



OUT OF UNIFORM: BUILDING COMMUNITY RESILIENCE THROUGH NON-TRADITIONAL EMERGENCY VOLUNTEERING

Annual project report 2014-2015

John Handmer, Joshua Whittaker and Blythe McLennan
RMIT University
Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC





Version	Release history	Date
1.0	Initial release of document	26/10/2015



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Non Commercial 4.0 International Licence.



Disclaimer:

RMIT University and the Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC advise that the information contained in this publication comprises general statements based on scientific research. The reader is advised and needs to be aware that such information may be incomplete or unable to be used in any specific situation. No reliance or actions must therefore be made on that information without seeking prior expert professional, scientific and technical advice. To the extent permitted by law, RMIT University and the Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC (including its employees and consultants) exclude all liability to any person for any consequences, including but not limited to all losses, damages, costs, expenses and any other compensation, arising directly or indirectly from using this publication (in part or in whole) and any information or material contained in it.

Publisher:

Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC

October 2015

Citation: Handmer J, Whittaker J, McLennan B, 2015, Out of uniform: Building community resilience through non-traditional emergency volunteering: Annual project report 2014-2015, Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC

Cover: At an emergency, the arrival of highly motivated volunteers not affiliated with the emergency services is becoming a familiar sight.

Credit: Eve Welch, University of Canterbury



TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
END USER STATEMENT	4
THE PROJECT	5
WHAT THE PROJECT HAS BEEN UP TO	7
Literature reviews	7
Case studies	7
End user engagement	8
Student projects	10
Conference presentations	10
UPCOMING ACTIVITIES	12
PUBLICATIONS LIST	13
Forthcoming and under review	13
CURRENT TEAM MEMBERS	14
Research team	14
Students	15
End Users	16



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The *Out of Uniform: building community resilience through non-traditional emergency volunteering* project aims to support the development of new and more inclusive models of volunteering for the emergency management sector. Its underlying purpose is to assist the sector to harness the benefits of engaging with and supporting a wider range of 'non-traditional' and unaffiliated volunteers while addressing associated risks.

The three-year project is being undertaken by researchers at the Centre for Risk and Community Safety at RMIT University, led by Professor John Handmer. The project methodology involves three key activities: literature reviews, case studies, and a cross-case analysis and evaluation of alternative emergency volunteering models.

A key outcome from the project will be practical guidance for end users on supporting key types of non-traditional emergency volunteering.

Key outputs from the project this year included:

- A report on the role of informal volunteers in emergency and disaster management that highlights three important forms of informal volunteerism: emergent, extending and digital.
- A report on broad trends in volunteering that examined likely implications for emergency volunteering and identifies focal areas that need to be incorporated into emergency management planning.
- A case study of Be Ready Warrandyte (BRW): an award-winning community-led bushfire preparedness project that involved a high degree of collaboration with emergency management organisations.

Key stakeholder engagement activities this year were: a 3-monthly project newsletter, an annual stakeholder communication workshop in October 2014, a project teleconference to assist case study selection in March 2015, and participation in the BNHCRC's Research Advisory Forum in April 2015.

Three PhD students undertaking associated projects also began or advanced their research this year. Their projects focus on: the use of volunteered geographic information in community engagement for bushfire preparation (Billy Haworth, University of Western Sydney), community-led recovery in the 2013 Forcett bushfires in Tasmania (Fiona Jennings, RMIT University), and social capital, inclusive volunteer engagement and community resilience (Julie Molloy, RMIT University).

The next year of the project will see the *Out of Uniform* project move from conducting case studies to conducting cross-case analysis and beginning work to evaluate alternative models of emergency volunteering through workshops with end users.



END USER STATEMENT

Historically this emergency service organisation has been reluctant to harness the goodwill and capacity of non-traditional volunteers. The prevailing perception that non traditional volunteers will compromise the operational response - many consider them to be an unwelcome nuisance to the first responders.

However, as demonstrated by the work of this research, non-traditional volunteers offer additional capacity to both response and recovery efforts. In addition to providing physical assistance, social media and technologies mean that non-traditional volunteers are well placed to generate real time incident information which can be translated by emergency service organisations into intelligence for decision making.

The challenge for my organisation is to change the internal discourse from avoiding and deterring non-traditional volunteers to creating the appetite to effectively harness what the community is offering.

I have been actively engaged with the research team to identify local research opportunities and have disseminated the research notes across the business to raise awareness and generate conversations about non-traditional volunteering in a positive light. Our long term volunteering strategy includes establishing an agency position on non traditional volunteering. The learnings and knowledge generated by this research will be critical to informing our policy.

Karen Roberts, Director Human Resources, Department of Fire and Emergency Services



THE PROJECT

The traditional model of emergency volunteering employed in Australia is based on formal, accredited volunteers who are affiliated with emergency management organisations, and are mostly involved in response and recovery roles (e.g. Commonwealth of Australia 2012). While this form of volunteering is crucial and has many strengths, it also excludes the potentially large number of people who are motivated to volunteer before, during and after emergencies in other, less ongoing and more informal ways.

At the same time, the landscape of volunteering is undergoing significant change, in Australia and internationally. Large-scale socioeconomic changes have recast the conditions in which people volunteer in the 21st Century (Hustinx and Lammertyn 2003; Warburton and McDonald 2009). As a result, emergency managers can expect to engage with a much wider and more diverse range of volunteers than in the past. These volunteers bring new opportunities, but also risks.

There are considerable benefits to be realised from greater engagement with these more diverse and, from the perspective of established emergency management organisations (EMOs) 'non-traditional', emergency volunteers. With disaster risk increasing worldwide due to population growth, urban development and climate change (Field et al. 2012) it is likely that non-traditional volunteers will provide much of the additional surge capacity required to respond to more frequent emergencies and disasters in the future. There is also a significant and largely untapped opportunity for EMOs to contribute to community resilience by supporting non-traditional emergency volunteers in new ways.

The *Out of Uniform: building community resilience through non-traditional emergency volunteering* project aims to support the development of new and more inclusive models of volunteering for the emergency management sector.

The project has three key objectives:

1. To identify how non-traditional emergency volunteering contributes to building community resilience to disasters throughout different phases of emergency management.
2. To identify ways the emergency management sector in Australia and New Zealand can promote community resilience through support of non-traditional emergency volunteering.
3. To develop and evaluate alternative models for emergency volunteering in Australia and New Zealand that are inclusive of non-traditional volunteering and volunteering organisations.

For the purposes of the project, volunteering is defined broadly to include 'any activity in which time is given freely to benefit another person, group or organization' (Wilson 2000, p.215). 'Non-traditional emergency volunteering' is any type of volunteering that is: 1) Focused on emergency prevention, preparedness, response, or recovery and 2) Involves volunteers who are not traditional emergency volunteers affiliated with established emergency management organisations (EMOs).



The project methodology involved three key activities: literature reviews, case studies, and a cross-case analysis and evaluation of alternative emergency volunteering models.

The desired outcomes of the project include:

- Adoption of more inclusive/flexible volunteer models by relevant EM agencies.
- The development of new, coordinated sector-wide model for engaging with the potential additional workforce of non-traditional emergency volunteers.
- Greater engagement by EM agencies with the potential additional workforce provided by non-traditional volunteers.
- Practical guidance for end users on engaging with non-traditional emergency volunteers and with not-for-profit volunteering organisations.
- An assessment of legal implications of alternative emergency volunteering models.



WHAT THE PROJECT HAS BEEN UP TO

This year work has focused on finishing up the first research stage (literature reviews) and making headway on the second stage (case studies).

Two new PhD students were also recruited to the project in this year. Fiona Jennings joined the project in the first quarter of the year while Julie Molloy joined in the final quarter.

LITERATURE REVIEWS

The first stage in the project was to undertake two literature reviews:

- 1) A global review of key concepts and models of emergency volunteering, focusing on approaches to non-traditional volunteering;
- 2) An Australian/New Zealand review of trends influencing emergency volunteering and of volunteering research by universities, end users and other volunteering organisations in Australia and New Zealand.

Reports on both these reviews were finalised this year. The first 'global review' examined the role of informal volunteers in emergency and disaster management. It highlighted three key forms of informal volunteerism: emergent, extending and digital. The second 'trends review' identified broad trends in volunteering and examined their likely implications for emergency volunteering. It highlighted areas that need to be incorporated into emergency management planning around volunteering in order to harness the potential benefits of emerging trends while managing associated risks and challenges. Manuscripts based on the reports were also prepared for submission to academic journals for both of these literature reviews.

CASE STUDIES

The second key stage of the project is to undertake approximately four to six case studies of diverse examples of non-traditional emergency volunteering in Australia. The purpose of the case studies is to examine experiences with non-traditional emergency volunteering in different contexts, at different scales and from different perspectives.

Ethics approval to undertake case studies was obtained from RMIT University's Science Engineering & Health College Human Ethics Advisory Network in October 2014.

A sampling frame to guide case selection was finalized in March 2015 with End User input.

The first (pilot) case study of Be Ready Warrandyte (BRW) was undertaken between November 2014 and April 2015. Be Ready Warrandyte was an award-winning community-led bushfire preparedness project that involved a high degree of collaboration between local community volunteers, local governments and the Country Fire Authority (CFA) brigade members and community safety personnel from two Districts. A final report on the case study is due for release in July 2015.



The second case study of Community On Ground Assistance (COGA) in Kinglake began in March 2015 and is nearing completion. COGA is a community initiative “that provides flexible and responsive assistance and support to eligible families and individuals where property damage has occurred as a result of the Victorian Bushfires of 2009”.¹ A preliminary report on the case study has been prepared and a final report is due for release by September 2015.

The third case study of Volunteering Queensland’s Emergency Volunteering Community Response to Extreme Weather (EV-CREW) system is in progress with data collection under way. With support from EV-CREW’s coordinator (and end user and PhD student with this project) Julie Molloy, this case study will outline the story of EV-CREW’s development and key learning by Volunteering Queensland along the way, and its use in preparedness, response and recovery phases of a particular event: the 2013 storms in south east Queensland. A report on the case study is due for release by September 2015.

The fourth case study of non-traditional volunteer responses to the Sampson Flat bushfires in South Australia in January 2013 is currently being set up with input from project end user Georgina Goodrich (Department for Communities and Social Inclusion, South Australia). It will focus on the activities of two groups of non-traditional volunteers: established faith-based organisations that extended into disaster recovery activities, and emergent animal rescue groups. This case study involves close collaboration with another BNHCRC project; Managing Animals in Disaster (MAiD) led by Mel Taylor of the University of Western Sydney. A report on this case study is expected to be released by the end of the year.

END USER ENGAGEMENT

A timeline of all significant stakeholder engagement activities undertaken by members of the research team during this year is included in Table 1 below. Key end user engagement activities were the annual stakeholder workshop in October 2014, a project teleconference in March 2015, and participation in the BNHCRC’s second Research Advisory Forum (RAF) in Sydney in April 2015.

In addition to the research team, the annual stakeholder workshop was attended by seven out of the project’s fourteen end users and seven additional stakeholders interested in the project. Key items included in the workshop were: an overview of the evolving policy context by Paul Davies (EMV), three research presentations (on informal volunteering, emerging trends, and emergency management implications), end user commentary by Kate Harrap (CFA), presentations of student projects by Billy Haworth and Fiona Jennings facilitated by John Richardson (Red Cross), and an open floor discussion.

Eight end users participated in a one hour teleconference to provide input on case selection criteria, which assisted the research team to target case studies to ensure areas of most interest to end users was included.

At the RAF, a break out meeting of the volunteering cluster focused on end user engagement and research utilization. A number of issues were raised including the need to develop a research utilization plan for the project.

¹ See http://www.each.com.au/images/service_files/COGA - Program Description.pdf



The project was also featured in an article in the Australian Journal of Emergency Management by the BNHCRC's Communications Manager (Bruce D. Out of uniform: Building community resilience through non-traditional emergency volunteering. Australian Journal of Emergency Management 2014; 29(2): 5-6).

Date	Engagement activity
7th August 2014	Presentation to the Hobart BNHCRC Research Briefing
28th August 2014	Second project newsletter circulated to end users
2nd September 2014	Presentation to the AFAC/BNHCRC Annual Conference, Wellington New Zealand
4th September 2014	Interview for Fire + Rescue magazine article
5th September 2014	Presentation to PDP – Introduction to Emergency Management industry
6th September 2014	Cluster level meeting with Allen & Clark researchers in Wellington re NZ volunteer research and potential collaborations
16th September 2014	New end user meeting – Paul Davies, EMV
24th September 2014	Presentation of project overview to the Emergency Service Community of Practice Research (by invitation from MFB)
7th October 2014	Project meeting with lead end user (Kate Harrap, CFA)
29th October 2014	First annual end user workshop held
12th November 2014	Workshop follow-up meeting with Karen Roberts (DFES)
15th February 2015	Third project newsletter circulated to end users
25th March 2015	Teleconference with End Users to develop Case Study Selection Sampling Frame
8-9th April 2015	Presentation and end user break out at the BNHCRC Research Advisory Forum
5th May 2015	BNHCRC web post by Fiona Jennings on launching a PhD
13th May 2015	BNHCRC web post by Billy Haworth on participating in the Association of American Geographers Annual Conference
14th May 2015	BNHCRC web post by Joshua Whittaker on end user engagement following the Research Advisory Forum in Sydney

TABLE 1: SIGNIFICANT END USER ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN, JULY 2014-JUNE 2015



STUDENT PROJECTS

There are three PhD student projects associated with the project:

- “Volunteered Geographic Information, Community Engagement and Bushfire Preparation in Tasmania” by Billy Haworth (University of Sydney)
- “Community-led recovery in the context of emergencies and disaster: a case study of community resilience in the 2013 Forcett Tasmania Bushfire” by Fiona Jennings (RMIT University)
- “Embracing social capital through inclusive engagement and integrated participation to have collective impact and increased community resilience to disasters” by Julie Molloy (RMIT University)

Billy is over half way through his PhD project. He has had two manuscripts accepted for publication in peer reviewed journals this year (see Publications list) and recently conducted fieldwork in Tasmania interviewing representatives of various emergency management organisations to gain agency perspectives on the potential of VGI in disaster preparation. He presented on his project at the BNHCRC Research Advisory Forum in early April and, with the support of the BNHCRC, presented at the Association of American Geographer’s conference in Chicago in late April. He recently received a prestigious scholarship from the International Association of Wildland Fire.

Fiona successfully completed her confirmation of candidature in June. This is a major milestone that marks a shift from probationary to full candidature in a PhD. As a part of this process, Fiona prepared a detailed project proposal outlining her research methodology. She also received ethics approval for her project in June. As a result, Fiona is now able to begin data collection. She will use a case study design, sourcing information from interviews, observer notes and documents.

Julie, who was already an end user of the project representing Volunteering Queensland, began her PhD in March this year. She is undertaking her PhD part time and has recently completed the coursework components, focusing on research design and methodology. While Julie is not formally supported by the BNHCRC, her research is associated with the *Out of Uniform* project through topic and supervisory links.

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

Members of the research team presented at a number of conferences this year.

- Billy Haworth presented a paper at the Institute of Australian Geographers Conference, Melbourne, July 2014 (“Volunteered Geographic Information, community engagement and bushfire preparation in Tasmania: a preliminary study”).
- Joshua Whittaker presented a paper at the Royal Geographical Society Annual Conference, London UK, August 2014 (“Co-producing knowledge and action in emergency and disaster management: the role of informal volunteers”)
- Blythe McLennan presented a paper at the AFAC/BNHCRC Annual



Conference, Wellington New Zealand, August 2014 ("Building community resilience through informal emergency volunteering").

- Billy Haworth presented a paper at the Association of American Geographers Annual Conference In Chicago, 21-25th April ("Engaging Communities in Disaster Risk Reduction through Volunteered Geographic Information: A case study of bushfires (wildfires) in Tasmania, Australia").



UPCOMING ACTIVITES

The next year of the project will see the research move from conducting case studies to conducting cross-case analysis and beginning work to evaluate alternative models of emergency volunteering through workshops with end users.

In addition to this, the research team will be presenting at the BNHCRC /AFAC conference in Adelaide in September, and the second annual stakeholder workshop is currently being organised for October 2015.



PUBLICATIONS LIST

(In alphabetical order)

1. Haworth B, Bruce E. A review of volunteered geographic information for disaster management. *Geography Compass* 2015; 9(5): 237-250. DOI: 10.1111/gec3.12213
2. McLennan BJ, Whittaker J, Handmer J. *Emergency volunteering in Australia: transforming not declining*. 2015, Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC: Australia.
3. Whittaker J, Handmer J, McLennan BJ. *Informal volunteerism in emergencies and disasters: a literature review*. 2015, Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC: Melbourne, Australia.
4. Whittaker J, Handmer J, McLennan B. Building community resilience through informal emergency volunteering, in *Proceedings of the Research Forum at the Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC and AFAC Conference 2014*, M. Rumsewicz, Editor. 2015, Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre: Wellington, New Zealand.
5. Whittaker J, Handmer J, and McLennan B. 2015. A review of informal volunteerism in emergencies and disasters: definition, opportunities, challenges. *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction* 13: 358-368.

FORTHCOMING AND UNDER REVIEW

6. Haworth B, Bruce E, Middleton P. Emerging technologies for risk reduction: assessing the potential use of social media and VGI for increasing community engagement in bushfire preparation. *Australian Journal of Emergency Management*. In press.
7. McLennan BJ, Whittaker J, Handmer J. *Community-led bushfire preparedness in action: the case of Be Ready Warrandyte*. Forthcoming, Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC: Melbourne, Australia.
8. McLennan BJ, Whittaker J, Handmer J. Australian disaster volunteering in the 21st Century: trends, implications and opportunities. Under review.



CURRENT TEAM MEMBERS

RESEARCH TEAM

Research
Leader



Professor John Handmer, BA (Hons), MA, PhD
Centre for Risk and Community Safety,
School of Mathematical and Geospatial Sciences
RMIT University

john.handmer@rmit.edu.au

03 9925 2307

Researcher



Dr Joshua Whittaker, B SocSci (Hons), PhD
Centre for Risk and Community Safety,
School of Mathematical and Geospatial Sciences
RMIT University

joshua.whittaker@rmit.edu.au

03 9925 2418

Researcher



Dr Blythe McLennan, BA, PGrad Dip, MEnv, PhD
Centre for Risk and Community Safety,
School of Mathematical and Geospatial Sciences
RMIT University

blythe.mclennan@rmit.edu.au

03 9925 5227

Researcher



Associate Professor Michael Eburn, BCom LLB; BA(Hons),
LLM, MPET, PhD
ANU College of Law
Australian National University

michael.eburn@anu.edu.au

STUDENTS

PhD
Candidate



Fiona Jennings

Centre for Risk and Community Safety,
School of Mathematical and Geospatial Sciences
RMIT University

fionatrig@gmail.com

PhD
Candidate



Billy Haworth

School of Geosciences, Faculty of Science
The University of Sydney

billy.haworth@sydney.edu.au

+61 2 9036 5469

PhD
Candidate









Julie Molloy

Centre for Risk and Community Safety,
School of Mathematical and Geospatial Sciences
RMIT University

s3527175@student.rmit.edu.au



END USERS

Robert Dugdale	Country Fire Authority	
Peter Jeffrey	Queensland Fire and Emergency Services	
Lucas van Rijswijk	Tasmania Fire Service	
Georgina Goodrich	Department for Communities and Social Inclusion, South Australia	
John Richardson	Red Cross	
Julie Molloy	Volunteering Queensland	
Samantha Colwell	Fire and Rescue New South Wales	
Karen Roberts	Department of Fire and Emergency Services, Western Australia	 
Kristine Wendtman	New South Wales Rural Fire Service	
Susan Gronow	New South Wales State Emergency Service	
Paul Davis	Emergency Management Victoria	
Adelaide Cooper	State Emergency Service South Australia	
Kathleen Lacurto	New South Wales State Emergency Service	