

Bill Calcutt



6 February 2020

Mr Tony Pearce  
Inspector-General for Emergency Management  
GPO Box 4356  
Melbourne VIC 3001

Dear Mr Pearce

**SUBMISSION TO THE INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATION INTO THE 2019-2020  
VICTORIAN FIRE SEASON – COMMUNITY & SECTOR PREPAREDNESS**

Please accept this as a submission to Phase 1 of the independent inquiry into the 2019-2020 Victorian fire season.

In 2014 the Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre (BNHCRC) sponsored research into the sustainability of emergency service volunteering in Australia. A consequent Master thesis titled “Valuing volunteers: Better understanding the primary motives for volunteering in Australian emergency services” acknowledges that volunteers are the lifeblood of emergency services in Australia, and finds that formal emergency service volunteering represents exceptional civic participation. The research, published in June 2019, concludes that a concurrence of an increased risk of climate change-related natural hazards and a decline in formal volunteering rates threatens Australia’s emergency preparedness. A copy of the thesis is attached.

The purpose of this submission is to highlight what I perceive are fundamental cultural and systemic obstacles to reforms in the emergency management sector. Over the last decade State-based emergency services have been subject to various official inquiries (in the case of Victoria and Queensland, after major catastrophic events), and these are summarised in Chapter 2 of the attached thesis under a

section titled “contemporary trends in emergency service volunteering in Australia” (p.32). Each of these inquiries identifies limitations in the management and resourcing of respective volunteer-based agencies, and it is not apparent what substantive actions have been taken to comprehensively address these issues. The attached thesis also explores some of the practical and systemic obstacles to change under a section titled “pressures for organisational reform” (p.48).

One of the limitations (and strengths) of thousands of volunteer-based units across Australia is a degree of independence from their State-based parent organisation, meaning the level of official influence over units can vary widely. This means that the cohesion of some units has its roots in personal relationships and a local culture that may not always be consistent with contemporary community standards relating to parochialism, merit, inclusion, equality, mutual respect and governance. In some cases volunteers’ allegiances may be primarily to their local unit, with members harbouring a degree of antipathy towards the parent organisation.

At the broader sector-wide level, the thesis acknowledges (p.158) that:

- Volunteering and emergency management are both highly complex and dynamic social phenomena, and there are a range of possible explanations (beyond the scope of this thesis) for the seemingly widely divergent perspectives that often exemplify the discourse on these phenomena. A degree of zeal, determination and conviction may be inevitable in emergency-response agencies with responsibilities for protecting lives and property. Differences in priorities may be natural when emergency management responsibilities and sometimes scarce resources are shared across different levels of government and between (sometimes competing) agencies. Personnel from military or law enforcement backgrounds can bring entrenched attitudes towards secrecy, authority and hierarchy. Pressures to safely and strategically deploy volunteer resources in the face of potential dangers may make a (para-military) command and control approach essential. And perhaps the use of a volunteer workforce to provide vitally important public services might be inherently anomalous in a market economy where some emergency services functions are remunerated and others are not.

- Whatever the reasons, divergent perspectives on concepts, relationships and priorities have the potential to constrain the development of flexible and innovative strategies to adapt to changing circumstances and respond effectively to the evolving risks posed by natural hazards.

Having been intensively engaged with various elements of the emergency management sector across Australia over the last five years (including actively participating in various national AFAC conferences, and talking to hundreds of officials and volunteers), I have observed that divergent perspectives may pose a fundamental obstacle to organisational and sector reforms. There seems such little consensus on principles, objectives, strategies or even terminology in the sector; some elements of the sector (across all levels of seniority) are actively resistant to change; and many of the perspectives seem to reflect zealous and deeply-entrenched personal beliefs around concepts of duty, sacrifice and heroism (and self-importance). While many officials express public support for research and evidence-based decision-making, there seems little indication of a willingness to learn from previous experiences or adopt and utilise contemporary research.

Finally, it is so disappointing to see jingoism about highly admirable altruistic values and the selfless contribution of volunteers being used by politicians and officials to evade hard and realistic questions about future risk, actual capabilities and performance. The answers are so vital to minimising the future threats to lives, property and the environment from climate change-related natural hazards.

I would be more than happy to expand on any issues of interest to the inquiry, and am happy for this submission and the attached thesis to be made public. Please note I will be making a similar submission to other relevant inquiries.

Yours sincerely

Bill Calcutt PSM

2019

# Valuing volunteers: Better understanding the primary motives for volunteering in Australian emergency services

Bill Calcutt

*University of Wollongong*

**UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG**

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**Valuing volunteers:  
Better understanding the primary motives for volunteering  
in Australian emergency services**

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School of Management, Operations & Marketing  
June 2019

## Abstract

Volunteers are the lifeblood of emergency services in Australia, and are integral to the nation's emergency management capabilities and overall disaster resilience. The concurrence of an increase in the risks posed by a range of climate change-related natural hazards and a decline in formal volunteering rates threatens Australia's emergency preparedness.

The Valuing Volunteers Study aims to provide a better understanding of the primary motives for formal volunteering in Australian emergency services, and the broader contemporary influences on such important civic participation. The research aims to generate evidence-based outputs that inform policies and practices, with the ultimate goal of maximising the retention of emergency service volunteers.

The research applied the Schwartz *Theory of Basic Human Values* and associated *Portrait Values Questionnaire* (PVQ-40) survey to determine the shared and contrasting values of a large State-wide emergency service volunteer workforce. The research revealed statistically significant variations in values preferences within the existing emergency service volunteer workforce by gender and generation, with females expressing a stronger preference for altruistic (other-oriented) values, and males and younger volunteers expressing a stronger preference for egoistic (self-oriented) values.

The research affirmed the crucial role of values as primary motives for emergency service volunteering, and the values differences revealed by this research have important implications for how the divergent values needs of distinct sections of the volunteer workforce can be acknowledged and accommodated. Values are powerful motivators, and shared values can reinforce volunteer commitment and retention, while conflicting values can contribute to volunteer turnover. Satisfying and managing the different values needs of an increasingly diverse volunteer workforce will require a more nuanced and responsive approach, with a greater emphasis on building an organisational culture founded on the values of encouragement, respect and inclusion.

## **Acknowledgements**

The author acknowledges the many thousands of people who selflessly donate their time and effort in a range of demanding emergency services roles, and who place the safety and welfare of their communities ahead of their own interests. The author remains deeply indebted to the hundreds of volunteers from across all emergency services that have participated in surveys or taken the opportunity to share their personal views with the author during the course of this study.

The author joined a local (urban) unit of the NSW State Emergency Service in March 2013, and remained operationally active until mid-2016. The author acknowledges that his volunteering experiences influenced and informed the nature and scope of his research proposal to the BNHCRC and the University of Wollongong in 2014. The author also acknowledges that his role as an active NSW SES volunteer may have assisted to some degree in gaining the support of other emergency services volunteers to participate in the study. The author has made a conscious effort to dissociate his personal experiences and unit relationships in the NSW SES from the observations presented in this thesis. The author continues volunteering as a telephone crisis supporter at Lifeline.

This research would not have been possible without the vision and professional and financial support (scholarship) of the Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre (BNHCRC). The BNHCRC plays a vital role in facilitating constructive collaboration between academia and the emergency management sector, providing both parties with invaluable access to the expertise of the other. The author is enormously grateful to the BNHCRC for giving him a unique opportunity to undertake research on important social issues.

Because of its commitment to the research objectives of the BNHCRC, the senior executive of the NSW State Emergency Service was willing to endorse and participate in intensive data collection involving its own members, a unique level of access and collaboration that may not be available to other researchers. The author would particularly like to acknowledge the unfailing support and patience of Ms Heather Stuart and Ms Kathleen Iacurto of the NSW SES, without whom this

research would not have been possible. In recent years, the NSW SES has been undergoing a period of highly dynamic change, and sustaining organisational support for research that at times has revealed new challenges and additional complexity reflects highly on the professionalism and commitment of both women.

The author would like to acknowledge the invaluable assistance of Trent Calcutt and Emily Kirsh in undertaking the statistical analysis (using SPSS) of the survey data.

Finally, the author would like to acknowledge the invaluable contribution of his academic supervisors and colleagues at the University of Wollongong, Associate Prof Michael Jones, Associate Prof Andrew Sense, Dr Yoke Berry, and more recently, Dr Mathew Todres. The author's supervisors have shown enormous patience, faith and respect in this journey of inquiry and discovery, and for this the author is enormously grateful. The author would also like to acknowledge the contribution of the thesis examiners who provided valuable constructive input to the final draft.

## **Certification**

*I, William Grant Calcutt, declare that this thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the conferral of the degree Master of Philosophy, from the University of Wollongong, is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. This document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.*

---

**William Grant Calcutt**

**19 June 2019**

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## Glossary of key terms

One of the particular challenges in undertaking research on complex but inter-related social science topics is the diversity of perspectives and terminology used in the literature. In order to clarify the terminology used throughout this thesis, the key terms and their meanings are outlined below. While much of the emergency management terminology is drawn from official publications, in instances where the meaning of a term is unclear or contested, the author has sought to provide a definition that reflects a synthesis of the contemporary usage.

- **All hazards approach** – “Dealing with all types of emergencies or disasters and civil defence using the same set of management arrangements” (Source: NERAG Glossary, 2015). Encompasses structure fires, rescues, medical emergencies, natural disasters, consequences of terrorism, other natural events, disaster events resulting from poor environmental planning/commercial development/personal intervention, technological and hazardous materials incidents, quarantine and control of diseases and biological contaminants (Source: Productivity Commission, 2016).
- **Altruism** (altruistic values) - A primary concern for the well-being, welfare and benefit of others (Source: author).
- **Civic participation** – “Involvement in activities reflecting interest and engagement with governance and democracy” (Source: ABS GSS Glossary, 2014)
- **Civil society** – “The wide array of non-government and not-for-profit organisations that have a presence in public life, expressing the interests and values of their members and others, based on ethical, cultural, political, scientific, religious or philanthropic considerations” (Source: World Bank, 2013). “The arena of un-coerced collective action around shared interests, purposes and values. In theory its institutional forms are distinct from the state, family and market, though in practice the boundaries between the state, civil society, family and market are often complex, blurred and negotiated” (Source: Productivity Commission, 2010).
- **Consequence** – “The outcome of an event that affects objectives” (Source: NERAG Glossary, 2015).

- **Core values** - The most important and influential guiding principles and beliefs for the individual and society, the foundation for conceptions of a collective (shared) interest and common cultural identity (Source: author).
- **Disaster** – “A serious disruption to community life which threatens or causes death or injury in that community. A disaster can also damage property to the point that is beyond the day-to-day capacity of the prescribed statutory authorities’ ability to address the damage. This then requires special mobilisation and organisation of resources other than those normally available to those authorities” (Source: NERAG Glossary, 2015).
- **Disaster risk management** – “The application of disaster risk reduction policies and strategies to prevent new disaster risk, reduce existing disaster risk and manage residual risk, contributing to the strengthening of resilience and reduction of disaster losses” (Source: UNISDR Terminology, 2016).
- **Egoism** (egoistic values) - A primary concern for the well-being, welfare and benefit of self (Source: author).
- **Emergency event** - “An event, actual or imminent, that endangers or threatens to endanger life, property or the environment, and requires a significant and coordinated response” (Source: NERAG Glossary, 2015).
- **Emergency risk management** – “A systematic process that produces a range of measures which contribute to the well-being of communities and the environment”. “The plans, structures and arrangements which are established to bring together the normal endeavours of government, voluntary and private agencies in a comprehensive and coordinated way to deal with the whole spectrum of emergency needs including prevention, response and recovery” (Source: AIDR Glossary, 2017).
- **Emergency service** – “An agency responsible for the protection and preservation of life and property from harm resulting from incidents and emergencies” (Source: AIDR Glossary, 2017).
- **Ethics** – Social rules that reflect normative and moral judgements about right actions and good outcomes (Source: author).
- **Formal volunteer** - “Someone who willingly gives unpaid help, in the form of time, service or skills, to or through an organisation or group” (Source: ABS Glossary, 2010).

- **Harm** – “A physical injury or damage to health, property of the environment” (Source: AIDR Glossary, 2017). Negative consequences (Source: author).
- **Hazard** – “A source of potential harm or a situation with a potential to cause loss. A source of risk” (Source: NERAG Glossary, 2015). “A process, phenomenon or human activity that may cause loss of life, injury or other health impacts, property damage, social and economic disruption or environmental degradation” (Source: UNISDR Terminology, 2016).
- **Informal volunteering** – Any spontaneous and/or sporadic helping activity (Source: author).
- **Leadership** – Inspiring, guiding and influencing others through personal ethical example and moral authority (Source: author).
- **Motives** – Rational and emotional reasons for actions (Source: author).
- **Morals** – Personal judgements, convictions and beliefs on the good/right and bad/wrong merits of a range of behaviours (Source: author).
- **Natural disaster** – “A naturally occurring rapid onset event that causes a serious disruption to a community or region, such as flood, bushfire, earthquake, storm, cyclone, storm surge, tornado, landslide or tsunami” (Source: Productivity Commission, 2014).
- **Probability** – “Measure of the chance of occurrence expressed as a number between 0 and 1, where 0 is uncertain and 1 is absolute certainty” (Source: NERAG Glossary, 2015).
- **Resilience** – “The ability of a system, community or society exposed to hazards to resist, absorb, accommodate, adapt to, transform and recover from the effects of a hazard in a timely and efficient manner, including through the preservation and restoration of its essential basic structures and functions through risk management” (Source: UNISDR Terminology, 2016).
- **Risk** – “The effect of uncertainty on objectives” (Source: ISO 31000, 2009). “The combination of the probability of an event and its negative consequences” (Source: Productivity Commission, 2014). “The chance of an event that will have an impact ... measured in terms of consequences and likelihood” (Source: AIDR Glossary, 2017).
- **Risk assessment** – “Overall process of risk identification, risk analysis and risk evaluation” (Source: NERAG Glossary, 2015). A disciplined and

transparent process for estimating and comparing the likelihood and severity of harms posed by a range of hazards (Source: author).

- **Risk management** – “Coordinated activities of an organisation or a Government to direct and control risk” (Source: NERAG Glossary, 2015).
- **Social capital** – “The relationships and trust that underpin the functioning of society” (Source: Productivity Commission, 2010). “A resource available to individuals and communities, and founded on networks of mutual support, reciprocity and trust. Research links strong social capital to increased individual and community wellbeing” (Source: ABS, 2015). “Networks, together with shared norms, values and understandings, that facilitate cooperation within or among groups” (Source: OECD, 2007).
- **Values** – “Desirable, trans-situational goals, varying in importance, that serve as guiding principles in people’s lives” (Source: Schwartz, 2005). Enduring principles and beliefs that guide and motivate individual and collective actions and attitudes. Influential and enduring human motives (Source: author).
- **Volunteering** - “Time willingly given for the common good and without financial gain” (Source: Volunteer Australia, 2015).
- **Volunteer emergency worker** – “A volunteer who engages in emergency activity at the request (whether directly or indirectly) or with the express or implied consent of the chief executive ... of an agency to which the State emergency response or recovery plan applies” (Source: AIDR Glossary, 2017).

# Chapter 1

## Introduction and background to the Valuing Volunteers Study

### Introduction

Volunteers are the lifeblood of emergency services in Australia, and are integral to the nation's emergency management capabilities and overall disaster resilience. The concurrence of an increase in the risks posed by a range of climate change-related natural hazards and a decline in formal volunteering rates threatens Australia's emergency preparedness.

This thesis, the Valuing Volunteers Study, aims to provide a better understanding of the primary motives for formal volunteering in Australian emergency services, through the empirical examination of the shared and contrasting values of a sample of emergency service volunteers. The study also examines the broader policy and social contexts for emergency service volunteering in Australia.

This chapter explains the broader research context for the Valuing Volunteers Study; details the specific research rationale; outlines the research aim and objectives; explores the significance and intended contributions of the study; and provides a precis of the thesis structure.

### Broader research context

Maslow's (1943) oft-cited "hierarchy of needs" emphasises the primacy of the basic human needs for personal and community safety, and collective security is a foundation element of the social contract between the individual and the state. All countries, irrespective of their economic and social development and level of preparedness, are susceptible to the risks posed by a range of natural and human hazards that can lead to emergency events, with the potential to become large-scale disasters resulting in mass casualties and great economic losses.

There is broad consensus that the risks (and potential dangers) posed by a diverse range of natural and human hazards world-wide have increased significantly over the last two decades, placing sometimes overwhelming demands on existing emergency management systems and capabilities in a number of countries. According to the 2015 *National Emergency Risk Assessment Guidelines* (NERAG) “emergency events and disasters stem from a range of natural, biological, technological, industrial and other human phenomena. These events impose significant social, environmental and economic costs on Australia, including: fatalities, injuries and illness; direct damage to property, infrastructure and facilities; financial costs and economic losses; ecosystem impairment and biodiversity loss; and social and cultural losses” (2015, p.2).

The 2011 *National Strategy for Disaster Resilience* (NSDR) notes (p.iv) that “Australia has recently experienced a number of large-scale and devastating natural disasters, including catastrophic bushfires, far reaching floods and damaging storms. Natural disasters are a feature of the Australian climate and landscape and this threat will continue, not least because climate change is making weather patterns less predictable and more extreme”.<sup>1</sup> In a similar vein, a 2014 Productivity Commission report titled *Natural Disaster Funding Arrangements* notes (p.3) that “natural disasters are an inherent part of the Australian landscape. Since 2009, natural disasters have claimed more than 200 lives, destroyed 2,670 houses and damaged a further 7,680, and affected the lives and livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of Australians”. Finally, the 2018 World Disasters Report from the International Red Cross notes that over the last decade the cost to Australia of natural disasters amounted to US\$27 billion, placing the nation 10<sup>th</sup> internationally in total costs incurred (2018, p.179).

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<sup>1</sup> The international Sphere Project defines climate change as “a change of climate patterns that can be attributed directly or indirectly to human activity, that alters the composition of the global atmosphere, and that is not due to the natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods” (Glossary, 2012, p.3). The author accepts the extensive academic literature and broad scientific consensus on the relationship between climate change and the evolving risks posed by a range of weather-related natural hazards, with an increase in the frequency and severity of extreme weather events (fires, floods, storms, cyclones, heatwaves) with potential to become large-scale emergencies.

Emergency services are those agencies “responsible for the protection and preservation of life and property from harm resulting from incidents and emergencies” (AIDR Glossary, 2017), and include the fire service organisations, ambulance service organisations, State emergency services, marine rescue and coast guard organisations, and lifesaving organisations (Productivity Commission, 2016, p.D3). According to the Productivity Commission, State and Territory Governments “have primary responsibility for delivering emergency services directly to the community through emergency service organisations” (ibid).

Emergency service volunteers constitute a series of unique workforces that provide essential (often life-saving) community services, and considerable public resources are expended in training, equipping and supporting these workforces. A 2016 Productivity Commission report titled *Report on Government Service – Volume D Emergency Management* estimates (p.D9) that in 2014-15 more than 250,000 volunteers were on the records of the fire, ambulance and emergency service organisations, with total expenditure across these agencies nationally of \$6.7 billion for the same period (p.D6).

While major changes in the environment and climate are transforming the nature and extent of the risks posed by natural hazards, powerful social forces are changing human values and altering forms of civic participation, including formal volunteering. Skinner and Joseph (2007, p.124) characterise voluntarism as a “barometer of change”, as ageing communities adapt to the dynamic forces of globalisation, privatisation, economic and social restructuring, changing demographics, evolving lifestyles and the impacts of technology. The 2011 *National Strategy for Disaster Resilience* acknowledges the forces for change, noting (p.1) “many known factors are increasing our vulnerability to disaster. Work-life patterns, lifestyle expectations, demographic changes, domestic migration, and community fragmentation, are increasing community susceptibility, as well as altering local social networks and sustainability of volunteer groups” (COAG, 2011, p.1).

A decline in formal (organisation-based) volunteering rates in Australia is reflected in data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) that reveals a reduction in the proportion of people 18 years and over who volunteered from 34% in 2010 to 31%

in 2014 (ABS, 2015). If this trend is translated into a decline in the rates of emergency service volunteering there is a potential for Australia's emergency and disaster management capabilities to be compromised, limiting the capacity to respond in a timely and effective manner to large-scale life-threatening events through the deployment of a highly-skilled and committed volunteer workforce.

### **Specific research rationale**

In response to ongoing concerns about future volunteer resourcing in a dynamic emergency management environment in Australia, in 2008 the Ministerial Council for Police and Emergency Management (MCPPEM) sought current information on the level of national preparedness for disasters and large-scale emergencies, and asked the Federal Attorney-General's Department to commission research into the future viability of Australia's emergency management volunteering systems (McLennan, 2008). A subsequent report by Dr Jim McLennan (2008, p.4) notes a "serious dearth of research concerning the recruitment and retention in volunteer-based emergency services other than the fire services".

A further report by Dr Judy Esmond (2009) identifies a range of potential challenges to the sustainability and growth of emergency service volunteering, and emphasises the need for evidence-based case studies on the most effective methods to attract, support and retain volunteers. Both the McLennan (2008) and Esmond (2009) reports highlight a number of significant challenges confronting emergency management in Australia, including growing pressure on agencies to professionally manage governance and risks and meet objective performance standards in respect to volunteer training and utilisation. Both reports recommend further research to address significant information gaps in the literature on emergency service volunteering.

The 2011 *National Strategy for Disaster Resilience* crystallises these concerns and emphasises the need for changes in Australia's emergency management systems. The strategy asserts that "ongoing support for the recruitment, retention, training, equipping and maintenance of paid and unpaid personnel in all aspects of the

emergency services will strengthen our capability to respond and recover from disasters”, with a priority outcome that “decision makers adopt policies and practices that support and recognise emergency services and the importance of volunteering in our communities” (COAG, 2011, p.12).

Acknowledging these challenges, in 2013 the Australian Government established the Bushfires and Natural Hazards Co-operative Research Centre (BNHCRC) to “undertake research that supports the development of cohesive, evidence-based policies, strategies, programs and tools to build a more disaster resilient Australia” (BNHCRC, 2014). The BNHCRC pursues a broad industry-driven research agenda built around three national themes, with a series of end-user clusters overseeing a range of specific research projects. The BNHCRC research aims to address significant information gaps and provide high-quality scientific support for Australian emergency management. The facilitation of constructive engagement between academics and end-users in order to maximise the relevance of outputs is central to this program.

In mid-2013 the BNHCRC promulgated its research agenda across all Australian emergency services, and as a volunteer in an urban unit of the NSW State Emergency Service (NSW SES) the author became aware of sponsored research opportunities. The author subsequently applied to progress research into emergency service volunteer motivation through the University of Wollongong. As a then active NSW SES volunteer the research complemented the author’s personal and academic interests, and lived experience as a relatively new emergency service volunteer (reflecting elements of ethnography).

The Valuing Volunteers Study commenced in 2014 as part of a BNHCRC-sponsored research project being undertaken by the University of Wollongong titled “improving the retention and engagement of volunteers in emergency service agencies”, part of the “sustainable volunteering” cluster under the national theme of “resilience to hazards”. The research coincided with a number of developments which have shaped the design and conduct of this study:

- An increased risk of catastrophic (climate change-related) emergency events;

- Changing social values and an associated decline in traditional (formal) emergency services volunteering;
- A complex and evolving multi-jurisdictional emergency management environment;
- Growing pressures on traditional member-based agencies to “modernise” and corporatise;
- New avenues for engagement and consultation between emergency services and research institutions, with a BNHCRC-organised sustainable volunteering end-user cluster providing considerable constructive input in the formulation of research aims and objectives.

### **Research aim, objectives and questions**

As reflected in the thesis title, the research aim is to gain a better understanding of the primary motives for volunteering in Australian emergency services, a topic that encompasses both the specific impetus for, and dynamics of, the giving behaviours of individuals, and the broader policy and social contexts within which such important civic participation occurs. The research seeks to generate original empirical and theoretical insights to inform emergency management policies and practices on the future mobilisation of a skilled volunteer workforce.

In order to fulfil the overall research aim of generating insights that can inform emergency management policies and practices, five research objectives will need to be met. The first research objective is to demonstrate that emergency service volunteering is of great economic and social value to the Australian community, and represents exceptional civic participation. This objective will be achieved through a comprehensive review and synthesis of contemporary official reports on the operations, performance and cultures of the various volunteer-based emergency services in Australia, effectively “setting the scene” for the subsequent examination of volunteer motivations (Chapter 2).

The second research objective is to establish the validity and utility of a values framework for interpreting and understanding the primary motives for emergency

service volunteering. This objective will be achieved by undertaking a comprehensive review of motivational theories that are relevant to emergency service volunteering, demonstrating the capacity of an inclusive multi-dimensional values framework to encompass and integrate diverse psychological, sociological and economic perspectives (Chapter 3). Values are widely acknowledged as influential and enduring human motives, and shared values can reinforce volunteer commitment and retention, while conflicting values can contribute to volunteer turnover.

The third research objective is to determine the distinct shared and contrasting values of a sample of Australian emergency service volunteers, and consider the implications of these values for volunteer policies and practices. This objective will be achieved through the use of a modified version of the PVQ-40 survey to obtain original empirical data on the values preferences of the volunteer members of the NSW State Emergency Service (NSW SES).

This third research objective aligns with the specific research questions that are the focus for empirical inquiry, developed in consultation with the BNHCRC's sustainable volunteering end-users cluster:

- What are the distinctive shared values of Australian emergency service volunteers?
- To what extent and in what ways do these shared values impact on volunteer expectations of and commitment to emergency service organisations?
- In what ways can the formal values of emergency service organisations be better aligned with volunteer values in order to maximise workforce satisfaction, commitment and retention?

The fourth and fifth research objectives seek to rigorously challenge the dominant paradigms that currently frame the policy and social contexts for emergency service volunteering, informing an incisive re-evaluation of these complex phenomena. Objective four critically analyses the all-hazards risk management framework within which Australian emergency services operate, and evaluates the efficacy and integrity of current processes for determining and resourcing national emergency management priorities. Objective five explores the broader social and cultural

contexts for volunteering, highlighting the implications of changing core values for future forms of civic participation, including formal emergency service volunteering.

### **Significance and intended contributions of the study**

The phenomena examined in this research are inherently complex, and this is reflected in the diversity of perspectives and terminology that appears in the literature. The inclusion of a glossary of key terms (immediately preceding this chapter) is intended to clarify the definition and meaning of terms and concepts used throughout this thesis. In the absence of a clear consensus on the meaning of some terms, several of the definitions reflect the author's synthesis of multiple divergent perspectives.

In respect to the first research objective, a comprehensive review of contemporary official reports on the operations, performance and culture of the various volunteer-based emergency services reveals that the use of a volunteer-based workforce to provide an essential public service is an inherently complex process, whose specific features are not well understood by the community or policy-makers. Beyond the stereotype of the heroic rescuer ready to respond in times of crisis, there seems little appreciation of the substantial personal commitment and goodwill required to undertake inherently demanding emergency response roles, or the conditional and potentially fragile nature of the relationship between the individual volunteer, the local unit, and the emergency service organisation. These circumstances are relevant to the third research question on the effects of values alignment on workforce satisfaction, commitment and retention.

In respect to the second research objective, a wide-ranging review of diverse motivational theories affirms that values constitute a comprehensive, multi-dimensional and multi-disciplinary theoretical framework for interpreting and understanding the primary motives for emergency service volunteering. The review reveals that the Schwartz *Theory of Basic Human Values* (Schwartz, 2012) has particular relevance to this study as the two bipolar (higher-order values) dimensions largely align with two of the major modernisation trends impacting on emergency

service volunteering, namely growing individual reflexivity and encroaching corporatisation.

For complex social and political reasons that are explored in a discussion paper at Appendix F, there has been little empirical research to determine the most important (core) values in Australia, and this research examining the shared and contrasting values of a large State-wide volunteer workforce using paper and online versions of the Schwartz *Portrait Values Questionnaire* (PVQ-40) survey is unique. In order to assist emergency services interested in determining the values preferences of their own volunteer workforces, a modified PVQ-40 survey is included at Appendix A, and a values audit checklist that summarises the various strategies developed during this study to maximise survey participation is included at Appendix B.

In respect to the third research objective (and related research questions), the empirical findings from a State-wide survey of the shared and contrasting values of a large volunteer workforce reveals significant differences in values preferences by gender and generation, with important implications for a range of volunteering policies and practices. The survey findings are consistent with a generational shift from collective (altruistic) to reflexive (egoistic) motives that is reflected in a marked decline in formal volunteering rates nationally post-2010 (ABS, 2015).

Various emergency services have responded to a decline in formal volunteering with the introduction of more flexible volunteer engagement strategies, and this research has informed these new approaches. In June 2017, the NSW SES Commissioner acknowledged the close collaboration with BNHCRC researchers in the development of a new flexible volunteering model called *Volunteering Reimagined*, noting that “the model will broaden both the capacity and capability of the organisation and is a fresh approach to overcome some constraints that have seen our numbers declining”.

Finally, in respect to the fourth and fifth (theoretical) research objectives, an incisive re-evaluation of the broader policy and social contexts for emergency service volunteering aims to stimulate further academic discourse and research on the impacts and interaction of contemporary forces on the future resourcing of a vital volunteer-based emergency response capability. In respect to research objective

four (policy context), a critical analysis of the way relative risks are measured and determined within an all-hazards risk management framework highlights the distorting influence of fear-based perspectives (specifically the spectre of terrorism) on national emergency management priorities in Australia, with important implications for the resourcing of various emergency functions. In relation to research objective five (social context), an analysis of contemporary indicators of changing core values in Australia confirms a progressive decline in altruistic values, with important implications for future forms of civic participation, including formal emergency service volunteering.

The various practical, methodological, empirical and conceptual insights generated during the course of the Valuing Volunteers Study constitute original and substantial contributions to existing information gaps, and to the general level of understanding of emergency service volunteer motivation. These insights have important implications for the way different parts of the existing volunteer workforce are managed, and for future forms of volunteer engagement. In integrating the separately-complex phenomena of emergency service volunteer motivation, all-hazards emergency management and evolving Australian values, this study seeks to contribute novel and thought-provoking insights to academic and public discourse on important social issues.

### **Thesis structure**

This chapter has explained the broader context for the Valuing Volunteers Study; detailed the specific research rationale; outlined the research aim and related objectives; and explored the significance and intended contributions of the study. The following paragraphs signpost the overall structure of the thesis.

Chapter 2 sets the scene for this research by exploring the unique circumstances and distinctive characteristics of emergency service volunteering that justify its recognition as exceptional civic participation (first research objective).

Chapter 3 reviews the contemporary literature that is directly relevant to the motives for emergency service volunteering, and evaluates the relevance of various theoretical constructs, including the Schwartz (2012) universal values framework (second research objective).

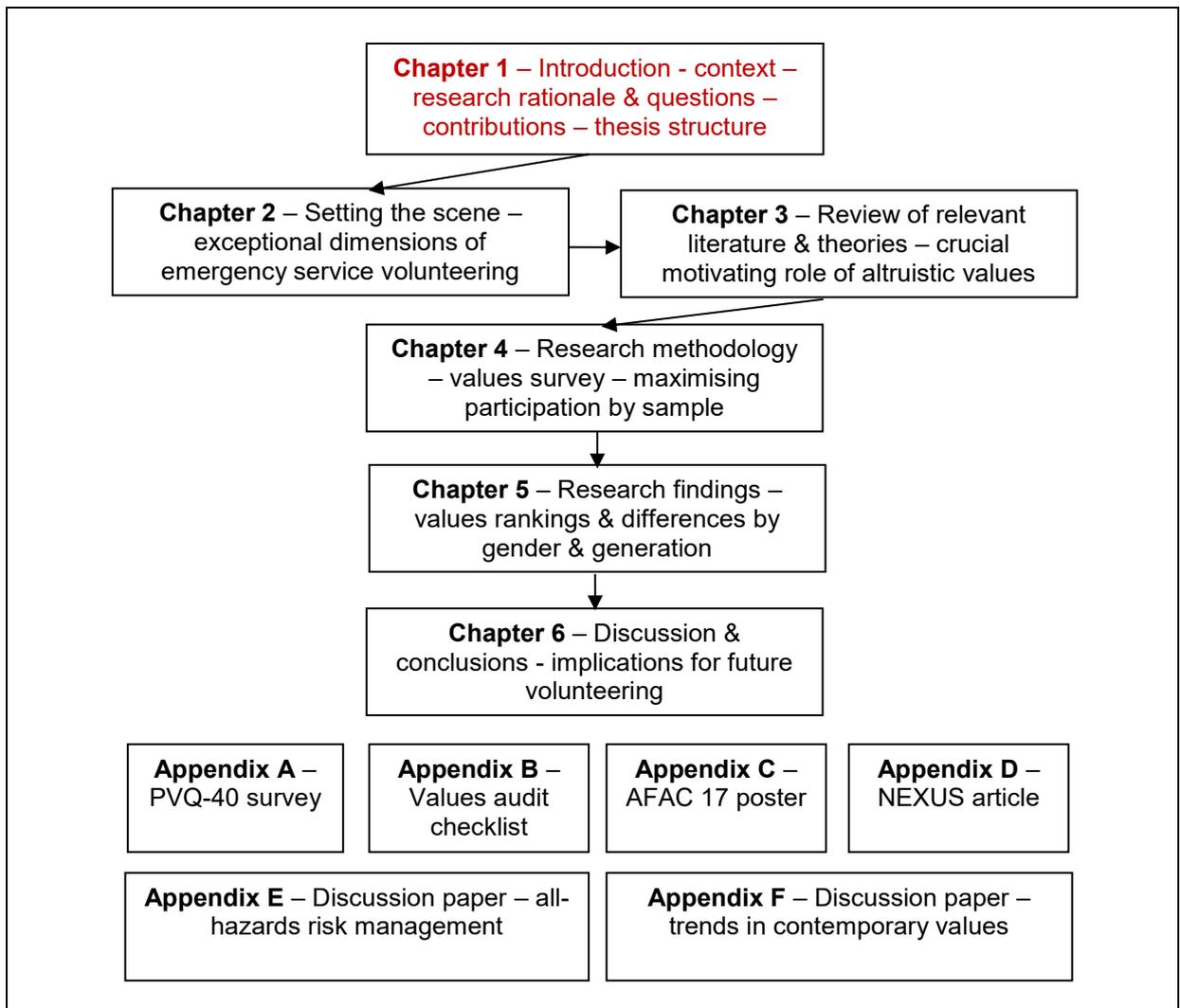
Chapter 4 details the conduct of an organisation-wide survey of the values preferences of the NSW SES volunteer workforce, and documents the challenges involved in maximising volunteer participation in the face of a range of prospective impediments. Empirical data collection necessitated the adaption of the Schwartz *Portrait Values Questionnaire* (PVQ-40) survey, and the adoption of a range of specific strategies to encourage participation (second research objective).

Chapter 5 details the survey findings that reveal statistically significant differences in values rankings by gender and generation (but not location). The findings in chapter 5 on what motivates people to volunteer for highly demanding emergency service roles, and their changing expectations, address a number of important information gaps, and have significant implications for a range of emergency services policies and practices (third research objective).

Chapter 6 reviews the research aims, objectives and questions that were originally articulated in Chapter 1, and considers the degree to which these have been addressed and satisfactorily answered by the Valuing Volunteers Study. The chapter also explores the broader implications of the empirical findings and theoretical contributions for future emergency service volunteering, and concludes with the research's limitations.

Finally, this study also aims to advance a better understanding of the broader policy and social contexts for emergency service volunteering in Australia, and discussion papers at Appendices E and F seek to challenge a number of the dominant paradigms that frame these phenomena (fourth and fifth research objectives).

The positioning of the current chapter in the context of the entire study is demonstrated graphically in Figure 1 below.



**Figure 1:** Thesis structure

## Chapter 2

### Emergency service volunteering as exceptional civic participation

*Core of my heart, my country!*

*Land of the rainbow gold*

*For flood and fire and famine*

*She pays us back threefold*

(Dorothea Mackellar “My Country”)

#### Introduction

This chapter sets the scene for the Valuing Volunteers Study by: placing volunteering within the wider context of civic participation; reviewing contemporary trends in volunteering in Australia; outlining the exceptional dimensions of emergency service volunteering; and exploring some of the pressures for organisational reform in emergency services that may have implications for volunteer engagement and retention. The chapter provides a comprehensive review and synthesis of contemporary official reports on the operations, performance and cultures of the various volunteer-based emergency services in Australia, and seeks to demonstrate that emergency service volunteering is of great social and economic value to the Australian community, and represents exceptional civic participation.

#### Volunteering as civic participation

The term “social capital” features regularly in the literature to describe the latent and intangible nature and value of discretionary social relationships. The Productivity Commission (2010, p.xix) describes social capital as “the relationships and trust that underpin the functioning of society”, while the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) (2015, p.1) observes “social capital is conceived as a resource available to individuals and communities, and founded on networks of mutual support, reciprocity and trust. Research links strong social capital to increased individual and community wellbeing”. The OECD (2007, p.103) defines social capital as “networks, together

with shared norms, values and understandings, that facilitate cooperation within or among groups”, highlighting the role that values play in motivating civic participation.

Volunteering is widely acknowledged as an important form of social capital. Berry and Welsh (2010) explore the structural (participating/networking) and cognitive (belonging/cohesion) dimensions of social capital, locating volunteering within a “civic engagement” component of the structural dimension. Hustinx, Handy, Cnaan, Brudney, Pessi and Yamauchi (2010, p.350) contend that “volunteering is a foundation block in the formation and sustainability of civil society across the world”.

Bittman and Fisher (2006, p.v) refer to the “contribution of volunteering to the stock of social capital”, and estimate that “voluntary welfare services are worth more than double the value of services provided by all levels of government in Australia”. In a discussion paper on social capital and social wellbeing, the ABS observes that “volunteering may be seen as an expression of reciprocity or potentially as a direct outcome of social capital. The act of volunteering demonstrates a balance between an individual’s self-interest and the public interest” (2002, p.18).

While major changes in the environment and climate are transforming the nature and extent of the risks posed by natural hazards, powerful social forces are changing human values and altering forms of civic participation, including formal volunteering. Skinner and Joseph (2007, p.124) characterise voluntarism as a “barometer of change” as ageing communities adapt to the dynamic forces of globalisation, privatisation, economic and social restructuring, changing demographics, evolving lifestyles and the impacts of technology.

Changes in the nature and level of civic participation and volunteering are reflected in the ABS General Social Survey (ABS GSS), one of the primary national sources of contemporary large-scale data on Australian social trends. The ABS GSS “measures resources that reflect the wellbeing of individuals and communities, with social capital being a particular focus” (2015, p.1). The four-yearly survey aims “to provide an understanding of the multi-dimensional nature of relative advantage and disadvantage across the population, and to facilitate reporting on and monitoring of people's opportunities to participate fully in society” (ibid). The ABS 2014 GSS notes

“changes in the levels of involvement in activities connecting people to their broader community and the way people are interacting with the community outside their household”, with “a decrease in the time and opportunity that Australians have for recreation and leisure, and social and community interaction” (ibid). Acknowledging these trends, a report titled *Australia’s Welfare 2017* from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) observes (2017, p.170) that “the decline in the rate of volunteering is concerning as it has links to the economy and health and is thought to be an indicator of wellbeing”.

### **Contemporary trends in volunteering in Australia**

Volunteering can be a difficult phenomenon to define precisely because of its diverse manifestations. Despite some contention in the literature over a common definition of volunteering, virtually all characterisations identify the discretionary exercise of individual free will for a positive social purpose without an expectation of direct financial reward. A 2008 Federal Government report titled *Volunteering in Australia* says simply “volunteering is something that people choose to do freely without an expectation of payment and for the benefit of the community” (2008, p.1). Dekker and Halman (2003, p.1) note that most definitions of volunteering contain “three or four common elements - it is non-obligatory; it is carried out...for the benefit of others; it is unpaid; and somewhat less common, it takes place in an organised context”.

For many years the term volunteering referred predominantly to formal activities that take place within the context of established organisations. The ABS has traditionally classified volunteer and community work as “unpaid work”, and has estimated the economic value of volunteering using measures of labour replacement costs or wages foregone (opportunity cost). An ABS 2010 Glossary defines a volunteer as “someone who willingly gives unpaid help, in the form of time, service or skills, to or through an organisation or group”. Much of the contemporary literature now makes a clear distinction between “formal” volunteering that is undertaken on an ongoing basis within an organisational context, and “informal” volunteering that is any spontaneous and/or sporadic helping activity. In 2015, the peak body Volunteering

Australia adopted a new and more inclusive definition of volunteering as “time willingly given for the common good and without financial gain”, encompassing both formal and informal volunteering.

Reports on the nature, extent and economic contribution of formal volunteering in Australia vary widely. A 2004 report by the Australian Institute for Family Studies (AIFS) titled *Diversity and change in Australian families* examined the use of time by Australian families, and estimated the financial value of unpaid voluntary work by the Australian community. Using an average pay rate of \$13.73 per hour and a 1997 time use survey, the report calculated “the total value of voluntary work in Australia in 1997 is estimated to be \$9.4 billion per annum” (AIFS, 2004, p.291). The AIFS report observed that the amount of time spent on voluntary work varies according to life stage, with women peaking between the ages of 45 and 74 (with a per capita value between \$3779 and \$4634), and men peaking between the ages of 55 and 75 (with a per capita value between \$3000 and \$5500) (ibid).

The social and economic contribution of formal volunteering is more comprehensively examined in a 2010 report by the Productivity Commission titled *Contribution of the not-for-profit sector* that observed that “community (not for profit) organisations play an important role in combatting social exclusion and enhancing the economic, social, cultural and environmental wellbeing of society” (2010, p.iv). The report defines civil society as “the arena of un-coerced collective action around shared interests, purposes and values. In theory its institutional forms are distinct from the state, family and market, though in practice the boundaries between the state, civil society, family and market are often complex, blurred and negotiated” (2010, p.xv). The report estimated volunteer numbers at 4.6 million in 2006, with a not-for-profit contribution to GDP of \$42.9 billion in 2006, and with the value of volunteer time estimated at \$8.9 billion (2010, p.53).

The Productivity Commission’s report on the not-for-profit sector explored the motivators and facilitators of civic participation, and notes that not-for-profits “are driven by their ‘community purpose’ which may focus on their members, targeted groups in the community (often the disadvantaged) or, more broadly, the ‘common good’”(2010, p.15). The report suggests strategies and processes that are conducive

to the effective operations of not-for-profit organisations, including professionalism, inclusiveness and responsiveness. The report acknowledged the importance of altruistic motives, but also emphasises the need to satisfy self-fulfilment goals such as status and personal development.

The economic contribution of volunteering to Victoria is explored in a 2012 report by Associate Professor Ironmonger from the University of Melbourne, commissioned by the Victorian Department of Planning and Community Development. The report estimated the contribution of Victorian volunteers as equivalent to 359,100 jobs in 2006, adding an additional 14.2% to the paid workforce (2012, p.4). The report applied an ABS gross opportunity cost hourly wage rate of just over \$24 in 2006 to estimate that organised (formal) volunteering in Victoria was worth \$4.9 billion, while unorganised (informal) volunteering was worth \$9 billion (ibid). Travel costs added a further \$2.5 billion to these amounts, making the total estimated value of organised and unorganised volunteering to Victoria as \$16.4 billion in 2006 (\$65.8 billion nationally) (p.18).

The ABS 2014 GSS (discussed earlier) finds that 31% of the Australian population aged 18 years and over (5.8 million people) volunteered in 2014, contributing a total of 748 million hours (or 128 hours annually per volunteer) (2015, p.2). This represented a decline in the national rate of volunteering from 34% in 2010.

The 2014 GSS surveyed the residents of almost 13,000 households. It provides detailed insights on formal volunteering trends in Australia, finding that:

- 54% of all volunteers are female.
- 34% of people born in Australia volunteered, compared to 26% born overseas.
- 39% of people living in outer regional and remote areas volunteered, compared to 30% in major cities.
- 38% of people working part-time volunteered, compared to 30% working full-time and 31% unemployed.
- 41% of people with a tertiary qualification volunteered, compared to 25% without a non-school qualification.

- 39% of people in households in the highest gross household income quintile volunteered, compared with 23% in the lowest.
- Almost 50% of volunteers had participated for more than 10 years.
- Almost 66% of volunteers had participated with the one organisation.
- 64% volunteered to help others and the community.
- 57% volunteered for personal satisfaction.
- 54% volunteered to do something worthwhile.
- 45% volunteered due to personal and family involvement.
- 37% volunteered for social contact.
- 31% volunteered to use skills or experience.

Finally, the most recent estimate of the national economic contribution of formal volunteering is a 2017 report by Deloitte Access Economics titled *Economic contribution of the Australian charity sector*. Utilising the ABS definition of a formal (organisation-based) volunteer, the report estimates the economic contribution of Australia's approximately 55,000 charities in the 2014-15 financial year as \$71.8 billion directly, and a further \$57 billion in flow-on contributions (2017, p.8). The report finds that "in 2014-15 the charity sector benefited from a total of 328 million unpaid volunteering hours" worth approximately \$12.8 billion (ibid). The report notes that "the ageing population also poses an interesting challenge for the sector to accommodate the evolving demographics and desires of the next generation of volunteers" (2017, p.10).

Given its substantial economic and social contribution, Governments at all levels have a strong interest in promoting and sustaining volunteering, and in 2011 the Federal Government released a *National Volunteering Strategy* that aims to address changes in the way people volunteer. The report identifies a range of national trends, including a decline in community service and emergency management volunteering, a reduction in hours volunteered, the need for greater flexibility in volunteering roles, and greater competition for volunteers' time. The actions proposed in the *National Volunteering Strategy* to respond to the trends identified above include: engaging young people; engaging older Australians; building inclusive volunteering; growing volunteering in workplaces; and sustaining emergency management volunteering (explored in detail later in this chapter).

Volunteering Australia (VA) is a national peak body that seeks to advance volunteering in the community. In 2016, Volunteering Australia commissioned PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) to produce a report titled *State of Volunteering in Australia* that explores contemporary issues with the potential to inhibit volunteering. The comprehensive findings of the PwC report are highly illuminating, revealing that:

- There is a disconnect between the volunteering roles that people are interested in, and the roles that organisations are offering.
- There is a misalignment between the sectors volunteers are interested in and the sectors with the most positions advertised.
- Informal volunteering is prevalent in society - 46% of respondents participated in informal volunteering in the last 12 months.
- Volunteers are deterred from volunteering because of a lack of flexibility, personal expenses incurred, lack of reimbursement for out of pocket expenses, and burdensome administrative requirements.
- Volunteer-involving organisations generally lack resources, both human and financial, and this can inhibit their ability to engage volunteers with barriers.
- Lack of resources may also reduce an organisation's ability to recognise their existing volunteer base.
- Volunteers are not getting responses from volunteer involving organisations about opportunities fast enough.
- Online methods of recruitment and volunteering could complement the needs of future volunteers.

### **Contemporary trends in emergency service volunteering in Australia**

Given the consistent reports above of a decline in formal volunteering generally, it is important to examine the contemporary trends in emergency service volunteering. Australian emergency services are those agencies “responsible for the protection and preservation of life and property from harm resulting from incidents and emergencies” (AIDR Glossary, 2017), and include the fire service organisations, ambulance service organisations, State emergency services, marine rescue and coast guard organisations, and lifesaving organisations (Productivity Commission, 2016).

Emergency service volunteers constitute a relatively small but distinctive subset of general volunteers in Australia, and estimates of volunteer numbers (sometimes referred to as “members”) have been highly variable. The ABS 2014 *General Social Survey* estimates that 217,100 people (or 3.8% of all 15+ volunteers in Australia) volunteered for emergency services in the previous 12 months, with each emergency service volunteer contributed an average of 42.5 hours per year. In comparison, in 2010 the ABS estimated that 421,000 people (or 6.9% of all 18+ volunteers in Australia) volunteered for emergency services. These figures represent a marked decrease in the percentage of the total 18+ population volunteering for emergency services from 2.45% in 2010 to 1.23% in 2014 (2015).

Over the last decade a series of official reports have acknowledged the growing pressures on, and a general decline in, formal emergency service volunteering (as reflected in the ABS data). The 2011 *National Volunteering Strategy* observes (p.17) that “the rate of natural disasters in Australia is predicted to increase in coming decades, and emergency management volunteering is facing a range of challenges. Declining numbers of emergency management volunteers is an issue for many Australian communities. The commitment required of volunteers in time, training, periods away during emergencies and associated costs is great. In many rural communities the population is declining and so too are the numbers of volunteers”.

Likewise, the 2011 *National Strategy for Disaster Resilience* observes (p.1) “many known factors are increasing our vulnerability to disaster. Work-life patterns, lifestyle expectations, demographic changes, domestic migration, and community fragmentation are increasing community susceptibility, as well as altering local social networks and sustainability of volunteer groups”. The strategy includes as a priority outcome (p.13) that “decision makers adopt policies and practices that support and recognise emergency services and the importance of volunteering in our communities”.

As Governments have become more conscious of growing threats to Australia’s emergency management capabilities, and more aware of the role and contributions of emergency service volunteer workforces, they have commissioned detailed

research into the sector to address major information gaps. A significant contribution to contemporary and comprehensive national data on the emergency management sector was provided by a 2016 report by the Productivity Commission titled *Report on Government Service – Volume D Emergency Management*. The report finds that:

- Nationally in 2014-15, total expenditure across ambulance, fire and emergency service organisations was \$6.7 billion, or \$283.82 per person in the population (p.D6).
- Nationally in 2014-15, 35,406 full time equivalent people were employed by emergency service organisations. Over half (54.9%) were employed in fire and emergency service organisations, while the remainder were employed by ambulance service organisations (p.D9).
- In 2014-15, 256,655 fire, ambulance and emergency service volunteers (and another 1122 community first response ambulance volunteers) were on the records of emergency service organisations (ibid).
- Nationally in 2014-15, emergency service organisations attended a wide range of emergency events including: 3.4 million emergency incidents attended by ambulance services; 385,118 emergency incidents attended by fire services including structure fires, landscape fires and road crash rescue events; 82,382 emergency incidents attended by State Emergency Service organisations, predominantly storm and cyclone events (67,439 incidents), followed by flood events (3759 incidents) and road crash rescue events (2411 incidents). State Emergency Service staff and volunteers contributed 354,515 hours of service” (p.D10).

There are a range of other official reports that provide valuable contemporary insights into the operations and performance of (largely State-based) emergency service agencies in Australia. These reports have typically been commissioned following major incidents (or controversies surrounding particular agencies), and have often provided significant impetus for reform. These reports highlight the inherent complexity of relying on a volunteer-based workforce to resource an essential life-saving public service, a situation acknowledged in the Productivity Commission’s observations on the not-for-profit sector that the “boundaries between the state, civil society, family and market are often complex, blurred and negotiated” (2010, p.xv). The sorts of complexities identified by these reports include: how to

effectively resource, manage and coordinate a State-wide volunteer-based workforce that is largely comprised of a diversity of autonomous work units; how to implement the organisation-wide reforms required by the community and Government without impinging on the autonomy of volunteers and units; and how to adapt to broader social changes and evolving values that are reflected in a decline in traditional sustained (formal) volunteering.

Reports from official inquiries following catastrophic natural events have provided more critical, and perhaps realistic, perspectives on the performance of volunteer-based agencies. Following the Black Saturday bushfires in Victoria in 2009 that resulted in the loss of 173 lives, the Victorian Government asked the Victorian Auditor-General to prepare a report on the capacity of the State's key emergency services (Country Fire Authority and State Emergency Service) to effectively manage volunteers. The Auditor-General's subsequent report titled *Managing Emergency Service Volunteers* (2014) finds (p.x) that "neither the CFA nor SES have a sound understanding of the total numbers of volunteers needed to fulfil their operational requirements. ... Both agencies assessment of current workforce capacity overestimate their emergency response capabilities, meaning neither agency can be assured that it has the capacity to respond to incidents as they occur". The report identifies deficiencies in the recruitment, training, support and retention of volunteers, and makes a number of recommendations to address these perceived shortcomings.

In a similar vein, following a series of catastrophic floods in Queensland in 2010/2011 in which 33 people died, the Queensland Government commissioned an inquiry to identify systemic issues that could be improved in future emergency response events. The subsequent *Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry – Interim Report* (2011, p.180) makes a number of specific recommendations relating to the operations of the State Emergency Service, including: "[stakeholders] should work together to identify and address deficiencies in the ability of the SES to respond effectively to flooding. At the very least, suitable flood boats and flood boat training should be provided to SES units which require them; the Queensland Government and councils should take measures, as soon as possible, to attract more SES volunteers, particularly in areas susceptible to flooding which do not have sufficient numbers. New SES units should be established where possible; the Commission

acknowledges that it may not be possible to recruit and train sufficient numbers of SES volunteers to the extent needed before the next wet season. However, this should not prevent steps being taken as soon as possible to identify the factors impeding the recruitment and retention of SES volunteers, action being taken to address them, and the commencing of recruitment activity”.

Finally, in 2014 the NSW Auditor-General conducted a performance audit of the State Emergency Service’s management of volunteers. The report notes (p.2) that the “SES is different from other emergency services in NSW, in that all of its frontline units are made up wholly of volunteers. This presents particular challenges”. The report finds that the “SES cannot be assured that it has sufficient volunteers to respond to future demands. It does not have strategies to establish what volunteers it needs and how to recruit, retain and train them effectively and efficiently”.

The Auditor-General’s report notes that “the number of active volunteers has fallen in recent years. Twenty-six percent of SES volunteers leave each year, many soon after joining. The high turnover imposes extra demands on SES and its volunteers for little benefit. This is a major challenge which SES has not addressed effectively and indicates problems with both recruitment and retention. Leadership, recognition, communication and training are the most important issues that SES needs to address to improve the management of volunteers and reduce turnover” (ibid). The report recommends action to “establish clear priorities, integrate initiatives and improve monitoring to better manage and support volunteers” (p.4).

Subsequent to the NSW Auditor-General’s report, the NSW SES commissioned Ernst and Young to review the agency’s operational support model. The review report observes (2015, p.4) that the organisation “is a highly valued, volunteer-based service providing needed emergency response to the community. As the organisation has grown and matured, the nature of the services provided has moved beyond the legislated role, which covers emergency response to floods, storms and tsunamis (weather-based disasters)”. The review report provides unique insights into the evolving culture of a hybrid employee/volunteer-based organisation, and its findings include:

- “The SES was established as a volunteer organisation and has evolved into a more regulated public sector agency. Within the organisation there is a prevailing belief that the SES has moved away from its volunteer origins, however our assessment of this reveals a more complex picture of the volunteer/staff relationship.
- The governance around decision-making is misaligned to the complexity of the decisions being made. Simple decisions such as ordering boots or organising dry-cleaning are being over-governed while more complex or far-reaching decisions are under-governed, such as the adoption of new services.
- The policy framework is not conducive to policies that are developed holistically and cross-functionally. Policies are developed frequently, not coordinated across the SES and are seen to be reactionary. Policies can be disseminated without context, consultation or reasoning which results in inconsistent application.
- The organisational structure is not aligned to simultaneously support business-as-usual and lengthy campaigns as emergency events take precedence.
- In assessing the performance of volunteers there is a lack of clarity about standards, accountabilities and management measures.
- Workforce planning is not currently used to affectively assess the current and future demand for staff and volunteers in the organisation or take account of how workforce supply is changing (i.e: is the profile of the volunteer workforce changing and what is the implication for the SES?). There is an underpinning philosophy in the organisation that there is a job for everyone.
- SES members have largely altruistic motivations for working or volunteering with the SES, underpinned by their desire to serve the community.
- The SES has no single identifying culture and is made up of a range of subcultures which have varying levels of inclusivity and diversity.
- SES members have an appetite for change which needs to be supported by adequate consultation and transparent communications.
- There are a series of underpinning beliefs, or paradigms, within the organisation that are key to addressing cultural and behavioural change across the SES” (p.9).

Acknowledging the changing patterns of emergency service volunteering, with a decline in formal volunteering and a rise in informal volunteering, in 2015 the Australian and New Zealand Emergency Management Committee (ANZEMC) commissioned a report titled *Spontaneous Volunteer Strategy: Coordination of volunteer effort in the immediate post disaster stage*. The strategy notes (p.3) that the “work of emergency management volunteers is being augmented through an increasing trend towards informal or ‘spontaneous’ volunteerism. ...These spontaneous volunteers can contribute a wide range of skills and experience to the work of the emergency management sector”. The ANZEMC strategy notes that “spontaneous volunteerism can provide the surge capacity that is critical in the disaster clean-up phase. However, it can also represent significant challenges for emergency managers and the community” (ibid). The strategy aims to recognise the inevitability of spontaneous volunteerism in the recovery (post-response) phase, and harness this capability through the national application of nine principles to facilitate their effective utilisation.

In the context of these various trends, and broader organisational concerns about the ongoing resourcing of its volunteer workforce, in 2017 the NSW SES announced a new organisation-wide strategy called *Volunteering Reimagined* that aims to “increase capability through the development of a sustainable volunteer workforce” (2017, p.2). With the objectives of reducing volunteer turnover and enabling more flexible and ad-hoc volunteering, the strategy introduces new categories of (informal) non-members called corporate and spontaneous volunteers. While retaining the existing (formal) “core” of volunteer members, the strategy provides new opportunities for flexible community engagement in less demanding support roles such as administration, logistics, field assistance, community engagement and incident management.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge that, in the context of Australia’s historical susceptibility to a range of natural hazards, conceptions of the “heroic rescuer” have always had a place within broader Australian cultural narratives about duty, mateship, bravery and resilience in the face of adversity (explored in greater detail in the discussion paper at Appendix F). In 2016, political tensions over the autonomy and independence of volunteer firefighters in Victoria culminated in the passage by

the Federal Government of the *Fair Work Amendment (Respect for Emergency Service Volunteers) Bill 2016*. The explanatory note accompanying the Bill states (p.i) that the purpose of the legislation is to “protect emergency services bodies and their volunteers by providing that an enterprise agreement cannot include terms that undermine the capacity of volunteer emergency services bodies to properly manage their volunteer operations”. Clause (1)(c) of the Act identifies the responsibilities of emergency services agencies to “recognise, value, respect or promote the contribution of its volunteers to the well-being and safety of the community”.

### **Exceptional dimensions of emergency service volunteering**

The various official reports on emergency service volunteering outlined above highlight the inherent complexity of this phenomenon. Many of these official reports characterise emergency service volunteers as a large and essential (unpaid) workforce that can be deployed in times of crisis. Such abstract generalisations can downplay the great social and economic value to the community of the services provided, or the quite exceptional nature of the roles undertaken.

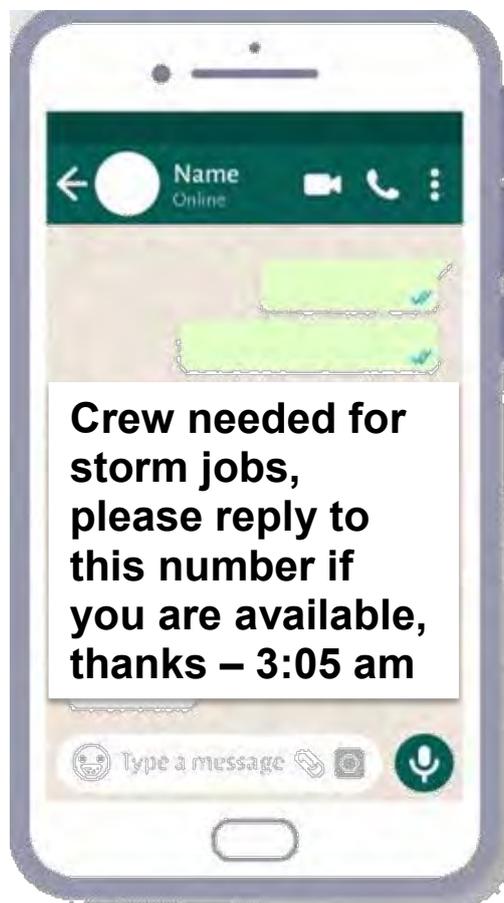
Beyond the official statistics, reports, inquiries and sometimes heroic media characterisations, emergency service volunteering in Australia has a number of unique circumstances and distinctive characteristics that distinguish it from most other forms of formal volunteering, and that justify its description as exceptional civic participation. These include the:

- Demanding nature of emergency response roles.
- Level of dedication and personal commitment required to sustain emergency service volunteering.
- Specialist competencies required to undertake emergency tasks safely.
- Economic and social value to the community of the unpaid services provided.

Many of the following observations on the culture and operations of emergency service units are based on: the author’s experience as an active volunteer with an urban unit of the NSW State Emergency Service from 2013 to 2016; the author’s consultations with a broad range of volunteers and emergency service staff at

National Council for Fire and Emergency Services (AFAC) conferences in 2014, 2015 and 2017; the author's active participation in and presentations to various Research Advisory Forums organised by the Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre, and related engagement with a diverse range of agency representatives on a Sustainable Volunteering end-users' consultation group; and a comprehensive report produced by the NSW SES Volunteer Association following a State-wide consultation with volunteer members in 2014.

*Demanding nature of emergency response roles*



Who would choose to leave the comfort of a warm bed at 3 am on a bitterly cold morning to go out into torrential rain to climb a ladder to place a tarpaulin over a leaking roof; to use a chainsaw to remove trees threatening to damage property or blocking access; to place sandbags to divert floodwater or bolster temporary levies; to evacuate people at risk of inundation; or to rescue those caught in dangerous floodwaters? These are just a small sample of the multitude of challenging

emergency tasks regularly undertaken by over two hundred thousand emergency service volunteers in Australia every year.

Often responding at short notice at any time of day or night, the emergency tasks undertaken by volunteers can be physically and psychologically demanding, and at times potentially hazardous. Manual work undertaken in the dark, wind, rain or cold using machinery or heavy equipment can pose inherent challenges, and every emergency incident can be different and unpredictable. Volunteers are expected to be constantly on call and available to respond immediately (sometimes with little or no notice), to be deployed for an indeterminate period of time (potentially days), with obvious implications for family and work relationships.

The roles require a sustained personal commitment (over a period of months and years) to develop and maintain competency in a broad range of skills, and to participate regularly (often weekly) in organised unit activities. Members are expected to become an integral part of work teams, where they rely on one another for mutual support and safety, and undertake complementary functions.

While personal risks to emergency service volunteers are mitigated by a pervasive safety culture, personal protective gear, modern high-quality equipment, explicit safety-focussed standard operating procedures, mutual care and a clear chain of authority, and a constant risk assessment process that explicitly prohibits any potentially dangerous actions, there will always be some element of inherent risk in managing unpredictable natural hazards despite the most careful planning and execution. Emergency service volunteers can be exposed to a range of stressful situations including rescuing people caught in floods, helping people severely injured or trapped in collapsed structures or in damaged motor vehicles, or finding deceased persons during land searches.

A 2018 report titled *When helping hurts: PTSD in first responders* by Australia21 acknowledges that “the risk of post-traumatic stress is inherent in the work that first responders do. First responders are the men and women who deliver the initial response to any kind of emergency situation, whether it be the result of a natural disaster, an accident or a deliberate human act causing or threatening injury or loss

of life. They include police, fire, ambulance, paramedics, rescue and other emergency services personnel” (2018, p.11). The report proposes a range of organisational strategies to mitigate and manage the effects of traumatic stress on workers, and concludes that “the moral case is that everything reasonably possible should be done to protect the health and wellbeing of those who put themselves at risk on behalf of the community, and the health and wellbeing of their families” (2018, p.55).

There can be a tendency in discussing emergency service volunteering roles to over-emphasise the active emergency-response (seemingly heroic and exciting) dimensions of the work. In reality, volunteering roles can also be extremely tedious and routine, with long periods of inactivity (in which training and preparation occurs), and limited opportunities for operational deployment. Particular types of emergencies (fires or storms) tend to be concentrated at particular times of the year (seasons), with relatively short periods of intensive activity (for example, summer for fires) followed by many months of inactivity.

Because the magnitude of an emergency event is not completely predictable, volunteers can be mobilised in reserve, including extended travel to distant locations, only to be stood down. In units with few vehicles and many members, the opportunity for deployment even in busy times may be limited by the capacity of the vehicles. A 2007 report prepared for the Australian Council of State Emergency Services (ACSES) titled: *The value of volunteers in State Emergency Services* estimates that 61% of volunteers’ time is allocated to training, 22% to unit management and other activities, 14% to response and recovery, and 3% to community service (ACSES, 2007).

### *Level of dedication and personal commitment required to sustain emergency service volunteering*

The motives for emergency service volunteering are the primary focus of this research. It is axiomatic that the substantial demands of emergency service volunteering roles and tasks (outlined above) need to be matched by a high level of

personal dedication and commitment. This research explores the contention that altruistic values play a seminal role in motivating this commitment, primarily through the collection of empirical data on the values preferences of the volunteer workforce.

Various official reports acknowledge the growing personal, organisational and social challenges to formal volunteering, raising even further the level of commitment required to sustain active participation. Time constraints, changing work and family obligations, financial pressures, competing interests, an ageing population, and the general demands of more complex and busy lives, are all impacting on volunteer availability, making the substantial level of commitment required for demanding emergency service roles increasingly unsustainable for some. Cowlshaw , Evans and McLennan, (2006, p.1) have studied the pressures that emergency services work can place on volunteers' families and, following a series of interviews with Victorian fire service volunteers, found that "many volunteers consistently prioritise brigade demands ahead of family responsibilities. The experience of being in second place to the fire-brigade often generates resentment from some family members".

As a vitally important (potentially life-saving) public service, emergency service volunteering is in many respects an anomaly in a developed market-based economy where value and service are typically remunerated. The community requires and expects that Governments will respond immediately and effectively to potentially life-threatening natural hazards, much as they do in responding to other serious threats and emergencies with law enforcement, fire and rescue, and defence. Each of these emergency-response functions constitutes an essential public service that is directed and deployed by Governments to keep the community safe and protect against the loss of life. The fundamental difference with emergency service volunteers is that mobilisation of the workforce in times of crisis is largely contingent on the ongoing goodwill and charity of its individual voluntary members.

If emergency services are to effectively manage their volunteer workforces, it is important to acknowledge the role of individual volition (the power to freely choose) in the personal decision to commit to and participate in highly-demanding volunteering roles. In contrast to the formal and explicit obligations and duties of an employment contract with paid staff, many of the conditions that define and govern

the relationship between the volunteer and the emergency service organisation are implicit, negotiated and conditional. Personal volition and goodwill need be sustained for volunteers to continue to serve, and may actually underpin a level of commitment and dedication that exceeds the duty-based obligations of paid employees.

Understanding the nuances and inherent contradictions between an essential emergency-response function and a discretionary workforce is thus critically important in managing and sustaining volunteer commitment and minimising turnover. The nature and strength of the implicit relationship between the individual, unit and organisation is pivotal to sustaining volunteer commitment and ongoing participation. Every time a volunteer is “called out” in an emergency situation they have to decide whether they are willing and available to step forward to serve. Theoretically, if a significant number of volunteers simultaneously decided not to participate, it would be difficult to resource an adequate response to a large-scale emergency event.

Individual commitment and goodwill is thus constantly conditional, and can be negatively impacted by a diverse range of internal and external factors, some seemingly minor. Factors that can erode goodwill include being treated unfairly or with disrespect, conflict with colleagues, a loss of confidence in local or state leadership, or growing resentment towards the increasingly bureaucratic requirements of the parent organisation. Capturing reliable data on the reasons why people cease volunteering can be difficult when exit interviews are not conducted as a matter of course, and many people just cease participating without explanation. An exception is a 2013 exit survey commissioned by the WA Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES) on the primary reasons for leaving that revealed that: 36% moved away; 26% management/supervision style; 25% did not feel valued; 18% employment demand including new job; 17% personality clash; and 14% lack of recognition (DFES, 2013, p.13).

The volition to participate may also give the volunteer the power to expect reciprocity from the organisation and fellow volunteers in terms of intangible issues like respect, consultation, recognition, competence and integrity. The strength and idealism of altruistic motives means that they may be matched by heightened personal

expectations that the donation of time and effort will be a positive experience, will make a meaningful contribution to the well-being of others, and the activities will be congruent with core personal values. The empirical research conducted as part of this study and outlined in Chapters 4 and 5 will provide evidence of a correlation between the satisfaction of such altruistic expectations, and the level of volunteer commitment and turnover.

### *Specialist competencies required to undertake emergency tasks safely*

Given the inherently unpredictable and dynamic nature of emergency events, emergency service volunteers require a diverse set of skills to be deployed operationally. Volunteers require ongoing training and accreditation in a broad set of generic and specialist competencies in order to undertake emergency tasks safely and effectively. Complicated or potentially risky activities (such as swift water rescue) may only be undertaken by specially trained and qualified personnel. The combination of the diverse set of minimum competencies required for accreditation and safe operational deployment are unique to emergency service volunteers. Training is a major financial and human resource investment by emergency service agencies, and the constant leakage of experienced operational capability is one of the reasons why agencies are so concerned about the relatively high turnover of volunteers (in some agencies exceeding 20% annually according to official reports).

New recruits undergo induction training that explains the rationale, principles, procedures, code of conduct, skills and minimum competency standards required for recognition and accreditation as an active volunteer (typically referred to as becoming a “member” of the unit and the organisation). Following the successful completion of induction, further core courses are provided on topics such as first aid, general rescue, storm and water damage operations, chainsaw operations, risk assessment, flood rescue boat operations, communication equipment operations, map reading and navigation, and working in an operations centre. All general volunteers are required to have a minimum set of generic competencies including first aid. Further specialist training is also available on a wide variety of subjects including land search operations, truck driving, vertical rescue and team leadership.

Emergency service volunteers can be called on to perform a highly diverse range of tasks in a single shift that each requires particular competencies. In one shift these tasks could include: evacuating families from their homes before rising waters prevent their move to higher ground; putting a temporary tarpaulin over a shattered roof in the rain; cutting up and clearing a large tree blocking vehicle access to a hospital; sandbagging the entry to an aged care facility to prevent damage from floodwater; directing traffic around a flooded area or downed power lines; and rescuing a family from a stalled car in rising flood water in the middle of the night.

### *Economic and social value to the community of unpaid services provided*

The volunteering page on the web site of the NSW Office of Emergency Management notes that “volunteers make an enormous contribution before, during and after natural disasters and other emergencies in NSW. Without these volunteers many people may have lost their lives, their homes or have taken much longer to get back on their feet after being involved in a natural disaster or other emergency. Volunteers can be involved in directly dealing with the emergency through roles such as firefighting, rescue or storm recovery, or through important support roles like catering, communications and transport”.

Estimates of the economic value of the gratis services provided by emergency service volunteers vary widely, with output methods imputing value to the goods or services produced (the replacement value), and input methods imputing value to the time worked by volunteers (such as the opportunity cost of wages forgone by volunteers). Other tangible measures of value include economic contribution of volunteering to gross domestic product (GDP), emergency management costs, emergency event costs, and estimates of economic costs mitigated.

In terms of an estimate of the opportunity cost of wages foregone by volunteers, using the Productivity Commission 2016 estimate of more than 250,000 emergency service volunteers, the ABS 2014 General Social Survey estimate of an average annual contribution of 42.5 hours, and an ABS gross opportunity cost hourly wage rate of \$24, wage costs in 2014 would exceed \$255 million. Given that active

“members” of emergency services typically attend weekly unit and brigade meetings that can involve several hours of competency training and equipment maintenance, the ABS 2014 GSS estimate of an average annual contribution of 42.5 hours may be highly conservative. Using an estimate of 100 hours annual contribution, the wages foregone for 250,000 volunteers would amount to \$600 million. Total expenditure across ambulance, fire and emergency service organisations in 2014-2015 was estimated by the Productivity Commission (2016, p.D6) to be \$6.7 billion.

In terms of the costs of emergency events, the Productivity Commission’s *Natural Disaster Funding Arrangements Report* notes (2014, p.5) that “Australia is exposed to a wide variety of natural hazards that become natural disasters when they significantly and negatively impact the community. .... Over the past 40 years, storms have been the most frequent disasters causing insured property losses. Floods have also been frequent and, when they occur, typically the most expensive events. Bushfires are less frequent, but account for most fatalities. Across the country accumulated insurance losses have been greatest in NSW (mostly hail and storms), followed by Queensland (mostly floods and cyclones)”. The report estimates that insurance losses by natural hazards in the period 1970 to 2013 amount to \$29.4 billion, though the report notes that “the bulk of these losses arose from a relatively small number of events” (ibid).

The Productivity Commission report notes (p.3) that “natural disasters have also had a significant financial impact on the Australian, State, Territory and Local Governments. Over the past decade, the Australian Government has spent around \$8 billion on post-disaster relief and recovery, with another \$5.7 billion to be spent over the forward estimates for past natural disaster events”.

In a similar vein, a 2014 report by Deloitte Access Economics titled *Building an open platform for natural disaster resilience decisions* notes (2014, p.12) that “that the economic cost of natural disasters to Australian communities amounts to an average of \$6.3 billion per year, with \$700 million of that borne by all levels of government, the majority of which is spent on post disaster relief and recovery. By 2050, this is forecast to rise to \$23 billion annually in present value terms”. Finally, the 2018 World Disasters Report from the International Red Cross notes that over the last

decade the cost to Australia of natural disasters amounted to US\$27 billion, placing the nation 10<sup>th</sup> internationally in total costs incurred (2018, p.179).

### **Pressures for organisational reform**

In the context of the unique and exceptional dimensions of emergency service volunteering that are outlined above, it is important to also acknowledge the rapidly changing organisational context for such activities. As noted in various reports, emergency services across Australia are currently undergoing a period of significant transformation, and volunteers are subject to both personal and social pressures for change. The 2011 *National Strategy for Disaster Resilience* expressed concern about an increasing vulnerability to disaster, and acknowledges the contemporary forces impacting on both emergency services organisations and on volunteer workforces (2011). The 2011 National Volunteering Strategy explicitly acknowledges the growing pressures on emergency service volunteers, with declining numbers and increasing community expectations “that volunteers and emergency management organisations will operate at a highly professional standard” (p.17). In the context of an increase in the frequency and severity of damaging emergency events, there are growing external pressures on traditional member-based bodies to modernise and comply with formal legal and regulatory rules and standards relating to accountability, transparency, risk-management, advancement on merit, equity and competency-based training. This section will explore these pressures for change and consider the potential implications for what have often been traditional member-based bodies.

A 2010 Productivity Commission report titled *Contribution of the not-for-profit (NFP) sector* explores these pressures and the changing environment for volunteers, noting (p.xxxii) that “generic regulation, such as occupational health and safety requirements, are imposing disproportional costs on NFPs. These and more specific qualification requirements are raising the cost of using volunteers. Such additional costs come at a time when volunteers are tending to volunteer for fewer hours on average, with younger volunteers preferring episodic and work-based volunteering. ... There is also evidence that increasing professionalization, that also corresponds with employment growth, crowds out voluntary effort in community services and

education”. The introduction in 2010 of new national work health and safety legislation extended the definition of worker to include volunteers, with implications for the legal obligations and responsibilities of both agencies and their volunteers (Eburn, 2011).

Organisational reform is a complex issue for many Australian emergency services. Many units and brigades originated as autonomous local community-based groups that were sponsored to varying degrees by Local Government. Over the last two decades these diverse groups have undergone major change as State Governments have moved to consolidate, formalise and enhance their emergency management arrangements. While it is difficult to generalise about the thousands of emergency service units across Australia, it is fair to say that all are in various stages of organisational and cultural transition as a result of contemporary changes in society, new accountability and governance obligations, and changes in the risks posed by climate change-related natural hazards.

While emergency service organisations have formalised hierarchical structures, paid staff at headquarters and regional levels, established command and control systems, and processes for coordinating responses to emergency events, the principal operational capability (the volunteer workforce) is located within local units or brigades. Local units continue to retain considerable autonomy with primary responsibility for the recruitment, training, administration, management, support and local coordination of their volunteer members. As reflected in the literature review, research consistently shows that volunteer loyalty and commitment is often centred on the local unit and personal networks, rather than the broader organisation.

Efforts at organisational integration continue, though wide variations in culture and standards remain between units, including member numbers, member demographics, length of service, levels of turnover, management styles and levels of operational activity. As noted earlier, a 2015 Ernst and Young report on the NSW SES observes (p.9) “the SES has no single identifying culture and is made up of a range of subcultures which have varying levels of inclusivity and diversity”. While agencies have developed and promulgated Codes of Conduct that emphasise the

organisation's core values, their influence on the day-to-day functioning of units can vary widely.

In such a dynamic and complex environment, the relationship between the parent agency (and paid staff) and its volunteer units can be volatile, with the potential that the top-down imposition of corporate requirements may impinge negatively on volunteer autonomy and motivation. In 2014, the NSW SES Volunteers Association (SESVA) consulted with its members across NSW, and the subsequent report notes (p.10) that "staff and volunteers often came from the same point of frustration, but there seemed to be little understanding or acknowledgement that each were experiencing the same frustration. There tended to be references to 'they' and 'them', rather than more inclusive terminology from both sides".

Similar sentiments are expressed in the Ernst and Young report quoted earlier that observes (p.9) that the [NSW] "SES was established as a volunteer organisation and has evolved into a more regulated public sector agency. Within the organisation there is a prevailing belief that the SES has moved away from its volunteer origins". As recently as July 2017, a SESVA submission to a NSW Parliament Legislative Council inquiry into bullying states (p.28) that the SES's values of trust, accountability, respect, professionalism, safety and service (TARPS) "have changed over a period of time from being statements that describe desired behaviours to now being used as a tool that is used to discipline members".

The growing pressures for organisational reform are characterised by various authors as the inevitability of modernisation. Utilising a framework originally developed by Zimmeck (2000), Rochester, Paine and Howlett (2012) explore the differences between "home-grown" and "modern" models of volunteer management. The home-grown or traditional organisation involves volunteers "more from a core expression of values", and has: shared ideals/interests; relies on informal authority; has friendship-based relationships; is egalitarian, democratic and consensual; and has a minimum division of labour (2012, p.153). In contrast, the modern corporate organisation involves volunteers "largely as a means to an end" and is: mission and rules-driven; hierarchical with volunteers subordinate to employees; applies direct control and formal authority; and has functional relationships, defined roles and a

clear division of labour” (ibid). It could be argued that these characterisations are broadly consistent with the growing professionalization and corporatisation of Australian emergency services.

A shift from a traditional to modern management model may impact negatively on volunteer retention and turnover in a number of ways. There is some potential that those older/longer-term (collective) volunteers who identify with and are committed to traditional values may resent and resist pressures for corporatisation and formalisation. This same older cohort may also experience dissonance with the attitudes and overt self-interest of younger reflexive volunteers. Conversely, the younger/newer reflexive volunteers are unlikely to sustain their commitment to an increasingly bureaucratic organisation over the longer term. In both instances a relatively higher level of volunteer turnover may be anticipated.

## **Conclusions**

This chapter has set the scene for the Valuing Volunteers Study by reviewing and synthesising a diverse range of contemporary official reports on the operations, performance and culture of the various volunteer-based emergency services in Australia. Given a reported decline in formal volunteering rates in Australia post-2010 (ABS, 2015), various official reports have identified a range of contemporary personal and social pressures that may impact on the community’s willingness and availability to commit to formal emergency service volunteering roles, including a shift to more reflexive and spontaneous forms of volunteering.

Consistent with the first research objective, this chapter has revealed the unique circumstances and distinctive characteristics of formal emergency service volunteering that justify its description as exceptional civic participation. The chapter demonstrates that the use of a volunteer-based workforce to provide an essential public service is an inherently complex phenomenon, whose specific features are not well understood by the community or policy-makers. Beyond the stereotype of the heroic rescuer ready to respond in times of crisis, there seems little appreciation of the substantial personal commitment and goodwill required to undertake inherently

demanding emergency response roles, or the conditional and potentially fragile nature of the relationship between the individual volunteer, the local unit and the emergency service organisation.

This chapter has revealed that the commitment and retention of emergency service volunteers may be particularly susceptible to specific external and internal forces, including changing social values (declining altruism) and growing pressures for organisational and cultural reform. The bulk of the volunteer workforce is comprised of thousands of individual units and brigades across Australia, each with its own distinctive culture, and organisational reforms that inevitably impinge on individual autonomy and sense of personal responsibility may add an additional level of complexity to sustaining volunteer motivation.

This chapter has demonstrated that emergency service volunteers constitute a vital and highly unique community resource, and continuing to churn through members without understanding and meeting their evolving needs may ultimately prove unsustainable. If predictions about the increasing severity of climate change-related emergency events are correct, then the demands on the emergency service volunteer workforce are only likely to increase over the longer term, with the possibility that a major emergency or catastrophic natural event could evolve into a large-scale disaster that overwhelms existing resources and capabilities.

The following chapter critiques various theories and related research that are relevant to an understanding of the primary motives for emergency service volunteering, and identifies a relevant and useful instrument for measuring values amongst existing and potential volunteers.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Valuing Volunteers Study - Literature review**

#### **Introduction**

Consistent with the second research objective, this chapter provides a comprehensive review of motivational theories that are relevant to emergency service volunteering, demonstrating the capacity of an inclusive multi-dimensional values framework to encompass and integrate diverse psychological, sociological and economic perspectives. This chapter also evaluates the efficacy of the Schwartz *Theory of Basic Human Values* and related *Portrait Values Questionnaire* (PVQ-40) survey for determining the primary motives of a large State-wide volunteer workforce (Schwartz, 2012).

#### **Concepts and key definitions**

One of the points of consensus in the contemporary literature on volunteering and civic participation is that these topics encompass a diverse range of inherently complex, multi-dimensional and dynamic phenomena. A review of texts on evolving forms of civic engagement by Bermudez (2012, p.533) observes “the picture of civic engagement that emerges presents us with an intricate set of cognitions, beliefs, behaviours and motivations resulting from interactions between individuals, groups, institutions and societies”. Eccles and Wigfield (2002, p.127) reviewed the literature on motivation, beliefs, values and goals, noting that “the proliferation of different terms (and measures) for similar constructs makes theoretical integration more difficult”, concluding that “the complex interactions of context and the individual need further explication”. Consistent with these observations on the diversity of concepts and definitions, a glossary of key terms is included at the front of this thesis.

As outlined in the previous chapter, volunteering is defined as “time willingly given for the common good and without financial gain” (Volunteer Australia, 2015, p.3). This definition encompassing both formal volunteering that is “someone who willingly gives unpaid help, in the form of time, service or skills, to or through an organisation

or group” (ABS, 2010), and informal volunteering that is any spontaneous or sporadic helping activity. For many years the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) defined and measured volunteering as “unpaid work”, though it is proposing to broaden its definition for the next *General Social Survey* to recognise the important contribution of informal volunteering (2017).

In a comprehensive review of contemporary survey-based volunteerism research, Wilson (2012, p.178) observes that “it is to the credit of scholars working in this specialised field that a wide range of disciplinary approaches can be found and that inter-disciplinary research is quite common. Psychological theories tend to emphasize intra-psychic phenomena such as personality traits, self-concepts, and motivation. Sociological theories focus on individual socio-demographic characteristics such as race, gender, and social class, and ecological variables such as social networks and community characteristics. Economic theories treat volunteerism as a form of unpaid labour, consuming resources and motivated by the promise of rewards”. Einolf and Chambre (2011, p.298) make similar observations, identifying “three major theoretical perspectives in research on volunteering: social theories that stress the importance of context, roles, and integration; individual characteristic theories that emphasize values, traits, and motivations; and resource theories that focus on skills and free time” that “loosely match the disciplines of sociology, psychology, and economics”.

Given the relatively narrow discipline-specific perspectives that are reflected in much of the volunteering literature, it seems logical to review the various contemporary motivational theories according to their discipline. The differences in the focus and scope of the various discipline-specific motivational theories are summarised in Figure 2 below. The following sections review psychological theories that focus on intrinsic and individual motives for volunteering, followed by sociological theories that focus on extrinsic and social motives for volunteering, and concluding with economic theories that focus on functional motives for volunteering. This will be followed by an exploration of multi-disciplinary perspectives that transcend the limited outlook that this review identifies in discipline-specific perspectives on emergency service volunteering motives.

<b>Discipline</b>	<b>Focus</b>	<b>Scope</b>
Psychology	Intrinsic & individual (self-oriented) motives for behaviours	Personality, thinking, reasoning, feelings, emotions, beliefs, needs, desires, principles, preferences, choices, personal values, morals
Sociology	Extrinsic & social (other-oriented) motives for behaviours	Culture, society, groups, community, norms, social capital, civic participation, context, roles, trends, social values, ethics
Economics	Functional & productive (rational) reasons & purpose for behaviours	Workforce, resources, utilitarian, structural, organisation, financial value, management

**Figure 2:** Summary of focus & scope of discipline-specific motivational theories (Source: author)

### **Psychological perspectives on the motives for emergency service volunteering**

Clary, Snyder, Ridge, Copeland, Stukas, Haugen and Miene (1998) have played a seminal role in volunteering research through their development of a *Volunteer Functions Inventory* (VFI). The VFI proposes six motivationally distinct needs that can be satisfied by volunteering, with volunteering “simultaneously serving multiple functions for the same individual” (Guntert, Strubel, Kals and Wehner, 2016, p.312). Finkelstein, Penner and Brannick (2005, p.404) summarise the VFI motives as “values (to express values related to altruistic and humanitarian concerns for others); understanding (to acquire new learning experiences and/or exercise skills that might otherwise go unused); social (to strengthen social relationships); career (to gain career related experience); protective (to reduce negative feelings about oneself or address personal problems); and enhancement (to grow and develop

psychologically)". Of the six VFI functions, the values motive clearly represents other-oriented altruism, while the remainder reflect varying degrees of self-interest.

In a study with particular relevance to the influence and implications of altruistic values for emergency service volunteering, Stukas, Hoyer, Nicholson, Brown and Aisbett (2014) apply the VFI to examine the motives of over 4,000 Australian volunteers, and compare the results to five measures of well-being (self-esteem, self-efficacy, well-being, social connectedness and trust). Their study concludes (p.17) that "Australian volunteers who engaged in service primarily for other-oriented reasons, to express their prosocial values or to reaffirm their relationships with close others ... were more likely to report higher levels of well-being", and "higher satisfaction, perceived support from the volunteer organization, and intentions to continue volunteering". In contrast, "volunteers who engaged in service primarily for self-oriented reasons, to distract themselves from personal problems or to advance their careers (but not specifically to feel good about themselves), were more likely to report lower well-being and poorer outcomes". The authors caution that "volunteers are rarely purely other-oriented or self-oriented in their motivations" (ibid).

In a contemporary review of strategies to recruit volunteers that is directly relevant to this research, Stukas, Snyder and Clary (2016, p.251) conclude that "we are sensitive to the possibility that methods to encourage community involvement may potentially result in two different classes of volunteers – those who are primarily other-oriented and intrinsically-motivated, and those who are primarily self-oriented and extrinsically-motivated. Although no real harm (and potentially a lot of good) may be achieved by volunteers who are self-oriented and extrinsically motivated, their commitment to sustained service may be lower than that of volunteers who are more other-oriented and intrinsically motivated. ... Methods that encourage people to develop and internalise a compassionate motivation to help others in need of their help may result in the most benefits for all". This suggests a shift in volunteering recruitment strategies to attract more extrinsically-motivated volunteers.

In a study that revealed generational differences in functional motives, McLennan and Birch (2008) surveyed the attitudes of 455 Country Fire Authority volunteers in Victoria. They conclude (p.7) that "those that volunteer do so because of a mix of

community-safety, community-contribution, and self-oriented motivations. It appears that younger volunteers are more likely to be motivated by self-oriented perceived benefits from volunteering compared with older volunteers". These personal benefits include career enhancement, skills development, the challenge, and opportunities for friendship and camaraderie. A later study by Francis and Jones (2012) that surveyed 252 State Emergency Service volunteers found that the two highest functional motives for both younger and older volunteers were values and understanding, with a strong orientation towards the values of universalism and benevolence.

As enduring principles and beliefs, values represent more cerebral motives, and *Construal Level Theory* offers some valuable insights into individual thinking and reasoning processes by exploring the nature and influences of concrete (proximal) and abstract (distal) mental constructs. As explained by Gong and Medin (2012, p.628), "more weight is given to global, abstract features at high-level construals, whereas local, concrete features are more influential at lower-level construals". Given values represent abstract higher-level construals, the *Construal Level Theory* framework may have some utility in better understanding the interaction between immediate (concrete) self-interest and broader (abstract) altruistic considerations. Trope and Liberman (2010, p.453) observe that "because of their relatively abstract and decontextualized nature, [values] will be more readily applied to and guide intentions for psychologically distant situations", concluding that values "are better reflected in their intentions for the distant future than in their intentions for the immediate future or their actual behaviour".

A study by Aknin, Van Boven and Johnson-Graham (2015) suggests that as a higher-level construal, values may be more influential in sustaining a longer-term commitment to the role rather than affecting the immediate decision on whether or not to respond to any particular emergency. They observe (p.458) that "prosocial actions are characterised by highly favourable abstract features and less favourable, sometimes unpleasant, concrete features". Their study of emergency volunteers in the United States "suggest that abstract construal increases the anticipated emotional benefits of prosocial actions relative to concrete construal" and "the effect of construal was larger when the prosocial action entailed greater personal sacrifice" (p.459). They conclude (p.461) that the findings may explain "why people may

appreciate the value of prosocial behaviour in the distant future but avoid opportunities to offer assistance in the present”.

In a study with possible implications for translating informal volunteering into more committed formal volunteering, Barraket, Keast, Newton, Walters and James (2013) surveyed the intrinsic motives of 712 spontaneous volunteers in Queensland following a spate of natural disasters. They concluded (p.35) that “the overwhelming initial motivation for spontaneous volunteering in response to natural disasters is a desire to help the community, which is consistent with the collective mode of volunteering. Yet for those who are new ... to volunteering through such events, opportunities for more reflexive modes of volunteering beyond the immediate crisis appear to be important in translating initial enthusiasm into sustained civic engagement”. Their study notes the positive role that helping may play in meeting individual psychological needs in response to crises, and highlights the significance of relationships (proximity) with people and place as facilitators of initial and potentially ongoing participation.

Given the dedication and substantial personal commitment required to sustain involvement in inherently demanding emergency service roles (explored in the previous chapter), these psychological theories have relevance to an understanding of the nature and strength of individual intrinsic motives and internal reasoning processes, and highlight the significant implications of other-oriented (altruistic) and self-oriented (egoistic) values. They do not on their own provide a comprehensive explanation of the systemic drivers of emergency service volunteer participation, and a review of sociological and economic perspectives is thus warranted.

### **Sociological perspectives on the motives for emergency service volunteering**

Much of the contemporary sociological literature emphasises the critical importance of understanding broader trends in cultural and social change. *Modernisation Theory* is a sociological approach that studies social evolution and social development, highlighting the changes that accompany the transition from industrial to technology and service-based economies (Marsh, 2014). While the approach was originally

developed (in the West) in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century, before the globally transformative effects of neo-liberalism, globalisation and a ubiquitous internet, a contemporary iteration called *Reflexive Modernisation Theory* posits that traditional and enduring social institutions and identities are being progressively displaced by subjective, dynamic, fluid and self-defined constructs (Farrugia, 2016). Yeung (2004, p.22) notes that “modernisation has been characterised by increasing individualisation, including the reflexive reconstruction of identity and the decline in the institutional determination of life choices”.

Hustinx and Lammertyn (2003, p.168) use a *Modernisation Theory* perspective to explore fundamental changes in the broader social and economic contexts within which volunteering occurs. They note various reports of “a transition from traditional/classical/old to modern/new, from collectivistic to individualistic, from membership-based to program-based, or from institutionalised to self-organised types of volunteer participation”, observing that “individualisation and secularisation are assumed to restructure the motivational bases and patterns of volunteering” (ibid). They propose a new analytical framework to explore the interaction of personal and social influences on what they characterise as “collective” (other-oriented) and “reflexive” (self-oriented) styles of volunteering. They contrast “classic volunteerism” by collective volunteers who identify with traditional social norms, demonstrate predominantly altruistic and idealistic motives, and make a long-term commitment to their chosen formal organisation, with “new volunteerism” by reflexive volunteers who identify with and selectively pursue various personal interests, often concurrently and informally on a sporadic basis.

Hustinx and Lammertyn’s (ibid) exposition on a collective-reflexive motivational continuum concludes (p.183) that “major changes occur in the relationship between volunteer and organisation. Volunteer involvement loses its self-evident character: it decreasingly corresponds to strong identifications and long-lasting memberships. A shift towards more reflexive, self-directed forms of volunteering may result in a widening gap between the priorities of the volunteer and the organisational work that has to be done. Another source of conflict lies in the intermittent course of reflexive volunteer involvement. Chances of organisational survival will depend on structural adaptations that can accommodate more self-interested, flexible and detached forms

of involvement". These observations have particularly relevance to Australian emergency services that are in transition from traditional member-based bodies to modern corporate entities, while continuing to rely on the availability of a mix of collective and reflexive members to respond at short notice to emergency events.

In a comprehensive review of contemporary volunteering literature and theory, UK-based Rochester, Paine and Howlett (2012) seek to broaden perspectives of volunteering beyond the dominant "volunteering as service" paradigm (formal, non-profit, altruism-driven, unpaid work), to include a "volunteering as activism" paradigm (reflecting self-help and mutual obligation), and a "volunteering as leisure" paradigm (reflecting genuine personal interest). In a similar vein, Chambre and Einolf (2008) utilise three overlapping models to represent the different manifestations of volunteering. The first (dominant) "unpaid labour" paradigm depicts volunteering as altruistic charity or welfare service through formally structured non-profit organisations. The second "civil society/activism" paradigm depicts volunteering as a collective mutual-assistance response to common challenges through democratic member-based associations. The third "serious leisure" paradigm depicts volunteering as intrinsically motivated involvement in areas of personal interest in the arts, culture, sporting and recreational fields through both large and small organisations. Formal emergency service volunteering, that which is encountered in this study, largely accords with the dominant unpaid-labour paradigm.

Sociological theories naturally focus on the interaction between the individual and their social context, and *Social Exchange Theory* posits that the relationship can be conceptualised in terms of the negotiated exchange of tangible and intangible resources that have costs and benefits for both parties. Hallmann and Zehrer (2016) use a *Social Exchange Theory* perspective to examine the costs and benefits affecting volunteer satisfaction, noting (p.749) that "it may be assumed that volunteers will be more likely to engage in future volunteering behaviour to the extent that they have experienced positive outcomes as a result of that behaviour in the past", and that "they will be less likely to volunteer again if they have experienced negative outcomes".

Kulik, Arnon and Dolev (2016) use a *Social Exchange Theory* perspective to study satisfaction levels among groups of organised (formal) and spontaneous (informal) volunteers working in emergency-response roles in Israel. They conclude (p.1298) that “the main variables that explained general satisfaction with volunteering among organised volunteers were the motives of personal empowerment and satisfaction with the extrinsic rewards of volunteering”, while “satisfaction with the intrinsic rewards contributed to satisfaction only among the spontaneous volunteers”. Interestingly, they comment (p.1301) on the need to adapt aspects of the theory “to the unique characteristics of volunteering in emergencies”, because “contrary to the theoretical prediction, the assessment of the personal price of volunteering during an emergency did not play an important role among the organized volunteers, whereas it even increased the general satisfaction with volunteering among the spontaneous volunteers”.

In a similar vein, Rice and Fallon (2011) apply a *Social Exchange Theory* perspective to explore the influence of interpersonal and group cohesion factors on volunteer satisfaction and commitment through a survey of 2306 Australian emergency service volunteers. They conclude (p.22) that “volunteers continually reassess and balance the rewards and costs of their involvement. Positive interpersonal relationships with supervisors, recognition, and group cohesion all appear to contribute to greater satisfaction and intention to remain committed to the agency in the longer term. ... These are among the few benefits that emergency services volunteers receive”.

Bekkers and de Wit (2014) explore the facilitators and impediments of participation in volunteering in Europe, observing (p.17) that “resources like income, wealth, education and health as well as high levels of social and cultural capital enable volunteering, while low levels of resources and capital hinders it”. They note (p.12) that “citizens who endorse general prosocial values such as reciprocity, social responsibility and the principle of care are more likely to start volunteering and less likely to quit volunteering” This is a finding that is consistent with other research on the key role of altruistic values in motivating volunteering.

Seeking to identify barriers to volunteering, Willems and Dury (2017) have studied the reasons why people don't participate at all. They use a framework developed by Brady, Verba and Schlozman (1995) that classifies three main groups of reasons for not volunteering – 'can't' (lack of time, physical boundaries, lack of skills), 'don't want to' (lack of benefits, uninterested, social boundaries, unwanted stress), and 'nobody asked' – to survey 1248 volunteers and non-volunteers. The study finds that there are often several concurrent reasons why individuals chose not to volunteer; that amongst active retired people (who have great potential as a target group for volunteering), physical boundaries and not being invited were the major barriers rather than lack of time; and that previous volunteering experience has a major positive effect on future volunteering intentions. They recommend that strategies to attract volunteers should focus on meeting the specific needs of homogenous sub-groups, an observation highly relevant to this study.

These sociological perspectives have relevance to an understanding of the dynamics of the relationship between the individual and their broader social and cultural context. The conceptualisation of a collective-reflexive individual motivational continuum has particular salience for locating the motives for traditional (formal) emergency service volunteering at one end. At the collective/altruistic/other-oriented end of the spectrum are concepts like interdependence, group identity, common purpose, teamwork, consistency and sustained commitment. At the reflexive/egoistic/self-oriented end of the spectrum are concepts like independence, personal autonomy, individual interest, self-development, spontaneity and sporadic involvement. This dichotomy will be applied later in this chapter in a consideration of the interaction of 'modernisation' trends.

### **Economic perspectives on the motives for emergency service volunteering**

Given the highly formalised aspects of emergency service volunteering (regular meetings, uniforms, defined ranks, differentiated roles, competency-based training, minimum participation requirements, command-and-control hierarchy), organisational theories can be particularly useful in exposing the interaction between the emergency service agency and what is effectively a substantial unpaid (reserve)

workforce. Understanding the dynamics of this relationship may be important where there are significant pressures on traditional member-based bodies for organisational reforms, with potential that encroaching regulation and corporatisation may impinge on the autonomy and altruistic motivation of a volunteer workforce.

Rochester et al. (2012, p.153) document research originally undertaken by Zimmeck (2000) that identifies two distinctly different models of managing volunteers. The “home-grown” or traditional organisation is member-driven with shared ideals/interests, informal, friendship-based, egalitarian, collectivist, democratic, consensual and adaptive, and involves volunteers “more from a core expression of values”. The “modern” efficient bureaucratic organisation is mission-driven, hierarchical and formal with explicit accountability and defined competency-based roles, and involves volunteers “largely as a means to an end” (ibid). In a similar vein, Drory and Zaidman (2007) explored the differences in the norms and structural characteristics between organic (home-grown) and mechanistic (modern) organisations, concluding that organic organisations rely far more on individual initiative and dedication to shared goals.

Particularly valuable insights on the nuances of the individual-organisational relationship are provided through the application of *Psychological Contract Theory*. The theory was originally developed as an empirical diagnostic tool to examine the informal and mutual obligations of workplace relations. It shares similarities with *Social Exchange Theory* as its focus is on the explicit and implicit transactions between the individual and the organisation. Because of its recognition of the inferred/implicit/intangible aspects of the individual/organisation “contract” it has particular relevance to an understanding of the subtle and multiple dimensions of discretionary social relationships that are sustained by choice and not bound by formal ties, such as occurs in emergency service volunteering. *Psychological Contract Theory* also has particular utility in exploring the potential implications of an evolving relationship between the individual and organisation, in particular encroaching bureaucratisation.

Vantilborgh, Bidee, Pepermans, Wilems, Huybrechts and Jegers (2011) use a *Psychological Contract Theory* framework, and the continuums of traditional-

professional organisation and collective-reflexive volunteer, to explore the potential for contract violations of different mixes of approaches. Their study finds that the top-down imposition of new policies and processes on predominantly collective volunteers has the potential to engender resistance to perceived goal displacement, leading to overt resentment and decreased loyalty. In a similar vein, Taylor, Darcy, Hoyer and Cuskelly (2006) use a *Psychological Contract Theory* perspective to explore divergences in expectations of and tensions between individuals and organisations that are transitioning to corporatisation, concluding (p.143) that “contract breach is likely to remain common ... as long as trends towards professionalization, bureaucratisation and managerialism continue to widen the chasm between the organisation and the volunteer”. Both studies highlight the inherent risks of “forcing” intrinsically-motivated volunteers into functional bureaucratically-defined roles. This issue is of particular relevance to this study, as Australian emergency service organisations are progressively imposing greater formal obligations and responsibilities on their volunteer workforces.

Lucas and Kline (2008) utilise a *Psychological Contract Theory* perspective to examine the influence of organisational culture and group dynamics on group learning and adaptation to change among groups of paid and volunteer emergency service workers in the US. They identify a distinctive sub-culture amongst firefighters that is strongly hierarchical and command-and-control, exhibits characteristics of a “hero” culture that is sustained by tradition, group cohesion and a sense of a unique shared group identity, and that had the potential to resist pressures for organisational change.

Likewise, Thurnell-Read and Parker (2008) explore organisational culture and masculine identities amongst male firefighters at a UK fire station, noting (p.127) that “throughout popular culture the iconic image of the male firefighter is one of quintessential bravery incorporating notions of heroism, danger and courage”. They explore how “fire service personnel construct their identities within this highly masculinised occupational setting”, and conclude that “occupational identities were based primarily upon notions of emotional strength, physical and technical competence and collective understandings of risk and responsibility. A commitment to group solidarity was also central to the masculine identities” (ibid).

Lee and Olshfski (2002) examine the different focus of commitment (to the supervisor, work group and organisation) of paid and volunteer firefighters in the United States, concluding (p.36) that “paid firefighters appear to respond to motivational strategies that focus on the individual level, while the strategies directed at volunteers might best be focused at the organisational level. ... Volunteers are more influenced by the peer group and the organisation as a whole in their decisions to remain with the organisation, while paid organisations need to focus on the individual level”.

Lois (2003) explores the emotional culture of search and rescue volunteers, revealing the complex interaction of intrinsic and extrinsic motives, organisational socialisation and culture, identity formation and status, and symbolic rewards. She highlights the intrinsic gratification of heroism and an associated prestigious identity, noting (p.173) “the esteem gained from developing such a selfless identity was ironically self-gratifying. ... For outsiders, the lure of this esteem made membership desirable. They wanted to associate themselves with the group so that they too could be viewed in a heroic light”. Lois concludes that individual and shared emotions play a vital role in the social construction of heroism, noting (p.195) “it appears that definitions of heroism involve not only the ability to manage one’s own emotions during crises, but also the superior ability to pass along that emotional control to others in distress”.

O’Toole and Grey (2016) study the phenomena of cultural control and resistance in a voluntary sea rescue organisation in the United Kingdom, exploring (p.56) the “tensions at the boundary between volunteers and their overarching management and organisation system”. They note that “whereas cultural control normally aims at the inculcation of strong, shared values and organisational commitment, in the voluntary context such values and commitment already exist to some degree in the very fact of volunteering. ... Contrary to the typical paradigm which seeks to gain commitment by soliciting the responsible autonomy from workers, managerial strategies in this case were more targeted towards pulling back autonomy from highly committed volunteers” (ibid). They conclude (p.71) “the fact of being volunteers created a kind of moral economy. The sense of having special status by

virtue of being at the sharp end is of course not unique, but the physical danger of the work allied to altruism of doing it by choice gave a kind of moral weight to the ... volunteers that is unusual in 'normal' settings". These observations may have equal relevance to emergency service volunteering which also combine altruism, localism and potentially hazardous work.

*Self Determination Theory* posits that "growth, integrity and psychological well-being stem from the degree to which innate basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence and relatedness are satisfied" (Bidee, Vantilborgh, Pepermans, Huybrechts, Willems, Jegers and Hofmans, 2013, p.35). Guntert et al. (2016) combine *Self Determination Theory* with a functional approach to examine the relative effects of self-determined (intrinsic) motivation verses controlled (extrinsic) motivation. Their study across volunteers in Swiss non-profit organisations found (p.319) that "values, understanding, and social justice motives were positively associated with relatively self-determined motivation, whereas career, social, protective and enhancement motives showed negative correlations". They acknowledge (p.324) that volunteering can serve both self-oriented and other-oriented functions simultaneously, however "whether these motives are accompanied by the experience of either self-determination or control significantly affects volunteers' satisfaction". Of particular relevance for emergency services are the observations (ibid) that "volunteers' efforts can be grounded either in interest and identification or in external pressure and control".

*Conservation of Resources Theory* posits that "humans are motivated to protect their current resources (conservation) and acquire new resources (acquisition). Resources are loosely defined as objects, states, conditions and other things that people value" (Halbesleben, Neveu, Paustian-Underdahl and Westman, 2014, p.1335). The theory seeks to explain the motives for peoples' behaviours in seeking to avoid losses and maximise gains in social interactions, in particular in their workplaces. Allen and Mueller (2013) apply a *Conservation of Resources* perspective to examine two potential antecedents of volunteer burnout in the United States - a volunteer's lack of voice in the decisions that affect them (and an associated sense of powerlessness and lack of autonomy), and ambiguity in the volunteer's understanding of their role. They conclude that both circumstances

threaten to drain the volunteer of their cognitive resources leading to burnout and increasing the intention to quit, an observation with particular relevance to organisations undergoing the process of corporatisation. Likewise, Scherer, Allen and Harp (2016) apply *Conservation of Resources Theory* and person-organisation fit to examine the influence of poor fit of volunteer goals, personality and values on burnout and intentions to quit, finding that the greater the incongruence the more burnout was experienced, and reinforcing the importance of aligning volunteer and organisational values and goals in strategies to reduce turnover.

Many of these economic/functional theories seek to reveal the key influences on the relationship between the individual and the organisation, and in the case of volunteers this is often crystalized in a discussion of whether they should be characterised as “members” of an organisation or group. In the context of the social and economic value and importance of unpaid workers, Cameron (1999) explores the distinction between volunteers and members, noting (p.54) that a primary concern in the extant literature is “the balance between empowerment and control in dealing with volunteers. Organisations want enthusiastic volunteers, but they want their energies channelled to serve the organisation’s purposes”. Cameron acknowledges that volunteers can operate in the grey area between formal organisations and community associations, and that characterisation as a member can serve to distinguish between different levels of commitment and authority.

*Social Identity Theory* explores the influence of group membership on an individual’s attitudes to others, and provides a framework for understanding group dynamics and intergroup relationships. The theory contends that individuals categorise themselves (and others) according to their nominal status as part of an “in-group” in order to secure recognition and a positive social identity. Stirling and Bull (2011) adopt a *Social Identity Theory* perspective to examine the collective agency of Australian rural ambulance volunteers, noting (p.197) that “central to the volunteer-organisational relationship is the match between values that prompt people to volunteer and their subsequent experiences”. They identify two dominant collective identities amongst rural ambulance volunteers, with “moral volunteers” characterised as special (though functionally invisible) people motivated by selfless altruism, and “professional volunteers” characterised as an integral part of (unpaid workers in) a

professional ambulance service. They conclude that the organisation's tacit preference for the moral volunteer identity is intended to marginalise the workforce and creates opportunities for their disempowerment and exploitation.

In contrast, *Role Identity Theory* posits that a strong alignment between the concept of self and the social roles that individuals play, through the internalisation of a group identity, can reinforce the personal importance of and commitment to group activities. Marta, Manzi, Pozzi and Vignoles (2014) defined role identities (p.200) as "self-definitions that individuals apply to their identities as a consequence of the structural role position that they have". Their longitudinal study of the influence of role identity on people's motivation to sustain their commitment to formal volunteering concludes (p.198) that volunteer "role identity fully mediated the relationship between behavioural intention and attitude, social norms, past behaviour and parental modelling". The theory may have particular relevance in understanding the strength of emergency service volunteers' affiliation with, and loyalty to, their local unit or brigade.

Finkelstein, Penner and Brannick (2005) examine the strength of role identity in sustaining volunteer engagement, observing (p.414) that "the individuals who are most likely to engage in ongoing, discretionary helping are those who have internalised a pro-social role and who strongly feel that others expect them to continue in a manner consistent with that role". In their study "the strongest correlate of role identity was the values motive" (p.415). In a later survey of 194 students in the United States, Finkelstein (2010) explored the implications of individualism (reflexivity) and collectivism for volunteering. Her study found (p.450) that "with individualism came evidence of self-focussed career aspirations, while collectivism was most closely associated with other-oriented motives and the development of a volunteer identity. ... Motive fulfilment may be particularly important for individualists, who are less persuaded than collectivists by social pressures to volunteer and who ... do not show close associations with the development of a volunteer identity".

Emergency service volunteers are often perceived and characterised as a large unpaid workforce, and Governments and communities invest significant resources in equipping and training volunteers. Retention and turnover rates can have major

financial and capability implications, and a range of authors have explored the barriers to sustaining emergency service volunteering. Malinen and Mankkinen (2018) surveyed 762 Finish volunteer firefighters and found that lack of time, work/school conflict and other work-related challenges were rated the most frequent and severe of thirteen barriers to voluntary participation. The next most severe barriers were “negative atmosphere in the fire brigade” and “interpersonal conflict with leadership”, with the authors concluding that “as a positive brigade climate is likely to enhance volunteer satisfaction, leadership development appears a good place to start for building an organisational culture that supports retention” (p.618).

In a study to examine the strength of identification with the nature of the work and the work group and the importance of personal relationships, Baxter-Tomkins and Wallace (2009) conducted in-depth interviews with 72 NSW State Emergency Service and NSW Rural Fire Service volunteers. They concluded (p.9) that “interpersonal relationships and group dynamics are two key issues affecting recruitment and retention of volunteers in emergency services”. They note (ibid) that “three main areas of complaint by emergency service volunteers may prompt thoughts of resignation. The first is a perceived lack of equipment, operational and personal: second is a perceived lack of effective leadership from headquarters paid emergency response professionals; and thirdly, and considered by volunteers to be the most important, disharmony and friction within the primary group”.

In a survey of 682 volunteer firefighters on the relationship between volunteer-family conflicts and volunteer satisfaction and intentions, Cowlshaw, Birch, McLennan and Hayes (2014, p.184) observed that “simply reducing volunteer demands may be counter-productive - insufficient opportunities to engage in operational activities may reduce the psychological rewards associated with being a volunteer. Strategies should thus focus on minimising conflict between volunteering and family to help reduce negative outcomes, without effecting positive experiences”.

Dadich (2012) examined the impacts of stress on workplace relationships amongst Australian rural fire-fighters, observing that the three main sources of stress are the actual demands of their difficult and unpredictable fire-fighting roles, organisational issues and broader pressures for social change. The study found that volunteers

could better integrate learned behaviours (including more professional management, communication and negotiation skills) into emergency situations when the training was more closely aligned with (similar to) the reality of their workplaces.

In a similar vein, Webber and Jones (2011) examined the positive and negative impacts of volunteering following the 2009 Victorian bushfires, finding (p.33) that “sustained volunteering involving intensive commitments of time resulted in role conflict between the demands of their family and the demands of volunteering. Volunteers found it difficult to reduce the amount of time spent on their voluntary activity... They also had difficulty handing over leadership roles to others. As volunteers became exhausted, their ability to make clear judgements was impeded and conflicts sometimes arose”.

Catts and Chamings (2006) examined the relationship between organisational culture and flexibility of training in six emergency services in Australia, finding that the four fire services studied had more mechanistic cultures (bureaucratic, authoritarian, vertical communication, focused), while the two State emergency services had more organic cultures (group decisions, democratic, vertical and lateral communication, holistic). Their study concluded (p.451) that “mechanistic organisations had high levels of insular trust and relied on training as a means of socialising new volunteers into the norms and practices of the organisation. They required all recruits to undertake the same training and did not recognise competencies acquired outside the organisation. In contrast, those organisations with a more organic structure had more flexible training strategies and used holistic assessment to recognise current competencies that volunteers brought to their roles”. Their research suggests that new and more flexible training strategies will be required to build trust in roles requiring a team-based emergency response capability.

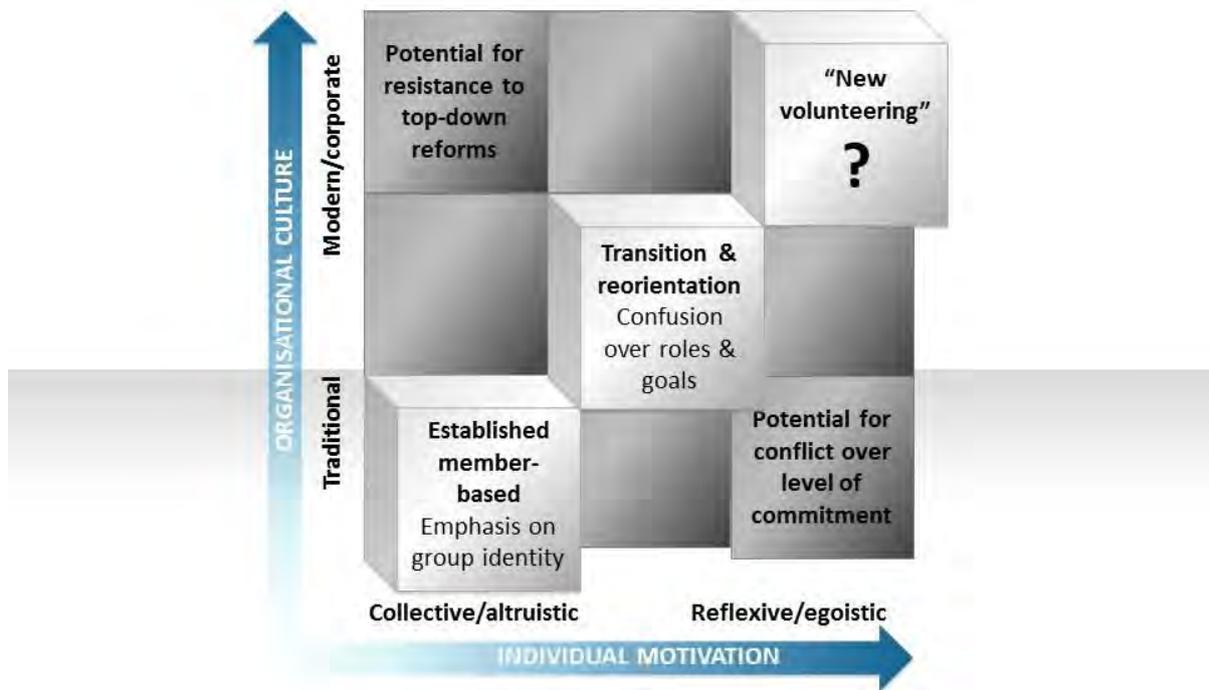
Acknowledging that emergency service volunteers are sometimes perceived as a large unpaid workforce that can be mobilised to protect the community in times of crisis, these economic theories have value in exploring the complex and evolving relationship between agency and volunteer, and between paid and unpaid workers. The identification of two distinct volunteer management models is conducive to the

development of an organisational culture continuum that largely reflects the current process of organisational evolution. At the traditional end of the spectrum are organisations that are informal, democratic, team-based, autonomous, member-directed, horizontal and inclusive. At the modern end of the spectrum are organisations that are formal, hierarchical, command-and-control, program-managed, compliant and highly-regulated. Australian emergency services organisations have been under growing pressure to move towards the latter model.

In conclusion, it may be useful to apply the multi-dimensional framework proposed by Vantilborough et al. (2011) to examine the interaction between two of the major “modernisation” trends in volunteering to emerge from this literature review. Figure 4 below illustrates the possible interaction of these modernisation trends in an emergency service volunteering context. The horizontal (x) axis represents an individual motivational continuum that ranges from collective/altruistic/other-oriented to reflexive/egoistic/self-oriented volunteers, as proposed by Hustinx and Lammertyn (2003). The vertical (y) axis represents an organisational culture continuum that ranges from traditional/member-based to modern/corporate bodies, as explored by Rochester et al. (2012).

Figure 3 below demonstrates the (perhaps inevitable) shift towards reflexivity and corporatisation, highlighting the potential for conflict between distinctly different perspectives and sub-groups with divergent values as they move towards new forms of volunteering. This framework will assist in the consideration of the implications of the research findings on the shared and contrasting values preferences of emergency service volunteers, and will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 6.

## Interaction of modernisation trends



**Figure 3:** Interaction of modernisation trends (Source: author)

### **Multi-disciplinary and multi-dimensional perspectives on the motives for emergency service volunteering**

While many of the discipline-specific theories outlined above make a valuable contribution to an understanding of particular aspects of emergency service volunteer motivation, few provide a comprehensive understanding of the complex interactions of multiple influences. This section reviews multi-disciplinary and multi-dimensional perspectives that emphasise the key role of values (particularly altruistic values) as primary motives for volunteering, confirming the efficacy of an inclusive values framework for interpreting and understanding diverse individual and social behaviours.

Highlighting the limits of discipline-specific perspectives in interpreting the intrinsic motives for volunteering, Haski-Leventhal (2009) reviewed perceptions of the role of altruistic values in volunteering across the disciplines of psychology, sociology,

economics and socio-biology. She concluded (p.293) that “none of the four disciplines here studied can offer an inclusive theory of altruism, since they base most of their research on the perception of rational, economical and utilitarian man. It is time to more broadly acknowledge the possibility of a moral and alter-centred humanity, and to see that not all altruism demonstratively serves the helper. First, altruism can be perceived as a continuum and not as a dichotomy. Second, an alter-centric approach recognises the impacts of values, conscience and altruistic perspective on altruistic attitudes and behaviour”. Haski-Leventhal’s observations emphasise the inherent complexity of interpreting the diverse motives for behaviours, and the need for a more holistic and nuanced approach is echoed by a range of authors.

Carpenter and Myers (2007) adopted a multi-dimensional approach when they examined the influence of altruistic values, reputational concerns and (extrinsic) material incentives as motives for volunteering amongst firefighters in the United States. They conclude that altruistic values are a primary motive for choosing to volunteer, and are positively correlated with participation in training, but did not appear to influence the decision to “turn out” in response to specific emergency events. In contrast, reputational concerns were positively correlated with both choosing to volunteer and responding to call outs. Their study also demonstrated that offering extrinsic incentives (in the form of small stipends) to volunteers had the direct effect of increasing call response, though offering such incentives to volunteers motivated by reputational concerns had no effect. They conclude (p.21) that “volunteers may value monetary rewards, but such rewards can also have the indirect and presumably unanticipated effect of discouraging prosocial behaviour among those who care about being perceived as altruistic”. These observations affirm the influence of intrinsic values (specifically altruism) in emergency service volunteering.

In a similar vein, in an extensive cross-cultural study of the social and cultural origins of volunteering motives, Hustinx, Handy, Cnaan, Brudney, Pessi and Yamauchi (2010) surveyed 5794 students across six countries, finding (p.370) that “with but a few individual item variations, students in all countries rated altruistic and value-driven motivations as the most relevant to their volunteering... To give time and skills

to benefit others requires, first and foremost, the willingness to be altruistic, but also carries concurrently the expectation of benefits to the volunteer". While acknowledging (p.372) that "numerous studies have found that the number one reason for volunteering is the desire to help – an altruistic motivation", they note that the strength of such motives may vary across countries.

Likewise, Briggs, Peterson and Gregory (2010) use a *Behavioural Reasoning Theory* perspective to explore how other-oriented (altruism) and self-oriented (egoism) reasoning towards volunteering influence the pro-social attitude formation of volunteers. Using survey data from several Australian non-profit organisations and focussing on the Schwartz basic human values of benevolence and achievement, they note (p.74) that "values and reasons that are other-oriented appear to be much more influential on pro-social attitudes than values and reasons for volunteering that are self-focussed". They also identify important generational differences, finding "age negatively correlated with me-oriented reasoning. The younger the volunteer, the more importance placed on values and reasons for volunteering that are self-focused" (ibid). These findings will be tested in this research's examination of the shared and contrasting values preferences of emergency service volunteers.

In their comprehensive review of contemporary volunteering literature, Rochester et al. (2012, p.80) note that a "combination of demographic, economic, social, cultural and political change, which is already underway, will alter the climate in which volunteering takes place". They note (p.81) that "the weakening of family ties, the loss of a sense of community based on location, secularisation, the professionalization of voluntary and community sector organisations and the reduction in the number of 'public spaces' – all tend to undermine the institutions and networks through which people found their ways into volunteering". At the society level they identify major issues like enduring poverty and inequality, disengagement and a "democratic deficit", and challenges to social cohesion, issues that are explored in detail in a Discussion Paper at Appendix F. Their proposed solutions involve "concerted action to overcome or find a way past the increasing number of obstacles in the way of engagement in voluntary action and civil society which would include mitigating the excesses of bureaucracy. On another – more important – level it would involve expressing and actively promoting some key values [cooperation,

wellbeing, citizenship] at the expense of other societal norms [individualism, material wealth, consumption]" (p.83). These observations by Rochester et al. highlight the influence of broader social and cultural forces (context) on the nature and extent of civic participation.

Bang, Ross and Reio (2013) surveyed the attitudes of 214 volunteers in US not-for-profit sports organisations and use *Social Exchange Theory* to examine the mediating role of job satisfaction in the relationship between volunteer motivation and effective commitment. They note (p.99) that the initial commitment of a volunteer's time and effort is likely to reflect an expectation of shared core values, and over time "as the fit between the values of volunteers and the values of the organisation get closer, the strength of the volunteers' commitment becomes greater". They conclude (p.107) that "the direct effect of values on effective commitment suggests that volunteers' intentions to be involved with an organisation may be likely based on their perception of the opportunity to express their values regarding altruistic and humanitarian concerns for the organisation". While their study did not establish a significant link between egoistic (self-oriented) motivation and effective commitment, it did emphasise the importance of individual-organisation values alignment.

Finally, almost two decades after they proposed the influential *Volunteer Functions Inventory*, Stukas, Snyder and Clary (2016) examined the different strategies required to recruit intrinsically-motivated/other-oriented volunteers versus extrinsically-motivated/self-oriented volunteers. They tellingly observe (p.249) that "fortunately, in the administration of the VFI, we have often found values motivation to be rated most important, and because volunteer activities are generally framed in terms of their humanitarian or prosocial goals, this motivation may also be relatively easy for volunteers to feel they have fulfilled. As such, volunteers who have strong needs to express and to act on their personal values may be the easiest to attract and sustain". In respect to the influence of altruistic values, they note that "research that has investigated this issue has generally found that the self-transcendence values, universalism and benevolence in Schwartz's typology ... are most associated with volunteer behaviour. ...These values focus on enhancing the welfare of a

personal network (benevolence) or the welfare of all people and of nature (universalism)” (ibid).

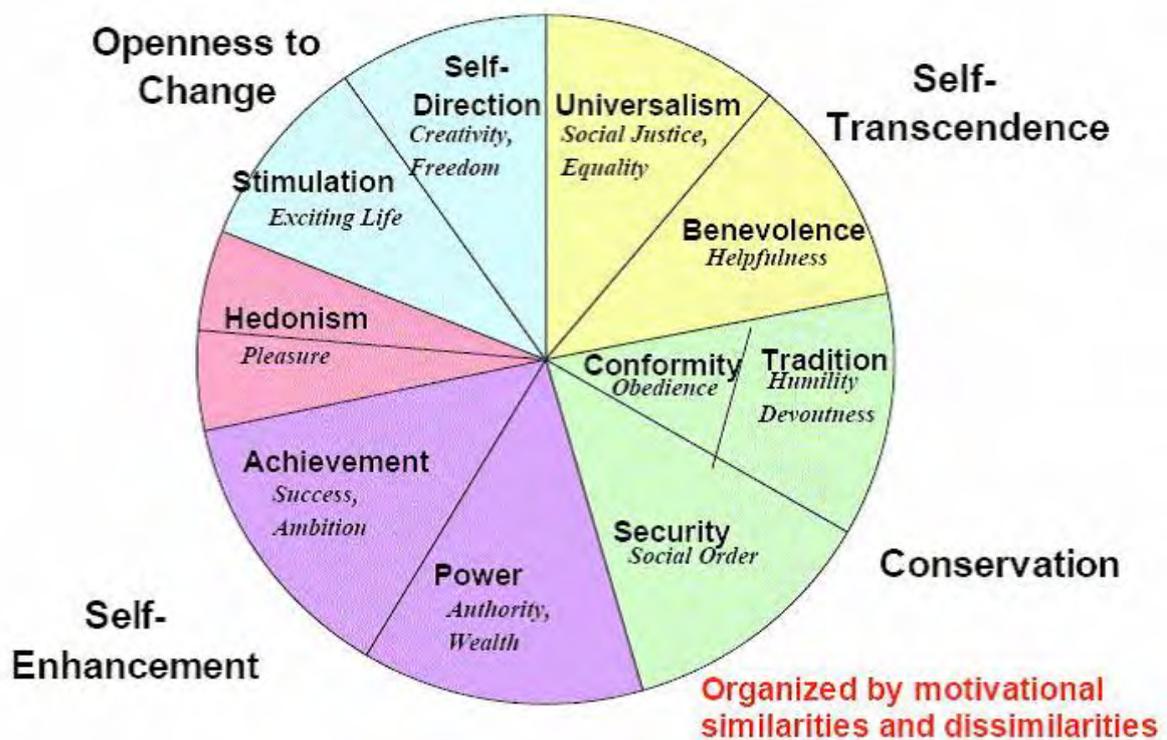
Each of these contemporary and highly relevant texts emphasise the primary role of values (in particular altruistic values) in motivating volunteering, and the role of values as influential and enduring motives for diverse behaviours has been studied extensively over the last two decades. (Gollan and Witte, 2013; Lee, Soutar, Daly, Louviere, 2011; Bilsky, Janik and Schwartz, 2011; Datler, Jagodzinski and Schmidt, 2013; PIRC, 2018; Perry, 2011; Kasser, 2011; Kulin and Svallfors, 2013; Kirmanoglu and Baslevent, 2011; Morris, 2014; Datler, Jagodzinski and Schmidt, 2013; Aleman and Woods, 2015; Verkasalo, Lonqvist, Lipsanen and Helkama, 2009; Longest, Hitlin and Vaisey, 2013).

The empirical study of the influence of individual and shared values systems, and their correlation with motives and behaviours, has been greatly assisted by the conduct of several large-scale, cross-cultural, longitudinal studies including the World Values Survey (WVS) and European Social Survey (ESS). “The World Values Survey is a global network of social scientists studying changing values and their impact on social and political life, led by an international team of scholars. ...The survey, which started in 1981, seeks to use the most rigorous, high-quality research designs in each country. ...The WVS seeks to help scientists and policy makers understand changes in the beliefs, values and motivations of people throughout the world” (WVS, 2018). According to Schofer and Fourcade-Gourinchas (2001, p.807), the WVS “constitutes a unique dataset for testing hypotheses about the structural basis of individual value orientation and behaviour”.

Professor Shalom Schwartz, the author of the *Theory of Basic Human Values* (2012), has been instrumental in the development of an integrated values framework that has been widely applied and extensively evaluated across multiple organisational and national setting over two decades. Schwartz defines values (2005, p.1) as “desirable, trans-situational goals, varying in importance, that serve as guiding principles in people’s lives”. Gollan and Witte (2013, p.11) observe that “in psychological research, Schwartz’s (1992) circumplex model is widely accepted as the standard theory on the structure of motivational conflicts between different

values. It is important to note that, unlike other theoretical models on values structure... the circumplex model was not developed in a data-driven way (bottom-up), but derived from theoretical considerations about which values are compatible and which are incompatible with one another". Likewise, Lee et al. (2011, p.234) observe that "Schwartz (1992, 1994) made an important contribution when he noted the importance of understanding values as a system, rather than concentrating on individual values".

The Schwartz universal values framework identifies ten basic human values and four higher-order value clusters, across two bipolar dimensions, that reflect conflicts and congruities between basic and higher-order values. The dynamic relationship between the Schwartz values can be visually represented in a circular motivational continuum (also referred to as a circumplex), that is replicated in Figure 4 below.



**Figure 4:** Schwartz circular motivational continuum

(Source: [https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Theoretical-model-of-relations-among-ten-motivational-types-of-values\\_fig2\\_237364051](https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Theoretical-model-of-relations-among-ten-motivational-types-of-values_fig2_237364051))

Each of Schwartz's ten basic human values are characterised by defining motivational goals (Schwartz, 2012).

- **Benevolence** – the defining motivational goal of this value is preserving and enhancing the welfare of those with whom one is in frequent social contact. Manifestations include valuing true friendship, mature love, helpfulness, loyalty, forgiveness, honesty and responsibility.
- **Universalism** – the defining motivational goal of this value is understanding, appreciation, tolerance and protection for the welfare of all people and nature. Manifestations include broad-mindedness, social justice, equality, a world at peace, a world of beauty, unity with nature, wisdom and protection of the environment.
- **Self-Direction** – the defining motivational goal of this value is independent thought and action, choosing, creating and exploring. Manifestations include freedom, creativity, independence, personal autonomy, curiosity and self-respect.
- **Security** – the defining motivational goal of this value is safety, harmony and stability of society, of relationships and of self. Manifestations include social order, family security, national security, reciprocity of favours, cleanliness, sense of belonging and good health.
- **Conformity** – the defining motivational goal of this value is restraint of actions, inclinations and impulses likely to upset or harm others and violate social expectations or norms. Manifestations include obedience, self-discipline, politeness, honouring parents and elders.
- **Hedonism** – the defining motivational goal of this value is pleasure and sensuous gratification for oneself. Manifestations include pleasure, enjoyment of life and self-indulgence.
- **Achievement** – the defining motivational goal of this value is personal success through demonstrating competence according to social standards. Manifestations include ambitious, successful, capable and influential.
- **Tradition** – the defining motivational goal of this value is respect, commitment and acceptance of the customs and ideas that one's culture or religion imposes. Manifestations include respectful of tradition, humble, devout, moderate, acceptance of one's place in life.

- **Stimulation** – the defining motivational goal of this value is excitement, novelty and challenge in life. Manifestations include an exciting and varied life, daring.
- **Power** – the defining motivational goal of this value is social status and prestige, control or dominance over people and resources. Manifestations include authority, wealth, social power, reputation, preserving one's public image.

As noted earlier, these ten basic values can be condensed into four higher-order value clusters across two bipolar dimensions. The higher-order value cluster of self-transcendence (emphasising concern for the welfare of others) is comprised of the basic human values of universalism and benevolence, while the contrary higher-order value cluster of self-enhancement (emphasising pursuit of self-interest) is comprised of the basic human values of power, achievement and hedonism. The higher order value cluster of conservation (emphasising order and resistance to change) is comprised of the basic human values of security, conformity and tradition, while the contrary higher-order value cluster of openness to change (emphasising independence and readiness for new experiences) is comprised of the basic human values of self-direction, stimulation and hedonism (Schwartz, 2012).

The Schwartz universal values framework has been operationalised through the development and extensive use of a complementary values survey instrument, called the *Portrait Values Questionnaire* (PVQ-40), that can reveal the individual and shared values preferences of defined groups and communities. Several of the PVQ-40 survey questions are included in the European Social Survey. Despite its limited utilisation in Australia, the Schwartz values framework and associated PVQ-40 survey have particular relevance and utility for this research for two distinct reasons. Firstly, the two bipolar dimensions of the Schwartz values framework (self-transcendence versus self-enhancement, and conservation versus openness to change) clearly align with the major modernisation trends identified in the literature (the continuums of collective-reflexive motivation and traditional-modern culture). Secondly, because of its brevity and ease of use, the PVQ-40 survey instrument is particularly suited to maximising the collection of empirical data on values

preferences from a diverse and widely dispersed volunteer workforce, including respondents who may not have access to the internet.

## **Conclusions**

This chapter has provided a comprehensive review of diverse motivational theories that are directly relevant to emergency service volunteering; evaluated the relevance of various psychological, sociological, economic and multi-disciplinary perspectives; and explored the validity and utility of the Schwartz universal values framework for understanding the primary motives for emergency service volunteering. This chapter has addressed the theoretical dimensions of the second research objective by demonstrating the efficacy of values as a comprehensive, multi-dimensional and multi-disciplinary theoretical framework for interpreting and understanding the primary motives for emergency service volunteering.

The following chapter details the conduct of an organisation-wide survey of the values preferences of the NSW SES volunteer workforce, and documents the challenges involved in maximising volunteer participation in the face of a range of prospective impediments.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Valuing Volunteers Study - Research methodology**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter documents the actions taken to obtain original empirical data on the values preferences of a sample of Australian emergency service volunteers. The chapter expands on the organisational and policy impetus for the research; explains the research philosophy; lists the research aim, objectives and questions; outlines the research and survey design (including the adaption of the Schwartz Portrait Values Questionnaire survey); reviews the survey marketing; summarises data collection and analysis; and identifies ethical and methodological issues.

#### **Research impetus**

As outlined in Chapter 1, Federal and State Governments concerns about information gaps and the absence of contemporary data on a range of issues concerning emergency management in Australia were crystalized in the establishment in 2013 of the Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre (BNHCRC). The BNHCRC is a unique national collaborative body that represents not only the interests of State and Federal Governments, but the various emergency services and a broad range of academic institutions across Australia. The BNHCRC undertakes “end-user inspired applied research to: reduce the risks from bushfire and natural hazards; reduce the social, economic and environmental costs of disasters; contribute to the national disaster resilience agenda; build internationally renowned Australian research capacity and capability; and enable Australian small to medium enterprises to be innovative in natural hazard products and services” (BNHCRC, 2016).

The BNHCRC’s research agenda is divided into three distinct themes: the policy and economics of hazards; resilience to hazards; and understanding and mitigating hazards. A series of research clusters focussing on particular issues and topics have been established under each theme, and specific research projects are guided and

overseen by end-user clusters comprised of (often senior) representatives from a range of relevant agencies. Agency representation on end-user clusters is intended to maximise the relevance, practical value and ultimate utilisation of the research commissioned by the BNHCRC, and where necessary facilitate support for specific research endeavours.

The BNHCRC advances its research agenda through grants to academic institutions and through the provision of scholarships to higher-degree students. The Valuing Volunteers Study was funded by a scholarship from the BNHCRC under the sustainable volunteering cluster (part of the resilience to hazards theme), and was a component of a multi-faceted research project at the University of Wollongong called “improving the retention and engagement of volunteers in emergency service agencies”. As part of its support for higher-degree students, the BNHCRC establishes and maintains a substantial web presence for both the author and the Valuing Volunteers Study at <https://www.bnhcrc.com.au/people/bill-calcutt> .

The importance of BNHCRC sponsorship for this research cannot be overstated, and not solely because of the financial support for the student and the supervising university. The active participation from the outset of key personnel from various emergency services in a sustainable volunteering end-user cluster ensured invaluable input to the formulation of research questions and the development of data collection strategies, and ultimately facilitated access to volunteers for the purposes of data collection. Put simply, without the emphatic commitment of agencies at the most senior level the Valuing Volunteers Study would not have been feasible. It may be extremely difficult for an independent researcher to gain access to and secure the active participation of paid staff and the volunteer workforce without official support, and explicit (written) executive support was vital in securing ethics approval for the research through the UOW Human Research Ethics Committee.

BNHCRC sponsorship also provided the author with multiple opportunities over several years to engage with diverse stakeholders across a broad range of Australian and overseas emergency services, including personal access to hundreds of volunteers and to the senior executive of a number of Australian agencies. The public profile provided through posters and personal representations at various

Australasian Fire and Emergency Services Authorities Council (AFAC) annual conferences and at BNHCRC-organised Research Advisory Forums was vital in securing broad interest in and diverse contributions to the research direction and findings (a copy of a poster presented to AFAC 17 is included in the appendices to this thesis).

## **Research philosophy**

The subjects explored as part of this research (motives, values, volunteering, civic participation, risk and emergency management, forces for change) are each complex and volatile phenomena, and making sense of their dynamic interaction is inherently challenging. Given that the focus of this research is on examining and interpreting subjective and highly variable individual and social motives and behaviours, this study broadly reflects a constructivist ontology, and sits squarely within the realm of the social sciences, in particular the discipline of sociology.

This thesis aims to integrate empirical data with broader social theory and apply a critical, independent and multi-disciplinary perspective to understand various complex and diverse social phenomena. The epistemological tradition that most closely accords with this research approach is pragmatism. Situated on a continuum between positivism and interpretivism, a pragmatist epistemology acknowledges the inherent fallibility of social inquiry and “recognises that there are many different ways of interpreting the world and undertaking research, no single point of view can ever give the entire picture, and there may be multiple realities” (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2012).

A pragmatist perspective examines the relationship between actions and actors and social structures, and contends that human habits create social norms rather than being determined by them (Gronow, 2012). A pragmatist approach validates the flexible use of mixed methods that are best suited to inform practical action, and accepts the use of inductive and abductive logic, reflexivity and critical thinking in order to create original insights on dynamic social phenomena.

A paradigm “is a framing set of concepts, beliefs and standard practices that guide human action” (Ehrenfeld, 1997, p. 88), or “a vocabulary with which we make sense of the world and it is the basis of our underlying world view” (Korhonen, 2002, p.67). A dominant paradigm is “the values, metaphysical beliefs, institutions, habits etc that collectively provide social lenses through which individuals and groups interpret their social world” (Milbrath, 1984, p.7). The author seeks to critically analyse and challenge the dominant paradigms that currently frame the policy and social contexts for emergency service volunteering, informing and catalysing a critical and incisive re-evaluation of these complex phenomena.

### **Author’s reflexivity**

The author’s perspectives on and approach to this research have been shaped by various explicit and tacit influences. Key amongst these is a life-long commitment to inquiry and critical thinking. The author acknowledges a clear view that rigorous social research should question assumptions and should seek to create new insights that inform academic and public discourse. At a personal level, the author acknowledges strong moral and ethical values, including convictions on the essential role of honesty, transparency, accountability and integrity in democratic governance and public administration. The author’s experience over two decades in highly responsible national research and policy roles have engendered an awareness of the importance of articulating and communicating clear objectives and strategies as the foundation for coordination and effective action. The author’s relatively recent experience as an active emergency service volunteer informed the adoption of research methods (survey), and the focus on shared values as primary (replicable) motives. The author is unaware of any personal or professional conflicts of interest in undertaking this research.

### **Research aim, objectives and questions**

As outlined in Chapter 1, the research aim is to gain a better understanding of the primary motives for formal volunteering in Australian emergency services. This topic encompasses both the specific impetus for and dynamics of the giving behaviours of

individuals, and the broader policy and social contexts within which such important civic participation occurs.

In order to fulfil the overall research aim of generating insights that can inform emergency management policies and practices, five research objectives were determined. These objectives are to:

- Demonstrate that emergency service volunteering is of great economic and social value to the Australian community, and represents exceptional civic participation.
- Establish the validity and utility of a values framework for interpreting and understanding the primary motives for emergency service volunteering.
- Determine the distinct shared and contrasting values of a sample of Australian emergency service volunteers, and to consider the implications of these values for volunteer policies and practices.
- Evaluate the efficacy and integrity of current processes for determining and resourcing national emergency management priorities.
- Identify trends in changing core values with implications for future forms of civic participation, including formal emergency service volunteering.

Consistent with these objectives, in particular objective three, and in consultation with the BNHCRC's sustainable volunteering cluster, a series of specific research questions were formulated that are the focus for empirical inquiry in this study. The research questions are

- What are the distinctive shared values of Australian emergency service volunteers?
- To what extent and in what ways do these shared values impact on volunteer expectations of and commitment to emergency service organisations?
- In what ways can the formal values of emergency service organisations be better aligned with volunteer values in order to maximise workforce satisfaction, commitment and retention?

## Research design

The observations in various Government reports (Chapter 2), and in the literature review (Chapter 3), on significant information gaps and the dearth of reliable contemporary information on emergency services volunteering provide some indication of the challenges of undertaking research in this complex and dynamic area. From the outset it was acknowledged that gaining access to and securing participation by a critical mass of emergency services volunteers could prove problematic, and the research design was specifically tailored to maximise both opportunities and incentives for volunteer participation.

Emergency management and volunteering are each evolving social phenomena in their own right, and their study is further complicated by a volatile operational and cultural context. In an all-hazards risk management environment, priorities can quickly change in agencies that are required to react at any time to the powerful and destructive forces of nature, while the unique aspects of the volunteer-organisation relationship can make data collection problematic. As detailed later, both issues impacted to some degree on the conduct of this research.

In the research planning stages, the author had the opportunity to extensively discuss the nature and design of the Valuing Volunteers Study with a range of emergency service stakeholders (both paid and volunteer) through various BNHCRC-organised consultation forums. In April 2015, the author gave a Three Minute Thesis presentation to a BNHCRC Research Advisory Forum in Sydney, and received considerable constructive feedback from participants during and after the presentation. In August 2015, the author participated in a DFES-organised emergency service volunteering workshop in Perth, again receiving considerable constructive feedback and an expression of interest in participating in the project from volunteer representatives from a diverse range of WA agencies.

The proposal to apply the Schwartz universal values framework and use the associated PVQ-40 survey instrument to determine the primary motives of emergency services volunteers was readily endorsed by agency representatives on a BNHCRC-sponsored sustainable volunteering cluster. Somewhat coincidentally,

the NSW SES had only recently promulgated a new code of conduct and ethics that articulated a set of core values called TARPS (an acronym for trust, accountability, respect, professionalism and integrity, safety and service). The proposed provision of qualitative data from the survey on the shared and contrasting values of the existing volunteer workforce had clear relevance to the SES's introduction of TARPS.

The research was subsequently represented in a poster display (titled "Volunteering challenges for emergency services") at the national AFAC conference in Adelaide in September 2015, and the author took the opportunity to consult with a wide range of volunteers during the four days of the conference. Later in that same month the author gave a presentation on the project and survey to the Board of the NSW SES Volunteer Association, securing their endorsement and receiving various valuable suggestions on maximising volunteer participation. Finally, the author informally discussed the research with various members of his own SES unit on several occasions, receiving considerable constructive input and personal encouragement.

Prospective impediments to the research that were identified during these various consultations included:

- The possibility that the research would be interpreted (and to some degree resisted) as a top-down management-driven attempt to collect personal data on individual volunteer's motivation.
- A high degree of survey fatigue amongst volunteers due to recent intensive organisation-initiated consultations.
- A degree of volunteer cynicism during a period of disruptive organisational change.
- The potential that urgent operational exigencies (a major and protracted emergency event) might disrupt engagement and information collection.
- The possibility that participation could be perceived as disloyal to or critical of local unit leadership.
- The possibility that executive changes or organisational reforms might impact on the interest in, commitment to and relevance of the research.

The empirical research was initially intended to have two distinct and complementary data collection stages, an anonymous large-scale values survey followed by

focussed participative action research consultations, each of which required and secured ethics approval through the University of Wollongong's Human Research Ethics Committee. For reasons that are detailed later, the second stage consultations did not proceed.

While the first data collection stage originally envisaged an Australia-wide survey (using a modified version of the PVQ-40) of the values preferences of emergency service volunteers from a diversity of agencies, and several emergency services initially expressed an interest in participating, the practicalities of securing an adequate and broadly representative level of participation across multiple agencies soon became apparent. Emergency services volunteers in thousands of units across Australia represent a broad cross-section of the community, and a percentage of volunteers are not frequent or competent internet users (or have restricted internet access). In such circumstances the conduct of a web-based survey was unlikely to capture the views of a broadly representative group of volunteers, and as a consequence it was decided that survey participants would need to be given the choice of a paper or web-based response.

Mailing sufficient quantities (tens of thousands) of paper-based surveys to thousands of emergency service units across Australia would have been logistically difficult and financially prohibitive. With the endorsement of end-users it was decided to maximise the level of participation by the volunteer members of one agency (the NSW State Emergency Service) in order to determine if sufficient participation could be secured to be broadly representative (an organisation-specific case study to determine the viability of a volunteer workforce values audit). This would also assist in determining the efficacy of the PVQ-40 survey instrument and process in an emergency services context. This approach also capitalised on a long history of research collaboration between NSW SES Headquarters (based in Wollongong) and the University of Wollongong.

In addition to the decision to offer all prospective survey participants the option of a paper or online response, a range of other strategies were implemented to maximise volunteer interest and participation in the survey. These included:

- As the completed surveys could nominally provide sensitive information on the personal values preferences of individual respondents, anonymity and confidentiality were vital requirements and were constantly stressed.
- The independence of the research was strongly emphasised in the promotional material encouraging volunteer participation, with the study described as “independent research being undertaken by University of Wollongong researchers”. Given the earlier discussion about local loyalties, unit autonomy and the sometimes ambivalent nature of the relationship between the volunteer and the organisation, even with assurances of anonymity a degree of volunteer reticence to participate in the collection of personal data may have been anticipated.
- The opportunity presented by the survey to express the needs of the volunteer workforce was strongly emphasised in an attempt to overcome “survey fatigue” and volunteer cynicism. The documentation accompanying the survey advised “it is hoped that this research will give voice to the collective expectations of NSW SES volunteers, and highlight the vital importance of recognising and respecting shared values in sustaining volunteer commitment and satisfaction”.
- Unambiguous executive support was confirmed through the NSW SES Commissioner’s endorsement. At the launch of the survey in September 2015 the Commissioner sent a personal email to every NSW SES volunteer stating “I would like to invite all volunteer members to participate in a survey being undertaken by one of our members into volunteer values”. The Commissioner stated “I fully support this research and am keen to see the findings. These will be used to assist us in looking at volunteer attraction and retention strategies. I encourage all members to contribute to Bill’s research”.
- The NSW SES Volunteer Association (SESVA) endorsed the survey by publishing a positive article titled “university study to focus on the values and needs of NSW SES volunteers” in its September 2015 magazine.

The proposed second stage of the research envisaged a series of intensive participative action research engagements with interested NSW SES volunteer units to explore how the shared and contrasting values preferences to emerge from the values survey are and could be better accommodated within a command and control

culture, and their compatibility with the agency's core values. This stage was specifically intended to inform the third research question on the impacts of the alignment of individual and agency values. While two preliminary unit consultations were undertaken in early 2017, the completion of the stage two consultations were delayed and ultimately abandoned due to a convergence of factors. These included: heavy operational demands (responding to a series of large-scale emergency events); major unexpected management changes in the NSW SES; and the organisation-wide roll-out in 2017 of a new flexible volunteering program that made further unit consultations largely irrelevant. It should be noted that in announcing the introduction of the new flexible volunteering model (called *Volunteering Reimagined*), the NSW SES Commissioner acknowledged close collaboration with BNHCRC researchers, meaning that the work already undertaken in the first stage of this research had informed decisions on new models of volunteer engagement.

### **Survey design and conduct**

The purpose of the values survey was to determine the shared and contrasting values preferences of a sample of emergency services volunteers, and to reveal statistically significant differences in values rankings between different demographic sub-groups. Given the requirement for anonymity the demographic dimensions sought (gender, age range, location) were accepted by the UOW Human Research Ethics Committee as sufficiently generic to minimise the possibility of identification of individual participants. In discussions with the NSW SES, the possibility of adding an additional demographic question on length of service was also considered, but was eventually excluded due to its specificity when combined with the other demographics. In any event a relatively small number of survey respondents elected not to answer one or more of the demographic questions.

Approximately 3000 paper copies of a set comprising a one-page double-sided participant information sheet, a three-page doubled-sided survey form, and a DL size reply-paid envelope were printed, packaged and mailed to more than 220 SES units across NSW in late 2015. Each package of surveys to units also contained a covering letter from the author titled "invitation to participate in values survey". The

inclusion of pre-addressed reply-paid envelopes was intended to facilitate the easy return of completed individual surveys to a University of Wollongong post box. The strategy of distributing paper copies to maximise opportunities for diverse participation was subsequently affirmed with 300 paper surveys returned by mail over several weeks, representing a 10% response rate on the 3000 surveys distributed.

The online survey was constructed using Qualtrics survey software and hosted on the University of Wollongong's server. The online survey was identical to the paper survey, except that respondents had to click on response buttons. A web page titled Emergency Volunteers Project (EVP) that outlined the aims of the survey was hosted on the UOW server and provided a PDF copy of the participant information sheet, a PDF copy of the paper survey, and a link to the Qualtrics online survey. A link to the URL address of the EVP web page (<http://www.uowblogs.com/evp/valuing-volunteers-survey/>) was included in various correspondence to volunteers encouraging their participation (including in an email from the NSW SES Commissioner to all members in September 2015).

Access to the UOW's Emergency Volunteers Project web page and to the Qualtrics online survey was not password-protected, and the survey did not force responses to all questions. (In reviewing the online responses a check was undertaken to ensure there were no multiple submissions from a single IP address). The online survey attracted a total of 222 responses, 180 (80%) of which were completed in the five days immediately following an email from the NSW SES Commissioner in September 2015 encouraging members to participate.

### **PVQ-40 Survey**

The PVQ-40 survey asks respondents to disclose their own personal values preferences by rating (on a scale of six to one) how much they are like (or not like) forty different portraits (or character types). Each of the PVQ-40 portraits contains two statements that are intended to describe actions or attitudes that are comparable representations of one of ten basic human values. Three of the basic

human values are represented by three portraits, five of the basic values have four portraits, one of the basic values has five portraits, and one of the basic values has six portraits. The six rating options for each of the PVQ-40 portraits are numbered from six to one on a Likert scale, and are listed vertically below each portrait with the direction “please circle the statement below that is most like you”, with response options ranging from “this person is very much like me” (6) to “this person is not like me at all” (1).

The survey consists of a total of forty-three questions, three initial demographic questions with varying response options, and forty PVQ-40 portraits, each with six response options. Each of the ten basic human values is represented by between three and six portraits, and the strength of preference for each value (and the order of values preferences) is represented by the mean score for the relevant portraits. Means of one and two represent a weak preference for the value (not like), means of three and four represent a moderate preference for the value (somewhat like), and means of five and six represent a strong preference for the value (very like). Likewise, the higher-order values preferences are determined by calculating the mean for the relevant basic human values.

The original PVQ-40 survey has separate male and female versions, necessitating considerable additional printing and adding an unnecessary level of administrative complexity for respondents (having to select the right paper survey for their gender). The survey used in this research was de-gendered by replacing “he” and “she” with “you”. While the global question remained “how much like you is this person?”, the portraits changed from “thinking up new ideas and being creative is important to him. He likes to do things in his own original way”, to “thinking up new ideas and being creative is important to you. You like to do things in your own original way”. In addition, the six response options were changed by adding “this person is” to each response. These changes align the question “how much like you is this person?”, with the portrait “[action] is important to you”, and the rating choice “this person is like/not like me”. Figure 5 below illustrates these changes.

### Original PVQ-40 question (male version)

Here we briefly describe some people. Please read each description and think about how much each person is like or not like you. Put an X in the box to the right that shows how much the person in the description is like you.

#### HOW MUCH LIKE YOU IS THIS PERSON?

	Very much like me	Like me	Some- what like me	A little like me	Not like me	Not like me at all
<b>1. Thinking up new ideas and being creative is important to him. He likes to do things in his own original way.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### Revised PVQ-40 question (gender neutral)

This survey briefly describes a range of different people and asks *how much like you is this person?*, with response options from *this person is very much like me* to *this person is not like me at all*.

How much like you is this person?

- 1. Thinking up new ideas and being creative is important to you. You like to do things in your own original way. (Please circle the statement below that is most like you)**
- 6 – This person is very much like me
  - 5 – This person is like me
  - 4 – This person is somewhat like me
  - 3 - This person is a little like me
  - 2 - This person is not like me
  - 1 - This person is not like me at all

Figure 5: Original & gender neutral PVQ questions/portraits

## Survey marketing

Securing the interest and participation of a diverse and widely dispersed workforce poses inherent challenges, particularly in the context of the unique relationship between the emergency service organisation, unit and individual; highly variable channels of direct communication with individual members; and the potential for a degree of resistance, cynicism and survey fatigue amongst volunteers. Considerable efforts were made to explain the purpose and independent nature of the research to volunteers, and these efforts may have positively influenced the level of survey completion. Promotion of the research and the survey to members needed to

balance executive support with an emphasis on the independence of the research, and the potential value to individual members of the anticipated results.

In addition to the detailed information contained in a participant information sheet that accompanied each paper survey, each of the packages of surveys mailed to SES units across NSW included a covering letter outlining the purpose of the research and inviting volunteer participation. All of the marketing documentation included the URL of the UOW's Emergency Volunteers Project web page, as well as the email contact details for the author and an invitation for further questions or feedback on the research.

The impending conduct of the values survey was publicly canvassed in an online bulletin called Hazard Note (titled "Ensuring volunteering is sustainable") published by the BNHCRC in July 2015. This was followed by a poster display (titled "Volunteer challenges for emergency services") at the annual conference of the Australasian Fire and Emergency Services Authorities Council (AFAC) in Adelaide in early September 2015. At the same time a detailed article on the research (titled "University study to focus on the values and needs of NSW SES volunteers") appeared in the September 2015 edition of the SES Volunteer Association magazine *The Volunteer*.

On 25 September 2015 the NSW SES Commissioner sent an email to all SES volunteers endorsing the research and strongly encouraging members' participation in the values survey. An article on "an independent study being undertaken by the University of Wollongong" appeared in the October 2015 edition of the NSW SES newsletter *Compass*. Posters on the research progress were subsequently displayed at the BNHCRC-organised Research Advisory Forum in Hobart in May 2016 (poster title "Valuing volunteers"), and the AFAC17 conference in Sydney in September 2017 (poster title "Valuing volunteers study", attached as appendix C).

## **Data collation and analysis**

The anonymous survey of the values priorities of NSW SES volunteers attracted 522 valid responses, 300 (57.5%) in paper form and 222 (42.5%) online using Qualtrics software. Prior to substantive analysis the raw data was manually screened to detect any obvious anomalies (such as no questions answered, or all values questions answered with the same Likert rating). Two paper surveys were returned blank, and six online surveys were submitted uncompleted, and all were eliminated from the sample. The online surveys were also checked for replication of IP addresses to detect any multiple submissions from the same respondent.

In order to facilitate data standardisation and analysis, each of the 300 paper surveys were manually entered into the Qualtrics software. This enabled an initial analysis of the demographic composition of the sample, and calculation of the means and standard deviation for each of the PVQ-40 portraits, ten basic human values and four higher-order value clusters. In both paper and online surveys, respondents could choose not to answer particular questions, and non-responses were subsequently excluded from consideration in the statistical analysis.

In addition to respondents' values preferences (from strong to weak), the inclusion of general demographic characteristics can reveal differences in values preferences by gender, generation and location. When the demographic data was collated the eight age ranges were condensed into three generations. Age options one to three (under 18, 18-30, 31-40) broadly align with Generation Y and younger (born after 1980); age option four broadly aligns with Generation X (born 1965-1980); and age options five to seven broadly align with Baby Boomers and older (born before 1965). The seventeen regions were condensed into urban location (regions 2, 6, 8, 12 and 17) and rural location (regions 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15 and 16).

The data was subsequently exported from Qualtrics into Microsoft Excel to facilitate data organisation and consolidation, to assist in coding of the consolidated (new) generation and location categories, and to cull superfluous imported data such as to/from date, start/end times and IP addresses. The significance of differences between means for each of the ten basic values and four higher-order clusters for all

respondents was compared using unpaired 2-way t-tests using a GraphPad Prism program.

The data was then exported from Excel into SPSS to facilitate a more comprehensive statistical analysis of differences between basic and higher-order values, and the three demographic variables. Comparisons and statistical analysis were undertaken via one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) with Bonferoni post-hoc analysis. Levene's test for homogeneity of variances was performed for each variable. All variables for gender were homogenous. All variables for generation were homogenous. The variable of 'enhancement' for rurality was heterogeneous (Levene's  $p = 0.49$ ), and so was assessed for significance using Welch's ANOVA.

### **Ethical & methodological issues**

Both the stage one survey and stage two unit consultations required and secured ethics approval through the Human Research Ethics Committee at the University of Wollongong. Issues raised during the ethics approval processes included ensuring the anonymity of participants; the provision of comprehensive information to prospective participants on research aims and methods; advice to participants on their ability to withdraw at any time; and explicit processes for consulting and communicating with stage 2 participants.

While the researcher's close collaboration with the NSW SES was instrumental in gaining access to volunteers and successfully undertaking data collection (a State-wide values survey), the researcher was also heavily reliant for the ultimate completion of the research on internal agency processes and personnel, sustained executive support, and dynamic operational demands. This highlights the critical importance of timing in undertaking research that meets a clear and immediate organisational need. At the time agency participation in the Valuing Volunteers Study was being sought through the BNHCRC's sustainable volunteering cluster, the NSW SES was undergoing a period of major organisational change, and a newly appointed Chief Executive with a clear mandate for progressive organisational

reform agreed to champion the values survey and wrote personally to all members encouraging their participation.

Turning to the efficacy of the PVQ-40 survey instrument, a specific issue was raised by fifteen respondents, three in emails to the author and a further twelve in written comments on completed paper surveys (one respondent attached an additional typed page of detailed comments to the returned survey). Each of the PVQ-40 portraits contains two statements that are intended to be comparable (are intended to reflect different examples of the same value), and all of the comments received related specifically to the incomparability of the two statements in a limited number of the portrait questions.

Typical respondent comments were “strange survey as each question has two statements which can have different responses” and “these two statements mean different things” and “I totally agree with one of the statements while totally disagreeing with the other”. Several respondents crossed out one of the statements before providing a rating for the other statement in one or more questions. The two statements in survey question 28 (“you believe you should always show respect to your parents and to older people. It is important to you to be obedient”) attracted comments from six respondents, with one crossing out the word “obedient” and replacing it with the word “considerate”, and another writing “depends on the situation”. While feedback on the issue of comparability was less than 3% of all respondents, it highlights the seriousness with which some participants approached the task of completing the survey.

## **Conclusions**

This chapter has detailed the conduct of an organisation-wide survey of the values preferences of the NSW SES volunteer workforce, and documented the challenges involved in maximising volunteer participation in the face of a range of prospective impediments. Empirical data collection required the adaption of the Schwartz Portrait Values Questionnaire (PVQ-40) survey, and the adoption of a range of specific strategies to encourage participation by a diverse and widely dispersed workforce.

This chapter has addressed the methodological dimensions of the second research objective by demonstrating the viability and efficacy of the PVQ-40 survey instrument in determining the primary motives of a large Australian volunteer workforce. In order to assist other emergency services interested in establishing the values preferences of their own volunteer workforces, the modified PVQ-40 survey is included at Appendix A, and a values audit checklist that summarises the various strategies developed during this study to maximise survey participation is included at Appendix B.

The following chapter details and analyses the survey findings that reveal statistically significant differences in values rankings by gender and generation.

## Chapter 5

### Valuing Volunteers Study – Research findings

#### Introduction

This chapter summarises the key findings from a State-wide survey of the values preferences of NSW State Emergency Service (NSW SES) volunteers. A modified version of the Schwartz *Portrait Values Questionnaire* (PVQ-40) survey was distributed to over 3000 NSW SES volunteers across NSW in late 2015, and subsequently elicited 522 responses, representing a nominal participation rate of almost 6% of an estimated volunteer workforce of 9000.

#### Demographic profile of survey respondents

Respondent anonymity was a core requirement for ethics approval for this research, but it was also an essential requirement for maximising volunteer workforce participation (both total numbers, and honesty of responses) by ensuring there could be no individual consequences from involvement. For these reasons the demographic details sought from respondents was limited to the generic criteria of gender, age range and region.

It was originally proposed that the demographic profile of the survey respondents would be compared with the demographic profile of the NSW SES volunteer workforce in order to determine how broadly representative the response sample was, but apart from the criterion of gender this data was not readily available at the time. Table 1 below summarises respondents' demographics.

**Table 1:** NSW SES survey respondents' demographic profile (N=522).

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Categories</b>	<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<i>Gender</i>	Male	324	62%
	Female	187	36%
	Total	511	
	Unknown	11	2%

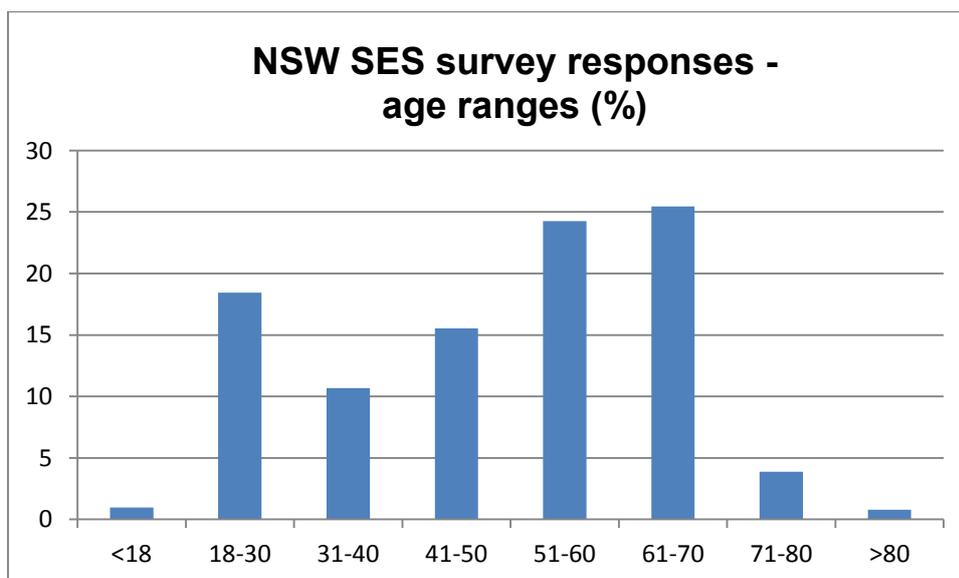
<i>Generation</i>	Generation Y	155	30%
	Generation X	80	15%
	Baby Boomers	280	54%
	Total	515	
	Unknown	7	1%
<i>Location</i>	Urban	228	44.5%
	Rural	284	55.5%
	Total	512	
	Unknown	10	1%

## Gender

Gender is the first survey question, with options of male, female and no response. Of the 522 survey respondents, 324 (62%) were male, 187 (36%) were female and 11 (2%) did not disclose their gender. The response rate by gender broadly accords with the NSW SES's 2017 estimate of 35% of active volunteers being females.

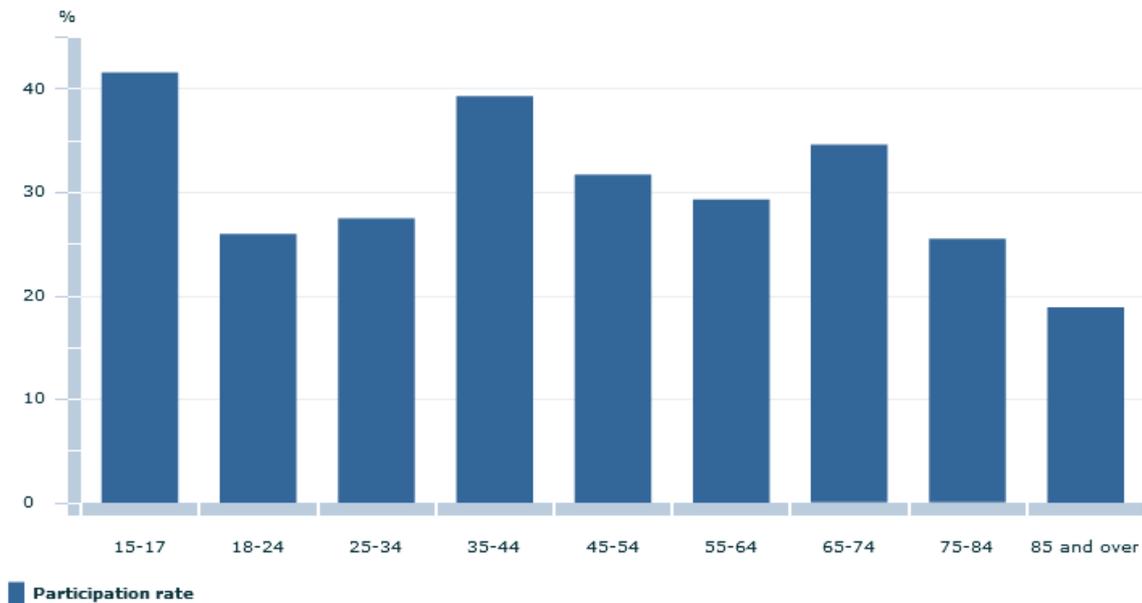
## Age ranges and generations

Age range is the second survey question with options of eight age ranges (<18, 18-30, 31-40, 41-50, 51-60, 61-70, 71-80, and >80) and no response. Figure 6 below reflects the percentage representation from each age range for 515 respondents.



**Figure 6:** NSW SES survey responses by age range (N=515).

When compared with the age profile of all volunteers nationally in the ABS 2014 GSS (2015) in Figure 7 below, there is a noticeably lower level of representation of people in the 34-44 age range in the NSW SES.



**Figure 7:** Age profile of all Australian volunteers in ABS GSS 2014.

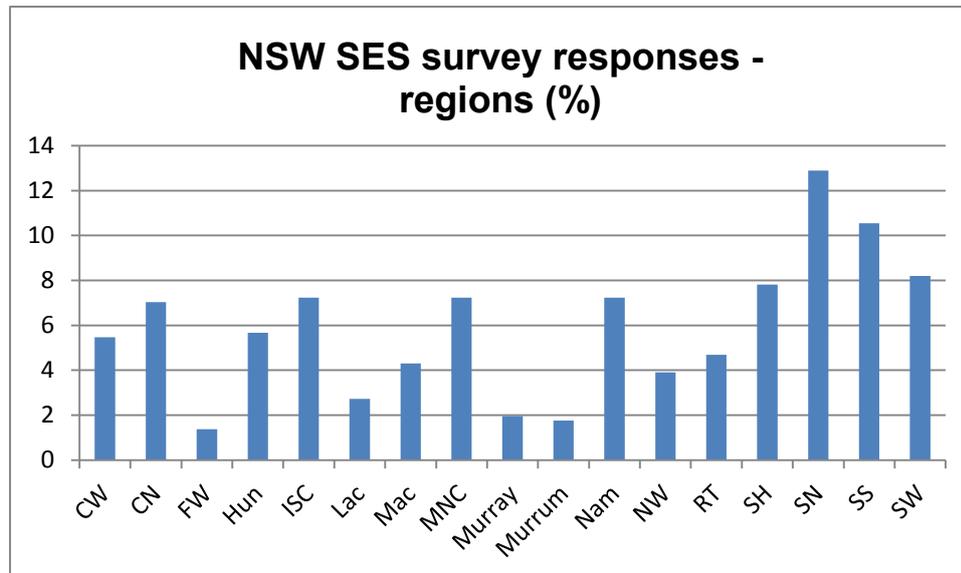
The eight age ranges were subsequently consolidated into three generations that broadly align with the categories of Generation Y and younger, Generation X, and Baby Boomers and older (ABS, 2006). While there is some contention in the literature about the start and end years for each of these generational categories, for the purposes of this analysis:

- Gen Y (also called Millennials) were born in the years 1977 to 1995 (representing respondents in the three age ranges from less than 18 to 40)
- Gen X were born in the years 1965 to 1976 (representing respondents in the age range 41-50)
- Baby Boomers were born in the years 1946 to 1964 (representing respondents in the four age ranges from over 50 to over 80).

Of the 515 survey respondents who disclosed their age range, 155 respondents (30%) were classified as Gen Y and younger, 80 respondents (15%) were classified as Gen X, and 280 respondents (54%) were classified as Baby Boomers and older.

## Regions and urban/rural locations

Region is the third survey question and offered 17 response options reflecting the division of responsibilities across the NSW SES. Figure 8 below illustrates the broad spread of survey responses across NSW.



**Figure 8:** NSW SES survey responses by region (N=512).

These 17 regions were subsequently consolidated into rural and urban locations, with rural location comprising the 12 regions of CW, CN, FW, Lac, Mac, MNC, Murray, Murrum, Nam, NW, RT, SH, and urban location comprising the five regions of Hun, ISC, SN, SS, SW. As reflected in Figure 14 below, of 512 respondents, 228 (44.5%) were from an urban location, and 284 (55.5%) were from a rural location.

## Basic human values rankings

To answer the first research question “what are the distinctive shared values of Australian emergency services volunteers?”, the basic human values for all survey respondents were ranked (from most to least important) according to their means, and the means were compared to determine the significance of differences between values. The ranking of the basic human values appears in Table 2 below, while the comparison of the significance of differences in means appears in Figure 9.

**Table 2:** Mean (standard deviation) basic human values rankings – all respondents pooled; corresponding survey questions (N = 522; maximum score is 6.0).

Value ranking	Score	Corresponding survey questions
1. <i>Benevolence</i>	4.850 (0.695)	15, 21, 30, 36
2. <i>Universalism</i>	4.791 (0.703)	6,11, 22, 26, 32, 43
3. <i>Self-direction</i>	4.781 (0.702)	4, 14, 25, 37
4. <i>Security</i>	4.460 (0.796)	8, 17, 24, 34, 38
5. <i>Conformity</i>	4.378 (0.863)	10, 19, 31, 39
6. <i>Hedonism</i>	4.165 (1.007)	13, 29, 40
7. <i>Stimulation</i>	3.997 (0.963)	9, 18, 33
8. <i>Achievement</i>	3.600 (1.038)	7, 16, 27, 35
9. <i>Tradition</i>	3.514 (0.877)	12, 23, 28, 41
10. <i>Power</i>	2.883 (0.948)	5, 20, 42

**Group 1:** Benevolence, Universalism, Self-direction\*  
 ↓ (**p = 0.0001**)  
**Group 2:** Security, Conformity  
 ↓ (**p ≤ 0.0003**)  
**Group 3:** Hedonism  
 ↓ (**p ≤ 0.0066**)  
**Group 4:** Stimulation  
 ↓ (**p = 0.0001**)  
**Group 5:** Achievement, Tradition  
 ↓ (**p = 0.0001**)  
**Tier 6:** Power

**Figure 9:** Statistically significant differences between basic human values (unpaired 2-way t-test) (\*Values grouped together are *not* significantly different (ie- p >0.05).

*Ranking 1: Benevolence (personal relationships)*

The defining motivational goal of the value of benevolence is “preserving and enhancing the welfare of those with whom one is in frequent social contact (the in-group)” (Schwartz, 2012, p.7), and according to Schwartz “benevolence values provide the internalised motivational base” for “positive, cooperative social relations in the family” (p.15). Benevolence ranks as the most important value in the survey of 522 NSW SES volunteers, with a mean score of 4.850. This top ranking is consistent with a Schwartz pan-cultural hierarchy of general population values, based on cross-cultural studies over two decades across 82 countries (ibid).

With a mean of 4.934 and p-value of 0.036, female respondents expressed a statistically significant stronger preference for the value of benevolence than males (mean 4.799). With a mean of 4.997 and p-value of 0.003, Gen Y respondents expressed a statistically significant stronger preference for the value of benevolence than Baby Boomer respondents (mean 4.766), with Gen X in the middle (mean 4.848). With means of 4.868 and 4.822 respectively, there was no statistically significant difference between urban and rural locations.

### *Ranking 2: Universalism (social relationships)*

The defining motivational goals of the value of universalism are “understanding, appreciating, tolerating and protecting the welfare of all people and nature” (Schwartz, 2012, p.7), and according to Schwartz “universalism values are functionally important primarily when group members must relate to those with whom they do not readily identify, in schools and work places” and thus contribute to positive social relations (p.15). Universalism is ranked the second most important value in the survey, with a mean score of 4.791. This ranking is consistent with the Schwartz pan-cultural hierarchy of general population values (ibid).

With a mean of 4.904 and p-value of 0.003, female respondents expressed a statistically significant stronger preference for the value of universalism than males (mean 4.715). With a mean of 4.851, Gen X respondents expressed the strongest preference for the value of universalism, followed by Baby Boomer respondents (mean 4.787) and Gen Y respondents (mean 4.751). With means of 4.826 and 4.749 respectively, there was no statistically significant difference between urban and rural locations.

### *Ranking 3: Self-direction (personal autonomy)*

The defining motivational goals of the value of self-direction are “independent thought and action – freely choosing, creating and exploring” (Schwartz, 2012, p.5), and according to Schwartz self-direction values “foster creativity, motivate innovation and promote coping with challenges. Behaviour based on these values is intrinsically

motivated. It satisfies individual needs without harming others” (p.15). Self-direction is ranked the third most important value in the survey, with a mean score of 4.781. This ranking is consistent with the Schwartz pan-cultural hierarchy of general population values (ibid).

With a mean of 4.786, the value of self-direction ranked the second strongest values preference for males, compared to the third strongest values preference for females (mean 4.771). With a mean of 4.835, Gen Y respondents expressed the strongest preference for the value of self-direction, followed by Gen X respondents (mean 4.814) and Baby Boomer respondents (mean 4.737). With means of 4.829 and 4.746 respectively, there was no statistically significant difference between urban and rural locations.

#### *Ranking 4: Security*

The defining motivational goals of the value of security are “safety, harmony, and stability of society, of relationships and of self” (Schwartz, 2012, p.6), and according to Schwartz “security and conformity promote harmonious social relations ... by helping to avoid conflict and the violation of group norm” (p.15). These values “are usually acquired in response to demands and sanctions to avoid risks and restrict the self” which “conflicts with gratifying self-oriented needs and desires” (ibid). Security is ranked the fourth most important value in the survey, with a mean score of 4.460. This ranking is consistent with the Schwartz pan-cultural hierarchy of general population values (ibid).

With a mean of 4.484, female respondents expressed a marginally stronger preference for the value of security than males (mean 4.436). With a mean of 4.596 and p-values of 0.001 and 0.007 respectively, Baby Boomer respondents expressed a statistically significant stronger preference for the value of security than both Gen Y (mean 4.299) and Gen X (mean 4.291) respondents. With means of 4.439 and 4.461 respectively, there was no statistically significant difference between urban and rural locations.

### *Ranking 5: Conformity*

The defining motivational goals of the value of conformity are “restraint of actions, inclinations and impulses likely to upset or harm others and violate social expectations and norms” (Schwartz, 2012, p.6), and according to Schwartz “tradition and conformity values are especially close motivationally as they share the goal of subordinating the self to socially imposed expectations. They differ primarily in the objects to which one subordinates the self” with “conformity entailing subordination to persons with whom one frequently interacts” (ibid). Schwartz notes (p.15) that the “emphasis of these values [security and conformity] on maintaining the status quo conflicts with innovation in finding solutions to group tasks”. Conformity is ranked the fifth most important value in the survey, with a mean score of 4.378. This ranking is consistent with the Schwartz pan-cultural hierarchy of general population values (ibid).

With a mean of 4.409, male respondents expressed a marginally stronger preference for the value of conformity than females (mean 4.307). With a mean of 4.464, Gen Y respondents expressed a stronger preference for the value of security than Baby Boomer respondents (mean 4.360) and Gen X (mean 4.287). With means of 4.436 and 4.340 respectively, there was no statistically significant difference between urban and rural locations.

### *Ranking 6: Hedonism*

The defining motivational goal of the value of hedonism is “pleasure or sensuous gratification for oneself” (Schwartz, 2012, p.5), and according to Schwartz “the importance of hedonism and stimulation values derives from the requirement to legitimize inborn needs to attain pleasure and arousal” and “unlike power values their pursuit does not necessarily threaten positive social relations” (p.16). Hedonism is ranked the sixth most important value in the survey, with a mean score of 4.165. This ranking is consistent with the Schwartz pan-cultural hierarchy of general population values (ibid).

With a mean of 4.159, male respondents expressed a marginally stronger preference for the value of hedonism than females (mean 4.146). With a mean of 4.539 and p-values of 0.015 and 0.000 respectively, Gen Y respondents expressed a statistically significant stronger preference for the value of hedonism than both Gen X respondents (mean 4.160) and Baby Boomer respondents (mean 3.960). With means of 4.136 and 4.181 respectively, there was no statistically significant difference between urban and rural locations.

### *Ranking 7: Stimulation*

The defining motivational goals of the value of stimulation are “excitement, novelty, and challenge in life” (Schwartz, 2012, p.5). Stimulation is ranked the seventh most important value in the survey, with a mean score of 3.997. This ranking is two places higher (more important) than the Schwartz pan-cultural hierarchy of general population values that ranks stimulation as ninth (ibid). There are a range of reasons why stimulation might be ranked higher for emergency services volunteers than the international norm, including the fact that such roles may seem to offer an element of excitement, adventure and risk (and perhaps the opportunity for heroism).

With a mean of 4.346 and p-value of 0.014, male respondents expressed a statistically significant stronger preference for the value of stimulation than females (mean 3.857). With a mean of 4.346 and p-value of 0.000, Gen Y respondents expressed a statistically significant stronger preference for the value of stimulation than Baby Boomer respondents (mean 3.781), with Gen X respondents in the middle with a mean of 4.079. With means of 4.007 and 4.009 respectively, there was no statistically significant difference between urban and rural locations.

### *Ranking 8: Achievement*

The defining motivational goals of the value of achievement are “personal success through demonstrating competence according to social standards” (Schwartz, 2012, p.5), and according to Schwartz “both power and achievement values focus on social esteem. However, achievement values (e.g. ambition) emphasise the active demonstration of successful performance in concrete interaction, whereas power

values (e.g. authority, wealth) emphasise the attainment or preservation of a dominant position within the more general social system” (p.6). Schwartz notes (p.15) “on the positive side these values motivate individuals to invest in group tasks and legitimize self-enhancing behaviour as long as it contributes to group welfare. On the negative side these values foster efforts to attain social approval that may disrupt harmonious social relations and interfere with group goal attainment”. Achievement is ranked the 8<sup>th</sup> most important value in the survey, with a mean score of 3.600. This priority is ranked one place lower (less important) than the Schwartz pan-cultural hierarchy of general population values that ranks achievement as seventh (ibid).

With a mean of 3.693 and p-value of 0.003, male respondents expressed a statistically significant stronger preference for the value of achievement than females (mean 3.407). With a mean of 4.038 and p-values of 0.000 respectively, Gen Y respondents expressed a statistically significant stronger preference for the value of achievement than both Baby Boomer respondents (mean 3.432) and Gen X respondents (mean 3.338). With means of 3.667 and 3.555 respectively, there was no statistically significant difference between urban and rural locations.

### *Ranking 9: Tradition*

The defining motivational goals of the value of tradition are “respect, commitment, and acceptance of the customs and ideas that one’s culture or religion provides” (Schwartz, 2012, p.6), and according to Schwartz tradition “entails subordination to more abstract objects – religious and cultural customs and ideas” (ibid). “Acting on tradition values can also contribute to group solidarity and thus to smooth group functioning and survival” (p.15). Tradition is ranked the ninth most important value in the survey, with a mean score of 3.514. This ranking is one place lower (less important) than the Schwartz pan-cultural hierarchy of general population values that ranks tradition as eighth (ibid).

With a mean of 3.513, female respondents expressed a marginally stronger preference for the value of tradition than males (mean 3.507). With a mean of 3.549, Gen Y respondents expressed a marginally stronger preference for the value of

tradition than Baby Boomer respondents (mean 3.523) and Gen X respondents (mean 3.451). With means of 3.502 and 3.525 respectively, there was no statistically significant difference between urban and rural locations.

*Ranking 10: Power*

The defining motivational goals of the value of power are “social status and prestige, control or dominance over people and resources” (Schwartz, 2012, p.5), and according to Schwartz “power values (e.g. authority, wealth) emphasise the attainment or preservation of a dominant position within the more general social system” and “may harm or exploit others and damage social relations” (p.15). Power is ranked the least important value in the survey, with a mean score of 2.883. This ranking is consistent with the Schwartz pan-cultural hierarchy of general population values (ibid).

With a mean of 3.00 and p-value of 0.000, male respondents expressed a statistically significant stronger preference for the value of power than females (mean 2.643). With a mean of 3.101 and p-values of 0.006 and 0.008 respectively, Gen Y respondents expressed a statistically significant stronger preference for the value of power than both Baby Boomer respondents (mean 2.808) and Gen X respondents (mean 2.715). With means of 2.907 and 2.872 respectively, there was no statistically significant difference between urban and rural locations.

The data derived from the values survey of 522 NSW SES volunteers, and the results of analysis for statistical differences, are summarised in the following tables.

**Table 3:** Mean (standard deviation) basic values rankings by gender  
N = 509. \* = p<0.05, \*\* = p<0.01, \*\*\* = p<0.001.

	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Absolute difference between genders</b>
<i>Benevolence</i>	4.799 (0.718)	4.934 (0.658)	0.135* (female > male)
<i>Universalism</i>	4.715 (0.716)	4.904 (0.668)	0.189** (female > male)
<i>Self-direction</i>	4.786 (0.706)	4.771 (0.703)	0.015
<i>Security</i>	4.437 (0.797)	4.484 (0.800)	0.047
<i>Conformity</i>	4.409 (0.867)	4.307 (0.864)	0.102
<i>Hedonism</i>	4.159 (1.016)	4.146 (0.989)	0.013

<i>Stimulation</i>	4.075 (0.950)	3.857 (0.975)	0.218* (male > female)
<i>Achievement</i>	3.693 (1.046)	3.407 (0.073)	0.286** (male > female)
<i>Tradition</i>	3.507 (0.840)	3.513 (0.908)	0.006
<i>Power</i>	3.000 (0.906)	2.643 (0.957)	0.357*** (male > female)

**Table 4:** Mean (standard deviation) basic values rankings by generation

N = 513. \* = p<0.05, \*\* = p<0.01, \*\*\* = p<0.001. Post-Hoc [Bonferoni] analysis performed between groups. Gen Y = Generation Y, Gen X = Generation X, BB = Baby Boomers.

	Generation Y	Generation X	Baby Boomers	Absolute difference between groups		
				Gen Y vs Gen X	Gen Y vs BB	Gen X vs BB
<i>Benevolence</i>	4.997 (0.728)	4.848 (0.603)	4.766 (0.697)	0.149	0.231** (Gen Y>BB)	0.082
<i>Universalism</i>	4.751 (0.733)	4.851 (0.663)	4.787 (0.698)	0.100	0.036	0.064
<i>Self-direction</i>	4.835 (0.059)	4.814 (0.590)	4.737 (0.710)	0.021	0.098	0.077
<i>Security</i>	4.299 (0.840)	4.291 (0.803)	4.596 (0.753)	0.008	0.297*** (BB>Gen Y)	0.305** (BB>Gen X)
<i>Conformity</i>	4.464 (0.862)	4.287 (0.854)	4.360 (0.860)	0.177	0.104	0.073
<i>Hedonism</i>	4.539 (0.962)	4.160 (0.895)	3.960 (1.002)	0.379* (Gen Y>Gen X)	0.579*** (Gen Y>BB)	0.200
<i>Stimulation</i>	4.346 (1.003)	4.079 (0.917)	3.781 (0.900)	0.267	0.565*** (Gen Y>BB)	0.298
<i>Achievement</i>	4.038 (1.023)	3.338 (0.966)	3.432 (1.003)	0.700*** (Gen Y>Gen X)	0.606*** (Gen Y>BB)	0.185
<i>Tradition</i>	3.549 (0.897)	3.451 (0.824)	3.523 (0.851)	0.098	0.026	0.072
<i>Power</i>	3.101 (0.935)	2.715 (0.915)	2.808 (0.938)	0.386** (Gen Y>Gen X)	0.293** (Gen Y>BB)	0.093

**Table 5:** Mean (standard deviation) basic values rankings by location

N = 510. No significant differences detected.

	<i>Urban</i>	<i>Rural</i>	<i>Absolute difference by rurality</i>
<i>Benevolence</i>	4.868 (0.717)	4.822 (0.680)	0.046
<i>Universalism</i>	4.826 (0.696)	4.749 (0.708)	0.077
<i>Self-direction</i>	4.829 (0.705)	4.746 (0.706)	0.083
<i>Security</i>	4.439 (0.797)	4.461 (0.797)	0.022
<i>Conformity</i>	4.396 (0.874)	4.340 (0.852)	0.029
<i>Hedonism</i>	4.136 (1.003)	4.181 (1.010)	0.045
<i>Stimulation</i>	4.007 (0.964)	4.009 (0.960)	0.002
<i>Achievement</i>	3.667 (1.003)	3.555 (1.078)	0.112
<i>Tradition</i>	3.502 (0.848)	3.525 (0.861)	0.023
<i>Power</i>	2.907 (0.061)	2.872 (0.971)	0.035

## Higher-order value cluster rankings

Similar to the process for determining the ranking order of the ten basic human values, the four higher-order value clusters for all survey respondents were ranked (from most to least important) according to their means, and the means were compared to determine the significance of differences between values. The order of ranking of the four higher-order value clusters appears in Table 6 below, while the comparison of the significance of differences in means appears in Figure 10 below.

**Table 6:** Mean (standard deviation) of higher-order value cluster rankings – all respondents pooled; corresponding basic values (descriptive statistics). N = 522.

	<b>Values</b>	<b>Corresponding basic values</b>
<i>1. Self-transcendence</i>	4.819 (0.611)	Benevolence Universalism
<i>2. Openness to change</i>	4.315 (0.699)	Self-direction Stimulation Hedonism
<i>3. Conservation</i>	4.119 (0.685)	Tradition Security Conformity
<i>4. Self-enhancement</i>	3.549 (0.812)	Power Achievement Hedonism

<p><b>Group 1:</b> Self-transcendence ↓ (<b>p = 0.0001</b>) <b>Group 2:</b> Openness to change ↓ (<b>p = 0.0001</b>) <b>Group 3:</b> Conservation ↓ (<b>p = 0.0001</b>) <b>Group 4:</b> Self-enhancement</p>
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**Figure 10:** Statistically significant differences between higher-order value clusters (unpaired 2-way t-test).

### *Ranking 1: Self-transcendence higher-order value cluster*

Comprised of the basic human values of benevolence and universalism, the self-transcendence higher-order value cluster emphasises concern for the welfare of others, and is the antithesis of the higher-order value cluster of self-enhancement. Schwartz (2012, p.8) notes that the self-transcendence versus self-enhancement bipolar dimension “captures the conflict between values that emphasise concern for the welfare and interests of others (universalism, benevolence) and values that emphasise pursuit of one’s own interests and relative success and dominance over others (power, achievement)”. The self-transcendence value cluster has particular relevance to this study because it largely aligns with values like altruism and collectivist that are reported to be in decline, and are reflected in changing patterns of civic participation.

With a mean of 4.819, self-transcendence clearly ranks as the most important higher-order value cluster with all survey respondents. With a mean of 4.919 and a p-value of 0.004, female respondents expressed a statistically significant stronger preference for the higher-order value cluster of self-transcendence than males (mean 4.757). With a mean of 4.874, Gen Y respondents expressed a marginally stronger preference for the higher-order value cluster of self-transcendence than Gen X respondents (mean 4.850) and Baby Boomer respondents (mean 4.777). With means of 4.847 and 4.786 respectively, there was no statistically significant difference between urban and rural locations.

### *Ranking 2: Openness to change higher-order value cluster*

Comprised of the basic human values of self-direction, stimulation and hedonism, the higher-order value cluster of openness to change emphasises independent action, thought and feeling and readiness for new experience, and is the antithesis of the higher-order value cluster of conservation. Schwartz (2012, p.8) notes the openness to change versus conservation bipolar dimension “captures the conflict between values that emphasise independence of thought, action and feelings and readiness for change (self-direction, stimulation) and values that emphasise order,

self-restriction, preservation of the past and resistance to change (security, conformity, tradition)". The openness to change value cluster has relevance to this study as it largely aligns with the impetus for major organisational reforms that are currently sweeping through Australian emergency services.

With a mean of 4.315, openness to change ranks as the second most important higher-order value cluster with all survey respondents. With a mean of 4.340, male respondents expressed a marginally stronger preference for the higher-order value cluster of openness to change than females (mean 4.258). With a mean of 4.573 and p-value of 0.000, Gen Y respondents expressed a statistically significant stronger preference for the higher-order value cluster of openness to change than Baby Boomer respondents (mean 4.159), with Gen X respondents in the middle (mean 4.351). With means of 4.324 and 4.312 respectively, there was no statistically significant difference between urban and rural locations.

### *Ranking 3: Conservation higher-order value cluster*

Comprised of the basic human values of tradition, conformity and security, the higher-order value cluster of conservation emphasises self-restriction, order and maintenance of the status quo, and is the antithesis of the higher-order value cluster of openness to change. As will be discussed in the following chapter, the conservation value cluster has relevance to this study given the potential for traditional member-based bodies to be resistant to pressures for "modernisation".

With a mean of 4.119, conservation ranks as the third most important higher-order value cluster with all survey respondents. With a mean of 4.117, male respondents expressed a marginally stronger preference for the higher-order value cluster of conservation than females (mean 4.101). With a mean of 4.160, Baby Boomer respondents expressed a marginally stronger preference for the higher-order value cluster of conservation than Gen Y (mean 4.104) and Gen X (mean 4.009). With means of 4.112 and 4.109 respectively, there was no statistically significant difference between urban and rural locations.

#### *Ranking 4: Self-enhancement higher-order value cluster*

Comprised of the basic human values of power, achievement and hedonism, the higher-order value cluster of self-enhancement emphasises concern for the pursuit of self-interest, and is the antithesis of the higher-order value cluster of self-transcendence. As discussed in detail in the next chapter, the self-enhancement value cluster has particular relevance to this study as it largely aligns with values like egoism and reflexive that are reported to be in the ascendance.

With a mean of 3.549, self-enhancement clearly ranks as the least important higher-order value cluster with all survey respondents. With a mean of 3.617 and a p-value of 0.003, male respondents expressed a statistically significant stronger preference for the higher-order value cluster of self-enhancement than females (mean 3.399). With a mean of 3.893 and respective p-values of 0.000, Gen Y respondents expressed a statistically significant stronger preference for the higher-order value cluster of self-enhancement than both Gen X (mean 3.402) and Baby Boomer (mean 3.400) respondents. With means of 3.570 and 3.536 respectively, there was no statistically significant difference between urban and rural locations.

The data derived from the values survey of 522 NSW SES volunteers, and the results of analysis for statistical differences, are summarised in the following tables.

**Table 7:** Mean (standard deviation) higher-order clusters rankings by gender  
N = 509. \* =  $p < 0.05$ , \*\* =  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* =  $p < 0.001$ .

	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Absolute difference by gender</b>
<i>Self-transcendence</i>	4.757 (0.634)	4.919 (0.569)	0.162** (female > male)
<i>Openness to change</i>	4.340 (0.689)	4.258 (0.715)	0.082
<i>Conservation</i>	4.117 (0.679)	4.101 (0.692)	0.016
<i>Self- enhancement</i>	3.617 (0.802)	3.399 (0.802)	0.218** (male > female)

**Table 8:** Mean (standard deviation) higher-order value clusters rankings by generation  
 N = 513. \* =  $p < 0.05$ , \*\* =  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* =  $p < 0.001$ . Post-Hoc [Bonferoni] analysis performed between groups. Gen Y = generation Y, Gen X = generation X, BB = Baby Boomers.

	Generation Y	Generation X	Baby Boomers	Absolute difference between groups		
				Gen Y vs Gen X	Gen Y vs BB	Gen X vs BB
<i>Self-transcendence</i>	4.874 (0.657)	4.850 (0.565)	4.777 (0.602)	0.024	0.097	0.073
<i>Openness to change</i>	4.573 (0.710)	4.351 (0.619)	4.159 (0.675)	0.222	0.414*** (Gen Y>BB)	0.192
<i>Conservation</i>	4.104 (0.700)	4.009 (0.673)	4.160 (0.671)	0.095	0.056	0.151
<i>Self-enhancement</i>	3.893 (0.785)	3.404 (0.734)	3.340 (0.791)	0.489*** (Gen Y>BB)	0.553*** (Gen Y>BB)	0.064

**Table 9:** Mean (standard deviation) higher order value clusters rankings by location  
 N = 510. No significant differences detected.

	Urban	Rural	Absolute difference by rurality
<i>Self-transcendence</i>	4.847 (0.617)	4.786 (0.609)	0.061
<i>Openness to change</i>	4.324 (0.696)	4.312 (0.705)	0.012
<i>Conservation</i>	4.112 (0.679)	4.109 (0.679)	0.003
<i>Self-enhancement</i>	3.570 (0.764)	3.536 (0.854)	0.034

## Conclusions

This chapter has summarised the findings from a State-wide survey of the values preferences of NSW SES volunteers. The findings have revealed distinct differences (by gender and generation) in values preferences within the volunteer workforce, with important implications for a range of volunteering policies and practices. The findings point to the need for nuanced, differentiated and targeted policies and strategies to meet the distinctly different values needs of a highly diverse and volatile volunteer workforce, issues that will be explored in further detail in the following chapter.

## Chapter 6

### Valuing Volunteers Study – Discussion and Conclusions

#### Introduction

This chapter reviews the research aims, objectives and questions that were originally articulated in Chapter 1, and considers the degree to which these have been addressed and satisfactorily answered by the Valuing Volunteers Study. This chapter also explores the broader implications of the empirical findings and theoretical contributions for future emergency service volunteering, and concludes with the research's limitations.

#### Scope of the Valuing Volunteers Study

This study has revealed a diverse range of contemporary influences on emergency services volunteering, and these are graphically summarised in Figure 11 below.



**Figure 11:** Contemporary influences on Australian emergency service volunteering (Source: author)

## Research aim, objectives and questions

As outlined in Chapter 1 of this thesis, the research aim is to gain a better understanding of the primary motives for volunteering in Australian emergency services. In order to fulfil the overall research aim of generating original empirical and theoretical insights that can inform emergency management policies and practices, five research objectives were determined. These objectives are to:

- Demonstrate that emergency service volunteering is of great economic and social value to the Australian community, and represents exceptional civic participation.
- Establish the validity and utility of a values framework for interpreting and understanding the primary motives for emergency service volunteering.
- Determine the distinct shared and contrasting values of a sample of Australian emergency service volunteers, and to consider the implications of these values for volunteer policies and practices.
- Evaluate the efficacy and integrity of current processes for determining and resourcing national emergency management priorities.
- Identify trends in changing core values with implications for future forms of civic participation, including formal emergency service volunteering.

Consistent with these objectives, in particular objective three, a series of specific research questions were formulated that are the focus for empirical inquiry in this study. The following research questions were developed and shaped the study:

- What are the distinctive shared values of Australian emergency service volunteers?
- To what extent and in what ways do these shared values impact on volunteer expectations of and commitment to emergency service organisations?
- In what ways can the formal values of emergency service organisations be better aligned with volunteer values in order to maximise workforce satisfaction, commitment and retention?

**First research objective - Demonstrate that emergency service volunteering is of great economic and social value to the Australian community, and represents exceptional civic participation**

This thesis has satisfied this first research objective, and finds that emergency service volunteering is demonstrably of great economic and social value and does represent exceptional civic participation. The following elements from Chapter Two of this thesis support this finding.

The chapter sets the scene for the Valuing Volunteers Study by reviewing and synthesising a diverse range of contemporary official reports on the operations, performance and culture of the various volunteer-based emergency services in Australia. These collated and reviewed reports identified a range of contemporary personal and social pressures that can and do impact on the community's willingness and availability to commit to formal emergency service volunteering roles, including a shift to more reflexive and spontaneous forms of volunteering.

The chapter also revealed the unique circumstances and distinctive characteristics of formal emergency service volunteering that justify its description as exceptional civic participation. The chapter highlighted the demanding nature of emergency response roles; the level of dedication and personal commitment required to sustain emergency service volunteering; the specialist competencies required to undertake emergency tasks safely; and the economic and social value to the community of the unpaid services provided.

The use of a volunteer-based workforce to provide an essential public service is an inherently complex phenomenon, whose specific features are not well understood by the community or policy-makers. Beyond the stereotype of the heroic rescuer ready to respond in times of crisis, there seems little appreciation of the substantial personal commitment and goodwill required to undertake inherently demanding emergency response roles, or the conditional and potentially fragile nature of the relationship between the individual volunteer, the local unit and the emergency service organisation.

The commitment and retention of emergency service volunteers may be particularly susceptible to specific internal and external forces, including changing social values (declining altruism) and growing pressures for organisational and cultural reform. The bulk of the volunteer workforce is comprised of thousands of individual units and brigades across Australia, each with its own distinctive culture, and organisational reforms that inevitably impinge on individual autonomy and sense of personal responsibility may add an additional level of complexity to sustaining volunteer motivation. In such an environment of dynamic change, continuing to churn through members without understanding and meeting their evolving needs may ultimately prove unsustainable.

**Second research objective - Establish the validity and utility of a values framework for interpreting and understanding the primary motives for emergency service volunteering**

This thesis has satisfied the second research objective, and has established the efficacy of a values framework for understanding the primary motives for emergency service volunteering. The following elements from Chapters Three and Four of this thesis support this finding.

Chapter Three of the thesis provided a comprehensive review of a wide range of discipline-specific motivational theories that are relevant to emergency services volunteering, demonstrating the capacity of an inclusive values framework to encompass and integrate diverse psychological, sociological and economic perspectives. The chapter established the efficacy of a values construct as a comprehensive, multi-dimensional and multi-disciplinary theoretical framework for interpreting and understanding the primary motives for emergency service volunteering.

Chapter Three demonstrated that values are powerful motivators, and altruistic values playing a crucial role in motivating emergency service volunteering. Importantly, shared values can reinforce volunteer commitment and retention, while conflicting values can contribute to volunteer turnover.

Chapter Four of this thesis summarised the various actions taken to obtain original survey data on the values preferences of the NSW SES volunteer workforce. From a methodological perspective, the successful use of a modified version of the Schwartz *Portrait Values Questionnaire* (PVQ-40) survey to determine the values preferences of a large Australian volunteer workforce may be unique to this study. In order to assist other emergency services interested in determining the values preferences of their own volunteer workforces, the modified PVQ-40 survey is included at Appendix A, and a values audit checklist that summarises the various strategies developed during this study to maximise survey participation is included at Appendix B.

### **Third research objective - Determine the distinct shared and contrasting values of a sample of emergency services volunteers, and consider the implications for volunteer policies and practices**

The findings detailed in Chapter Five on the shared and contrasting values of a sample of 522 emergency service volunteers are directly relevant to this research objective, and specifically address the first and second research questions on distinctive shared values and their impacts on volunteer expectations and commitment. The findings are also partially relevant to the third research question on values alignment, insofar as they highlight differences in values preferences between distinct demographic sub-groups within the workforce, rather than between the workforce and the parent organisation. The survey reveals significant differences in values rankings by gender and generation, with important implications for the management and motivation of specific sections of the volunteer workforce.

In interpreting the survey results, it is important to reiterate that the Schwartz (2012) universal values construct is a comprehensive and integrated framework that explicates the relationships and interaction between complementary and contradictory basic and higher-order value clusters, across two bipolar dimensions. Schwartz's circular motivational continuum is thus a valuable tool in interpreting the implications of the trends in values preferences that have emerged from the survey. The bipolar dimensions of the Schwartz construct have particular relevance in this study as they largely align with two of the major "modernisation" trends identified in the literature, namely the shifts from collective/altruistic/other-oriented to

reflexive/egoistic/self-oriented motives, and from traditional to corporate organisational cultures.

### *Implications of basic human values rankings*

Chapter Two of this thesis argued that, because of the substantial personal dedication required to commit on an ongoing basis to inherently demanding roles, emergency service volunteering requires an exceptional level of commitment and motivation. The overall dominance and importance of the other-oriented values of benevolence and universalism in the survey responses (which combined represent the higher-order value cluster of self-transcendence), is entirely consistent with a contention on the crucial role of altruistic values as a primary motive for highly formalised volunteering roles.

Comparing the order of values rankings of a sample of Australian emergency service volunteers with the Schwartz pan-cultural hierarchy of general population values (2012), it is interesting to note that the value of stimulation amongst emergency service volunteers ranked two places higher in importance than the pan-cultural ranking for this value. This result may reflect the inherent appeal of emergency response roles to the motivational goals of the stimulation value of “excitement, novelty and challenge” (Schwartz, 2012, p.5).

### *Implications of differences in basic and higher-order value clusters rankings by gender*

The clear differences in values preferences to emerge by gender are one of the most important findings of this research, in particular a marked divergence between females and males in the bi-polar dimension of self-transcendence versus self-enhancement. The Schwartz values construct suggests that conflicting higher-order values can be significant de-motivators, and values conflicts may ultimately contribute to volunteer turnover.

For complex reasons beyond the scope of this thesis, males dominate operational emergency response roles, and various official reports have alluded to cultural impediments to female advancement. A 2016 report titled *Women in fire and emergency leadership roles* commissioned by the Victorian Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, and based on a survey of staff, found (p.4) that “more than half (54%) of respondents agreed there were barriers to women taking on fire and emergency leadership roles, with 67% of women and 37% of men agreeing. Echoing this finding, only 26% of women did not see their gender as a limitation to their future career prospects, compared with 84% of men”. Barriers identified in the report included unconscious bias, a boys club mentality, an emphasis on operational experience, stereotyped roles, expectations of a higher standard for women, and the absence of female role models.

In a similar vein, Wemlinger and Berlan (2016) analysed the influence of gender on the type of organisation that an individual volunteers for, and the relationship between the level of gender equality and volunteering habits, using cross-national data from the World Values Survey. They concluded (p.869) that “while women are significantly less likely to volunteer in traditionally male organisations, this segregation exists in all gender equality contexts. In countries where women have changed their roles and have become part of the economic and political sphere, they are still less likely than men to volunteer at these traditionally male-dominated organisations”.

The survey findings on gender differences add credence to a general contention that females often bring a different set of values and expectations to many roles. Compared with males, female survey respondents expressed statistically significant stronger preferences for the (other-oriented) basic values of benevolence and universalism, and the higher-order cluster of self-transcendence (altruism). In marked contrast, male respondents expressed statistically significant stronger preferences for the (self-oriented) basic values of stimulation, achievement and power, and the higher-order cluster of self-enhancement (egoism). As noted earlier by Schwartz (2012, p.15), “on the positive side these values [power and achievement] motivate individuals to invest in group tasks and legitimize self-enhancing behaviour as long as it contributes to group welfare. On the negative side

these values foster efforts to attain social approval that may disrupt harmonious social relations and interfere with group goal attainment". In an emergency service volunteering context, such negative effects may be inconsistent with the maintenance of a respectful team environment that is essential for effective operations.

The clear incongruity of some of the basic and higher-order values suggest that distinctly different organisational strategies may be necessary to manage gender issues. It may be that a self-oriented male culture may be largely incompatible with the values preferences of many women, and values conflicts may ultimately contribute to volunteer turnover. If volunteer recruitment and retention strategies are to continue to appeal to and rely on the strength of prospective members' altruistic values, then efforts need to be increasingly targeted towards attracting a greater proportion of female members. In addition, organisations will need to be more sensitive to meeting the needs of existing members holding altruistic values if they are to be retained.

#### *Implications of differences in basic and higher-order values rankings by generation*

The survey findings also revealed statistically significant differences in values rankings by generation, specifically a clear divergence in values preferences between younger Gen Y and older Baby Boomers. Compared with Baby Boomers (and Gen X in most instances), Gen Y respondents expressed statistically significant stronger preferences for the basic values of benevolence, hedonism, stimulation, achievement and power, and the higher-order clusters of openness to change and self-enhancement. In contrast, Baby Boomers expressed a statistically significant stronger preference for the basic value of security than Gen Y and Gen X.

Chapter Three explores the literature that finds major differences in the values preferences of different generations. Hustinx and Lammertyn's (2003) seminal exposition on the shift from collective (other-oriented) to reflexive (self-oriented) volunteering concludes (p.183) that "major changes occur in the relationship between volunteer and organisation. ... A shift towards more reflexive, self-directed

forms of volunteering may result in a widening gap between the priorities of the volunteer and the organisational work that has to be done. ... Chances of organisational survival will depend on structural adaptations that can accommodate more self-interested, flexible and detached forms of involvement”.

In a similar vein, in their contemporary review of strategies to recruit volunteers, Stukas, Snyder and Clary (2016, p.251) conclude that “we are sensitive to the possibility that methods to encourage community involvement may potentially result in two different classes of volunteers – those who are primarily other-oriented and intrinsically-motivated, and those who are primarily self-oriented and extrinsically-motivated. Although no real harm (and potentially a lot of good) may be achieved by volunteers who are self-oriented and extrinsically motivated, their commitment to sustained service may be lower than that of volunteers who are more other-oriented and intrinsically motivated”. The observations by Hustinx et al. (2003) and Stukas et al. (2016) suggest strongly that emergency service agencies need to make clear decisions on how they will promote their volunteering roles to particular sub-groups of prospective members, and this will need to be complemented by distinctly different management strategies once these specific (age, gender) groups become members.

The survey findings in respect to both bipolar dimensions indicate that, compared with older Baby Boomers, younger Gen Y respondents are more reflexive and self-oriented, and more amenable to change. Given the clear incongruity of these higher-order values, the findings highlight the potential for inter-generational values conflicts between older “traditional” collective volunteers and younger “modern” reflexive volunteers, with the possibility that such values conflicts may contribute to volunteer turnover. Such values differences could be reflected in greater reluctance amongst existing and prospective Gen Y volunteers to commit to long-term established roles; higher expectations of concrete personal development opportunities and benefits from volunteering; and greater amenability to organisational reforms (in contrast to Baby Boomers who may be more actively resistant to change). These different motives may have particular relevance to a sector undergoing major organisational reform, and again highlight the requirement for differentiated management strategies that meet the divergent needs of different sections of the volunteer workforce, with a

generic one-size-fits-all approach potentially failing to meet any one group's needs adequately.

**Fourth research objective - Evaluate the efficacy and integrity of current processes for determining and resourcing national emergency management priorities**

The discussion paper at Appendix E titled "All-hazard risk management and emergency management priorities in Australia" examines a national policy that commits to manage "all types of emergencies or disasters and civil defence using the same set of management arrangements" (NERAG, 2015), and to determine national emergency management priorities by objectively assessing and comparing risks using measures of probability and consequences. Mortality represents a catastrophic consequence (severe harm), and an effective national emergency management system would focus resources and efforts on minimising mortality due to potentially avoidable causes.

The discussion paper asks, of the more than 10,000 potentially preventable deaths in Australia annually, how do we decide which lives are more precious and are worth saving, and at what cost? The paper contrasts the inestimable resources dedicated to counter-terrorism (where the harms in terms of mortality are relatively limited) with the reliance on unpaid volunteers to protect whole communities from the devastating effects of natural hazards (where the harms in terms of mortality can be catastrophic). The paper concludes that while climate change-related natural hazards pose substantial and growing risks to life and property, Australia's national emergency management priorities are distorted by fear-based perceptions of terrorism.

This discussion paper seeks to contribute novel and thought-provoking insights to academic and public discourse on the resourcing of a vital volunteer-based emergency response capability.

**Fifth research objective - Identify trends in changing core values with implications for future forms of civic participation, including formal emergency service volunteering**

The discussion paper at Appendix F titled “Trends in contemporary Australian values” has critically examined Australia’s core values, the contemporary global forces that are driving changes in values, and various indicators of a decline in altruistic values in Australia.

The discussion paper has noted that for many years Australia has been unique amongst developed Western nations in its reliance on amorphous politically-mediated narratives to articulate and sustain its core national values, and as a consequence defining what it means to “be” Australian in a rapidly growing and evolving pluralist society is fraught with complexity. The paper contends that the unprecedented convergence of powerful disruptive forces is fundamentally reshaping human conceptions of individual and social reality, changing the community’s shared core values by catalysing a shift towards individualism and egoism. This shift is reflected in growing political and social volatility, a decline in community participation in a range of traditional forms of altruistic civic participation, and increasing social atomisation and polarisation.

The discussion paper has reviewed a highly diverse range of official reports on current policies towards the most disadvantaged in the Australian community, and concluded that these reports collectively confirm a decline in altruism as a core national value in Australia, with implications for many traditional forms of civic participation, including formal emergency service volunteering. The paper has suggested that community functions and organisations that have traditionally relied on goodwill, empathy and a sense of collective responsibility and duty will need to develop different strategies (that specifically acknowledge and satisfy individual and personal needs) if they are to continue to secure the level of participation required for the provision of important community services into the future.

## **Broader implications of findings for emergency service policies and practices**

This research has explored the diverse and complex individual and social influences on the phenomenon of emergency service volunteering (graphically represented in Figure 11 above), and has highlighted the crucial role of altruistic values as primary motives for formal volunteering. Both the empirical research and the theoretical expositions have concluded that altruism is in decline in Australian society, meaning that new models of community engagement will be required in the future to resource essential volunteer-based emergency response capabilities.

While new flexible volunteering models may be able to engage with people who don't want to commit intensively to a formal role on an ongoing basis, there will always be a significant and ongoing requirement for a critical mass (core) of highly-skilled and dedicated volunteers who can be mobilised at short notice in times of crisis to mitigate the immediate harms caused by major natural hazards. If predictions about an increase in the frequency and severity of climate change-related events are accurate, then the demands on such a dedicated volunteer workforce are only likely to increase (National Strategy for Disaster Resilience, 2011; National Volunteering Strategy, 2011; Productivity Commission, 2016).

This research has revealed distinct values differences within the existing volunteer workforce by gender and generation, and has suggested that emergency services need to consider differentiated management strategies to meet the distinct and divergent values needs of particular sub-groups. This is most apparent in respect to female members. This raises broader issues about how agencies can develop and champion their core values (in particular inclusion and respect), as the vehicle for developing and strengthening a shared consensus between the individual, unit and agency on common goals, principles, ethics and professional standards. The literature review highlights the importance of values alignment for volunteer commitment and retention, and shared core values can be powerful motivators that define and shape a positive and inclusive organisational culture.

Given the critical importance of personal values as primary motives for emergency service volunteering, the values differences revealed by this research have

significant implications for how the divergent values needs of distinct sections of the volunteer workforce can be accommodated, reconciled and ultimately satisfied to sustain their commitment. This will require a more nuanced and responsive approach to the management of diverse volunteers, with a greater emphasis on building an organisational culture that is founded on the values of encouragement, respect and inclusion.

### **Research limitations**

The utilisation of the Schwartz *Theory of Basic Human Values*, and associated *Portrait Values Questionnaire* (PVQ-40) survey instrument, as the primary conceptual and empirical constructs for interpreting volunteer motivation, clearly reflect the author's confidence in the utility of this extensively-used theoretical framework. In respect to the efficacy of the PVQ-40 survey instrument, the author acknowledges the concerns raised by fifteen survey respondents on the incomparability of the two statements in a number of the portrait questions, but these valid observations on comparability are unlikely to have significantly impacted on the overall survey findings.

While the goal for responses to the survey on the values preferences of NSW SES volunteers was originally 900, representing a participation rate of around 10% of an estimated workforce of 9000, after extensive efforts to facilitate diverse participation (including the organisation-wide distribution of over 3000 paper survey with return-paid envelopes), the survey ultimately attracted 522 responses (almost 6%). While the efforts to secure wide and diverse participation by SES members from over 220 units across the State was successful, the author accepts that the opportunities for generalisations across both the NSW SES and emergency services more broadly are limited with a sample of this size.

### **Future research suggestions**

To the author's knowledge there has been no commensurate intensive application of the PVQ-40 survey (in both paper and online forms) to determine the values

preferences of a large State-wide volunteer workforce in Australia, and as a consequence the opportunities to compare findings on values preferences in other Australian emergency services are limited. Should other emergency services decide to conduct values audits of their own volunteer workforces (using the tools and engagement strategies developed for this study), then it is possible that a broader body of comparable data could be developed.

This study has identified and encountered a diverse range of factors that makes research on the motives for emergency service volunteering challenging. A number of these challenges relate to the highly unique culture of emergency service organisations, and the complexity and sensitivity of relationships between individuals, units and agencies, and between paid staff and volunteers. Agencies may create greater opportunities to obtain valuable qualitative data while facilitating change if they were to actively encourage and empower all volunteers to participate in and take ownership of organisational reforms.

At a broader level, one of the shortcomings of values research in Australia is the virtual absence of empirical data on shared and contrasting values, as a benchmark for determining and comparing values norms in the broader community. The absence of such empirical data takes on additional significance given the volatile and sometimes opaque nature of Australia's core values, as explored in the discussion paper at Appendix F. Given the relative ease with which the PVQ-40 can be utilised, there may be opportunities for further large-scale data collection should the question of defining core values gain greater public currency.

Finally, the discussion papers at Appendices E and F that critically analyse the broader policy and social contexts for emergency service volunteering are intended to stimulate further academic and public discourse and research on the impacts and interaction of contemporary forces on the future resourcing of a vital volunteer-based emergency response capability.

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## List of appendices

- A - Modified values survey
- B - Values audit checklist
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- F – Discussion paper on the social context for emergency service volunteering - *Trends in contemporary Australian values*

## Appendix A

### Valuing Volunteers Survey

#### Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to participate in an anonymous survey of the values of NSW SES volunteers. As reflected in the accompanying Participant Information Sheet, this survey is part of independent research being undertaken by University of Wollongong researchers (and approved by the university's Human Research Ethics Committee) that aims to better understand the primary motives for volunteering in emergency services. Values are the enduring principles and beliefs that guide and motivate individual and group actions, and this study aims to reveal the dominant and shared values of the NSW SES volunteer workforce.

This survey briefly describes a range of different people and asks **how much like you is this person**, with response options from **this person is very much like me** to **this person is not like me at all**. There are no right or wrong answers, and your choices provide a guide to your own values preferences. The survey should take around 15 minutes to complete.

#### Your details: (Please mark the appropriate box)

**Gender:** Female  Male

**Age range:** -18  18-30  31-40  41-50  51-60  61-70  71-80   
81+

**Region:** Central West  Clarence-Nambucca  Far West   
Hunter  Illawarra South Coast  Lachlan  Macquarie  Mid North Coast   
Murray  Murrumbidgee  Namoi  North West  Richmond/Tweed   
Southern Highlands  Sydney Northern  Sydney Southern  Sydney  
Western

#### How much like you is this person?

2. **Thinking up new ideas and being creative is important to you. You like to do things in your own original way.** (Please circle the statement below that is most like you)

6 – This person is very much like me  
5 – This person is like me  
4 – This person is somewhat like me  
3 - This person is a little like me  
2 - This person is not like me  
1 - This person is not like me at all

3. **It is important to you to be rich. You want to have a lot of money and expensive things.**

6 – This person is very much like me  
5 – This person is like me  
4 – This person is somewhat like me  
3 - This person is a little like me  
2 - This person is not like me  
1 - This person is not like me at all

4. **You think it is important that every person in the world be treated equally. You believe everyone should have equal opportunities in life.**

6 – This person is very much like me  
5 – This person is like me  
4 – This person is somewhat like me  
3 - This person is a little like me  
2 - This person is not like me  
1 - This person is not like me at all

5. ***It's very important to you to show your abilities. You want people to admire what you do.***  
6 – This person is very much like me  
5 – This person is like me  
4 – This person is somewhat like me  
3 - This person is a little like me  
2 - This person is not like me  
1 - This person is not like me at all
6. ***It is important to you to live in secure surroundings. You avoid anything that might endanger your safety.***  
6 – This person is very much like me  
5 – This person is like me  
4 – This person is somewhat like me  
3 - This person is a little like me  
2 - This person is not like me  
1 - This person is not like me at all
7. ***You think it is important to do lots of different things in life. You always look for new things to try.***  
6 – This person is very much like me  
5 – This person is like me  
4 – This person is somewhat like me  
3 - This person is a little like me  
2 - This person is not like me  
1 - This person is not like me at all
8. ***You believe that people should do what they're told. You think people should follow rules at all times, even when no-one is watching.***  
6 – This person is very much like me  
5 – This person is like me  
4 – This person is somewhat like me  
3 - This person is a little like me  
2 - This person is not like me  
1 - This person is not like me at all
9. ***It is important to you to listen to people who are different from you. Even when you disagree with them, you still want to understand them.***  
6 – This person is very much like me  
5 – This person is like me  
4 – This person is somewhat like me  
3 - This person is a little like me  
2 - This person is not like me  
1 - This person is not like me at all
10. ***You think it's important not to ask for more than what you have. You believe that people should be satisfied with what they have.***  
6 – This person is very much like me  
5 – This person is like me  
4 – This person is somewhat like me  
3 - This person is a little like me  
2 - This person is not like me  
1 - This person is not like me at all
11. ***You seek every chance you can to have fun. It is important to you to do things that give you pleasure.***  
6 – This person is very much like me  
5 – This person is like me  
4 – This person is somewhat like me  
3 - This person is a little like me  
2 - This person is not like me  
1 - This person is not like me at all
12. ***It is important to you to make your own decisions about what you do. You like to be free to plan and to choose your activities for yourself.***  
6 – This person is very much like me  
5 – This person is like me  
4 – This person is somewhat like me  
3 - This person is a little like me  
2 - This person is not like me  
1 - This person is not like me at all

**13. It's very important to help the people around you. You want to care for their well-being.**

- 6 – This person is very much like me
- 5 – This person is like me
- 4 – This person is somewhat like me
- 3 - This person is a little like me
- 2 - This person is not like me
- 1 - This person is not like me at all

**14. Being very successful is important to you. You like to impress other people.**

- 6 – This person is very much like me
- 5 – This person is like me
- 4 – This person is somewhat like me
- 3 - This person is a little like me
- 2 - This person is not like me
- 1 - This person is not like me at all

**15. It is very important to you that your country be safe. You think the state must be on watch against threats from within and without.**

- 6 – This person is very much like me
- 5 – This person is like me
- 4 – This person is somewhat like me
- 3 - This person is a little like me
- 2 - This person is not like me
- 1 - This person is not like me at all

**16. You like to take risks. You are always looking for adventures.**

- 6 – This person is very much like me
- 5 – This person is like me
- 4 – This person is somewhat like me
- 3 - This person is a little like me
- 2 - This person is not like me
- 1 - This person is not like me at all

**17. It is important to you always to behave properly. You want to avoid doing anything people would say is wrong.**

- 6 – This person is very much like me
- 5 – This person is like me
- 4 – This person is somewhat like me
- 3 - This person is a little like me
- 2 - This person is not like me
- 1 - This person is not like me at all

**18. It is important to you to be in charge and tell others what to do. You want people to do what you say.**

- 6 – This person is very much like me
- 5 – This person is like me
- 4 – This person is somewhat like me
- 3 - This person is a little like me
- 2 - This person is not like me
- 1 - This person is not like me at all

**19. It is important to you to be loyal to your friends. You want to devote yourself to people close to you.**

- 6 – This person is very much like me
- 5 – This person is like me
- 4 – This person is somewhat like me
- 3 - This person is a little like me
- 2 - This person is not like me
- 1 - This person is not like me at all

**20. You strongly believe that people should care for nature. Looking after the environment is important to you.**

- 6 – This person is very much like me
- 5 – This person is like me
- 4 – This person is somewhat like me
- 3 - This person is a little like me
- 2 - This person is not like me
- 1 - This person is not like me at all

**21. Religious beliefs are important to you. You try hard to do what your religion requires.**

- 6 – This person is very much like me
- 5 – This person is like me
- 4 – This person is somewhat like me
- 3 - This person is a little like me
- 2 - This person is not like me
- 1 - This person is not like me at all

**22. It is important to you that things be organized and clean. You really don't like things to be in a mess.**

- 6 – This person is very much like me
- 5 – This person is like me
- 4 – This person is somewhat like me
- 3 - This person is a little like me
- 2 - This person is not like me
- 1 - This person is not like me at all

**23. You think it's important to be interested in things. You like to be curious and to try to understand all sorts of things.**

- 6 – This person is very much like me
- 5 – This person is like me
- 4 – This person is somewhat like me
- 3 - This person is a little like me
- 2 - This person is not like me
- 1 - This person is not like me at all

**24. You believe all the worlds' people should live in harmony. Promoting peace among all groups in the world is important to you.**

- 6 – This person is very much like me
- 5 – This person is like me
- 4 – This person is somewhat like me
- 3 - This person is a little like me
- 2 - This person is not like me
- 1 - This person is not like me at all

**25. You think it is important to be ambitious. You want to show how capable you are.**

- 6 – This person is very much like me
- 5 – This person is like me
- 4 – This person is somewhat like me
- 3 - This person is a little like me
- 2 - This person is not like me
- 1 - This person is not like me at all

**26. You think it is best to do things in traditional ways. It is important to you to keep up the customs you have learned.**

- 6 – This person is very much like me
- 5 – This person is like me
- 4 – This person is somewhat like me
- 3 - This person is a little like me
- 2 - This person is not like me
- 1 - This person is not like me at all

**27. Enjoying life's pleasures is important to you. You like to 'spoil' yourself.**

- 6 – This person is very much like me
- 5 – This person is like me
- 4 – This person is somewhat like me
- 3 - This person is a little like me
- 2 - This person is not like me
- 1 - This person is not like me at all

**28. It is important to you to respond to the needs of others. You try to support those you know.**

- 6 – This person is very much like me
- 5 – This person is like me
- 4 – This person is somewhat like me
- 3 - This person is a little like me
- 2 - This person is not like me
- 1 - This person is not like me at all

**29. You believe you should always show respect to your parents and to older people. It is important to you to be obedient.**

- 6 – This person is very much like me
- 5 – This person is like me
- 4 – This person is somewhat like me
- 3 - This person is a little like me
- 2 - This person is not like me
- 1 - This person is not like me at all

**30. You want everyone to be treated justly, even people you don't know. It is important to you to protect the weak in society.**

- 6 – This person is very much like me
- 5 – This person is like me
- 4 – This person is somewhat like me
- 3 - This person is a little like me
- 2 - This person is not like me
- 1 - This person is not like me at all

**31. You like surprises. It is important to you to have an exciting life.**

- 6 – This person is very much like me
- 5 – This person is like me
- 4 – This person is somewhat like me
- 3 - This person is a little like me
- 2 - This person is not like me
- 1 - This person is not like me at all

**32. You try hard to avoid getting sick. Staying healthy is very important to you.**

- 6 – This person is very much like me
- 5 – This person is like me
- 4 – This person is somewhat like me
- 3 - This person is a little like me
- 2 - This person is not like me
- 1 - This person is not like me at all

**33. Getting ahead in life is important to you. You strive to do better than others.**

- 6 – This person is very much like me
- 5 – This person is like me
- 4 – This person is somewhat like me
- 3 - This person is a little like me
- 2 - This person is not like me
- 1 - This person is not like me at all

**34. Forgiving people who have hurt you is important to you. You try to see what is good in them and not to hold a grudge.**

- 6 – This person is very much like me
- 5 – This person is like me
- 4 – This person is somewhat like me
- 3 - This person is a little like me
- 2 - This person is not like me
- 1 - This person is not like me at all

**35. It is important to you to be independent. You like to rely on yourself.**

- 6 – This person is very much like me
- 5 – This person is like me
- 4 – This person is somewhat like me
- 3 - This person is a little like me
- 2 - This person is not like me
- 1 - This person is not like me at all

**36. Having a stable government is important to you. You are concerned that the social order be protected.**

- 6 – This person is very much like me
- 5 – This person is like me
- 4 – This person is somewhat like me
- 3 - This person is a little like me
- 2 - This person is not like me
- 1 - This person is not like me at all

**37. It is important to you to be polite to other people all the time. You try never to disturb or irritate others.**

- 6 – This person is very much like me
- 5 – This person is like me
- 4 – This person is somewhat like me
- 3 - This person is a little like me
- 2 - This person is not like me
- 1 - This person is not like me at all

**38. You really want to enjoy life. Having a good time is very important to you.**

- 6 – This person is very much like me
- 5 – This person is like me
- 4 – This person is somewhat like me
- 3 - This person is a little like me
- 2 - This person is not like me
- 1 - This person is not like me at all

**39. It is important to you to be humble and modest. You try not to draw attention to yourself.**

- 6 – This person is very much like me
- 5 – This person is like me
- 4 – This person is somewhat like me
- 3 - This person is a little like me
- 2 - This person is not like me
- 1 - This person is not like me at all

**40. You always want to be the one who makes the decisions. You like to be the leader.**

- 6 – This person is very much like me
- 5 – This person is like me
- 4 – This person is somewhat like me
- 3 - This person is a little like me
- 2 - This person is not like me
- 1 - This person is not like me at all

**41. It is important to you to adapt to nature and to fit into it. You believe that people should not change nature.**

- 6 – This person is very much like me
- 5 – This person is like me
- 4 – This person is somewhat like me
- 3 - This person is a little like me
- 2 - This person is not like me
- 1 - This person is not like me at all

**Directions for return of completed surveys**

Completed surveys can be returned post-free to:

Valuing Volunteers Study  
Reply Paid 60417  
PO Box U7  
University of Wollongong NSW 2500

Queries about the conduct of this research can be directed to:

Mr Bill Calcutt PSM  
Valuing Volunteers Study  
University of Wollongong  
[wgc447@uowmail.edu.au](mailto:wgc447@uowmail.edu.au)

***Thank you again for your willing participation in this important research.***

## Appendix B

### Values audit checklist

The following list of actions is intended to assist agencies considering (or undertaking) an audit of the values preferences of their volunteer workforces, utilising a modified version of the 40-item Schwartz Portrait Values Questionnaire (PVQ-40) survey. Values are widely acknowledged as influential and enduring human motives, and shared core values can constitute a powerful set of principles that can define and shape a positive and inclusive organisational culture.

- Written proposal put to agency executive outlining the reasons for, and proposed uses of, an anonymous survey of the values preferences of volunteer workforce.
- Agency executive formally endorses values survey, and identifies specific aim and objectives (part of strategic planning, formulation of a values statement, promotion of a Code of Conduct).
- Primary responsibility for effective conduct of the survey (and for taking all actions necessary to maximise workforce participation) delegated to a specific senior member of agency staff, to be the contact point for any queries about the survey.
- Volunteers and volunteer representatives (association) consulted and endorse values survey, identify common aims in obtaining members' values data.
- Executive commences ongoing conversation with management, staff and volunteers on the nature and importance of shared core values, and their role in defining organisational culture and operations (over a number of months).
- Information on the purpose of the proposed values survey widely and regularly disseminated in internal reports and newsletters, in the months leading up to the actual conduct of the survey.
- Executive advice on the survey to the volunteer workforce to stress: the voluntary nature of participation; the importance of anonymity and confidentiality of individual responses; the agency's commitment to share findings with members.

- If a university researcher is seconded to assist in the research, it may be necessary to apply for ethics approval from the relevant university's Human Research Ethics Committee.
- Decide what basic demographic data is to be sought from survey respondents, consistent with the maintenance of anonymity.
- Determine that members be given the option of completing the survey online or in paper form, in order to maximise participation opportunities.
- Draft participant information sheet to accompany survey forms that explains survey purpose and emphasises that there are no right or wrong answers to questions.
- Set up the survey online using an appropriate database and ensuring an weighting of Likert response options according to the PVQ-40 guidelines.
- Set up a post box for the return of reply-paid envelopes.
- Print appropriate numbers of survey forms, participant information sheets and reply-paid envelopes (more than 50% of responses may be in paper form).
- If the survey is to be State-wide with participation by numerous small dispersed units, then appropriate quantities of survey forms, information sheets and pre-addressed reply-paid envelopes will need to be distributed to every unit, with a covering explanatory letter from the Chief Executive.
- Chief Executive to write individually (via email) to all volunteer members encouraging their participation when survey is launched.
- Determine a realistic cut-off date for survey responses (several weeks).
- Manually input returned paper survey responses to survey database to enable standardised collation and analysis.
- Interpret and process the survey findings in accordance with the PVQ-40 guidelines.
- Publish the survey findings, and promote wide discussion of and consultation on the implications of shared and contrasting values preferences.
- Utilise findings on volunteers' values preferences to explore management strategies to meet the varying needs of different sections of the workforce, and to consider ways to strengthen shared core values.

# VALUING VOLUNTEERS STUDY



**Bill Calcutt PSM**  
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Volunteers are the **lifeblood** of Australian emergency services and constitute a **unique skilled workforce** that provides an **essential public service**

A number of emergency services have experienced annual **volunteer turnover** exceeding 20%, with **major financial and capability implications**

## Research questions

- The research is seeking to better understand the primary motives for volunteering in Australian emergency services, and to determine what role the alignment of individual, unit and corporate values plays in volunteer satisfaction and turnover
- Values are enduring principles and beliefs that guide and motivate individual and group attitudes and actions
- Central premises of the research are that values play a pivotal role in the decision to commit to and sustain volunteering, and that ongoing volunteer commitment is conditional on feeling valued
- The research so far has involved anonymous surveys of the values preferences of volunteers in the NSW and SA State Emergency Services
- Further face-to-face consultations are underway with particular NSW SES units to explore how the individual need for autonomy and independence is expressed and accommodated within a command and control culture

## Research findings

- The values surveys affirmed the importance of altruistic values as primary motives for emergency services volunteering
- The surveys also highlighted the strength of the value of self-direction (personal autonomy and independence)
- The surveys revealed statistically significant differences in values preferences by gender and generation (but not location), with important implications for how different volunteer sub-groups are managed
- The research has exposed the sensitive and qualified nature of the volunteer's relationship with the unit and agency, and the importance of nurturing goodwill to maintain volunteer commitment
- Evolving social values and the demands of modern life are challenging traditional forms of altruistic civic engagement, necessitating more flexible and innovative ways to engage with a dynamic and diverse workforce into the future

## Research utilisation

- A better understanding of the distinct and changing needs of a highly motivated and skilled volunteer workforce should assist emergency services leaders to better align organisational and workforce values, with strategic implications for recruitment, training, management and volunteer commitment
- The results from this research will be provided to the NSW State Emergency Service who are working towards developing a flexible volunteering strategy, and the Valuing Volunteers Study may be used to inform that strategy
- The methodological contribution of this research will include a values audit package that can be used by emergency services to assess the evolving values priorities of their volunteer workforces



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[Rural Issues, Volume 29 Issue 2](#)

### **Implications of the rise of egoism for altruistic social participation**

Posted on [August 21, 2017 1:29 pm](#) by [TASA](#)

**Bill Calcutt, University of Wollongong**

Doctoral research being conducted under the auspices of the Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre into the primary motives for volunteering in emergency services in Australia has highlighted the potential broader implications of evolving social values for traditional forms of altruistic civic engagement.

Volunteers are the lifeblood of emergency services in Australia and constitute a unique skilled workforce that provides an essential public service. Volunteering in emergency services represents exceptional civic engagement for a range of reasons. These include the vital (sometimes life-saving) importance to the community of the unpaid services provided; the inherently demanding (sometimes arduous and hazardous) nature of the tasks undertaken in responding to emergency events; the specialist competencies required to undertake diverse emergency tasks safely; and the level of personal commitment required to respond at short notice to emergency events. Recent data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics show a significant decline in the rate of volunteering in Australia (from 34% in 2010 to 31% in 2014), and emergency services have experienced annual volunteer turnover exceeding 20%, which has major financial and capability implications.

The [Valuing Volunteers study](#) is seeking to better understand the primary motives for volunteering in Australian emergency services, and to determine what role the alignment of individual, unit and corporate values may play in volunteer satisfaction and turnover. Using the Schwartz theory of basic human values as the theoretical framework, I surveyed the values preferences of volunteer members of the State Emergency Service in two states. The surveys revealed statistically significant differences in volunteers' values priorities by gender and generation, with females and Baby Boomers expressing a stronger preference for altruism-related values and Gen Y expressing a stronger preference for egoism-related values.

These findings, and the apparent decline in volunteering nationally, raise broader questions about the changing nature of social participation in an increasingly

complex, fast-paced and time-constrained world. It seems likely that the convergence and interaction of powerful and unprecedented disruptive forces in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is progressively transforming the way citizens in postmodern societies interpret and construct their own individual and social realities. The consequent diversification of perspectives is facilitating a generational shift in the community's dominant values from altruism to egoism.

Several powerful disruptive forces are driving this change. New information technologies that enable virtually universal and instantaneous access to vast quantities of undifferentiated information challenge the capacity to distinguish between fact, opinion and emotion. New communication technologies enable and reinforce the capacity of autonomous individuals to construct and sustain their own unique and highly personal world view. There is growing social and economic polarisation related to globalisation-related dislocation and the ongoing displacement of labour through automation, while the corrosive influence of terrorism-inspired fear and suspicion post-9/11 has eroded trust and social cohesion.

A fundamental shift in the community's dominant higher-order values from altruism to egoism has significant implications for many traditional forms of civic engagement, not just volunteering. The development of multiple divergent perspectives of social reality has the potential to erode the community's commitment to shared core values (including conceptions of the common good), and diminish support for a range of long-established institutions (including confidence in democratic processes).

These social atomisation effects are likely to be accentuated in Australia because the nation has traditionally relied on amorphous politically-mediated narratives to articulate shared core values in the absence of formal institutions and explicit norms, such as a Bill of Rights. In an evolving pluralist society, the task of describing the enduring characteristics of a common Australian identity (who 'we' are) is fraught with complexity given such a fluid and dynamic environment. The coherence of shared values and a common identity are further clouded by palpable contradictions between the nation's idealised image as a modern, affluent, progressive, fair and tolerant society and the reality for a growing number of citizens who are not included in or beneficiaries of this archetype.

The Federal Government's introduction of an [Australian values statement](#) in 2007 was apparently intended to articulate more clearly a set of shared core values as the foundation for strengthening social cohesion. The recent introduction of Australia's [multicultural statement](#) and the subsequent tightening of Australian citizenship requirements appear to have similar intent. Time will tell whether these belated efforts at articulating and formalising a set of shared core values will have meaning and resonance in highly diverse communities that are increasingly focused on individual autonomy and self-interest.

## Appendix E

### DISCUSSION PAPER

#### All-hazards risk management and emergency management priorities in Australia<sup>2</sup>

*Those who would give up essential liberty to purchase a little temporary safety,  
deserve neither liberty nor safety*

(Benjamin Franklin – 1755)

### Introduction

Volunteers are the lifeblood of emergency services in Australia, and are integral to the nation's emergency management capabilities and overall disaster resilience. The concurrence of an increase in the risks posed by a range of climate change-related natural hazards and a decline in formal volunteering rates threatens Australia's emergency preparedness. The Valuing Volunteers Study aims to provide a better understanding of both the primary motives for formal volunteering in Australian emergency services, and the broader policy and social contexts.

Consistent with the fourth research objective, this discussion paper critically analyses the all-hazards risk management policy context within which Australian emergency services operate, in order to evaluate the efficacy and integrity of current processes for determining and resourcing national emergency management priorities. This paper seeks to rigorously challenge the dominant paradigm that currently frames the policy context for emergency service volunteering, informing and catalysing original insights on this phenomenon.

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<sup>2</sup> An earlier draft of this chapter was submitted on 8 November 2018 to a comprehensive review of the legal framework governing the National Intelligence Community being undertaken by the Federal Attorney-General's Department.

## **Challenging dominant paradigms**

This thesis aims to fill a number of important information gaps by providing original empirical data on the primary motives for emergency services volunteering in Australia, and novel theoretical perspectives on the changing social and conceptual context for the phenomena of volunteering and emergency management. As demonstrated by BNHCRC sponsorship of this research, interest in emergency services volunteering is not simply academic, but is driven by serious national concerns about the ongoing capacity of the community and Governments to respond effectively to protect lives and property in the face of the increasing risks posed by climate-related natural hazards.

Volunteering and emergency management are both highly complex and dynamic social phenomena, and there are a range of possible explanations (beyond the scope of this thesis) for the seemingly widely divergent perspectives that often exemplify the discourse on these phenomena. A degree of zeal, determination and conviction may be inevitable in emergency-response agencies with responsibilities for protecting lives and property. Differences in priorities may be natural when emergency management responsibilities and sometimes scarce resources are shared across different levels of government and between (sometimes competing) agencies. Personnel from military or law enforcement backgrounds can bring entrenched attitudes towards secrecy, authority and hierarchy. Pressures to safely and strategically deploy volunteer resources in the face of potential dangers may make a (para-military) command and control approach essential. And perhaps the use of a volunteer workforce to provide vitally important public services might be inherently anomalous in a market economy where some emergency services functions are remunerated and others are not.

Whatever the reasons, divergent perspectives on concepts, relationships and priorities have the potential to constrain the development of flexible and innovative strategies to adapt to changing circumstances and respond effectively to the evolving risks posed by natural hazards. This discussion paper seeks to inform this discourse by challenging a range of prevailing assumptions that can obscure a clearer understanding of the strategic context for emergency services volunteering.

## Understanding risk management

Risk is an internationally recognised measure of “the effect of uncertainty on objectives” (ISO 31000, 2009), and is comprised of “the combination of the probability of an event and its negative consequences” (Productivity Commission, 2014). According to the 2015 *National Emergency Risk Assessment Guidelines* (NERAG), risk management is “coordinated activities of an organisation or a government to direct and control risk”, while emergency risk management is “a systematic process that produces a range of measures which contribute to the well-being of communities and the environment” (AIDR Glossary, 2017).

A disaster is “a serious disruption to community life which threatens or causes death or injury in that community” (NERAG Glossary, 2015) According to NERAG (p.2), “emergency events and disasters stem from a range of natural, biological, technological, industrial and other human phenomena. These events impose significant social, environmental and economic costs on Australia, including:

- Fatalities, injuries and illness
- Direct damage to property, infrastructure and facilities
- Financial costs and economic losses
- Ecosystem impairment and biodiversity loss
- Social and cultural losses”.

A hazard is “a source of potential harm or a situation with a potential to cause loss”, or “a source of risk” (NERAG Glossary, 2015). For more than a decade the Australian Government has been committed to a comprehensive, integrated and consistent national risk management process for evaluating and responding to the relative risks posed to the nation's interests from a diverse range of hazards and emergency events. Characterised as an “all-hazards” policy, the approach “deals with all types of emergencies or disasters, and civil defence, using the same set of management arrangements” (NERAG Glossary, 2015). Emergency events included in an all-hazards approach include structure fires, road crash rescues, medical emergencies, natural disaster events (landscape fire, earthquake, flood, storm,

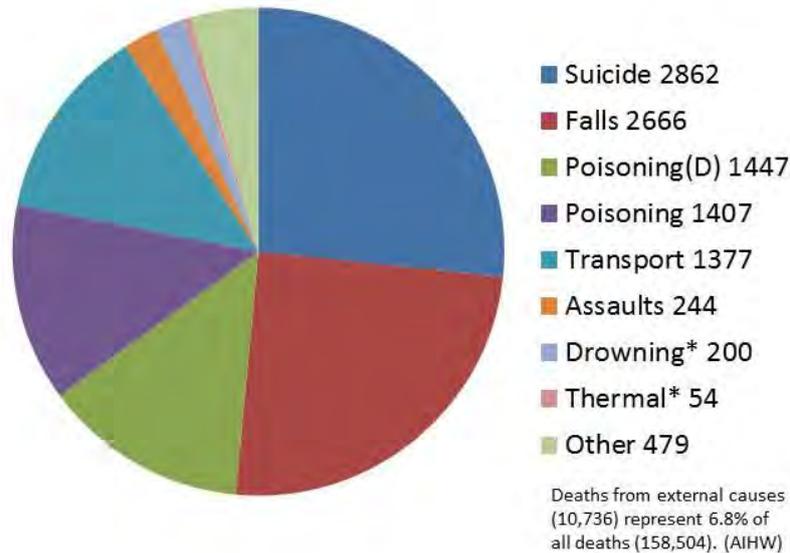
cyclone, tsunami, land slide), consequences of acts of terrorism, other natural events (drought, frost, heatwave, epidemic), technological and hazardous materials incidents, quarantine and control of diseases and biological contaminants (Productivity Commission, 2016).

A commitment to estimate/measure and compare a broad range of *relative* risks using standard objective criteria is arguably the most important advancement in democratic governance and public accountability for decades. Applied across the diversity of government functions, risk management provides a rational evidence-based framework and process for transparently determining the relative importance of every single government function. In terms of advancing public accountability, a transparent national risk management process empowers the community to question and evaluate both Government and public sector activities and performance, moving beyond the rhetoric of volatile politics and sectional interests to evidence-based decisions and policies.

The implementation of a transparent, accountable and evidence-based risk management system for determining national emergency management priorities is intended to enable authorities to move beyond reactive short-term crisis-driven responses to emergency events, and to develop and implement proactive emergency management plans and build enduring risk mitigation capabilities across the nation. The importance of an inclusive all-hazards approach in ensuring an effective, proportionate and coordinated response to emergency events cannot be overstated, particularly when significant (but increasingly finite) financial and human resources are expended, and when responsibility for managing different risks falls to different levels of government and different agencies.

Mortality represents a catastrophic consequence (severe harm) in a risk calculation, and national mortality rates constitute an important objective measure of significant human costs. Data from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) has revealed that of the more than 158,500 deaths in Australia in 2016, 10,726 deaths (6.8%) were from (potentially preventable) external causes (AIHW, 2018). A breakdown of the various external causes of death are illustrated in Figure 12 below.

## Deaths from external causes - 2016



**Figure 12:** Deaths from external causes in 2016 (Source: AIHW)

These figures provide an important benchmark for considering the actual, potential and relative risks of mortality posed by a range of hazards. Of the more than 10,000 potentially preventable deaths in Australia annually, how do we decide which lives are more precious and are worth saving, and at what cost? An effective national emergency management system would focus resources and efforts on minimising deaths due to all potentially avoidable causes.

Deaths attributed to natural hazards like floods and wildfires will be reflected in the mortality rates for accidental drownings and exposure to smoke, fire and flames. A 2014 Productivity Commission report titled *Natural Disaster Funding Arrangements* observes (2014, p.3) that “since 2009, natural disasters have claimed more than 200 lives, destroyed 2670 houses and damaged a further 7680, and affected the lives and livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of Australians”. The loss of 173 lives in the Victorian bushfires in 2009 and 33 lives in the Queensland floods in 2010/11 further illustrate the magnitude of the risks posed by natural hazards.

## **Terrorism as a national hazard**

While terrorism is nominally included in Australia's national all-hazards risk management system, in practice it is treated in an entirely exceptional way that is largely divorced from objective measures of actual or prospective risk and harm (including mortality). At the same time national policies continue to maintain the illusion of a commitment to a balanced all-hazards approach, as reflected in the 2015 *National Guidelines for Protecting Critical Infrastructure from Terrorism* that advises infrastructure owners to "consider terrorism as one of the hazards in an all-hazards risk management approach" (p.2).

Terrorism sits outside Australia's national all-hazards risk management system because it is, at its core, a powerful political and psychological phenomenon that seeks to undermine fundamental democratic principles and institutions. Because terrorism is shrouded in secrecy and managed in the arcane and discrete world of national security, it defies objective and transparent quantification as a relative risk, and secrecy remains a constant obstacle in discussing terrorism in the context of other potentially life-threatening hazards.

By threatening and undertaking highly-visible indiscriminate attacks on civilians, terrorists aims to engender widespread fear and insecurity in the community while directly challenging the first duty of the State to keep citizens safe. Beyond the individual acts of barbarity (sometimes resulting in mass casualties), the strategic goal of terrorism is to coerce the State into implementing wide-ranging and regressive social changes that will ultimately undermine the State's legitimacy, erode social cohesion and create the conditions for further alienation and radicalisation.

Terrorism seeks to damage civil society and ultimately undermine humanity by drawing the State into an escalating cycle of increasingly repressive, generalised counter-terrorism actions (responding to the prospects of an amorphous ever-present threat), effectively displacing a decisive, targeted, proactive, proportionate, multi-faceted, evidence and risk-based law enforcement response to reduce the threat posed by base criminality (the actions of ruthless killers). By catalysing the visceral emotions of fear, anxiety and distrust, terrorism seeks to neutralise the moral

ideals of respect and equality that are the foundations for democracy and a civil society.

Under the aegis of a global “war on terror” following the 9/11 attacks on the United States in 2001, counter-terrorism became the rationale for military action in Afghanistan and Iraq and increasingly stringent security measures across the world. Largely due to a basic physical security failure (the absence of secure commercial airline cockpit doors), many thousands of civilians have been killed in military conflicts, various insurgent armies have emerged across the region, centuries-old enmities have been reactivated, and inestimable amounts have been spent on globally-invasive intelligence, surveillance and military capabilities. Ironically, a war metaphor was never appropriate for terrorism, as indiscriminate attacks on civilians are explicitly prohibited under the Geneva Conventions (have no possibility of moral justification), and extremists determined to murder civilians are unable to gain recognition as lawful combatants in international law.

As an asymmetric conflict strategy for individual extremists to coerce regressive social change, terrorism has been transformed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century through unlimited access to a ubiquitous media that offers instant global reach and infamy to a lone attacker wielding a knife or driving a vehicle with homicidal intent. Since the 9/11 attacks, terrorism has grown into a powerful universal brand that serves to transform and magnify isolated and often small-scale acts of brutality into globally-significant events that perpetuate terrorism propaganda. Utilising data from the Rand Corporation, Weimann and Winn (1994) have provided a prescient critique of the symbiotic relationship between the mass media and international terrorism, identifying a “contagion effect” in which media coverage of terrorist attacks create powerful incentives for emulation.

Securitization theory explores the social purpose and process of threat construction, in particular the political framing of an existential threat as the rationale for a shift in the power relationship between the individual and the State (Balzacq, Leonard and Ruzicka, 2016). The invocation of a war metaphor and characterisation of terrorism as an existential threat have been used in a number of democracies as justification for far-reaching changes to national security policies and practices that

fundamentally alter the long-standing balance between national security and civil liberties. Under the aegis of strengthening national security (“keeping Australians safe”) and bolstering counter-terrorism capabilities, a range of legislative changes have been progressively introduced in Australia that expand the State’s executive powers, extend the reach and scope of covert surveillance and State secrecy, and increase the security responsibilities of a range of (previously service-oriented) government agencies.

At the same time the spectre of terrorism threatens to incrementally erode an inclusive and resilient pluralist society by spawning a divisive narrative that demonises others along racial, religious or ethnic lines, ultimately undermining the shared core values of equality and respect for the freedom and dignity of all. In Australia, growing community apprehension about an amorphous threat from “foreigners” has seen a hardening of attitudes towards issues such as migration and border protection. Zealous counter-terrorism over-reach can inadvertently serve to validate an extremist narrative on Western morality and repression, with the potential to further alienate already marginalised individuals and sub-groups in the community.

### **Governance and ethical risks**

While these implications are important, they pale when compared with the possibility of compromising long-standing Westminster principles that are essential for democratic governance, accountability and ethics. Since 9/11 there has been constant pressure to integrate and subsume various civilian law enforcement, intelligence, home affairs and defence functions; to broaden the veil of secrecy; and to extend the application of a more “flexible” (utilitarian) governance regime. It is axiomatic that official secrecy, while often necessary, inevitably impedes public accountability and transparency, and obliges the community to place great trust in the competence and integrity of the State and its agencies.

In the 2011 *Independent Review of the Intelligence Community* (IRIC) Cornall and Black (2011) acknowledge the pressures for greater integration, noting (p.29) that “some people argue that, in the globalised Information Age, it is artificial and hinders effectiveness to maintain the distinction between domestic security and foreign

intelligence”. The IRIC emphasises the importance of striking an appropriate balance between civil liberties and national security, noting (p.21) that “in a free society, it is always important to keep the safeguards of our liberty, privacy and other human rights under review to maintain the balance we have struck as a nation between these individual rights and our security as a community. The Review believes the legal framework that enshrines that balance is sound and does not need any adjustment at present. ... This balance is not just protected by law and the regulatory and oversight regimes that regulate and monitor agency conduct. It is also protected by the culture of each agency and the intelligence community as a whole. Maintaining the culture that sustains the balance between security and liberty, especially after a period of dramatic AIC growth, will require continued attention”.

The IRIC highlights a highly sensitive issue on the architecture and governance of the Australian intelligence community that is not widely understood by the broader Australian community. Put simply, different levels of legal and ethical governance and oversight apply to different agencies, according to the degree to which their intrusive surveillance and operational activities impinge on Australian citizens. These deliberate oversight and regulatory arrangements were essentially put in place following various commissions of inquiry in the 1970s and 1980s, and remain effective today. These governance regimes are vitally important as there are a spectrum of potential individual harms that can be caused by the lawful activities of security and intelligence organisations, ranging from: a theoretical invasion of privacy; restrictions on freedom of movement; reduction in employment options; damage to public reputation through suspicion and humiliation; feelings of social isolation, persecution or coercion; through to detention and other physical harms.

Arguably the most important elements of this governance framework are the deontological ethics that impose explicit, transparent and enduring rules-based duties on those security and intelligence agencies (such as ASIO) whose work potentially impinges on the rights and civil liberties of Australian citizens. The IRIC observes (p.29) that “it is important to the protection of the rights of Australians that ASIO’s culture and practices are shaped by an unambiguous legal and ethical framework which balances individual rights with national security concerns”. In contrast, those agencies whose primary targets are “foreigners” (such as ASIS) are

not similarly constrained by rules-based duties, and are able to apply the more relative utilitarian ethical precepts of the “greater good”.

It is critically important to understand the essential difference between deontological and consequentialist/utilitarian ethical frameworks, and the way they interpret and influence ethical behaviours. Under deontological ethics, the morality (rightness) of an act is internally judged by its conformity with explicit rules (such as do no harm), and the actor has a personal responsibility to comply with his/her moral duty, irrespective of the ultimate outcome. Deontological ethics play a crucial role in ensuring public accountability by clearly stipulating what acts are right and wrong and who has a moral duty to comply, particularly in circumstances which may present a degree of moral ambiguity. These rules are often articulated in codes of conduct and ethics.

In contrast, under consequentialist (utilitarian) ethics, the merit (goodness) of an act is externally judged by its contribution to a desirable outcome (such as community safety), with the act itself being amoral and the actor being absolved of personal responsibility providing the actions are consistent with conceptions of the greater good. Under utilitarianism, the State can authorise amoral means in pursuit of “greater good” ends, including actions that cause both intangible and real harms to citizens. In absolving the actor of personal responsibility for the morality of specific actions and removing rules-based duties, utilitarian ethics can provide a morally neutral framework for potentially harmful actions, an approach that would be intolerable in regulating the broader public service.

An unsettling shift in the rhetoric on the governance of the Australian intelligence community is reflected in the 2017 *Independent Intelligence Review* (IIR) that concludes (p.5) “a central theme of this report is to provide a pathway to take those areas of individual agency excellence to an even higher level of collective performance through strengthening integration across Australia’s national intelligence enterprise”. Responding to the recommendations of the IIR, in May 2018 the Attorney-General announced a review of the legal framework of the national intelligence community. The inference that a new and threatening national security (presumably counter-terrorism) environment necessitates the greater integration of a

range of security and intelligence functions will have profound implications for Australian governance and democratic accountability if it involves an extension or expansion of utilitarian ethics (and associated secrecy) across a broader range of government functions that deal with the Australian community.

An extension of the expedient and relative ethical precepts of utilitarianism across broader government functions that deal with the Australian community, with the potential for a higher (political) authority to secretly direct and sanction amoral and individually-harmful state actions, may pose unprecedented moral and ethical risks to the professionalism, integrity and independence of the Australian public service, with the potential to compromise essential democratic accountability.

### **Implications for emergency management**

The distortions caused by the spectre of terrorism are pervasive and directly relevant to emergency management and emergency service volunteering in Australia. The allocation of substantial government resources to fund a burgeoning, costly and opaque national security (counter-terrorism) industry has clear implications for the risk-based resourcing of emergency management in Australia, particularly in an environment of growing fiscal restraint.

The implications of the distortions caused by the spectre of terrorism for national emergency management priorities and resources are palpable. The dedication of inestimable resources to counter-terrorism (where the harms in terms of mortality are relatively limited) can be starkly contrasted with the reliance on unpaid volunteers to protect whole communities from the devastating effects of natural hazards (where the harms in terms of mortality can be catastrophic).

The effective exclusion of terrorism from an all-hazards national risk management system has a number of serious consequences in terms of the proportionate risk-based allocation of finite government resources to the hazards that objectively pose the greatest threat to life and property in Australia. If terrorism is responsible for less than 20 of the more than 10,000 potentially preventable deaths in Australia annually, what sort of resources should be reasonably allocated to risk mitigation relative to the risks posed by other potentially fatal hazards? How do we compare the risks of

mortality posed by the actions of a small number of isolated “lone wolf” extremists, with the possibility that whole communities could be consumed by wildfires or devastated by floods? What is the basis for deciding that hundreds of millions of dollars will be applied in mitigating one potentially fatal hazard, but managing other more deadly hazards will be devolved to unpaid and under-resourced volunteers?

## **Conclusions**

Consistent with the fourth research objective, this discussion paper has critically examined the all-hazards risk and emergency management policy context within which Australian emergency services operate, in order to evaluate the efficacy and integrity of current processes for determining and resourcing national emergency management priorities. The paper concludes that while climate change-related natural hazards pose substantial and growing risks to life and property, Australia’s national emergency management priorities are distorted by fear-based perceptions of terrorism.

## Appendix F

### DISCUSSION PAPER

#### Trends in contemporary Australian values

*How a society treats its most vulnerable –  
whether children, the infirm or the elderly – is always the measure of its humanity*  
(UK Ambassador Matthew Rycroft - 18 June 2018)

#### Introduction

Volunteers are the lifeblood of emergency services in Australia and are integral to the nation's emergency management capabilities and overall disaster resilience. The concurrence of an increase in the risks posed by a range of climate change-related natural hazards and a decline in formal volunteering rates threatens Australia's emergency preparedness. The Valuing Volunteers Study aims to provide a better understanding of both the primary motives for formal volunteering in Australian emergency services, and the broader policy and social contexts.

Consistent with the fifth research objective, this discussion paper explores the broader social and cultural contexts for volunteering, highlighting the implications of changing core values for future forms of civic participation, including formal emergency service volunteering.

#### The nature of values

Feather (1992, p.111) describes values as stable “generalised beliefs about what is or is not desirable” that motivate people's actions. Halman and de Moor (1994, p.22) describe values as “deeply rooted dispositions guiding people to act and behave in a certain way”, while Longest, Hitlin and Vaisey (2013, p.1500) observe that values “direct human action and imbue it with meaning”. Schwartz (2005, p.1), the author of the *Theory of Basic Human Values*, defines values as an integrated set of “desirable, trans-situational goals, varying in importance, that serve as guiding principles in people's lives”. As reflected in the literature review (Chapter 3), values are widely acknowledged as influential and enduring human motives, and extensive empirical

research has demonstrated the efficacy of a values paradigm as a comprehensive, multi-dimensional and multi-disciplinary theoretical framework for interpreting and understanding such motives.

Core values are fundamental (strong) beliefs and guiding principles, and shared core values can represent important and enduring social norms that are the foundation for conceptions of a collective interest and common cultural identity. The nature of specific core values, and the extent to which they are explicitly articulated and reinforced, can vary widely between different societies. In some societies, core values are deeply embedded, highly formalised and publicly championed, while in others core values are largely implicit, fluid and subject to constant re-interpretation. A charter of rights and responsibilities that defines a nation's core values can act like a code of conduct for a society, and the absence of explicit principles and norms can contribute to moral and ethical deficits in society.

The Common Cause Foundation (2016, p.27) is a not-for-profit organisation in the United Kingdom that is dedicated to the study of shared cultural values, described as being "of profound influence in shaping our motivation to engage with bigger-than-self problems". The Foundation identifies three challenges confronting contemporary UK society: "to mount proportionate responses to profound social and environmental problems; to deepen public commitment to civic participation; and to rebuild social cohesion and trust in social institutions". The Foundation utilises the Schwartz universal values framework to promote compassionate and altruistic (self-transcendence) values that emphasise the well-being of others.

Altruistic values, and their influence on traditional forms of civic participations, are a central focus of the Valuing Volunteers Study, and the literature reflects a diversity of perspectives on their origins and manifestations. Noting the Oxford Dictionary definition of altruism as "disinterested and selfless concern for the well-being of others", the phenomenon is typically characterised as one pole of a motivational spectrum that represents the individual's primary orientation towards and concern for others. At the other-oriented (altruistic) end of the spectrum are concepts like collectivist, pro-social, helping and self-transcendence (a Schwartz higher-order

cluster), while at the self-oriented (egoistic) end of the spectrum are concepts like individualistic, reflexive and self-enhancement (a Schwartz higher-order cluster),

In the absence of their institutionalisation and formal articulation, the degree of community and Government commitment to altruistic values (whether they genuinely represent core values and enduring social norms) can be reliably inferred by examining the policies and actions of Governments and the community towards the circumstances of those who are most disadvantaged. Contemporary economic and social indicators can provide clear measures of the extent to which altruistic values such as respect, dignity, equality, fairness, inclusion and compassion represent genuine social norms that are reflected in public policy.

### **Interpreting Australian values**

Public discourse on Australian culture, core values and national identity has been highly politicised for many years, in part reflecting the dynamic and rapidly evolving nature of Australian society. Acknowledging the tens of thousands of years of settlement by the traditional custodians of this ancient continent, the establishment of Australia as a British outpost/colony in a predominantly Asian region dates from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, meaning that Australia's European heritage spans only two and a quarter centuries.

Alluding to this relatively short European heritage in a paper titled *The Adolescent Country* for the Lowy Institute, Hartcher (2014) describes Australia's "provincial reflex" where "big matters are commonly crowded out by the small". Less charitably, Catsaras (2014) observes that "the roots of our adolescent behaviour lie deep in the lack of maturity of our national consciousness. The juvenile language of our leaders, our false bravado, and our burning need to constantly prove ourselves on the sporting world stage all reflect the characteristics of an adolescent: insecure, uncertain of their place in the world, reluctant to come of age and enter adulthood".

The Constitution of the Commonwealth of Australia came into effect on 1 January 1901, providing an administrative framework for the federation of the States (formerly separate British colonies). The Constitution is largely silent on the attributes and

values of the citizens of the constituent States, although it institutionalised a White Australia policy that maintained a European mono-culture for the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Political decisions in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century transformed an archaic social policy from cultural homogeneity to heterogeneity, and Australia has undergone significant social and cultural changes since multiculturalism and non-discriminatory migration policies were implemented in the mid-1970s. These relatively recent changes mean that many Australians over the age of 40 lived under the previous exclusory policy.

Any brief critique of Australia's history would be incomplete without an acknowledgement of the various national character traits that are regularly mythologised as being part of the Australian cultural idiom. These character traits centre on narratives on conceptions of mateship (solidarity), egalitarianism (equality and scepticism of authority), a "fair go" (consideration), "she'll be right" (complacency) and "the lucky country" (resource-rich) that broadly have their origins in Australia's penal, colonial and gold-rush pasts.

One of the more enduring narratives from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century is the Anzac legend, and the idealisation that the national character is embodied in a spirit of courage, endurance, resilience, mateship, sacrifice, ingenuity and good humour. These sentiments are exemplified by fifteen stained glass windows in the Hall of Memory at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra, representing: the personal qualities of resource, candour, devotion, curiosity and independence; the social qualities of comradeship, ancestry, patriotism, chivalry and loyalty; and the fighting qualities of coolness, control, audacity, endurance and decision.

In the last three decades Australia has undergone dramatic social, cultural and economic changes. The nation's population has grown by more than 50% from 15.75 million in 1985 to 25 million in 2018, with the majority of that increase being attributed to overseas migration (ABS, 2017). In 2016 more than 25% of those living in Australia were born overseas, and "nearly half of all Australians were either born overseas or had at least one parent who was born overseas" (ibid). Australia's heterogeneity is reflected in the 2016 Census where 36.1% of respondents identified their ancestry as English, followed by 33.5% as Australian, 11% as Irish, 9.3% as

Scottish, 5.6% as Chinese, 4.6% as Italian, 4.5% as German, 2.8% as Indian, 1.8% as Greek, and 1.6% as Dutch (ibid).

Average life expectancy in Australia has risen from 75.6 years in 1985 to 82.75 in 2014, and has been complemented by a rise in healthy life expectancy (AIHW, 2016). According to the ABS “by the late 20<sup>th</sup> century low fertility, declining mortality and the ageing of the large baby boom generation combined to see an increase in the numbers of older people” (ABS, 2017, p.4). According to the 2015 Intergenerational Report, between 1974/75 and 2014/15 the proportion of the population aged over 65 rose from 8.7% to 15%, and the number of people aged 15 to 64 for every person aged over 65 fell from 7.3 to 4.5 people (Treasury, 2015). Over the same period the employment of females aged 15 to 64 rose from 46% in 1974/75 to 66% in 2014/15 (ibid).

International comparative studies on core values and social norms provide limited insights on Australia relative to other nations. Eder (2017) reports on the results of an International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) that examined attitudes towards citizenship in 34 countries. The “good” citizen was defined as either individually righteous (self-oriented) or socially responsible (other-oriented), and Australia ranked second highest amongst the nations on individual righteousness. Deeming (2016) used data from the ISSP to examine community attitudes towards social welfare, finding (p.174) that “57% of Australians claim that it is not the State’s duty to ensure that everyone has a job”, and “many Australians oppose the unconditional welfare state model that provides social security for unemployed workers” (p.178).

In a similar vein, Gelfand (2012) used World Values Survey (WVS) data to examine the “tightness” or strength of social norms among 33 nations, with Australia ranking 24 out of 33 countries (not strong). Jiang, Li and Hamamura (2015) also used WVS data to examine the relationship between the strength of social norms and morally debatable behaviours, finding that Australia ranked 16 out of 20 countries (not strong). They observe (p.335) that “the strength of social norms in a society may greatly influence whether individuals in the society are free to make personal judgements regarding morally debatable behaviours or obliged to follow the moral rules rigidly”.

In the context of major and relatively recent demographic changes, defining what it means to “be” Australian in a rapidly growing and evolving pluralist society is fraught with complexity. For many years Australia has been unique amongst developed Western nations in its reliance on amorphous politically-mediated narratives to articulate and sustain its core national values, in the absence of their formal articulation in a founding Constitution or Charter of Rights. Williams (2009, p.1) observes that “Australia is now the only democratic nation in the world without a national charter or bill of rights”, noting that “without a charter of rights, freedoms can be ignored or taken away too easily”. In a similar vein, Garnaut (2005, p.3) has written of a “great complacency” that descended on Australia in the new millennium, with Australians reverting “to their traditional preference for having popular politics in command of resource allocation and economic decision-making”, with a “return to traditional approaches to economic policy-making, favouring the ad hoc and expedient over the economically rational”.

A tacit approach to the articulation of core national values was reflected in then Prime Minister John Howard’s 2006 Australia Day address, which argued that the strength of Australia as a cohesive multicultural society is founded on a balance between tolerance of diversity and respect for our European cultural heritage. Howard described Australia’s “dominant cultural pattern” as “Judeo-Christian ethics, the progressive spirit of the Enlightenment, and the institutions and values of British political culture”. Howard praised that “no institution or code lays down a test of Australianness”, and warned of the potential constraints on the Parliament of a legal instrument like a Bill of Rights.

Less than a year after Howard’s 2006 address, the Australian Government moved to articulate and progressively formalise a set of core national values. This development occurred in the context of growing community and political concerns about the integration of migrants into the Australian community, and a broader environment of terrorism-inspired fear and insecurity. In 2007 the Federal Government introduced an *Australian Values Statement* accompanied by a booklet titled *Life in Australia – Australian Values and Principles*. These were widely

promulgated to encourage those seeking to travel to or settle in Australia to “gain an understanding of Australia, its people and their way of life”.

The *Australian Values Statement* identifies Australia’s national values as:

- English as the national language and an important unifying element
- Respect for the freedom and dignity of the individual
- Freedom of religion
- Commitment to the rule of law
- Parliamentary democracy
- Equality of men and women
- A spirit of egalitarianism that embraces mutual respect, tolerance, fair play and compassion for those in need and pursuit of the public good
- Equality of opportunity for individuals, regardless of their race, religion or ethnic background.

The accompanying *Life in Australia* booklet restates Australia’s national values as:

- Respect for equal worth, and the dignity and freedom of the individual
- Freedom of speech
- Freedom of religion and secular government
- Freedom of association
- Support for parliamentary democracy and the rule of law
- Equality under the law
- Equality of men and women
- Equality of opportunity
- Peacefulness
- A spirit of egalitarianism that embraces tolerance, mutual respect and compassion for those in need.

On 20 March 2017 Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull launched *Australia’s Multicultural Statement* that asserts that “the glue that holds us together is mutual respect – a deep recognition that each of us is entitled to the same respect, the same dignity, the same opportunity”. The statement lists a range of shared values that “unite us and create social bonds between us”, including:

- Respect for the rule of law and allegiance to Australia; respect for the liberty and dignity of all individuals; valuing diversity and embracing “mutual respect, inclusion, fairness and compassion”
- Support for the equality of men and women; belief in equality before the law; belief in equality of opportunity for all
- A fundamental commitment to freedom; support for freedom of thought, speech, religion, enterprise and association; a commitment to parliamentary democracy; responsibility for fulfilling our civic duties.

### **Contemporary forces for change**

A key contention of the Valuing Volunteers Study is that declining altruistic values are increasingly challenging the volunteer resourcing of essential emergency services in Australia. As reflected in the literature review, a range of authors have highlighted the implications for traditional and formal modes of volunteering of a rise in self-oriented motives (Rochester et al., 2012; Clary et al., 2016). Haddara and Lingard (2017, p.839) explore the phenomenon of “lost altruism” amongst doctors in Australia and Canada, with a longitudinal study of the values embodied in professional codes of ethics. They find “a gradual and uneven loss of altruistic content over time”, concluding that “loss of altruism is not merely a current generational issue but extends through the past century and is likely due to political and social forces” (ibid).

Hustinx and Lammertyn (2003, p.180) apply *Modernisation Theory* to explore the implications of a shift from collective to reflexive styles of volunteering, observing that “modernisation theorists predict a progressive erosion of traditional group belonging, and thus a weakening of the collective roots of volunteering”. They contrasts “classic volunteers” who identify with traditional social norms, demonstrate predominantly altruistic and idealistic motives and commit long-term to formal organisations, with “new volunteers” who identify with and selectively pursue various personal interests, often concurrently and informally on a sporadic basis. Recent Government reports have also acknowledged the implications for emergency service volunteering of major changes in individual and social contexts (Productivity Commission, 2016), and the ABS 2014 General Social Survey reports a decline in

formal volunteering rates for people aged 18 years and older in Australia from 34% in 2010 to 31% in 2104.

Consistent with Modernisation Theory, this thesis contends that the unprecedented convergence in the 21<sup>st</sup> century of powerful disruptive global forces is fundamentally reshaping human conceptions of individual and social reality, catalysing a shift from altruistic to egoistic values. These disruptive forces are largely facilitated by major advances in new technologies that are progressively transforming all aspects of humans' physical and intellectual lives. The nature and influence of each of these disruptive forces is worthy of further academic examination, and the following precis is not intended to be exhaustive.

### *Advances in communication technologies*

The first disruptive force is new communication technologies that facilitate the process of individualisation and social atomisation by enabling the autonomous individual to construct and sustain their own unique and highly personal paradigm. Communication technologies allow the reflexive individual to control and focus their interests and efforts on relationships and activities within a narrow realm of direct personal relevance, effectively filtering out unwanted external influences and contradictory broader perspectives. Educational psychologist Borba (2016) has referred to an "epidemic of self-absorption" that has been accompanied by a decline in empathy amongst youth in the United States. Likewise, as the author of a controversial article titled *Have smartphones destroyed a generation?*, Twenge (2017) documents changes in behaviours amongst teens in the United States and has written extensively on the negative implications of the obsessive use of technology by the "me generation".

Makarovic and Golob (2013) explore the fluidity of identifications and fragmentation of social meanings in the European Union, noting (p.291) that the "complexity of information has an impact on perceptions of the self in relation to external referential frames, which have undermined traditional conceptions of social reality". They observe (p.292) that "social context has lost its continuity and stability and the complexity and ambiguity of information-encouraged individual reflexivity", and

conclude (p.301) that “the role of individual imagination and self-categorisation has thus gained an increased influence in attaching the meaning to the world around”.

Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2001) have explored the manifestations and implications of transformative social change, and the processes of individualisation and reflexive modernisation in a globalised world. They observe (Preface, p.2) that “neoliberal economics rests upon an image of the autarkic human self” who “alone can master the whole of their lives, that they derive and renew their capacity for action from within themselves. ... The ideological notion of the self-sufficient individual ultimately implies the disappearance of any sense of mutual obligation”. They observe (Ch.2, p.1) that “we live in an age in which the social order of the nation state, class, ethnicity and the traditional family is in decline. The ethic of individual self-fulfilment and achievement is the most powerful current in modern society. The choosing, deciding, shaping human beings who aspire to be the author of his or her own life, the creator of individual identity, is the central character of our time”. The Becks’ analyses have proved prescient given they predated the pervasive influence of information and communications technologies on the process of individualisation.

Farrugia (2015, p.17) examines youth homelessness “as a late modern form of inequality which emerges from the individualisation process”. He attributes the rise of contemporary secular individualism to the process of structural fragmentation that weakens “social bonds that formerly provided collective sources of meaning and resources for identity”. He explores (p.19) de-traditionalisation and dis-embedding processes “that break apart the coherence of these ways of life leading to the dissolution of collective sources of meaning and identity”. Farrugia explores (p.23) the implications of growing subjectivity and reflexivity where “subjects take themselves as the authors of their own biography, constantly reflecting on the kind of person they have become and wish to be”, and concludes (p.25) that “despite the cultural emphasis on choice and rationality in late modernity, the individualisation process may actually erode young people’s capacity to exert control over their environment”.

In a report prepared for UNESCO titled *Ethical and societal challenges of the information society*, Mukherjee (2013, p.40) observes that “social media have

created new forms of virtual community, but they have also redefined classical visions of society. These networks, while allowing many people to accumulate millions of connections and ‘friends’, have also given rise to new forms of solitude”. The report notes (p.41) the “increasing destabilisation of our notions of nature and the natural. The ethical question is whether such a destabilisation also means rethinking the normative and ‘natural’ frames that we have used to inform our values systems and beliefs about the world”. The report concludes (p.46) that “for all its strengthened social connectivity, the information society has also given rise to new forms of narcissism, personal branding, network capital, and consumption of the self and ‘status’”.

### *Advances in information technologies*

The second (related) disruptive force is new information technologies that provide the individual with virtually universal and instantaneous access to limitless quantities of often complex, contradictory and intense information from a vast array of sources. A virtual crescendo of information “noise” can make it increasingly difficult for the individual to distinguish between fact, opinion and emotion, creating incentives for intuitive sentiments to displace the rigour of logic, reasoning and empirically-based science in the creation of knowledge. In a highly competitive and volatile information environment, the dominant public discourse is often framed around simplistic and populist narratives or confected short-term crises, marginalising reasoned, dispassionate and evidence-based discussion. As alluded to in the report to UNESCO, this dynamic can give disproportionate influence to those who can shape a distorted perception of “reality”, with the control of dominating images representing propagandising by the State, the media or those individuals seeking fifteen seconds of infamy (such as extremists).

In such a chaotic and distorted information environment, established science (such as climate change) can be depreciated as ideology, and long-standing “traditional” ethical values (such as dignity, loyalty and honour) can be denigrated as anachronistic and “politically correct”. Tellingly, the terms post-fact [era] and post-truth [age] have entered the lexicon of the Oxford dictionary, both described as “relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in

shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief". At a 2017 Harvard University-organised conference in the United States on media disruption, Baum, Lazer and Mele (2017, p.3) observed "recent shifts in the media ecosystem raise new concerns about the vulnerability of democratic societies to fake news and the public's limited ability to contain it. ... An abundance of information sources online leads individuals to rely heavily on heuristics and social cues in order to determine the credibility of information and to shape their beliefs, which are in turn extremely difficult to correct or change".

Marshall (2017, p.3) argues that "human reflexivity is one factor that makes society what is known as a 'complex system' which interacts with other complex systems". He concludes (p.19) that "contemporary 'information society' is not 'knowledge society'. Deceit, 'fake news', data smog, and information blockage are part of people's day-to-day lives. This arises because communications has social functions other than the transmission of accurate information. ... People invest heavily in information groups around identities and meaning, and develop 'information paranoia', embracing an ordering of doubt or suspicion". Likewise, Madden, Lenhart and Fontaine (2017, p.3) explore "eroding trust in journalistic institutions and the rise of a highly-politicised networked digital media environment". Their interviews of high school graduates in the United States revealed (p.4) that "most teens and young adults express low levels of trust in the news media and are relying on networked strategies to help them navigate the stories they most care about".

### *Growing uncertainty & insecurity*

The third disruptive force is growing social and economic polarisation due to globalisation-related dislocation from the unrestricted international flow of goods, services, capital, knowledge and labour. Those in (mainly) developed countries displaced and marginalised by the exodus of capital and labour to more efficient low-cost destinations have responded with resentment and growing cynicism to the inability of their national leaders to protect their sovereign interests and ensure equitable access to the benefits of global free trade. Community confidence in and support for a range of established institutions, including trust in democratic processes, have diminished in a number of developed countries, reflected in a rise in

electoral support for populist candidates promoting protectionist and nationalist policies.

Demos (2017) explores a rising culture of fear (of the unknown, of the other, of the future) in Europe, reflected in the growth of populist politics that support tighter border controls, the erosion of liberal freedoms and welfare chauvinism. Demos observes (p.14) that the social impacts of fear are “seen in the increasingly nativist and ‘othering’ discourse in the public realm; the disintegration of civil society and declining social trust; and the resurgence of exclusive national and regional identities” (ibid). In Australia, research conducted by the Australian National University (2015) reports (p.11) that “mapping the political mood over time reveals that the political mood has been in steady decline since 2008. Net satisfaction among Australians ... has fallen from more than 50% in March 2008 to 19% in March 2015”.

Further economic and social disruption is likely (in both developed and developing economies) with the prospective large-scale displacement of traditional labour-based work by new technologies, particularly through automation. Characterised by some in the media as “precarious work in the gig economy”, diminishing access to stable paid work has great potential to further erode confidence in existing social and economic systems and institutions. In a 2017 report titled *Preparing Young People for the Future of Work* by the Mitchell Institute, Torii and O’Connell (2017, p.3) find that “future generations will navigate a vastly different world of work to that of their predecessors. Technology is rapidly disrupting how we live and work – many tasks at the core of low and medium skill jobs are being automated or contracted offshore. Some research estimates that 40 per cent of jobs in Australia are at high risk of being automated in the next 10 to 15 years”. In a similar vein, in a report prepared for the International Monetary Fund, Berg, Buffie and Zanna (2018) apply a general equilibrium model to analyse the implications of advances in artificial intelligence and robotics for output, wages and inequality. Their report finds that the modern world is at the threshold of a new industrial revolution that could have significant negative consequences for employment, wages and inequality.

### *The politics of fear*

The final disruptive force is the emergence post-9/11 of the spectre of international terrorism, and the corrosive influence of fear and suspicion in undermining trust and social cohesion within the Australian community. As explored in the discussion paper at Appendix E, a largely State-fed fear of terrorism threatens to incrementally erode an inclusive and resilient pluralist society by spawning a divisive narrative that demonises others along racial, religious or ethnic lines, undermining the shared core values of equality and respect for the freedom and dignity of all. An amorphous and uncertain threat of extreme violence may have particular emotional resonance with communities already anxious about the implications of rapid social change and the ill-defined threat posed by “foreigners”. Data from a 2017 IPSOS survey of attitudes towards world affairs in 24 countries reported that 67% of Australian respondents felt there was a very or somewhat real threat of a major natural disaster occurring in Australia, while 82% of Australian respondents felt there was a very or somewhat real threat of a terrorist attack taking place in Australia in the next twelve months (10% more than the average for all other countries).

At a deeper institutional level, the State’s counter-terrorism responses threaten to undermine essential democratic accountability when they include far-reaching changes to national security policies and practices that alter the long-standing balance between national security and civil liberties. While pervasive secrecy impedes essential public accountability, the extension and normalisation of the expedient and relative ethical precepts of utilitarianism across broader government functions may pose unprecedented moral and ethical risks to the professionalism, integrity and independence of the Australian public service.

In conclusion, the convergence and interaction of these powerful disruptive global forces may be changing the community’s shared core values by catalysing a shift towards individualism and egoism. This shift is reflected in growing political and social volatility, a decline in community participation in a range of traditional forms of altruistic civic participation (including formal volunteering), and increasing social atomisation and polarisation. The response of many Governments to these emerging trends (in particular growing insecurity) is to increase the public emphasis on

national values in an attempt to counter a marked decline in many traditional forms of civic participation. In some states the response has included a rise in nationalism.

This critique of globally disruptive forces would not be complete without an acknowledgement of the profound implications of an increase in the risks posed by climate change-related hazards. Climate change is a generic term used to refer to long-term changes in global climate patterns due to a rise in the level of atmospheric carbon dioxide, and leading to an increase in ocean water temperatures (warming). Climate change poses great challenges globally as it pits longer-term environmental and social sustainability against immediate and long-term economic interests, in particular the growing energy needs of emerging economies like China and India. Climate change poses a particular dilemma for Australia because the nation is one of the world's largest per-capita emitters of greenhouse gases and one of the world's major coal producers.

Catastrophic climate change-related natural events (principally extreme temperatures and fire weather, prolonged droughts, extreme rainfall and floods, severe storms and damaging winds, sea level rise and inundation) are beginning to threaten previously safe communities in both developed and developing nations. Climate change is important for this research because of the likely implications of an increase in both the severity and frequency of destructive climate-related events requiring a coordinated response from a skilled emergency services volunteer workforce.

### **Indicators of contemporary Australian values**

As noted earlier, altruistic values reflect a primary concern for the well-being, welfare and benefit of others, and this thesis contends that such values play a crucial role in motivating formal emergency service volunteering. The importance of altruistic values (whether they are an integral part of core national values) are reflected in the degree to which a country's economic, social and political systems operate to uphold other-oriented values such as equality, fairness, inclusion, compassion and opportunity, and in the policies and actions of Governments and the community towards the circumstances of those who are most disadvantaged. Kasser (2011)

examined values data on twenty wealthy nations to determine the extent to which (shared) cultural values influence the level of concern for the well-being of current and future generations of children. He concluded (p.211) that “the values espoused by a nation may affect the extent to which it enacts policies and pursues practices that promote or diminish the well-being of present and future generations of children”.

As noted earlier, Australia is unique amongst developed Western nations in its reliance on amorphous politically-mediated narratives to articulate and sustain its core national values. In the absence of their formal expression in a founding Constitution or Bill of Rights (and acknowledging the relatively recent promulgation of the *Australian Values Statement*), objective measures of Australia’s core values largely need to be inferred from evidence-based reviews of the actual effect and consequences of public policy and Government action.

Applying the Oxford Dictionary definition of altruism as a “disinterested and selfless concern for the well-being of others”, the following official reports provide some broader indications of contemporary trends in real levels of Government and community concern for the welfare of others, in particular for those who are most disadvantaged. These reports encompass the dimensions of aged care, business ethics and public governance, child and youth welfare, civic participation and philanthropy, equity and opportunity in income and wealth, health and wellbeing, housing and homelessness, and social inclusion and cohesion.

#### *Aged care*

A 2017 report titled *Elder Abuse – A National Legal Response* from the Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC) finds that (p.17) “as Australia faces the ‘inescapable demographic destiny’ of an ageing population, the potential reach of elder abuse may grow”. The ALRC report finds that the majority of aged care and support is provided in the community by informal carers, and concludes (p.18) that “vulnerability does not only stem from intrinsic factors such as health, but also from social or structural factors, like isolation and community attitudes such as ageism”.

In May 2017 a fact sheet titled *National Prioritisation System* from the Australian Government Department of Health outlined the commencement of a national prioritisation system for access to a capped number of home care packages (130,750 in total in December 2017) in order to address “significant variations in waiting periods across Australia”, and with the aim of “the fairer allocation of packages to clients, based on their individual needs and circumstances” (p.1). A March 2018 report titled *Home Care Packages Program* from the Department of Health indicates that “as at 31 December 2017 there were 104,602 consumers in the national prioritisation queue, with 45.8% either in, or assigned, an interim package” pending the Government’s allocation of more home care packages.

In an address to the *National Press Club* on 25 October 2017, Aged Care Minister Ken Wyatt noted that up to 40% of people in aged care homes never get visitors and asked “Do I want to be abandoned in my later years? Is this what my elders deserve? Is this how I want to live out my days?” The Minister noted “when I talk to people in aged care I find so many who crave simple touch, a hug, the warmth of palms clasped together, or a soothing hand on their shoulder”.

### *Business ethics and public governance*

A 2014 *Report of the Royal Commission into the Home Insulation Program* by Ian Hanger revealed systemic deficiencies in the administration of a Federal Government business stimulation program that resulted in several fatalities, and concluded (p.2) that “it ought also to have been obvious to any competent administration that the injection of a large amount of money into an industry that was largely ‘unregulated’ would carry with it a risk of rorting and other unscrupulous behaviour”.

A 2017 report titled *Wage Theft in Australia* by Berg and Farbenblum (2017, p.5) finds that “a substantial proportion of international students, backpackers and other temporary migrants were paid around half the legal minimum wage in Australia” and (p.7) “international students, backpackers and other temporary migrants also experienced other indicators of exploitation and criminal forced labour. The report concluded that “the findings also invite scrutiny of how certain businesses profit from

wage theft and gain advantage over others that pay workers in compliance with Australian labour law, and how wage theft among temporary migrants may be driving wages down for all workers in certain industries” (ibid).

A 2017 report titled *Black Economy Taskforce – Final Report* commissioned by the Australian Government finds (p.1) that “the black economy is a significant, complex and growing economic and social problem”. The report notes (p.11) “in our opinion the black economy could be as large as 3 per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) today, up to 50 per cent larger than the Australian Bureau of Statistic (ABS) 2012 estimates”. The report concludes (p.2) that “the black economy is an endemic cultural problem. It is supported by values and assumptions that participation in the black economy is a “victimless crime”, that “everyone does it”. We are seeing it become more entrenched with such views spreading through families and communities including through social media”.

A 2017 report titled *Corporate tax transparency report for the 2015-16 income year* from the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) finds that of 2043 major corporate entities only 64% paid tax, and there had been a decrease in tax payable from the previous financial year of 8.7% (\$3.6 billion). Reasons for the non-payment of taxes included deduction of prior-year losses; entitlement to offsets; reconciliation of items like deductions against an accounting profit; and accounting losses (p.12).

A report titled *Corruption Perception Index 2017* by Transparency International that measures perceived levels of public sector corruption worldwide finds (p.6) that “since 2012 several countries significantly improved their index score,...while several countries declined, including Syria, Yemen and Australia”. The report reveals that Australia’s score fell from 85 in 2012 to 77 in 2017.

An August 2017 report titled *Shifting the dial: 5 Year Productivity Review* from the Productivity Commissions explores a range of strategies to enhance productivity in health, education, cities and confidence in institutions. The report notes (p.7) that “in the period between now and the next of these reports in 2022, income growth in Australia is likely to be about half of historical levels. ... We estimate that on a business as usual basis, productivity growth in Australia is more likely to fall than rise

over the medium term”. The report observes (p.8) that “governments and commentators should be very wary of the seductive claim that something is well under way already in the areas to which we devote most attention. The Commission’s analysis ... is that the headline is not often supported by reality; or has not yet achieved the cooperation of all necessary participants. ... We were told by countless participants that governments themselves – their structures, relationships, incentives and capabilities – are today the key impediment to (but could be the crucial catalyst for) essential reform”.

A June 2018 report titled *Restoring electricity affordability and Australia’s competitive advantage* from the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission into Australia’s electricity markets concludes (p.iv) that “high prices and bills have placed enormous strains on household budgets and business viability. The current situation is unacceptable and unsustainable”. The ACCC report notes (p.v) that “electricity retailers have also played a major role in poor outcomes for consumers. Retailers have made pricing structures confusing and have developed a practice of discounting which is opaque and not comparable across the market. Standing offers are priced excessively to facilitate this practice, leaving inactive customers paying far more than they need for electricity”.

Evidence presented by various major financial institutions to the *Royal Commission into Misconduct in the Banking, Superannuation and Financial Services Industry* in 2018 has demonstrated repeated, consistent, significant and systemic patterns of unconscionable conduct. In addressing the reasons for such systemic behaviours, the Interim Report published in September 2018 concludes (p.xix) that “too often, the answer seems to be greed – the pursuit of short term profit at the expense of basic standards of honesty”.

### *Child and youth welfare*

A report titled *Society at a Glance 2014 Highlights: Australia OECD Social Indicators* from the OECD finds (p.1) that “relative poverty in Australia (14.4% of the population) is higher than the OECD average (11.3%)”, and while poverty rates for youth and those over the age of 65 had declined, child poverty increased. The OECD report

also notes (p.2) that confidence in the national government had fallen from 55% in 2008 to 44% in 2014.

A 2015 report titled *The mental health of children and adolescents*, based on an extensive Federal Government-funded survey, found that almost 14% (or 1 in 7) of 4-17 year-olds (560,000) were assessed as having mental disorder in the previous twelve months, with one fifth of adolescents experiencing high or very high levels of psychological distress, and one third of 11-17 year-olds having been bullied in the previous twelve months. The same report found that almost 25% of 11-17 year-olds spent 3-4 hours per (week) day on the internet, with 17.6% spending 5-8 hours per day, and over 10% spending more than 9 hours per day.

A 2016 *Youth Survey 2012-16* from Mission Australia and the Black Dog Institute finds (p.5) that “in 2016 just under one in four young people aged 15-19 years who responded to the Youth Survey met the criteria for having a probable serious mental illness. Concerningly, there has been a significant increase in the proportion of young people meeting this criteria over the past five years (rising from 18.7% in 2012 to 22.8% in 2016)”. In relation to indigenous youth, “in 2016 over three in ten (31.6%) of ATSI respondents met the criteria for a probable serious mental illness” (ibid).

A 2017 report titled *Independent review of out of home care in NSW – final report* by David Tune that examined child protection systems in NSW concludes (p.3) that “the NSW system is ineffective and unsustainable”, and “the system is failing to improve long term outcomes for children and to arrest the devastating cycles of intergenerational abuse and neglect. Outcomes are particularly poor for Aboriginal children, young people and families”.

A 2017 report titled *Generation Stalled* from the Brotherhood of St Laurence finds (p.2) that “precarious employment is hindering the capacity of many young people, especially those without qualifications and skills, to build satisfying and productive adult lives, as the pathways that were open to their parents appear to have stalled”. Using data from the ABS and HILDA, the report finds that “underemployment, at 18 per cent of the youth labour force (February 2017), is the highest in the 40 years since the count officially began. The challenge now affects even more young people

than unemployment, currently at 13.5 per cent; young people are far more likely to be in casual and part-time jobs than at the beginning of this millennium; in the past 15 years the average gap has widened between the actual working hours of young underemployed people and the hours they would like to work” (ibid).

A 2017 report titled *Family Matters* from SNAICC finds (p.5) that “Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children make up approximately 36 per cent of all children living in [out of home care], the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in OOHC is almost 10 times that of other children, and disproportionate representation continues to grow (AIHW, 2017a). This has eventuated despite – or because of – the laws, policies, and programs of successive Australian governments”. The report concludes (p.74) that “this report exposes the alarming trajectory that some of Australia’s most vulnerable children face. ... For the future of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, it is incumbent upon our collective responsibility as government and non-government stakeholders to work together ... to change the story of the past 200 years and begin to provide an environment which is in the best interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and sees them safe and thriving”.

A April 2018 report titled *What price the gap? Education and inequality in Australia* by David Hetherington from the Public Education Foundation examines educational inequality and (p.3) “analyses the costs of students at the bottom falling further below those at the top and estimates that over the six years from 2009-15 alone this growing inequality has cost Australia around \$20.3 billion, equivalent to 1.2% of GDP”. The report notes that “Australia’s school performance (as measured by international test scores) has been falling. What’s less understood is that this headline buries a stark, unpalatable fact: our international test results show that kids at the bottom of the performance distribution are falling faster and further than kids at the top” (ibid).

A 2018 report from **headspace** has reported that “nearly one in three (32%) young Australians (12 to 25 year olds) are reporting high or very high levels of psychological distress – more than treble the rate in 2007 (9%)”. The report indicates

that rates of psychological distress are higher among young women, and that that 18-21 year olds are reporting the highest levels.

The 2018 Final Report of the *Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse* concludes (p.5) that “tens of thousands of children have been sexually abused in many Australian institutions. We will never know the number. Whatever the number, it is a national tragedy, perpetrated over generations within many of our most trusted institutions. ... It is not a case of a few rotten apples. Society’s major institutions have seriously failed. In many cases those failings have been exacerbated by a manifestly inadequate response to the abused person. The problems have been so widespread, and the nature of the abuse so heinous, that it is difficult to comprehend”.

#### *Civic participation and philanthropy*

The ABS 2014 *General Social Survey* (2014 GSS) aims “to provide an understanding of the multi-dimensional nature of relative advantage and disadvantage across the population, and to facilitate reporting on and monitoring of people's opportunities to participate fully in society. ... The themes include how Australia has progressed on aspects of social capital such as participation, support, feelings of safety and trust”. The 2014 GSS “results show changes in the levels of involvement in activities connecting people to their broader community and the way people are interacting with the community outside their household” that are consistent with previous ABS data “showing a decrease in the time and opportunity that Australians have for recreation and leisure, and social and community interaction” (2015, p.xx).

The ABS defines a volunteer for statistical purposes as “someone who is over the age of 15 and, in the previous twelve months, willingly gave unpaid help, in the form of time, services or skills, through an organisation or group” (2010 Glossary). The 2014 GSS finds that in “in 2014, volunteering rates declined for the first time since the ABS began national voluntary work surveys in 1995. Between 1995 and 2010, volunteering rates increased, reaching a peak of 34% in 2010, but in 2014, the

proportion of people aged 18 years and over who were volunteering fell to 31%. Both men and women were less likely to volunteer in 2014 than they were in 2010”.

A 2016 report titled *The Australia We Want* from the Community Council of Australia (CCA) finds (p.9) that “Australia is currently a place where our incarceration rates are three times that of Ireland and rising, our suicide rates are higher than our road toll, and inequality is growing. We volunteer less and give less as a percentage of our income than we did five years ago. We are slipping down the international corruption scale just as we are slipping down the scale of international generosity. These are not good indicators”.

A report titled *Australian Organ Donation Performance* from ShareLife reveals that as at December 2016 Australia’s organ donors per million of population was less than 50% of world leading practice, with Australia ranked 17<sup>th</sup> in organ donation rates in the world. Despite the expenditure of over \$300 million over 7 years, Australia’s number of organ donors per million increased by 8.6 whereas other countries such as Croatia and Iceland increased by more than 20.

A report titled *Australia’s Welfare 2017* from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), commenting on the trends revealed by the 2014 GSS, finds (p.170) that “the decline in the rate of volunteering is concerning as it ... is thought to be an indicator of wellbeing (for example, by building social connections)”. The AIHW report concludes (p.172) that “rates of volunteering appear to be on the decline. Data on why this is occurring – such as societal factors (including changes in work patterns and living arrangements) – and on the impacts on society (for example, on trust and social cohesion) are not readily available”.

A November 2017 report titled *Economic contribution of the Australian charity sector* from Deloitte Access Economics defines a volunteer (p.3) as “an individual who provides unpaid help willingly”, and estimates (p.77) “that in 2015 there were 3.35 million individuals who volunteered with ACNC registered charities and collectively contributed 327.7 million hours of volunteer time” that “has been valued at \$12.8 billion in 2015 dollars”. The report notes (p.10) that “population ageing and income inequality have been identified as two of the major social challenges for Australia in

the coming decades. The ageing population will put increasing pressure on health related services provision such as aged care, disability support and community health services. And, to the extent that the gap between rich and poor widens into the future, demand for charity support from lower income households will become a critical issue for the outlook for charity sector services”.

A 2018 report titled *Charity still ends at home* by Browne, Swann and Grudnoff from the Australia Institute examines Australia’s declining levels of official development assistance (ODA). The report notes (p.3) that ODA as a percentage of Gross National Income (GNI) has fallen 33% over the period 2013-2018, placing Australia 17<sup>th</sup> internationally as a donor.

#### *Equity and opportunity in income & wealth*

A 2014 report titled *Income & Wealth Inequality in Australia* by Richardson and Denniss from the Australia Institute notes (p.2) that “inequality between those with the most and those with the least is rising in Australia. Australia is one of the wealthiest countries in the world, but there are many people in our society who are falling behind. For instance, the minimum wage and unemployment benefits have failed to keep pace with the rise in average earnings, resulting in a divergence between low-income earners and the average employed Australian. A divergence has also occurred between the average Australian and those at the top. Senior executive pay is now 150 times greater than average weekly earnings”.

A 2015 report titled *Living Standard Trends in Australia: Report for Anglicare Australia* by Ben Phillips from NATSEM at the University of Canberra examines (p.3) “changes in living standards for a broad range of family types in Australia between 2004 and 2014”. The report finds (p.4) that “living standards have increased in Australia over the past 10 years however, that growth was not shared evenly by all. The gap in the living standards between the richest and poorest grew by around 13 percentage points during this period and we project a further widening by 10.4 per cent over the coming decade. Growth in living standards of the top 20 per cent grew by around 22.1 per cent while the bottom 20 per cent grew by just 13.8 per cent”. The report concludes (p.26) that “while all groups have enjoyed an increase in their

living standards there are some groups who, from a relative perspective, are falling behind. These groups include low income households, single parents, younger households, and those on allowances such as new start, parenting payment partnered and youth allowance.

A 2015 report titled *Inequality in Australia – A Nation Divided* from the Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS) observes (p.8) that “excessive inequality in any society is harmful. It is harmful to the ability of people to participate in social and economic opportunities, and it undermines social cohesion”. The report finds (p.10) that “wages growth was very unequal over the period and acted to increase income inequality. Over the 25 years to 2010, real wages increased by 50% on average, but by 14% for those in the bottom 10% compared with 72% for those in the top 10%” and “wealth is far more unequally distributed than income. A person in the top 20% has around 70 times more wealth than a person in the bottom 20%”.

A 2017 report titled *The Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia: Selected Findings from Waves 1 to 15* (HILDA) from the Melbourne Institute aims to provide “a nationally representative longitudinal study of Australian households”. Utilising “the most commonly employed definition applied to the study of poverty in developed countries, which conceives of poverty as *relative* deprivation or socio-economic disadvantage, and which measures deprivation in terms of inadequacy of *income*”, the report finds that the relative poverty rate in Australia has shifted only marginally from just below 12% in 2003 to the current rate of just below 10% in 2015 (p.33). The report also finds (p.34) that relative poverty rates are high for people living in single-parent families, amounting to 21% in 2015.

The OECD’s *Better Life Index 2017* compares a range of social and economic indicators across 38 countries annually. The current OECD report ranks (p.xx) Australia’s household disposable income as 21/38 for social inequality, and 22/38 for gender inequality; employment rate as 22/38 for gender inequality; personal earnings as 28/38 for gender inequality and 20/38 for social inequality; job security as 20/38 for gender inequality and 27/38 for social inequality; quality of support networks as 26/38 for gender inequality; very long hours as 29/38; leisure and personal care time as 32/38.

A report titled *Australia's Welfare 2017* from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) finds (p.354) that “real net disposable income per capita rose steadily over the 30 years to June 2016 but has dropped since 2012”. The report concludes “while the distribution of income in Australia has shown little change in recent years, income inequality has risen since the mid-1990s as measured by the Gini coefficient” (ibid).

A report titled *OECD Economic Surveys: Australia 2017* finds (p.5) that “inclusiveness has been eroded. The Gini coefficient has been drifting up and households in upper income brackets have benefited disproportionately from Australia’s long period of economic growth. Real incomes for the top quintile of households grew by more than 40% between 2004 and 2014 while those for the lowest quintile only grew by 25%. ... This partly explains the increasing share of income going to the very top end of the income distribution. In addition, large socio-economic gaps between Australia’s indigenous population and the rest of the population remain and there is room to reduce gender imbalance”.

A 2018 report titled *Household financial comfort report* by ME Bank that surveyed 1500 respondents on how comfortable they feel about their financial situation using 11 measures, concludes (p.2) that “with subdued and stagnant incomes, more Australians are feeling strapped for cash, and are being forced to dip into their savings to cover the rising cost of living”. The report notes that “currently, around a quarter of Australian households have less than \$1000 in cash savings” and “consistent with ABS wage data, the latest HFCR data found nearly half (42%) still had the same income as a year ago” (ibid).

A 2018 report titled *Rising Inequality? A stocktake of the evidence* by the Productivity Commission examines contemporary trends in inequality, economic mobility and disadvantage across Australian society, including (p.5) “the nature and extent of deep and persistent disadvantage in Australia”. The report defines (ibid) disadvantage as “a multidimensional concept that can take the form of low economic resources (poverty), inability to afford basic essentials of life (material deprivation) or being unable to participate economically and socially (social exclusion)”. The report

finds that “about nine per cent of Australians (2.2 million people) experienced relative income poverty (income below 50% of the median) in 2015-16, with children and older people having the highest rates of relative income poverty. ... Despite 27 years of uninterrupted growth [this aggregate figure] has not declined”.

A March 2018 report titled *The cost of privilege* from Per Capita (commissioned by Anglicare Australia) examines the tax measures that benefit the wealthiest Australians (including CGT concessions and exemptions, superannuation concessions, private education tax exemptions, private health tax exemptions, negative gearing and discretionary trusts). The report finds (p.5) that “the cost of forgone tax revenue from the richest 20% of Australians is over AU\$68 billion per annum”, compared to \$6.1 billion in benefits to the bottom 20%. The report concludes (p.6) that “Australian society is becoming increasingly stratified, with growing inequality of wealth and income”.

### *Health and wellbeing*

A 2017 report titled *Pillars of Communities* by Bourne, Nash and Houghton from the Regional Australia Institute finds (p.4) that “between 1981 and 2011, the number of professionals in inner regional small towns grew by 85 per cent, but there was growth of only seven per cent in small towns in remote and very remote areas. This is despite the fact that education and health outcomes are consistently worse in remote and very remote areas”. The report found many people in Australia’s small towns are unable to access basic services and concludes (p.5) that “although there are instances where the gap in service delivery personnel between major cities and small towns is closing, overall these gaps remain significant and for some professions the trend is that the gaps are widening rather than narrowing”.

A 2018 report titled *Australian Wellbeing Index* from the National Australia Bank (NAB) finds (p.1) that “Australian wellbeing has fallen to survey low levels, with a marked improvement in anxiety offset by low happiness, life worth and life satisfaction”. The report notes (p.2) that “the NAB Australian Wellbeing Index fell to a new survey low 62.8 points in Q1 2018. This was down from 64.6 points in Q4 2017 and now sits well below its long term average of 64.4 points”.

A 2018 report titled *Australia's health 2018 in brief* from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) notes (p.16) that “mental illness and substance use disorders are responsible for 12% of the total disease burden in Australia – the third highest disease group after cancer and cardiovascular diseases. Mental illness affects individuals, families and carers. It also has a far-reaching influence on society as a whole, through issues such as poverty, unemployment and homelessness”. The report identifies particular groups experiencing increased rates of mental illness, noting “females aged 15-24 account for nearly 3 in 5 community mental health care service contacts for eating disorders (58%) and hospitalisations for eating disorders (57%)” (ibid).

A 2018 report titled *Family, domestic and sexual violence in Australia* from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) finds (p.ix) that “one in 6 Australian women and 1 in 16 men have been subjected, since the age of 15, to physical and/or sexual violence by a current or previous cohabitating partner”, while “almost 1 in 4 (23%) women and 1 in 6 (16%) men have experienced emotional abuse from a current or previous partner since the age of 15” (p.x). The report notes (p.xii) that “in 2014-2015 Indigenous women were 32 times as likely to be hospitalised due to family violence as non-Indigenous women, while Indigenous men were 23 times as likely to be hospitalised as non-Indigenous men”.

### *Housing and homelessness*

A 2017 report titled *Housing Australia* from the Committee for Economic Development of Australia (CEDA) notes (p.86) that “these trends present a distinct picture of a growing divide between generations in terms of access to housing market opportunity. It would appear that young people’s access to both home ownership and property investment opportunities has lagged further and further behind the opportunities available to older age groups. The property ownership trends have inadvertently resulted in housing wealth becoming increasingly concentrated in the hands of smaller sub-groups”. The report concludes (p.88) that “Regrettably, it would appear that property ownership has become the new class divide in Australia. It is increasingly a marker of distinction between young aspiring

home buyers and older home owner-investors. In addition, it is exacerbating intra-generational inequality, creating a widening chasm between the haves and have-nots as young people are fortunate enough to receive substantial transfers of wealth from their parents while others miss out on such intergenerational transfers”.

A 2017 report titled *The opportunities, risks and possibilities of social impact investment for housing and homelessness* by Muir, Meltzer, Moran, Mason, Michaux, Ramia, Findlay and Heaney from the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI) finds (p.7) that “despite an extended period of economic growth and increasing prosperity for the majority of Australians in recent decades (in part due to rising property prices), Australia faces numerous housing policy challenges that negatively impact on health and wellbeing outcomes and increase associated costs, reduce the opportunity for people affected to achieve their potential and contribute fully in society, and have potential broader consequences for social cohesion and economic outcomes for the country”. The report concludes (p.1) that “the waiting lists for social and affordable housing are long (and a significant proportion of the social housing stock is no longer fit-for-purpose), large proportions of the population are in housing stress and too many people are experiencing homelessness”.

A report titled *The Hard Road – National Economic & Social Impact Survey 2017* from the Salvation Army finds (p.4) that “unacceptable persistent disadvantage and exclusion experienced by individuals and families” in need. A large proportion of the Salvation Army’s clients experience “housing issues including housing stress, homelessness and transience; financial difficulties, managing on inadequate income and resulting from prolonged unemployment; persistent hardship, financial pressures due to costs of living in Australia and multiple deprivations; limited opportunities and exclusion for individuals and their families; and reduced participation and access, disconnectedness and inequity for children” (ibid).

### *Social inclusion and cohesion*

A 2015 report titled *National prevalence survey of age discrimination in the workplace* from the Australia Human Rights Commission (AHRC) finds (p.2) that

“over a quarter of Australians aged 50 years and over report that they had experienced some form of age discrimination in the last two years”, and “when managers were asked if they factored age into their decision-making, a third responded that they did”.

A 2016 report titled *Mapping Social Cohesion* by Andrew Markus from the Scanlon Foundation notes a marked decline in community trust in Australia’s political system, with 48% of respondents to a 2009 survey indicating that the government in Canberra can be trusted ‘almost always’ or ‘most of the time’, but by 2016 this had dropped to 29%. The Scanlon Foundation report concludes (p.4) that “there are emerging signs of increased pessimism, relatively high levels of negativity towards Muslims and an increase in the proportion of people experiencing discrimination on the basis of skin colour, ethnicity or religion”.

A 2016 report titled *Australians Today* by Andrew Markus from the Scanlon Foundation explores the results of an extensive survey of Australian social attitudes, finding that 43% of respondents indicated (p.48) that “you can’t be too careful” in trusting others. On the question of tolerance towards cultural diversity, the report finds (p.48) “18% strong negative scores in major cities, 39% in outer regional areas, and within major cities, strong negative scores range from 13% in areas of highest cultural diversity to 28% in areas of lower diversity”. The report concludes “a prominent theme in focus group discussions was the difference between culturally diverse and homogenous areas, the multi-cultural and mono-cultural. Participants discussed environments in which they felt a sense of ‘belonging’, ‘at home’, ‘comfortable’, ‘normal’, contrasted with areas where they were ‘out of place’, a ‘stare object’, an ‘alien.’ Areas of diversity are seen as a separate world, one that is distinct from ‘white Australia’” (ibid).

A 2017 report titled *Concluding observations on the eighteenth to twentieth periodic reports of Australia* from the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) finds (p.3) that “the Committee notes the State party’s definition of multiculturalism and social cohesion and appreciates the implementation of the National Anti-Racism Strategy. The Committee is, however, concerned that expressions of racism, racial discrimination, and xenophobia, including in the public

sphere and political debates as well as in the media, are on the rise. The Committee also expresses concern that migrants, notably Arabs and Muslims, asylum seekers and refugees, as well as Africans and people of African descent, South Asians, and Indigenous Peoples are particularly affected by racist hate speech and violence”.

The CERD report recommends (p.3) that the State “ensure that anti-racism related measures are implemented effectively in collaboration with grassroots organizations and community representatives that are active in the fight against racism and racial discrimination; reconsider the anti-terrorism and national security clauses of the Multicultural policy, ‘Multicultural Australia: United, Strong, Successful’, as these may lead to practices prohibited under the Convention, such as ethnic and racial profiling by law enforcement officers and agencies, targeting in particular Arabs and Muslims; increase its measures to combat racist hate speech and xenophobic political discourse, and ensure that public officials not only refrain from such speech but also formally reject and condemn hate speech, in order to promote a culture of tolerance and respect”.

A June 2018 report titled *Understanding Australian attitudes to the world* by Alex Oliver from the Lowy Institute, based on a random survey of 1200 Australian adults, reports (p.1) that “for the first time, the poll finds that a majority of Australians [54%] think the current rate of immigration to Australia is too high”, with 40% seeing “large numbers of immigrants and refugees coming into Australia” posing a critical threat (p.3). “Only 17% of Australians are satisfied with the way things are going in the world today”, with 49% “satisfied with the way things are going in Australia today” (p.4).

A 2018 report titled *Everyone’s business: Fourth national survey on sexual harassment in Australian workplaces* from the Australian Human Rights Commission finds (p.7) that “more than four in five (85%) Australian women and over half (56%) of Australian men over the age of 15 have been sexually harassed at some point in their lifetimes”, and more seriously “almost one quarter (23%) of women have experienced actual or attempted rape or sexual assault at some point in their lifetimes, and nearly one third (31%) of women have experienced unwelcome requests or pressure for sex or other sexual acts” (p.8).

## **Implications for altruistic values and the nature of civic participation**

These diverse (post-2010) official reports across multiple dimensions of disadvantage constitute a substantial body of empirical evidence on the real circumstances of (and significant challenges confronted by) the most disadvantaged in Australia (children, aged, sick, poor, disabled, migrants, indigenous, homeless). These reports provide substantial objective evidence of Australia's current policies towards and treatment of those in the community who are most disadvantaged, and are indicative of the real levels of empathy and altruism in public policies (irrespective of statements about "compassion for those in need" in the National Values Statement).

These reports consistently reveal a widening gap between a relatively affluent majority and a poor but growing minority in Australia. While Australia projects itself internationally as a modern, affluent, progressive, fair and tolerant pluralist nation (a secular democracy), these reports raise serious questions as to whether this archetype accurately reflects Australia's core values and actual social norms. The reports suggest that there are great inconsistencies between Australia's idealised identity (as an egalitarian society concerned with fairness and the welfare of others), and the economic and social reality for a significant and growing number of citizens. Moreover, in the context of a powerful and bipartisan ideological commitment to free markets and competition, a range of essential social services for vulnerable people are being progressively transformed into large publicly-subsidised industries, where the interests and welfare of both "clients" and employees are increasingly subordinate to broader business and commercial considerations.

These often substantial evidence-based reports collectively confirm a decline in altruism as a core national value in Australia, with implications for many traditional forms of civic participation, including formal emergency service volunteering. It is clear that the changes that are occurring in values, culture and social norms in Australia in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are transformational, and community functions and organisations that have traditionally relied on goodwill, empathy and a sense of collective responsibility and duty will need to develop different strategies (that acknowledge and satisfy individual and personal needs) if they are to secure the

level of participation required for the provision of important community services into the future.

## **Conclusions**

Consistent with the fifth research objective, this discussion paper has explored the broader social and cultural contexts for volunteering, highlighting the implications of changing core values for future forms of civic participation. The examination of contemporary indicators of Australian core values has confirmed a progressive decline in altruistic values, with important (potentially adverse) implications for future rates of formal emergency service volunteering.