A recent incident involving SES; Approached personally.

Important Motivating Factors

	Men	Women
Contribute to the community	96%	90%
Wanting new challenges	96%	75%
Protect community	91%	89%
Learn new skills	85%	93%
Social interactions/camaraderie	84%	83%
Security-knowing the job is being done	78%	54%
Career enhancement	61%	59%
Knew local unit needed members	59%	65%
Family members/friends FESA volunteers	46%	38%
Enhance protection of own property	38%	62%

Further analysis showed that these 10 motivating factors grouped into three clusters: community contribution motives; community safety and protection motives; and self-enhancement motives. Compared with the motives of new FESA volunteer firefighters, self-enhancement motives were significantly more important for new SES volunteers. For FESA volunteer firefighters, community safety and protection motives were relatively more important.

2.1.3 Volunteer Ambulance Services

Fahey and Walker (2002) surveyed 1014 volunteer ambulance officers in Australia (n = 654) and New Zealand (n = 360). Respondents were asked why they had volunteered. Responses were (in decreasing order of frequency):

- Assisting the community/helping others
- Learning new skills
- A sense of achievement

- Gaining self esteem
- A sense of achievement
- Meeting new people
- Being part of a group/forming friendships
- Improving employment prospects
- Excitement

Fahey and Walker's respondents were also asked why they joined the **ambulance** service in particular. Responses were (in decreasing order of frequency):

- Interested in the medical/first aid field
- The local station needed more volunteers to continue
- A representative asked me to join
- I had friends or family who were members
- I had seen the volunteer ambulance service in action and it prompted me to join
- The local ambulance group stood out in the community
- The organisation advertised for volunteers

Fahey and Walker noted that written comments from respondents reinforced a conclusion that the major motivational drivers to become volunteer ambulance officers were: (a) helping members of the community; (b) gaining new, valued, skills; and (c) contributing to an effective and valued community service.

2.1.4 Volunteer-based emergency and disaster relief and recovery organisations

No reports of research concerning reasons or motivations for volunteering with these agencies could be located. Two reports were located which examined reasons for volunteering generally in Australia. The findings probably apply to some degree to non-government volunteer-based emergency and disaster relief and recovery organisations.

The ABS Report (2001) *Voluntary Work, Australia* listed the frequency of reasons given for volunteering by those surveyed:

1. Help others/benefit community	47%
2. Personal satisfaction	43%
3. Personal/family involvement	31%
4. To do something worthwhile	30%
5. Social contact	18%
6. Use skills/experience	12%
7. Religious beliefs	12%
8. To be active	11%
9. To learn new skills	7%
10. Gain work experience	4%

Learning new skills and gaining work experience were relatively more important for those aged 18-24 compared with other age groups: 13%, and 17%, respectively.

Brown (2004) conducted an e-survey of 505 persons seeking an opportunity to volunteer by means of the *GoVolunteer* volunteer recruitment website in March 2004. In response to the question about what motivated them to want to volunteer, overall response tallies were:

1. To help others	68%
2. Gain work experience	66%
3. Learn new skills	61%
4. Do something worthwhile	60%
5. Personal satisfaction	53%
6. Use skills	52%
7. Be active	45%
8. Social contact	28%
9. Religious beliefs	4%
10. Personal contact	2%

Brown (2004) noted that there were age-related differences in frequency of nominated reasons. The most frequently nominated reason for volunteering for all age groups combined was “To help others”. However, for those aged 18-24 the most frequently nominated reason was: “To gain work experience”. For those over 60 the most frequently nominated reason was “be active”.

For those under 35 the top-four order was:

1. Gain work experience
2. Help others
3. Learn new skills
4. Do something worthwhile.

For those over 35, the top-four order was:

1. Help others
2. Personal satisfaction
3. Use skills/experience
4. Do something worthwhile.

Brown’s (2004) survey suggests that for those under 35, altruistic motives may be relatively less important as ‘drivers’ of volunteering compared with more instrumental, or self-oriented, motives.

2.2 Barriers to Emergency Services Volunteering.

2.2.1 Volunteer-based fire services

Birch and McLennan (2006a) reported findings from a survey of residents in 29 communities across the NSW “Grain Belt” region. Some 10,000 households were surveyed and approximately 1,200 responses were received from residents who were **not** NSW Rural Fire Service volunteers. Residents were asked how important each one of a list of possible barriers to becoming a NSW RFS volunteer was as a reason for not volunteering.

What are the major barriers to your volunteering with RFS?

- About 50% of respondents reported that they did not have time, or had other commitments and priorities; 41% said that they could not leave their job/business/farm to fight fires;
- About 40% of respondents were reluctant to join RFS as an organised fire service, preferring instead to focus on protecting a closer circle of family, friends and neighbours;

- About 35% of respondents thought they were unsuitable to volunteer with RFS due to age, illness, disability, family commitments or their own emotional vulnerability;
- About 35% of respondents feared injury and possible resultant loss of income;
- About 30% of respondents reported that they did not know that more volunteers were needed, or did not know how to apply to volunteer;
- About 30% expressed a fear of being sued as a result of activities with RFS;
- About 30% feared that RFS activities would be too distressing or frightening;
- About 25% of respondents thought their employer would not be happy about them attending fires with RFS;
- About 25% of respondents reported that they did not have anyone to mind their children.
- 18% of respondents said that costs, especially fuel, were a barrier to volunteering.

Birch and McLennan (2006a) also reported that those members of rural communities who were aged 35-44 years were LEAST interested in volunteering with the NSW RFS compared with younger or older aged groups--apparently because of work and family related commitments.

As part of the CFA New Volunteers Tracking Project (McLennan & Birch, 2006), the new volunteers were asked what would have made it **easier** for them to become CFA volunteers (an alternative way of asking about barriers to volunteering)

Things That Would Have Made it Easier to Decide to Volunteer

	Men	Women
Knowing someone in CFA	80%	77%
More knowledge of opportunities to develop useful life skills	79%	74%
More obvious career development opportunities	70%	68%
Knowing more about what CFA volunteering involves	68%	69%
More information on how to contact/join CFA	60%	58%
Assistance with childcare during CFA activities	47%	34%
More information about non-operational roles	43%	67%
A website for the local brigade	43%	53%
More opportunities for family/friends to be involved	40%	54%

2.2.2 Volunteer-based emergency services other than fire services

No reports could be located concerning the reasons why people do not volunteer with emergency services other than fire services. No reports could be located concerning the reasons why Australians do not volunteer generally.

Several surveys conducted overseas (US, UK, Canada) have reported reasons why people do not volunteer generally

The *US Bureau of Labor Statistics* (2003) reported the following reasons given for not volunteering in the previous 12 months, based on its annual survey: Lack of time (44.7%); health or medical problems (14.7%); family responsibilities/child care (9.5%); not relevant to life situation (5.8%); not interested (4.3%); moved/lack of information/no transport/expense (4.2%); no one asked (3.2%); burnout/no longer enjoyable (2.4%).

Caloura (2001) reported a state wide survey of Rhode Island (USA) citizens concerning volunteerism. Of those who responded and reported that they were not volunteers, 42% gave as the reason that their schedule was too full. Other reported barriers to volunteering were: don't know how to get involved (13%); no one ever asked (12%); too old (11%); fear of being unable to fulfil commitments (8%); nothing interesting to volunteer for (7%); health/medical problems (6%); lack of transport (5%); people should be paid for work they do (5%); child care (4%); and other (6%).

The UK *Institute for Volunteering Research* (2004) reported reasons for ceasing to volunteer or for not volunteering as found in a 1997 survey. Those not involved in volunteering were asked if they would like to become involved: 37% said yes, 20% said no because of lack of time, 12% said no for other reasons: don't know any volunteers, don't have the necessary skills or experience. Those who expressed an interest (37%) were asked what would make it easier for them to become involved. Key "encouragers" were: being asked; if someone helped me to get started; if family or friends were involved too; if I knew it would improve my skills; if I could do it from home; and if it led to a qualification.

In their review of volunteering in Canada, Hall, McKechnie, Davidman, and Leslie (2001) concluded that the biggest barriers to volunteering appeared to be time-related. Employer support for volunteering helped mitigate time pressures "—employee volunteers who receive employer support volunteer more time than those who do not" (p. 22). Another barrier was the lack of information about how to get involved with a particular activity. Other barriers mentioned included: people feel a need to be asked; language and literacy problems—especially for newer Canadians; and previous negative experiences with voluntary organisations. Other perspectives on barriers to volunteering were: (a) the diminished value that society places on volunteering, and (b) a perception that there is too much bureaucracy in voluntary organisations which interferes with effectiveness.

Hall et al. identified one of the biggest gaps in the literature is a lack of understanding of the factors that lead Canadians to identify lack of time as their biggest barrier to volunteering:

In some instances when Canadians identify that they lack the time to volunteer more, they are probably signalling that volunteering takes a lower priority to other discretionary activities in their lives (e.g., recreational activities, socialising, hobbies). In other instances, volunteering may indeed be more highly valued than other discretionary activities but there is simply little time to devote to volunteering because of the demands of work, family, and daily living. A better understanding of time-related barriers would provide direction to initiatives addressed at ameliorating the problem. For example, the support of employers in providing flexible working arrangements may reduce work demands on time while efforts to promote family volunteering may reduce the competition for time between volunteering and family (p. 22).

Section 3: Retaining Emergency Services Volunteers.

3.1 Positive Aspects of Emergency Services Volunteering

As part of the CFA New Member Tracking Project, McLennan and Birch (2007b) reported the benefits gained from being a CFA volunteer 12 months after joining:

Benefits gained from being a CFA volunteer (Percentage endorsing “strongly agree”)

	Men	Women
Contribute to protecting members of the community	77%	63%
Learn new things and apply new skills	61%	63%
Feel a valued member of the community	47%	53%
Broadens my networks in the community	40%	39%
Allows me to help others instead of dwelling on my own concerns	39%	33%
Helps meet my sense of community obligation	37%	35%
It adds to career options	17%	23%
Friends place a high value on me being a CFA volunteer	16%	21%

There were no significant overall differences between men and women volunteers in the degree to which they derive benefits from their CFA volunteering.

The analysis was repeated for volunteers aged 18-34 years. While younger volunteers at six months were more strongly motivated by self-interested motivations (career, skills, challenges, new friends), there were no differences between younger and older volunteers in the pattern of benefits derived after actually being a CFA volunteer for 12 months.

Birch and McLennan (2007) reported a survey of NSW Rural Fire Service volunteers. Among other things they were asked to indicate the relative importance of each of several potential benefits derived from being a NSW RFS volunteer. The percentage of “strongly agree” endorsements were as follows:

As an RFS volunteer I can contribute to protecting the members of my community	83%
Being an RFS volunteer allows me to learn new things and apply new skills	59%
Being an RFS volunteer makes me feel I am a valued member of the community	53%

Being an RFS volunteer broadens my networks in the community	39%
Being an RFS volunteer adds to my career options	17%

Luong and Tuckey (2006) surveyed 466 SA CFS volunteers from a random sample of 150 brigades. Volunteers completed the Volunteer Functions Inventory--VFI (Clary et al., 1998). The VFI is a widely-used research tool in studying volunteerism. It comprises six volunteer functions scales, each measuring a particular motive for volunteering:

<i>Values</i>	Volunteering as a chance to express humanitarian concern for others
<i>Enhancement</i>	Volunteering to boost self-esteem and achieve personal growth
<i>Understanding</i>	Volunteering provides an opportunity for new learning experiences
<i>Social</i>	Volunteering as an opportunity to be with friends
<i>Career</i>	Volunteering for career-related benefits
<i>Protective</i>	Volunteering may serve to reduce the guilt of being more fortunate than others or act as an escape from problems

To which Luong and Tuckey added a seventh motive scale:

<i>Enjoyment</i>	Volunteering as an opportunity to have fun and excitement
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Luong and Tuckey computed average level-of-importance scores for each motive. The most strongly endorsed motive for being a CFS volunteer was Values—the opportunity to express humanitarian concern for others; followed by: Enjoyment—the opportunity for fun and excitement; Enhancement—boosting self esteem and achieving personal growth; and Understanding—an opportunity for new learning experiences.

In their survey of Australian and New Zealand volunteer ambulance officers Fahey and Walker (2002) found the top four activities enjoyed through volunteering to be as follows:

Training and skills maintenance	29%
Helping people—treating patients	18%
Call outs, attending emergencies	12%
Friendships with peers and being a member of a team	12%

Clearly, for these volunteer ambulance officers, the intrinsic nature of the work is a major source of positive experiences, presumably contributing to intention to continue.

3.2 Negative Aspects of Emergency Services Volunteering.

McLennan and Birch (2008) reported an analysis of 394 exit survey returns from 2,438 former SA CFS volunteers who resigned during the period December 2005 – December 2007. Former volunteers were invited to write responses to the question: “*What did you enjoy least about volunteering with CFS?*”

There were 286 written text responses describing sources of dissatisfaction. Some former volunteers described more than one source of dissatisfaction.

The responses were inspected and assigned to one of seven major categories. These are tabulated below, in descending order of frequency of response category. Where possible, sub-categories have been listed.

[Note that these responses are self-reports of volunteers' perceptions].

1. Dissatisfaction with brigade life:

- Poor brigade climate: conflicts, factionalism, exclusion, bullying: 64
- Poor brigade leadership: autocratic, favouritism, incompetence: 23
- Negative impacts of other volunteers: lazy, unsafe, troublemakers: 9

TOTAL: 96 (34%)

2. Time demands of volunteering:

- Time required: 32
- Time wasted: operations, training: 30

TOTAL: 62 (22%)

3. The nature of the work of a CFS volunteer:

- Risks and stressors: mostly anxieties associated with attending vehicle accidents: 32
- Physical conditions: heat, smoke, fatigue, dirt, climbing ladders: 10

TOTAL: 42 (14%)

4. Bureaucracy, red tape, rules, forms: 33 (12%)

5. CFS structures, staff, and processes (above the level of brigade):

- Locals not consulted, ignored, over-ruled: 15
- Negative behaviours/attitudes of paid staff to volunteers: 8
- Inadequate resources/equipment: 4
- Lack of communication with brigades: 2

TOTAL: 29 (9%)

6. Training:

- Excessive demands: 13
- Inadequate/poor quality: 3

TOTAL 16 (6%)

7. Local community: lack of interest, support, recognition: 8 (3%)

The findings suggest that organisational difficulties (both at agency and brigade level) associated with being a volunteer firefighter far outweigh negatives associated simply with the tasks involved in doing the work of a volunteer firefighter.

As part of Birch and McLennan's (2007) survey of NSW RFS volunteers, respondents were asked; "How much has each of the following limited your participation in RFS activities?" and presented with a list of 14 items to rate on a scale of "Great Extent", "Moderate Extent", "Not At All", "Don't Know", or "Not Applicable". The results are set out in the following table sorted in descending order based on the number of respondents reporting the item as limiting their participation to a "Great Extent".

1. The perceived bureaucratic nature of the RFS:	26%
2. Business, farm or work commitments:	24%
3. Internal brigade politics:	15%
4. The out-of-pocket expenses of membership (e.g. petrol, phone calls, Internet time):	14%
5. The increased complexity of RFS activities:	13%
6. Increased or ongoing demands of training or assessments:	12%
7. Increased time commitments required by RFS:	12%
8. Awkwardness of leaving my workmates or employees at work while attending calls:	12%
9. Parenting and family activities:	11%
10. Lack of resources provided by the RFS:	7%
11. Increased commitments caused by drought:	6%
12. Domestic duties:	6%
13. Losing interest in RFS:	6%
14. Fear of legal action arising from RFS activities:	5%

Fahey and Walker's (2002) survey sample of Australian and New Zealand volunteer ambulance officers reported the following to be important factors which made volunteering difficult:

Time commitments	38%
Poor relationships	11%
Lack of organisational support	8%
Inadequate provision of resources	7%
Isolation-lack of training opportunities and professional support	7%

Lewig, Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Dollard, and Metzger (2007) investigated factors leading to burnout of South Australian volunteer ambulance officers.

The results of their study suggested that in order to retain formal volunteers, volunteer emergency services organizations need to: (1) provide a work environment in which volunteers feel valued both by the organization and the communities they serve; (2) ensure that volunteers understand the organization's values and support those values; (3) make certain volunteers are

well supported to perform their role (this includes having access to peer support and having some say in the work that they do); and (4) keep an eye on time pressure and any conflict at home that may be occurring as a result of the volunteer role. This last point is especially important where volunteers show signs of exhaustion or cynicism toward their work

3.3 Why People Resign From Volunteer-based Emergency Services.

3.3.1: Volunteer-based fire services

CFA conducted a survey of volunteers who exited between 1 March 2000 and 23 June 2000 (Woodward & Kallman, 2001). The CFA record system indicated that 1,853 members left during the period, but contact details were available for only 843 of the former members. Subsequently, 40 of these were found to have been incorrectly identified as having left CFA, when they were actually in the process of transferring to another Brigade. Of the 803 actual “leavers” sent a questionnaire, 125 were “unknown at this address”. A total of 166 completed surveys were returned (24% of the 678 surveys delivered). Of the 166 returns, 19% stated that they left CFA because they moved (employment, study, family reasons). If this figure (19%) is applied across the sample of 678, a notional number of 129 left the area results. If this figure is then added to the 125 “not known at this address” former members, the result is a notional total of 254 former members who probably left CFA because they moved house, corresponding to 32% of the 803 “leavers” surveyed. If the assumptions in the calculation are accepted, that gives an estimate that about **two-thirds** of resignations resulted from some factor other than simply leaving the area.

Woodward and Kallman (2001) analysed their 166 returns and concluded that the three major reasons for leaving (apart from leaving the area) were (a) time demands (26%); (b) negative Brigade issues (18%); and (c) training demands (12%).

- (a) Time Demands: the three kinds of time demands described were work commitments (51%); family commitments (25%); and personal commitments (21%).
- (b) Negative Brigade Issues: the five issues described were demands of meetings and call-outs (27%); lack of recognition by the organisation (25%); interpersonal conflict (25%); lack of leadership opportunities (10%); and nepotism (9%).
- (c) Training Requirements (internal training and skills maintenance): the two aspects described were time demands (47%) and limited access to training opportunities (41%).

McLennan and Birch (2008) reported an analysis of 394 exit survey returns from 2,438 former SA CFS volunteers who resigned during the period December 2005 – December 2007.

Reasons For Resigning

(based on responses to the 12 possible reasons for resigning listed in Question 19; respondents could endorse up to **five** reasons for resigning, in order of importance; 1 most, 5 least)

- Work/Family Commitments: 51% of respondents endorsed this as a contributing reason for resigning; 49% indicated that work/family commitments played no role.
- Moved away from the district: 38% of respondents endorsed this as a contributing reason for resigning; 62% indicated that moving from the district played no role.
- Age/Health Concerns: 28% of respondents nominated this as a contributing reason for resigning; 72% indicated that this played no role.

- Dissatisfaction with CFS volunteering: 25% nominated this as a contributing reason for resigning; 75% indicated that this played no role.

Gender and Reasons For Resigning

There were NO significant differences between men and women, overall, in their patterns of reasons for resigning.

Age and Reasons For Resigning

<i>Reason</i>	<i>Age Group</i>		
	<i>18 – 34</i>	<i>35 – 44</i>	<i>45+</i>
Moved away from district	55%	41%	28%
Age/Health Concerns	12%	17%	40%
Work/Family Commitments	56%	67%	43%
Dissatisfaction	20%	25%	22%

Detailed analyses showed that:

- Those aged 18-34 years were significantly MORE likely to cite Moving from the District as a reason for resigning, compared with the other two age groups.
- Those aged 45+ years were significantly MORE likely to cite Age/Health Concerns as a reason for resigning, compared with the other two age groups.
- Those aged 35-44 years were significantly MORE likely to cite Work/Family Commitments as a reason for resigning, compared with the other two age groups.
- There were NO significant differences among the three age groups in likelihood of resigning for Dissatisfaction reasons.

The Makeup of Former CFS Volunteer “Dissatisfaction”

(The number in brackets at the end of each reason is an indicator of the relative importance of that reason in contributing to dissatisfaction).

- Unhappy with brigade (or higher level) management (.73)
- Felt excluded from brigade activities (.68)
- Didn’t feel there was a role for me in the brigade (.57)
- Unhappy with the direction of CFS as an organisation (.55)
- Dispute with another member (.45)
- Lost interest in the CFS (.41)

Aspects of Reported CFS Volunteering Experiences Associated Most Strongly with “Dissatisfaction”

(The number in brackets at the end of each item from the survey questionnaire indicates the relative strength of the association between response to that item and level of dissatisfaction.)

- If you had a complaint or serious request, how satisfied were you that you had a fair hearing and resolution to your complaint or serious request at local level? – *Not at all* (.25)
- How well did you feel your efforts as a volunteer were recognised and appreciated by the CFS? – *Poorly* (.23)

- At the time you left, how well would you describe the morale of your brigade? – *Poor* (.18)
- How satisfied were you that the training you received enabled you to do your duties safely and efficiently? – *Not at all* (.13)

3.3.2: Volunteer-based State Emergency Services

Graham (2006) interviewed 15 former members of the ACT SES who had resigned from the organisation. Graham concluded that several factors contributed to an individual's decision to resign—none of his interviewees gave a single factor as the reason for resigning. Poor 'people management' and competing time commitments were mentioned most frequently. Several of the women former volunteers interviewed reported dissatisfaction with the 'boy's club' atmosphere and a lack of respect from their male counterparts.

3.4 Why Volunteers Remain

Birch and McLennan (2007) reported responses by NSW RFS volunteers to a survey question "Why do you remain a volunteer with RFS?". Volunteers were presented with a list of possible reasons and asked to rate the importance of each. The percentage of respondents endorsing "strongly agree" for each is tabulated below:

<i>Reason for remaining</i>	<i>% "strongly agree"</i>
I think RFS has an important function to perform	82%
I enjoy most aspects of being in the RFS	60%
I enjoy the responsibility	52%
It is an important part of my community life	51%
To better protect my home and assets	38%
I hope to become an officer in the Brigade one day	19%
There is no one in the community to take my place	12%

A report by McLennan and Birch (2007c) identified those experiences of new CFA volunteers after 12 months membership likely to be related to volunteer retention. The indicator of "retention" was the strength of the volunteer's reported intention to continue as a CFA volunteer in the near future. The findings reported are based on 495 responses to surveys mailed to all volunteer who became CFA volunteers in the period April 2005 to March 2006, 12 months after they joined, as part of the New Members Tracking Project.

The level of overall Intention to Remain was strongly linked with Overall Positive Feelings about being a CFA volunteer, and somewhat less strongly linked with Overall Level of Benefits Gained from being a CFA volunteer.

HIGHER levels of overall Intention to Remain were linked significantly to two perceived benefits of being a volunteer: (1) *Broadens my networks in the community*, and (2) *I can contribute to protecting members of the community*.

LOWER levels of Intention to Remain were linked significantly to three reported experiences: (1) *I volunteer with CFA because I feel I have to*; (2) disagreement with the statement that *After doing assessments the certificate of attainment arrives quickly*; and (3) reporting that *CFA takes up more time than I really want to give*.

HIGHER levels of Intention to Remain were linked significantly to two reported experiences: (1) *I find CFA Membership as rewarding as I expected*; and (2) *My brigade and CFA deals with troublesome members promptly*.

[*I find CFA Membership as rewarding as I expected* was, in turn, strongly linked to five other reported experiences: (1) *I find I am being included in the group by all members of my brigade*; (2) *The brigade officers are good leaders*; (3) *My brigade gets on well with other agencies (e.g., DSE & SES)*; (4) disagreeing that *CFA activities conflict with my study commitments*; and (4) disagreeing that *I volunteer with CFA because I feel I have to*.]

LOWER levels of Intention to Remain were strongly linked to two reported problems: (1) *I feel pressure from my Brigade to turn up more often than I want*; and (2) *I have difficulty getting to all scheduled training and assessments*.

LOWER levels of Intention to remain were linked to three reported limitations: (1) *I have trouble reaching some equipment on the trucks*; (2) *I find it hard to understand some of the equipment and procedures used*; and (3) *I find attending some kinds of incidents too distressing*.

Intention to Remain was NOT related to level of concern about risks (injury/death, litigation, loss of income etc.)

Conclusions

The factors identified as likely to be related to retention of CFA volunteers are neither new nor unexpected. What the Report does is to identify a small sub-set of the many factors which could impact on retention as being particularly important:

- Two benefits derived from CFA volunteering are especially important: enhanced social networks in the community, and active involvement in community protection.
- Important negative retention factors comprise: being a reluctant volunteer in the first place; delays in results following assessments; conflict between time demands of training and turning out, and other activities—especially study; and being limited in the ability to contribute fully to Brigade activities.
- Important positive retention factors comprise: being included in brigade activities; good leadership by officers; harmonious relationships within the brigade; and harmonious relationships between the brigade and other agencies.

Overall, the findings reinforce strongly a common-sense notion that a well-lead and well-managed harmonious brigade, which has good links to its host community and cooperates with other agencies, and in which workloads are reasonable and training requirements flexible, is a

brigade which will retain its members. The challenge is for volunteer fire services to facilitate more brigades having these characteristics.

The survey of volunteer ambulance officers reported by Fahey and Walker (2002) was the only study located which examined in detail those characteristics of volunteer management and support by agencies which were valued by volunteers. The findings were as follows:

	<i>Percent "very important"</i>
Management contact person available and supportive	49%
Receive training certificate promptly	37%
Opportunity to provide feedback to management	30%
Receive organisational information promptly	27%
Management staff visit volunteer group	25%
Receive letter of commendation	23%

--The above are probably a reasonably good description of what constitutes practical valuing of volunteers by their organisation.

Section 4: Selected Specific Issues

4.1 The economic contributions of volunteer-based emergency services.

Bittman and Fisher (2006) provided a comprehensive discussion of general economic and social contributions of volunteering in Australia.

Several estimates have been made of contributions to the economy through voluntary or unpaid work. Three different approaches to estimating the economic value of volunteering have been proposed:

- input cost method – The number of hours provided by volunteers multiplied by a market salary rate
- opportunity cost method – The amount that a volunteer would have earned had the time been spent on paid work (usually: hours X average weekly earnings)
- value of output method – The funding that would be required to provide the existing volunteer services using paid staff.

The ABS (2000) estimated that the value of **all** volunteer/unpaid work activity through **formal volunteer organisations** to the Australian economy was A\$8.9 billion in 1999-2000, on the basis of the opportunity cost method (equivalent to about A\$11.7 billion in 2007, after adjusting for inflation).

Lyons (2006) used a somewhat more comprehensive survey methodology to estimate that the contribution of volunteer/unpaid work activity through formal volunteer organisations to the Australian economy was A\$14.6 billion in 2004 (equivalent to about A\$15.9 billion in 2007 corrected for inflation).

Hourigan (2001) used the value of output method to estimate that CFA volunteers contributed A\$470 million to Victoria in 2000/2001. This corresponds to about A\$572 million in 2007, adjusting for inflation. Hourigan also estimated that each CFA volunteer contributed A\$8,000 annually (2000/2001 \$ value, this corresponds to a 2007 figure of about A\$9,700 after correcting for inflation).

--If Hourigan's (2001) estimate of A\$9,700 per CFA volunteer is simply applied 'across the board' to Australia's approximately 220,000 fire service volunteers, then the total contribution to the Australian economy by volunteer fire services would be of the order of **A\$2 billion**, corresponding to about 13% of the total formal volunteering contribution to the Australian economy proposed by Lyons (2006).

The RMIT University *Centre for Risk and Community Safety* (2004) used an input cost method to estimate the value of the contribution of SES volunteers in NSW and Victoria. The Report concluded, on the basis of surveying SES volunteers in 2002 about their time spent on SES volunteering activities, that each volunteer was worth A\$9,458 to the community. The total value of the NSW SES volunteer contribution was estimated to be between A\$69.4 million and A\$85.1 million (in 2007 A\$, about 75.4 – 92.5). For Victoria, the corresponding value range was estimated to be between A\$37.6 million and A\$55 million each year (in 2007 A\$, about 40.8 – 59.8).

Fahey and Walker (2002) used an input cost method to estimate the overall value of volunteer ambulance officer input to the Australian economy as A\$27 million per annum (in 2007 A\$, about 31 million).

O'Connell (2006) published details of a value of output based costing which estimated that the contribution of surf lifesaving volunteers to the Australian economy in 2004 was A\$1.4 billion (in 2007 A\$, about 1.5 billion).

Gledhill (2001) noted that emergency services volunteers contribute to their communities in several ways:

- they give their time and their expertise
- they bear personal risk to life, health and wellbeing
- they undertake expensive training and study
- they practice regularly to maintain their skills
- they carry a range of out-of-pocket expenses associated with their volunteering activities.

“The contributions of time and money made by volunteers in emergency services can be considered as ‘endowments’ bestowed on the community. These ‘endowments’ are funded by both volunteers and their employers. For those volunteers who are self-employed, their ‘endowment’ contribution could be substantial”. (Gledhill, 2001, p. 5)

Several authors have noted that the value of volunteering to Australian society is much more than monetary.

“Volunteering helps create a cohesive and stable society and adds value to the services that governments provide...Volunteering work brings communities together...Volunteering develops social capital because it helps build trust, coordination and cooperation in communities...”. (Soupourmas & Ironmonger, 2002, pp. 30-31)

4.2 The costs associated with being an emergency services volunteer.

In 2006, the AEMVF commissioned a study of the costs associated with being an emergency services volunteer. The resulting report (King, Bellamy, & Donato-Hunt, 2006) concluded that emergency services volunteers incur a significant financial impost:

- The average direct cost per volunteer for the period April 2005 to March 2006, after reimbursements, was **\$544**.
- The average in-kind contribution per volunteer after reimbursement was **\$406**.
- Thus, the total cost (direct costs plus in-kind contribution) was **\$950** per annum.
- For those volunteers who were employees, if costs to the employer are included the total average cost rose to **\$1679** per annum.
- For those volunteers who were self-employed, if business costs are included the total average cost rose to **\$3282** per annum.
- For those volunteers who were retired, their total average cost (direct and in-kind) was **\$687** per annum.
- The average cost per emergency response agency volunteer was about **three times** the average cost incurred by a disaster recovery agency volunteer.

--Note that volunteer fire service organisations chose not to participate.

It should also be noted that the study was conducted in 2006, that is, before the recent sharp increase in fuel costs and food prices.

A survey in late 2007 of Queensland Fire and Rescue Service Rural Operations Volunteer Fire Wardens (Birch & McLennan, 2008) found that rising fuel costs were the major concern reported by the volunteers to threaten their work as fire wardens.

As noted previously, in Birch and McLennan's (2007) survey of NSW RFS Volunteers Preliminary Report, about 14% of respondents nominated "Out of pocket expenses (petrol, phone etc)" as a major factor limiting their participation in RFS volunteering activities. This was the 4th ranked negative aspect of volunteering out of 14, behind only: The bureaucratic nature of RFS; Business, farm and work commitments; and Internal brigade politics.

It seems very likely that costs associated with driving will be a major issue for emergency response volunteers (fire, SES, ambulance, rescue) in rural areas in the immediate future.

4.3 Recognition of, and incentives (recompense) for, emergency services volunteers and/or their employers.

The importance of valuing emergency services volunteers by publicly recognising their contributions was highlighted by Gledhill (2001) at the 2001 *Valuing Volunteers Conference* in Canberra. However, ensuing discussion failed to distinguish between recognition in the form of financial rewards or recompense, and other forms of recognition not involving financial benefit. In the interests of clarity it is recommended that a clear distinction be made between **recognition** schemes, which involve some form of public acknowledgement of the contribution of volunteers in ways *other than* providing financial benefits, and **incentive** schemes, which involve some form of financial recompense for volunteers.

Time did not permit an examination of **volunteer recognition schemes** across the broad spectrum of volunteer-based emergency services agencies. McLennan and Bertoldi (2005) compared Australia's volunteer fire agencies' volunteer recognition schemes. All Australian rural fire services have recognition schemes, mostly in the form of long service awards, for their volunteers. However, there are considerable differences among the eight agencies in: (a) the number of recognition opportunities available, (b) the variety of awards available, and (c) the minimum length of service required to qualify for an award. McLennan and Bertoldi recommended that fire services review their recognition and award systems so as to maximise the effectiveness of these schemes in contributing to volunteer commitment and retention. However, as far as is known, no such action has been taken to date. There is no evidence that agency recognition schemes are viewed by volunteers as a pressing issue impacting on their satisfaction or retention, but nor has the issue been specifically canvassed with volunteers or volunteer Associations. In 2005, the recognition schemes administered by the SA Country Fire Service and the Tasmania Fire Service were arguably more comprehensive than those of other agencies.

As far as could be ascertained, there are **no** incentive schemes for emergency services volunteers in Australia. The closest approximation is a discount card service available to CFA and SES volunteers in Victoria (*Emergency Memberlink*). Recently, Victorian CFA and SES volunteers have been granted free access passes to Victorian National Parks.

New Zealand Fire Service has an incentive scheme to compensate volunteers for loss of income incurred while attending training. Volunteers who earn an income (not pensioners, the

unemployed, nor retirees) may claim compensation for loss of income incurred while attending required Fire Service sponsored training at an hourly or daily rate equal to the New Zealand average weekly earnings figure (Vincent Arbuckle, personal communication, 2007).

In the USA a variety of emergency service volunteer incentive schemes are in operation, including state tax exemptions, reimbursements, or benefits; and superannuation contributions. Most recently (16/06/2008) the US State of Pennsylvania Senate is considering four schemes involving volunteer firefighters and emergency medical volunteers:

- Senate Bill 1314: to establish a \$500 State personal tax credit for volunteers.
- Senate Bill 1315: to establish an undergraduate tuition reimbursement program for volunteers involving a 50 percent reimbursement for each course credit.
- Senate Bill 1316: to establish a \$1,000 tax credit against the personal tax bill of an employer of emergency services (a) volunteer(s) up to a maximum of \$5,000.
- Senate Bill 1169: to establish a tax credit of up to \$400 against a volunteer's liability under the Local Tax Enabling Act.

In Australia, a range of possible incentive (exemptions/reimbursement/compensation) schemes have been proposed in various contexts (e.g., the *Valuing Volunteers Conference*, 2001), including:

- Income tax exemptions/benefits.
- Relief from local government emergency services property tax levies.
- Compensation for employers whose employees take time off work to attend emergency incidents and/or training. In NSW, Queensland, and Victoria employers whose staff volunteer for emergency services organisations such as SES and fire services are exempt from paying payroll tax for the hours staff spend away from work undertaking emergency response activities.

New Zealand Fire service has developed a formal scheme so employers of fire brigade volunteers may use this fact as a component of advertising their goods and services (Heather Clark, personal communication, 2007).

So far, there appears to have been only limited systematic endeavours to examine (a) the level of need for some form of incentive (as reimbursement or compensation) for volunteers; or (b) the relative merits of the various options proposed. This is in spite of recommendations from several high-level inquiries (e.g., Ellis, Kanowski & Whelan, 2004; Nairn, 2003).

4.4 Gender and emergency services volunteering.

Beatson and McLennan (2005) reviewed reports concerning gender issues in emergency services (both paid, and volunteer based). They concluded that there was ample evidence that women were under-represented in Australian volunteer-based fire services and that they faced significant barriers to volunteering and were likely to experience both passive and active discrimination. Two surveys of women volunteer firefighters (SA CFS, ACT RFS) were conducted by McLennan and Birch (2007d,e).

McLennan, Birch, Beatson, and Cowlshaw (2007a) reviewed research conducted by the Bushfire CRC Volunteerism Project team relating to recruitment and retention of women volunteer firefighters. They concluded:

- Women are deterred from volunteering because: (a) they fear not being welcomed in a male environment; (b) they believe that they are not suited to firefighting; and (c) they have child-care responsibilities.
- There are few meaningful differences between women and men in motivations to become volunteer firefighters.
- Women volunteers overwhelmingly reported feeling welcomed and accepted, however a significant number reported experiences of discrimination and harassment. A greater number reported difficulties with the fit of protective clothing and the usability of equipment.
- While some of the problems described are relatively intractable, others could be addressed quickly and effectively, albeit at some financial cost.

McLennan, Birch, Beatson and Cowlshaw (2007b) proposed that hitherto male dominated senior managements of volunteer fire services had failed to appreciate the reality of the barriers experienced by many women volunteer firefighters because of a lack of women in senior roles within fire services.

There does not appear to be evidence of serious gender imbalance or discrimination in other volunteer-based emergency services, although the senior managers of most emergency response organisations are males.

4.5 Emergency services volunteers from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds.

4.5.1 Enhancing diversity

While there has been discussion about the desirability of greater diversity among the volunteer memberships of emergency services, there has been very little research investigation of relevant issues.

The then Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs and the NSW RFS commissioned Eureka Strategy Research to carry out research so as to inform a possible pilot project to encourage more people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds (including Indigenous Australians) to volunteer with the NSW RFS (Eureka Strategy Research, 1998). The researchers conducted a total of 11 focus groups: two with current RFS volunteers, five with non-volunteers from a non-English speaking background (NESB), two with indigenous non-volunteers, and two with non-English speaking background and Indigenous community leaders. Current RFS volunteers described only minor barriers to involvement by NESB people, the major one being proficiency in English for safety reasons. Significant barriers were described for Indigenous people: some volunteers saw Indigenous people generally as lacking respect for property, likely to hinder firefighting efforts, and likely to light fires deliberately. However, the focus group volunteers said they would welcome Indigenous volunteers who demonstrated a commitment to the RFS.

As part of their survey of NSW RFS volunteers, Birch and McLennan (2007) included a question about the perceived importance of a diverse volunteer membership. Respondents were given a list of 16 RFS principles or values and asked to rate their importance on a scale: "Very Important"; "Somewhat Important"; or "Not Important". Responses are shown below, sorted in descending order of the number of respondents rating each item as "Very Important". Percentages have been calculated based on the total valid count of responses for each value (each row of the table) excluding "Not Stated".

Values related to safety, efficacy and group cohesion rated high, whilst values relating to the broader community such as compassion, accountability, the environment, and diversity of membership rated lower. Diversity of membership is notable for not only for rating lowest but also for being rated “Not Important” by twice as many respondents as the next lowest item. *There appears to be a degree of rejection of diversity in membership amongst the volunteer ranks which may limit the Service’s ability to attract or retain recruits from culturally diverse backgrounds.*

Importance of RFS values

	Very Important		Somewhat Important		Not Important		Not Stated
	Count	Valid Percent	Count	Valid Percent	Count	Valid Percent	Count
Safety	1316	92.0	101	7.1	14	1.0	158
Teamwork	1308	91.0	109	7.6	20	1.4	152
Professionalism (in what we do)	1270	88.4	160	10.4	16	1.1	153
Honesty, integrity and trust	1251	87.4	154	10.8	26	1.8	158
Our people	1234	86.1	164	11.4	36	2.5	155
Respect	1212	84.8	179	12.5	39	2.7	159
Community	1204	84.1	210	14.7	18	1.3	157
Communication	1170	81.6	223	15.6	41	2.9	155
Co operation	1135	79.7	252	17.7	37	2.6	165
Volunteer Ethos	1088	76.2	303	21.1	36	2.5	162
Continuous improvement	1078	75.4	315	22.0	36	2.5	160
Compassion	1061	74.8	304	21.4	53	3.7	171
Accountability	1049	73.1	331	23.1	55	3.8	154
Quality customer service	1027	71.7	351	24.5	54	3.8	157
The environment	822	57.4	545	38.0	66	4.6	156
Diversity (in membership)	777	54.1	509	35.5	149	10.4	154

4.5.2 Indigenous volunteering

Birch (2008) undertook a review of material available relating to emergency services volunteering by Indigenous Australians in preparation for a pilot study involving NSW RFS aimed at strengthening links between local brigades and Indigenous members of local communities. Birch noted that the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2007) estimated that there are about 500,000 Australians who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. In numerous rural and remote communities Aboriginal people represent a significant proportion of the population, and in some communities the populations are almost entirely Indigenous. Anecdotally, Indigenous people are under-represented among the ranks of local volunteer emergency services units. However, the records management systems of volunteer-based emergency services agencies generally do not record how many of their volunteers identify as Indigenous Australians.

Research concerning recruiting Indigenous Australians into the volunteer emergency services is almost non-existent. For example, Emergency Management Australia (EMA) recently published a report into the requirements for successfully engaging Indigenous communities so as to improve emergency services in their communities (EMA, 2007). The report listed just five references in the bibliography, each of which was very broadly pitched at either general emergency management arrangements or at Indigenous issues, but none did both.

There are anecdotal accounts of failed attempts to establish volunteer emergency services in remote Aboriginal communities; and reports of racial discrimination or conflict surrounding volunteer emergency services units in mixed communities. However, there is little reliable evidence detailing these reported problems or their possible causes.

Participation in general volunteerism by Indigenous Australians

Estimates of the extent to which Indigenous Australians are currently involved in voluntary work vary according to the research methodology and due to alternative cultural interpretations of the term “voluntary work”. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (2007) reported that, based on 2006 Census results, 13 percent of the 218,931 respondents aged 15+, who identified as Indigenous Australians, reported having undertaken voluntary work for an organisation over the previous 12 months.

Kerr, Savelsberg, Sparrow, and Tedmanson (2001) conducted one of the few pieces of formal research into general volunteering by Indigenous Australians. They assert that, in fact, Aboriginal people volunteer at higher rates than do non-Indigenous Australians. They pointed out that Aboriginal people have no word equivalent to “volunteer” in the Western sense, but that there are words for reciprocity and community obligation. They maintain that the “standard definitions and measures of what constitutes volunteer activity (such as those used by ABS) are arguably culturally-biased and do not adequately account for the freely-given time and effort” (p.9) contributed by Aboriginal people within their communities.

Kerr et al. (2001) noted that Indigenous volunteers are inhibited from participation in mainstream organised volunteering through lack of culturally/linguistically appropriate information or training resources; racism; and, a perception of being excluded from recognition in the wider community. They concluded that further research is required to identify the specific nature of Indigenous volunteering practice in rural and remote communities. None of the volunteers interviewed for Kerr et al.’s study listed emergency services as an area of their voluntary work.

Recruitment of Indigenous emergency services volunteers

The State Emergency Service in north western NSW reports trialling a program to encourage Indigenous people to undertake SES training and then join SES units to assist with emergency response (SES, 2007). It is vital that apparently successful pioneering projects of this kind are subject to independent evaluation and review in order to capture the lessons learned for broader application.

Volunteering Australia (2007) has published a brochure designed to assist volunteer organisations to involve Indigenous Australians in volunteering. It provides basic cultural awareness principles and advice for recruiting Indigenous Australians into voluntary work.

The Queensland Department of Emergency Services makes use of State and Federal government grants to assist Indigenous Australians who are interested in joining the emergency services with bridging training to reach the requisite levels of education (Queensland Government, 2008). It has established an Indigenous Engagement Unit in Cairns to ensure consultation and negotiation with relevant government and non-government bodies, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. In partnership with related agencies, the unit contributes to the development and implementation of community plans to deal with emergency situations (NAILSMA, 2008). The experiences of the Indigenous Engagement Unit may provide a valuable knowledge base of issues and strategies for more widespread recruitment of Indigenous Australians into emergency services, both volunteer and salaried.

Conclusion

There is growing awareness of a need to recruit Indigenous Australians into volunteer emergency services. There are reasons to expect challenges arising from major cultural differences, and from the legacy of poor treatment of Indigenous Australians since white settlement. To date there is almost no research into the problems likely to be encountered in this area, let alone any possible solutions. If attempts to foster Indigenous engagement in volunteer emergency services in small regional communities fail, resulting in animosity, this may limit options for further attempts in the near future. It is critical that the recruitment of Indigenous Australians as emergency services volunteers is carried out with appropriate levels of cultural understanding and monitored to ensure that problems are identified and addressed early, and lessons are learned for the future.

4.6 Volunteer/career staff relations.

Relationships between volunteers and career (or paid) staff in volunteer organisations generally has been the subject of much discussion and some research. Netting, Nelson, Borders, and Huber (2004) published a review which concluded, *inter alia*, that such relations were frequently problematic. There is much advice on Australian websites on how paid staff should go about managing volunteers. However, nothing could be located which was specifically concerned with volunteer/career staff relations in emergency services organisations.

In their survey of NSW RFS volunteers, Birch and McLennan (2007) asked respondents: “What is the quality of the relationship you or your brigade have with the RFS staff?” They were given a list of four items and asked to score them on a scale from “Strongly Agree”, “Somewhat Agree”, “Don’t Know”, “Somewhat Disagree” or “Strongly Disagree”. Whilst the majority of respondents reported favourably about their relations with RFS staff, 20-40% of respondents reported **unfavourably** across the four items.

RFS staff members ensure that resources are distributed fairly between brigades

	Count	Valid Percent
Valid Strongly Agree	336	22.5
Somewhat Agree	601	40.3
Don't Know	196	13.1
Somewhat Disagree	224	15.0
Strongly Disagree	134	9.0
Total	1491	100.0
Not Stated	98	
Total	1589	

RFS staff members always treat volunteers with respect

		Count	Valid Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	437	29.3
	Somewhat Agree	558	37.4
	Don't Know	61	4.1
	Somewhat Disagree	285	19.1
	Strongly Disagree	151	10.1
	Total	1492	100.0
Not Stated		97	
Total		1589	

RFS staff members consult my brigade before making major decisions that affect it

		Count	Valid Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	261	17.6
	Somewhat Agree	434	29.2
	Don't Know	238	16.0
	Somewhat Disagree	326	21.9
	Strongly Disagree	228	15.3
	Total	1487	100.0
Not Stated		102	
Total		1589	

RFS staff members have a helpful approach

		Count	Valid Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	421	28.3
	Somewhat Agree	626	42.1
	Don't Know	119	8.0
	Somewhat Disagree	216	14.5
	Strongly Disagree	104	7.0
	Total	1486	100.0
Not Stated		103	
Total		1589	

The findings, though limited to a single fire service agency, suggest that volunteer/career staff relations in emergency response agencies is a potentially problematic issue which warrants more extensive investigation.

4.7 Emergency services volunteering and work.

Birch and McLennan (2006b) reported a mail survey of employers across New South Wales undertaken in mid 2006. The survey was a collaborative endeavour involving the Bushfire CRC Volunteerism Project team at La Trobe University and the New South Wales Rural Fire Service (RFS). In total, 384 employers responded to the survey. The aim was to find out the

views employers had about employees volunteering with RFS, and the experiences of employers who had done so.

Attitude to Employees Volunteering with RFS

Only a small minority of respondents were opposed to their employees volunteering with RFS:

- About 6% of respondents either prohibit or discourage their employees from volunteering with RFS *during* working hours, whilst about 0.5% prohibit or discourage volunteering with RFS *outside* working hours.
- About 35% of respondents have no particular view either for or against employees volunteering with RFS;
- About 30% of respondents tolerate or encourage their employees volunteering with RFS during working hours and about 38% tolerate or encourage volunteering outside working hours;
- About 20% of respondents allow their employees to take paid leave to volunteer with RFS during working hours.

Asking job applicants if the volunteer

Only about 8% of employers reported asking applicants during job interviews whether they are 'members of an emergency service'. Private sector employers were about twice as likely to ask as public or not-for-profit sector employers. This finding suggests that most employers are not *concerned* about having employees who are RFS volunteers. It could be inferred that there is unlikely to be much discrimination against job applicants because they are RFS volunteers. At the same time it also suggests that employers are not sufficiently impressed by any potential benefits of engaging personnel who volunteer with the emergency services to actively seek them out via the job interview process.

Policy about employees volunteering

Only about 3% of employers have any sort of policy about engaging staff who volunteer with RFS and only about 1% has a formal written policy. Again, this suggests that engaging personnel who volunteer with RFS is not a major issue for employers, either in a negative or a positive sense.

Time off work for volunteering

Respondents were generally fairly generous with the amount of time they were prepared to release employees to volunteer with RFS during working hours. Only about 11% were not prepared to release their employees at all. About 35% were prepared to release employees for times ranging up to 100 hours per year, with a median of 25.5 hours per year. A further 45% of respondents were prepared to release employees for 'as much time as genuinely needed'. No respondents were prepared to release employees for more than 100 hours per year.

Leave provisions

Relatively few respondents (11%) had leave provisions in place to allow employees to volunteer with RFS. Predictably, larger employees were considerably more likely to have leave provisions in place than were small to medium employers. About 14% of respondents indicated that their organisation would benefit from help in drafting leave provisions for volunteers.

Knowledge of anti-dismissal legislation

In recent years, state and federal governments have each passed anti-dismissal legislation to provide some level of protection from dismissal for employees for taking time off to volunteer

with the emergency services. About 35% of respondents reported being aware of such legislation.

Negative experiences

Only about 5% of respondents reported any negative experiences involving employees volunteering with RFS. Amongst these, employers' experiences included the disruptiveness of employees taking leave suddenly, unexpectedly, frequently or for lengthy periods, and the financial impact on small businesses. Only a very small minority of negative experiences related to perceived abuse by employees of the permission to be released. It is noteworthy that 20% of respondents had *concerns* about employees, but very few could report instances of negative experiences to substantiate their concerns.

Concerns

- 75% of respondents reported that they had *no* concerns about employees volunteering with RFS.
- Respondents were invited to provide further information about any concerns they might have and about 20% did so. Content analysis was carried out to identify the main aspects of concern expressed by respondents. Three dimensions were evident from the analysis; the amount of volunteering, the nature of the negative impact volunteering might have on the employer, and the characteristics of the employers' organisations that make it difficult for them to support employees volunteering.
 - With regard to the amount of volunteering, about 45% of those respondents that described concerns were apprehensive that volunteering should not interfere *too much* with work, and about 25% believed that volunteering should not interfere *at all* with work.
 - With regard to the negative impacts of volunteering on the employer, respondents perceived the following issues as the concerns of most importance:
 - the financial burden on the organisation (17% of those describing concerns);
 - the difficulty of replacing specialised staff (15%);
 - the extra burden on management of organising around employee absences (14%);
 - the reduced quality of service (13%), and
 - the extra burden imposed on the remaining staff (12%).
 - With regard to the characteristics or particular circumstances of employers, that respondents believed made them less able to accommodate employees volunteering with RFS, the following characteristics were mentioned most often:
 - small employers with a bare minimum work force that do not have spare capacity to release employees to volunteer (46% of those describing concerns);
 - employers subject to demanding clients, strict deadlines or schedules, or where client contact is by appointment (24%);
 - employers that have specialised, indispensable or highly interdependent personnel who they cannot spare employees for volunteering with RFS (19%);
 - employers that have employees who cannot be released because they have special obligations of care to consumers who are vulnerable (e.g. children, the elderly or the sick) (11%).

Benefits of having employees who volunteer

- Respondents assigned considerable importance to the potential benefits that are commonly claimed for employers that employ staff who volunteer. The claimed benefits that

respondents regarded as most important were ‘that employees who volunteer have higher job satisfaction’ (67%), ‘retention rates’ (65%) ‘and health and fitness’ (65%). Respondents regarded claims that ‘potential employees are attracted to employers who support employees volunteering with RFS’ as less important (47%). Claims that ‘investors feel good about investing in organisations known to support RFS volunteering’ rated comparatively poorly (37%). However, even the lowest rated benefit that ‘politicians win approval from attracting organisations known to support RFS volunteering to their areas’ was endorsed by 27% of respondents.

- Respondents assigned more importance to the training and skills employees might acquire through volunteering with RFS. Approximately 85% of respondents rated as important the suggestion that employees might acquire better teamwork, initiative, decision-making, leadership skills and familiarity with working according to procedures. The lowest ranking skills were those relating more directly to emergency services activities such as driving skills and firefighting skills, but these were still rated as important by about 60% of respondents.

Recognition for allowing employees to volunteer

Respondents also placed considerable importance in recognition from various segments of the community for supporting employees who volunteer with RFS. About 73% of respondents rated recognition from the general public as important, while 65% valued recognition from customers or potential customers. About 60% of respondents indicated that recognition within their organisation amongst their own employees was important. About 50% of respondents regarded formal recognition by the RFS as important. Recognition from related organisations such as industry partners, trade unions or professional associations was regarded as important by about 40% of respondents.

As part of the CFA New Members Tracking Project, McLennan and Birch (2006) asked new volunteers about how their employment impacted on their volunteering. Responses are tabulated below.

Have told employer about joining CFA	Men	Women
False	12%	9%
True	53%	52%
Not applicable	35%	39%
Have talked with employer about time off to attend call outs	Men	Women
False	15%	20%
True	31%	23%
Not applicable	53%	58%
Have asked employer about time off, no agreement	Men	Women
False	26%	16%
True	5%	7%
Not applicable	69%	78%

Not permitted to take any time off to attend call outs	Men	Women
False	29%	22%
True	2%	1%
Not applicable	69%	78%
Allowed to take time off, but fear to do so	Men	Women
False	29%	22%
True	2%	1%
Not applicable	69%	78%
Allowed to take time off for short periods in major emergencies only	Men	Women
False	26%	21%
True	5%	2%
Not applicable	69%	78%
Allowed to take whole days off for major emergencies only	Men	Women
False	22%	15%
True	9%	7%
Not applicable	69%	78%
Allowed to take time off for any CFA callout	Men	Women
False	18%	12%
True	14%	11%
Not applicable	69%	78%

For the majority of CFA volunteers, both men (two thirds) and women (three quarters), being permitted to take time to attend incidents was not an issue—they were self employed, worked on a family property, or engaged in home duties. For the remainder of the volunteers (who were employees), about half reported that their employer allowed them to take time off freely to attend CFA incidents, while about 6% reported that they were not permitted to take any time off work to respond to emergencies.

The recently released Australian Government (2008) *National Employment Standards* discussion paper proposes that emergency services volunteers should receive community service leave to attend emergency incidents, travel to emergency incidents, and recover from attending emergency incidents.

4.8 Emergency services volunteering and the families of volunteers.

It is known in general terms that family needs are (a) a barrier to emergency services volunteering; and (b) a reason for volunteer resignations. However, little is understood with certainty about the impacts of emergency services volunteering on the families of volunteers, or how volunteer-based agencies could more effectively support and assist families of their volunteers.

Cowlshaw, Evans, and McLennan (2008) published a review of the sparse literature on the impacts of emergency services volunteering on families of volunteers. They concluded that the limited evidence clearly indicated that family issues play a role in many volunteer resignations and could contribute to a decline in volunteer numbers. However, agencies have little evidence to inform strategies for supporting the families of their volunteers. The review summarised the small amount of research available on rural families in general, and volunteer firefighter families in particular. It described a potentially useful model of Work-Family Conflict which suggests that time- and strain-based pressures may be important sources of difficulty for spouses and partners balancing volunteer firefighter and family roles.

Cowlshaw, McLennan, and Evans (2008) reported an investigation involving exploratory interviews with 20 managers of CFA volunteer firefighters. The interviews generated themes of potential conflicts between volunteer firefighting and family life. In particular, managers commented that many of their volunteers experience difficulty prioritising family and brigade needs. They described how this failure to balance family and brigade demands was associated with several specific conflict areas, including: time away from family; leaving family members with additional household and business responsibilities; and unpredictable interruptions to family activities. Other sources of conflict were associated with (a) volunteers' changes in mood and behaviour following stressful incidents, (b) family experiences of anxiety, and (c) financial pressures on families. Initial recommendations from this study are that agencies direct resources towards providing better information to volunteers and their families about working within the emergency services. However, changes in the underlying work-family culture (e.g., family supportiveness) of Australian volunteer emergency service agencies appear to be a necessary for effecting substantial reductions in work-family conflict.

One study of emergency services volunteers and their partners is currently in progress. Responses have been received from about 100 couples, the data are currently being analysed (Sean Cowlshaw, personal communication, 2008).

4.9 Risks for emergency services volunteers.

As a component of the CFA New Members Tracking Project, McLennan and Birch (2007b) asked volunteers who had been members for 12 months (a) how concerned they were about each of six potential risks facing them as CFA volunteers, and (b) their level of knowledge about how CFA mitigated these risks. The following table indicates that: (i) a significant proportion of volunteers are concerned about risks, and (ii) there is a generally low level of knowledge about agency protections mitigating these risks.

Risks associated with being a CFA volunteer; and associated knowledge of how CFA mitigates these risks: percentages (totals may not sum to 100 because of rounding errors).

	Yes	KNOWLEDGE?		Total%
		No	Unsure	
<i>Risk of being sued</i>				
Not at all concerned	13	16	14	42
Somewhat concerned	9	20	12	41
Very concerned	2	8	7	17
Total%	24	43	33	

	Yes	KNOWLEDGE?		Total%
		No	Unsure	
<i>Risk of injury or death</i>				
Not at all concerned	21	6	7	34
Somewhat concerned	29	10	13	52
Very concerned	6	4	4	15
Total%	56	20	25	

	Yes	KNOWLEDGE?		Total%
		No	Unsure	
<i>Loss of income due to injury</i>				
Not at all concerned	7	25	21	52
Somewhat concerned	6	12	16	34
Very concerned	1	9	4	14
Total%	14	46	41	

	Yes	KNOWLEDGE?		Total%
		No	Unsure	
<i>Risk of distress to family</i>				
Not at all concerned	12	14	14	40
Somewhat concerned	16	22	13	51
Very concerned	1	6	3	10
Total%	28	41	31	

	Yes	KNOWLEDGE?		Total%
		No	Unsure	
<i>Risk of psychological trauma-self</i>				
Not at all concerned	22	10	6	37
Somewhat concerned	29	11	14	54
Very concerned	4	2	3	9
Total%	55	22	23	
<i>Risk of being sacked</i>				
Not at all concerned	10	35	35	80
Somewhat concerned	2	9	5	16
Very concerned	0	3	1	4
Total%	12	47	42	

It appears that a significant proportion of new CFA volunteers are concerned about risks associated with their volunteering. A high proportion of new volunteers do not know about the procedures in place to minimise these risks.

Methodology

As noted in the Introduction, this review did not involve the collection of new research data; it involved locating and compiling information generated by previous research studies and available in readily accessible data bases. The primary data base used was the Bushfire CRC Volunteerism Project *EndNote* data base, maintained and regularly updated since it was first established in 2004. The Emergency Management Australia (EMA) Library data base was searched. The Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaCSIA) web site was searched. Web sites of AEMVF participant agencies were visited and searched. Past issues of the *Australian Journal on Volunteering*, the *Australian Journal of Emergency Management*, and the *Third Sector Review* were searched. General internet searches were conducted for material relating to volunteering and Australian and New Zealand emergency services organisations—both emergency response agencies and disaster relief and recovery organisations.

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Appendix A

Volunteer-Based Emergency Services Organisations: Volunteer Numbers

Volunteer Fire Services

WA - FESA homepage	Bush Fire Service	24,809	http://www.fesa.wa.gov.au/internet/default.aspx?MenuID=8
NSW - Annual report	Rural Fire Service	71,441	http://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/file_system/attachments/State/Attachment_20080124_A9FFAD5B.pdf
SA - CFS homepage	Country Fire service	15,500	http://www.cfs.org.au/about/pdf/CFS%20Strategic%20Directions%20-%202007-09.pdf
VIC - Annual Report	CFA	59,509 Operational: 35,144;	http://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/about/documents/cfa_annual_report_2007.pdf
QLD - Homepage	QFRS- Rural Operations	44,134	http://www.fire.qld.gov.au/about/statistics.asp
NT - Homepage	Fire & Rescue Service	250	http://www.pfes.nt.gov.au/index.cfm?fuseaction=page&p=272&m=37
ACT - homepage	Rural Fire Service	450	http://www.esa.act.gov.au/ESAWebsite/content_rfs/volunteering/volunteers.html
TAS - Homepage	Tasmania Fire Service	4,800	http://www.fire.tas.gov.au/mysite/Show?pageId=colVolunteer

State Emergency Services

WA - FESA homepage	SES	1,854	http://www.fesa.wa.gov.au/internet/default.aspx?MenuID=8
NSW – SES Homepage	SES	10,000	http://www.ses.nsw.gov.au/about/
SA – SES Homepage	SES	18,000	http://www.ses.sa.gov.au/volunteers/volunteers.htm
VIC – SES Homepage	SES	5,500 Operational: 3,750	http://www.ses.vic.gov.au/CA256AEA002F0EC7/page/Who+We+Are+Volunteers?OpenDocument&1=10-Who+We+Are~&2=10-Volunteers~&3=~
QLD – SES Homepage	SES	8,000	www.emergency.qld.gov.au/ses/
NT – SES Homepage	SES	460	http://www.pfes.nt.gov.au/index.cfm?fuseaction=page&p=374&m=43
ACT – SES Homepage	SES	200	http://www.esa.act.gov.au/ESAWebsite/content_ses/volunteering/volunteering.html
TAS – SES Homepage	SES	500	http://www.ses.tas.gov.au/what_is_ses/

Volunteer Coast Guard/Coastal Patrol/Marine Rescue

WA – FESA Homepage	Marine Rescue	1,074	http://www.fesa.wa.gov.au/internet/default.aspx?MenuID=8
QLD, SA, NSW, VIC, TAS-AVCG Homepage	Aust Vol Coast Guard	9,000 Vic. 600	http://www.coastguard.com.au/membership.html

Life Saving

WA – SLS Homepage	Surf lifesaving	1,800	http://www.mybeach.com.au/node/126
NSW SLS - Phone	Surf lifesaving - Senior	15,000	Phone no. information on website, spoke with Peter James
NSW SLS - Phone	Surf life saving - Junior	25,000	Phone no. information on website, spoke with Peter James
SA – SLS Homepage	Surf lifesaving	5,500	http://www.surfrescue.com.au/content.asp?p=3
VIC – LSV Phone	Lifesaving Victoria	20,000 Operational: 5,709	Phone: spoke to Roshada, number on website
QLD - Homepage	Surf lifesaving	28,487	http://public.lifesaving.com.au/index.cfm?objectid=94E1B0AD-C298-99DD-C893AF941FFEDBE2
NT - Homepage	Surf lifesaving	460	http://www.pfes.nt.gov.au/index.cfm?fuseaction=page&p=374&m=43
ACT - Homepage	Lifesaving	1,000	http://www.lifesavingnt.com.au/index.htm
TAS - Phone	Surf lifesaving - Senior	1,472	spoke to Megan, number on website
TAS - Phone	Surf life saving - Junior	1,102	spoke to Megan, number on website
Surf Life Saving Australia	Operational members who patrol beaches (National Figure)	37,000	

Volunteer Rescue

WA – FESA Homepage	Fire and Rescue	1,781	http://www.fesa.wa.gov.au/internet/default.aspx?MenuID=8
NSW – VRA Homepage	NSW Volunteer Rescue Assoc	3,109	http://www.rescue.org.au/
WA – FESA Homepage	Volunteer Emergency	472	http://www.fesa.wa.gov.au/internet/default.aspx?MenuID=8

Volunteer Ambulance Services

WA -			?
NSW – Annual Report	NSW Ambulance service	90	http://www.ambulance.nsw.gov.au/docs/ar2007.pdf
SA – Annual Report	SA ambulance service	1,619	http://www.saambulance.com.au/publicweb/pdf/SAAS%20Annual%20Report%202006-07.pdf
VIC		428	OESC (2008)
QLD - Homepage	Queensland ambulance service	1,500	http://www.ambulance.qld.gov.au/about/default.asp
NT			?
ACT			?
TAS - Homepage	Tasmania ambulance service	500	http://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/services/view.php?id=412

Disaster Relief and Recovery

St John Ambulance	Nationally	12,631	www.stjohn.org.au
Red Cross	Community and Emergency Services Division	10,000	www.redcross.org.au/media/AnnualReport
St Vincent De Paul	Nationally	Approximately 20,000, no information on numbers involved with disaster relief	
Salvation Army	?	?	
ANGLICARE	?	?	
ADRA	?	?	

Appendix B

NEW RESEARCH FROM THE BUSHFIRE COOPERATIVE RESEARCH CENTRE.



FIRE NOTE

ISSUE 10 JANUARY 2007

RECRUITING YOUNGER FIRE SERVICE VOLUNTEERS

An example of 'research adoption' of Bushfire CRC research outcomes by an end user agency.

Australia's population is ageing. Consistent with this trend, the volunteer memberships of Australia's volunteer-based rural fire services are also ageing. In response to this trend, CFA initiated the New Volunteer Members Tracking Project in collaboration with the Bushfire CRC.

A preliminary survey of new volunteers conducted after six months in the CFA found that self-oriented motives (career advancement, new skills, new friends, new challenges) were more salient for younger volunteers (<35 years) compared with older volunteers. These findings informed CFA's October 2006 recruitment campaign. Those who responded were younger overall than those who joined in the period April-September 2005. It was also found that younger enquirers made much greater use of CFA's web site and on-line download facilities, compared with older enquirers.

BACKGROUND

Australia's annual birth rates have declined over the past three decades. This has resulted in an ageing population. In 1970/71, 31 per cent of the population was aged 15 years or younger. By

2002/3 the corresponding figure had declined to 22 per cent. Over the same period the percentage of the Australian population aged 65-plus grew from 8 per cent to 13 per cent. It is predicted that the percentage of the population aged 65-plus will climb to about 25 per cent by 2040, while growth in the traditional workforce age range (18-60 years) will slow to almost zero (McLennan & Birch, 2005).

Australia's volunteer-based rural fire services are not insulated from these demographic changes. Almost all agencies report concerns that the age of their volunteer membership is rising. Over the period 2001-2006 the median age of CFA's volunteer membership rose from 40 years to 46 years (Figure 1). This is a potentially serious development for fire agencies since operational fire fighting can be a very physically demanding activity.

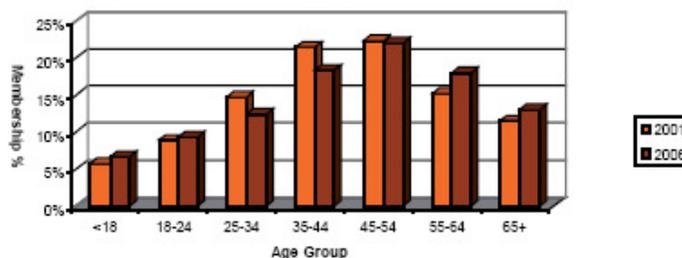
Clearly, volunteer-based fire agencies would like to halt and reverse the ageing of their volunteer memberships by recruiting and retaining greater numbers of younger (<35 years) volunteers. However, other social factors, including changes in the nature of work in Australia, make this difficult.



ACTIONS AGENCIES CAN TAKE TO TARGET YOUNGER VOLUNTEERS:

- Emphasise the *what's in it for me?* aspects—career enhancement, new skills, new friends, personal development.
- But NOT at the expense of community safety and community contribution aspects.
- And make sure your web page dealing with volunteer recruitment is state-of-the-art!

Figure 1: CFA volunteer age profiles 2001 and 2006



BUSHFIRE CRC RESEARCH MAKING A DIFFERENCE

As part of the planning process for CFA's October 2006 volunteer recruiting campaign, the web page providing information on becoming a CFA volunteer was upgraded and a downloadable enquiry form made available, which could be emailed or faxed to CFA. In addition, the finding that younger volunteers were more likely to be motivated by Self-oriented issues compared with older volunteers was noted and incorporated in the previously successful *Does the hat fit?* volunteer recruitment strategy. A key aspect of the marketing component was the preparation of five different newspaper advertisements, each to run once over five weeks in local and state-wide newspapers. These different advertisements featured a mix of self-oriented, community safety oriented, and community contribution oriented motivational messages—see example on Page 4.

At the conclusion of the campaign, a total of 320 enquiries had been received by CFA. As well as requiring contact details, the enquiry form also asked how the enquirer found out that CFA was seeking volunteers. Figure 6 shows the relative importance of each of six possible listed methods of finding out about CFA's need for volunteers. Advertisements in a local newspaper was the most frequently reported prompt to seek more information.

The median age of the enquirers aged 18-plus was 33 years. The median age of those who volunteered during the period April-September 2005 was 40 years. This suggests that the campaign was effective in engaging the attention of younger potential volunteers. Of course, it remains to be seen how many of the enquirers proceed to become volunteer CFA members and what is the age profile of those who do so.

While many factors determine the number of enquiries in response to a state-wide volunteer recruitment campaign, the number of enquires (320) was substantially greater than those received following the October 2004 (69) and October 2005 (137) campaigns.

Figure 6 shows that downloading the on-line enquiry form and emailing or faxing this was the most common means of enquiry (54%), followed by using the 1800 telephone number (40%).

The enquiry form asked enquirers to report their age. This allowed researchers to compare younger and older enquirers on how they made their initial enquiry contact with CFA (Figure 7).

For younger enquirers the most common method was to visit the CFA web site and download the enquiry form (60%). For older enquirers, the preferred method was to phone the 1800 number.

It appears clear that younger potential volunteers do, indeed, have a strong preference for using the web as a source of information about volunteering.

Figure 5: How inquirers found out about volunteering with the CFA?

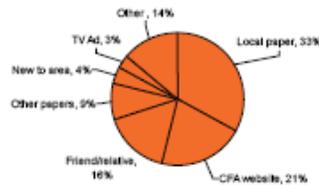


Figure 6: How enquiries were received during the October 2006 campaign

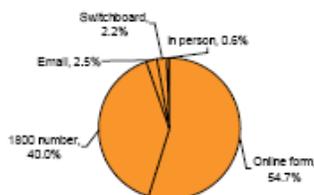
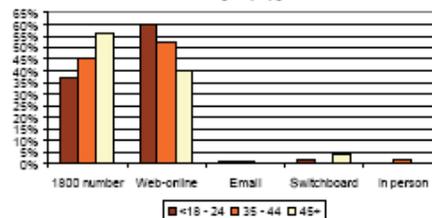


Figure 7: What age group are using what enquiry type



FIRE NOTE

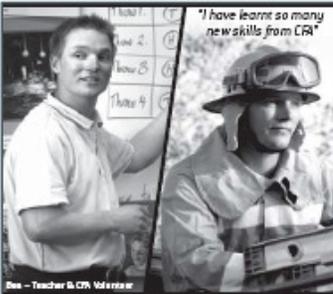
FUTURE DIRECTIONS

CFA will follow-up the enquiries to see who became a volunteer and what factors differentiated between those who did and those who did not.

This report illustrates how an agency can identify potentially relevant information from a Bushfire CRC research project and immediately implement it within an existing system for subsequent evaluation

For more information about the *Does the hat fit?* volunteer recruitment strategy contact Charles King. c.king@cfa.vic.gov.au

For more information about the Bushfire CRC Volunteerism Research Project go to the Bushfire CRC website: www.bushfirecrc.com or contact Jim McLennan: j.mclennan@latrobe.edu.au



Does The Hat Fit?

Become a CFA volunteer today and make a difference in more ways than one. Give back to your community. Benefit from being part of Victoria's largest volunteer team. Meet new people, learn new skills and involve your whole family.

If you think the hat fits, free call
1800 232 636
 for information on how to join.
www.cfa.vic.gov.au

CFA **Victoria**
 The Place to Be

AUTHORS

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There are many different types of volunteer roles at CFA.

By making a contribution to our community you will make new friends, meet new people and be part of Victoria's largest volunteer team.

What are the benefits of volunteering?

Volunteering gives you a chance to:

- meet new people
- learn new skills
- improve your CV
- gain work experience
- help your community
- make a difference

The role will challenge you, and there are many opportunities that help you grow and learn. We offer a range of training and support to help you get started. Find out what roles are available to you.

▲ ABOVE: SCREEN SHOT OF CFA WEBSITE
 ◀ LEFT: CFA RECRUITMENT ADVERTISEMENT.

ABOUT THE BUSHFIRE CRC VOLUNTEERISM PROJECT

The Bushfire CRC's Volunteerism project is working with Australian volunteer based fire agencies on research into factors impacting on the recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters.

The research involves conducting interviews with current volunteers, developing case studies of best practice brigades, and surveys of employers of volunteers. It is tracking the experiences of new volunteer recruits as they move through recruitment, induction, training, and initial deployments to fires and related emergency incidents.

The project is also exploring attitudes of employers of volunteer firefighters, increasing diversity in volunteer workforces – including women volunteers and volunteers from culturally and linguistically diverse background backgrounds and the impacts of volunteering on families of volunteer.

The results are providing fire agencies with valuable information to help strategic planning and policy development concerning volunteers and highlighting new ways to recruit and retain volunteer firefighters.

REFERENCES / FURTHER READING

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Bushfire CRC is a national research centre formed in partnership with fire and land management agencies in 2003 to undertake end-user focused research.

The Centre is part the national Cooperative Research Centres Programme.