

# Adaptive Leadership for Volunteer Managers



Change and impact

# Mega-trends 1

- Digital age
  - tools
  - culture
- Time
  - episodic
  - events
  - mixed experiences
- Legislation and risk
- Compliance volunteering (?)

# Mega-trends 2

- Complex service delivery models
- Corporate
- Leadership
- Informal
- Universities
  - student volunteering / engagement
  - service learning
- Transitions
- Experience

# Adaptive leadership 101

What is adaptive leadership?

“Adaptive leaders focus on **the disparity between what we hope to achieve and our current reality.**”  
(Dr.Heifetz 2006)



# Adaptive leadership 101

We do this by...

“Challenging current systems and behaviours which are not effective, and facilitating the creation of new solutions and ways of working through **collaboration** and **participation**. (Beerel, 1998; Owens, 2004)



# Adaptive leadership 101

**Adaptive leadership** is called for in times of change and uncertainty,

- where existing structures, systems, and procedures are no longer appropriate;
- where innovation, boundary pushing and creativity are needed;
- when one must operate outside their area of expertise and authority.

# Adaptive challenge

Task	Technical	Adaptive
<b>Direction</b>	Provide problem definition and solution	Identify the adaptive challenge; frame key question and issues
<b>Protection</b>	Protect from external threats	Disclose external threats
<b>Order</b>		
<b>Orientation</b>	Orient people to their current roles	Disorient current roles and resist orienting people into new roles too quickly
<b>Conflict</b>	Mitigation and conflict resolution	Allowing for conflict to emerge and explore its causes
<b>Norm</b>	Maintain social, cultural and behavioural norms	Challenge social, cultural and behavioural norms or allow them to be challenged

# UnitingCare Community experience

## Issues facing the organisation:

- Differing practises for managing volunteer involvement
- No consistent guiding principles and practises across the organisation
- No shared goals/end game
- Unrecognised pockets of excellence
- No sharing!
- Lost opportunities, e.g. young people, eHelping!



# What we did

- Asked everyone what was going on!
- Naming the challenges (adaptive and technical)
- Asked the organisation “what next?”
- Reported on the responses, with recommendations
- The journey begins
- Resourcing the change and developing accountability
- Remaining aspirational—things always change, challenge, and improve.

# What we did

- Identify and name the adaptive challenge
- Engage stakeholders across the organisation
- Work from the balcony and the dance floor
- Act as a catalyst rather than problem solver
- Focus on values
- Initiate a process of change, experiment, and take risks smartly.

# Action Learning Group

- Hasten slowly
- Recognising that volunteer management has a strategic role in the organisation
- Support and solidarity is as important as training