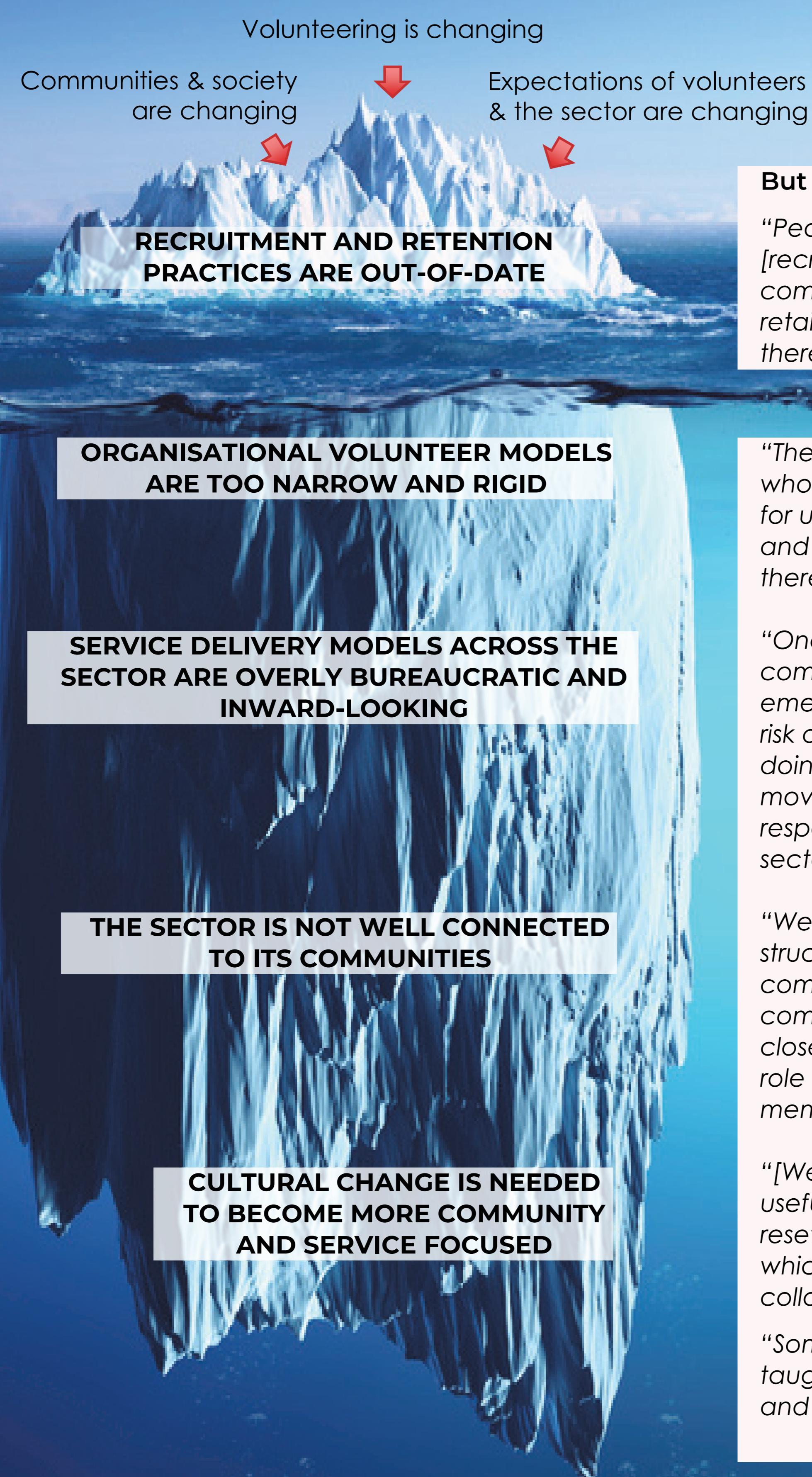# Volunteer sustainability is about much more than recruitment and retention

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We asked 26 government and non-government volunteer managers about volunteer sustainability. You might be surprised by what they told us. Recruitment and retention practices are just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the changes needed to meet the future.

Volunteering is changing

Communities & society are changing

Expectations of volunteers & the sector are changing

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION PRACTICES ARE OUT-OF-DATE

ORGANISATIONAL VOLUNTEER MODELS ARE TOO NARROW AND RIGID

SERVICE DELIVERY MODELS ACROSS THE SECTOR ARE OVERLY BUREAUCRATIC AND INWARD-LOOKING

THE SECTOR IS NOT WELL CONNECTED TO ITS COMMUNITIES

CULTURAL CHANGE IS NEEDED TO BECOME MORE COMMUNITY AND SERVICE FOCUSED

But more than recruitment and retention needs to change

"People have already mentioned that we've got to have a great [recruitment] campaign. No... What are the needs? We just keep coming back to a holistic approach. What will help recruit and retain is that you're introducing flexible models. Thinking about that there is [rural] decline." [Manager 1]

"Then there is the whole model of volunteering … whether the whole membership model needs to be re-examined. Is there a need for us to stop focusing on the fact that there is a gateway process and you are either inside the organisation or you are outside and there is a massive gulf in between the two?" [Manager 2]

"One of the challenges … is the bureaucracy because there will come a point where, and we experience that now, where emergent forms of volunteering go against the government and the risk adverse attitude we have. We don't want to take risks. We like doing things slowly and we have got to change. We have got to move more quickly if we want to remain the leading people who respond to storm and flood and bushfires and everything else the sector does." [Manager 3]

"We need to understand better the intersects between the structures we put in place in emergency management and how communities really work. And how we can interact better between community and emergency management and work together more closely. And understand you need the role of volunteers in that: the role between volunteers as community members, and volunteers as members of organisations." [Manager 4]

"[We can have] the best strategy on the planet, but it won't be useful unless we change culture at the coal face and I guess have a reset on what's important and what's valuable while we're there; which is community and our services to community, and collaborating with community." [Manager 5]

"Some of this stuff around that cultural arrogance. If it hasn't been taught by us and practiced in our environment we don't value it and we don't recognise it." [Manager 6]

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