Challenges and opportunities for the emergency management sector in the next 5 to 10 years

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Change & adaptation

Opportunities & challenges in emergency management volunteering

Australian Emergency Management Volunteer Forum

A changing world

The old and the new

Changing nature of emergency volunteering

Conclusions

Volunteering in Australia

- 6.4mill. people in Australia volunteer

- $200 bill. per annum contribution to the Australian economy

- Greater economic contribution than mining, agriculture & retail

- 500,000 volunteers in 'emergency management'

O'Dwyer, University of Adelaide

The value of volunteers in emergency management

Australian Emergency Management Volunteer Forum (AEMVF)

- National representative body for emergency management volunteers, their managers and organisations & key reference point on volunteer issues for ANZEMC

- Formed in 2001 as a result of recommendation from the National Volunteer Summit, supported by AG's

- Focus on volunteer concerns and requirements; current and future, including
  - Training
  - Legal
  - Recognition
  - Partnerships

- Development of Volunteer Leadership Program (in partnership with AEMI)

- Key contribution to National Emergency Management Volunteer Action Plan

- Research/projects on topics including;
  - Cost of volunteering
  - Management of spontaneous volunteers
  - Legal issues in emergency management volunteering

A changing world
Influences on volunteering

- Climate change

- Demographic change

- Societal change

- Policy change/evolution

- Technological developments

- Changing nature of volunteering

Hazard scape/Climate change

- Higher fire danger days (more and greater intensity) in South east Australia

- More intense rainfall in some areas, other areas will become drier

- Uncertainty over what will happen with Cyclones

Demographic changes

- Adding a Canberra sized city to the population each year

- Ageing population

- 2.2million people in the age range 15-64 or around 15% of the population have a disability

- 27% of Australians were born overseas

- 20% of people speak a language other than English

- Mobility of employment

Societal changes

- Working longer

- Commuting more

- Less cash

- More on-line connection

- Different motivations and approaches to volunteering

Policy evolution

National Strategy for Disaster Resilience (NSDR)

Resilience to disasters is part of strengthening individual and community resilience more broadly, enabling people to function more effectively in regard to a wide range of daily challenges

NSDR - A new way of thinking?

• Holistic approaches which incorporate emergency and disaster aspects

• Participatory approaches

• Joined up planning, breaking down silos within and between organisations and sectors

• Maximising linkages and collaboration

• Learning from other sectors

NSDR - Some key challenges

•Moving away from a hazard and risk focus to one of more resilient individuals and communities

•Coordinating diversity of effort to maximise outcomes

•Whole of government v. whole of community

•Promoting resilience through enhancement/integration of traditional areas of emergency management together with new ways of working

•Matching funding and resources to enable a new approach

Volunteering in emergency management

Traditional & emerging approaches

Traditional
- Focus on Prevention/Preparedness/Response/Recovery
- High levels of government funding, particularly for response activities
- Strong governance models, driven by state/territory governments
- Predominance of command/control and understanding of emergency management
- High levels of training/skills development

Emerging
- NSDR; collaborative approach across government, business, community
- Changing nature of volunteering
- Use of social media
- Reactive, intuitive & innovative

Traditional approaches/organisations

- Rural fire services

- State/territory emergency services

- Larger not for profits

Traditional approaches/organisations

Attributes
- Well organised and trained
- Skilled and disciplined
- Command/control
- Committed
- Established and highly regarded within community

Challenges
- Organisational size and scale
- Traditional solutions
- Sustainability

Solutions/enablers
- Best suited to well defined, technical, skills based roles

Emerging approaches/organisations

- Mud Army

- Firefoxes

- Blazeaid

- NZ student army

- Etc.

Emerging approaches/organisations

Attributes
- Enthusiasm, innovation, flexibility, nimbleness
- Mobilise around an event or activity (episodic volunteering)

Challenges
- May work independently or form groups
- Don't necessarily understand governance structures, existing roles and responsibilities
- Personal impacts and responsibility

Solutions/enablers
- Efforts would be enhanced through greater understanding of emergency context

Spontaneous/episodic volunteering - Drivers

- The role of the media

- Timing of offers of help

- The importance of the event

- Needing to help

- 'I'll do anything'

Spontaneous/episodic volunteering – Why?

- 81% Media coverage

- 62% Talking to others

- 53% Call for volunteers

- 44% Size or enormity of event

- 86% Needing to do something to help

- 39% Feeling useful instead of distressed

- The need to talk

Spontaneous/episodic volunteering – When?

- 78% within the first week

- 12% on the first day

- 45% within the first few days

- 21% later in the first week

Balancing the need **to** help with the need **for** help

The future: Challenges and developments

- Maximising volunteer opportunities and input

- Sustainable volunteering models
  - Flexible governance
  - Meeting economic challenges
  - Changing and adapting funding models

- Harnessing enthusiasm & commitment

- Recognising and adapting to community change

- Governance systems and processes that support and enable rather than block and stifle

- Harnessing corporate involvement

- Providing newer volunteers/emergent groups with context and insight into emergencies

- Understanding and utilising technology more effectively
  - Social media