



**Volunteering ACT**

**Operational Plan for the Management of Spontaneous  
Volunteers under  
the ACT Community Recovery Sub – Plan**

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# **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<b><u>PREAMBLE</u></b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b><u>BACKGROUND - INFORMATION ON VACT'S INVOLVEMENT AND EXPERIENCE OF THE JANUARY 18, 2003 EMERGENCY.</u></b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b><u>LESSONS LEARNT</u></b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b><u>CONSULTATION</u></b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b><u>OVERSEAS MODELS</u></b> .....	<b>20</b>
<b><u>MANAGING SPONTANEOUS VOLUNTEERS IN TIMES OF EMERGENCY</u></b>	<b>21</b>
<b><u>THE PLAN</u></b> .....	<b>25</b>
<b><u>CONCLUSION</u></b> .....	<b>34</b>

## **Preamble**

The ACT Recovery Bushfire Recovery Task force identified the need for the development of an Operational Plan for the Management of Spontaneous Volunteers under the ACT Community Recovery Sub – Plan and commissioned Volunteering ACT, the peak body for volunteers and those organisations involving or having an interest in volunteers, in the ACT and region, to write the plan.

Volunteering ACT, (VACT), as the peak body for volunteering in the ACT and the SE of NSW, works to advance volunteer effort in the ACT and its region. It represents the diverse views and needs of the entire volunteer movement while promoting and facilitating the activity of volunteering as one of enduring social, cultural and economic value to the community.

It is part of an extensive network of volunteer resource and referral agencies and has strong relationships across the community, government and private sectors. Its diverse membership is representative of the full cross section of volunteer activity

As the peak body for volunteering in the ACT region it represent the interests of all Volunteers and of all those who work with volunteers. It promotes supports and resources volunteer effort and provides a range of services which include advice and assistance with:

- representation and promotion
- advice and information
- developing and evaluating volunteer programs
- policies and procedures
- selecting recruiting and retaining volunteer staff
- preparing volunteers for specific roles
- supporting and supervising volunteers
- accredited and non accredited training for managers and volunteers
- addressing difficult issues
- developing an employee or corporate volunteering program

It links people in the community with appropriate volunteer opportunities and supports managers of volunteers. It provides the answers questions about insurance, industrial issues and volunteer management standards. VACT has the tools and resources for managers and hands on staff to enable them to go from policy to practice.

It conducts regular meetings for managers to network with others in the volunteering profession, and opportunities for volunteers to be recognised and celebrated, such as National Volunteer Week and International Volunteer Day.

VACT was well positioned therefore to explore the experiences of those who confronted the issue of spontaneous volunteers on and post January 18 2003, to examine the factors influencing their management as part of any response to any future emergency, through consultation with local stakeholders and interstate and international colleagues, and to devise a management plan.

## **Background - Information on VACT's involvement and experience of the January 18, 2003 emergency.**

Volunteering ACT, (VACT), was not part of the sub plan for emergencies in the ACT prior to Jan 18. and initially experienced considerable difficulty in ascertaining the role it was expected to play, notwithstanding it being aware that it had an obvious role in managing the issue of spontaneous volunteers and assisting agencies with their needs for additional volunteer staff. On the Sunday VACT called un paid and unpaid staff to staff the phones, built an emergency data base for registering the spontaneous volunteers and make an attempt to contact key agencies.

Many organisations were affected by the fires directly, either through loss of access or property or staff absences and, although in need of extra volunteer staff, were unable to be contacted immediately, or when contacted were not able to take on additional unpaid or paid staff because of lack of capacity to do so.

Many people came forward to volunteer their services, they phoned or presented themselves at VACT, phoned Canberra Connect and radio stations, attended evacuation Centres, contacted the various police stations, ESB and the Recovery Centre once it was established.

Communication was difficult and although VACT utilised Canberra Connect, the Recovery Centre, all available websites including its own and all other forms of media it was very difficult to send clear consistent messages to the public, not for profit and Government organisations and departments, the media and business.

Due to technical and human difficulties, e.g. VACT did not have enough telephone capacity, there was a constant turn over of staff at Canberra Connect and the Recovery Centre, and communication was therefore extremely difficult. The records or presenting volunteers were scant to practically non existent in some cases. VACT had to adapt its database several times. It built on-line and hard copy forms for the use of the spontaneous volunteers and the organisations that would possibly need to utilise these volunteers, with the assistance of the federal department of FACS.

VACT became a place to contact re the donation of goods, used and new, and for advice re numbers of matters unrelated to its core business, e.g. a local radio station asked VACT to coordinate the donations of ice with the recipients. Many people asked VACT to provide them with volunteers directly to transport people or goods. Canberra Connect and the Recovery Centre requested its assistance in this way from time to time. Insurance for volunteers was becoming problematic. In addition VACT received enquires from people wanting advice about removing trees from their gardens or nature strip and the details of tradespersons to carry out electrical or plumbing work.

The Government decided to call together a 'Charities' sub committee at that time to coordinate the donation of goods. VACT was asked to sit on that sub committee along with the major charities, service club representatives, ACTCOSS and the ACT Chamber of Commerce. It met weekly for some weeks.

As Belconnen came under threat and messages were broadcast about yard clean up etc people who felt vulnerable rang VACT about their situation. This then escalated to people in non affected suburbs across Canberra.

VACT called a meeting of Regional Community Services, Anglicare and DEWR to try to coordinate some response capacity utilising the spontaneous volunteers, through a joint insurance policy as had been successfully trialled and accomplished in Belconnen, see below. This was not successful at the time. However later on the Recovery Centre contacted VACT for advice on the eve of a public education program roll out as it was feared that this may provoke anxiety amongst vulnerable people.

A small committee of Handyhelp, VACT and Regional Community Services was formed. VACT contacted all Service Clubs at the time to gather intelligence on available volunteers from that source.

Below is an overview of what transpired over the next 4 to 6 weeks, and in some the longer term.

### **How many people**

Over 1000 came forward to offer their services, (there may well have been more who spontaneously volunteered elsewhere), not all through VACT, some went directly to Evacuation Centres, the Emergency Services Bureau, police stations and the Recovery Centre. Of those who offered their services VACT registered 850 on a specially created a data base.

### **What kind of people**

People of all ages and professions came forward to assist from those in their teens, people aged between 20 years through to older retired persons. There were tradespeople, professionals, public servants, small business owners, corporate teams, service clubs, a sporting team and their manager and even politicians on leave.

### **Availability**

Some people were only available immediately, as the emergency occurred in the middle of the school holidays, others stated they wanted to do something immediately as they were feeling powerless in the face of such an emergency. Some volunteers continued to work in the recovery process for a number of weeks after the event, whilst 200 people on the database were offered outdoor work as part of the garden restoration project.

### **Volunteering ACT Response**

- Built a data base of 850 names addresses and the details of their individual skills in order that we could match them to positions when the need arose, approx 450 of these persons were placed in the immediate aftermath and a number since.
- Advertised on the ACT Government, VACT and ABC web pages and in the media to assist individuals wanting to volunteer and direct them to register

with VACT as well as advising organisations that we had a register of volunteers with a wide range of skill that were ready and willing to volunteer,

- Developed a special page on our website for the bushfire recovery together with application forms for organisations and prospective volunteers and general bushfire information.
- Conducted a clean up day in Belconnen, with Belconnen Rotary and Belconnen Community Service, for people concerned about the fire threat the 2<sup>nd</sup> weekend, this was a service offered to frail aged, persons with disabilities, single parents and those recovering from or suffering acute illness at the time.
- Organised the provision of services for those who were affected by the fire e.g. the cleaning up of yards and removal of burnt debris.
- Provided daily advice, to both Government and non government agencies, regarding volunteer management issues and volunteer insurance in relation to spontaneous volunteer and spontaneous activity by community members, e.g. the problem of teams of unattached and uninsured people taking chain saws out into affected areas to fell trees and branches in private gardens.
- Provided ACT Government with information and advice on managing donations of time and materials, obtained from colleagues overseas.
- Was asked to join the Charities sub committee formed initially to handle issues surrounding donations of goods. Later this committee included the discussion of issues surrounding the donation of time and skills on its Agenda.
- Assisted the major shopping centres to contact volunteers and organisation to invite them to a Thank U Day by:-
  1. contacting the 850 people who were on the VACT database to invite them to the event, whether they had been matched with a volunteer position or not
  2. contacting all the volunteer organisations that had been involved in the emergency or recovery process to advise them of the Thank U day.
- Sat on the Vulnerable Persons sub committee and assisted with strategies to respond to any anxiety created by the Government's fire awareness campaign
- Met with ACTCOSS and several other stakeholders to review lessons learnt from the emergency and recovery
- Held Summit during MAY 2003 at which a new objective for the "*Agenda on Volunteering 2003 to 2007*" was adopted by over 80 delegates, i.e. "*To work with the ACT Government and relevant Departments to develop a Management plan for spontaneous volunteers, to form part of the Government's Emergency Management Plan*".
- Commenced consultations with all stakeholders
- Joined Community Sub plan Committee
- Represented Volunteering Australia at a Disaster and Emergency Group Meeting of Association of Services Supporting Australia's Families, Member

of Families Australia, Lifeline Australia, Member of Families Australia Consultant, Community Services, The Salvation Army Domestic Operations, Australian Red Cross National Manager Service Integration Shop, Centrelink, Community Branch, Department of Family and Community Services, ACTCOSS , Relationships Australia, Emergency Management Authority and Younger Veteran's & VVCS, Department of Veteran's Affairs

### **Placements**

During the recovery process VACT provided volunteers from its data base to the following organisations, Dept. of Education, Youth and Family Services, Lifeline, Recovery Centre, St Vincent's de Paul, St. John's Care, Canberra Connect, CMD ( Chief Minister's Department), Urban Services, NALAG (National Association for Loss and Grief), ACTOSS (ACT Council of Social Service), Dog Companion Club. In addition in partnership with the Belconnen Rotary Club and Belconnen Community Service we rostered 60 volunteers to do hazard reduction around the homes of frail, aged and people with disabilities whilst Belconnen was still on high alert.

Some 450 of the spontaneous volunteers were placed during the recovery process. Not all those who came forward or registered were able to be placed as we were unable to find a position that was suitable to their skills or in other cases the prospective volunteers had returned to their paid positions and were no longer available. However some volunteers were re contacted and utilised for the garden clean up.

### **Ongoing Work that took place over a number of months**

- Recruiting and referring volunteers to Backyard Clean up and to assist vulnerable people
- Continuing advice and assistance re volunteer accident insurance, public liability and volunteer management
- Contributing to Charities Sub Committee
- Consultation on Sub Plan
- Discussions with various Service Clubs re possible support role
- Drawing up the VACT Operational Plan in consultation with stakeholders
- Agreed an MOU with ACT Government
- Consultation with interstate and overseas colleagues in relation to the management and training of spontaneous volunteers
- Presentation of a w/shop at the EMA National Conference in September 2003 and attendance at Conference.
- Preparation to deliver Workshop at Volunteering Australia's National Conference June 2004.
- Preparing paper for VACT annual Summit on the "*Agenda*".
- Examined several sites in order to identify suitable Government buildings that can be assigned as a "Volunteer Reception Centre".

## **Lessons Learnt**

Following the emergency there was a huge response from people wanting to volunteer their services. Unfortunately there was no plan in place to deal with this outpouring of community expression. There was a lack of a system to manage the volunteers, infrastructure, including coordination, insurance coverage, and logistics to link areas of need with offers of help.

*The need was identified to have a place for volunteers to register, away from the affected area. This volunteer reception area should be charged with the management and coordination of these volunteers.*

Information provided by media and other forms of communication was confusing and communication was inconsistent and patchy.

*There is a need for a clear and consistent communication strategy which will carry a clear message about what to do if people want to volunteer or donate goods or money.*

A high turnover of staff during the early stages of the emergency meant that there was a lack of continuity of staffing and a lack of corporate knowledge, this caused additional problems with communication and some disinformation, also some distress among the more vulnerable groups. There was also a turnover of volunteers.

*There needs to be a plan in place which allows for staff, paid and unpaid to be relieved by appropriately trained and experienced staff. Care must be taken to ensure relief staff are thoroughly briefed and that information is recorded accurately and clearly.*

People with disabilities and the elderly were disadvantaged by communication difficulties and some persons remained isolated in their own homes unaware how or where to access assistance or even aware of what was happening around them. A number of elderly people who were unable to clear rubbish from their properties became distressed and vulnerable.

*A permanent strategy needs to be put in place through one central body; both in terms of initial assistance and to provide on-going support e.g. Handyhelp, or the Regional Community Services to assist these people. Set up voluntary register for people who will be contacted and offered appropriate support in case of a disaster. This would include people with disabilities, the frail aged; those from non-English speaking background. Develop protocols for assisting vulnerable groups in disaster situations such as people with disabilities, the frail aged; those from a non-English speaking background e.g. create separate emergency contact numbers for major languages with information about this service available through Canberra Connect.*

Following the emergency the major charities and VACT were inundated with generous donations of goods. Dealing with the donations was difficult due to the large number of donations, the poor quality of many of the goods, lack of storage, no immediate demand for many of the donations and agreed coordination. Donors and

recipients often had no way to transport the goods or else wanted to control the manner in which the donation was handled.

*There is need to identify a centralised place, or places, where the donation and distribution of goods can be managed. This could be managed by a coalition of the major charities. Again a communication strategy would include a public announcement re the need for donations of money rather than of goods.*

Non Government organisations staff, paid and unpaid experienced considerable stress on several levels, loss of facilities and communications, suspension of normal business to respond to the emergency, new and additional clients, long and extended work hours for paid and unpaid staff, staff personally affected directly by the firestorm through loss of property, staff suffering from a sense of helplessness. There was no process in place to assist these organisations to conduct regular daily debriefing, replace and relieve staff, provide counselling for staff.

*Agreed processes and resources need to be in place to assist non Government organisations to relieve staff and to carry out critical debriefing.*

There were serious issues highlighted in relation to risk to injury to unaffiliated volunteers and the lack of capacity of organisations to work with them because of the lack of insurance cover. Additionally organisations own “contracted outcomes” and their funding agreements prevent flexibility and the capacity to respond. An example of the quite serious risk, that individuals exposed themselves and others to, was exemplified by the following:

A group broadcast a call over the radio for individuals to bring their chain saws to a certain suburb, where they could join ‘chain saw gangs’ in the work of clearing burnt trees from properties. This group, and the individuals they recruited in this manner, had no volunteer accident insurance for this activity and it was uncertain as to what public liability cover was available to them.

*Any future plan must include an insurance package to cover unaffiliated volunteers in their placements which that can be activated at very short notice and the ability of organisations to negotiate flexibility in the way they work with new clients who may not fall within there funding agreements.*

## **Consultation**

### **Methodology**

VACT has consulted with its stakeholders in preparing the following plan in the following ways

- conducted a joint Community, Business, Union and Government Summit
- held 3 focus groups involving a cross section of stakeholders
- participated in joint ACTCOSS, community groups consultation
- Participated in consultation regarding the way in which people with disabilities were assisted during the emergency, particularly but not exclusively those in SAAP accommodation
- held a meeting of regional community services and charities
- held a meeting with representatives of the 3 major service clubs.
- held a workshop at the EMA national conference , attended by 60 emergency service agencies across Australia
- attended a training course in emergency management at the EMA training facilities
- Consulted with NSW colleagues\* regarding research undertaken post NSW Fires and covering a number of other emergencies.
- consulted with International colleagues in Britain Asia and the Americas e.g. the Points of Light Foundation and FEMA
- attended the “Lessons Learnt” presentation by FEMA
- consulted with VACT Council of Advice consisting of representatives from business, unions, public sector, Multicultural, women’s and youth affairs, public relations and sport
- Consulted with VACT Stakeholder group which is made up of one representative from each major volunteer sector and with “Agenda Implementation Group”.
- held a number of one to one interviews with key personnel at ESB, the ACT Police Service, Red Cross, St John Ambulance, Dept of Housing , Disability and Community Services, ACTCOSS, Service Club representative, Greening Australia, business representatives, Canberra Labor Club Group regarding increasing telephone capacity and Department of Education, Youth and Family Services.

Note: a planned focus group for health and disability workers unable to be held yet due to the Department being unable to arrange the meeting in the time frame.

\*COVERRS, Coordinators of Volunteer Education, Referral and Resource Services, full report attached.

## *Findings and Recommendations*

### *Focus Groups*

#### *Issues with utilising spontaneous volunteers*

Participants identified the following:

At the time spontaneous volunteers took up valuable staff time. Skills of volunteers presenting at the Evacuation Centre were unknown and they were a distraction from key focus for management staff. Evacuation centres and the Recovery Centre staff needed to direct spontaneous volunteers to other organisations as they had not been formally interviewed nor had referee checks. There needs to be a centralised intake point with hotline, etc. There was no plan.

Spontaneous volunteers created further work and further crowding, the 'structure' was being 'thrown out'. How do we re-direct them? We need a plan, sufficiently resourced to manage the influx, e.g. a volunteer base to manage the volunteers. Not to turn them away, but to find **something** for them to do. There needs to be a balance between actions with process, e.g. getting them to do something vs. just filling in a registration form. Volunteers may not be needed at the specific time of an emergency but are needed post-event. How do they register? Who does the paper work and record keeping?

How can we implement such a plan? There is a funding issue, who will fund the infrastructure and the management? What would be the scope of an organisation managing these volunteers?

Concern was expressed about confused communication at the time of the January 18 emergency. There were difficulties experienced in collecting data. There was no readily accessible referral contact point for volunteers in public domain; there was a need for a way of registering the volunteers.

There were difficulties in communicating; it was hard to stay informed about the bigger picture. Lack of knowledge could lead to incorrect advice/information being given out. There was poor coordination of volunteers workers with the agencies present at the Recovery Centre

There has to be someone 'in charge' giving direction, there is a need for a chain of command with telephone numbers, etc, briefing for all agencies regarding the purpose of coordinating spontaneous volunteers. At the time the problem was overwhelming, frustrating, there was a lack of control, high emotions, a sense of urgency, this could impact on the job being carried out safely. Local knowledge is paramount in this situation, especially as some personnel who are utilised in emergencies will not be local.

Need to make sure the volunteers do not interfere with the delivery of professional services. How can organisations practically use their skills and give them appropriate

tasks? Volunteers may not have the skills needed. They need clear direction. The job may be too small/too big for the spontaneous volunteer

The skills of the presenting volunteers may not be appropriate to situation/task. There is a need for validation of their qualifications, untrained; unqualified people are often a hindrance. How do organisations deal with untrained volunteers when there is no knowledge of their skills or if they have non-specific skills, when there is no time to teach the volunteers or assign duties?

There are insurance issues; the safety of these volunteers must be assured. There are currently limits to what organisations are insured to do, or allowed to do, under their contracts. Volunteers had a lack of awareness of safety aspects leading to safety issues with new volunteers and untrained staff and organisation exposed to liability. Cross border issues exist.

There is the issue of high turnover of volunteers; therefore paid staff members continually having to explain the process from the start. Different “values” led to inconsistent service and assistance, e.g. One spontaneous volunteer phoned x agency to offer their home as emergency accommodation, was politely received however the offer was not subsequently taken up, (*This story was repeated several times over*). It was difficult to keep people ‘under control’ at a time of anger and confusion, how do we deal with conflict and complaints? There was a fear that some volunteers may leave posts, time is needed to train, manage and to support the volunteers. There was a concern that a danger existed should there be volunteers with ‘vested interests’.

There was no process for acceptance of goods being donated or for handing out donated goods. A facility is needed to accommodate the volunteers and donated goods.

### **The impact on volunteer management**

Participants identified the following:

There is a high turnover of volunteers and paid staff and the work is demanding. There is insufficient debriefing, staff 'burnt out' from working long hours. Regular volunteers feel “pulled between home and volunteering” and these ‘regular’ volunteer are not so readily available now.

Managing volunteers is always time consuming. It is difficult to maintain a constant level of expertise. In times of an emergency it is difficult to manage the queries/questions that visitors ask the volunteers. The volunteers need to be constantly aware of the latest news. Telephone lines clogged with offers of help. Dedicated volunteer phone lines were needed.

There is a conflict between the time taken to manage volunteers vs. assisting those who need help and to time to communicate within and between organisations re needs and the filling of needs, tracking injuries and accidents.

Time was needed to maintain a supportive environment for everyone, to manage the anxiety of the volunteers, this took emotional energy and time, and people became exhausted. It was difficult to maintain 'business as usual', as the emergency had a negative impact on normal business duties, affecting regular volunteers who were withdrawn from their usual tasks. Many paid staff and regular volunteers stopped their normal tasks to work on the disaster, regular volunteer staff were put on "hold" until well after the event

Staff experienced 'burn out', felt they had done enough as the recovery period lengthened. Wanted to hand over but there was no relief. Believed it was inappropriate to hand over to a people who didn't have the corporate knowledge, concern was expressed about consistency. Consistency did suffer when relief staff did replace regular staff. It was difficult to arrange any leave for staff. There was/is a long term psychological impact on paid staff and volunteers. Volunteers needed to be demobilised and recognised.

Organisations need to be trained in an 'all hazards' approach. CISM - Critical Incident Stress Debriefing should have been instituted. Emergency response can have a long-term negative impact on wellbeing.

### **What is needed to be able to utilise Spontaneous Volunteers?**

Participants identified the following:

Preparedness is the key, need to consider compatibility, redundancy, capacity and portability. Organisations need be able to access more capacity to undertake prior training/briefing of staff in preparation for emergencies and to understand their role. They need additional capacity to managing regular volunteers, to train 'regular' volunteers to be able to manage influx of 'casual' volunteers.

A wider community communication strategy is needed to give immediate information to those who want to volunteer including

- Media strategy to get information out
- A Web site that can be called on, maybe Canberra Connect
- Communication strategy to inform all stakeholders how to manage/re-direct spontaneous volunteers as they present.

Need a central coordinating body, with a good command and control structure, organised and prepared with procedures and strategies to be able to managing the influx of "well intentioned" people. With the infrastructure to receive spontaneous volunteers, e.g. phone lines, broadcast telephone numbers, personnel to staff phones, etc. Good communication is needed to keep track of events as they transpire.

Need a centralised response with infrastructure to meet demand and utilise spontaneous volunteers which would appropriately meet the volunteer needs and understand the motivation to assist e.g. are they may be overcome with trauma/anxiety?

This body need to know where to send volunteer when they register and have a registration system for spontaneous volunteers which has-

1. an identified and specific intake procedure, a sign-up process, which captures the volunteers' details, taking into account privacy, Issues. i.e. a privacy statement on every form to be signed by the volunteer
2. trained paid staff in working with volunteers
3. volunteer tasks simply outlined with clear instruction for the volunteers
4. insurance capacity
5. capacity to I.D. perhaps by using a system of bar-coding, magnetic strips
6. sufficient IT capacity
7. First Aid kits, sun block, hats

Sufficient staff is need to oversee spontaneous volunteers in the work place and efficiently handle the influx of volunteers. All staff, not just managers, need be kept up to date on the Community Recovery Plan. An incident management protocol needs to be in place; perhaps a one-page flow chart can assign work groups to particular areas of need. A system need to be in place to follow up and thank the spontaneous volunteers to ensure these volunteers feel valued. Some volunteers won't be able to be utilised, we need to be able to respond to needs of volunteers – engage/educate/thank, look after their 'welfare' needs, and listen to the volunteers, dealing with frustration and anger.

Organisations need to be assured that appropriate relief is available, e.g. the capacity to roster paid and unpaid staff to avoid "Burn-Out". There is a need for flexibility, e.g. to be able to move spontaneous volunteers to area of need. All volunteers must be provided with fulfilling and meaningful activities.

Need a post-disaster response for spontaneous volunteers e.g. counselling services; also a strategy for closure.

### **Volunteering ACT should establish**

- a 'Call Centre' for spontaneous volunteers and take control of the coordinated training and management of the spontaneous volunteers' utilisation.  
*\*Note this role is underpinned by policies and procedures and sanctioned by the 'Emergency Recovery Plan'*
- provide a public education program pre-disaster about appropriate volunteering, timing of response, skills needed.
- provide training for public servants on how to manage volunteers
- assist organisations with policies and procedures for inducting new volunteers
- a register of volunteer positions in times of emergencies
- a system to check the currency of the volunteers' qualifications; check if the volunteer has police check clearance, any manual handling training?
- a 'hotline' for organisations to contact, separate from volunteer hotline including contact arrangements for all support organisations to activate emergency response and contact for their volunteers
- have agreements with service clubs to utilise their volunteers

- ensure insurance and “indemnity arrangements” are in place for spontaneous volunteers
- coordinate information and support for people with disabilities
- develop a register of organisations and roles for volunteers and matching service to match the volunteers with the registered jobs
- a volunteer data base – online if possibility
- an orientation/basic training course for the volunteers before assigning to tasks
- ID volunteers
- set up dedicated telephone lines, considering emergency power, etc.
- have a system whereby volunteers can be followed up after the event to be debriefed, if the organisation hasn’t done this, and receive formal recognition for their work

### **Other organisations can –**

- create linkages with Canberra Connect
- have a centralised hot line
- pre-train staff to divert calls (re-direct)
- be aware how spontaneous volunteers can be used
- include in any media releases information about how to volunteer – or not to volunteer
- raise awareness of all-hazards response
- pre-planning, e.g. with Service Clubs, for disaster response e.g. Service Clubs to have arrangements in place to respond to calls from any frontline organisation, and have arrangements in place so that frontline organisations know who to call.
- be familiar with Disaster Recovery Community Sub- Plan, ensure key staff is aware of their roles and hold regular drills.
- maintain a comprehensive contact list of staff and skills
- incorporate fire drills/safety/operation plan in ongoing OH&S strategy and awareness training
- develop telephone tree/s

### **Possible roles for additional volunteers in emergency and recovery stages**

Participants identified the following:

- assist with the process of administrating appeal funds
- Skilled It support
- Skilled Data entry operators
- Telephone answerers
- Admin, clerical, e.g. note takers
- Registration teams
- Family tracking
- Couriers
- Runners
- Transport drivers, car and bus
- Drivers assistants
- People to supervise parking at critical centres, direct traffic and/or direct people
- Outdoor workers to carry out pre and post clean up

- Physical tasks, loading and unloading goods
- Labourers/assemblers
- People to prepare and serve food
- Warehouse staff, sorting, packing etc
- Carers
- People to provide a 'listening ear', social contact
- Nurses
- Signers
- Translators
- Animal carers/ veterinary assistants

*“Have we got News for You!”*

## **Workshop Outcomes**

### **What are the most serious concerns about spontaneous volunteers?**

Participants listed the following issues:

- Lack of co-ordination – diversion of staff and resources to deal with these volunteers;
- Lack of suitably skilled people;
- Lack of prior training of volunteers – specific and general (such as OH&S);
- Lack of clarity in liability issues related to use of spontaneous volunteers – e.g. confidentiality issues; risk of damage to self, others or equipment; damage to reputation of agency;
- Lack of available resources to manage spontaneous volunteers, including money and equipment;
- Logistics concerns – identification of volunteers; security; registration & screening; deployment in the field;
- Unclear and mixed messages about ongoing need for volunteers during emergency situations from both media and agencies;
- No central point to refer volunteers on to;
- No management plans for spontaneous volunteers and no inter-agency protocols yet developed

### **What is needed for spontaneous volunteer management?**

Participants identified the following:

- Ongoing consultation with stakeholders including:
- lobbying for recognition of the role of coordinating spontaneous volunteers
- involving Local Emergency Management Committees
- A management plan;
- Legislation clarifying liability and insurance status;
- Policy – including a code of ethics;
- Co-ordination strategies including:
- defined roles and responsibilities;
- central locations for volunteer referral points away from operations and evacuation centres
- record management and tracking systems which incorporate screening, ID coding etc,
- pre-training and maintenance training of key personnel
- identification of existing volunteer resources in communities, e.g. service clubs, corporate volunteer programs, community services etc.
- Media and communication strategies including:
- pre-public education;
- pre-event media education;

- clear, co-ordinated media communications during emergency with agencies and public
- Telstra 1800 number
- SEWS/police warning system used to communicate information for volunteers and donations;
- Note: not sure if this is possible but was a recommendation from the workshop.
- Back up systems including:
  - alternate physical sites
  - generators and battery-operated equipment;
  - records management systems without computers
  - communication strategies when telephones are down;
- information on strategy for handling spontaneous volunteers distributed to operational and evacuation centres;
- Reflection of cultural diversity through consultation with multicultural and indigenous communities, with utilisation of bi-lingual or culturally appropriate volunteers to be included in the development of a volunteer management plan.
- Volunteer management plan developed
  1. Consultation
  2. Identification of Risks
  3. Risk Statements
  4. Decide on whether to accept risks
  5. Decide on how to deal with acceptable risks
  6. Identify responsibilities for handling risks
  7. Risk treatment methods developed

(List of possible risks already identified by workshop participants in listing the concerns about spontaneous volunteers)

### **What opportunities do you see for spontaneous volunteers?**

Participants identified the following:

- Recruiting and involving new volunteers
- New networks and partnerships
- Higher community awareness/education
- Better planning and documenting;
- Better registration systems;
- Volunteers can be involved post-disaster and during recovery;
- Establish links with local volunteer centre;
- Opportunity for skilled people to get involved;
- Opportunity to develop media strategies.

### **Where to from here/How can we work together?**

Participants identified the following:

- Start locally and work upwards – identify existing plans and review;
- If volunteers are not needed, get that information out quickly with thanks;
- Use media management strategies, including an 1800 number;
- Look at risk management including back up systems;
- Develop a code of ethics;

- Identify funding and resources;
- Lobby for recognition of role of co-ordination of spontaneous volunteers;
- Volunteer management plan needs local emergency management personnel support;
- Reflect cultural diversity and engage different ethnic and indigenous communities in planning.

### **Evaluation of the workshop**

Participants were asked to describe their experience of the workshop.

- Really appreciate hearing everybody's views;
- Enjoyed the debate about spontaneous volunteers;
- Being from NZ I really enjoyed the feedback from my Aussie neighbours;
- I enjoyed sharing;
- I have had a mind set change;
- I found the session very interesting;
- I found opportunities I did not know existed for volunteers;
- Enlightening and educational;
- Networking
- Very informative;
- Very interesting;
- Interesting;
- Stimulates ideas;
- Good knowledge of other states & territories;
- Frustrating and interesting;
- Good ideas for future directions and stimulating side comments;
- Stimulating and challenging;
- Powerful networking and exchange of ideas;
- Additional ideas;
- Increased awareness;
- If you always do what you've always done, you always get what you've always got;
- NZ input raised awareness of additional legislative framework;
- A lot of valuable information;
- Fascinating to note who is taking responsibility and who is not;
- Getting us talking together so early in the piece has been a great move.
- \* This workshop was delivered by Ros Kimber, St George Community Centre and Glynis Gzafraniec, Volunteering Wollongong, both of COOVERS, and Mary Porter AM, CEO Volunteering ACT.

## **Overseas Models**

Contact was made with the Points of Light Foundation in the U S A and excellent information is available on establishing plans for managing volunteers, including a copy of the book *'Ready to Respond, Disaster Preparedness and Response for Volunteer Centres'* and training materials used by the Points of Light Foundation in preparing Volunteer Centres for response, *'Preventing a Disaster within the Disaster': 'The Effective Use and Management of Unaffiliated Volunteers'* containing recommendations from the National Leadership Forum on Disaster Volunteers., The *'Good Ideas Book'*, published by FEMA which contains ideas for partnerships, media relations, special events, and outreach and *'Assessing Resilience and Vulnerability: Principles, Strategies and Actions.'* Marsh and Smale, published 2001.

## Managing Spontaneous Volunteers in Times of Emergency

The plan for the management of Spontaneous Volunteers, as part of the Community Recovery Sub plan, includes:-

1. volunteers who need to be called on as part of a contingency plan by the regular organisations involved in Emergency response., e.g. Lifeline, Red Cross, Salvation Army, Emergency Services, etc and
2. Spontaneous volunteers.

*The plan needs to take into account all of the following:-*

- A process and resources need to be in place as part of that plan to divert, register, interview, perhaps orientate and train, and place, *or not place in some cases*, the spontaneous volunteer. This need to include the identification of the Lead Agency, e.g. the nearest Volunteer Centre, and a separate or additional location away from the “action” but close enough for volunteers to go there or be taken there.
- The “Lead Agency” should be able to concentrate their efforts on the management of the Spontaneous volunteers and not have other responsibilities in the Plan, e.g. the Agency should not also be trying to carry out frontline response at the same time.
- The lead Volunteering Agency needs to be at the table from the very beginning, i.e. at the point of any review of the Community Recovery Sub Plan post any Emergency, involved in mock emergency scenarios and the evaluation of these, and day one of the emergency.
- A communication strategy needs to be put in place which would include use of a radio station, TV and a website, as well as print media. There needs to be one organisation, with a consistent staff contingent, which can be the conduit for all information that “goes to air”. Information needs to be accurate, consistent and accessible; (the local ABC radio station was the most listened to form of communication in the ACT during and after January 18 2003). The message must be formulated in such a way as to keep spontaneous volunteers from congregating at the frontline and at key locations and instead direct them to a “Volunteer Reception Centre”.
- All organisations and personnel, from the highest official to the staff in charge or working at any point, need to be aware what the procedure is in responding to spontaneous volunteers or sometimes known as “walk up” volunteers”.
- A team of skilled pre trained and pre prepared “coordinators” that will take charge of teams of the ‘walk up’ volunteers will be put in place as part of the plan. These coordinators will be experts in their field would be selected and equipped well in advance and on ready stand by through an electronic or phone call up system. These could include for instance a coordinator of crowd control who would be in charge of a team of the ‘walk up’ volunteers. The volunteers would be selected against pre prepared job descriptions, given

initial orientation and training for their task and then put under the charge of the “coordinator”. Other examples are volunteers to staff phones, fill sand bags in the case of a flood, direct traffic etc.

- A team of field officers will also be identified to staff information and registration desks at key locations where spontaneous volunteers will congregate, e.g. ESB, police stations, evacuation centres, and the recovery centre.
- Procedures, policies and risk management plans need to be in place to underpin the above.
- Additionally there needs to be strategies in place to assist spontaneous groups that spring up during the “recovery” phase. Some of these groups may already exist and take on new roles in informal ways, e.g. service clubs, church groups, scout groups. Others would form at the time, e.g. the 4 wheel drive club calling for other interested citizens who owned a chain saw to gather at point X, with their chain saws, for a day of conducting “dangerous tree” felling.
- Insurance and risk assessment and risk management are very important in managing volunteers, and groups of volunteers, during the emergency and recovery.
- Methods for recruitment of additional staff, both paid and unpaid need to be part of the plan. Staff turn over can be quite high due to the environment and stress levels that people are working under. Staff turn over creates loss of corporate knowledge, information being lost or misinterpreted during staff hand over and communication
- Care for both paid and unpaid staff, should be factored in. After September 11 an off site location was identified for staff to go to debrief and receive physical and emotional care. It is not always possible for staff to go to a *place*. There should be “trouble shooting teams” to provide the care where its needed as well as pre education for organisations on what signs to be aware of, how to debrief and support staff, where to go and when to replace staff, take staff off line.
- The donations of goods needs special management, policies and procedure, including a communication strategy which directs people to donate money and not goods, however also has a contingency for receiving and distributing the inevitable goods which will be donated.
- VACT needs to assist the Service Clubs to prepare for their role in future emergencies. The service Clubs could provide a support role in providing human and other resources to assist front-line organisations to better deliver their core services. This could involve each front-line agency having a continuing relationship with one or two service clubs now. This relationship would be ongoing, and would provide the agency with a single point of contact for assistance as and when needed. The particular service clubs

involved would maintain a form of continuous contact with the agency, and the agency would have a single point of contact to call up assistance. Alternately this could be coordinated through the VACT at the Volunteer Reception Centre, see below.

- A Volunteer Reception Centre for the registration, recruitment and matching service spontaneous volunteers, will be established in an accessible and safe central location, where possible, which is separated by some distance from all other key areas, i.e. Evacuation Centres, ESB, Recovery Centre, Police Headquarters.
- Note: This will be of sufficient size to cope with the expected numbers of volunteers, have private offices for staff, private interview spaces, staff rest areas, children's play area, toilets, kitchen, ICT access and equipment, telephone lines to cope with a large number of calls, free parking, be accessible to people with disabilities and have access to a bus route.
- Volunteer Reception Centre, from here on known as the Centre, will be staffed by trained staff, both paid and volunteers.
- The management and debriefing of the Centre paid staff and volunteers will be the responsibility of VACT
- The Centre will support and advise to agencies working with volunteers during the emergency and recovery period including staff at the Recovery Centre and Evacuation Centres in relation to effective volunteer management.
- The Centre will recruitment volunteer staff for agencies under the sub plan against predetermined job descriptions, utilising the presenting 'walk up volunteers and volunteers who subsequently come forward.
- Participating agencies, and other agencies as required, will identify the additional volunteer roles required and provide detailed job descriptions
- A comprehensive data base will be held at the Centre listing the volunteer positions, as lodged by participating agencies, and the details of volunteers offering assistance.
- VACT will arrange appropriate insurance cover for the volunteers at the Centre and those being placed in the field where existing policies are not sufficient
- As soon as practicable VACT will select suitable volunteers, orientate and allocate them to pre determined specific tasks at various locations/ agencies
- VACT will provide orientation and basic training for all staff at Centre and for volunteers being deployed to other agencies
- Appropriate ID material and referral information to be issued to each volunteer on deployment.

- Unsuitable volunteers or volunteers not required at the time will be registered and asked to return home to be contacted at a later stage, either to be thanked for their offer of assistance or to be deployed at that time.
- VACT will provide scripts re the deployment of spontaneous volunteers for announcements to be used as part of the Communication plan by the media, Canberra Connect and all other key agencies.
- VACT will provide field staff Canberra Connect, Evacuation Centres, the Recovery Centre, ESB, Police Headquarters and Police Stations or at other identified locations where the public may be congregating offering assistance. The role of the Field Officers will be to register and redirect spontaneous volunteers away from these locations to the Volunteer Reception Centre. A Mini bus. Or buses will be deployed to shuttle spontaneous volunteers away from these locations and transport volunteers from the centre to assigned locations once they have been properly allocated roles.
- The Department will provide a number of signs with arrows directing the public for use at the key locations. The signs will read “**VOLUNTEERS PLEASE PROCEED TO REGISTRATION DESK**”.
- All staff at critical points of communication, e.g. Canberra Connect, Evacuation Centres, Recovery Centre, ESB, and Police Stations and Headquarters VACT will be provided with accurate information regarding the process of managing the public who present as ‘walk up’ volunteers
- VACT will work with and consult other agencies, attend meetings and provide regular reports to the Recovery Coordinator as defined in the Sub plan and provide all relevant VACT contacts.

## **The Plan**

### **Planning and Preparation**

- Nominate a VACT paid staff member to be a member of the Community Recovery Sub-Committee, authorised to speak for VACT
- Nominate a VACT paid staff member to be represented on any other formed committees
- Develop plans for the management of agreed services as above, in consultation with and including arrangements with all participating agencies
- Provide lists of VACT contacts to the Recovery Coordinator
- Ensure the nominated VACT member on the Community Recovery Sub Committee disseminates information across VACT
- Ensure Volunteering Australia's Standards for involving volunteers\* and Volunteering Australia's accredited or approved training courses are utilised in working with paid staff and volunteers at all levels of the VACT organisational structure, utilising the excellent materials also available through points of Light and FEMA in the USA.
- Identify alternative sites for the Volunteer Reception Centre other than VACT's current location
- Work with the Department regarding the provision of a number of signs for use at the key locations to direct spontaneous volunteers
- Identify readily accessible and appropriate insurance cover for unaffiliated volunteers
- Verify and establish systems for obtaining the necessary police checks and/or child protection checks and for supplying approved ID for volunteers that will be deployed from the Centre.
- Verify the clauses in the provisions of the Workers Compensation Act (as amended) as they apply to registered emergency volunteers or casual volunteers i.e. Casual Volunteers used during a disaster need to be under the supervision of an existing employee/volunteer.
- Ensure that the Volunteer Reception Centre and all other areas of management have identified access to material and equipment which may be required during any disaster including telecommunications, IT, generators and battery-

operated equipment; first aid equipment, appropriate furniture, adequate provisions of food and water, sunscreen, hats and identifying bangles or T shirts for Centre staff and mini buses.

- Participate in all designated Disaster exercises under the sub plan
- Implement continuous review and improvement in relation to the plan
- Identify key roles within the Centre and in the field including a First Aid Officer for the Centre, Field Officers and mini bus drivers. Select and train Staff that will be stationed at the Volunteer Reception Centre or act as Field Officers at key locations, Utilising Volunteering Australia's Standards\*. Ensure that all appropriate policies, procedures and tools are developed.
- Identify appropriate support and resources needed at the Centre to assist vulnerable groups such as interpreter services, signing.
- Develop "spontaneous volunteer script" for the use of the Communications team under the disaster plan
- Coordinate information sessions regarding the purpose of the Volunteer Reception Centre and the plan for managing spontaneous volunteers in times of emergency situations. These will include basic information about volunteer management and managing the risks associated with unaffiliated volunteers and invitations to attend the sessions will be extended to all agencies under the sub plan, the media representatives and other as identified by the Recovery
- Develop and distribute information packages at the Information Sessions to the above organisations and provide a link on the VACT website.
- Develop a registration and recruitment package including job descriptions, messages to be communicated to the public agencies under the sub plan and other key agencies, and a training package. The training package will include the following topics:
  1. The role of Volunteer Reception Centre and staff members
  2. How to refer spontaneous volunteers to the Centre
  3. How to utilise spontaneous volunteers including identifying suitable roles, writing the job specifications and selection criteria and out of pocket cost reimbursement policy and procedures.
  4. Legal aspects of utilising the spontaneous volunteers including an awareness of risk management, insurance arrangements, occupational health and safety legislative requirements, security and identification.
  5. The management and care of all staff during and post an emergency including the psychosocial phases of disasters and self-care after a disaster
  6. How to recognise and reward volunteer staff
- Develop orientation and training program for the unaffiliated volunteers.

- Identify anticipated roles for the unaffiliated volunteers with agencies under the sub plan.
- Provide a consultation service for problem solving in relation to Volunteer Management.
- Continue to work with key individuals in the 3 main Service Clubs to realise the proposed support role to be played by the Clubs
- Continue to consult with relevant Departments regarding vulnerable people including the frail aged, people with chronic illness or a disability, isolated persons and single parents.
- Continue to progress discussions with peak business associations and key business personnel regarding corporate and employee programs in order that partnerships can be forged that will create opportunities under the plan
- Identify volunteer recognition methods to be implemented post emergency and recovery period

\* *“National Standards for Involving Volunteers in Not for Profit Organisations”* 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 2001 published by Volunteering Australia, VA, and as approved by the VA Standards Review panel

## **Response**

As soon as notified of a state of emergency by the Recovery Coordinator will contact the VACT designated Volunteer Reception Centre Manager and instruct her or him to mobilise the trained and appropriately skilled paid and unpaid staff at the agreed location, identified as the “Volunteer Reception Centre”.

- It will deploy appropriate “field staff” at pre-identified locations, which have the potential to attract spontaneous volunteers, as above, with the intention of registering and re-directing the spontaneous volunteers away from these areas to the “Volunteer Reception Centre”. Such locations would include Evacuation Centres, ESB, Police Stations and Headquarters and the Recovery Centre, and other strategic locations as identified under the Sub Plan.

VACT will:

- Nominate the Volunteer Reception Centre for the delivery of all necessary requisites
- Establish facilities for the purchase, collection and dissemination of all necessary materials under the plan, in consultation with and as directed by the Recovery Coordinator

- Utilising Volunteering Australia’s Standards\* ensure that all VACT staff have appropriate policies, procedures and tools at their disposal to manage the Volunteer Reception Centre and the spontaneous volunteers
- Ensure that the locations from which VACT paid staff and volunteers are operating are safe and secure environments and accessible to staff and people wishing to volunteer and that first aid materials and a first aid officer are present.
- Ensure appropriate insurance for spontaneous volunteers, (who may work directly with VACT or as part of a Recovery team), is put in place immediately or as soon as is practically possible
- Ensure ‘Communications’ begins the broadcast of the message to the public in relation to how to volunteer.
- Ensure the appropriate support staff is on hand at the centre for vulnerable people, e.g. people with a disability, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- Ensure that Field Officers are stationed at key locations and commence the registration of the ‘walk up volunteers’ and their transportation to the Volunteer Reception Centre.
- Activate database. Commence a process of registering, interviewing, selecting, orienting and providing basic generic training to the spontaneous volunteers to be deployed
- Commence ID procedures using previously agreed identified by the Recovery Coordinator
- Continue to provide support for agencies to implement appropriate management practices for volunteers, including identifying the manager of volunteers, and the provision of advice to agencies regarding appropriate risk management, insurance cover, adequate supervision, out of pocket cost reimbursement policy and procedures, job description and job criteria
- Continue to accept appropriate volunteer job requests for volunteers to assist in key areas from ACT Government Departments, such as Health, Environment ACT, CMD and Urban Services, the ACT Police Service, ESB, the Recovery Centre and other participating agencies. Register these on the data base

Note: some of these “positions” have been identified, as far as practical, as part of the consultation in relation to the drafting of Operational Plan, see above, ACT Health and the Department of Housing, Disability and Community Services, ESB and the ACT Police Services have undertaken to continue to consult with VACT regarding the identification of appropriate roles and the drawing up of the job descriptions. Other agencies and Departments have indicated a willingness to do so.

- Refer appropriate volunteers to organisations under the sub plan, and other support organisations, against agreed job descriptions and criteria and issue each volunteer with appropriate ID material and referral information and to transport to sites.

Note: Where possible VACT will provide appropriate volunteer staff, as requested, to work to the Department of Education, Youth and Family Services, in designated volunteer position, to assist with the process of administrating appeal funds.

- Activate Service Club plan and corporate and employee partnerships as appropriate
- Commence. Agreed action under any plan for vulnerable people.
- Inform volunteers who are deemed unsuitable for current tasks, register these on a data base to be notified at a later date should suitable tasks be identified
- Inform organisations that volunteers have been referred to them and request verification of their placement.
- Monitor the organisations utilising spontaneous volunteers to identify problem areas
- Provide a “Volunteer Management Help Desk” facility to managers of volunteers in the field
- Keep accurate daily records regarding volunteer job requests, referrals and placements
- Evaluate the performance of the plan post the recovery process and make recommendations for improvement or adjustment where necessary.

## **Communication and Record Keeping**

VACT will:

- Nominate a VACT paid staff member to the Recovery Coordinator, authorised to speak on behalf of VACT
- Provide lists of VACT contacts to the Recovery Coordinator
- Ensure the nominated VACT member on the Community Recovery Sub Committee disseminates information across VACT

- Ensure that Canberra Connect and other relevant emergency service and recovery personnel have all necessary details regarding the location and contact information for the Volunteer Reception Centre and the relevant staff
- Supply a script for broadcast and for use of personnel at key locations when contacted or approached by a person wishing to offer their time and skills as a spontaneous volunteer
- Issue a media release to all media, via agreed channels under the sub plan, regarding the details of the Volunteer Reception Centre and directing spontaneous volunteers appropriately. The media message would also contain information about the consequences of citizens acting unilaterally and independently as “unaffiliated volunteers”
- Issue information and instructions to previously identified personnel within agencies as to how to manage and direct spontaneous volunteers as they present
- Ensure all relevant information and instructions are carried on the VACT website and GoVolunteer, and submit to the ACT Government website and other relevant media websites
- Activate database at Centre
- Ensure translators and signers are listed and obtained as necessary.
- Ensure accurate records are kept of presenting walk up volunteers by the Field Officers at key locations and that these are relayed to the Centre.
- Ensure agencies are notified about the expected arrival of volunteers being deployed by the Centre as part of the plan.
- Provide situation reports to VACT’s CEO and the Recovery Coordinator.
- Report any concerns regarding communications, or other matters, to the Recovery Coordinator as soon as possible, including any problems with staffing levels or staff fatigue
- Ensure accurate financial records are maintained and that certified accounts are presented to the Recovery Manager for payment of goods purchased and services obtained at the Departments request
- Provide evaluations of operational performance to the Recovery Coordinator.
- Post the emergency and recovery VACT will ensure that all volunteers, whether utilised or not are thanked via mail
- Hold recognition event for volunteers post emergency in partnership with other key agencies.

## **Staff Management**

VACT will:

- Apply Volunteering Australia's Standards pertaining to all VACT staff management matters
- Ensure all staff are appropriately skilled, trained and briefed for the task
- Ensure all policies and procedures are in place and clearly articulated in written and verbal form
- Ensure appropriate insurance cover is in place
- Ensure safe and secure work environment with appropriate access
- Provide proper staff management to the Volunteer Reception Centre staff and any field staff
- Have debriefing and counselling services in place to cover the staff of the Volunteer Reception Centre to ensure that paid staff and volunteers are debriefed during and after the disaster
- Have identified relief staff to ensure staff are rotated appropriately
- Inform the Department of any problems with staffing levels or staff fatigue
- Ensure staff are appropriately recognised post event.

## **Recovery**

VACT will:

- Abide by and be cognisant of the Principles of Recovery Management in its provision of services and support during the recovery phases.\*
- Nominate a paid staff member to attend the meetings of any Community Recovery Sub Committee formed
- Provide a nominated person to liaise with the Evacuation / Recovery Centre Manager (DEYFS) and represent VACT on local Community Recovery Committees
- Ensure VACT has field officers available at the Evacuation Centres, the Recovery Centre, ESB, Police Stations and Headquarters and other locations as necessary.

- Ensure all above matters in relation to staff management including debriefing and the periodic relief of staff, continues during the recovery phase
- Ensure accurate financial records are maintained and that certified accounts are presented to the Recovery Manager for payment of goods purchased and services obtained at the Departments request

### **Long Term Recovery**

- Ensure VACT has trained and appropriately skilled paid and unpaid staff at the Volunteer Reception Centre and agreed location, for the long term recovery phase, on the advice of the Recovery Coordinator, to assist in implementing long term recovery strategies following the disaster
- Ensure all matters in relation to the management of the above staff and that of the spontaneous volunteers as previously described is carried out in accordance with the sub plan and Volunteering Australia's Standards
- Ensure appropriate debriefing and recognition policies are implemented.

### **\* Principles of Recovery Management**

- *Recovery from disaster is an enabling and supportive process which allows individuals, families and communities to attain a proper level of functioning through the provision of information, specialist services and resources.*
- *Effective recovery from disaster requires the establishment of planning and management arrangements which are accepted and understood by recovery agencies, combat agencies and the community.*
- *Recovery management arrangements are most effective when they recognise the complex, dynamic and protracted nature of recovery processes and the changing needs of affected individuals, families and groups within the community over time.*
- *The management of disaster recovery is best approached from a community development perspective and is most effective when conducted at the local level with the active participation of the affected community and a maximum reliance on local capacities and expertise.*
- *Recovery management is most effective when human services agencies play a major role in all levels of key decision making which may influence the well being and recovery capacity of the affected community.*
- *Recovery from disaster is best achieved where the recovery process commences from the moment of disaster impact.*

- *Recovery planning and management arrangements are most effective where they are supported by training programs and exercises which ensure that recovery agencies and personnel are properly prepared for their roles.*
- *Recovery from disaster is most effective where recovery management arrangements provide a comprehensive and integrated framework for managing all potential emergencies and disasters and where assistance measures are provided in a timely, fair, equitable manner and are sufficiently flexible to respond to a diversity of community needs. (Ratified at the 1989 Australian Social Recovery Administrators Meeting).*

## **Conclusion**

This plan is on the VACT website and has been circulated to the VACT Volunteer Managers Network and agencies under the sub plan for comment. It will be presented to delegates at the annual “*Agenda*” Summit as one of the agreed strategies under the ‘*Agenda on Volunteering 2003 to 2007*’

The above strategies are being employed to achieve ratification of the plan as VACT has found that the various stakeholders are not readily able to attend consultation meetings.

The final implementation and effective of the plan is contingent on resources being made available to VACT to:

- select volunteer staff for the various roles
- develop training packages and kits
- deliver training for VACT staff and training and information sessions for agencies under the sub plan
- increase VACT current telecommunications capacity
- identify suitable premises for alternate Volunteer Reception Centres
- identify resources for the Centre to be able to operate it effectively under the plan
- secure appropriate insurance cover for the unaffiliated volunteers
- identify the manner by which the volunteers referred and placed by the Centre are to obtain various clearances and obtain appropriate ID
- develop database and on-line facilities

Further work that also needs to be resourced in order that it can be continued is:

- progressing partnership ideas with the Service Clubs
- Assisting agencies under the sub plan to identify their possible needs for additional volunteer staff at times of emergency, and to assist them in drawing up their job descriptions and selection criteria.
- progressing discussions with peak business associations and key business personnel regarding corporate and employee programs in order that partnerships can be forged that will create opportunities under the plan

VACT looks forward to discussing the plan, and the implementation of the plan, with the Recovery Coordinator and can be I can be contacted on (02) 6251 4060 or on [maryp@volunteeract.com.au](mailto:maryp@volunteeract.com.au)

Mary Porter AM  
CEO.