

The Emergency Management Sustainable Volunteering Blueprint

Celeste Young, Collaborative Research Fellow

Victoria University

Danielle Meggos, Director Policy (Capability Development)

Department of Premier and Cabinet NSW





We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of all the lands on which we live and work, and pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging. We recognise that these lands and waters have always been places of teaching, research and learning.





The team

- Roger Jones (VU)
- Celeste Young (VU)
- Kara Dadswell (VU)
- Daniel Ooi (VU)
- Steve Cameron (Bloc Consulting)
- Siobhan McCuskey (VU)
- Neil Parry (VU)
- AFAC Volunteer Management Technical Group
- Sandra Lunardi, AFAC
- Adam Moore, AFAC
- Andrew Coghlan, Australian Red Cross
- Blythe McLennan, NHRA (now AIDR)
- Vana Demetriou, NHRA
- Mary Cadeddu, NHRA



The purpose of this project

To provide a National Emergency Volunteer Sustainability Blueprint and Action Plan as a **living document** that presents tangible pathways for actions that:

- Actively progress the sustainable volunteering agenda
- Reframe the agenda; and
- Support the case for investment

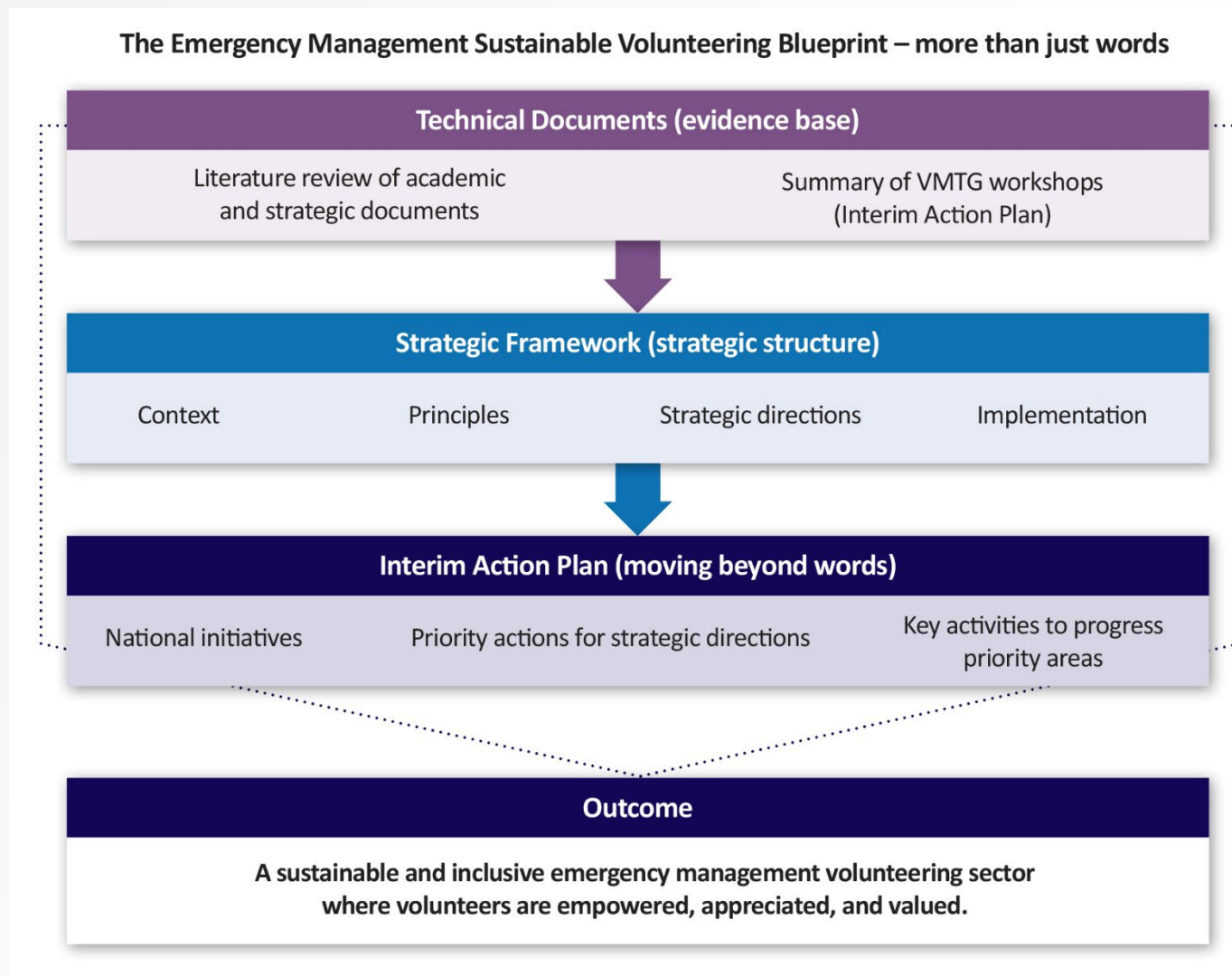
Things are changing

- Increasing demand for EM services and competition for volunteers
- Expansion of the EM volunteering role
- Decreases in formal volunteering
- Increases in other forms of EM volunteering
- Changing communities, community contexts and social contracts; and
- Changing expectations of work

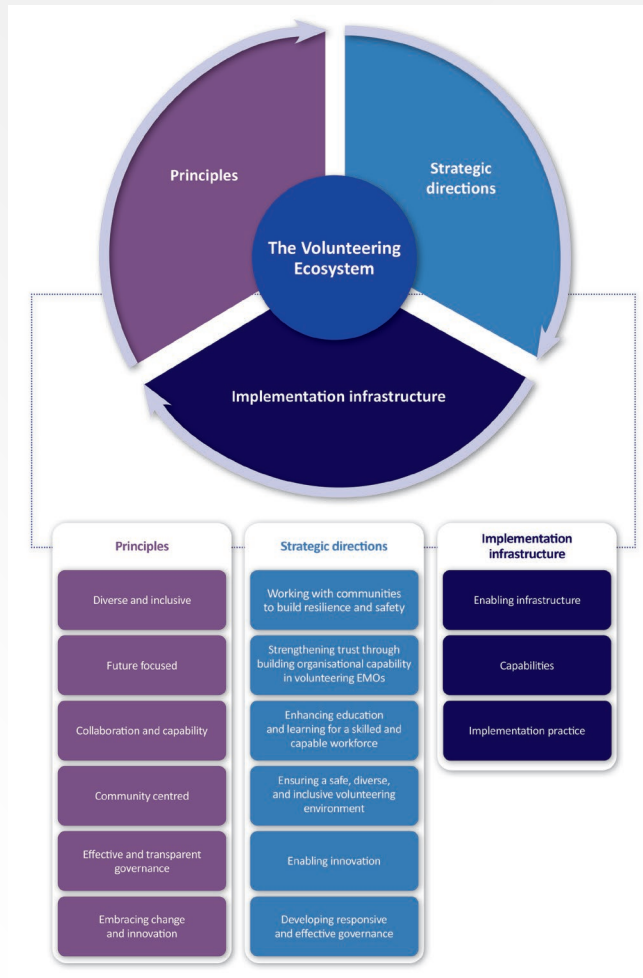
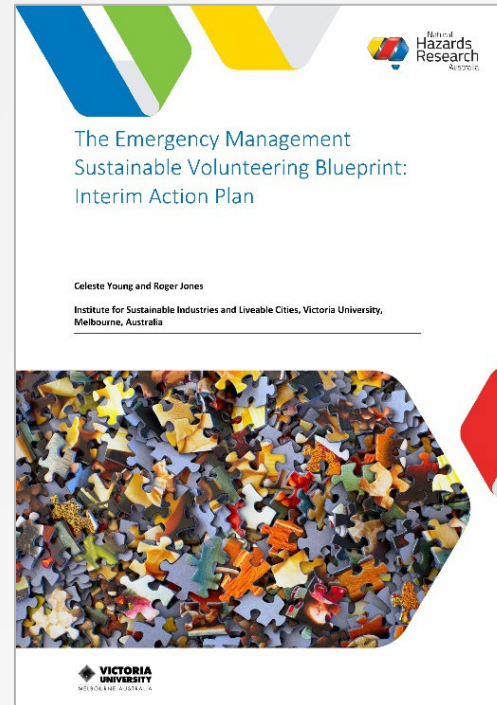
Future focused



The Blueprint



Going beyond words



Impacts

- The AFAC Volunteering Management Technical Group have taken ownership of The Interim Action Plan and endorsed The Blueprint Strategic Framework.
- Contributed to the national conversation – ABC Radio interviews, Phoenix (2024) and The Official Yearbook of the National State Emergency Service Volunteer Association, Celebrating 50 Years of State Emergency Services (2025).
- It has contributed to the development of the NEMA funded National Volunteering Strategy being led by NSW Premier's Department.
- Built a bridge between national initiatives

National Emergency Volunteering Strategy



Guiding principles for national action

- Enhance and support State and Territory based capability
- Integrate within and support existing State and Territory command and control structures
- Recognise the importance of supporting and empowering local communities in areas of high disaster risk
- Build on existing work underway
- Flexible and adaptive
- Collaborative and community informed in design
- Consider all phases of emergency management



The process

What we wanted and what we achieved:

- Inclusive conversations and the opportunity for a broad range of stakeholders to contribute.
- Unpacking where the barriers are and what opportunities there are for a program of reform
- Identification of priority areas for reform and outcomes and actions for change with high consensus across jurisdictions.



What we heard

- Multi-sector system- all tiers of government, non-government, informal volunteers & community
- System level reform
- Inclusion, diversity & untapped volunteer cohorts
- Disaster lifecycle
- Coordination & data
- Psychosocial health & safety



Priority areas

Training and compliance

Honours and award
systems

Disaster funding

Volunteer value

Insurance and protections

Surge capability



Linking to the Blueprint

- Tangible and measurable actions in the National Strategy
 - Supporting movement along the Blueprint maturity matrix
- Government (at all levels) working at scale
 - Aligned to the principles of the Blueprint



Policy in practice

Strategic Direction: Ensuring a safe, diverse, and inclusive volunteering environment

Objective: To ensure that volunteers work in a safe environment where they feel welcomed, valued, and their diverse needs are accommodated.

Outcome: An environment where all volunteers and community cohorts feel welcomed and emotionally, culturally, and physically safe.

Protentional action: Building awareness of cultural and social safety and how to manage this, and its connection to psychosocial safety requirements.

Strategic objective: safeguard emergency volunteers, including informal and spontaneous cohorts through consistent and transparent insurance and protection measures to support a safe and sustainable workforce.

Outcome: Foster safe, diverse and inclusive volunteer environments.

Proposed actions

- Identify and share mechanisms that promote diversity and inclusion
- Identity and share measures to protect the physical and mental health of volunteers



Thank you

Celeste Young

celeste.young@vu.edu.au

Danielle Meggos

danielle.meggos@premiersdepartment.nsw.gov.au