

Spontaneous Emergency Volunteering in Victoria

A final report on the HelpOUT and MSEV Programs

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Executive Summary

Volunteering Victoria's HelpOUT emergency volunteering service was initiated in July 2015, with time-limited pilot funding through the Commonwealth government's Natural Disaster Resilience Grants Scheme, and went live in February 2016. The initiative aimed to improve the coordination and management of spontaneous emergency volunteers through a recruitment, coordination and management service.

HelpOUT, including the Managers of Spontaneous Emergency Volunteers (MSEV) program, aimed to complement and support the vital role of state and local government in emergency management by capturing and better managing spontaneous volunteer offers, freeing up other resources in the immediate aftermath of an emergency.

This report captures the lessons learned, opportunities and recommendations from Volunteering Victoria and stakeholder experience with these programs.

Opportunities:

- Build community awareness of emergency management arrangements through a state-wide database;
- Increase community awareness of spontaneous volunteering by building partnerships with the agencies most likely to be contacted by spontaneous volunteers;
- Build engagement opportunities with other organisations who are contacted by potential spontaneous volunteers;
- Build capacity and capability in the organisations most likely to receive offers of assistance;
- Explore potential for skilled versus unskilled support that could be provided;
- A register of volunteers requires regular communication and opportunities to keep engaged;
- Develop a social media and online volunteering strategy as part of any future work on spontaneous volunteers in Victoria;
- Work with partner agencies such as Red Cross, LGAs and CFA to source additional opportunities for MSEVs within the emergency management sector.

Recommendations:

- In line with the Emergency Management Reform white paper, the best response to an emergency remains the local community and its assets and capabilities.
- There is a clear and present requirement to support communities in their disaster response efforts by supplying an online portal which allows spontaneous volunteers to be directed somewhere to register in the event of an emergency.
- One government department must take responsibility for and provide the state-wide infrastructure and capacity building for supporting communities to respond to spontaneous volunteers.
- Utilise the networks and capabilities developed through the HelpOUT and MSEV pilot projects through a community based and community contextualised program building the capability and capacity of local governments and community based volunteer involving organisations through network building and training. Volunteering Queensland's 'Building Local Capability' project provides a best practice example of this.
- Volunteering Victoria, as the peak body is uniquely placed to be the voice of community volunteering at the emergency service table including the Volunteer Consultative Forum and regional emergency management planning committees.

Introduction

Background

The Manager of Spontaneous Emergency Volunteers (MSEV) project was conceived as a partnership between local government, local volunteer organisations, emergency management agencies and local communities. It was designed to help build enhanced emergency preparedness, capability and community resilience by recruiting, training, supporting, deploying and debriefing a workforce of skilled Managers of Spontaneous Volunteers (MSEVs) to assist during emergency relief and recovery. The community-demand driven MSEV deployment model ensures the affected community is assisted and remains in charge. Developed with funding from the National Disaster Resilience Grant Scheme (NDRGS) and partnering with Volunteering Queensland, HelpOUT complemented the MSEV Program. Volunteering Victoria's HelpOUT service operated year-round, registering offers of volunteer assistance, and linking them to organisations working in affected communities when help was needed.

The two programs worked together as shown in Figure 1. The yellow line represents the peak in offers of assistance by spontaneous volunteers and the role of the MSEV to assist in managing this influx. The blue line represents the potential need for volunteers in communities and HelpOUT as a system helps to bridge this gap.

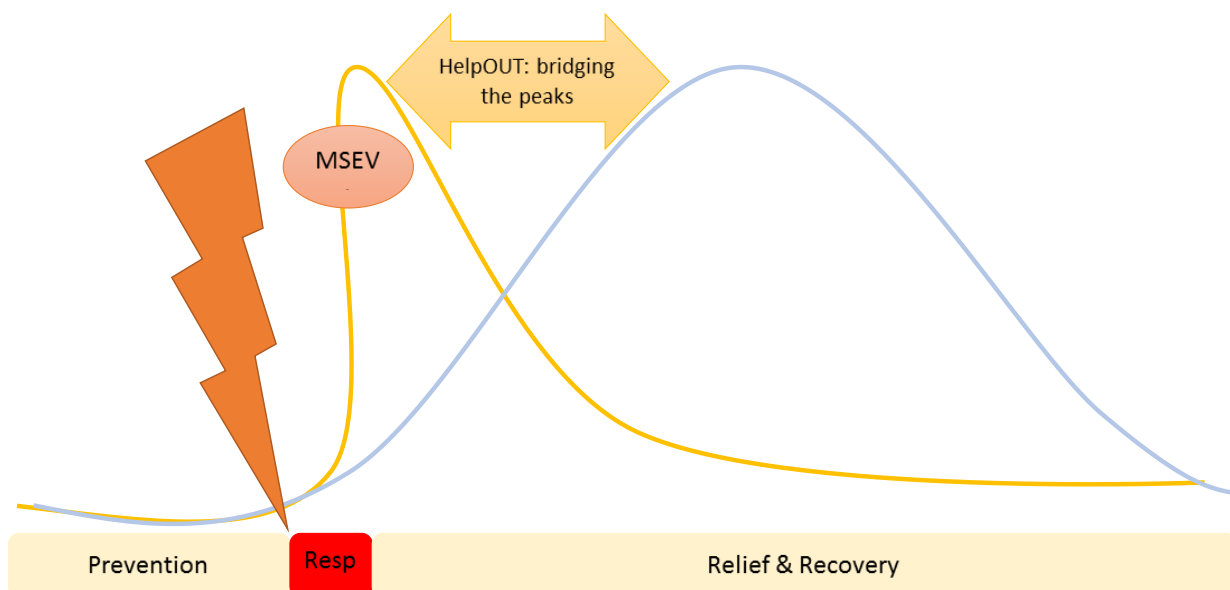


Figure 1. HelpOUT and MSEV in response to an event.

As of November 2017, Volunteering Victoria was informed that the NDRGS, which was used to support the HelpOUT service for two years, was no longer available. Regrettably, Volunteering Victoria was no longer able to support the delivery of the HelpOUT service. During the first half of 2018 Volunteering Victoria was supported by Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to manage a planned transition of HelpOUT. This report is part of the resources prepared during the transition period.

Aims

The aims of this report are:

- To capture the lessons learned from Volunteering Victoria's development and implementation of the HelpOUT and MSEV programs.
- To hear from key stakeholders across the programs including volunteers, local government and emergency service agencies and
- To articulate any future opportunities and recommendations for managing spontaneous volunteers in to the future for Victoria.

Methodology

The evidence required to prepare this report has come through

- Online survey of HelpOUT volunteers;
- Online survey of MSEV training participants;
- Lessons Learned workshop with key stakeholders;
- Case studies; and
- Database analysis.

Limitations

The scope of this report is to look at the high level lessons learned of the two projects and did not include a review of the operational or technical processes of the programs or the workings of the HelpOUT database. Due to limited capacity and resourcing, low numbers of responses were elicited through the online surveys (no follow up was done to encourage more responses).

HelpOUT and the Managers of Spontaneous Emergency Volunteers.

As there had not been a significant event since the inception of the register we were unable to review the effectiveness of the register or its ability to harness the surge of volunteers during a large scale event.

Objectives of HelpOUT and the MSEV Program

In late 2016 Cube Group provided an evaluation of HelpOUT including the MSEV Program. As part of that evaluation a number of objectives were articulated for the programs. These were:

- Foster culture and understanding of the value of spontaneous volunteerism;
- Increased capability and capacity of EM and non-EM organisations to manage spontaneous volunteers;
- Increased capacity to co-ordinate spontaneous volunteers and respond to emergencies;
- Develop systematic and organised approach to co-coordinating spontaneous volunteers.

HelpOUT Register

The HelpOUT register was adapted from Volunteering Queensland's Emergency Volunteering Community Response to Extreme Weather (EV CREW) service. EV CREW's success has been proven in Queensland through a number of major floods and cyclones since 2008, and is also being implemented in Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory.

Through HelpOUT, every day Victorians could register their interest in helping communities impacted by an emergency. HelpOUT then matched people with rewarding volunteering opportunities that supported identified community needs, by partnering with the organisations working on the ground in affected communities.

At the end of May 2018 **2852** Victorians had put their name on the HelpOUT register. This included people from across Victoria who had:

- Registered with EV Crew during the Queensland Floods;
- Registered on DHHS 'Volunteering in an Emergency Register'; or
- Registered direct with HelpOUT.

The register was maintained through quarterly newsletters asking volunteers to update their details or deregister. As at the end of May, 10% of people had either deregistered or were not contactable, leaving over 2500 Victorians registered to HelpOUT. While deregistration may be due to a broad range of reasons one of which could include a lack of opportunities, it also indicates that volunteers were consciously managing their ability to volunteer.

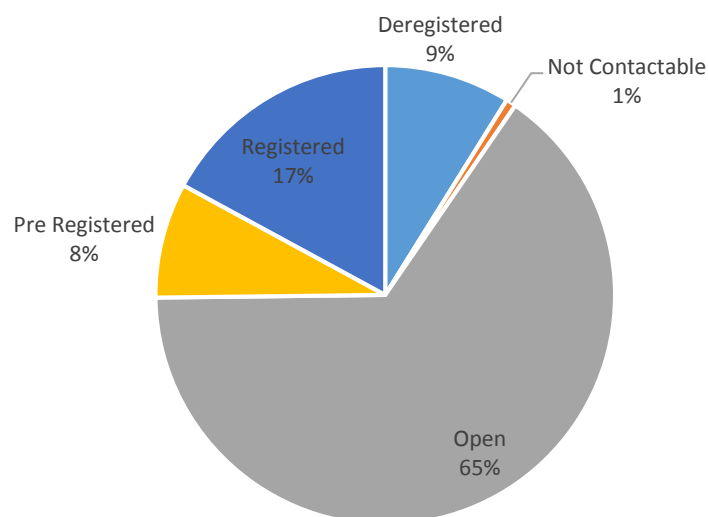


Figure 2. HelpOUT volunteer status

Almost ¼ of the volunteers on the register were from Metropolitan Melbourne with the next largest group from Barwon SW. This is indicative of population spread in Victoria and the first pilot program based in the Barwon SW region.

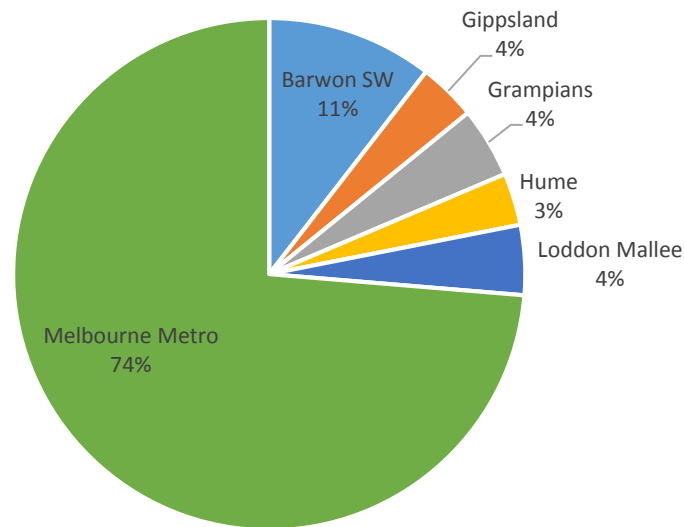


Figure 3. HelpOUT registrations by region

Most volunteers registered on HelpOUT were available to undertake general labour and administration roles with a smaller number holding more specialised skills.

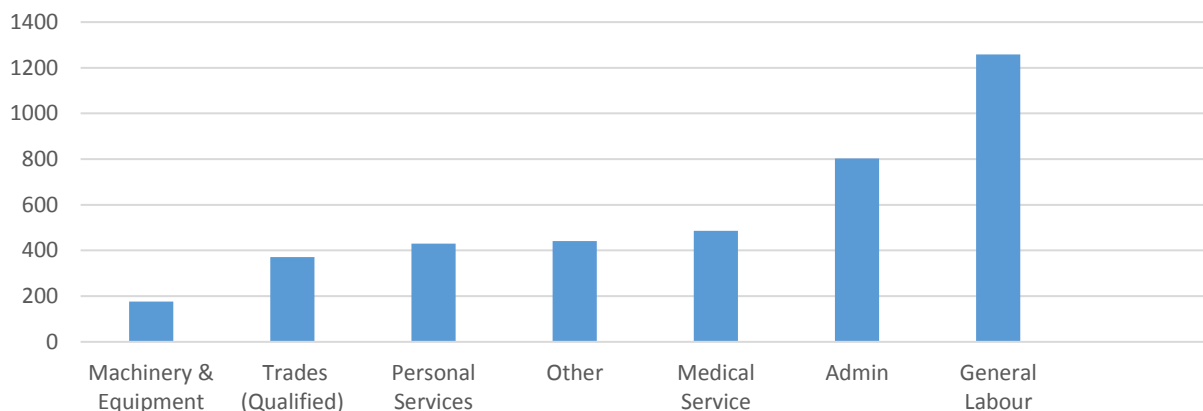


Figure 4. HelpOUT skills spread

Organisations were encouraged to register with HelpOUT prior to an event happening. As at May 2018, six organisations had signed up to the HelpOUT register. Of these three had engaged with HelpOUT to request volunteers. These are in bold below.

- **Southern Otway Landcare Network**
- **Colac Otway Shire**
- Golden Plains Shire
- Salvation Army
- **Yarra Ranges Council**
- Nillumbik Shire Council

MSEV Program:

The Managers of Spontaneous Emergency Volunteers (MSEV) project was designed to build community resilience by recruiting, training, supporting, deploying and debriefing a workforce of skilled MSEVs to assist during emergency relief and recovery activities. MSEV training was developed and delivered in collaboration with Australian Red Cross.

Working within existing emergency management structures, MSEVs could assist with relief and recovery activities, generally within the first 1 – 4 weeks of an event when the cohort of spontaneous volunteering is at its peak. Typically, a few weeks after an emergency, when the danger has subsided, media attention has reduced and community priorities are established, the resourcing for volunteer activities is more structured.

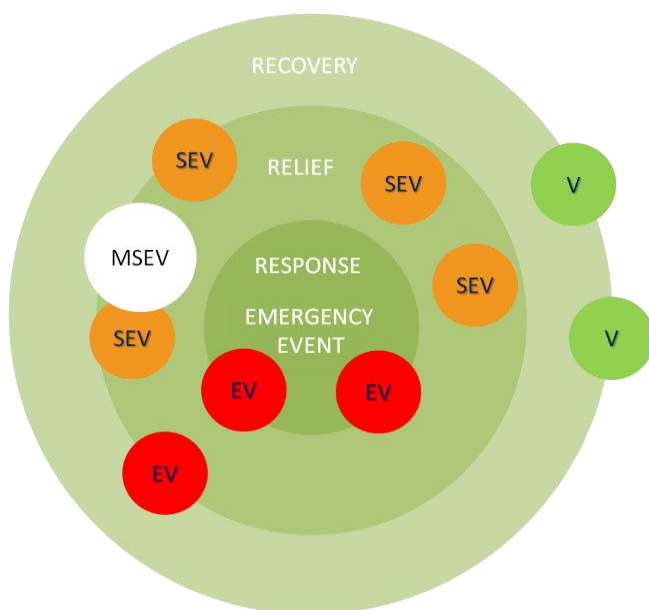


Figure 5. Role of MSEV in supporting volunteers in an emergency

EV = Emergency Volunteer

MSEV = Manager of Spontaneous Emergency Volunteers

SEV = Spontaneous Emergency Volunteers

V = Traditional volunteer

Between July 2014 and June 2018 **259** people undertook MSEV training. As at May 2018 there were **77** MSEVs on the register.

As with HelpOUT, organisations were encouraged to sign up with MSEV prior to an emergency event. 13 LGAs had signed MOUs with Volunteering Victoria (including the eight LGAs who make up the Eastern Metro Partnership), and there were a number of draft MOUs awaiting confirmation of ongoing arrangements.

Golden Plains Shire
Benalla Rural City
Mansfield Shire Council
Murrindindi Shire Council
City of Wodonga
City of Boorondara*
City of Knox*
Manningham City Council*
Maroondah City Council*
City of Monash*

Nillumbik Shire Council*
City of Whitehorse*
Yarra Ranges Council*

Deployment process

In the event of an emergency MSEVs could be called upon to assist LGAs in relief or recovery activities. This need would be identified via the MRM and a request submitted to Volunteering Victoria by phone (preferred) and/or email, and details confirmed back in email. Volunteering Victoria will access the MSEV database to identify an appropriate and available MSEV to be deployed. This MSEV would report directly to the MRM.

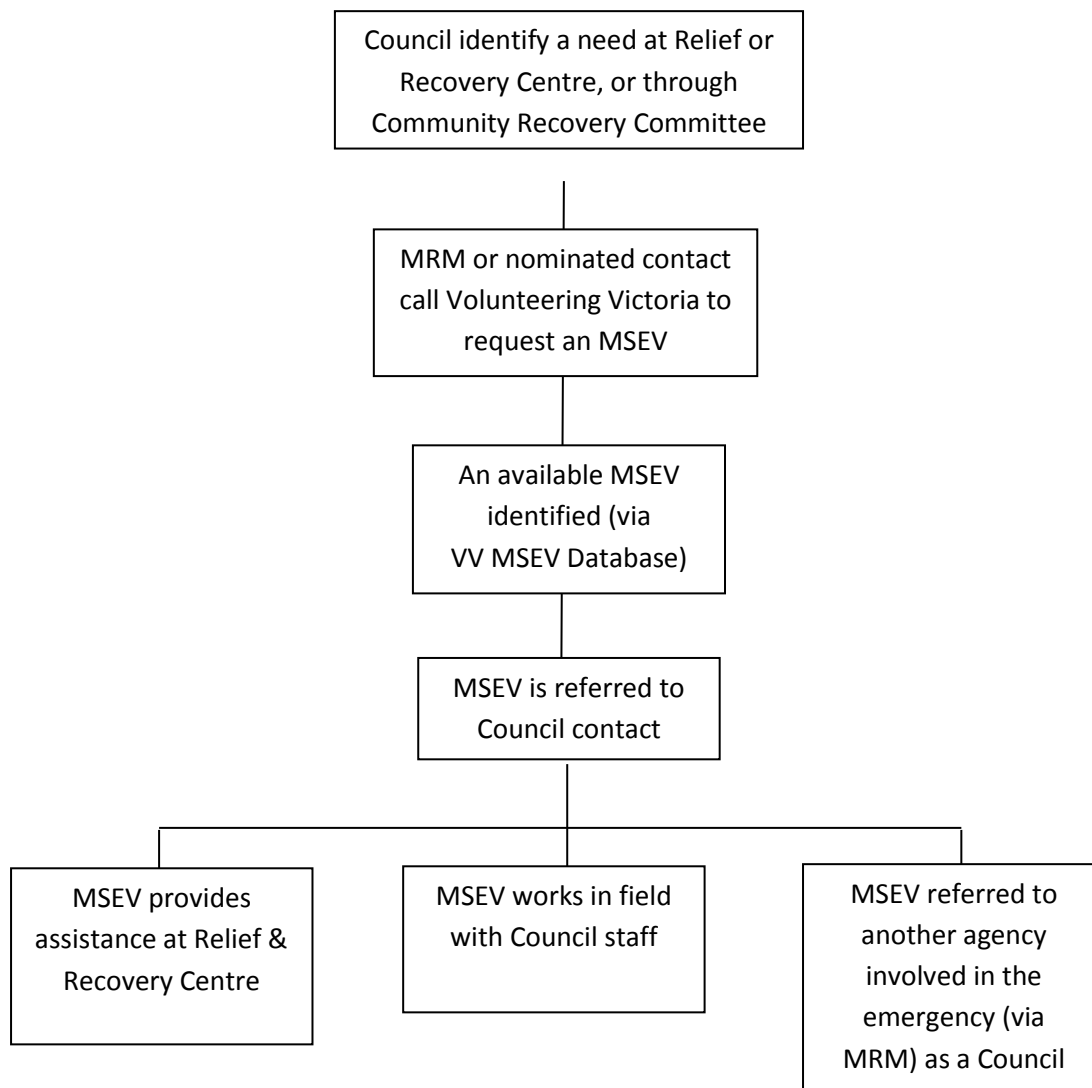


Figure 6. Deployment process for MSEV

Activations:

There were 4 activations involving MSEV and/or HelpOUT. Additionally MSEVs were placed on standby during days of high temperatures and following the Barwon South West Fires in March 2018. This contributed a total of 137 volunteer hours to community recovery following the Wye River Fires and the 2016 storms across Melbourne's east.

Date	Event	Organisation	Volunteer Role	Number of volunteers	Number of hours
February 2016	Wye River Boxing Day Fires	Colac Otway Shire	Manager of Spontaneous Emergency Volunteers	2	16
April 2016	Wye River Boxing Day Fires	Southern Otway Landcare Network	Bird box transport	2	32
October 2016	Wye River Boxing Day Fires	Colac Otway Shire	Community Lunch Event Assistants	6	48
December 2016	Storms	Yarra Ranges Council	Storm Clean Up Campaign	10	41

Table 1. HelpOUT and MSEV Activations



Storm debris in Yarra Ranges.

Lessons Learned

Since initial development of HelpOUT and MSEV new understanding and experiences in coordinating spontaneous volunteers have emerged. These include:

- Development of the AIDR Handbook ‘Communities Responding to Disasters: Planning for Spontaneous Volunteers;
- Volunteering Queensland’s project “ Building local capability to manage spontaneous volunteers”; and
- Stakeholder and volunteer feedback from Volunteering Victoria’s HelpOUT and MSEV programs.

In early June 2018 Volunteering Victoria gathered a group of key stakeholders from across the emergency management and volunteering sectors in Victoria and nationally to discuss wrapping up the HelpOUT and MSEV programs. They identified the following lessons learned by combining the knowledge and insights from that discussion.

The Victorian Emergency Management Reform White paper identified in 2012 a plan is required to manage spontaneous emergency volunteers at scale and in very short time frames as well as engaging community groups and Volunteer Involving Organisations in relief efforts. There is no state wide plan or infrastructure to achieve both of these outcomes.

People want to volunteer in emergencies. The HelpOUT register was designed to harness the surge of interest in volunteering during an emergency and potentially match to opportunities during the longer term recovery. Despite this 70% of those registered still thought their help would be needed during the response to an emergency and 85% thought their help would be needed in the immediate aftermath. Most people thought they would be able to assist by volunteering in skilled or unskilled roles. The skills listed in the register saw the majority of people registering for general labour and administration skills reflecting the general feeling of the work required similar to the clean-up work seen in Queensland.

In a survey of the HelpOUT register, the top three organisations volunteers would approach to offer assistance were:

- Relief and Recovery Agencies;
- Emergency Management Agencies; and
- Local volunteering support organisations.

These organisations need to have a planned response to managing volunteers in emergencies. Registering with HelpOUT was identified by a number of organisations as a way to be prepared.

“Engaging with Volunteering Victoria and HelpOUT has meant Yarra Ranges is now well placed to engage with volunteers before, during and after emergencies. The support, cost savings and improved preparedness by registering and connecting with the HelpOUT service cannot be underestimated in light of our changing climate and the increased frequency of natural disasters.”
Yarra Ranges Council

Participants in the MSEV training also identified the need to have a coordinated response as one of their key learnings.

A recurrent theme in open ended comments from volunteers on the HelpOUT survey was they were disappointed they hadn't been contacted to volunteer. When asked how frequently they expected to be contacted close to 50 % thought they would be contacted to volunteer less than once a year however 25% thought they would be contacted every six months and 15% thought they would be contacted once a month.

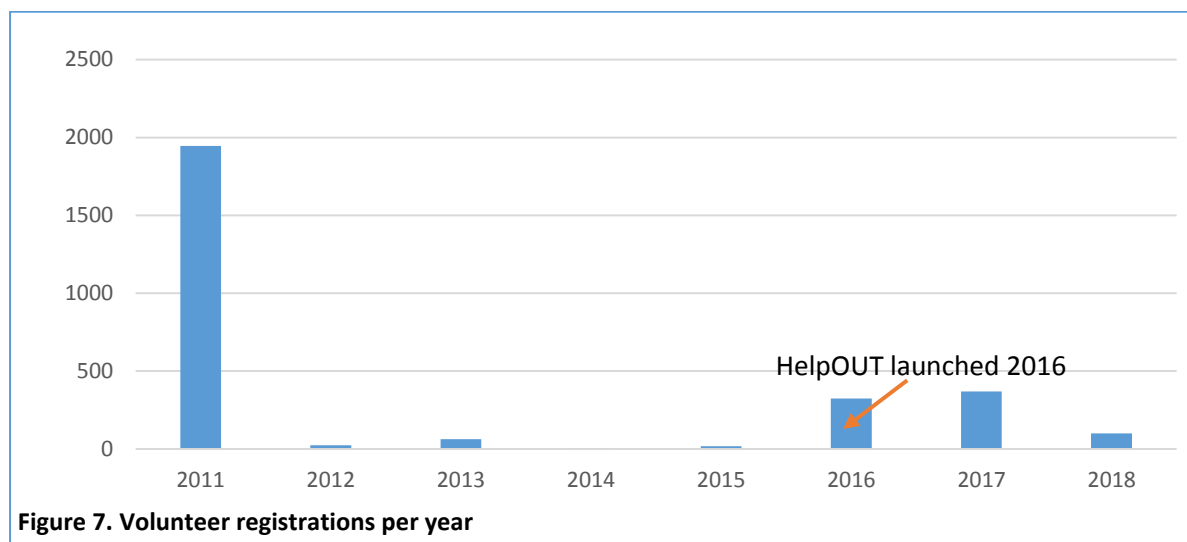
"I haven't been contacted. But I did find it hard to believe that I wouldn't have been needed"
HelpOUT volunteer

Opportunities

- Increase community awareness by building partnerships with the agencies most likely to be contacted by spontaneous volunteers
- Explore potential for skilled versus unskilled support that could be provided
- Build capacity and capability in the organisations most likely to receive offers of assistance
- A register of volunteers requires regular communication and opportunities to keep engaged.

There is a critical need for a state-wide database that can act as a buffer for LGAs during emergencies, provide ongoing communications to the registered volunteers and provide resources in the shape of volunteers for communities when the need arises. LGAs simply do not have the time capacity or resources to deal with the overwhelming response from the community.

Since the launch of HelpOUT in 2016, 794 people registered on the system. In 2018 with the service in transition mode and very little promotion there were still an average of 16 registrations per month. Registrations increased following events for example in the two weeks following the Barwon South West fires there was a 2-fold increase in registrations from the baseline average, again with very little promotion of the service. The vast majority of registrations came through the online portal with only a handful of people ringing in to register. HelpOUT had been set up to include the option of an inbound call centre but due to the lack of a large scale event during the pilot this was never tested.



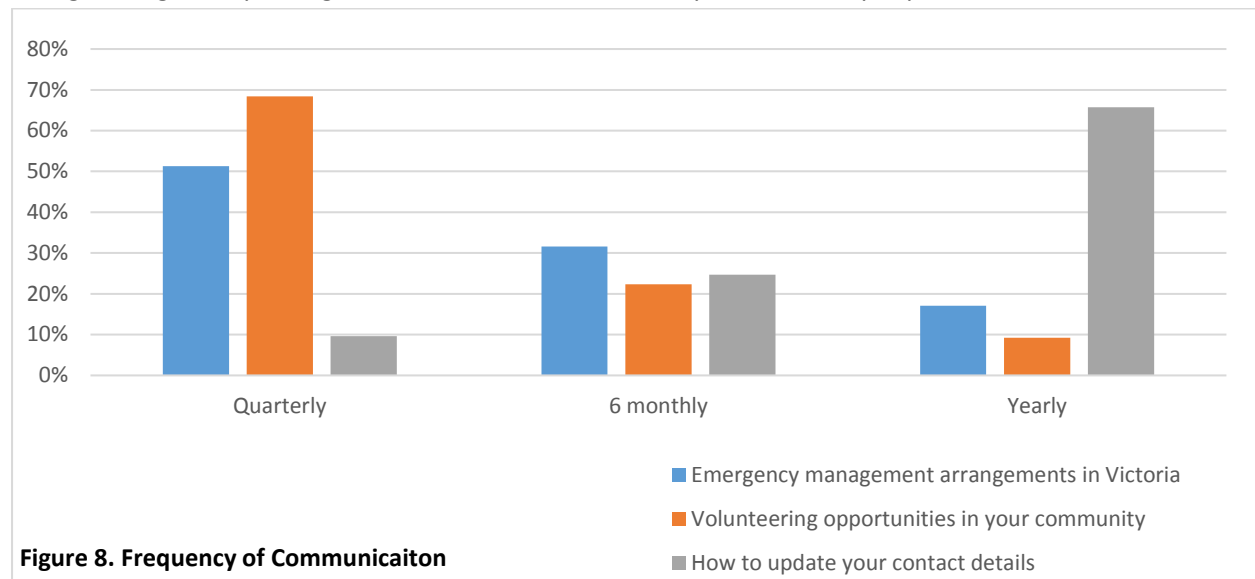
Stakeholders at the lessons learned workshop highlighted the importance of a database to capture offers of assistance and act as a buffer between volunteers and their organisations.

“The HelpOUT database will be essential to record the details of potential spontaneous emergency volunteers. The MSEV program will also be essential to manage the spontaneous emergency volunteers.” EM Agency Representative

“We would not accept volunteers who would turn up randomly. The buffer was very important to us. Volunteers will be referred to HelpOUT and this has been written in to our policies” LGA Representative

Ongoing communication with those people registered was also identified as incredibly important. When surveyed the majority of volunteers on the register thought they should be contacted quarterly with information on Emergency Management Arrangements in Victoria, quarterly with information on volunteering opportunities in their local community and yearly on how to update contact details. This suggests that a quarterly newsletter with articles on emergency management

and volunteering opportunities would suit most people. Once a year an email with information on deregistering and updating contact details would also respond to most people's needs.



Opportunities:

- There is a clear and present requirement to support communities in their disaster response efforts by supplying an online portal which allows spontaneous volunteers to be directed somewhere to register in the event of an emergency;
- There is an opportunity to build community awareness of emergency management arrangements through a state-wide database;
- Build engagement opportunities with other organisations who are contacted by potential spontaneous volunteers.

Lack of ownership by any one government department created uncertainty for the pilot projects making it difficult to engage LGAs, emergency service agencies and the community. This uncertainty has continued with fragmentation clear between the different units and agencies.

From the outset there has been a challenging government environment to work in with multiple state government departments as stakeholders and uncertainty as to which agency would take a lead role. Volunteering Victoria first identified this as an issue in June 2016 and between August 2016 and March 2017 participated in the Spontaneous Volunteers Steering Group with Department of Human Services (DHHS) (Emergency Services and Volunteers branches), Emergency Management Victoria (EMV) and Local Government Victoria (LGV) with an aim to resolve this issue. The minutes of the final meeting left this to EMV and DHHS to resolve but by October 2017 there was still no clear answer.

With no clear agency lead, there was also no clarity to ongoing funding of the programs and by November 2017, when it was made clear the third year of funding through the NDRGS wouldn't be available Volunteering Victoria wrote to EMV and DHHS informing them that they wouldn't be in a position to continue supporting program. DHHS were able to provide Volunteering Victoria with additional budget to continue the project in maintenance mode until final shut down in June 2018. The ongoing uncertainty as to government ownership continued throughout this period. The negative impacts of this were:

- Loss of key staff;
- Inability to develop new MOUs with LGAs;
- Inability to register MSEV training participants as MSEVs;
- Lack of engagement from LGAs and VIOs; and
- Uncertainty in the sector as to whether HelpOUT was active during the Barwon South West Fires and this also lead to uncertainty regarding messaging about spontaneous volunteers.

Opportunities:

- One government department must take responsibility for and provide the state-wide infrastructure and capacity building for supporting communities to respond to spontaneous volunteers.

Successful training of local managers of volunteers as MSEV created a capability that LGAs were lacking. Additional outcomes of the training were increased awareness of emergency management arrangements in Victoria and building of relationships between LGAs, local managers of volunteers and emergency management agencies.

The success of the MSEV program in training, supporting and deploying a skilled workforce of volunteer managers was evident through the positive responses of participants, LGAs and emergency management agencies to this program. 259 people participated in the MSEV training and at the end of the program 77 MSEVs were available to support communities in times of emergencies.

Feedback from MSEV training sessions demonstrated success of the program in building capacity of volunteer managers to:

- Manage and support spontaneous volunteers in an emergency context;
- Work within the chaotic environment of an emergency situation; and
- Recognise techniques for dealing with people in distress

Question	Top 5 Responses
What were the 3 key concepts you learned?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The MSEV role • Emergency Management arrangements in Victoria • Psychological First Aid • Self-care • Spontaneous volunteers
What 2 things did you find interesting and you would like to hear more about?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psychological First Aid • Emergency management and the role of other agencies • Processes involved in the MSEV program • MSEV role • All was interesting
One question you still have	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Processes and where to from here • Questions about the MSEV role • Additional training/refresher courses • Role of agencies and communities in the MSEV Program • How to integrate in to council/MEMP

Table 2. Learning outcomes reported by MSEV training participants

In a follow up survey, MSEV training participants reported the top 5 key learnings were:

- Role of MSEV
- Emergency Management Arrangements
- Psychological First Aid
- Need for MSEV role
- Need to coordinate response

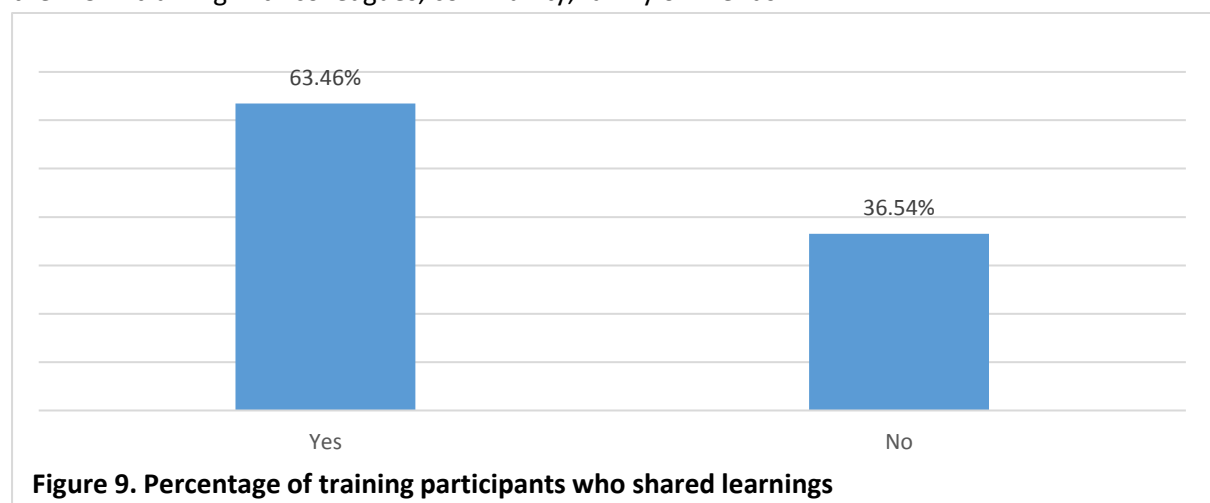
73 % of MSEV training participants said they had used the knowledge or skills from MSEV training in preparing for emergencies both at an organisational level and also for personal preparedness in emergencies. This was particularly the case for attendees who came from local government suggesting that many of them had attended the training not to become an MSEV but to build the capacity within their organisation.

“We have reviewed our internal policies related to emergency management applying some of the learnings from the training that I participated in.” MSEV training participant

“I used what I learned in informing emergency management planning for the Shire” MSEV training participant

“I was completing it as a Council EM practitioner to understand the role and possible connections for Council EM” MSEV Training participant

A high proportion of MSEV training participants also reported they had shared the learnings from the MSEV training with colleagues, community, family or friends



The training also raised awareness for organisations to consider what roles there could be for spontaneous volunteers within their organisation with 56% of respondents agreeing there would be roles.

“Many roles including - Local knowledge, communication, social media, liaise between services and community members, catering support, maintenance of facilities etc” MSEV training participant

MSEV training participants expressed concerns that the lack of activations due to the lack of any large scale emergencies during the life of the program means skills could be lost. They also expressed concerns they hadn’t had an opportunity to engage with their LGAs emergency management processes.

“Apart from the good ongoing email contact from the Volunteering Vic office I have been disappointed that there has be no contact at all from the local Wyndham emergency response people. To get together with these people and other local MSEV's would be good to be better prepared and skilled for supporting them when a problem arises. Do they even know we exist?” MSEV training participant

“I think it is a good idea but it hasn’t been activated which means unless we are retrained we are likely to lose our skills” MSEV Training participant

Overall the MSEV training achieved its objectives of training local managers of volunteers to support LGAs in managing spontaneous volunteers during emergencies and has support within the emergency management and volunteering sectors for its continued role out.

“Keep building this! There is a real place for well trained & responsive volunteers & volunteer managers in this space. I learned my skills by being at the coal face & watching others, both good & not so good. And whilst going through those things was incredibly intense & often heart breaking, I’m so grateful for what it has all taught me.” MSEV Training participant

“Although I have never needed to call on the MSEV program, I am sure it would be very beneficial during an emergency. Our small Shire only has one part-time volunteer coordinator who would be very quickly overwhelmed by spontaneous volunteers. It is also reassuring to know that we have at least one MSEV living in our community” LGA representative

Opportunities:

- Utilise the networks and capabilities developed through the HelpOUT and MSEV pilot projects through a community based and community contextualised program building the capability and capacity of local governments and community based volunteer involving organisations through network building and training. Volunteering Queensland’s ‘Building Local Capability’ project provides a best practice example of this.
- Work with partner agencies such as Red Cross, LGAs and CFA to source additional opportunities for MSEVs within the emergency management sector

HelpOUT and MSEV stakeholders identified incredible value in building relationships between LGAs, emergency management agencies, community groups and the volunteering sector.

The HelpOUT and MSEV programs provided an opportunity for LGAs, emergency management agencies and community groups to come together around spontaneous volunteering. Volunteering Victoria built and strengthened relationships with over 60 organisations and over the course of the projects engaged in formal partnerships with Cube Group, Resilient Melbourne, Emergency Management Victoria, Australian Red Cross and the Country Fire Authority. Figure 10 shows the complexity of the stakeholder environment for spontaneous volunteers within Victoria and the many interconnections between stakeholder groups. Figure 11 demonstrates the number of different stakeholders Volunteering Victoria engaged with across the life of the program.

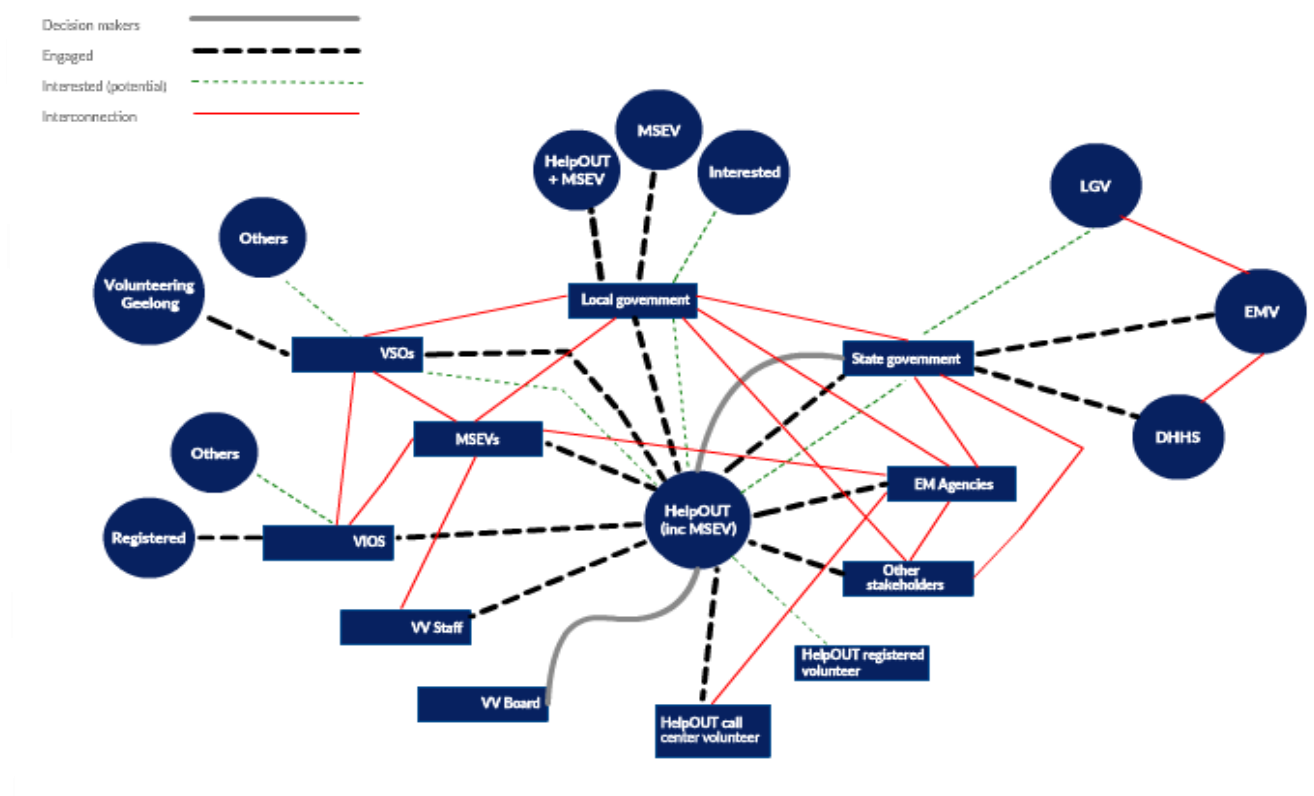
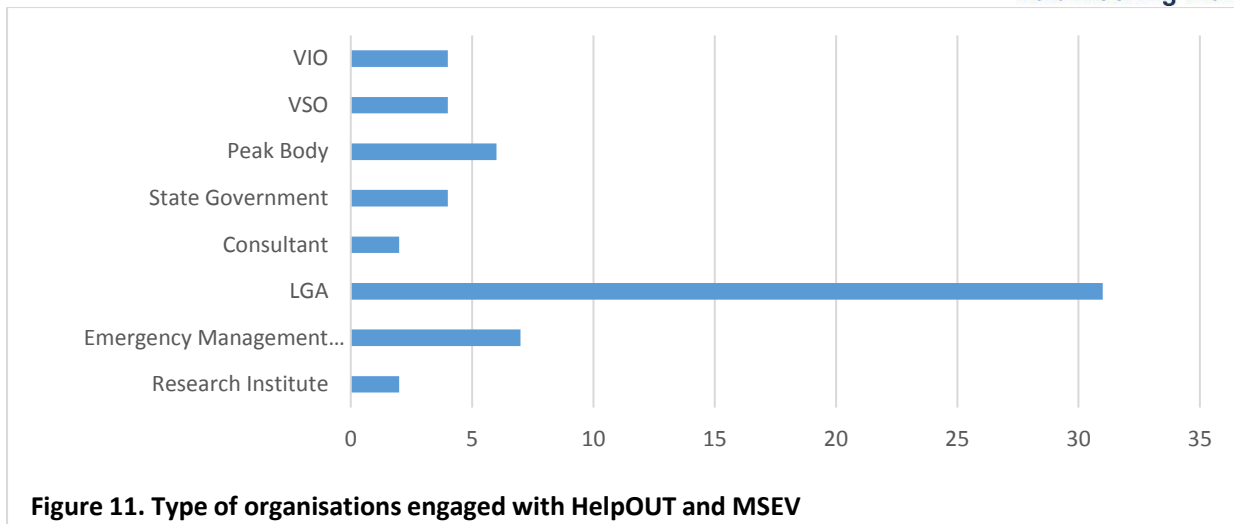


Figure 10. Stakeholder map for HelpOUT and MSEV



There were a number of times when meetings facilitated by Volunteering Victoria to organise MSEV training gave the emergency management and community development teams at local government an opportunity to meet and look at ways to collaborate.

One of the highlights of the program was the opportunity to partner with EMV and Resilience Melbourne in screening ‘Resilience Age’ at Nova Cinemas in May 2017. This event brought together close to 100 attendees from across local government, volunteering and emergency management to network and think about what resilience means to communities facing emergencies.

Participants at the lessons learned workshop highlighted building of relationships as one of the unexpected outcomes of the program and suggested that Volunteering Victoria, as the peak body for volunteering, has a unique ability to facilitate relationships between LGAs, EM agencies, VSOs, VIOs and community groups.

“One of the best outcomes is the people and conversations here in the room” Lessons Learned workshop participant

Opportunities

- Volunteering Victoria, as the peak body, can utilise its networks to facilitate relationships across the volunteering and emergency management sectors.

Queensland (With significant on the ground experience of natural disasters) has focused on the work of building an MSEV equivalent capacity and activating local community groups to activate volunteers in relief and recovery. By building local capacity they build community resilience, work with existing management and insurance structures and have easy access to acknowledgement activities post recovery.

Volunteering Queensland have shared with Volunteering Victoria the findings from their recent project: *'Building local capability to manage disaster volunteers'*. The project worked closely with local government and local disaster management groups to assist them identify which agencies and groups in their community were best placed to take on future roles in managing spontaneous volunteers. Once identified, Volunteering Queensland assisted in the development of agreements, training and tools to support the local arrangements. Three models evolved out of the project:

- *Model 1:* Local government led management of spontaneous volunteers;
- *Model 2:* Appointing one key partner to have the responsibility of managing spontaneous volunteers;
- *Model 3:* Using a consortium of partners (this model proved to be the most popular).

Training similar to that of MSEV was developed and run for team leaders from across the groups and local government, the training created a strong commitment for cooperation and coordination and highlighted the role of Volunteering Queensland EV CREW for the recruitment and management of spontaneous volunteers. VQ also developed a resource kit with a range of generic tools and templates designed to assist local government and their partners in planning for and establishing shared good practices for the management and coordination of spontaneous disaster volunteers.

The next steps for Volunteering Queensland (subject to funding) include:

- Working in partnership to provide support for LGs, LDMGs and partners to progress arrangements to manage spontaneous disaster volunteers
- Considerations for LGs and LDMGs in continuing the development of models and approaches
- Building a state-wide consortium
- Further promotion of the work
- Further implementation of EV CREW Program
- Monitoring and evaluation

Opportunities:

- Utilise the networks and capabilities developed through the HelpOUT and MSEV pilot projects through a community based and community contextualised program building the capability and capacity of local governments and community based volunteer involving organisations through network building and training. Volunteering Queensland's 'Building Local Capability' project provides a best practice example of this.

Systems need to be community based and community contextualised, each region is different, able to engage with different community groups and require varying amounts of support.

The Queensland experience with differing models being appropriate for different councils was also experienced in Victoria with differing engagement with HelpOUT and MSEV.

Golden Plains Shire has set up systems that mobilise a pre-registered and screened team of local council volunteers who can be the first volunteers in an emergency who have the skills and training to support other spontaneous volunteers in the relief and recovery phases.

How Golden Plains Shire set up their systems

- Two Emergency Management Operation Manuals for the Manager of Disaster Volunteers (MDV) and the Disaster Volunteers Coordination Team (DVCT) members
- Emergency Volunteer Induction Manual and registration documentation
- Position Descriptions established for roles that are common across a range of disaster situations
- Emergency Volunteer Administration box that is accommodated in their Relief and Recovery Trailer
- Five dedicated Volunteer Support Areas established within the Relief and Recovery centres
- A structure that engages up to 20 pre-registered, screened and trained volunteers that form a Disaster Volunteer Coordination Team (DVCT)
- Management structures that incorporate the utilisation of MSEV and HelpOUT programs
- Data based program that captures deployment activity of volunteers.

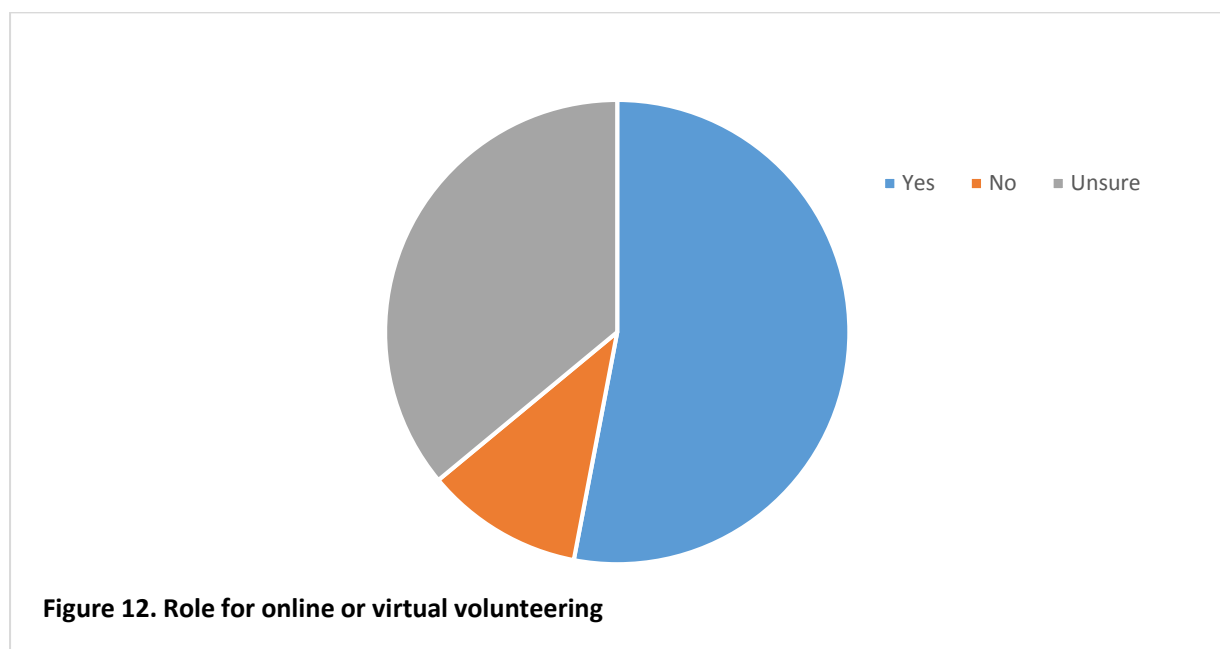
Others have set up more light touch systems, registering with HelpOUT and MSEV and were able to call on Volunteering Victoria in times of an emergency. See Appendix 1 for full case studies from a number of LGAs.

Opportunities:

- Utilise the networks and capabilities developed through the HelpOUT and MSEV pilot projects through a community based and community contextualised program building the capability and capacity of local governments and community based volunteer involving organisations through network building and training. Volunteering Queensland's 'Building Local Capability' project provides a best practice example of this.

There is an opportunity to engage more through social media and virtual volunteering.

The role of social media and virtual volunteering has increased significantly over the past few years and although a communications plan was written for HelpOUT including prepared social media posts the potential opportunities and risks of engaging more fully was not explored. A bit over 50% of MSEV participants did see a role for online or virtual volunteering, particularly in the areas of social media monitoring, registering volunteers online and engaging with emergent or community groups. These are all ways to further engage with local communities.



Opportunities:

- Develop a social media and online volunteering strategy as part of any future work on spontaneous volunteers in Victoria

As the peak body, Volunteering Victoria must be part of the conversation regarding volunteers in emergencies through membership of the Volunteer Consultative Forum.

Although invited to speak at events and meetings, Volunteering Victoria has been considered a side party to emergency management arrangements in Victoria making it challenging to build consistency across the state. The experience in Queensland has shown that being a part of the arrangements and having a seat at the table has been invaluable.

Opportunities:

- Volunteering Victoria, as the peak body is uniquely placed to be the voice of community volunteering at the emergency service table including the Volunteer Consultative Forum and regional emergency management planning committees.

Recommendations:

Based on this feedback, and other learnings from the Pilot project Volunteering Victoria recommends:

- In line with the Emergency Management Reform white paper, the best response to an emergency remains the local community and its assets and capabilities.
- There is a clear and present requirement to support communities in their disaster response efforts by supplying an online portal which allows spontaneous volunteers to be directed somewhere to register in the event of an emergency.
- One government department must take responsibility for and provide the state-wide infrastructure and capacity building for supporting communities to respond to spontaneous volunteers.
- Utilise the networks and capabilities developed through the HelpOUT and MSEV pilot projects through a community based and community contextualised program building the capability and capacity of local governments and community based volunteer involving organisations through network building and training. Volunteering Queensland's 'Building Local Capability' project provides a best practice example of this.
- Volunteering Victoria, as the peak body is uniquely placed to be the voice of community volunteering at the emergency service table including the Volunteer Consultative Forum and regional emergency management planning committees.

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About Volunteering Victoria

Volunteering Victoria is the state peak body for volunteering and we have a singular and specialised focus on volunteering.

Through our dynamic and transformative leadership we will promote and build a vibrant, prosperous and strong volunteering community that is inclusive, respected and sustainable. Our vision is resilient communities and empowered and active citizens through volunteering.

We provide support to volunteers and to organisations that involve volunteers in their workforce, support volunteering in their communities, or offer volunteering programs for their employees.

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Volunteering Victoria is endorsed as a Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR)

Appendix 1. Spontaneous Volunteers in Victoria Discussion Paper

This discussion paper, based on the findings of this report was presented to the state government in June 2018.

Background

The Victorian Emergency Management Reform White paper identified ‘following the 2009 bushfires, more than 22 000 spontaneous volunteers’ offered their help online or by phone, but only a small number were used.’ It also highlighted ‘deployed staff and trained volunteers were re-directed to manage these unsolicited volunteers and donations’. The White paper made a range of recommendations to improve the participation of communities in their own recovery which, is at the foundation of building resilience.

In the event of another major emergency on the scale of Black Saturday, there would likely be a significant negative community reaction if a system were not in place and if local government does not have the capacity or capability to engage with the system.

Current arrangements

The Managers of Spontaneous Emergency Volunteers (MSEV) program commenced in the Greater Geelong area in July 2014 and has been delivered in a number of regions across the state including Hume, Eastern Metro, Southern Metro and Central Victoria. The program wrapped up in June 2018. The HelpOUT project was initiated in July 2015 and was launched in the Greater Geelong area in February 2016. From June 2016, HelpOUT was expanded into the Eastern Metro and Hume regions. From July 2017, ongoing funding uncertainty led to a halt of the expansion of HelpOUT and in June 2018 the HelpOUT service was shut down.

Volunteering Victoria has been working with the Department of Health and Human Services, Emergency Management Victoria, Red Cross and other stakeholders to review the successes and lessons learned from the HelpOUT service and MSEV Program, and to inform a longer term, sustainable model for the coordination and management of spontaneous emergency volunteers.

Lessons Learned

Since initial development of HelpOUT and MSEV new understanding and experiences in coordinating spontaneous volunteers have emerged. These include:

- Development of the AIDR Handbook ‘Communities Responding to Disasters: Planning for Spontaneous Volunteers;
- Volunteering Queensland’s project “ Building local capability to manage spontaneous volunteers”;
- Stakeholder and volunteer feedback from Volunteering Victoria’s HelpOUT and MSEV programs.

In early June 2018 Volunteering Victoria gathered a group of key stakeholders from across the emergency management and volunteering sectors in Victoria and nationally to discuss wrapping up the HelpOUT and MSEV programs. They identified the following lessons learned by combining the knowledge and insights from that discussion.

(Note these are not the position or statements of Volunteering Victoria per se, they represent the specific summarised outcomes of the workshop)

1. The Victorian Emergency Management Reform White paper Identified in 2012 a plan is required to manage spontaneous emergency volunteers at scale and in very short time frames as well as

engaging community groups and Volunteer Involving Organisations in relief efforts. There is no state wide plan or infrastructure to achieve both of these outcomes.

2. There is a critical need for a state-wide database that can act as a buffer for LGAs during emergencies, provide ongoing communications to the registered volunteers and provide resources in the shape of volunteers for communities when the need arises. LGAs simply do not have the time capacity or resources to deal with the overwhelming response from the community.
3. Lack of ownership by any one government department created uncertainty for the pilot projects making it difficult to engage LGAs, emergency service agencies and the community. This uncertainty has continued with fragmentation clear between the different units and agencies.
4. In line with program objectives successful training of local managers of volunteers as MSEV created a capability that LGAs were lacking. Additional outcomes of the training were increased awareness of emergency management arrangements in Victoria and building of relationships between LGAs, local managers of volunteers and emergency management agencies.
5. HelpOUT and MSEV stakeholders identified incredible value in building relationships between LGAs, emergency management agencies, community groups and the volunteering sector.
6. Queensland (With significant on the ground experience of natural disasters) has focused on the work of building an MSEV equivalent capacity and activating local community groups to activate volunteers in relief and recovery. By building local capacity they build community resilience, work with existing management and insurance structures and have easy access to acknowledgement activities post recovery.
7. Systems need to be community based and community contextualised, each region is different, able to engage with different community groups and require varying amounts of support.
8. There is an opportunity to engage more through social media and virtual volunteering.
9. As the peak body, Volunteering Victoria should be part of the conversation regarding volunteers in emergencies through membership of the Volunteer Consultative Forum.

Recommendations

Based on this feedback, and other learnings from the Pilot project Volunteering Victoria recommends:

- In line with the Emergency Management Reform white paper, the best response to an emergency remains mobilisation of the local community and its assets and capabilities.
- There is a clear and present requirement to support communities in their disaster response efforts by supplying an online portal which allows spontaneous volunteers to be directed somewhere to register in the event of an emergency.
- One government department must take responsibility through oversight of the state-wide infrastructure and capacity building for supporting communities to respond to spontaneous volunteers.
- Utilise the networks and capabilities developed through the HelpOUT and MSEV pilot projects through a community based and community contextualised program building the capability and capacity of local governments and community based volunteer involving organisations through network building and training. Volunteering Queensland's 'Building Local Capability' project provides a best practice example of this.
- Volunteering Victoria, as the peak body is uniquely placed to be the voice of community volunteering at the emergency service table including the Volunteer Consultative Forum and regional emergency management planning committees.

Appendix 2. Case Studies

Country Fire Authority Flexible Model of Volunteering

The Flexible Model of Volunteering pilot was developed after extensive research to support the Country Fire Authority (CFA) in Victoria to evolve with the communities we serve. The traditional model of volunteering potentially excludes parts of the community. A more flexible approach to volunteering will allow everyday people get involved in emergency management volunteering and increase the vibrancy of brigades and communities.

The pilot provides a structure that will facilitate flexibility, improve connectivity with the community before, during and after an emergency, and create opportunities for partnerships locally and at state level while maintaining the safety of the CFA, its members and the communities they serve. The pilot is strengthening relationships with key stakeholders including Volunteering Victoria and local volunteer focused organisations, each agency leveraging from the strengths and expertise of the other.

Engaging with the MSEV and HelpOUT programs works towards CFA's aim to inspire innovation within the service. Community members want to help during an emergency and often the time is not right or there are not enough resources to manage the potential volunteers. The HelpOUT database will be essential to record the details of potential spontaneous emergency volunteers. The MSEV program will also be essential to manage the spontaneous emergency volunteers.

CFA and Volunteering Victoria created a partnership to deliver MSEV training with the following objectives:

- To increase the number of registered MSEVs to 90;
- To build understanding within CFA of alternative models of volunteering;
- To foster collaborative networks and partnerships across VSOs, VIOs, government, Volunteering Australia and our inter-State colleagues in order to achieve our shared objectives;
- To support the Victorian community to better manage community and volunteer resources in the event of an emergency.

The outcomes from this training are dependent on the MSEV/HelpOUT programs continuing, ensuring potential spontaneous volunteers have somewhere to register, and that their skills can be utilised if required. These potential volunteer will have a sense of being valued even if their skills are not required.

Research and experiences are showing that resilient communities are made up of people who band together in the challenges times. This pilot aims to harness the potential of these people.



"In an emergency situation I should be able to utilise my skills and training by working as an MSEV. By doing this I would be able to assist other people to safely and effectively volunteer for the benefit of the whole community. "MSEV participant

Yarra Ranges Storm Clean-Up

A storm on 9 October 2016 left substantial tree debris across Knox, Cardinia and Yarra Ranges shires. A locally driven Community Clean-Up Campaign to assist storm affected residents with the removal of tree debris was one part of the recovery process. Over two weekends in December, seven volunteers from Volunteering Victoria's HelpOUT service assisted community members to remove tree debris from private properties to the nature strip, ready for collection by a council appointed contractor. As well as removing the debris this important work helped residents prepare for the upcoming bushfire season.

This was the first time Volunteering Victoria's HelpOUT service has been activated by Yarra Ranges Council as the service only launched in the Greater Geelong area in February 2016 and rolled out to the Eastern Metro and Hume regions in July 2016. HelpOUT supported the campaign by managing volunteers, human resource considerations, safety issues and management considerations to deploy 10 volunteers for 41 hours, literally helping out our local community.

Engaging with Volunteering Victoria and HelpOUT meant Yarra Ranges is now well placed to engage with volunteers before, during and after emergencies. The support, cost savings and improved preparedness by registering and connecting with the HelpOUT service cannot be underestimated in light of our changing climate and the increased frequency of natural disasters.



Before and after, removal of storm debris in the Yarra Ranges

Both residents and volunteers alike have clearly benefitted from this initiative:

"These guys were fantastic, there is no way I could have done this without them. Thank you" Yarra Ranges resident


"Thank you for allowing me to participate with this organisation. I was there for both Saturday and Sunday, and although the sites were quite large, the other volunteers were great to work with, whilst the coordinators were extremely professional and helpful! Don't hesitate to contact me in the future for any other projects that you may have going?" HelpOUT volunteer

Wye River Bird Boxes



HelpOUT
Volunteering in
an emergency

HelpOUT supports native wildlife renewal after Wye River bushfires



Volunteering Victoria's HelpOUT emergency volunteering service made its first volunteer match in the Wye River community at Easter 2016. Two volunteers, Neil Fisher and Brendon Brackin, partnered with Southern Otway Landcare Network to help distribute habitat kits to the area impacted by bushfires at Christmas 2015.

The habitat kits, known as 'bird boxes', provide relief to birdlife that lost food and shelter in the blaze which also destroyed 116 homes. A total of 50 boxes were couriered from Monbulk in Melbourne's East to Wye River by the HelpOUT volunteers. Neil said the process was simple and well organised, and his volunteering activity "went like a well-oiled machine". He is now encouraging others to register with HelpOUT.

Upon receiving Landcare's request for a volunteer driver, Volunteering Victoria searched its HelpOUT database for a volunteer who had offered to assist in both eastern Melbourne and the Colac Otway Shire area. Neil was the perfect fit – he lives in Melbourne's eastern suburbs and has a holiday home in Wye River which survived the recent fires. He recruited his Wye River neighbour Brendon and the pair delivered the boxes to Wye River CFA in time for the local Easter fete. Mike Nurse from Southern Otway Landcare also had full praise for the deployment, commending Volunteering Victoria's speed in coordinating the project and sourcing the volunteers.

Volunteering Victoria's HelpOUT emergency volunteering service operates year-round, registering offers of volunteer assistance from every day Victorians, and linking them to organisations working in affected communities when help is needed. Registration only takes a few minutes – visit volunteeringvictoria.org.au/helpout and sign up today.

HelpOUT supports identified community needs by partnering with the organisations working on the ground in affected communities. Organisations can contact Volunteering Victoria to find out more: helpout@volunteeringvictoria.org.au

HelpOUT is an initiative of Volunteering Victoria in partnership with Volunteering Geelong and Volunteering Queensland. Volunteering Victoria acknowledges the support of the Commonwealth and Victorian Governments through the Natural Disaster Resilience Grants Scheme.

Photo caption: Displaying the habitat kits to local residents at the Wye River CFA Fete, 2016. The HelpOUT volunteer Brendon Brackin (with sunglasses) and Neil Fisher (with sunglasses) are seen with the kits. Photo credit: Volunteering Victoria.

volunteeringvictoria.org.au/helpout



Volunteering Victoria

Golden Plains Shire embeds volunteers in emergency management



Golden Plains Shire embeds volunteers in emergency management

" Golden Plains Shire experienced a large scale emergency on 27 March 2013 with a destructive bushfire in Dereel "

The bushfire claimed 18 dwellings, nearly 1300 hectares of land across 119 properties, and affected families, individuals and community groups alike.

The subsequent response, relief and recovery efforts would not have been possible without the significant contribution of volunteers but it became clear the Shire as a whole was not prepared for the volunteer coordination required.

Following the event they conducted a community survey to identify the issues and the gaps in their emergency volunteer management. Issues identified were lack of coordination, no registration processes, no defined roles or management structures, no guidelines or resources and no training and support for volunteers. The Shire has now set up systems that mobilise a pre-registered and screened team of local council volunteers who can be the first volunteers in an emergency who have the skills and training to support other spontaneous volunteers in the relief and recovery phases.

HOW IT WORKS!



- Two Emergency Management Operation Manuals for the Manager of Disaster Volunteers (MDV) and the Disaster Volunteers Coordination Team (DVCT) members
- Emergency Volunteer Induction Manual and registration documentation
- Position descriptions established for roles that are common across a range of disaster situations
- Emergency Volunteer Administration box that is accommodated in their Relief and Recovery Trailer
- Five dedicated Volunteer Support Areas established within the Relief and Recovery centres
- A structure that engages up to 20 pre-registered, screened and trained volunteers that form a Disaster Volunteer Coordination Team (DVCT)
- Management structures that incorporate the utilisation of MSEV and HelpOUT programs
- Data based program that captures deployment activity of volunteers

For more information about HelpOUT visit:
<http://volunteeringvictoria.org.au/emergency-volunteering/>

HelpOUT is an initiative of Volunteering Victoria in partnership with Volunteering Geelong and Volunteering Queensland.

MSEV is an initiative of Volunteering Victoria in partnership with Volunteering Geelong and Australian Red Cross. Volunteering Victoria acknowledges the support of the Commonwealth and Victorian Governments through the Natural Disaster Resilience Grants Scheme.

Golden Plains Shire has been a key stakeholder in Volunteering Victoria's HelpOUT project and the Managers of Spontaneous Emergency Volunteers (MSEV) project and has embedded these program structures and systems into their internal emergency management processes.

volunteeringvictoria.org.au/helpout

Volunteering Victoria

MSEVs support Colac Otway Shire

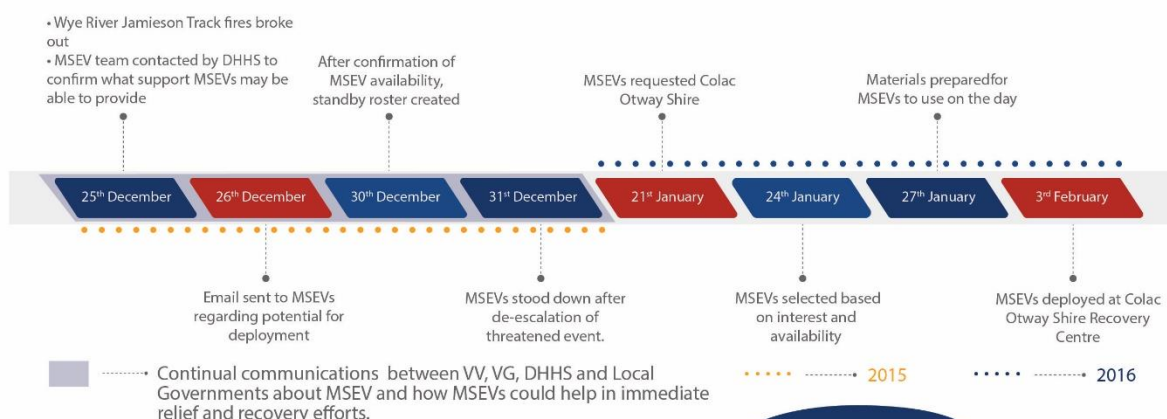


MSEVs support Colac Otway Shire

The Manager of Spontaneous Emergency Volunteers (MSEV) program has been designed to help build community resilience by recruiting, training, supporting, deploying and debriefing a workforce of skilled manager of volunteers to assist during emergency relief and recovery activities.

On 3rd February, MSEVs from the G21 region were deployed to the Colac Otway Shire (COS) Recovery Centre to respond to enquiries from people wishing to volunteer in the region after the Christmas fires. Jill Rush and Marina Power worked tirelessly all day making over 130 calls. The purpose of these calls was to thank people for their interest and offers to volunteer, to give them an update on the status of recovery work in the region and to inform them of the new HelpOUT service launched in the G21 region on 1st February 2016.

The MSEVs did a fantastic job and both COS and the Department of Health and Human Service commended them for their efforts on the day. This successful deployment was an endorsement of the program and demonstrated how the skill sets of the MSEV team, add value to recovery efforts.



"Excellent to receive such positive feedback on the day and to know the effort was worthwhile" - MSEV

"People were very grateful to be acknowledged" - MSEV

The numbers

2 MSEVs deployed
130 phone calls made
49 people showed interest in HelpOUT



MSEV is an initiative of Volunteering Victoria in partnership with Volunteering Geelong and Australian Red Cross.

Volunteering Victoria acknowledges the support of the Commonwealth and Victorian Governments through the Natural Disaster Resilience Grants Scheme.

For more information visit <http://volunteeringvictoria.org.au/emergency-volunteering/managers-of-spontaneous-emergency-volunteers/>



volunteeringvictoria.org.au/helpout

