



## Bushfire CRC Volunteerism Project Findings

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### **(National) Volunteerism Project:**

**Aims to:**

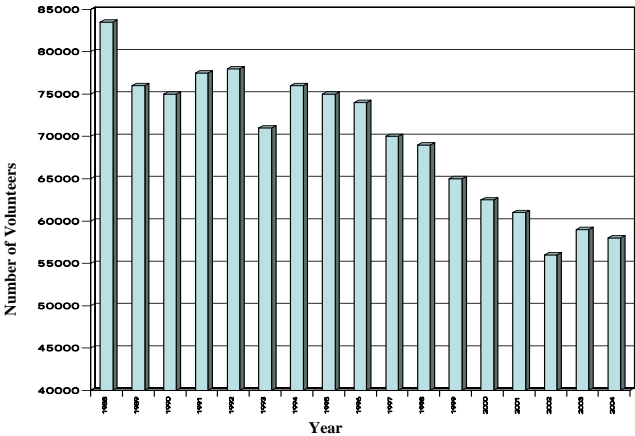
- ✓ do research
- ✓ with and for Australian volunteer fire services
- ✓ so as to develop new ways to maintain adequate numbers of volunteers
- ✓ now and 5-10 years down the track.

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# “Vanishing Volunteers”

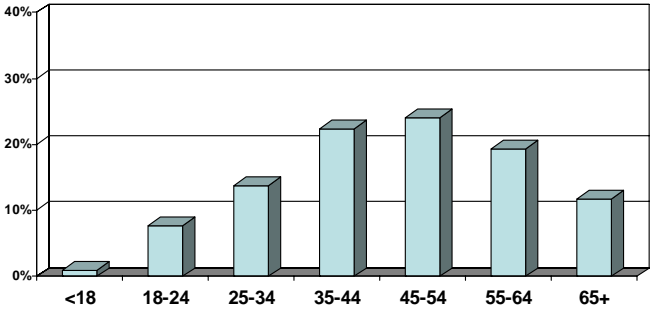


•CFA Volunteer Numbers 1988 to 2004

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# “Ageing Volunteers”



•Age Profile – QLD F & R S (Rural) volunteers (2004)

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## All fire agencies have “headaches”

- **Smaller rural communities: dwindling brigade memberships, declining/static & ageing communities**
- **New housing developments around urban/rural fringes: lack of volunteers, lack of “community”**
- **Urban/rural fringes: busy brigades, lack of crew 9-5 weekdays, risk of ‘burnout’**

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## Some of the causes are obvious

- **Population movements**
- **Ageing Australian population**
- **Changes in the global economy**

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## Some are less obvious

- **Structural changes in the nature of work**
- **Changes in the makeups of families and households**
- **Generational changes in values and volunteering(?)**

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## Other Findings

- **Agencies have (mostly) inadequate volunteer data base management systems for planning purposes**
- **Agencies' recognition and award systems (mostly) don't reflect the work volunteers do, and don't match today's "volunteering climate"**

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## More findings

- Brigades are often not particularly “female friendly”
- Volunteers are increasingly in a state of time-poverty: work & families
- “Its all too hard”—demands of volunteering
- “its all too scary”—fears of legal ‘blowback’

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## “What is too be done?”

- Find out, so as to change things---
- Who does and does not volunteer and why?
- Who leaves the agency, who stays, and why?
- What will make things easier for : employers of volunteers, and families of volunteers?

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## What is being done?

- NSW RFS Region West community survey of 6,000 households—why don't people volunteer?

[Pilot survey: 1. Too old/infirm.

2. Employment responsibilities.

3. Family responsibilities.

--RFS perceived positively, but a low level of accurate knowledge in the community]

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## “being done”

- NSW RFS: Survey of employers of volunteers
- CFA: Survey of four new communities in Melbourne's 'growth corridors'
- CFA: ongoing follow-up of new volunteers: 6, 12, 24 months

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## “being done”

- SA CFS: survey of their 4,100 women volunteers
- FESA WA: survey of new volunteers – 6 months
- TFS: volunteers needs for training in leadership skills (planned)

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## Into the future:

- Research with agencies 2006-7
- Develop new initiatives with agencies
- Evaluate these new initiatives

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