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HARNESSING THE CAPACITIES OF SPONTANEOUS VOLUNTEERS

Application and adaptation of the
Queensland model

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Australian Government
Department of Industry,
Innovation and Science

Business
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SPONTANEOUS VOLUNTEERS (SVS)



Source: Volunteering Queensland

- ❑ The new (post 9/11) face of **an old phenomenon**
 - ❑ Convergence, emergent and extending organisation
 - ❑ 'Traditional', digital, self-deployed professionals
- ❑ Is **normal, inevitable** but not reliable
- ❑ **Self-organising, flexible, innovative** and **responsive** to **perceived** local needs
- ❑ But often **unaware of the bigger picture**

Whittaker J, McLennan B, Handmer J (2015) A review of informal volunteerism in emergencies and disasters: Definition, opportunities and challenges. International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction 13:358-368. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijdrr.2015.07.010>

MANAGING SVS

- Also **not new** but **largely reactive** and **off the radar**
 - Not seen as 'real' volunteering
 - Not been planned for
 - Big movements recently
- **Spectrum of approaches internationally**
 - Adapting SVs to EM structures and traditional volunteer management practices, or vice versa (Clark 2016)
- **Appropriate** planning and support can reduce risks and maximise benefits

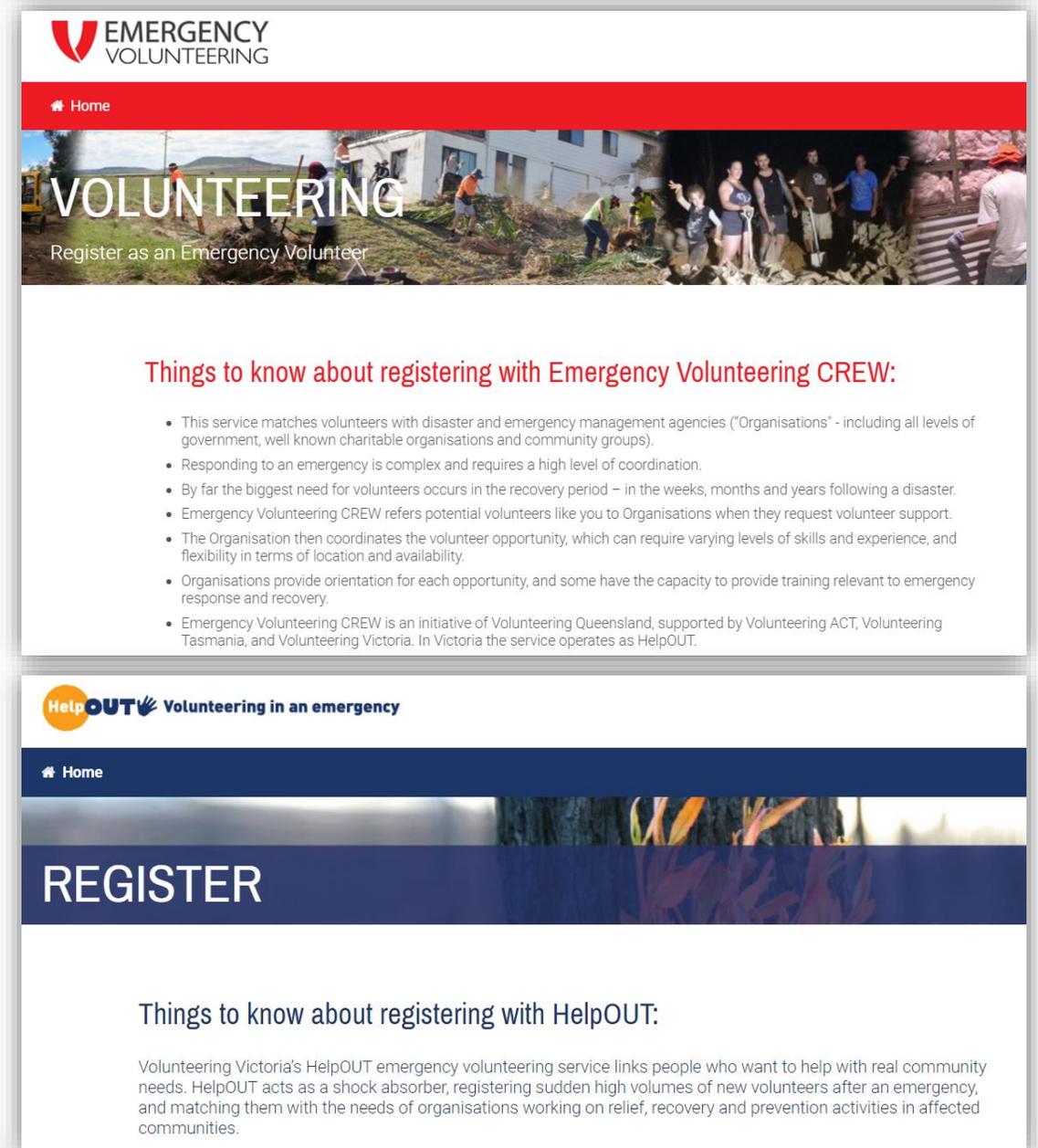


Clark M (2016) Spontaneous volunteers. Community participation in disaster response and recovery. The Conference Board of Canada, Ottawa

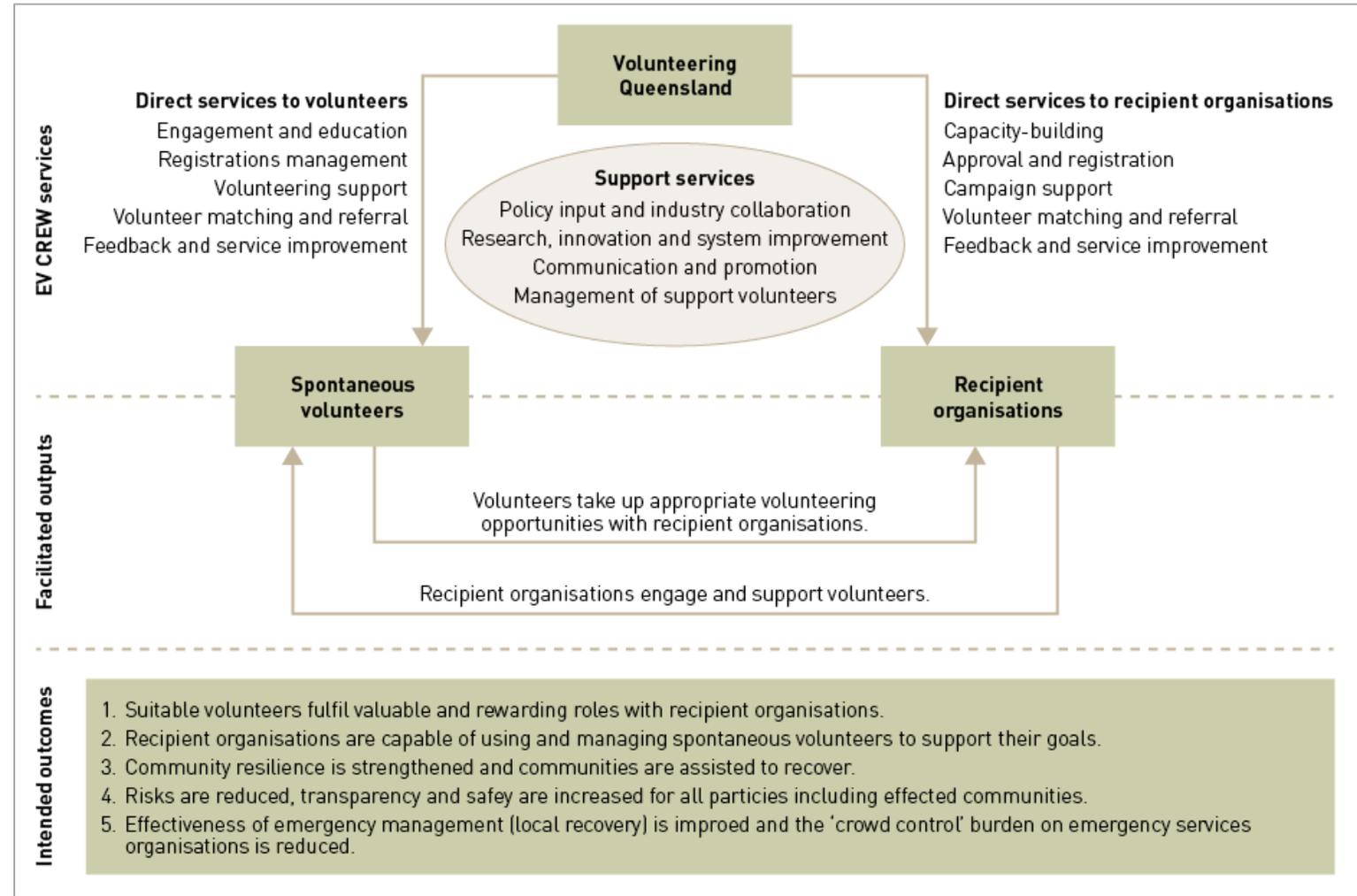
THE CASE STUDY

- ❑ **Exploratory, qualitative study** of experiences with developing, applying and adapting EV CREW
 1. **Development and application** by Volunteering Queensland (McLennan et al 2016)
 2. **Adaptation** by volunteering peak bodies in ACT, Tas, Vic
- ❑ Work-in-progress

Key informants (20ppl, 14 interviews)				
	Qld	ACT	Tas	Vic
Managers	3	2	3	3
Stakeholders <i>with direct experience</i>	6	1	0	2



THE EV-CREW MODEL



McLennan B, Molloy J, Whittaker J, Handmer JW (2016) Centralised coordination of spontaneous emergency volunteers: the EV CREW model. Australian Journal of Emergency Management 31:24-30. <https://ajem.infoservices.com.au/items/AJEM-31-01-07>

THE VOLUNTEERING-COMMUNITY RESILIENCE LINK

**The link is strong
but not well
recognised or
capitalised on in
planning**

“That this is about [...], the identification, supporting [...] of a very local capability to make a very local difference in that more global sense of how long before the knights on white horses are coming riding over the hill to save them? You don’t need that anymore. You have this local capacity.”

“When you look at all the material and all the frameworks and all the documentation about community resilience and community recovery it is community led. So instead of the truck, the fire truck turning up with the water and hosing out a yard [after a storm] or the SES getting in there and doing it, the community led, and the community worth, approach of recovery and of helping each other goes a long way to actually recovering because it basically maintains the community glue for want of a better word but also maintains the basic fabric of what a community is.”

AN ADDITIONAL AVENUE NOT A REPLACEMENT

Managed SVs don't replace traditional EM volunteers, informal helping behaviour or self-organised, emergent volunteering

“CREW is a component of a range of volunteering and other options that exist. Making sure that there's some recognition that uniformed volunteers and officers, the CREW type volunteers and the mates giving a hand, it isn't one or the other. More importantly [it's] how we build a structure that recognises and blends various people together better.”

“That's what I would love to project more of. Help the people you already know, help the people you've got an affiliation with help your family. Help your friends help your neighbours. You don't need to register with anyone to do that. It's about local resilience – healthy, connected, informed community. I think community resilience can be measured by how ready, willing and able people are to help each other without having to go through formal processes. But we also know that there are people who want to help more than the connections they have.”

AN INTERFACE WITH THE PUBLIC

Not just volunteer registration

- Buffer for EMOs
- Public education
- Expectation management
- Gathering intel on SVs
- Closing the supply-demand gap
- Surge capacity
- Recruitment pathways
- Psychological support
- Supporting emergent/ extending organisations, self-organised SVs

Communication, communication, communication!!

“[People] try to help in the best way they can from a very sincere place, they are compelled to help but they are not aware of what is going on because it isn’t reported in the media, clearly concisely loudly reported in timely fashion by government and lead agencies about this is what we need from you or don’t need. People go and try to meet a perceived need. That’s where the complexity starts to get messy.”

“We have an opportunity to actually assist people who are peripherally impacted. [...] to this day we are missing a big, big, big opportunity here to better engage with community and build that resilience.”

ADAPTING FROM QLD TO OTHER CONTEXTS

Benefits:

- A tried and tested model
- New volunteer management approach
- Sharing resources

Limitations/challenges:

- Maintaining capacity with infrequent use?
- Risk aversion
- 'Fit' with different contexts

"We're in a position where we're proactively setting this up to prepare for and be ready for supporting our community when there is an emergency, whereas Queensland developed their system in - on the fly in reaction and response to something that was happening where there was obviously a need [...] So I think that puts us in a very lucky position because we can learn from everything that they've been through [...]"

"We're being, quite frankly, a lot more risk averse, I think. So our client eligibility policy and our terms and conditions for both organisations and volunteers are much more in depth."

FACILITATING SKILLS-BASED VOLUNTEERING

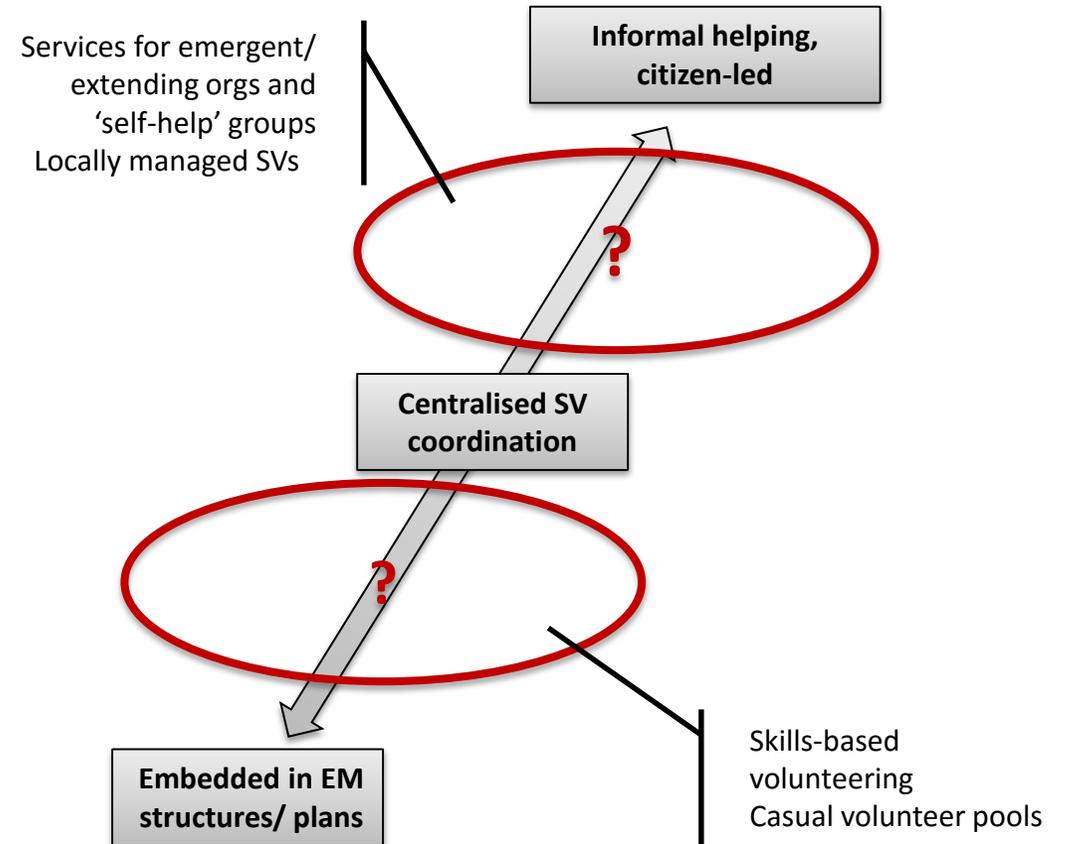
- ❑ A skilled volunteer register?
- ❑ Project-based and casual skills-based volunteering
- ❑ Preparedness and longer-term recovery as well as immediate recovery

“There’s lots happening in that space when fires encroached on more populated areas. There is a fairly strong community response in helping move livestock to other properties. I wonder how could it work in using CREW to that end? There is a need for it, and there is volunteer capacity to help before an emergency hits.”

KEY POINTS

- Part of **a spectrum of ways to help**
 - **Not about planning out** all spontaneity and emergence
 - **Not about centrally directing** everyone
- From volunteer registration and matching to a **public interface?**
- **Risk aversion in planning is a threat**
- **Sustainability?**

Rights, needs, wishes of people impacted by disaster is paramount



THANK YOU

Thursday 10:05am - “Managing offers of assistance and the power of asking – critical messaging before, during and after disaster events”, **Julie Molloy**