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RECOVERY VOLUNTEERING AFTER THE PINERY FIRE, SOUTH AUSTRALIA 2015: AN EXPLORATIVE CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The goal of this exploratory study was to better understand the breadth of disaster recovery volunteering following the Pinery Fire in South Australia in 2015, with a particular focus on faith-based groups. The report draws upon experiences and perspectives from a key group of individuals (8) involved in the recovery phase of the fire. The study sought to learn from the experiences and perspectives of these individuals. The study also focused on the disaster recovery structure in South Australia within which this volunteering is embedded

The move toward engaging volunteers and NGOs not traditionally involved in disaster recovery alongside those with more established roles can be of benefit in a range of ways. The pool of volunteers to assist impacted communities will obviously be greater. Many of the members from community development and faith-based organisations have skills and approvals to volunteer and undertake a breadth of tasks and can be well-suited to provide much needed social support. However, an influx of people can put pressure on administrative processes, such as timely placement of new volunteers. In addition, organisations can incur costs undertaking recovery roles and this cost shifting of financial burden from disasters is one they do not want to, or cannot support. Furthermore, as NGOs their autonomy is important because they are NGOs and independent of government and this arrangement they do not wish to forgo even during disaster recovery.

NGOs with a common goal to assist in the recovery generally worked well together, although some rivalries and jostling about processes occurred. The experiences and reflections of interviewees about the recovery processes for the Pinery Fire were in general very positive. They acknowledge their involvement in fires like Pinery and the collaborative approaches such as South Australia's Stakeholder Forum for disaster recovery can prepare them to better share data; streamline processes and differentiate roles for future events.



END USER STATEMENT

Georgina Goodrich, *Department of Communities and Social Inclusion, South Australia*

National principles for disaster recovery include using community-led approaches. The responsibility for disaster recovery is shared between individuals, non-government organisations and all tiers of government.

This research shows the vital role that non-government organisations, emergent groups and community members provide through disaster recovery volunteering. Peacetime relationship building and discussions about how to manage issues such as confidentiality and information sharing help NGOs to successfully perform their disaster recovery roles.

This research fits with the broader review currently underway of the Spontaneous Volunteer Management Handbook. Change is inevitable and we must change our language, approach and response to community recovery. Volunteer involvement in recovery is most successful when based on sound principles of working with, rather than for or to, and is inclusive of the many groups in society that have a part to play.

ABOUT THE PROJECT

This report is an output of the *Out of Uniform: building community resilience through non-traditional emergency volunteering* project. This three-year project is being undertaken by researchers at the Centre for Risk and Community Safety at RMIT University as a part of the research program of the Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre.

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

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INTRODUCTION

The goal of this exploratory study was to better understand the breadth of disaster recovery volunteering following the Pinery Fire in South Australia in 2015, with a particular focus on faith-based groups. These groups have long been active participants in recovery but have largely been considered only superficially in disaster research until recently, particularly in Australia [1]. The study also focused on the disaster recovery structure in South Australia within which this volunteering is embedded.

The State Recovery Office (SRO) is a unit within the Department of Communities and Social Inclusion (DCSI), and is responsible for managing the needs of affected community members in the aftermath of a major disaster such as the Pinery Fire 2015. The SRO co-ordinates state level recovery; provides management and an administrative service to the State Recovery Committee and supports local recovery efforts [2]. Arrangements and organisational relationships in disaster recovery have changed in recent years in South Australia. For example, the SRO has a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Volunteering South Australia and Northern Territory (VSA&NT), to assist in planning and managing the volunteer effort.

This study is exploratory. It was not intended as a project evaluation and did not seek to objectively assess the recovery process. Rather, it sought to learn from the experiences and perspectives of those involved. It therefore provides insights into the potential opportunities and challenges for volunteers, the SRO, non-government organisations (NGOs¹) involved in future disaster recovery.

KEY FINDINGS

- Engaging NGOs not traditionally involved in disaster recovery can expand the number of volunteers involved and many of these organisations' members have appropriate skills and approvals such as Police Checks, Working with Children etc. and therefore can be deployed immediately.
- Individuals who respond after a disaster to volunteer, can register through VSA&NT and be matched to organisations, tasks and/or activities and this can streamline the process for NGOs. Timely placements to utilise these volunteers are likely to continue to develop given the increasing focus on spontaneous volunteering in Australian emergency management.
- Faith-based volunteers can be well suited to recovery because of their experience in pastoral care and ability to navigate delicate situations. Although some tasks such as visits to impacted properties with vineyards or race horses; or collection of donations at venues/sporting events with alcohol/gambling can challenge their values and beliefs.

¹ In this report NGO refers to community development groups, faith-based groups and emergency relief groups, where reference is made about, for example, faith-based group/s, this means it is pertinent to this type of group/s.



- Faith-based volunteers and volunteer managers are mindful of their role in recovery and that it is one of support and not spiritual or religious advocacy. At the same time, their presence and work in affected communities can provide opportunities to break down barriers and attitudes about faith-based organisations.
- NGOs recognise the need for centralised co-ordination for disaster recovery, for example by the SRO, however, their autonomy is important because they are independent of government and this arrangement they do not wish to forgo even during disaster recovery.
- NGOs with a common goal to assist in the recovery generally worked well together, although some rivalries and jostling about processes occurred.
- Many NGOs manage confidentiality issues appropriately; however, limitations for sharing information because of government processes may impede recovery activities and work against developing an environment of trust.
- NGOs adhere to rules and procedural guidelines, but are less constrained by bureaucratic red tape than government agencies and their processes can be faster and more adaptive in situations that call for spontaneous decision-making.
- NGOs and their volunteers can incur increased costs if or when governments step away from tasks in the name of 'shared responsibility'. Thus, they may be left with more responsibility and less resources with which to realise that responsibility. The money collected through public donations is rightly channeled toward those most impacted by the disaster, whether some of these funds can offset NGOs costs is possibly one for future consideration.
- The Local Recovery Co-ordinator has a pivotal role in recovery, however this appointment does rely upon the availability of a person for an extended period of many months and someone who can be released from their current role or is retired or has some other flexible work arrangement. This can make it difficult to prepare this role and have the 'right person' ready to go. This suggests that increased planning and preparation for the role of LRC, whether from government or community, in the event of a disaster, may be desirable.
- Public donations after disasters are vitally important and politicians can diplomatically (or well-known celebrities can 'comically') advocate for 'quality' and highlight money as the best donation.



METHODOLOGY

The data for this case study was collected primarily from eight key interviews, six conducted in June 2016 and two interviews in December 2016. This was supplemented by additional secondary data from:

- reports of relevant government agencies about Pinery Fire;
- media reports, and;
- documents about volunteering procedures and processes in South Australia.

This was an exploratory study only, with selective key informants and not an exhaustive sample of those involved. Semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted with state government officials and representatives of NGOs involved in the Pinery Fire recovery. These eight people have a great depth of knowledge about recovery processes and /or activities and the roles of volunteers across a range of types of organisations that varied from more to less traditional in structure and operation. No community members from the fire impacted area were interviewed because the focus was on recovery organisations interaction and volunteer management. We acknowledge that community members may have different perspectives on the recovery process than those reported here.

This qualitative inquiry used an interview guide, which followed a set of questions (Appendix A). The interview guide was designed around key project questions and included open-ended questions that allowed interviewees to provide their own degree of detail and where required, clarification for the researcher. This semi-structured interview process means that no two interviews are the same. Interviewees have the opportunity to share their experience or knowledge about a particular phenomenon or event in their way, which is an important part of qualitative inquiry [3]. Interviewees perspectives can come through clearly, and can help researchers identify new issues and lines of questioning not previously considered.

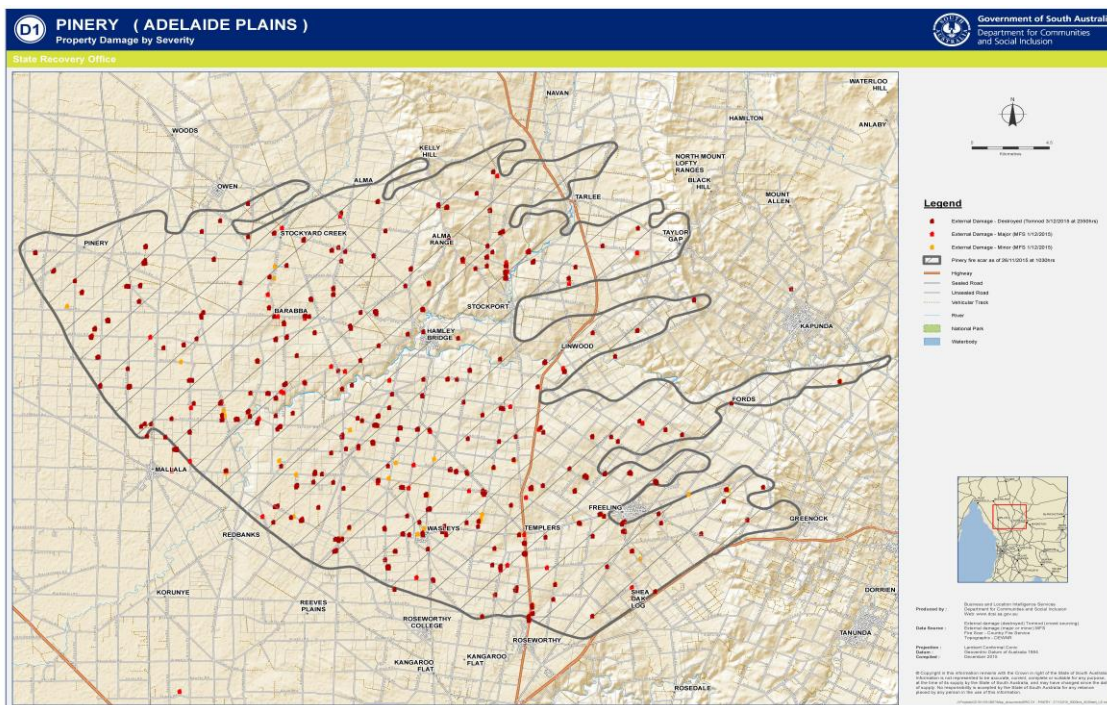
Interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and returned to the participant for review. We coded transcripts guided by the research questions and by topic. The list included broad themes, for example, governance; recovery response; skills; organisational considerations; and lessons learned. We then open coded to allow for emergent themes, and analytically coded [4] to identify patterns and underlying meanings from across the interviews.

The research process adhered to ethical standards on confidentiality and privacy and was approved and overseen by RMIT University Human Ethics Advisory Network. A number has been assigned to each interviewee and selected comments/quotes are presented as such within this report. The excerpts from the interviews 'the data', unless otherwise stated, reflect the majority of interviewees' experiences.

CASE DESCRIPTION

SETTING

On the 25th November 2015, a fire started on a day of extreme hot and windy conditions near the settlement of Pinery in South Australia (see map below), approximately 80km north of the city of Adelaide. The 'Pinery Fire' spread rapidly and because of the weather conditions (38 degrees Celsius), dry surrounds and fuel loads, there was no expectation of containing the fire until winds and temperatures moderated [5].



Map of the Pinery Fire showing the boundary of the fire and property damage [6]

The Pinery Fire burned from the 25th November to the 2nd December over an area of approximately 83,000 hectares of scrub and farmland. During the fire two people died. The fire destroyed approximately 90 houses and nearly 400 outbuildings and many kilometers of fencing. It also caused significant damage to rural produce; 53,000 poultry and 17,500 head of livestock perished [7].

Prior to this, in early 2015, the State had experienced another major bushfire about 30km north of Adelaide. The Sampson Flat Fire, 2nd-9th January burnt through 12,500 hectares, killed more than 900 animals and destroyed sheds, farms and 27 homes and was declared a major emergency [8]. This Fire was approximately one-eighth the size of the Pinery Fire, but a large fire nonetheless, and this meant that some NGOs and sections of government had tried and tested their procedures during the Sampson Flat Fire and lessons learnt could be carried to the Pinery Fire



RECOVERY

Immediately after the bushfire, the Emergency Relief Functional Service Group set up a Recovery Centre (RC) in the township of Gawler approximately 10km south of the fire area, and eight km south of Roseworthy (Roseworthy is shown on the map previous page on the southern edge of the fire area). Gawler is a major town about 45km north of Adelaide. Although the location of the RC for some fire affected residents on the northern periphery of the fire would be a distance of tens of kilometres, the town provided the necessary infrastructure for ongoing provision of recovery services.

Gawler Township has toilets, facilities, da-da-da, so it's a bit of a hike for some people, it probably is a bit far for some people on properties. I think it worked well, it was highly publicised and had a lot of people go through it [Interviewee 3].

The RC operated for just over one year and closed on the 28th December 2016, it provided important services including health and wellbeing services, information about insurance and other advice [9]. At the same time the RC was setting up on the fringe of the fire, local relief centres were being set up by communities in the impacted area. There were about five local centres set up and they operated for approximately two weeks.

There is a definite place for both the impromptu local relief centre and the more organised, broader serving government centres [Interviewee 7].

The local relief centres were described by some interviewees as a way for impacted community members to rally together, respond and provide urgent help. The centres were predominantly organised and staffed by local women and because they were local, they played a vital social support role in the immediate aftermath of the fire.

The weakness of Government even though they have lots of personnel, for example Red Cross, psychologist etc., they don't have the local knowledge of people and who might need particular support, who might need a hug [Interviewee 7].

The selection of a Local Recovery Co-ordinator (LRC) is also a primary task and is appointed by the Premier upon advice from the SRO. The LRC's role is to liaise with recovery and volunteer organisations and to oversee the day-to-day activities in the fire area and assess and prioritise the needs of the affected community [2]. The role requires a person with high level communication and leadership skills and who may have experience in natural hazard and disaster events. The nomination of a LRC is a priority action and appointed as soon as possible, so he or she can oversee the commencement of the disaster recovery phase. However, this does rely upon a person's availability for an extended period of many months and who can be released from their current role or is retired or has some other flexible work arrangements. The 'right person' may not always be available and so planning for an LRC, whether from government or community, in the event of a disaster, means they are ready to go.

NGOs and individuals responded to the emergency and the public appeal to call and register to support the recovery phase of the fire. People (new or spontaneous volunteers) can register through VSA&NT and be matched with



service-providing organisations. The VSA&NT pass on the names of those registered to NGO's, for example, when an NGO has exhausted their volunteer base. Over four hundred and fifty people registered with VSA&NT, although none of these volunteers were deployed to the recovery site. The registration and organisation of volunteers for disaster recovery – the MOU between the SRO and VSA&NT – is still in the early stages and timely placements to utilise these volunteers will continue to develop. However, VSA&NT promoted two clean-up activities at Hamley Bridge and nine volunteers responded; and a Red Cross training session where approximately 40 people attended [10].

The key NGOs and many of their members who assisted with the recovery effort included a number of faith-based organisations: Habitat for Humanity; Mormon Helping Hands; Saint Vincent de Paul; Samaritan's Purse; and Tzu Chi, a Buddhist-based charity organisation. It also included non-faith based groups: Architects/re-building advisers; BlazeAid; Conservation Volunteers Australia (CVA); Livestock S.A.; and SA Veterinary Emergency Management (SAVEM).

Other supporting activities and events included: a team of chaplains from Disaster and Recovery Ministries (Uniting Church SA) who helped around the community; the Toyota Land Cruiser Club team spent 105 days in the field and clocked up 700 hours of work and travelled approximately 7,000 km; 60 volunteer men graduated from a training program called 'Menswatch' and helped others in their area with stress and emotional support; and 50 staff from Pernod Ricard painted the Wasleys Institute as part of staff volunteer day in June 2016 [9].

Local governments across Australia play a pivotal role in disaster recovery, because they are well positioned to provide support at the local level. For large scale fires where the fire has crossed local government boundaries, councils will co-ordinate together and in the case of Pinery, work closely with the Emergency Relief Functional Service Group and the Local Recovery Co-ordinator. Furthermore, state government departments (other than (DCSI), provide advice for example: animal welfare; pest plant and animal management; soil management and so on. This case study did not explore the full extent of activities undertaken by these sections of government, but acknowledge their major contribution toward the Pinery Fire recovery.

There were likely many more acts of support and gestures of kindness from within and outside the fire impacted community that have not been officially recorded. This mirrors the situation in other disaster recovery scenarios, where much of the voluntary assistance is provided informally via existing social networks by people from within impacted communities as well as from neighbouring areas [11].



KEY ACTIVITIES

The interviewees described a range of activities and key tasks their NGOs and volunteers completed during the recovery phase. The organisations provided services directly and indirectly to people affected by bushfire throughout the Pinery Fire area and these included:

- access and referrals to other relevant services;
- cash cards, organisations use their funds to provide a set amount of dollars e.g. \$500, \$1000, to the most needy, e.g. people who have lost their home;
- collectors of money donations (donation cans/boxes, shake tins) for example, State Government disaster relief fund at major thoroughfares, activities or sporting events;
- dispatch for donated items for affected people – clothes, household goods;
- food preparation such as snacks, health bars;
- minor earthworks and construction works, e.g. fence building/repair;
- property clean-up to enable rebuilding to start;
- rebuilding and recovery planning and advice;
- technical advice, and;
- veterinary emergency management.

In addition to the administrative services, physical tasks and technical advice; the social and emotional support is a significant aspect of disaster recovery. For example, Habitat for Humanity is described as “helping residents with the often overwhelming task of cleaning up fire-affected sites and provides emotional support, which is ongoing along the rebuilding timescale” [12]. Interviewees talked about the important social interactions with fire impacted people and the value of working amongst these communities. Furthermore, many of the everyday activities faith-based organisations undertake means volunteers can be well suited to pastoral care and able to navigate delicate situations.

A big concern is about sensitivity to people in these difficult situations, and we don't invade people's privacy and front up insisting that we clean-up a property [Interviewee 5].

I'm not a qualified chaplain but I know how to put my arm on the shoulder of a hurting farmer and have a hamburger with him and help to carry the load. That's a bit what we do as well [Interviewee 8].

Although, the faith-based organisations are mindful of their role in recovery and that it is one of support and not spiritual or religious advocacy.

It's not really a brigade or a specific entity within the church, it's simply church members volunteering, as they're able and when needs arise. ...Because the bottom line for us, is helping people in need [Interviewee 5].

We don't run around with a big bible under our arm and belt people over the head. Our thing is to show our faith by our actions. End of story [Interviewee 8].



We don't look at who you are, what you are, what religion you are. We just want to come and help, so we don't differentiate anybody [Interviewee 2].

At the same time, their presence and work in affected communities can provide opportunities to break down barriers and attitudes about less well-known faith-based organisations.

We only want to make ourselves better and be known to the community - by the community. Hopefully there will be more people joining our group, that's all. We don't want to convert [Interviewee 2].

Churches were good, not everyone has affiliations with churches, but in country areas seems to be stronger than metropolitan area [Interviewee 7].

The presence of volunteers in the aftermath of the fire can provide an opportunity for disaster affected individuals to share their experience.

People will be dramatically different in the way they deal with these things, and we have to be very alert and have our human antennae up. ...So we are adding another dimension to recovery that hasn't traditionally been there [Interviewee 1].

Interviewees described how many landholders expressed gratitude about the people they did not know who volunteered to help them.

There was one family, they came back to our office to thank us, so that was really good [Interviewee 2].

We did some work at Pinery, he hadn't even been burnt out, but was so traumatised by the fire that got quite close and had all his stuff on his property. He wanted us to come in and was overwhelmed by it and wanted us to come and help remove a lot of this junk as it were on his property [Interviewee 4].

The feedback we've got from the property owners has been great [Interviewee 5].

The range of tasks administered or undertaken by NGOs and the many hundreds of individuals provided much needed support to fire-affected communities to begin the recovery and rebuild after the Pinery Fire.



CASE ANALYSIS

This section examines key themes in the case study from the perspectives of the interviewees. It focuses on the relationships between organisations; challenges, risks and limitation; as well as the strengths and enabling factors.

RELATIONSHIPS ACROSS ORGANISATIONS

The recovery for Pinery Fire involved numerous individuals from local community groups, and in-coming community development; emergency relief, and faith-based organisations. The key NGOs and activities undertaken are listed in the previous sections (see Recovery & Key activities).

During any large-scale event, with or without urgency and the potential risks and hazards, it can be a great feat to achieve and maintain streamlined processes. As a consequence of such things like delays or miscommunications, individuals and organisations can be tested. The Pinery Fire presented some of these challenges, which will be discussed in greater depth in the 'Challenges risks and limitations' in the proceeding section. However, interviewees described on the whole, constructive relationships and co-operation between organisations prevailed during the Pinery Fire recovery:

We have found quite a good partnership with Habitat for Humanity ... we work with Habitat for Humanity predominantly ... We've got no MOU or anything like that, just two NGOs working well together [Interviewee 4].

No real rivalries, friendships developed between smaller groups, and Habitat for Humanity and church groups all worked well together [Interviewee 7].

To avoid duplication, tasks and areas are assigned to various groups and this was described by interviewees as beneficial for recovery work. Although, in the haste of response and recovery and as outlined in interviews, it would seem some duplication or 'unauthorised' activities by new groups can take place.

There's only been one situation I can remember where a group started volunteering [providing food]...without authorisation and were asked to pack up their van and leave, because that's actually the role of the Salvation Army [Interviewee 3].

Without warning and without being able to control it, several other organisations and individuals set themselves up in a similar vein and we found ourselves having to tidy up a mess in a number of instances, which we didn't anticipate [Interviewee 6].

Areas of potential rivalry were about groups providing similar services and to avoid this there were nominated team leaders – to work with e.g. clean-up team, welfare team, and so no clashes or rivalries [Interviewee 7].



In other circumstances co-operation between groups varied, particularly when relationships between the groups are new and involve different ways of working as several interviewees outlined with respect to BlazeAid, for example:

BlazeAid do a fabulous job, without a doubt and they garner support and they've got great funding. They do this amazing job. ...Many of them do a wonderful job, but yeah, the fallout, sometimes it [quality of work] is questionable [Interviewee 4].

BlazeAid was probably the odd group out, more prepared to do their own thing than to be seen as part of the big team. And this was not a problem, but other organisations were not getting the same degree of publicity, so they tried to balance so BlazeAid weren't getting all the accolades [Interviewee 7].

We're happy to connect with BlazeAid or any other group that is spearheading a big clean up [Interviewee 5].

BlazeAid are a wonderful, wonderful organisation. I do take my hat off to them. It's just unbelievable what they have achieved and how they draw the volunteers in who just love them. What they've done is just incredible [Interviewee 8].

BlazeAid was established in 2009 in response to the Black Saturday Bushfires in Victoria, the organisation now responds to assist landholders after major disaster events – floods, fires, drought and cyclones – across Australia. Some interviewees talked about the great work of BlazeAid, whereas a few interviewees found BlazeAid more difficult to engage. Whether negative experiences described by some of the interviewees have to do with such things as, the 'outsiders' from interstate, local peculiarities or 'new kid on the block', this report cannot speculate, however it could be one to monitor. This could also be reflective of challenges that may arise further in future as newer styles of volunteering, volunteer management, and voluntary organisations become increasingly involved in disaster recovery [13].

This explorative case study suggests NGOs with a common goal to assist in the recovery can generally work well together, however, some rivalries and jostling about processes can occur.

Because of the way we do things and, religiously, there may be some differences. So we'd rather just do our thing, and you do your own thing, to limit - to prevent any conflicts or different opinions and ideas [Interviewee 2].

NGOs establish and function for different reasons and herald a diverse range of people, they operate in different ways and this can create tensions between groups. This sorting out phase and ascertaining differences is likely beneficial for future events. As NGOs become more familiar with each other's protocols and preferences they will not be starting from scratch, as the following quote highlights:

We're not having to build those relationships anymore and that can only get stronger as time goes on [Interviewee 1].



The experiences and reflections about the Pinery Fire and the co-ordinated recovery as described by the interviewees were in general very positive.

The residents in the Pinery region - they felt that we really showed our care. We cared for them, we wanted to help. Yeah, everybody was happy [Interviewee 2]

I think the experience has been great for us as a church community; I mean it's sad, horrible to see people go through these things. But we haven't had any negativity [Interviewee 5].

Yeah, we're proud to be involved [Interviewee 6].

Interviewees talked about learning from their participation, at the same time recognising disaster events may become all the more frequent (climate change) and therefore their services sought more often.

Pinery is going to become the normal fire is what's scary [Interviewee 1].

Maybe the next time - heaven forbid - it might be completely different and they may need us for whatever reason [Interviewee 4].

The Stakeholder Forum for disaster recovery set up by the SRO in 2013 brings together key NGO representatives to meet on a twice-yearly basis. These meetings provide opportunity to facilitate discussion about recovery processes; roles; tasks; volunteer management; reflect on past events and work collaboratively towards improvement.



CHALLENGES, RISKS AND LIMITATIONS

All interviewees acknowledged the merit of South Australia's model for disaster recovery and the goal to speed up processes and involve a greater range of individuals and organisations. However, most interviewees described delays in decision-making by government agencies and officials and frustrations with bureaucratic processes.

You have to feel sorry for the bureaucrats, they are very much constrained by the processes that are the day to day processes, and they have no ability to deal with the unique circumstances (Interview 1).

Furthermore, interviewees talked about their organisation's good standing within the community and concerns about the organisational reputation when processes are out of their control and their services are indirectly compromised by delays. At the same time, interviewees acknowledged the importance of checks and procedures to ensure aid and support is directed to the right people.

If we don't get SRO to do the verification process [e.g. eligibility to receive assistance], it's open to anybody. This is what we have been discussing for a very long time should we have the SRO to do the verification for us? But if we let the SRO do the verification, that will take up a lot of their time and they have a limited number of people to do this, and it's a very big job [Interviewee 2].

NGOs loaded with years of experience in community development and social support, operate in a less constrained environment than many government agencies, and have autonomy and responsibility. However, some interviewees took umbrage about some of the disaster recovery processes and described what seemed to them, a lack of trust.

We know Recovery SA is in charge of projects. I said we're willing to take guidance and direction and for you to be comfortable with what we're doing. But we wouldn't surrender any of our autonomy, we just wouldn't [Interviewee 5].

I think is crucial so that we know that family X has had a legitimate, you know issue around property loss if it's a fire and A, B, C, D circumstance. ...We assess people in crisis, but if there was a shared database - I get the whole privacy thing and all that. I understand the requirements there, but in a situation of crisis it would be very useful for us to be able to share information with the government from day one around, this is what's been provided to this family, this is what's been provided to this family and so on they [SRO] just don't share the information [Interviewee 6].



Interviewees recognise the need for centralised co-ordination for disaster recovery, for example by the SRO, however, their autonomy is important because they are NGOs and independent of government and this arrangement they do not wish to forgo even during disaster recovery. Wider research also shows that NGO's independence from government can enable them to do things that government organisations cannot in recovery, for example garnering greater trust with some disaster-impacted communities, and tapping into social networks, volunteer bases, and donations that are not be available to government entities [14].

Interviewees acknowledge the government's move toward shared responsibility for disaster recovery but at the same time felt there is a need to better share information and operations. Furthermore, NGOs were more than willing to assist, but for the most part are unable to absorb significant additional costs. When NGOs are saddled with costs that government previously carried, this can be a cause of concern for future involvement.

That has made it a bit restrictive [costs] I suppose on how much time in volunteering that we can offer, to make sure that we are able to cover our costs and pay our team leader's wage [Interviewee 4].

In SA on the money side of things, I think there's a couple of million dollars raised by the public and that money naturally went into a fund to support the victims; those that lost homes and so on. But there was no money for the people like ourselves out in the field actually doing the work [Interviewee 8].

After a disaster public donations are vitally important and as Interviewee 8 acknowledges the generosity of many to raise around two million dollars. However, at the same time people can decide to donate household items and goods, and some can be dubious in quality and not always practical or essential for victims of disaster. Such was the Pinery Fire, where good intentions may not translate to useful items.

A significant percentage of people saw it as an opportunity to clean out their wardrobes or sheds. There were some horrendous examples of people donating nothing less than rubbish [Interviewee 6].

This situation is known in disaster research as 'material convergence' and it is widely reported to occur in almost every disaster event to the extent that it has been labelled the 'second disaster' [15]. Immediately after the Pinery Fire, public messages were made to guide the public in their provision of assistance. The Pinery Fire experience suggests that action is needed in Australia to improve the guidance given to the public on the most beneficial ways to materially assist disaster-impacted communities. In these situations politicians and media spokespersons may play a role to diplomatically advocate for 'quality' items and highlight money as the best donation. It was suggested by an interviewee that perhaps well-known celebrities could 'comically' advocate for practical and useful items or again promote money as the preferred donation.

The SRO provides information on their website 'Management of donated goods after a disaster' [2]. The website outlines cash as the best donation, because it provides impacted people with choice to buy what they need. This money is typically spent within the local community, which also aids recovery.



STRENGTHS AND ENABLING FACTORS

The SRO has a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with a number of key organisations to assist with recovery after a major disaster. As previously noted, the MOU with VSA&NT is to assist in planning and managing the spontaneous volunteer effort, to promote opportunities through their website and enlist volunteers to match them to organisations and activities for appropriate skills and time availability [2]. The SRO also has a MOU with Saint Vincent de Paul, and has appointed the organisation responsible for the management, collection and distribution of goods donated through public appeals in response to disaster events.

After a major disaster a public appeal for donations to support the communities impacted by the disaster may be launched and the Pinery Fire public appeal was set up. Most donated monies are processed through a major emergency relief organisation like the Australian Red Cross for the State Emergency Relief Fund. In addition, other charity organisations and faith-based groups can set up separate appeals and do have the ability to tap into their networks and quickly raise funds.

We can easily raise funds overnight, serious money [Interviewee 8].

In some of the most remote or less populated areas of Australia churches exist and continue to function. Faith-based organisations can have extensive networks across the country and can respond quickly and can have good local knowledge about surrounding communities and their needs.

The churches played a great role. There were some really great people involved. The Hamley Bridge Minister was very involved. And a couple of women, church-based who are trained; one a counsellor and one a psychologist and they went out three days a week to support communities and still continue [Interviewee 7].

The presence of churches in impacted areas can mean that once major recovery structures such as the LRC and agency support is finalised, the local faith-based groups and their pastoral and lay people can continue to support communities.

The Sampson Flat Fire as noted previously (see Setting) was a major fire, which occurred approximately 11 months before the Pinery Fire. Some organisations and sections of government had tested their procedures during the Sampson Flat Fire and lessons learnt could be carried to the Pinery Fire.

Sampson was the learning curve and Pinery was an opportunity to go in and say: We're here when you're ready [Interviewee 4].

We're learning every time ... we changed our method so that in the Pinery bushfire, everything was much simpler and people were much happier [Interviewee 2].

However, no two fires are the same nor are the personnel and approaches will differ.

It works really well, I think [recovery], but the thing is the structure is different in each emergency [Interviewee 3].



We learnt in the Sampson Flat fire that the systems [computer databases] were quite archaic and we were surprised, because our systems are certainly not state-of-the-art, but the government systems, in many instances we were just going wow, how bad is that [Interviewee 6]?

One of the things that happened in Pinery that didn't happen in Sampson Flat, was in the early days a lot of talking at the community. Whereas in Sampson Flat, I think we did a little bit better. ...we are sharing that collective knowledge. We are getting better at this, but every time they send a substitute who is starting from scratch, ooh. Because they're having to do huge catch-ups [Interviewee 1].

Interviewee 1 eludes to leadership styles and personnel who can approach things differently and reinforces the idea that processes will change overtime and people need to be up-to-date with current practices.

NGOs not traditionally part of recovery efforts can bring a range of skills and expertise. The autonomy of individuals and organisations not under the guise of government can give them leeway to ascertain situations and potentially be quite frank in their assessment and possibly more helpful in the long run.

Some people are saying, I'm a victim, rescue me. The answer is: That's not going to be good for you, you're not going to become resilient by me doing it all for you. [Interviewee 1].

Engaging NGOs who have not previously been involved in disaster recovery will expand the number of volunteers. A lot of the members of these organisations have appropriate skills and approvals such as Police Checks, Working with Children etc. and therefore can be deployed immediately.

We were able to engage thousands of volunteers and undertake huge amounts of priority projects [Interviewee 4].

We've got hundreds of people that we can mobilise pretty quickly...any reasonable civilisation looks after those in crisis really well and that's not a bad measure for any civilisation [Interviewee 6].

Many of these organisations have an ability to call on a large number of members who are volunteering or supporting community development and charitable work and are keen to assist.

Volunteer management and volunteering styles in disaster recovery range from very traditional (structured, long-term, ongoing volunteers) to more adaptive models and shorter-term volunteering (i.e. 'non-traditional styles'). Disaster recovery benefits from a range of volunteering models co-existing. For example, more traditional organisations can refer spontaneous volunteers to less-traditional organisations able to take them, rather than turning down their offers to assist.



CONCLUSION

This research set out to learn more about and to better understand the breadth of disaster recovery volunteering in recovery and the contexts and structures within which it occurs and used the Pinery Fire 2015 in South Australia as an exploratory case study. The report draws upon experiences and perspectives from a key group of individuals (8) involved in the recovery phase of the fire. The findings (see Key Findings) provide insights into the potential opportunities and challenges for the SRO and volunteer-involving organisations involved in future disaster events.

The move toward engaging volunteers and NGOs not traditionally involved in disaster recovery alongside those with more established roles can be of benefit in a range of ways. The pool of volunteers to assist impacted communities will obviously be greater. Many of the members from community development and faith-based organisations have skills and approvals to volunteer and undertake a breadth of tasks and can be well-suited to provide much needed social support. However, an influx of people can put pressure on administrative processes, such as timely placement of new volunteers. In addition, organisations can incur costs undertaking recovery roles and this cost shifting of financial burden from disasters is one they do not want to, or cannot support. Furthermore, as NGOs their autonomy is important because they are NGOs and independent of government and this arrangement they do not wish to forgo even during disaster recovery.

The experiences and reflections of interviewees about the recovery processes for the Pinery Fire were in general very positive. They acknowledge with concern that disasters will probably increase (climate change) and experiences from fires like Pinery and Sampson Flat and collaborative approaches such as the Stakeholder Forum, can prepare them to better share data; streamline processes and differentiate roles for future events.



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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Participant

1. Can you tell me about yourself and your involvement with <ORGANISATION/INITIATIVE>?
2. What were the most surprising things about your experience?

What happened?

3. Can you tell me more about <VOL EXAMPLE>? (How did it start? What happened? Who was involved? Purpose?)
4. Can you tell me more about the volunteers involved? (What did they do? Who were they? How they got involved? How were they managed?)
5. Is the organisation/initiative still operating? Has it changed over time? (How? Why?)
6. What worked well / didn't work well? What barriers, challenges, problems and risks arose? How were they tackled?
7. Did you need to deal with any unplanned/unexpected issues?

Relationships/integration

8. We're interested in finding out more about how these types of initiatives interact with the official emergency management system. Can you tell us anything about experiences in this case?

Lessons learned

9. What would you do the same/differently next time?
10. Do you have any advice for others interested in starting something like this in the future?
11. Do you have any advice for emergency management organisations about engaging with/supporting organisations/initiatives like this one?

Specific issues (if relevant, not already covered)

- How was the initiative funded?
- Were any actual or potential legal issues encountered? Addressed?
- Safety issues? Addressed?
- Problems with other organisations? Addressed?
- Problems with recipients? Addressed?

Wrap up

1. Has your opinion of this type volunteering changed because of your involvement?
2. Future plans arising from this?
3. Other general comments or questions you may have?
4. Do you know of other key people, or people with different opinions to you, we might talk to?

Note, this is the interview guide for the researcher. The process we use is an iterative one and therefore at the time of the interview, in some cases not all questions will be asked (deemed not relevant or there are time constraints) and in other situations, additional questions can be included.