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Enhancing Volunteer Recruitment and Retention Project (D3)

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Volunteer Recruitment and Retention Issues: A Review of the Literature

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Executive Summary

This volunteerism research literature review was carried out for two main reasons:

(a) To confirm that the various research priority needs identified previously by fire services in relation to volunteer recruitment and retention had not already been addressed elsewhere—the review confirmed these gaps in knowledge.

(b) To provide a resource for those working or studying in the broad area of emergency services volunteer recruitment, management, support, and training—this is the first comprehensive review of research relating to recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters in Australia.

- The review has been organised into 16 self-contained sections, each with its own list of references. The topics addressed (which were generated during discussion with staff and volunteers of the participating agencies) are: General trends in volunteering; Age and volunteering—with a special sub section on youth volunteering; Rural regions and volunteering; Economic aspects of volunteering; Reasons for volunteering; Barriers to volunteering; Retention of volunteers; Incentives and recognition; Volunteers and their communities—social capital; Organisational issues; Training; Legal issues; Families of volunteers; Employers of volunteers; Women volunteers; Volunteers and minority groups—Indigenous Australian volunteers, and volunteers from Non-English Speaking Backgrounds.

- There is a considerable body of literature on current and long-term trends in Australia's potential pool of volunteers generally. However, there is little research which focuses directly on how such trends are likely to impact on the provision of volunteer emergency services.

- The knowledge gaps in the research literature most likely to be of concern to rural fire services are of three kinds:

    - How communities view volunteer fire services, fire service volunteers, and fire service volunteering. In particular: (a) different geographic communities-- remote rural, urban/rural fringe, small-to-medium country towns, regional centres; and (b) identifiable groupings of community members—Indigenous Australians, members of Non-English Speaking Background Communities, women, young people (18-26).
    - Volunteers' beliefs and needs concerning a range of issues relating to volunteer retention: leadership; management and support; conflict resolution; training; recognition; legal liability.
    - The needs of key volunteering 'third parties': employers of volunteers, and families of volunteers.

- The review makes it clear that the forces likely to impact most negatively on fire services' volunteer numbers are too powerful for fire services to combat directly: namely, **economics** and **demographics**. Fire services must adapt to these forces. The review suggests strongly that the adaptations required are of four kinds:
    - Investing more resources in recruiting (and retaining) from non-traditional sources—more women, especially in operational roles; more volunteers from

> Indigenous Australian and Non-English Speaking Backgrounds; and junior volunteers (<16) and youth volunteers (17-25).

- Investing more organisational (human and financial) resources in the management and support of volunteers—strategic planning and policy development functions as well as day-to-day administration.
- Addressing those aspects of volunteer organisational life known (at least in general terms) to contribute to resignations from volunteer fire services: poor leadership and interpersonal conflict, lack of meaningful recognition, lack of consultation, financial imposts on volunteers, and unnecessary demands on volunteers' time.
- Investing more resources in informing, supporting, and assisting two key 'players' in the volunteering process: employers of volunteers and families of volunteers.

Recommendations

- This review makes it clear that there is paucity of sound research into the factors identified as being likely to affect the recruitment and retention of emergency services volunteers in Australia. Much of our current 'knowledge' is anecdotal. There is thus a need for more robust research by fire services to investigate the volunteer firefighter recruitment and retention issues discussed in this review. There is likewise a pressing need for fire services to evaluate any measures they put in place to enhance recruitment and retention. Finally, fire services need systems in place to detect emerging new threats to their volunteer numbers in relation to community protection needs.

1. Introduction

The emergency services do not appear to be carefully considering how capacity and capability can be maintained, despite their desire for more volunteers. Very few organisations know where their volunteers are recruited from, and what motivates them to join or to resign; and, more than likely, understand why people do not volunteer at all (Rheinholtd, 1999/2000, p. 8)

The Review was carried out for two reasons. First, to ensure that the gaps in knowledge identified through discussions with rural fire services (McLennan, 2004) have not, in fact, been addressed in previous research. Second, to generate a resource able to be used by those working or studying in the field of emergency services volunteer recruitment, management and support.

Every effort has been made to locate and include material directly relevant to volunteer recruitment and retention issues facing Australian rural fire services. There is a vast literature concerning volunteering in general—both Australian and overseas. References to general (or Third Sector, or not-for-profit, or non-government organisation) volunteering have been included where these appeared to be relevant to emergency services volunteering in Australia.

Because the Review is most likely to be used as a resource document, major topics relating to recruitment and retention of rural fire services volunteers have been organised into self-contained Sections, each with its own Reference List. This has resulted in some duplication across Sections.

This Review is not intended to provide a comprehensive discussion of all aspects of the various issues noted: it is an attempt to describe the material available, as at 2004, which bears on the issues described. A copy of each of the references cited is available from Adrian Birch, Research Officer, Bushfire CRC Volunteerism Project, School of Psychological Science, La Trobe University, Bundoora, 3086: a.birch@latrobe.edu.au -- please contact Adrian if you have any difficulty in locating a reference cited in the Review which you require.

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2. General Trends in Volunteering

2.1 Overseas

2.1.1 USA

The *US Bureau of Labor Statistics* (2003) reported that its Annual Survey showed 28.8% of the adult population engaged in volunteering activity during the previous 12 months, an increase from 27.4 % reported in 2002. For those under 21 years of age the increase was from 26.9% in 2002 to 29.5% in 2003, possibly reflecting increased emphasis in schools on volunteering. The participation rate for women (32.2%) was higher than that for men (25.1%). The highest participation rate was in the 35-44 years age range: 34.7%, unchanged from 2002. Participation rates for minority groups were lower compared with those for Whites (30.6%): Blacks 20%; Asian 18.7%; Hispanic 15.7%. There was a strong link between level of education and volunteering: for those who did not complete high school the rate was 9.9% compared with 45.6% for those who were college graduates. Those in the work force were more likely to volunteer, with those in part-time employment reporting the highest participation rate.

2.1.2 United Kingdom

The *Institute for Volunteering Research* (2001) in the UK reported findings from a 1997 survey, the third in a series of such national surveys commencing in 1981, with the second in 1991. Compared with the 1991 figures, there was a slight fall in overall participation in voluntary activity: down from 51% of the population (aged 18 years and over) in 1991 to 48% in 1997. There was an increase in the average weekly hours of volunteering: up from 2.7 hours pw in 1991 to 4 hours pw in 1997. More retired people were volunteering in 1997 but participation by younger people fell (down from 55% to 43%), as did the amount of hours per week in volunteer activity—down from an average of 2.7 hours pw in 1991 to 0.7 hours pw in 1997. Those in employment were more likely to volunteer than those outside the labour market—compared with 1991 there was a big reduction in volunteering by unemployed people: down from 50% in 1991 to 38% in 1997. This is consistent with a concern that reform of the UK unemployment benefits system has acted as a deterrent to volunteering. Volunteering rates were inversely related to socioeconomic status (SES): those in the highest SES group were almost twice as likely to volunteer as those in the lowest SES group. Men and women were equally likely to volunteer.

nfpSynergy is a British 'think-tank' dedicated to the voluntary sector. In 2003 it issued a Report *Five key trends and their impact on the voluntary sector* (Evans & Saxton, 2003). The five trends identified and discussed were:
1. The ageing population.
2. An increase in the number of 'blended' step-families associated with a rising divorce rate.
3. An increase in the number of single-person and single-parent households.
4. Increasing enrolments (especially by females) in tertiary education.
5. Delays in financial independence of children as greater numbers undertake tertiary education.
The implications of such changes were said to include: more claims on the 'voluntary dollar' as people become more discriminating in causes they are prepared to support; an expectation by younger volunteers that their volunteering will result in a 'return' in the form of enriched job-related skills; older volunteers (especially women) becoming more discriminating about

the form of volunteering they will be prepared to engage in; increased demand upon voluntary services for older persons in the community; and increased competition among employers and volunteer organisations for younger people.

2.1.3 Canada

A Canadian review (Hall, McKechnie, Davidman, & Leslie, 2001) reported that in 1998 almost one-third of Canadians undertook some form of voluntary work. However, volunteers devoted fewer hours to volunteering compared to the time they devoted in 1987. Hall et al concluded from their review that there was cause for concern about the future of volunteering in that country. They noted that only a small minority of Canadian volunteers (8%) provided the bulk of volunteering time (72%).These high-participation volunteers tended to be older, married, have children living at home, have higher incomes, be better educated, and to be regular church attenders. Hall et al concluded (p. 18) "Any decline in the participation of this unique group of 'core' volunteers is likely to have dramatic repercussions on the availability of volunteer time". Changing demands on volunteer's time was identified as an important trend for volunteers: the need for dual incomes in families, increased expectations in the work place, and increased family commitments were emerging as significant impediments to volunteering. Volunteers reported less time being available for their voluntary work. Volunteers were increasingly seeking skill development opportunities from their volunteering activities: "meaningful volunteer experiences to gain skills can be listed on their resumes" (p. 19). Voluntary sector informants noted that volunteers were being more selective in what they chose to do than in the past: "As one informant observed 'we have swung from a "what can I do?" volunteer to a "what can you do for me" volunteer'" (p. 19).

Graff (2000) discussed emerging trends and issues in relation to volunteering in Canada, based on a review of a large volunteer-hosting organisation, *Canadian Blood Services*. She identified three key emerging recruitment 'markets':
- In recognition of an ageing workforce, and in anticipation of ongoing losses as a result, target a younger volunteer workforce;
- Foster corporate volunteering;
- Target ethnically and racially diverse communities.

2.2 Volunteering in Australia

2.2.1 General

The *Australian Bureau of Statistics* (ABS, 2001) has so far conducted two surveys of voluntary work in Australia, one in 1995 and the other in 2000. In 1995, the estimated number of volunteers aged 18 years and over was 3,189,400, representing 24% of the population. In 2000 the corresponding number of volunteers was 4,395,600 representing 32% of the population (a participation rate very similar to that reported for Canada in 1997 by Hall et al. (2001). The 1995/2000 change is an increase of 38% in the number of Australians volunteering. However, the median number of hours per week of voluntary work remained stable at 1.4 hours per week per volunteer. On the basis of the 2000 survey, volunteering rates were: slightly higher for women compared with men; highest in the age range 35-44 years; higher for married people; and higher for those born in Australia (35%) compared with those born overseas (25%). People in employment (full- or part-time) were more likely to volunteer than those who were unemployed or otherwise not in the labour force. However, people not in the labour force contributed, in aggregate, somewhat more hours of voluntary work per year than did people who were unemployed. Occupational group membership was related strongly to volunteering. Professionals had the highest participation rate (46%), followed by Advanced

clerical and service workers (42%), and Managers and administrators. Associate professionals (38%), Intermediate clerical, sales and service workers (34%), and Elementary clerical, sales, and service workers (32%) had intermediate levels of participation rates. Tradespersons and related workers (28%), Labourers and related workers (24%), and Intermediate production and transport workers (22%) had relatively lower participation rates.

Paul (2001) discussed possible implications of the ABS (2001) survey for volunteer organisations in relation to: age of volunteers; gender issues and volunteering; marginalised people and volunteering; non-metropolitan areas and volunteering; motivation for volunteering; volunteering and 'social capital'; and active engagement with the community. Each of these issues is addressed in subsequent Sections of the review.

As Wilkinson and Bittman (2002) observed, the ABS has conducted only two population surveys on volunteering. However, they also noted that the ABS has conducted three time-use surveys (1987, 1992, 1997). Based on the trends suggested by these, Wilkinson and Bittman predicted that both the number of volunteers and the hours of voluntary work they would supply are likely to increase in 2011 and 2021. However, this growth in volunteering is likely to involve persons aged over 55 years.

Hughes and Blackman (2002) examined data drawn from the Australian Community Survey of 6,242 persons conducted by researchers from *Edith Cowan University* (WA) in 1998. Fifty two percent reported that they were involved with a community group or organisation in an unpaid capacity (other than simply subscribing to the organisation or donating money). Personal characteristics predicting frequency of involvement in voluntary activities included: reported busy-ness of life; high level of formal education; frequency of church attendance; importance of helping others as a principle for guiding one's life; and proportion of close friends residing in the local area.

Possible impacts on Australian volunteering resulting from changes in the attitudes of governments to communities and volunteers were discussed by Fahey (2003). Fahey agued that governments of all persuasions were increasingly seeing society not so much as a source of needs to be met but rather as a resource to be exploited. Fahey's concern was that policies which push communities towards volunteering may have unintended negative consequences arising from increased expectations of voluntary organisations, which expectations cannot be met.

2.2.2 Fire and Emergency Services
Little research has been published concerning trends in Australian fire and emergency services volunteering. A Report to the *South Australian Country Fire Service Board* (Regan, 2003) noted that there had been a gradual decline in volunteer membership over time: "Over the past five years, the CFS volunteer population has continued to record a gradual downward trend. On average, approximately 1200 new members join CFS each year, while 1,600 leave the service" (p. 9). Regan identified two major categories of trends likely to impact adversely on volunteer numbers—demographic changes, and societal barriers to volunteering. Under 'demographic changes', Regan listed (a) ageing population (including the 'baby boomers' now reaching retirement age); (b) increased number of households where both partners are employed; (c) changes in the nature of paid work—increased casualisation, and growth of part-time work and self-employed work; and (d) declining population numbers in some rural areas. Under 'barriers to volunteering' Regan listed (i) desire for episodic volunteering driven

by changes in the nature of work; (ii) time-poverty; (iii) increased cultural diversity; (iv) and inadequate supervision of volunteers by paid staff.

A CFA (2001) submission to the *Economic Development Committee of the Parliament of Victoria* included data on volunteer numbers in CFA indicating that there had been a decline of about 15,000 in the number of rural and regional (as distinct from urban) volunteers between 1990 and 2001. The annual rate of decline during the period varied between 4.4% and 4.8%: "At that rate, if unchecked, the voluntary emergency services workforce available to the State in rural and regional areas could be halved in 10-15 years and be gone within a generation" (p. 8). However, it now appears that a significant proportion of the apparent decline is the result of more stringent record keeping. That is, at least some of the decline represents a "book entry" loss of volunteers rather than a genuine decrease in effective numbers. The submission proposed that there were seven major reasons why volunteers were leaving CFA:

1. Increased (paid) working hours.
2. Increased stress at (paid) work.
3. Reduced job security.
4. Increased family demands, especially where both partners are working.
5. A need to leave the area (for life style, work, family, or retirement reasons) and the resulting disruption of their social networks and links to CFA.
6. The taking up of other interests—sports, clubs, internet etc.
7. The bureaucratic attitudes and requirements of CFA Headquarters to volunteers (as perceived by the volunteers).

The Submission argued that these reasons were expressions of more deeply seated problems within communities, related to structural changes in the economy—especially 'economic rationalism'. The Submission followed the ideas of Howe and Cleary (2001) in grouping factors associated with economic change into three categories:

(i)   changes in the nature of work and industry (eg, the shift from manufacturing to services and growth in part time work);

(ii)   changes in demography and household structure (eg, increase in the number of single person households, the ageing population and marital instability); and

(iii)   changes in public policy, (eg, changes in levels of tariff protection, deregulation of the financial system, and replacement of state-owned utilities with corporatised or privatised providers).

Rheinholtd (1999/2000) identified a range of key socio-economic trends likely to have an adverse impact on Australian volunteer-based emergency services organisations.

- Population trends: mobile and volatile population distribution; rapid population growth in suburban areas, tourist centres, and coastal areas; periods of population decline in some rural areas.

- Economic and industry trends: regional restructuring rationalisation of services in rural areas; economic change consequent on government deregulation and competition policy.

- Labour market participation trends: a more highly educated workforce; increasing numbers of women in the paid labour force; people in full-time employment working longer hours; rising unemployment levels.

- Social trends: growing number of single parent families; an ageing population; increased ethnic diversity.

Rheinholtd's conclusion was that emergency services organisations needed to develop volunteer strategic resource management plans defining objectives and specifying projects and practices aimed at ensuring continued viability of volunteer-based emergency service provision, with both immediate and longer-term horizons.

2.3 Summary

The main trends likely to impact on volunteering generally in OECD countries seem clear: the number of potential volunteers will rise, but most of the increase will be in those aged over 55. There will be fewer people in the workforce aged 25-35 and competition among employers and volunteer-hosting organisations will be keen. Emergency services volunteers in this age group are likely to be a scarce commodity. Changes in the nature of the global economy, and thus work, will continue along their present trajectory: more people involved in casual and part-time work, and more self-employed; greater job insecurity; and more privatisation of services traditionally provided by governments. Changes in family structure will continue: more single adult households; more blended families; more single-parent households. These changes in the nature of work and families are likely to make it more difficult for individuals to engage in voluntary work, regardless of their motivation to do. What remains less clear is the extent to which these general trends will impact on rural fire services volunteering.

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3. Age and Volunteering: Generational Differences?

(Note that there are two self-contained parts, 3.1 – 3.3 which is a general discussion, and 3.4 – 3.5 focussing specifically on youth [18 – 25 years] volunteering issues. Each part has a separate Reference list. There is an overall summary at 3.6).

3.1 Overseas

Wilson (2000) reviewed US research on volunteering generally. In relation to age as a correlate of volunteering he suggested that as people age, their stock of 'human capital' changes, and thus the likelihood they will volunteer varies over the course of their lifespan. Ageing also impacts on social roles, creating new opportunities and imposing new constraints. Finally, people of different ages are likely to have different outlooks on life generally and volunteering in particular. Rates of volunteering tend to fall during the transition from adolescence to young adulthood, and rise to a peak during middle age. The exception to this (US) pattern is high-risk volunteering (emergency services, political activism) which attracts mainly younger people. In general, as people move from young adulthood to middle age, they move out of self- and career-oriented activities into more community-oriented activities. As they make the subsequent transition from middle- to old-age, they tend to turn away from youth-related, political, and ethnic group activities and toward service organisations, recreational clubs, and agencies which assist the elderly.

According to the Marriott Seniors Volunteerism Study (Marriott Senior Living Services, 1991), during 1990 for every 10 older adults in the USA who volunteered, there were approximately 3.4 latent volunteers (not active but would volunteer if asked) and 5.9 conditional volunteers (not active but might volunteer in certain situations if asked).

Okun and Schultz (2003) administered the Volunteer Functions Inventory—VFI (Clary, Snyder, & Ridge, 1992) to 523 volunteers associated with *Habitat for Humanity International*. Okun and Schultz concluded that as age increases, volunteer motivations of Career (to gain work-related experience) and Understanding (to learn more about the world) decrease, while Social (to strengthen social relationships) volunteer motivation increases—Enhancement (to enhance self-esteem), Protective (to reduce negative feelings), and Values (to express important values like humanitarianism) volunteer motivations were unrelated to age

3.2 Australia

Paul (2001) noted that two age-related groups had increased their rate of volunteering significantly, as indicated by the two ABS surveys of 1995 and 2000. For younger people (aged 18-24), the rate of volunteering increased from 17% to 27%. For those aged 55-65, the rate of volunteering increased from 24% to 33%. Paul commented that these two age groups are the main feeder groups into volunteering.

The only Australian study located which addressed age-related motivational factors in volunteering was reported by Brown (2004). She surveyed 505 people seeking volunteering opportunities through the *GoVolunteer* on-line volunteer recruitment web site. She found:
(i) The main reason for volunteering was "To help others", for all age groups except (a) 18-24 years (To gain work experience), and (b) those over 60 (To be active);
(ii) For those under 35, their four main reasons for wanting to volunteer were: 1. To gain work experience, 2. To help others, 3. To learn new skills, and 4. To do something worthwhile. For

those over 35, the four main reasons for volunteering were: 1. To help others, 2. For personal satisfaction, 3. To use their skills and experience, and 4. To do something worthwhile.

Brown's (2004) data suggests clearly that people of different generations have different reasons for volunteering. This raises the question as to whether these observed differences represent different generational values systems, or whether they simply reflect age-related human capital and role differences which occur across the life span (cf. Wilson, 2000). Social commentators have made much of supposed generational differences in values: 'baby boomers', 'generation X', 'generation Y'. However, Evans (2003) examined survey data collected as part of the 2002 *International Social Survey Program* and concluded that there was a strong age-related pattern of values in volunteering, it was not possible conclude that these resulted from enduring generational differences: age could not be separated from "generation".

The *Western Australian Department of Premier and Cabinet* (2002) commissioned a research project into 'Baby Boomers and Volunteering' in 2001. The research aimed to identify motivators and barriers to volunteering, and strategies to encourage Baby Boomers to volunteer their services to the community. The subsequent Report identified seven strategic focus areas for volunteer-hosting organisations in order to optimise their prospects of recruiting Baby Boomers as volunteers—summarised by the acronym BOOMNET:

- **B** Baby boomers have clear ideas about what they expect from their volunteering experiences
- **O** Organised, professional, and well managed organisations
- **O** Open and supportive organisational environments where they are valued
- **M** Meaningful, interesting, creative, and challenging volunteering opportunities
- **N** Personal needs must be met, not just the organisation's needs
- **E** Education and learning opportunities must be available
- **T** Time is precious, they are unlikely to commit for the long term.

While 'baby boomers' have been identified as an important generational cohort, Allison (2002) described focus group data (gathered for the *NSW Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care* during 2001) which suggested four types of baby boomer volunteers: Nurturers, Adventurers, Socialisers and Workers (p. 19).

- Nurturers are mostly women who are motivated by a desire to make emotional connections with the vulnerable and disadvantaged—they are often found working with the elderly, the disabled, or needy children;
- Adventurers are mostly women who are looking for new experiences and stimulation as they contemplate their post-employment and post-child rearing years;
- Socialisers are motivated by a desire for social interaction—they are often found in roles such as volunteer emergency services. For them, volunteering is all about teamwork, mateship, and a sense of belonging to a publicly identified group;
- Workers are mostly men. Their key motivation is to achieve a sense of self worth by continuing to be useful and productive. They are looking for opportunities to use their existing skills in new settings—they often provide handy-man or trades-based services or service on committees where their business experience is utilised.

Warburton, Le Broque, and Rosenman (1998) analysed demographic data provided by 604 older Australians (aged 50-86 years). Those who were volunteers were more likely to: (a) come from higher occupational classes, (b) be employed by others rather than self-employed,

and (c) view their health positively. Zappala and Burrell (2002) surveyed 426 *Smith Family* volunteers and found that higher levels of commitment (evidenced by more frequent volunteer activity) was related to: age (40-59 years), higher household income, being employed, being a volunteer with other organisations, and higher levels of Career, Social, Values, and Enhancement functional motives for volunteering.

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3.4 Youth & Volunteering (Felix Acker)

3.4.1 Prevalence of Youth Volunteering

It is impossible to say at the moment whether global youth volunteering is on a rise or fall. Trends differ across countries, and even within countries different findings may contradict each other. The latest report located on youth volunteering in Canada, for example, was released by the *Canadian Centre for Philanthropy* in 2003. It stated that since 1997 youth volunteering has been in decline (29 % in 2000 vs. 33 % in 1997). However, the same report indicated that younger youths (aged 15-19) volunteered in higher numbers (37 % vs. 22 %)

and for longer hours (136 vs. 121 hours per year) than their older peers (aged 20-25), therefore it might be assumed that the current Canadian decline observed is a sampling artefact and not indicative of a general trend.

In contrast to the Canadian report, youth volunteering in the UK appears to be on a rise. According to findings from the 2003 Home Office Citizenship Survey (Munton & Zurawan, 2003), 45% of British youths engaged in *informal* volunteering in 2003. This represented a rise of 4 % in comparison to 2001 (41 %) and was well above the national average across all age groups (37 %). However, the rate of *formal* volunteering dropped from 26 to 25 % and was below the national average across all age groups, which in the same period increased from 27 to 28 %. Volunteer activity in emergency services in the UK was only mentioned by 7 and 9 % of 2500 respondents in 2001 and 2003, respectively (although this statistic is based on a cross section of the general population and might be different for youths). Other statistics from the UK National Survey on Student Volunteering (Student Volunteering England, 2004) indicated that there has been a steady increase in volunteer numbers among students.

In the United States, youth and teenage volunteer numbers also seem to have risen. A report by the Independent Sector (Hamilton & Hussain, 2001) documented that in 1995 more than 50 % of American teenagers engaged in some form of volunteering activity.

The most comprehensive and most recent volunteerism study in Germany (*Freiwilligensurvey*) from 2001 reported that the youth volunteering rate is slightly higher than that for adult volunteering (37 % of youths compared to a 35 % average across all age groups) and that youths are usually highly committed as reflected in their weekly volunteer hours (Picot, 2001). Moreover, more than half of youth volunteers consider expanding their commitment in the future; while 53 % of those currently not volunteering indicated that they might do so in the near future. In Austria, reportedly more than 61 % of youths engage in volunteering activities, a rate which clearly exceeds that of the general population--51 % (Badelt & Hollerweger, 2001). Compared to data of the same survey series collected previously in 1980 there seems to have been a slight reduction (about 2%) in the Austrian youth volunteering participation rate.

Australian data seems to suggest that although national youth volunteer rates are below the national average, there has been a rise over the last five years. Fryar (2001) reanalysed the 1995 Census data and reported that in the 15-25 year old age group, the total number of young people engaged in voluntary work was 298,000, approximately 11% of that age group. Compared to the national average (24 %) this number seems to indicate a lower level of volunteer in the next generation. Saunders (2001), on the other hand, reported that trends globally, as well as nationally, predicted an increase in volunteer percentages among youths (15-25) notwithstanding the fact that--due to demographic changes--the **absolute number** of youth volunteers is likely to decrease. Other research (Brown, Lipsig-Mumme, & Zajdow, 2003) using data from three surveys which were part of the Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth (LSAY) showed that those who begin volunteering young are most likely to continue volunteering through later stages of life. Brown et al's. data indicated that the highest volunteering rate among youths occurs for those aged 16-17 (40.4%). A second longitudinal study (from 1995 – 2001) of youth volunteering commissioned by the *Australian Government Department of Family and Community Services* (Ferrier, Long & Roos, 2004) involving two samples with initially 10,000 participants each, largely confirmed other national and international results. According to this large survey in the year 2000, 52.4 % of the 20-year olds (about 65% of the original sample, the rest had dropped out) had previously participated in some volunteer work. Twenty-two percent of all 20-year olds volunteered at least monthly.

One year later, 46.1% were doing voluntary work every now and then, but 22.7 % reported volunteering at least monthly. When asked about the frequency with which they would like to engage in volunteering, it appeared that either young people are (a) willing to commit frequently, that is once a week or more, or (b) not at all. It must be kept in mind, however, that 47 % of the interviewees, by their own account, had not previously engaged in volunteer work and thus are all still possible candidates for volunteering in the future. According to an analysis by Wilkinson and Bittman (2002), volunteering rates among youths are increasing with age. Initially, that seems to be intuitively correct, since only at the age of 18 or older are a full range of volunteer opportunities are available to young people (although some volunteer jobs may actually require certain periods of driving experience and thus be not accessible to younger volunteers until later). Moreover, since young people who started to volunteer are likely to continue to volunteer in the future (Brown, Lipsig-Mumme, & Zajdow, 2003) the absolute number of volunteer in the community is likely to rise over time (since the available data suggest that fewer volunteers 'drop out' than 'get on board').

3.4.2 Motivations for Youth to Volunteer

In the study conducted in the UK by the *Institute for Volunteering Research* (Gaskin, 1998) young peoples' motivation to volunteer were assessed using focus groups, in-depth interviews and more than 4000 survey responses. The results were based on the National Survey on Volunteering (1997) which incorporated responses from more than 15,000 volunteers, approximately 25 % of who were considered as young people (i.e. <25 years of age). When asked about their motivations young people emphasised the importance of with or for other young people. They also indicated that they wanted to use their volunteering commitment to gain experience that would help them professionally in some way. A second large scale study, the National Survey on Student Volunteering in 2003 (Student Volunteering England, 2004) found that the highest ranked positive motivational factor of volunteering for students was to be able to work with other young people (35 % said so). Although this answer predominantly referred to volunteer activities such as sporting events organisation, coaching and/ or working in youth groups, it showed that working with peers is an attractive incentive to youth volunteers.

US research on youth volunteer motivations carried out by the *Independent Sector* (Independent Sector, 2001) found that the best predictor of volunteering activity was **being asked** to volunteer: They were nearly four times more likely to volunteer if they were asked than if they were not. Moreover, of those who reported being asked to volunteer, 93% actually did so. An earlier study conducted by the Independent Sector in 1999 yielded very similar results in that, again, of those young people who were asked to volunteer 87 % actually did so. It was also the case that those who began volunteering at a young age remained volunteers in later stages of their lives. Data from a survey issued by the Advertising Council (2003) showed that young people who do volunteer were (1) knowledgeable about the available volunteer opportunities, (2) had formed a clear rationale for getting involved, or (3) had a personal connection to someone already affiliated with a volunteer organisation. Moreover, young people have self-satisfying as well as altruistic motivations to volunteer. While the aim to benefit personally in some way is often the initial driving force to volunteer the morale rationale is reportedly to help others.

Research about the motivation for youth volunteers in Germany and Austria is sparse but generally seems to fit the results obtained for other countries: youth volunteering is primarily

altruistically driven; however, young people--more so than the generation before them—expect to derive a benefit in one way or another from their volunteering (Picot, 2001).

Australian research by Saunders (2001) in the area of youth volunteer motivation confirms overseas findings that the main reasons why young volunteers get involved are either pre-existing ties to other volunteers (preferably peers), or being directly asked to participate by either an organisation or personal contacts.

The Australian Longitudinal Study (Ferrier, Long and Roos, 2004) identified three motivations to volunteer that emerged most frequently in young peoples' responses. These were: to be able to put one's own values and beliefs into action, being able to work with peers, and seeing the impact of one's efforts as well as feeling needed. Respondents pointed out that good volunteering experiences resulted from having control over what they did as volunteers, to have input into organisations objectives, having opportunity to use their skills and be challenged with the right level of responsibility (neither too little nor too much). Furthermore, young volunteers wanted opportunities for progression within an organisation and to be appreciated and rewarded for their work.

3.4.3 Image of Volunteering

A recent study in the UK issued by the *Institute for Volunteering Research* (Ellis, 2004) surveyed about 1500 young people and interviewed 400 in depth and explored, among other things, young peoples image of volunteer*[1]. It was found that young people have a positive and progressive conception of volunteering activities. Words that often were used in relation to their experience as volunteers were 'opportunities', 'learning' and phrases such as 'changing the world'. They furthermore characterised volunteering as *cool, respected, progressive, beneficial, relevant and enhancing*. At the same time they wanted volunteerism to be promoted with these characteristics but did not feel this had been done adequately thus far.

However, a US study by the Advertising Council (2003.) found that the term "volunteer" was generally disliked by youths and more often described as "uncool". In comparison, "getting involved" or use of the generic term "help" was judged more favourably.

In Germany volunteering maintains a positive image. This is to some extent due to strong historic traditions of volunteer commitment as, for example, in fire brigades (Deutsche Jugendfeuerwehr, 2004). However, both in Germany and Austria young people seem to prefer a new terminology and do not identify with the historic German terms for volunteering, such as *Ehrenamt* (Badelt & Hollerweger, 2001)

According to Australian research by Saunders (2001) most 'traditional' volunteer opportunities are not regarded as exciting enough to satisfy the needs of contemporary young people. A possible explanation for this is that young people conceptualise volunteer activities not as a fun or satisfying activity but rather as a duty, and thus see volunteering as a 'burden'. In addition, Saunders found that young people believe that organisations and communities only attribute limited value to their efforts. Taking all these points together, it seems likely that many potential young volunteers hold a powerful negative conception of volunteering which keeps them from engaging in volunteering activities.

3.4.4 Barriers to Youth Volunteering

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[1] Here used as a generic term for all words involving volunteer such as volunteer**ing,** volunteer**ism,** etc.

A Canadian study (Canadian Centre for Philanthropy, 2003) showed that the perceived barriers to volunteering differed across age groups and that young volunteers encounter different barriers. For example, not being asked was the most prominent reason for young volunteers (49 %), for those older than 25 this was clearly a less significant obstruction (34 %). Interestingly, 19 % of the youth volunteers that had been asked directly reported that they would volunteer more if asked for it.

In a US report issue by the *Advertising Council* (2003) data from six focus group interview sessions (participants between 18-25 years) were compiled to explore volunteer motivation, barriers to volunteering, and effective recruitment strategies. Although young people appeared to be generally positive towards the idea of volunteering, their actual behaviour was not consistent with their statements. This finding seems to indicate that while young people have a positive view of volunteering (i.e. they agree with the general idea), they perceive that the 'costs' associated with volunteering outweigh the benefits. Young people in the US who do not volunteer cited the following reasons most frequently: (a) general lack of time, (b) fear of volunteering, (c) absence of volunteer role models and an associated negative valence of volunteerism in general, coupled with the often erroneous belief that they lack skills to be of any service as their main reasons for not volunteering. Non-volunteers seem not to have formed a mindset of possible intrinsic benefits of volunteerism. Most of the barriers that non-volunteers face can be summarised in that they have formed a stereotypical picture of "the volunteer" which they either or in some ways dislike or else is in stark contrast with their self-perception. Time constraints was the dominant factor in a another study conducted by Sundeen and Raskoss (2000). The highest percentage of respondents attributed their inability to volunteer to their perceived lack of time (33.1%). Being simply not interested in volunteering was the second frequently mentioned reason (24.7 %), followed by not being asked (23.4). The fourth most cited barrier to volunteering was the respondent's age (19.6 %).

The German *Freiwilligensurvey* (Rosenbladt, 2001) indicated that youths are in general enthusiastic about volunteering. However, there seem to be two significant barriers. The most frequently stated reason for not volunteering, or for not expanding an existent volunteer commitment, was perceived lack of time, which was mentioned by more than 60 % of those surveyed. The second reason was a lack of information about volunteer opportunities and particularly incentive programs such as certified courses. About 50 % of current non-volunteering youths stated that they did not know where to get appropriate information about volunteering and volunteer development programs. Although there are information offices for volunteers in every major city, more than 80 % were reportedly unaware of their existence (Picot, 2001).

Age limits to volunteering activities emerged as one major negative factor in young peoples' responses in Australian research (Wilkinson & Bittman, 2002). Young people who had been rejected from their desired volunteer activity due to their age were particularly taken aback by this. However, the study does not indicate whether young people nevertheless join once they have reached the appropriate age.

Additional barriers to young volunteers (Kidd & Kidd, 1997) resulted from an interaction of peer pressure and a negative image of volunteerism within the relevant youth culture more broadly. Also, lack of information about specific obligations, tasks and opportunities within a given volunteer organisation was often identified as reducing interest or enthusiasm in volunteering. Young people also often lacked appropriate family role models, in particular

parents who volunteer and who thus provide the necessary ties to the organisation (Saunders, 2001). Ferrier, Long and Roos (2004) found that negative volunteer experiences for young people resulted from them being given tasks that appeared meaningless or lacked a rational purpose or explanation. By the same token, tasks labelled "traditional volunteer tasks" but which did not seem to serve any real purpose contributed to an overall negative impression of volunteering in general. Lastly, young people pointed out that technical language or jargon was a "turn-off" factor when they were looking for information about a volunteering opportunity.

3.4.5 Incentives for Youth Volunteers

The UK has a unique funding scheme specifically to encourage youth, and particularly student, volunteering. It has been labelled the Higher Education Active Community Fund for Volunteering Students (http://www.hefce.ac.uk/reachout/heacf/volunteer.asp) and is likely to be a catalysing factor for an increase in student volunteer rates, according to the National Survey on Student Volunteering (Student Volunteering England, 2004).

The Independent Sector (1999) yielded some recommendations for organisations to provide effective youth volunteer incentives. Young people have to be offered: new routines; the opportunity to meet new people (preferably of their age); and career building skills such as short training courses and learning experiences which can be incorporated in their resumes (along with references from the volunteer-hosting organisation).
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Youth volunteers in Germany are described as having high demands and expectations when they enter a volunteer commitment (Rosenbladt, 2001). It is important to them that they receive some form of tangible recognition for their time and efforts and apparently respond best to certificates or other documentation that can help them with their job prospects (Picot, 2001). Other than that, the main motivation for young volunteers seems to be to have a good time and help other youths – points that can be utilised by volunteer organisations to create a positive environment for young volunteers. Considering that fun is important for young people it is less surprising that the overwhelming majority of German youth volunteers entered their current commitment because they had been asked by a friend. This circumstance, quite naturally, seems a solid basis for a positive experience.

Young peoples' answers in Australian surveys, for example as reported by Ferrier, Long and Roos (2004), indicate that successful youth recruiters are likely to be those organisations which recognise and adapt to youth lifestyle issues--more than anything else, these organisations recognise the time pressures faced by adolescents and young adults (education, sport and recreation, employment (full- or part-time), family, friends. Successful organisations (a) keep their training as short and focussed as possible (although this comes at a price and would need to be carefully considered in the case of fire services where less training might correlate with lowered safety), and (b) adopt young peoples' 'languages'---both literally and in the sense of using the information channels preferred by young people (such as e-mail and web sites). Finally, most successful youth volunteer-hosting organisations have charismatic leaders with high media profiles. This last point is consistent with anecdotal observations that young people are generally attracted to high profile individuals, presumably stimulated by their immersion in contemporary mass media (Mallan & Pearce, 2003). Other characteristics of volunteer positions that are particularly attractive/ important to young potential volunteers were identified by Spinks (2004) as including creating a sense of ownership of the volunteer issues, and giving young volunteers opportunities to engage in the decision making process

with the appropriate amount of responsibility. Other practical suggestions to retain youth volunteers include dividing volunteer tasks into smaller more manageable chunks that can be completed in a short time frame.

3.4.6 Youth Volunteer Characteristics

US research by Sundeen and Raskoss (2000) confirmed the significance of family, church and school socialisation in shaping volunteer activities of American teenagers and initially engaging them in volunteering activities. They also found an influence of social status and personal characteristics on the likelihood of volunteering. Whites were more likely to volunteer than non-whites, and youths with high school grades were more likely to volunteer than youths with low grades. About one fifth of young people surveyed were independently seeking volunteer opportunities.

Rosenbladt (2001) reported that several social and socio-economical characteristics of German youths and their families are associated with volunteer involvement. Volunteering is more likely for youths who have completed a higher level of education and who grew up in a higher income household. Similarly, a larger circle of friends, a wider variety of leisure activities, religious involvement and previous volunteer commitments are all predictive of future volunteering. With regards to gender, it is noteworthy that more young men than women are committing themselves to volunteering. Those young women who do volunteer are more likely to contribute large amounts of time, six hours per week or more (Picot, 2001).

In Australia, Brown, Lipsig-Mumme, and Zajdow (2003) submitted their youth volunteering survey data to a path analysis and identified the four most important independent variables predicting volunteer participation. The analysis identified (1) gender, (2) cultural knowledge and language spoken (English vs. NESB), (3) socioeconomic status (SES), and (4) size of town as major predictors of volunteering. Thus, a higher participation rate was found among youths from an English speaking background (for those aged 18-20): about 29 % of native English speakers vs. 18.5 % of those from a non English speaking background (NESB). Activities such as *Meals on Wheels*, childcare and sports coaching were more likely to be carried out by young people from smaller towns, while *Lifeline* (telephone counselling) support was only found among young people in metropolitan areas, but not in regional or rural areas. A likely explanation for this particular example is the lack of access to the relevant volunteering opportunity. There were, nevertheless, some activities which were not differentiated by the size of town. These included church/youth group involvement, *Reading to the Blind*, *St. John's Ambulance*, and *Home Help for the Elderly*.

A study by Sundeen (1992) also found clear regional differences in the degree to which young people volunteer. Rural youth reported higher volunteering participation rates compared with urban youth.. Similarly, Soupourmas and Ironmonger (2002) found that about 50 % of young people in regional Victoria engaged in some sort of volunteering, but only 29 % did so in the metropolitan areas. Volunteering thus seems generally more likely in smaller rural locations, followed by regional centres, and least likely in metropolitan areas.

Other Australian research by Saunders (2001) confirmed some of the factors found by Brown et al. (2003), but identified additional characteristics of the typical youth volunteer. According to his analysis young volunteers are more likely to be students and religiously active, versatile in their volunteering activities, and far more often from English speaking backgrounds. Clear

differences with regard to the occupation of young people and their likelihood to volunteer was also found in a study conducted by Wilkinson and Bittman (2002). Full time students (29.3%) and part time students (58.4 %) were most likely to actively participate in voluntary work, whereas those who were either working full time or neither working nor studying were less likely to volunteer. One of the features of younger volunteers (18-25) is that the number of their volunteering hours is likely to decline as the hours of their other commitments increase and they will be quite ready to move from one volunteer opportunity to another which better accords with their time availability.

3.4.7 General Comments

It is difficult to determine those aspects of youth (18-25) volunteering that relate directly to volunteer fire fighting. There are two main reasons for this. First, general surveys on volunteering which selectively sample from the general population include only a small number of volunteer firefighters, even though the overall sample may include a large number of participants. Typically, the percentage of volunteer firefighters within any large volunteer study ranges between one and two. Of all the respondent engaged in the Longitudinal Survey of Australian Youth (Brown, Lipsig-Mumme, & Zajdow, 2003), for instance, only 0.9 percent of the 20 year old interviewees that participated had ever been members of volunteer fire services. This percentage approximated to eighty participants, ranging from those who had volunteered once to those who were regular members. Because of the small percentage, detailed information about the group of firefighters (or other emergency personnel) are usually not published in comprehensive volunteering studies, and the small sample size casts doubt on the validity of generalising any findings. The second problem is that surveys or other investigations specifically targeting fire service volunteers are rare and are typically are not broken down in a form that allows inferences to be drawn about young volunteer firefighters. As described by McLennan (2004), the current state of fire service databases also does not permit conclusions about the state of youth volunteer fire fighting within Australia.

In the absence of specific information on the motivations of and barriers faced by potential young fire service volunteers the only alternative was to investigate youth volunteering trends in general and attempt to draw inferences about young people interested in fire fighting in particular. The need to rely on indirect methods, however, emphasises that data from young volunteer firefighters is required.

Looking at general trends in youth volunteering, one can be cautiously optimistic that rates are globally on the rise. However, today's young volunteers enter organisations with different motivations and aims than has traditionally been assumed. Although helping others is still seen as a main reason for volunteer activity, young volunteers are cognisant of the personal benefits they can derive from their engagement. Specifically, they want to utilise volunteering as a mean to obtain career building skills, entries in their resume, and work experience. There is a second large group of young people who are generally unaware of volunteering opportunities or unmotivated to volunteer. They fear that their efforts will not valued by the organisation they might volunteer for and by society in general. They are not aware of the benefits volunteering holds for them or are simply not motivated enough to start volunteering by themselves. This is typically reflected in the response "No one has asked me". Young people often indicate that they are not aware of volunteer opportunities, or say that they do not know where to get additional information. To some extent, it can be plausibly assumed that these respondents are not intensively looking for volunteering opportunities, but the statement

makes it clear that there also seems to be a promotional deficit on the side of volunteer organisations.

What is common to both the young volunteers and the young non-volunteers is that volunteering for them is but one activity, which has to compete with a range of other alternatives. If they chose to volunteer, they therefore want to do it on their terms. Specifically, young people require organisations to accommodate their variable schedules, to challenge but not to overburden them, to provide them with clear rationales for their tasks, and show appreciation of young peoples' efforts.

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3.6 Overall Summary

Different ages are likely to be associated with different motivational drivers to volunteer. Younger volunteers are more likely to be motivated by self-serving factors, especially opportunities for career promotion and opportunities for social interaction with peers. The 'take home' message for volunteer fire services from the literature is: determine what age group of volunteers is most needed, tailor marketing and recruiting strategies to as to target the selected age group, and be prepared to make whatever changes to the nature of volunteering activities are possible to take into account the life circumstances of these volunteers.

Recruiting and retaining younger (<26 years) volunteers is very important for rural fire services at the present point in time. The literature suggests strongly that volunteers who start while young are likely to endure as volunteers, although there may be 'breaks' for education, family, or employment reasons. Young people tend to have extensive peer networks: they are likely to be good recruiters of other younger volunteers. But emergency services volunteering will be one of many competing claims on the younger volunteer's time and interests. Making organisational structures transparent, facilitating inputs, and devolving appropriate responsibilities are most likely to avoid disappointing and losing younger volunteers.

4. Rural Regions and Volunteering

4.1 General

There is general agreement among government agency and NGO sources that communities in rural and regional Australia are facing particular difficulties and there are adverse implications for volunteering in many of these communities (eg, *NSW Rural Women's Advisory Council*, 2001; *NSW Premier's Department*, 2002; *Volunteering Australia*, 2004).

- Structural changes to the Australian rural economy have had profound, mostly negative, impacts on the life of many rural communities. A general reduction in employment opportunities has resulted in population shifts away from smaller communities to capital cities and larger regional centres.
- In turn, this population drift has meant tht some rural and regional areas are "ageing" faster than the total population.
- There is a general decline in the overall rate of volunteering in rural Australia. Older volunteers are reducing their volunteering activity and younger people are being discouraged from volunteering by a range of barriers
- The most serious barriers are associated with economic factors—the result of economic rationalism which has seen outsourcing of many previous local government and state government services and activities: financial hardship has resulted in reduced opportunities to volunteer, regardless of motivations to do so.

Paul (2001) noted that the ABS (2001) Report showed that in every state and territory the non-metropolitan rate of volunteering (38% overall) is higher than the metropolitan rate (28%).

4.2 Emergency Services

In 2001, CFA made a Submission to the *Economic Development Committee of the Parliament of Victoria* concerning the impact of structural change in the Victorian economy and the impact of these changes on emergency services volunteerism. The submission noted that the impacts of structural change in rural Victoria had been mostly negative, with unemployment rates increasing in every region, even in regions showing growth in the number of employed persons. While Victoria's population had grown by about 1.6% in the past 10 years, rural areas had lost a disproportionate number of their population aged 15-35 years. In competing for jobs, it is recognised generally that those with higher levels of educational qualifications fare better than those job seekers who are unskilled and lack formal educational qualifications. In some rural and regional areas, the proportion of the population without formal educational qualifications is near 50% in some areas, while the corresponding urban statistic is about 10% lower, generally. This implies that impacts of structural economic change will be felt more heavily in rural areas, as jobs become scarce. These changes are likely to have enduring negative impacts on rates of emergency services volunteering in rural Victoria.

In summary, the economic and demographic changes being experienced in rural and regional Australia are reasonably well documented. However, to date, no research has been conducted by fire services in order to obtain detailed information on rural communities and knowledge of rural fire service, volunteers, and volunteering so as to inform marketing and recruitment strategies. (NSW RFS intends to carry out such a survey in 2005, focussing on communities in the NSW 'grain belt').

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5. Economic Aspects of Volunteering

5.1 USA: Volunteer Fire Services

The *National Volunteer Fire Council's* Report on the 2000 National Volunteer Fire Summit proposed that volunteers saved communities in the USA an estimated US$42.3 billion in 1999 [based on National Association of State Foresters (1993). *Fire protection in rural America: A challenge for the future*]. Estimated GDP for the USA in 1999 was US$9.2 trillion, implying that the estimated savings amounted to about 0.46% of US GDP.

5.2 Australia

5.2.1 General

Several estimates have been made of contributions to the economy through voluntary or unpaid work. Three different approaches to estimating the economic value of volunteering have been proposed:
- input cost method – The number of hours provided by volunteers multiplied by a market salary rate
- opportunity cost method – The amount that a volunteer would have earned had the time been spent on paid work
- value of output method – The funding that would be required to provide the existing volunteer services using paid staff.

Soupourmas and Ironmonger (2002) estimated (based on the opportunity cost method) that the economic value of volunteering in Victoria in 1997 was:

Through volunteer organisations: A$2.3 billion
Informal volunteering: A$5.7 billion
Associated travel costs: A$2.0 billion

The total A$10 billion was equivalent to 7.6% of the Victorian Gross State Product. [Adjusted for inflation—June Quarter 1997 to December Quarter 2004 (ABS, 2005), the corresponding 2004 figures are: volunteer organisations, A$2.8 billion; informal, A$6.6 billion; travel, A$2.4 billion; total = A$11.8].

The ABS (2000) estimated the value of all volunteer/unpaid work activity in Australia to be A$31 billion in 1997, on the basis of the opportunity cost method (equivalent to A$37.8 billion in 2004 after adjusting for inflation—June Quarter 1997 to Dec. Quarter 2004 [ABS, 2005], representing about 8.3% of GDP).

Ironmonger (2000) provided a higher value estimate using the opportunity cost method: A$42 billion in 1997 (equivalent to A$51.24 in 2004, after adjusting for inflation—June Quarter 1997 to Dec. Quarter 2004 [ABS, 2005]).

5.2.2 Emergency Services

Hourigan (2001) used the value of output method to estimate that CFA volunteers contributed A$470 million to the State in 2000/2001. This corresponds to A$526.4 million in 2004, adjusting for inflation—Dec. Quarter 2000 to Dec. Quarter 2004 (ABS, 2005), and represents

about 2.6% of Gross State Product. Hourigan also estimated that each CFA volunteer contributed A$8,000 (2000/2001 $ value, for an estimated 60,000 volunteers).

The *RMIT University Centre for Risk and Community Safety* (2004) used an input cost method to estimate the value of the contribution of SES volunteers in NSW and Victoria. The Report concluded, on the basis of surveying SES volunteers in 2002 about their time spent on SES volunteering activities, that each volunteer was worth A$9,458 to the community. The total value of the NSW SES volunteer contribution was estimated to be between A$69.4 million and A$85.1 million. For Victoria, the corresponding value range was estimated to be between A$37.6 million and A$55 million each year.

Fahey and Walker (2002) used an input cost method to estimate the overall value of volunteer ambulance officer input to the Australian economy as A$27 million per annum.

Gledhill (2001) noted that volunteers contribute to their communities in several ways:
- they give their time and their expertise
- they bear personal risk to life, health and wellbeing
- they undertake expensive training and study
- they practice regularly to maintain their skills
- they carry a range of out-of-pocket expenses associated with their volunteering activities.

"The contributions of time and money made by volunteers in emergency services can be considered as 'endowments' bestowed on the community. These 'endowments' are funded by both volunteers and their employers. For those volunteers who are self-employed, their 'endowment' contribution could be substantial" (Gledhill, 2001, p. 5).

Several authors have noted that the value of volunteering is much more than monetary.

"Volunteering helps create a cohesive and stable society and adds value to the services that governments provide…Volunteering work brings communities together…Volunteering develops social capital because it helps build trust, coordination and cooperation in communities…" (Soupourmas & Ironmonger, 2002, pp. 30-31).

5.3 Summary

The two comprehensive attempts at placing a dollar value of the contributions of emergency services volunteers to the economy (Hourigan, 2001; Centre for Risk and Community Safety, 2004) indicate that the contribution is substantial—considerably greater than the cost to government of funding the services. While it has proved difficult to quantify, there seems good evidence that volunteer emergency services contribute substantial intangible benefits to their host communities, especially rural communities, in the form of 'social capital'. No research could be located which studied the contributions of emergency services volunteer organisations and services to the 'life' of Australian rural communities.

The methodology used by the *RMIT University Centre for Risk and Community Safety* for estimating the economic value of SES volunteers could be usefully extended to volunteer fire services.

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6. Reasons For Volunteering

6.1 Overseas

6.1.1 USA

There is a considerable body of North American research literature reporting on motivational and related aspects of being a volunteer firefighter.

Volunteer fire departments in the USA have a history dating back to the early 1700's, with strong traditions of autonomy from centralised government control (Smith, 1978). It has been estimated that there are about 25,000 volunteer fire departments in the USA, with about 1 million members—amounting to about 80 percent of the total US fire-fighting labour force (Perkins, 1990). One of the earliest studies of US volunteer fire departments was that of Lozier (1976), who reported a community survey, a survey of 37 volunteer fire departments, and a case study of a rural volunteer fire department. Lozier concluded that against the cost of being a volunteer (in terms of lost leisure time, physical effort, risk, and financial impost) the benefits were perceived to be (a) the gain of useful knowledge, especially social skills; (b) active participation in a process of mutual aid and fraternal cooperation; and (c) community regard, respect, and recognition (p. 348). Lozier also documented rivalry between neighbouring volunteer departments, notwithstanding an accepted general principle of mutual aid in case of need. Perkins (1987) reported a case study of a volunteer fire department (VFD) in the State of Virginia and noted (p. 344):

> "…the VFDs are usually resistant to any perceived state intervention because they are grassroots organizations, arising from the community's perceived need for fire protection. I can say with complete confidence that the VFDs in rural Virginia are suspicious and fearful of any state-regulation of record keeping or mandated training criteria".

Perkins and Poole (1996) also reported a case study of a rural volunteer fire department. They noted that the department was well-integrated into the local community, that there was strong resistance to any state-mandated training requirements, that there were rivalries with adjoining volunteer departments, and that a sizeable minority of volunteer fire department members were opposed to the principle of mutual aid on the grounds that protection of their immediate local community was the first priority.

Perkins and Metz (1988) surveyed 327 volunteer firefighters in 15 volunteer fire departments in the State of Virginia and noted the strong commitment of volunteer firefighters to their local community and to their local volunteer fire department as an organisational entity. Thompson and Bono (1993) surveyed 354 members of 15 volunteer fire departments in New York State. Relative importance of various motivations for being a volunteer fighter were as follows: 1. Helping one's community; 2. Making a real contribution to an important activity; 3. Friendships with fellow volunteers; 4. A sense of being in control. Thompson (1994) surveyed 50 members of a volunteer fire department. Respondents stated that firefighting placed significant stress on family relationships, but that their families were supportive of their firefighting activities. Respondents reported very strong links with their local community and strong friendship ties with fellow volunteers. Almost half of the sample engaged in other community volunteer activities additional to firefighting.

6.2 Australia

6.2.1 General

The ABS Report (2001) *Voluntary Work, Australia* listed reasons given for volunteering by those surveyed:

1. Help others/benefit community	47%
2. Personal satisfaction	43%
3. Personal/family involvement	31%
4. To do something worthwhile	30%
5. Social contact	18%
6. Use skills/experience	12%
7. Religious beliefs	12%
8. To be active	11%
9. To learn new skills	7%
10. Gain work experience	4%

For those surveyed aged 18-24, volunteering was seen as a way to learn new skills and to gain work experience (13% and 17%, respectively).

Brown (2004) conducted an e-survey of 505 persons seeking an opportunity to volunteer by means of the *GoVolunteer* volunteer recruitment website in March 2004. In response to the question about what motivated them to want to volunteer, responses were:

1. To help others	68%
2. Gain work experience	66%
3. Learn new skills	61%
4. Do something worthwhile	60%
5. Personal satisfaction	53%
6. Use skills	52%
7. Be active	45%
8. Social contact	28%
9. Religious beliefs	4%
10. Personal contact	2%

Brown (2004) noted the most frequently nominated reason for volunteering for all age groups was "To help others" except for (a) 18-24 = "To gain work experience", and (b) over 60 = "be active".

For those under 35 the top-four order was:
1. Gain work experience
2. Help others
3. learn new skills
4. Do something worthwhile.

For those over 35, the top-four order was:
1. Help others
2. Personal satisfaction
3. Use skills/experience

4. Do something worthwhile.

Brown's (2004) survey suggests that for those under 35, altruistic motives may be relatively less important as 'drivers' of volunteering compared with more instrumental motives.

6.2.2 Emergency Services

Australian research concerning motivational aspects of being a volunteer emergency services worker is sparse. Moran, Britton, and Correy (1992) surveyed 23 volunteer members of the *NSW State Emergency Service* (SES) from two regional centres. The most common reason for being an SES volunteer was the importance of helping others, followed by personal concern for others, and the opportunity to learn hands-on skills through training with the SES. Learning how to deal with people and making new friends were reasons advanced frequently for remaining SES members. Half the respondents indicated that the good standing of the SES in the local community was also influential in their decision to join. There was no evidence that the volunteers joined the SES to escape from, or to compensate for, impoverished or unstimulating activities elsewhere in their lives: most rated themselves as content with their home life and their current employment. The majority indicated that their current jobs were stimulating. One third of the respondents belonged to other voluntary organisations (rural fire brigades, sporting groups, children's groups).

Fahey and Walker (2002) surveyed 1014 volunteer ambulance officers in Australia (n = 654) and New Zealand (n = 360). Respondents were asked why they had volunteered. Responses were (in decreasing order of frequency):

Assisting the community/helping others
Learning new skills
A sense of achievement
Gaining self esteem
A sense of achievement
Meeting new people
Being part of a group/forming friendships
Improving employment prospects
Excitement

Fahey and Walker's respondents were also asked why they joined the ambulance service in particular. Responses were (in decreasing order of frequency):

Interested in the medical/first aid field
The local station needed more volunteers to continue
A representative asked me to join
I had friends or family who were members
I had seen the volunteer ambulance service in action and it prompted me to join
The local ambulance group stood out in the community
The organisation advertised for volunteers

Fahey and Walker commented that written comments from respondents reinforced the major motivational drivers to be: helping the community, gaining skills, and contributing to an effective service.

In Victoria, M.Townsend and E. Hallebone conducted 51 focus discussion groups, each comprising about 20 CFA volunteers from different brigades, as part of a social research study on behalf of the CFA (*CFA Corporate Focus Group Report: Volunteer Development Project*, June 1998). The research was carried out because of CFA concerns that changing socioeconomic conditions in Victorian rural communities may compromise the ability of CFA to meet its statutory responsibilities due to a shortage of volunteers (Rheinholtd, 1999/2000). M.Townsend and E. Hallebone (personal communication, April 2000) concluded that CFA volunteer firefighters were not a homogeneous group. For many practical reasons, three distinctive subgroups of volunteers could be distinguished.

1. Volunteers from small rural communities and towns remote from Melbourne. These volunteers tended to be older, to have generally low levels of formal education, to have a farming or 'outdoors' background, to be familiar with machines and mechanical equipment in the context of their daily working activities, and to have long and well-established links with their local community. For these volunteers, time devoted to CFA activities was a genuine sacrifice: they worked long hours, they were not wealthy, and they typically served their local community in other voluntary capacities apart from CFA. Devoting time to CFA training and administrative duties was a particularly vexed issue. For many of these volunteers, so much of their time had to be devoted to simply earning a living that having to set time aside to take part in training activities represented a considerable burden. These volunteers tended to be quite practical and concrete in their thinking, with little interest in more abstract issues. Their primary motivation for being a CFA volunteer was rooted in the notion of a 'mutual aid pact' with other members of their local community. Their local community and its safety needs were their primary focus. They were prepared to travel considerable distances to assist other communities, but the need had to be real and apparent, and they were very concerned that, under such circumstances, their own local community might be unprotected and in need while they were absent. While there was pride in being a member of CFA as an organisation, there was a frequently expressed view that CFA management had no idea at all of the real day to day conditions under which they operated. There was a strong sense of independence and some reluctance to operate as part of larger coordinated organisational units. These volunteers were self-confident, comfortable with their role, aware of the dangers involved, but accepting of the need to assume their responsibility for their community. There was no evidence of any tendency to engage in needlessly risky firefighting behaviour. Rather, there was a realisation that if they were to be killed or seriously injured while engaged in firefighting activity, this would be an economic disaster for their family.

2. Volunteers from the urban/rural interface around Melbourne. These volunteers were very heterogeneous. They included long-term residents in what were previously rural communities and new arrivals who often commuted long distances to work in Melbourne. There was a range of ages and education levels. A few of these volunteers were unemployed or under-employed and saw CFA membership and training as conferring an advantage in the job market. Most others said that they were members of CFA in order to serve their local community. Some fire stations were staffed by a mix of paid and volunteer firefighters. For most, social interaction with fellow CFA members was an important reason for continuing to be a member. They accepted, generally, a need to devote time to training and administrative duties, but frequently expressed concern that CFA management was indifferent to how precious their time was, having to be distributed across work, family, and other social and community responsibilities. While most of these volunteers described their work in matter-of-fact terms about the need to do a job, some

referred to the excitement of turning out to fires and seemed to be looking to fulfil needs for social recognition not met in other aspects of their lives.

3. Volunteers from the large regional centres of Geelong, Ballarat, and Bendigo and immediately surrounding areas. These volunteers were also heterogeneous. Those from the City areas resembled those volunteers from the urban/rural interface of Melbourne in some regards, in that that some fire stations were staffed by a mix of paid and volunteer staff. Volunteers from the surrounding country areas resembled those described previously who lived in small rural communities and towns. There was little evidence of any motivation to engage in risky behaviour for its own sake, rather there was a recognition that they did a job that necessarily entailed a measure of risk if their community was to be protected. A few volunteers spoke of the exhilaration involved in working with their fellows engaged in fire suppression activities. There was a preparedness to travel to assist other communities in times of need, but a clear indication that their primary allegiance was to their local community.

There are many similarities with the findings from North American research about motivational factors associated with being a volunteer firefighter: notably the importance of a sense of responsibility for the safety of the local community, and the importance of friendships with fellow volunteers, along with a degree of insularity and a focus on local needs and issues. However, the narrow parochialism of volunteer fire departments reported in the US literature seemed to be less evident in the Victorian CFA sample.

Townsend and Hallebone's research presents few surprises: CFA volunteers are diverse. A common motivation is a sense of responsibility to protect the local community. Being a CFA volunteer has additional positive outcomes, mostly in terms of social interactions with fellow volunteers. There were indications that some individuals might be attracted by the risk and excitement aspects of the work, but no evidence of a culture of disregard for safety and the taking of needless chances. In some focus groups, CFA volunteers complained that some members of the public wrongly perceived volunteer firefighters as "thrill seekers" (1998, p. 4).

The CFA Submission to the *Economic Development Committee of the Parliament of Victoria* (CFA, 2001) discussed previously in Section 2 proposed the following as necessary attributes for fire service volunteers, not required generally of volunteers in other organisations:
- a high degree of altruism;
- compliance with the disciplines of emergency 'command and control' and the requirements of standard operating procedures imposed by the organisation;
- willingness to face danger and to sustain personal trauma and injury (and sometimes death itself);
- toleration of appalling working conditions including, for example, physical exertion, extreme heat, dehydration and thirst, smoke, uncertainty, etc.
- the carrying of a range of direct costs associated with service delivery on behalf of the agency (essentially a subsidy or an indirect form of tax to support government safety programs and/or the profits of the insurance industry, where property protection is the paramount focus);
- exposure to the risk of litigation over the allegations of negligence; and
- preparedness to be on call 24 hours a day, especially during summer months, with unpredictable disruption of family and personal life. (pp. 10-11)

Three surveys of rural fire service volunteers concerning their reasons for volunteering have been reported; those of Aitken (2000), Palmer (2000) and Clancy and Holgate (2004). Table 1 summarises the findings from these three surveys.

Table 1 Summary of findings from three surveys of volunteer firefighters' reasons for volunteering.

Aitken (2000) (N = 542)		Palmer (2000) (N = 376)		Clancy and Holgate (2004) (N = 110)	
Sense of community	(50%)	Serve community	(84%)	Serve community	(39%)
Social/mateship	(13%)	Meet community need	(82%)	Community involvement	
Novelty/new skills	(9%)	Interest/satisfaction	(61%)	/mateship	(14%)
Competitions/training	(6%)	Community obligation	(60%)	Challenge/self-	
Duty	(6%)	Learn new skills	(56%)	development	(12%)
Interest	(6%)	Meet new people	(38%)	Self-protection/job	
Help others/protect				prospects/gain skills	(12%)
lives and property	(6%)			Excitement	(8%)
				Friends joined	(4%)

In all three studies, participants could nominate more than one reason for volunteering and many did so. Inspection of Table 1 indicates (following Palmer, 2000) the influence of a mixture of community-oriented and individual-oriented motives, with community-oriented motives dominating and providing a context for individually-oriented motives being fulfilled. This suggests that a key to volunteer recruitment is to first activate a personalised sense of community responsibility in individuals and to subsequently channel this into the action of joining a local brigade.

6.3 Summary

The various surveys of emergency services volunteers, both in Australia and overseas, present reasonably consistent findings about what motivates them: a mixture of community-oriented and individually-oriented motives, with community-oriented motives dominating and providing a context for individually-oriented motives to be fulfilled. This suggests that a key to volunteer recruitment is to first activate a personalised sense of community responsibility in individuals and channel this subsequently into the action of joining a local brigade.

There is probably little point in undertaking more research which involves simply surveying fire services volunteers and asking them why they joined. The findings will almost certainly repeat what is known already. However, what seem to be lacking are surveys of potential volunteers which ask about their perceptions of volunteer fire services and volunteering.

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7. Reasons Why People Do Not Volunteer: Barriers

7.1 Overseas Research

7.1.1 USA

The *US Bureau of Labor Statistics* (2003) reported the following reasons given for not volunteering in the previous 12 months, based on its annual survey: Lack of time (44.7%); health or medical problems (14.7%); family responsibilities/child care (9.5%); not relevant to life situation (5.8%); not interested (4.3%); moved/lack of information/no transport/expense (4.2%); no one asked (3.2%); burnout/no longer enjoyable (2.4%).

Caloura (2001) reported a statewide survey of Rhode Island citizens concerning volunteerism. Of those who responded and reported that they were not volunteers, 42% gave as the reason that their schedule was too full. Other reported barriers to volunteering were: don't know how to get involved (13%); no one ever asked (12%); too old (11%); fear of being unable to fulfil commitments (8%); nothing interesting to volunteer for (7%); health/medical problems (6%); lack of transport (5%); people should be paid for work they do (5%); child care (4%); and other (6%).

7.1.2 United Kingdom

The UK *Institute for Volunteering Research* (2004) reported reasons for ceasing to volunteer or for not volunteering as found in a 1997 survey. Of those who had given up, one third said it was no longer relevant to them, and one fifth said that they had moved away from the area. Other reasons for ceasing were: getting too much physically, and that they could no longer spare the time. Those not involved in volunteering were asked if they would like to become involved: 37% said yes, 20% said no because of lack of time, 12% said no for other reasons: don't know any volunteers, don't have the necessary skills or experience. Those who expressed an interest (37%) were asked what would make it easier for them to become involved. Key "encouragers" were: being asked; if someone helped me to get started; if family or friends were involved too; if I knew it would improve my skills; if I could do it from home; and if it led to a qualification. Of those in paid work or recently retired, 16% said their employer had supported their volunteering. The key aspects of such employer support were: time off work; knowing that the activity would benefit their career; learning new skills; volunteering as part of a group; and more information about available volunteering activities.

7.1.3 Canada

In their review, Hall et al. (2001) concluded that the biggest barriers to volunteering appeared to be time-related. Employer support for volunteering helped mitigate time pressures "— employee volunteers who receive employer support volunteer more time than those who do not" (p. 22). Another barrier is the lack of information about how to get involved with a particular activity. Other barriers mentioned included: people feel a need to be asked; language and literacy problems—especially for newer Canadians; and previous negative experiences with voluntary organisations. Other perspectives on barriers to volunteering were: (a) the diminished value that society places on volunteering, and (b) a perception that there is too much bureaucracy in voluntary organisations which interferes with effectiveness.

Hall et al. identified one of the biggest gaps in the literature is a lack of understanding of the factors that lead Canadians to identify lack of time as their biggest barrier to volunteering:

> In some instances when Canadians identify that they lack the time to volunteer more, they are probably signalling that volunteering takes a lower priority to other discretionary activities in their lives (e.g., recreational activities, socialising, hobbies). In other instances, volunteering may indeed be more highly valued than other discretionary activities but there is simply little time to devote to volunteering because of the demands of work, family, and daily living. A better understanding of time-related barriers would provide direction to initiatives addressed at ameliorating the problem. For example, the support of employers in providing flexible working arrangements may reduce work demands on time while efforts to promote family volunteering may reduce the competition for time between volunteering and family (p. 22).

Greenberg and Bozzo (2001) reported a survey of Ontario citizens. Of those surveyed who said that they did not volunteer, their reasons for not volunteering were: no time (75%); unwilling to make a year-round commitment (32%); already made contribution (29%); preferred to give money rather than time (21%); had not been asked (18%); no interest in volunteering (11%); health problem/physically unable (14%); financial cost of volunteering (12%); did not know how (9%).

7.2 Australia

Very little published Australian research could be located concerning reasons for not volunteering—no research was located concerning reasons why people did not join volunteer fire or other emergency services.

7.2.1 Barriers to Older Volunteers

A *School of Volunteer Management* (2003) discussion of older people and volunteering proposed a conceptual scheme of four levels of barriers to volunteering:
- Personal barriers – individual motivations concerning the particular volunteering activity
- Contextual barriers – the perceived salience in the community of the particular volunteering activity
- Systemic barriers – knowledge in the community about how to volunteer for the particular activity
- Organisational barriers – the organisation's approach to its volunteers.

The discussion offers suggestions for overcoming each of these kinds of barriers.

7.2.2 Barriers to Volunteering from Indigenous and Non-English Speaking Communities

A report by Kerr, Savelsberg, Sparrow, and Tedmanson (2001) identified barriers to recruitment for Indigenous Australians and for members of non-English speaking minority communities. Indigenous Australians had high levels of voluntary participation in family-care related activities within their own communities. However, their involvement in 'mainstream' volunteering within the majority culture was less likely, for two related reasons: mainstream volunteering activities were structured and rigid, while commitments to family would always take precedence over organisational commitments. Non-English speaking background (NESB) members of communities also reported a high level of volunteering within their particular ethnic community. Three barriers to mainstream volunteering were identified: language

difficulties, fear of not being accepted by organisations and volunteers from the majority culture, and lack of knowledge of volunteering in Australian society in general.

A paper presented by *Volunteering Victoria* (2002) to the 4th Biennial Conference on Volunteering addressed a range of issues related to diversity in volunteer recruitment. Barriers to greater participation by members of ethnic minority communities were identified by *Volunteering Victoria* (2002) as:

- General community stereotypes of the nature of traditional volunteer organisations and traditional (majority culture) volunteers
- Organisational purpose not being seen as relevant
- Financial costs of volunteering
- Lack of organisational flexibility in relation to family commitments
- No history or tradition of formal volunteering (as distinct from informal community helping) in their country of origin.

7.2.3 Barriers to Volunteering by Youth

Barriers to volunteering by young people (Volunteering Victoria, 2002) were identified as:

- Organisations being seen as too traditional and uninteresting
- Peers often devalued volunteering as 'for losers'
- Parents were concerned that their children might be exposed to drugs through volunteering, or had no tradition of volunteering—their children should be earning money.

Volunteering South Australia (2004) published a discussion paper on young people and volunteering. In a discussion of barriers to volunteering, the paper notes that while traditional entry points for youth volunteering in the past were churches and organisations such as Scouts or Guides, these are no longer relevant to many young people. Schools often have volunteering as a recognised part of a curriculum aimed at developing a sense of community responsibility. The paper identifies two major barriers to youth involvement in volunteering activities, image and time.

Image
- The image of volunteering is unattractive to many young people
- Peer group culture and influences emphasise fun and socialising
- Community attitudes often devalue young people's contributions
- Limited family support and role models—few parents who volunteer
- Volunteering opportunities available are not sufficiently varied or exciting
- Many volunteering opportunities demand high levels of long term commitment.

Time and Commitment
---Young people have other priorities and claims on their time
- Family responsibilities
- School
- Tertiary education and training
- Work obligations
- Social needs

The *Volunteering South Australia* paper goes on to discuss the particular demands made on volunteer management by younger volunteers. Note that there is a detailed review of literature associated with youth volunteering in Section 3.4.

7.3 Summary

There is very little research available to guide volunteer fire services in attempts to boost recruitment of volunteers from Indigenous and non-English speaking background communities. This lack is an expression of a wider research gap: a lack of research generally concerning community knowledge and perceptions of volunteer fire services and volunteering, with a corresponding lack of sound information to guide marketing and community education about volunteer fire services.

Most rural fire services provide opportunities for young volunteers through cadet or junior volunteers programs. There is general agreement that such programs have the potential to boost volunteer numbers through flow-on from junior to senior volunteer ranks. However, there is no research available concerning the factors which promote or inhibit movement of juniors into senior ranks.

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8. Reasons for Leaving: Retention of Volunteers

8.1 USA

In a paper presented in the US at the 2000 *National Volunteer Fire Summit*, Bush (2000) noted that the number of volunteers had declined by 12.5% since 1983, while most volunteer fire departments had experienced a dramatic increase in the number of fire calls over the same period.

> Fire departments can no longer count on the children of current volunteers following in their parents' footsteps. Nor can they count on a continuous stream of local people eager to donate their time and energy to their volunteer fire department. Departments cannot even rely on members staying active in the volunteer fire service for long periods of time. (p. 17)

The paper identifies 11 "root problems" facing volunteer fire departments in the US:
1. Increased time demands: two-income family and working multiple jobs; increased training time; higher emergency call volume; increased job demands (fund raising, administration).
2. Training requirements: higher standards; more time required.
3. Increasing work load: wider response roles.
4. Changes in the nature of the job: abuse of the service by members of the public; loss of the social aspects of volunteering.
5. Changes in the community--urban: transient populations; loss of a sense of community and community pride; generational changes in values.
6. Changes in the community—rural: employers less willing to allow time off to respond.
7. Leadership problems: poor leadership—authoritarian, failure to manage change.
8. Federal legislation and regulations: Fair Labor Standards Act; OSHA ruling that four firefighters had to be on scene before entering a hazardous environment; EPA live-fire burn restrictions.
9. Increasing use of combination departments: disagreements between service/department chiefs; friction between volunteer and career members.
10. Higher cost of housing: volunteers can no longer afford to live in their community.
11. Ageing communities: more older people; lack of economic growth in some towns.

---All of the above find expression in some form on the Australian emergency services volunteering scene.

Aldridge (2003) undertook a study tour of several volunteer fire departments in the US. In his report he noted seven factors which were related to maintaining adequate numbers of volunteers:
- Strong, effective brigade leadership
- Maintaining a good public brigade image
- Flexibility in the way training programs were delivered to accommodate the needs a diverse range of volunteer needs (shift workers, single parents, etc)
- Recruiting volunteers to meet the needs of the brigade and its host community
- A range of appropriate volunteer recognition and incentive schemes

- Making sure that being a volunteer is an enjoyable experience.

8.2 Australia

In a paper prepared for *Emergency Management Australia's* National Summit on Volunteers in Emergency Management, Gledhill (2001) identified several sources of pressure on fire and emergency services volunteers. The needs of industry for competitiveness in the global economy, combined with changes in policies of all levels of government, have resulted in structural changes in the Australian economy. This in turn has increased workplace pressures on volunteers and brought about changes in the demographics of communities through job losses. Social changes within communities have lead to increased pressures on family life and demands on personal time. Volunteers report that it is difficult to maintain their volunteer commitments in the face of escalating requirements to train so as to meet more stringent OH & S standards. Expanding suburbs on urban fringes and rising community expectations have increased the demands on volunteers.

As indicated previously in Section 2, the CFA (2001) Submission to *the Economic Development Committee of the Parliament of Victoria* proposed seven reasons why volunteers resigned from the organisation:

1. increased (paid) working hours
2. increased stress at (paid) work
3. reduced job security
4. increased family demands , especially where both parents are working
5. the need to leave the area (for life style, work, family, or retirement reasons) and the resulting disruption of their social networks and links with CFA
6. the taking up of other interests—sport, clubs, Internet etc.
7. the bureaucratic attitudes and requirements of CFA Headquarters to volunteers (as perceived by the volunteers).

Presumably, this list was generated by (a) anecdotal reports from volunteer Associations, brigades, and regions, and (b) the exit surveys reported by Woodward and Kallman (2001). McLennan (2004) re-analysed Woodward and Kallman's data and estimated that perhaps one-third of resignations were the result of volunteers leaving the local area, while two-thirds resulted from some factor other than simply moving away. Woodward and Kallman analysed their 166 responses and concluded that the three major reasons for volunteers leaving CFA (apart from moving away from the local area) were (a) time demands (26%); (b) negative Brigade issues (18%); and (c) training demands (12%).

(a) Time demands: the three kinds of time demands described were work commitments (51%); family commitments (25%); and personal commitments – education, recreation, other interests (21%).

(b) Negative brigade issues: five were noted – demands of meetings and call-outs (27%); lack of recognition by the organisation (25%); interpersonal conflict (25%); lack of leadership opportunities (10%); and nepotism (9%).

(c)Training requirements (internal training and skills maintenance): the two issues noted were time requirements (47%) and limited access to training opportunities (41%).

Aitken (2000) reported results from a survey of 542 fire service and SES volunteers in WA. Among the fire service volunteers, the four most favoured activities were:
Firefighting
Assisting and aiding the community
Social activities
Practical training

The least favoured activities were:
Administration
Competitions
Educating the public on safety issues
Theory training

Aitken's report notes that factors affecting retention of volunteers are likely to differ across rural/farming brigades and outer metropolitan brigades. The report offers several practical suggestions for maximising retention of volunteers, including:

- brigades maintaining close links to their local communities
- establishing realistic expectations in new recruits
- ensuring that training is relevant, practical, and enjoyable
- maintaining effective and timely communications procedures to keep volunteers informed
- adequately resourcing brigades
- providing appropriate reward and recognition schemes
- educating career staff so that they can work effectively with volunteers
- helping prospective leaders to develop the necessary leadership skills
- ensuring that workloads on volunteers do not become excessive.

As part of their study of volunteer ambulance officers in Australia and New Zealand, Fahey and Walker (2002) identified several factors which made things difficult for the volunteers, presumably reducing commitment to remaining with the organisation:
Time demands
Poor work relationships
Lack of organisational support
Inadequate resources
Lack of training
High workloads due to low volunteer numbers.

No research could be located which linked high workloads to volunteer retention difficulties, although several authors commented on the issue. Aitken (2000) noted that high call-out rates for urban-rural fringe brigades during business hours could result in a high workload falling upon a few volunteers. Meikle (2001) discussed the risks of high workloads leading to volunteer 'burnout'.

8.3 Summary

The limited information available suggests that a substantial proportion of volunteer fire fighter resignations are the result of factors within the organisation. Anecdotally, it appears that there is substantial scope for fire services to increase volunteer retention through improved volunteer management—including support and training. However, research is lacking to guide fire services in setting priorities on ways to improve volunteer management.

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9. Incentives for and Recognition of Emergency Services Volunteers

9.1 Introduction

There is general agreement that giving direct cash payments to volunteers for the services they provide would be counter-productive; it would run counter to the common-sense notion of volunteerism—service to the community, freely given, with no financial inducement (Gledhill, 2001; Turner, 2004). However, it is recognised by many that emergency services volunteers do incur "losses" as a consequence of their volunteering activities (direct financial expenses, loss of income, loss of time with family, loss of opportunities for recreation). With changes in the global economy and consequent structural changes in the nature of work and family life there is a general concern that volunteer emergency services may need to do more than in the past to "reward" volunteers for their efforts in order to ensure adequate numbers of volunteers to protect communities. Two approaches to such "reward" schemes are distinguished: incentives schemes and recognition schemes. Incentive schemes involve some form of financial benefit to the volunteer, or to the families of volunteers, or to employers of volunteers. Recognition schemes involve some form of public acknowledgement of the contribution of volunteers, families of volunteers, employers of volunteers, or other organisations which support volunteers and volunteer-hosting organisations, in some way other than by direct financial benefit.

9.2 Incentive Schemes.

Despite various proposals (discussed later) there is presently only one incentive scheme for emergency services volunteers operating in Australia—CFA's Memberlink discount scheme, described later. However, overseas, especially in the US, several incentive schemes have been put into place. Walter (2001) described three kinds of incentive schemes for emergency services volunteers in the US involving tax relief programs.

Income Tax Programs
Several states use income tax programs as incentives for volunteer fire and emergency services personnel. Such programs have the advantage of providing a direct and visible recruitment and retention incentive. However, they may be difficult to implement and be administratively complex in operation. In South Carolina in 2000, the state allowed a deduction of taxable income of $3,000. The state of Maryland offers an Income Tax Subtraction Modification for eligible volunteers. In order to be eligible, volunteers must meet specific performance requirements and in 2000 could deduct $3,500 from their state income taxes.

Personal Property Tax Deductions
Some states and local municipalities offer personal property tax reduction and/or elimination for emergency services volunteers. In Connecticut, in 2000, legislation allowed towns to give volunteer emergency workers up to $1,000 per year in tax relief on personal property. A similar program in New York meant the volunteers received a 10% reduction of the assessed value of the county property tax.

Individual Tax Benefits
US Federal tax law allows emergency services volunteers to claim a range of tax benefits when filing federal income taxes, including car mileage to and from the fire station and training sites, uniform costs, and related expenses.

In a paper prepared for *Emergency Management Australia's* National Summit on Volunteers in Emergency Management, Gledhill (2001) described a range of incentive schemes for US emergency services volunteers (p. 10):

- Tax incentives (for example, in Connecticut, Maryland, South Carolina). The tax break in Connecticut is provided on a sliding scale as a reduction in property taxes. The saving starts at $250 after one year of services, and increases so that after 10 years or more of service the saving reaches $1,000;
- State pension programs for volunteers in California and Montana;
- Legislative protection to fire and emergency services volunteers against unfair dismissal for participation in emergency duty and training (for example, in Massachusetts);
- Legislation in California to allow volunteers time off work for training (up to 14 days per year if working for an employer employing 50 or more people);
- Direct funding for volunteer fire and emergency organisations, including low interest loans.

Gledhill (2001, pp. 11-12) proposed the following taxation policy changes to assist Australian fire and emergency services volunteers:

- tax deduction for out-of-pocket expenses incurred by volunteers in delivering volunteer services;
- tax deduction for value of volunteer time spent attending emergency incidents, undertaking required training, and community safety and education programs;
- rebate to volunteers of taxes on insurance policies for private vehicles, plant and equipment used in emergency work, and
- tax deduction for employers for the value of lost production by volunteers engaged in emergency service activity during working hours.

Gledhill (2001, pp.13-15) estimated that the cost to Federal and State/Local government of the above taxation policy changes would be between 41 and 56 million dollars annually.

The *House of Representatives Select Committee into the Recent Australian Bushfires* (Nairn, 2003) made several Recommendations associated with volunteer recognition and compensation issues:

Recommendation 27
- the Commonwealth implement a program similar to the Army Reserve Employer support Program for the re-imbursement of costs incurred by employers of volunteer fire fighters when attending bush fires for a period exceeding five days in any month; and
- the Commonwealth consult with states and territories through Council of Australian Governments to develop a range of measures related to local government rates, state government charges and insurance costs to provide rebates for registered volunteer fire fighters.
- The Commonwealth consider the feasibility of taxation relief on costs incurred by registered fire fighting volunteers in the line of duty.

Recommendation 28
The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government work with Australasian Fire Authorities Council to review the insurance cover provided to volunteer fire fighters in all states and territories and ensure that cover is adequate for loss of life or injury and related loss of income and property lost in the line of duty.

In June 2001 the *Council of Australian Governments* (COAG) commissioned a review of arrangements for dealing with natural disasters. A High level Group (HLG) of senior officials from Commonwealth, State and Territory governments and the Australian local Government association was established to undertake the review. In December 2003, COAG gave in-principle approval to the recommendations of the HLG Report *Natural Disasters in Australia: reforming mitigation, relief and recovery* (Department of Transport and Regional Services—DOTARS, 2004). Under the heading Volunteers, the HLG stated in their Summary Report:

> The High level Group is strongly of the view that volunteers are an indispensable part of the nation's natural disaster and emergency management capability that need to be supported and nurtured in tangible ways. Barriers to volunteer service need to be systematically addressed by each level of government to overcome the decline in the number of volunteers available for natural disasters and emergencies.
>
> The High Level Group recommends that each level of government examine and take action on the measures identified by the National Summit for Emergency management Volunteers in October 2001 which fall into four key priority areas:
> * legal protection for volunteers
> * incentives, including financial incentives
> * recognition, and
> * training (p.9)

Under the heading "Tangible Support for Volunteers in the Emergency Management Sector", the HLG proposed Recommendation 58:

> The HLG recommends that each level of government examine and take action on the following recommendations from the Volunteers Summit:

(a) that all jurisdictions

* agree to approach their respective occupational health and safety organisations in order to develop standards and codes of practice for volunteer organisations, and
* conduct an audit of legal risks faced by emergency sector volunteers, share the results, and develop responses

(b) that the Commonwealth Government:

considers providing support for employers of emergency services volunteers

recognises emergency management volunteers as trainees

examines the administrative processes associated with the implementation of the National Training Reform Agenda with a view to simplifying them

(c) that State and Territory Governments

* review and compare the legal protection provided in their legislation to determine whether it offers adequate cover for both volunteers and their organisations
* consider providing assistance with the provision of public liability insurance for emergency management volunteer organisations

- recognise emergency management volunteers as trainees
- provide funding to emergency sector volunteer organisations to enable them to implement the National Training reform Agenda
- explore the provision of concessions to emergency sector volunteers

(d) that Local Governments

- examine the provision of concessions such as rate rebates to emergency services sector volunteers.

--It is noteworthy that none of the provisions of the COAG HLG Recommendation 58 refer explicitly to tax concessions for emergency services volunteers.

Templeman (2004) noted that progress on implementing the COAG HLG Recommendations was unlikely to be rapid because of several factors, including: (a) the complexity of volunteer issues; (b) the large number of agencies making up the sector; (c) debate over the degree to which the Recommendations should apply to non-government services; and (d) states and territories lacking the resources to implement the provisions of the Recommendations.

CFA has, for several years, made available to its volunteers (and also to Victorian SES volunteers) a discount card service (Memberlink). This allows members of both organisations access to a wide range of goods and services at discounted prices. As at the end of 2004, approximately 11,000 CFA volunteers (19% of the membership) availed themselves of the services; while approximately 2,000 SES volunteers (36% of the membership) did so.

9.3 Recognition

Recognition of Emergency Services Volunteers in Australia has, for many years, been appalling. (Stringer, 2001, p.4)

Stringer (2001) proposed that eight levels of recognition issues required attention (p. 4):
- recognition of the individual volunteer;
- recognition of the emergency service organisation;
- recognition by local government;
- recognition by state governments;
- recognition by the Federal Government;
- recognition by corporate Australia;
- recognition by the media; and
- recognition by the general public.
--It should be noted that Stringer combined both incentive and recognition issues in much of his discussion of recognition by the different levels of government.

McLennan (2004) reviewed the recognition and service award schemes provide by the various Australian rural fire services, noting that there were great differences among the eight agencies in terms of the number of awards, the type of awards, and the length of time required to qualify for a length-of-service award.

Aldridge (2003) observed that there are individual differences in volunteer fire fighters' needs for public recognition. He noted the importance of State and National firefighting awards, but also commented on the importance of the media in the volunteer recognition process.

In their study of volunteer ambulance officers, Fahey and Walker (2001) concluded that while recognition was not a strong motivator in itself, lack of recognition was likely to impact adversely on volunteer retention.

It was noted during visits to rural fire services that few have formalised mechanism for recognising the contribution of employers of volunteers (SA CFS being a notable exception), notwithstanding the obvious importance employers in the volunteer emergency services sector.

9.4 Summary

It is generally acknowledged that emergency services volunteers incur "losses" as a consequence of their volunteering. While direct payments to volunteers for services are rejected by volunteer associations and fire services generally, there is widespread agreement that a range of concessions by local governments, state and territories governments, and the Federal Government would ease the financial burden of emergency services volunteering. No research could be located which provided information on the preferences of emergency services volunteers for the various alternatives.

Anecdotally, there appear to be great differences among the eight volunteer fire services in the way they approach the general issue of public recognition of their volunteers.

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10. Volunteers and Their Communities: Social Capital (Robert Jamieson)

In Australia, rural fire brigades provide an essential non-deferrable public good. The recognition of this function, and the intimate connection of fire brigades to the communities from which volunteers are recruited, is reflected in the responses to three recent surveys of Australian volunteer firefighters (Aitken, 2000: Palmer, 2000: Clancy & Holgate, 2004). In each case the sense of community, the commitment to the local social network and the provision of an important service rank among the highest of the priorities reported. Changes in communities which impede the recruitment of volunteer firefighters have serious safety implications and the substitution of professional (salaried) firefighters in place of volunteers would have serious economic and social ramifications. The volunteer bush firefighter has iconic status in the annals of Australian rural life and reported problems with recruitment (McLennan, 2004) indicate a serious disruption in the social fabric of rural Australia: There is anecdotal evidence that recruitment of new volunteers is emerging as an important issue for the viability of some rural brigades.

There is a serious gap in our understanding of the community dynamics underlying volunteering generally, and volunteering as a firefighter specifically. In a recent review Wilson (2000, p. 18) noted that "the impact of context on individual volunteering is one of the least understood issues in the field". At this stage, the limited research findings available on the effect of place of residence on voluntary participation do not provide a coherent account of the determinants or the processes involved. Even the claim of urban/rural differences in the motivation to volunteer (Paul, 2001) has not been explained satisfactorily.

Voluntary participation in community organisations is an indicator of "social capital". In a recent review of the concept and its policy implications the *Productivity Commission* (2003, p. 61) identified the importance of government support for volunteer bushfire brigades because of the focus of their activity and their role in the development of "networks, and … a sense of community and mutual trust among participants". The occasional mention of volunteering in the burgeoning literature on social capital belies the importance of this indicator as a key aspect of the desire to build community capacity to respond to local needs, rather than depend on central government to intervene to provide services. This appears to be a characteristic of many developed economies. Communities with many satisfied residents are more likely to generate volunteers involved in a wide variety of activities with positive consequences for the community and a range of social indicators measured at the community level.

In one of the few studies to specifically focus on the relationship between a fire department and the community it serves, Perkins (1987) described a small group of fire departments (or fire brigades) located in one rural county in the USA. Each department strenuously defended its autonomy and was closely integrated into the life of the local community, and provided a focus for a number of community recreational events. The solidarity developed among members was an important operational characteristic since teamwork is necessary for effective performance in this high risk environment. Within the department there was little internal specialization and a relatively flat command structure. Fire departments in rural USA appear to have emerged in response to perceived threat and often in the wake of a specific event, hence the significance of the improvement in safety for the community when an effective fire department exists.

Thompson (1993) also emphasised the importance of the relationship between the fire department and the community in the US. In a study which compared volunteer fire department members with the social characteristics of the community they serve the ability to volunteer appears to be a defining feature. Fire department members have more control over their time, are better educated and tend to have higher household incomes. They are commonly part of a family with volunteer experience, have lived for longer in the community and are less likely to move. The emerging picture is of a person with a relatively high sense of community, well integrated into the local setting and willing to invest in maintaining an integrated social environment.

In a more recent study, Omoto and Snyder (2002) explored the community context of volunteers who provide support for people with AIDS. While the type of service provided contrasts with that of the volunteer firefighter this is an excellent example of volunteerism which can inform our understanding of the process and the context which facilitates recruitment of volunteers. Volunteers who work with people with AIDS are more likely to report stigma associated with their work and recruitment of volunteers appears to be influenced by the local level of conservatism.

Generally, a positive attitude appears to attach to volunteer firefighters. However, recruitment patterns are likely to be influenced by local prevailing social and cultural norms which are related to participation in community based activities and organisations. In particular an important psychological dimension, Sense of Community, is likely to be a key driver of the volunteer recruitment process.

The concept of Sense of Community (SOC) provides the focus for an area of research which has considerable potential in volunteer research generally, and volunteer firefighters specifically. The literature in this area, starting with the seminal work of Sarason (1974) and the initial attempt to measure SOC (McMillan & Chavis, 1986,) provides numerous examples of measurement systems which vary slightly, but all focus on the key issue of understanding the dynamics which are the essential features of coherent, healthy communities, and communities which respond to their local needs. In short, communities from which volunteers are likely to emerge in response to a recognised local need. SOC appears to reflect the interconnections between people, the social network, the level of control over local events and the resources available to address local needs. Conversely, when a volunteer organisation is not connected closely with its host community the continued existence of the organisation is problematic:

> Anecdotal evidence indicates that loss of connection between the brigade and the community impacts negatively on recruitment of new volunteers, partnership problems with vulnerable groups and other key community players, shared acceptance of responsibility, perceptions about service quality, funding, future planning and the general health of the brigade. (Ford, 2002, p. 3)

To understand the contexts which support volunteer recruitment it is necessary to research an extensive range of communities which vary in ease of recruitment. It is important to measure the extent of volunteer activity, the functions of volunteering for the individual, the SOC of the community, and the normative influences at work in the specific community.

By way of a concluding observation, despite frequent comment about the importance of volunteer brigades maintaining close links to their communities (eg, Aitken, 2000) no research

could located which investigated Australian volunteer fire brigades and how they relate to their host communities.

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11. Organisational Issues

11.1 Introduction

While becoming a volunteer firefighter is ultimately an individual decision, once acted upon volunteering goes on subsequently in an organisational context. There is a limited amount of published research concerning organisational factors and volunteer recruitment, commitment and retention. However, almost all of this material is concerned with general not-for-profit, or Third Sector, volunteering: very little research has been published concerning emergency services organisations and volunteering.

Penner (2002) reviewed published research (in the US) concerning organisational factors and volunteerism. His general conclusion was that two kinds of organisational variables were most likely to influence a volunteer's commitment to the organisation: "(1) an individual member's perceptions of and feelings about the way he or she is treated by the organization and (2) the organization's reputation and personnel practices" (p. 458). In relation to perceptions and feelings toward the volunteer-hosting organisation, Omoto and Snyder (1995)—among others—found that level of satisfaction with the organisation was related strongly to volunteer retention; Grube and Piliavin (2000) found that organisational commitment was related to the amount of time volunteers contributed. Penner noted that while research specifically concerned with volunteers' perceptions of their organisation was sparse, research concerning voluntary prosocial actions among paid employees of organisations indicated that such voluntary contributions to the organisation were related to: job satisfaction; perceived organisational fairness; organisational commitment; and perceived leader supportiveness (Borman, Penner, Allen, & Motowidlo, 2001; Midli & Penner, 1995; Organ & Ryan, 1995; Rioux & Penner, 2001). In relation to organisational reputation and practices, Grube and Piliavin (2000) reported that perceived organisational prestige was related to both the number of hours contributed by volunteers and intention to remain with the organisation.

Almost no research has been reported concerning volunteer recruitment and retention in relation to organisational factors in Australian volunteer emergency service agencies—a report by CFA Corporate (1998) is a notable exception (see below). Discussion papers (eg, Conboy & Turner, 2001; Ford, 2002; Turner, 2004), anecdotal accounts (eg, Adler, 2004), and discussions with members of volunteer fire services (eg, McLennan 2004a, 2004b) suggest that perhaps eight organisational factors in particular are likely to have significant impacts upon recruitment and retention of volunteers: (1) relationships between paid staff and volunteers; (2) volunteer leadership; (3) communication and consultation; (4) volunteer administration; and (5) provision of facilities, are each discussed below; (6) training (Section 12) and (7) legal issues (Section 13) are discussed elsewhere in this Report. The issue of (8) recognition of volunteers by their organisation was the subject of a separate report (McLennan 2004b)—see also Section 9.

11.2 Relationships between paid staff and volunteers

Cuskelly and Brosnan (2001) discussed problematic relationships between paid staff in volunteer-hosting organisations and volunteers in Australian not-for-profit organisations generally. They noted that "Paid staff can be resentful if they feel that they 'have to be volunteers too' and exceed the boundaries of their job description or work extended hours without overtime pay…Volunteers, on the other hand, are sometimes resentful when paid staff

place demands on them to complete tasks, especially when a task is perceived as a functional responsibility of an employee" (p. 105).

Conboy and Turner (2001) noted, in their discussion of the origins of the CFA Volunteer Charter, the occurrence of friction between volunteer and career firefighters over industrial relations issues. Conboy and Turner observed that the Australian industrial relations system was established originally to prevent and settle disputes which extended beyond a single state. They noted that the traditional manner of resolving industrial disputes was by the making of awards, which underpin the present system of terms and conditions of employment where employers and unions representing employees use a conciliation and arbitration mechanism to resolve disputes. "The difficulty is that this system never allowed for the incorporation of volunteers because they are unpaid and accordingly are not parties to any industrial negotiation between employer and employee. The reality is that volunteers can be very much affected by industrial agreements and…should be taken into account when enterprise agreements are made" (p. 45). Conboy and Turner described two examples of industrial disputation between CFA and the *United Firefighters Union* (representing career staff) impacting negatively on volunteers. The first involved a dispute between the Union and CFA concerning Community Support Facilitators (CFSs) and the provision of training to CFA members: "The impact on the volunteers was that many lost the services of a CFS or the services provided were curtailed…The relationship between volunteers and career staff was made more difficult by some career staff who chose to press the industrial issue…Some career staff behaved abusively towards volunteers, denigrating their efforts, refusing to collect hoses after incidents and displaying placards at workplaces that undermined the quality and integrity of the services provided by volunteers" (p. 45). A second example concerned new training positions to facilitate delivery of training to volunteers. The union argued successfully that these employees should be covered by the Firefighters Award. The impact of the decision was to compromise the way in which volunteers were able to arrange the training. "The ultimate insult to volunteers was that they were unable to be compensated for petrol money for doing a training job that they had traditionally done well before this (Enterprise Bargaining) agreement was implemented" (p. 45).

Issues of volunteer/career staff relationships were raised in the course of the focus group discussion program reported by CFA Corporate (1998):

> In some fire stations where there were both paid staff and volunteers, there was an antipathy between the two groups, with volunteers perceiving themselves as having a lower status. In some cases this led to conflict. Problems were also highlighted in the relationship between paid staff and volunteers at both Regional and Headquarters levels. Whereas volunteers saw CFA as being, in principle, a volunteer driven organisation with paid staff to keep it running, they perceived that members of the hierarchy and paid staff at Regional offices saw the volunteers as a free labour force serving the formal organisation. (p. 6)

The above identifies three important sub-groupings of staff within volunteer fire services' organisational frameworks: volunteers, career firefighters, and management ("the vols", "the blue shirts", and "the head shed"). Some level of in-group/out-group negative stereotyping among these identifiable subgroups of an organisation is probably inevitable. With the exception of the CFA focus group study, no research could be located which examined relationships between Australian career and volunteer members of rural fire services.

11.3 Volunteer leadership

Woodward and Kallman (2001) identified interpersonal conflict within brigades as a contributor to volunteers resigning. During discussions with fire services staff, a need for improved training of volunteers in interpersonal dispute resolution and conflict management was noted (McLennan, 2004a). Adler (2004) criticised the present system of volunteers being elected to positions of leadership in brigades without regard for their fitness to occupy a leadership role:

> One key concern faced by any service that elects rather than appoints officers is that without minimum set standards, the best person for the job may be bypassed in favour of one who is popular or politically active. Elections bring in politics, lobbying, and in many case are disruptive for extended periods leading up to and post elections. Many members have left due to interpersonal fights around elections and the vanquished are often demoted from senior positions to base grade. These highly trained and qualified officers are nearly always lost to the service as demotion to ranks taking orders from those of far lesser experience and qualifications is highly demeaning. In country communities these practices often paint a poor image of what should be seen as a professional service and reduce the motivation of prospective members. There may also be a double whammy when a bypassed member leaves and takes other demoralised personnel with them. (pp. 81-82)

Other writers have emphasised the importance of brigade leadership in maintaining an organisational climate that fosters member morale and brigade commitment (eg, Aldridge, 2003). However, research into the ingredients of more versus less effective brigade leadership, and how brigade leadership and 'people' skills can be enhanced, is conspicuously lacking.

11.4 Communication and consultation with volunteers

Several writers have commented on the importance of communication and consultation with volunteers by rural fire services (eg, Adler, 2004; Aldridge, 2003; Turner, 2004). It appears that agencies are generally very aware of the importance of communication with their volunteers. Anecdotal evidence suggests that difficulties continue, especially in the larger states. In the future, internet-based communication is likely to be used more widely, although the pick-up rate of new communication technologies is likely to be slower in the more remote rural locations compared with urban-rural fringes.

No reports could be located describing volunteers' usages of, or preferences for, various means of communication from agency headquarters (emails, printed newsletters or bulletins, magazines). During discussion with agencies, a view was expressed frequently that better use could be made of video- and telephone-conferencing facilities so volunteers did not have to drive long distances to take part in meetings.

11.5 Volunteer Administration

In most agencies, there is anecdotal evidence of tensions arising from a shift away from a locally based (or municipal), and 'loosely' organised, bush fire service to a more centralised and 'corporatised' state-wide organisation. The change is generally understood as being

inevitable (in light of more rigorous training and OH & S requirements, and more stringent governance and accountability standards demanded of state and territory government instrumentalities generally). However, especially in more remote rural areas, there is a degree of unhappiness at what is perceived as a loss of local autonomy and an increasingly bureaucratic exercise of remote control from a headquarters which is out of touch with local issues and problems (cf., Adler, 2004).

There are anecdotal reports of burdensome administrative and reporting requirements contributing to resignations by older, experienced volunteers and difficulties for brigades in finding volunteer members who will take on administrative and secretarial roles.

In most agencies there is anecdotal evidence of dissatisfaction among some rank-and-file volunteers with their volunteer firefighter Associations. The Associations are, apparently, perceived by some as being out of touch with current member issues and irrelevant to the 'new' corporatised fire services. This is not a new phenomenon. The CFA focus group study (CFA Corporate, 1998) noted member dissatisfaction with volunteer Associations (p. 6):

> Very high levels of frustration were expressed about the nature and effectiveness of the Associations. There was a lack of clarity about the roles and scope of Associations, and whom they purported to represent. Therefore their effectiveness as representative bodies was perceived to be low.

In most volunteer fire services, volunteer Associations have an important consultative role to play in the administration of volunteers. It should be a matter of concern if a substantial number of an agency's volunteers believed that that they had no effective voice in the consultation process because they perceived that their Association did not represent their views and needs adequately.

11.6 Facilities

There is some anecdotal evidence of a belief among volunteers that agencies focus on the provision of fire fighting related equipment and overlook 'people issues'. Adler (2004) claimed that compared with New Zealand, Australian rural fire services generally had much poorer facilities at fire stations (toilets, meeting rooms, kitchens)—especially in rural locations. He argued that this lack limited brigades in their capacity to have an active social dimension to their functioning, impacting negatively on member morale, commitment, and retention. No reports could be located which examined members' perceptions of brigade facilities.

11.7 Summary

Rural fire services depend heavily on a volunteer workforce in order to meet their statutory obligations to protect communities. As both community expectations of level of protection and demands on volunteers to train and provide a professional service rise, agencies will have to increase the level of administrative support provided to their volunteers. What is lacking is good quality information on volunteers' needs which will assist agencies to prioritise the kinds of administrative support required.

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12. Training

Training and its likely impact on volunteer recruitment and retention has been mentioned frequently in a range of documents, reports, and discussion papers. In summary, two (superficially) conflicting views are often presented: first, that increased training demands (usually associated with minimum skills requirements) are a burden on experienced volunteers already functioning in operational roles pressed for time because of work and family pressures, and are thus likely to lead to experienced volunteers leaving fire services; second, that increased training opportunities provide personal and professional development opportunities which will enhance both volunteer recruitment and retention. Research shedding light on the current situation concerning training requirements/opportunities and the impact of these on volunteer recruitment and retention in Australian rural fire services is conspicuously lacking.

While the deaths of five volunteer firefighters at Linton in December 1998 seems to have been a catalyst for most Australian volunteer fire services to review their training requirements and related operational procedures, concerns about aspects of training for volunteers had been noted previously. The CFA Corporate (1998) report of a focus group study noted that (p. 9):

> Predominantly the view was firmly held that training (and processes of accreditation) were necessary to the efficiency of operating a volunteer fire service. It was also thought that it was important to make it exciting and stimulating.

> Underlying several linked issues concerning training and accreditation was the perception that current CFA training policies and procedures were seen to discourage volunteers from training. Existing training programs were seen as being too time consuming and/or too rigid in the timing offered, and geographically inaccessible. Availability of training in specialist areas was seen as inadequate.

> Accreditation requirements failed to take prior learning into account, and procedures for accreditation were perceived as being unclear and lacking clear protocols. Transferability of accreditation also posed problems.

Fahey and Walker (2001), reporting their studies of volunteer ambulance officers, noted that their participants were generally very positive about training: most believed that there was NOT 'too much' training, and most believed that it was held at a convenient time. Most were satisfied with the quality of training provided. Younger volunteers (18-30 years) were most interested in upgrading their standard of qualifications, those over 60 much less so. Fahey and Walker (2002) concluded that the training opportunities available to volunteer ambulance officers functioned as strong recruitment and retention tools, provided the training was delivered in a timely and suitable manner. No reports could be located which provided information on fire services' volunteers' satisfaction with the quality and standards of their training.

In a paper delivered at *Emergency Management Australia's* National Summit on Emergency Services Volunteers, Stone (2002) advocated that emergency services adopt the national vocational education and training (VET) framework and claimed that most had done so. Templeman (2002), in commenting on the National Summit, noted that "Training proved to be a major issue and there appears to be a level of opposition to the introduction of competency based training…"(p.5). He also conceded that "There was concern expressed about the

increased time which volunteers must spend on training, and that this was having an adverse effect on recruiting and retention of both volunteers and trainers" (p. 6).

In his report of a study tour to the USA and visits with US volunteer fire departments, Aldridge (2003) noted that a feature of US volunteer department training was the flexibility in delivery in order to meet the needs of a variety of members: shift workers, single parents etc. He commented that "Time management for attending training courses can at times be a major barrier for retention of volunteer firefighters. However, in the United States, they appear to be combating this problem effectively. Training in Australia could be tailored to cater more for the volunteers who do not work the usual 9-5, Monday through Friday week" (p12).

Henry and Hughes (2003) reported on a research project involving CFA aimed at fostering volunteer retention through strengthening learning orientation. The report gives a conceptual account of adult life-long learning in relation volunteer training, but contains little that is likely to be of immediate use to volunteer fire services.

In summary, many claims and assertions have been made concerning volunteer training and its impact on recruitment and retention. Research on current volunteers' training needs and evaluations of training arrangements has simply not been carried out, although it is understood that Queensland Fire and Rescue Service- Rural is in the process of carrying out a survey of volunteer members in relation to training.

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13. Legal Issues

Anecdotal evidence suggests that at least some volunteer firefighters are increasingly concerned about the possibility of some form of legal action being taken against them as a consequence of their volunteer activities (Turner, 2004). This increased level of concern is said to have arisen, at least in large measure, as a consequence of widely publicised coronial inquiries involving rural fire services held in several states and territories over recent years (ACT – Canberra fires; Victoria – Linton fire; NSW – Lithgow fire; WA – volunteer firefighter deaths in 2003).

However, the CFA Corporate (1998) report of a focus group study of volunteer members found evidence of concerns among members prior to the Linton volunteers fire deaths in 1998 and subsequent coronial inquiry:

> Another major concern was the perceived lack of backup for volunteers by CFA in legal matters. Volunteers were concerned about the fact that even when they do not personally bear liability, they nevertheless may be faced with long and stressful court proceedings. (p. 5)

Concerns about the degree to which volunteers are, or are not, protected from legal liability have been discussed recently in the context of general (or Third Sector, or Non Government Organisation) volunteering by several commentators. Oppenheimer (2001) observed that in Australia the law only legitimises labour carried out by the paid worker: "The law barely recognises unpaid work, both domestic and voluntary. The industrial relations system in Australia today does not recognise volunteer work because there is no financial exchange for the work performed" (p. 140). Oppenheimer noted that there was no uniformity across Australia in how volunteers were dealt with under the OH & S legislation introduced by the various states and territories.

Reynolds (1999) had noted previously that there had been few instances of litigation in Australia involving volunteers. Nonetheless, he identified five important areas of potential liability for volunteers generally: negligence, value of incorporation, defamation, criminal offences, and child protection. He concluded that it was desirable for volunteer hosting organisations to develop risk management strategies so that organisations and their volunteers were familiar with legal consequences of volunteering. He concluded that under some circumstances, risk minimisation "…may involve NOT using volunteers if insurance was unobtainable or excessively expensive" (p. 44).

In the USA, volunteers are protected from personal legal liability under the provisions of the Volunteer Protection Act (1997), Section 2 of which states that:

> 2(a) The Congress finds and declares that

> > (1) the willingness of volunteers to offer their services is deterred by the potential for liability actions against them;

> > (2) as a result, many non-profit and private organisations …have been adversely affected by the withdrawal of volunteers…

(3) the contribution of these programs to their communities is
thereby diminished, resulting in fewer and higher cost programs
than would be obtainable if volunteers were participating.

The purpose of the US Act is to limit legal action against volunteers. It was intended to
provide a complete defence for any legal action against a volunteer, provided one or more of
the following criteria are met:

- The volunteer was acting within the scope of the volunteer's responsibilities;

- If required, the volunteer was properly licensed or authorised by the relevant agency;

- The volunteer was not guilty of a conscious flagrant indifference to the rights or safety
  of individuals;

- The volunteer was not guilty of wilful or criminal misconduct, gross negligence, or
  reckless misconduct;

- The relevant state had not imposed other limitations affecting the operation of the Act.

---But see the observations by Eburn (2003) and McGregor-Lowndes (2004) below, which call
into question the degree of protection provided by such acts in practice.

Smith and Dunlop (2001) discussed issues associated with volunteers and legal liability in
their paper prepared for Emergency Management Australia's National Summit on Emergency
Services Volunteers. They noted that in Australia, volunteers may be held liable for an act or
failure to act under:

(a) civil action

- negligence (common law duty of care; statutory obligation or duty; statutory
  power)
- trespass to land
- trespass to goods
- trespass to person (battery; assault)

(b) criminal prosecution

(c) occupational health and safety (OH & S) statute

Smith and Dunlop discussed issues associated with defences against liability and statutory
immunity from liability and prosecution. They noted that there are unresolved issues about
when immunity will apply and observed that the application of immunity provisions to
volunteers had yet to be tested in the courts.

Eburn (2003) discussed ways in which Australian Parliaments have introduced various
provisions designed to modify laws relating to negligence as these might apply to 'Good
Samaritans' and volunteers. He noted that a recent 'Review of the Law of Negligence' by a
panel of eminent persons headed by Mr Justice Ipp did **not** recommend the introduction of

special 'Good Samaritan' legislation (Ipp, 2002). Notwithstanding, such legislation now exists in all Australian states and territories:

- (SA) *The Volunteer Protection Act 2001*
- (NSW) *Civil Liability Act 2002*
- (ACT) *Civil Law (Wrongs) Act 2002*
- (Tas) *The Civil Liability Act 2002*
- (Vic) *Wrongs and Other Acts (Public Liability Insurance Reform) Act 2002*
- (WA) *Volunteer (Protection From Liability) Act 2002*
- (NT) *Personal Injuries (Liabilities and Damages) Act 2003*
- (Commonwealth) *Volunteers Protection Act 2003*
- (Qld) *The Civil Liability Act 2003*

Eburn concluded his discussion by noting that:

> What the Parliaments and presumably those who advocated for these reforms wanted was an absolute guarantee that deserving Good Samaritans and volunteers would not be sued. The passage of legislation does not however stop litigation; it simply shifts the issues that are the subject of litigation. (p. 11)

McGregor-Lowndes (2003, 2004) undertook an analysis of the differences among the different Acts in relation to the coverage offered and the limitations and exceptions provided for. He concluded that the overall situation was far from satisfactory and commented critically on the lack of uniformity across jurisdictions. He also noted (McGregor-Lowndes, 2004) that in the USA, the Volunteer Protection Act (1997) did not appear to have reduced the level of litigation involving volunteers and their host organisations.

In a recent paper Dunlop (2004) discussed legal issues that may arise for volunteers when they advise and assist members of the community as distinct from undertaking fire suppression activities. Dunlop noted that the law was complex and there were few legal precedents to guide emergency services organisations. However, she suggested several courses of action which agencies could take to minimise legal liability risks to their volunteer members.

Turner (2004), having noted legal concerns by fire services volunteers, claimed that the situation for Victorian volunteer fire fighters with respect to liability was now very good following an amendment to the CFA Act. He noted that (pp. 76-77):

Section 92 of the CFA Act now reads as follows:

> 92. Immunity provision
>
> [1] This section applies to –
>
> (a) the Chief Officer;
> (b) any officer exercising the powers of the Chief Officer;
> (c) any officer or member of any brigade or group of brigades or an interstate fire brigade;
> (d) a volunteer auxiliary worker;
> (e) a person to whom section 30A applies.

[2] A person to whom this section applies is not personally liable for anything done or omitted to be done in good faith –

(a) in the exercise of a power of the discharge of a duty under this Act or the regulations; or
(b) in the reasonable belief that the act or omission was in the exercise of a power or the discharge of a duty under this Act or the regulations.

[3] Any liability resulting from an act or omission that would but for sub-section [2] attach to a person to whom this section applies attaches to the Authority.

Turner's positive endorsement of the amendments to the Victorian CFA Act is encouraging. However, the apparent lack of uniformity across the states and territories in the protection afforded to volunteer fire fighters by the different volunteer protection Acts and fire and emergency services Acts is a matter of concern.

It would appear to be a useful exercise for a suitably qualified researcher to undertake a comparative analysis of the protections offered (and the associated limitations of these protections) specifically to **emergency services volunteers** against various forms of liability under the provisions of both (a) volunteer protection Acts of the different states and territories (cf. McGregor-Lowndes, 2003, 2004) **AND** (b) relevant volunteer fire and emergency services Acts.

Also lacking is any research which examines issues such as: (a) the nature and level of concerns which fire services volunteers have about their legal liability; (b) the likely impact of such concerns on volunteer recruitment and retention; or (c) volunteers' knowledge of their legal liability and what actions they should take to minimise risk.

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14 Families of Volunteers

The general literature on trends in volunteering discussed in Section 2 suggests strongly that economic pressures on families, such as both adults having to work or one adult having to undertake further study, will be a barrier to many forms of volunteering in the immediate future. Likewise, changes in the nature of families—especially an increase in the numbers of single-parent families and blended families will make it increasingly difficult for people who may be interested in volunteering to be able to do so (eg, Evans & Saxton, 2003).

In the general literature on emergency services volunteering there are occasional references to the importance of families of volunteers (eg, Regan, 2003; Turner, 2004). The CFA Corporate (1998) focus group study report noted that families of volunteers paid a price and were also important sources of (unacknowledged) support to volunteer members' activities:

> In several Areas, for instance, there did appear to be some negative perceptions about the impacts of conditions of CFA working context on the families of volunteers. A widespread view was that volunteers' families missed out on the opportunity for summer family holidays and day trips because of the need for volunteers to be on standby.

> There was also a widespread perception that families (partners and children) needed to provide support and work which was almost completely unrecognised by CFA: for example, in answering fire calls. Families were frustrated by the interruptions to their daily lives from CFA activities, including emergency call outs, ringing around brigade members to assemble crews, and false alarms. This was exacerbated by the context of community ignorance and apathy towards CFA, particularly in urban areas.

> The lack of CFA communication with volunteers' families when volunteers were away on strike teams created anxiety for families, which then contributed to tension for volunteers. (CFA Corporate, 1998, p. 5)

A report by Benn (2001) prepared for the South Australia Emergency Services Administrative Unit discussed emergency services volunteering and the importance of adequate child care being available: "Childcare as a last minute arrangement is not ideal for the emergency services volunteer. Juggling the pressure of response against the need for an appropriate childcare arrangement can have detrimental effects on the decision making process" (p.17). Benn discussed emerging social trends (including growth in the number of single parent families and families where both parents worked) likely to make the need for child care in emergency services responding more urgent. She also discussed alternative models of child care arrangements for emergency services volunteers.

Aldridge (2003) noted that one of the distinguishing features of active and effective volunteer fire departments in the USA was their family-oriented approach, with flexible training and meeting arrangements to accommodate volunteer members with family commitments.

The CFA Corporate (1998) focus group study report and Benn's (2001) report on childcare issues for emergency services volunteers were the only accounts located concerned with the impacts of volunteering on families. No material could be located which discussed the needs of families of volunteers, nor possible means by which rural fire services could meaningfully recognise or assist families of volunteers.

Anecdotal accounts suggest that the impact of absences by volunteers for long periods of time on 'campaign firs' may be particularly stressful on some families. However, no information could located on the frequency and severity of such stressful impacts. It is noted in passing that the Australian Defence Forces devote considerable resources to informing and supporting families of defence personnel who are deployed overseas—even in cases of relatively brief deployments.

In summary, it seems that fire services have generally not undertaken much activity aimed at better understanding the impact of volunteering on families and the ways in which families of their volunteers could be better informed and supported--especially during lengthy 'campaign fires' absences.

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15. Employers of Volunteers (Adrian Birch)

15.1 General

Many volunteer firefighters are members of the labour force or self-employed, and it is inevitable that they encounter conflict between the demands of work and the provision of 24-hour fire services. One of the key issues of concern to fire agencies is the shortage of volunteers who can respond during business hours.

There has been very little research into the issues surrounding the releasing of staff for voluntary fire fighting activities. In one of the few papers touching on this area, Collett (2001) reports that, "structural changes in the Australian economy during the last 2 to 3 decades have made it more difficult for people to make a long-term commitment to volunteering in the [fire and emergency services sector] FESS". He argues that "volunteering is being adversely affected by the increase in average working hours, reduced job security [and] increasing reluctance of employers to release staff to attend emergency incidents" (p. 7).

Woodward and Kallman found that the biggest single reason given by CFA volunteers for leaving the organisation was 'time demands' (26%). Of those, 51% reported 'work commitments' as the main reason (Woodward and Kallman, 2001, p.93).

15.2 Measuring the demand for volunteers during business hours

It is difficult to summarise succinctly the level of demand for fire service volunteers. CFA maintains relatively good turnout statistics, so these have been used as a general indicator. Based on data published in the CFA Annual Report 2003-2004 (p.18), the mean number of callouts received by CFA brigades each year is 49. For a full time worker, approximately 20% of the hours in a year are work hours. This implies, *ceteris paribus*, that the average CFA volunteer is called out to 10 incidents during working hours each year. If we assume that turnouts occupy the time of a volunteer for an average of one hour, the mean time lost by employers to turnouts during working hours is potentially 10 hours per employee per year. In practice, the number of callouts per annum varies widely between brigades, with some CFA brigades receiving over 1,000 callouts per year. This equates to 200 callouts during business hours, or about 27 x 7.5 hour shifts per annum.

Major fires can also lead to callouts of a much longer duration than one hour. For instance, the NSW bushfires in 2001 involved 10,000 firefighters from throughout Australia, mostly volunteers. They worked multi-day rotations over a period of 16 days (Australian Government Department of Transport and Regional Services, 2002, p.67). The North East Victorian bushfires in 2003 extended over 84 days and involved 15,725 personnel (Hunter, 2003, p.114), mostly volunteers working 3 and 5 day rotations.

This prompts the question; how much should employers or self-employed volunteers be expected to bare the costs and disruption of releasing employees for emergency service activities?

15.3 The generosity of employers

For private sector employers, releasing employees to provide volunteering services in the community is analogous to donating money to the community. Employers lose the

productivity of the employees through their absence. They may also lose wages and salaries if they provide paid leave. However, whilst monetary donations to registered charities are generally tax deductible, donations by an employer of an employee's time are not.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics has conducted a survey of business philanthropy in Australia. The results of the survey show that for the 2000-01 financial year, businesses in Australia donated $1,447 million to the community sector in cash, sponsorships, goods and services. This represents 1.02% of their wages and salaries expenditure (ABS, 2002, p.3) or approximately 3 person-days per employee. This is an indicator of the level of generosity that businesses think they can afford in the face of market forces and competition.

15.4 Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

Whilst Collett (2001) identified the adverse affects on volunteerism of economic rationalist policies over the past few decades, a newly emerging debate on corporate social responsibility (CSR) offers hope of some reversal of those affects. Proponents of CSR (Lukka, 2004; Keeble 2003) argue that businesses should encourage their employees to undertake voluntary work for the community sector.

For Keeble, seen as part of a broader strategy of corporate responsibility, corporate support for employee volunteerism may help to address diminished trust of the corporate sector among a company's stakeholders (Keeble, 2003).

Lukka argues that "Companies with employee volunteering programmes find that:
- Employees are proud to work for them
- Potential employees want to join them
- Customers feel good about buying from them
- Partners want to work with them
- Investors want to invest in them
- Local governments want the organisation on their patch" (Lukka, 2004, p.1).

Employers may also stand to gain indirectly from the health benefits reported by employees who volunteer. In a survey conducted by ICM Research in the U.K. respondents who were volunteers reported that volunteering had contributed to improved health and fitness, fewer days off sick, weight loss and reduced consumption of alcohol, cigarettes and chocolate (CSV, 2004, p.2).

Likewise a study of employees working in a British Gas National Sales Centre in Cardiff found that individuals who volunteered in the community showed higher retention rates, lower absenteeism levels and improvements in job satisfaction and perceptions of the company. (Keeble 2003, p.5)

Significantly, employee volunteering as contemplated by businesses appears to relate to finite and regular forms of volunteering that can be managed without undue disruption to business. In contrast, firefighting volunteers are called upon in an irregular, unpredictable and abrupt fashion. On occasions firefighters may be deployed to large wildfires for days at a time and return exhausted and incapable of an immediate return to work.

However, whilst it is in the interests of employers to ensure that employee volunteering is rewarding to the employee and valued by stakeholders, employers are also under pressure

from other stakeholders to minimise any disruption and cost to the enterprise. The view that public companies should be involved in assisting the community is by no means universally accepted. Following the recent Asian tsunami many public companies pledged donations to assist affected communities. This drew sharp criticism from the Australian Shareholders Association. In an interview on the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's AM radio program, the Deputy Chairman of the Association, Mr Stephen Matthews made the following comments:

> Boards of directors don't have a mandate from their shareholders to spend the money in that way and they have no way of possibly knowing whether or not shareholders want their money – the shareholders' money – spent in this way.

> It's an attempt to shift the cost to a particular sector of the community, that is the shareholders.

> ...there is a role for business to make a contribution in relation to the tsunami, particularly those businesses who have activities up in south Asia, and companies like Blue Scope Steel come to mind. Where their businesses are dependent on those sorts of markets, there could possibly be a benefit for shareholders in them making donations to relief (Matthews, 2005).

15.5 The impact of training and skills maintenance on employers

Collett (2001) noted the considerable increase in the amount of training required of volunteers in the FESS over the past two decades. Over this period "statutory occupational health and safety requirements have been considerably lifted. Concurrently, community expectations of professionalism in service delivered by the FESS have risen. As well, the technologies used in the FESS have changed both in range and sophistication. These and other factors have required the FESS agencies to raise the training requirements for volunteers" (Collett, 2001, p.7).

Woodward and Kallman identified the increased time needed for training and skills maintenance as a significant factor contributing to volunteers leaving CFA (Woodward & Kallman, 2001, p.94). To date, the increased time demands on volunteers for training have been imposed at the expense of their personal and family leisure time. It is conceivable that employers could assist by releasing fire service volunteers for part of their training during business hours. Research would be required to investigate the feasibility of this idea, and how it might be implemented equitably across all types of employers.

It has been suggested that the training and skills received by emergency service volunteers improve their value to employers. Whilst it is unlikely that firefighting skills are of direct value to most employers, skills in teamwork, leadership, discipline, driving heavy vehicles etc. may be of value. It may be productive to study the ways in which firefighter training can offer synergies for civilian employers.

15.6 The risk to employers

Firefighting activities can expose volunteers to more risk of accidental injury, death or psychological trauma than other employees. In response to the obvious risks, and spurred on by various serious incidents and more stringent occupational health and safety legislation, fire agencies increasingly give high priority to the safety of firefighting personnel. Employers of

volunteer firefighters share some of the risk because of the possibility of the incapacitation or loss of employees as the result of accidents or psychological trauma. Volunteers are also at risk of becoming tied up with lengthy judicial proceedings in the event of major incidents such as that leading to the Linton coronial inquiry in Victoria.

Whilst fire agencies typically provide income replacement insurance for firefighters who are injured on duty, this in no way reimburses employers for the loss of personnel. In particular, volunteers who are self-employed may suffer severe business hardship in the event of incapacity arising from firefighting activities. At present fire agencies do not provide business expenses insurance for such cases. There are volunteer firefighter associations welfare funds associated with some fire agencies that can offer assistance to firefighters experiencing a wide range of hardships, however such funds are limited.

Employers' perceptions of the risks to employee-volunteers may be distorted by the occasionally dramatic nature of firefighting. In reality, over 4 decades from 1949 to 1990, a total of 51 CFA firefighters, mostly volunteers, died while engaged in firefighting activities, an average of 1.25 per annum (Murray, 1995). The rate of injury is much higher. For the five years to June 2004, CFA recorded a mean of 236.8 compensation claims per annum for injuries to volunteer firefighters out of a population of approximately 60,000 Victorian volunteer firefighters (CFA Annual Report, 2003-2004, p.31). This is one claim per 250 firefighters per annum.

It would be valuable to know how accurate employers' perceptions of the risks to their employees are, and what impact they have on employers' willingness to release their employees for volunteering.

15.7 Issues for employers of shift workers

Shift workers offer an attractive potential pool of volunteer firefighters because they can provide much-needed daytime response during business hours. In Australia, approximately 14% of the labour force does shift work (ABS, Working Arrangements Australia, 2003).

There has been a significant amount of research into issues surrounding the affects of shift work on employees over the past 3 decades. Whilst it might be anticipated that shift workers would suffer from a diversity of social, health, safety and performance problems, the most significant problems seem to be a reported lack of sleep (Singer, 1985, p.9). In particular, shift workers need more sleep during their off-duty hours than non shift-workers in comparable jobs (Tune, 1969).

Employers may be concerned about their shift-workers' sleep problems being exacerbated by callouts during sleeping times. Anecdotal evidence indicates that employers in the mining industry are most reluctant to release employees for firefighting due to concerns about safety repercussions in the workplace.

15.8 Issues for the self-employed

Volunteers who are self-employed (including farmers and graziers) may have greater freedom to respond to fire calls during business hours, depending on the nature of their business. As most fire agencies report difficulties maintaining adequate numbers of volunteers able to respond during business hours, self-employed volunteers can prove invaluable. In some areas

brigades may be heavily dependent on self-employed volunteers to ensure any response capability at all during business hours.

However, in meeting the demand for daytime response, self-employed volunteers may tend to do too much and harm their business interests. They may erode the revenue of the business by being away too often, and they may also damage customer relations by providing less reliable customer service. They may also undermine the morale of any other employees they have who are left behind to run the business.

As discussed earlier, self-employed volunteers face additional risks if incapacitated whilst on firefighting duties. Whilst fire agency compensation schemes may reimburse injured volunteers for lost salary, they typically will not reimburse business expenses. A self-employed volunteer may need to maintain payments of business expenses such as rent, utilities, insurance etc. and may also need to hire specialised staff to stand in for them while they are incapacitated. Prudent business owners may respond to the heightened risk by taking out business expenses insurance, but the premiums can be a significant added expense to the business. It may be an additional cost that would not otherwise have been justified if they were not volunteer firefighters.

We have seen that overall, businesses think that giving about 1.66% of pre-tax profit (ABS, 2002, p.2) to the community is appropriate. It seems likely that self-employed volunteers in busy brigades may be contributing considerably more than this in time and productivity lost from their businesses. In so doing, they may be shouldering a disproportionate share of the cost of providing fire services to the community. This is clearly an area worthy of further research.

15.9 Public sector employers

Traditionally, the public sector (including municipal governments and utilities) have been important sources of FESS volunteers—and, significantly, volunteers who had some latitude from employers to respond to emergencies during working hours. However, economic structural changes over the past two decades have had significant impact on the numbers of public sector employees, and thus on FESS volunteers able to respond during working hours. State and Commonwealth government agencies have largely withdrawn from rural towns into regional centres and capital cities. Utilities have been partially or fully privatised. Municipal governments have moved increasingly to engaging labour through outsourced contracts rather then by hiring employees, and in some states municipalities have undergone amalgamations with associated reductions in their workforces. The impact of these changes in public sector employment appears to have been felt most strongly in rural areas.

The CFA (2001) submission to the *Economic Development Committee of the Parliament of Victoria* examined the relationship between structural changes in the economy and the decline in FESS volunteer numbers during the preceding 15 years. The submission focussed particularly on five industry sectors where employment levels were expected to have been affected negatively by structural economic change: agriculture, utilities, transport and storage, finance, and government. The submission drew upon work by Neville and Emery linking economic disadvantage through unemployment, or underemployment, with a reduced tendency to volunteer. The submission concluded that "declines in the numbers of jobs, mainly in the utility, agriculture, and government sectors, have been large enough on their own, on a

region by region basis, to account for the decline in numbers of rural volunteers serving CFA" (p. 20).

The CFA (2001) submission noted also that the program of radical municipal amalgamations in Victoria during the 1990s resulted in fewer jobs in the local government sector. The submission noted that the policy of contracting out labour which was increasingly adopted by municipal governments at the time "…was associated with substitution in employment and some job losses" (p. 22). Anecdotal accounts suggest that volunteers working for state or local government and utilities find it easier to negotiate agreements about leave for emergency services volunteering than do individuals employed on a casual or contract basis. The submission noted that the rationalisation of some Victorian State government department rural offices to a small number of regional centres and to Melbourne (where very large employment growth occurred) contributed further to reduced opportunities for employment in rural areas, a shrinking rural labour force, and fewer FESS volunteers.

Clearly, changes to public sector employment over the past two decades have contributed significantly, if inadvertently, to the decline of FESS volunteer numbers in rural areas. Whereas most other factors that have impacted negatively on rural FESS volunteer numbers are driven by commercial market forces and are thus largely outside the influence of government, it is within the power of government to act in an interventionist manner in the sphere of public sector employment.

15.10 Sanctions against dismissal

In July 2003, following the protracted campaign fires in North East Victoria, the Commonwealth Parliament passed amendments to the Workplace Relations Act, 1996, to protect emergency management volunteers from dismissal. The amendments make it unlawful for an employer to terminate employment where the employee is temporarily absent from the workplace because of the carrying out of a voluntary emergency management activity. They apply Australia-wide but there are a number of important qualifications. Moreover, in some states and territories the protections only apply when a state of emergency has been formally declared.

According to the Explanatory Memorandum (2002-2003, p.1) drafted to accompany the amendments, they do not provide protection for employees who are currently excluded from the protection of unfair dismissal legislation such as short-term casuals. This is significant because the proportion of the labour force in casual employment has recently increased dramatically. In the decade from 1988 to 1998 the proportion of the workforce in casual employment rose from 19% to 27% (ABS, 2002, p.2). It would be useful to determine what impact the exclusion has on the recruitment or retention of casual employees as fire service volunteers.

The amendments state that the absence must be "reasonable in all the circumstances" (subsection 170CK(2) (i)). The Explanatory Memorandum indicates that 'reasonableness' would mean, for example, "that in most circumstances there would be an expectation that the employee would seek the employer's consent before" leaving the workplace, but acknowledges that prior consent may not always be possible. Similarly, the duration of the absence would have to be "reasonable in all of the circumstances". The size of an employers business is given as a possible consideration and it is suggested that it would not be reasonable

for the sole employee of a small business to be absent from work for an extended period (pp.3-4).

The Bills Digest (2002-2003) drafted to support debate of the amendments indicates that most of the States and Territories have similar legislative protection for emergency services volunteers but the provisions vary. In some States the protections offered are broader than under the Commonwealth Act. For example, legislation in some States protects the employee not only from 'dismissal' but also from other forms of 'victimisation' including "altering the employee's position or circumstances of employment or 'injuring' the employee in any other way" (p.4). Legislation in other States and Territories also safeguard against such actions as "loss of long service leave, sick leave, recreation leave, or other benefits" (pp.4-5)

The Bills Digest also notes that some State and Territory legislation goes further than the Commonwealth amendments and protects the employee regardless of whether the employer has consented to the absence. The Australian Capital Territory legislation places the onus on emergency services organisations to release volunteers from operations if satisfied that their absence would cause significant hardship to the business of the employer (p. 5).

In other respects some of the State and Territory legislation provides narrower protections than the Commonwealth amendments. The Bills Digest notes that the amendments apply "not just to situations where a formal state of disaster or emergency has been declared, but in any emergency situation where the employee's absence is 'reasonable'" (p. 4).

The Explanatory Memorandum notes that the Commonwealth amendments also provide that the employee must be involved in response to an emergency or in immediate preparation or post emergency activities but not in more regular activities such as training (p.4). As noted earlier, firefighting can be arduous work and on occasions volunteer firefighters are too fatigued after an incident to go straight back to work. There does not appear to be a provision within the amendments protecting volunteers who need reasonable rest and recuperation after an incident.

The Bills Digest notes that the Commonwealth amendments do not provide an entitlement for employees to be paid for the time they are absent on emergency duty. In fact, they require that the employee must be carrying out the emergency management activities on a 'voluntary basis', however they do allow for volunteers to receive 'gratuities', 'honoraria' and the like and still receive protection. It reports that the South Australian legislation goes further in allowing employers to apply to the State Government for reimbursement of any wages or salary paid to volunteers in respect of periods of absence (p.5).

The Bills Digest reports that Commonwealth amendments only apply to employees who are members of, or in a member-like association with, a recognised emergency management body. In contrast, some States and Territories provide protection for 'casual volunteers' who are not members of an emergency service organisation (p.5).

The Bills Digest notes that many emergency services volunteers in Australia are not afforded the protection of workers compensation cover. It explains that "most legal entitlements in the employment context are premised on the existence of a contract under which the worker is paid in return for work done. On this basis, volunteer workers are excluded from workers compensation legislation even if the injury or illness is directly related to the work they have

been doing" (pp.5-6). In some States volunteers are 'deemed' to be employees to get around this problem, but in most States and Territories this is not the case.

There is little research available into the impact of the various legislative protections, either on employers' attitudes towards employing emergency services volunteers, or on employees' willingness to volunteer.

15.11 Leave arrangements

In deciding to release employees for volunteer firefighting, employers must manage a range of issues. Can employees be released from their normal duties without unduly disrupting the enterprise? To what extent can the enterprise afford to release the volunteer before their absence starts to have a negative impact on budgets? Can they be released immediately or does their release need to be micro-managed and approved by someone? Do the functions of the employee need to be taken over by someone else? How do fellow employees feel about taking over the absent employees workload? Do co-workers resent carrying extra responsibilities while the volunteer is perceived to be off "having an adventure"? For what length of time can the employee be released before their absence becomes unacceptably disruptive for the enterprise? Should volunteers continue to earn pay and entitlements whilst volunteering with fire agencies and will doing so erode a volunteer's entitlements to any fire agency compensation arrangements or unfair dismissal legislation? If employees continue to earn pay & entitlements, should employers or the self-employed be able to claim reimbursement from government?

Woodward and Kallman note that "some larger employers already recognise the importance of emergency services volunteering by providing emergency services leave. However, this is increasingly difficult for small employers who many not be able to afford to release workers from their business (Woodward and Kallman, 2001, p.95).

There is the potential for the abuse of emergency services leave arrangements by employees. They may respond to calls for which they are not required or remain absent for longer than necessary. Employers may reasonably expect the cooperation of fire agencies in policing such abuses.

15.12 Tax relief

Gledhill (2001) discusses a range of options for Government to support fire service volunteers including tax concessions. He notes the important contribution that "employers including the self-employed" make "to the cost of providing volunteer services" and proposes that they could be reimbursed "for the loss of production" through tax rebates (p.11).

However, tax rebates may be problematic as a form of reimbursement. The benefit, via a taxation assessment, can lag almost 2 years behind the date that the expense was incurred. Also, the rebate is only of value to businesses that have a tax bill larger than expense to be reimbursed. In all likelihood, a more direct and timely form of reimbursement of employers needs to be investigated.

15.13 Mismatched expectations

There is the potential for a mismatch in expectations between firefighting agencies and employers regarding the necessity for calling on volunteers to respond. Fire agencies treat every call for assistance seriously, and respond no matter how likely it seems that a given call may be trivial or a false alarm. Employers may be accustomed to a more pragmatic commercial standard of risk management and regard the fire agencies' standards as excessive. It would be useful to research the disparity in expectations and explore ways of reconciling the differences.

With modern paging systems and centralised call dispatch, fire agencies tend to alert all members of a brigade for all incidents in their area, no matter how small. It is also common practice to respond two brigades to every incident. This means that for 2 brigades of, say, 40 members each, 80 volunteers are paged for most incidents, even though perhaps as few as 1 crew of 4 is actually required. Employers may view this practice as indiscriminate and wasteful if they are being asked to release, and perhaps pay, employees for each call. As noted earlier, busy brigades could be called out several times a day during business hours. Employers and the self-employed would probably welcome more sophisticated alerting arrangements and technologies that could reduce the number of times individual volunteers are called out unnecessarily. There is currently no research available on employers' attitudes towards the desirability of more efficient alerting arrangements.

15.14 Negotiating leave arrangements with employers

The Commonwealth's anti-dismissal legislation for emergency services volunteers highlights the need for employees to obtain the consent of their employer before taking leave for emergency services activities. As outlined in the previous sections, there are potentially many issues that need to be resolved between employers and employees when addressing emergency services leave. Either party may find it difficult to negotiate mutually acceptable arrangements and may benefit from the availability of well researched guidelines or other forms of assistance.

15.15 Conclusion

In summary, employers of volunteers, and self-employed volunteers, are key 'players' in the provision of emergency services. Yet there is almost no research available on their knowledge of emergency services volunteering, their expectations, or their needs.

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16. Women Volunteers (Ruth Beatson)

16.1 General

The general volunteering participation rates appear to be either higher (US and Australia) for women than men, or equal (UK). The US *Bureau of Labor Statistics* (2003) survey, for example, reported that while 32.2% of women engaged in volunteer activity in the twelve months prior to completing the survey, only 25.1% of men did so. In Australia, a survey conducted by the *Australian Bureau of Statistics* (2001) showed slightly higher participation rates for women (33%) than men (31%). However, in the UK, according to a report by the *Institute for Volunteering Research*, men and women were equally likely to volunteer (Institute for Volunteer Research, 2004).

16.2 Women Volunteers in Fire Services

16.2.1 Introduction

Despite the trend of higher volunteer participation for women in general, the volunteering rate for women in nontraditional fields, such as emergency services, is appreciably lower. This follows, to some extent, the under-representation of women in paid nontraditional vocations such as the so-called 'uniformed services' (military, police, firefighting and correctional services) in which women constitute less than 25% of the workforce in the USA (Grube-Farrel, 2002). Interestingly, of all the uniformed services in the US, women's participation is lowest in firefighting: Grube-Farrel claims that women make up only 3.6% of professional firefighters and fire prevention workers in the US. Likewise, women make up less than 3 % of paid fire personnel in Australia (Yaman, 2004). However, the rate of participation by women in the fire services is higher among the volunteer ranks. According to a study of volunteer fire departments in the US, males constitute between 85% and 100% of fire service volunteers (Manolakes, 2002), and women constitute 0% to 15%. In Australia, women constitute between 12% (Tasmania) and 24% (West Australia) of volunteers in fire services (McLennan, 2004). Reports by CFA Corporate (1998) and Regan (2003) indicate that there is some level of concern among Australian fire services that women are under-represented among volunteer ranks.

Among volunteers, however, when the distinction between operational and support roles is made, a discrepancy between male and female participation rates in volunteer firefighting is more apparent. In a sample of 354 members from 15 volunteer fire departments in rural America, Thompson and Bono (1993) found that only 5.9% of the volunteer firefighters who had obtained 'full membership' (as opposed to playing a support role in 'Ladies Auxiliaries') were women. A similar pattern emerges in Australia where, according to a recent report, between 23%-98% (average 63%) of women volunteers in the fire service engage in operational roles, compared with 76-100% (average 85%) of male volunteers (McLennan, 2004).

The observed variability among the different Australian volunteer-hosting fire services in their rates of female participation in operational roles (in the context of a volunteer membership that is predominantly male and aging) warrants serious attention. Unfortunately, there is currently no reported research on Australian women volunteer firefighters which addresses the phenomenon of low participation rates by women volunteers in operational roles. There is, however, some literature from the US and UK concerned mostly with issues faced by paid

female firefighters, issues that may inform future Australian research on the recruitment and retention of female volunteer firefighters.

16.3 Fire Culture Background and the US Experience

Despite the fact that women have been volunteers in US fire services since the 1800s (Women in the Fire Service, 1993), fire departments in the US have a strong tradition of male 'brotherhood' and masculinity. According to Manolakes (2002) the mere presence of female firefighters implicitly threatens associations between firefighting and masculinity. Thus, attempts by female firefighters to join US fire departments have been responded to with concern and dissuasion if not outright hostility. Perkins (1990) argued that fire services are perceived to be tight-knit clubs, in which the inclusion of women requires the expense of too much emotional energy for them to be represented in significant numbers. This situation appears to have been perpetuated by several factors that hinder the recruitment and retention of women.

16.4 Recruitment of Women Firefighters: Salaried and Volunteers

Based on overseas reports there are three factors likely to impact on the recruitment of women into the volunteer fire services: public perceptions of the fire service, differing motivations, and societal factors.

16.4.1 Public perceptions

Three aspects of public perception that apparently hinder the recruitment of women into fire services include (a) beliefs that women are not welcomed in fire stations, (b) beliefs that women are not capable of being firefighters, and (c) inadequate information about the variety of roles available in fire services.

16.4.1.1 Women are not welcomed

According to a 1994 report on the public image of the UK fire services, in comparison with nursing, policing, and being in the armed services, firefighting was viewed by the public as the **least** suitable occupation for women (Bucke, 1994): 43% of women surveyed agreed that women firefighters would not be made welcome by male coworkers.

A number of factors may contribute to this belief. One factor identified by researchers both in the UK and the US is language. According to Floren (2001), the mass media usage of the term 'firemen' instead of 'firefighters' contributes to stereotypical beliefs that firefighting is a man's job. Likewise, within UK fire departments, the offensive and inappropriate reference to women firefighters as 'lassies' and 'girls' has been found to be (a) frequent, and (b) not recognized as offensive (UK Fire Service Inspectorate, 1999). The language used in and by at least one Australian fire service appears to be similarly discriminatory: the official publication of the Victorian CFA volunteer Associations (Victorian Urban Fire Brigades Association, Victorian Rural Fire Brigades Association, Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria) is titled *The Fireman* (emphasis added!).

However, actions may speak louder than words. The substantial gender difference in recruitment levels (especially salaried, but also volunteers) not only implies that women are

not (generally) as valued or as welcome as men in fire services but directly influences the ongoing under representation of women firefighters. There is evidence from both the UK and the US that male firefighters become interested in the service through personal contacts with other (male) firefighters in local brigades, while women attribute their interest to chance (Bucke, 1994) and more often join through formal channels (Manolakes, 2002)--a recruitment process likely to maintain women's 'outsider' status and thus likely to impact negatively on retention.

16.4.1.2 Women are incapable

While a number of arguments have been employed to explain the exclusion of women from fire services, the most prominent justification is a claim that women are simply not physically capable of meeting the job requirements. Indeed, the UK Fire Service Inspectorate (1999) survey found that 59% of women believed that the physical demands of the job would be too difficult for them. However, 49% believed themselves capable given adequate training. Beliefs of incompetence held and perpetuated within fire services will be discussed later in section 16.5: Retention of Women Volunteers.

16.4.1.3 Women have inadequate information about diverse roles

Closely related to the problem of a perception that women are not capable of serving in fire departments, is the perception that all firefighters do is fight fires. According to C3 (a UK consultancy firm), fire services have a generally positive, but low, profile in the community, with little public awareness of the scope of activities undertaken by fire services (C3, 2000). According to a study by the UK *Fire Service Inspectorate* (1999), 78% of women surveyed indicated a lack of information about job opportunities in the fire service.

There is anecdotal evidence of a general lack of community awareness about the variety of volunteer roles (other than operational firefighter) available within Australian volunteer fire services, also. An advertisement campaign recently employed by the Victorian CFA (*Does the hat fit*) indicates an awareness of this problem for that agency. However, research is needed to assess whether lack of information about women and fire service volunteering is in fact an issue in Australian communities, and if so, how best to target recruitment practices in order to boost women volunteer numbers.

16.4.2.1 Motivations of Women Firefighters

Manolakes (2002) has argued that the motivations for men and women to join volunteer fire services differ. While men tend to cite social rewards, women appear to be attracted more to the altruistic and practical helping aspects of volunteering. As yet, no Australian research has investigated possible gender differences in fire service volunteer motivations.

Paul (2001) identified gender issues in volunteering as one of seven challenges to volunteering emerging from the ABS (2001) survey of volunteering in Australia. She noted that the participation rate for women in voluntary activity is appreciably higher than that for males in the age ranges 25-34 and 35-44, but fell below that of men thereafter: "A challenge – to assist women in the prime family caring demographic group to continue to balance their important caring, employment and community roles" (p.32).

Daytime crewing has been described as a major issue facing volunteer fire services in Australia (Benn, 2001). In the context of a largely male population of aging volunteers, a prospective target group for daytime crewing in the younger age bracket includes primary child care givers, of which a large proportion are women. Anecdotal evidence that volunteers delay joining the service until children reach their teens has been cited as a potential source of loss of years of volunteer support. Benn notes that while brigades not responding to the need for childcare support for their volunteer members may be minimizing litigation risks, this is likely to be at the expense of recruiting and retaining adequate membership numbers.

16.5 Retention of Women Volunteers

Retention of women volunteers in fire services is likely to be influenced by a number of factors concerning both the social and physical environment of brigades and fire stations. While there is currently no available research on the experiences of Australian volunteer firewomen, research on the obstacles faced by paid female firefighters in the UK and US may inform and direct future investigations of the factors that impact on the retention of Australian volunteer firewomen.

16.5.1 Social Environment

According to a survey of the earliest paid female firefighters in the US, the major obstacles faced were identified as 'attitudes of male fire fighters: skepticism, prejudice, hostility and harassment' (Floren, 1981). Today, women career firefighters appear to face the same issues.

16.5.1.1 Skepticism

While male skepticism includes doubts about women's motivations for joining the service (for example, male firefighters have speculated that women join to file false harassment charges for financial settlements; Floren, 1999), the overwhelming concern appears to be over women's competence.

In 1976 a survey of California fire chiefs found the majority believed women to be physically incapable of doing the job (Women in the Fire Service, 1993). More recently, a survey of UK fire brigades resulted in the UK *Fire Service Inspectorate* (1999) reporting that the overwhelming collective view of uniformed staff and officers was strong opposition to the employment of women in operational roles. This was on the basis that women were not capable of doing 'a man's job'.

While societal stereotypes of female fragility play a significant role in the perception that women are less capable firefighters than men, differences in socialization, and hence employment history also have an impact. For example, most males entering the UK fire service come from other skilled manual jobs, while most women come from non-manual occupations (Bucke, 1994). It is no surprise, then, that gaps in mechanical knowledge have been identified as a disadvantage to women (Chetkovich, 1997) leading to problems in training. In the US, Yoder and Berendsen (2001) found 55% of white women reported that during initial periods of training a lack of adequate information and explanation meant that women had to ask questions - which has been interpreted as a sign of incompetence (rather than interest) that hampers the acceptance of women within their departments (Women in the Fire Service, 1999).

Perceptions of female firefighter incompetence are perpetuated by several tactics, including greater visibility of mistakes, close and punitive supervision, and non-regulation drills. In her study of US female volunteer firefighters Manolakes (2002) noted greater attention to mistakes made by females. Chetkovich (1997), likewise, reported that mistakes made by female recruits were more (a) rapidly circulated, (b) widely known and (c) embellished upon than mistakes made by male counterparts. Yoder and Aniakudo (1996), similarly, reported that in a survey of 22 female firefighters, 82% felt that their mistakes were noticed more than those made by their male counterparts. This may result from closer supervision of women (Women in the Fire Service, 1999). According to the study by Yoder and Berendsen (2001), 88% of women firefighters sampled reported unfavorable supervision and agreed that in order to demonstrate their competency they had to outperform male colleagues. Similarly, Floren (1981) reported that only 12% of women did not feel pressured to work harder or do better than men in order to prove their worth. Among professional firefighters there have been reports of non-regulation drills specifically designed to exhibit weaknesses in women (Chetkovich, 1997; Yoder & Berendsen, 2001)

16.5.1.2 Prejudice and discrimination

According to Murphy, Beaton, Cain and Pike (1994), gender discrimination is the only stressor ranked significantly higher by female compared with male firefighters in the US. This is a common stressor. One US survey of 551 female firefighters found that 73% reported being treated differently from male coworkers in negative ways, 96% of these more than once, and 55% reported ongoing differential treatment (Women in the Fire Service, 2004). Three discriminatory manifestations of prejudice identified in the literature are paternalistic overprotection, ignoring, and overt hostility including sexual harassment.

In the study by Yoder and Berendsen (2001) paternalistic overprotection was cited as a problem by 95% of the sample. Although benevolent in intent, it can compromise competence and hence, the safety of all firefighters and the community served. Another form of gender discrimination noted in the literature is a tendency for males to ignore their female coworkers. In a sample of 24 female firefighters 79% reported being ignored (Yoder & Berendsen, 2001) or feeling invisible. Chetkovich (1997) identifies several motives for ignoring women, including fear that anything said will be construed as sexual harassment, genuine confusion over how to behave with women in a work context, and deliberate exclusion from social interactions in the hope that women will quit.

16.5.1.3 Hostility and harassment

While many US female firefighters report (a) explicit communications of disapproval (as many as 71% according to Yoder and Berendsen, 2001), (b) threats of abandonment at fires, and (c) equipment tampering (Willing, 1996), the most researched form of hostility in male dominated industries is sexual harassment. According to the UK *Fire Service Inspectorate's* 1999 report, in all brigades sampled, there were accounts of sexual harassment. Similarly, research in the US suggests that sexual harassment is a prevalent problem for women in fire services, with unpublished data from a 1995 survey indicating 90% of paid and 76% of volunteer firefighter women experienced one or more forms of sexual harassment (Women in the Fire Service, 1996). The most common form of sexual harassment appears to be encounters with unwanted sexual teasing, jokes or remarks. Yoder and Aniakudo (1996) report that 91% of those who said they had been sexually harassed experienced this form, though not exclusively. In a more recent study, Rosell, Miller and Barber (2001) noted that

50% of the women firefighters who reported being harassed indicated a problem with sexual stereotypes. Nearly one quarter reported dealing with acts of violence. This is in contrast to a UK report in which Bucke (1994) asserted that physical abuse of women in UK fire services was rare.

It is important to note that research on sexual harassment within US fire services indicates a social environment in which such behaviour goes unchallenged. According to Yoder and Aniakudo's (1996) study of 22 African American firewomen, less than a quarter believed that if a male coworker told a sexually offensive joke, another male would reprimand him. Rosell, Miller and Barber (2001) contend that responses at the level of management are no better; with two thirds of departments taking no formal action in response to the filing of sexual harassment complaints. Unfortunately, filing a complaint can lead to consequences more negative than departmental inaction. Bucke (1994) reported that in the UK, women firefighters overwhelmingly believed filing an official complaint would result in further victimization and stigma. Such beliefs do not appear to be unrealistic. Following intensive interviews with firefighters in the US, Chetkovich (1997) concluded that regardless of how inappropriate a behaviour was, a woman complaining about an incident would almost invariably be criticized and ostracized. A 1999 report on the British fire service found that all women who filed sexual harassment complaints subsequently quit the service (UK Fire Service Inspectorate, 1999). It therefore comes as no surprise that approximately only one third of US harassed women firefighters apparently make official complaints (Women in the Fire Service, 1996; Rosell, Miller & Barber, 2001).

In the US, women firefighters who experience sexual harassment are not only significantly more stressed than those who do not, but are also more afraid to go to work and more likely to use sick leave to avoid work (Rosell, Miller & Barber, 2001). Information about the prevalence of sexual harassment within Australian volunteer ranks and its impact is lacking.

16.5.1.4 Actions to Combat Negative Attitudes and Behaviours

A first step to combating negative behaviours involves identifying the source. Manolakes (2002) suggests that the ostracism, prejudice, discrimination and hostility found toward women in US fire services comes primarily from older rather than younger males. However, anecdotal evidence from Australian volunteer firefighters suggests otherwise. Informal discussions with Australian female volunteer firefighters suggest that sexism is a problem for young and old males alike. Systematic research is needed to assess to what degree sexual harassment is a problem for female firefighters (salaried and volunteer) in Australia, and what impact it has on retention.

In recognition of problems regarding skepticism, discrimination and hostility, diversity training programs have been instituted by many fire services in the US and UK. However, according to Floren (1999), training programs that focus only on brigade policies, how to comply, and consequences of noncompliance, are met with resentment and opposition. Furthermore, in departments in which such training is not well received, more women report being sexually harassed - policies are apparently not enough. In a study about which women do and do not experience sexual harassment, Rosell, Miller and Barber (2001) found that just as many women in fire departments where unions have a sexual harassment policy were harassed as those without policies. However, significantly fewer women reported being sexually harassed when women perceived that their union was supportive of issues affecting women firefighters.

16.5.2 Physical Environment

Several institutional factors have been identified as manifestations of the cultural intolerance of women in fire services. These include difficulties with uniforms and fire station facilities.

16.5.2.1 Protective gear

According to a 1995 survey of almost 500 American female firefighters, 58% indicated that at least one or more items of protective gear did not fit, 43% of women reported that their gloves were too big, almost 20% had problems with boots, and around 15% experienced difficulties with turnout coats and pants (Women in the Fire Service, 1996). Of the women who reported advising their department of the problem only 23% reported prompt resolution, while 31% reported that their department eventually addressed the problem (sometimes taking over 10 years). A report by the UK *Fire Service Inspectorate* (1999) also identified inappropriate gear as a problem for women in UK fire services. There is anecdotal evidence that Australian female volunteer firefighters face similar problems, wearing gear that is uncomfortable, inhibits movement, and is ultimately unsafe.

16.5.2.2 Fire station facilities

With the sexual integration of the US and UK fire services, the design of many older fire stations for a single-gender workforce, has led to inconveniences, discomfort and embarrassment. In addition to a lack of provision of separate shower and changing rooms for men and women inconveniencing members, and sending a message that women are not important enough to deserve separate facilities, it exposes fire departments to potential discrimination lawsuits – which, as Willing (1988) notes, cost more than separate bathrooms. The inadequacy of facilities seems to be a problem as reported in the US (by Women in the Fire Service, 1996b), and also in the UK where, according to one study, provision of separate toilet, shower and locker rooms was a problem in all 10 brigades sampled (UK Fire Service Inspectorate, 1999). It is not known to what extent inadequate facilities affect the retention of Australian volunteer firefighters.

16.6 Summary

The typical fire service represents a traditionally male dominated organization in which attempts at gender integration have met various obstacles. Issues regarding the recruitment of women firefighters (both volunteer and salaried) include public perceptions of intolerance, assumptions that women are physically incapable, and a lack of awareness of variety of roles available for women in fire services. Social obstacles identified as likely to hinder the retention of women firefighters include male skepticism of female motivations and competence, prejudice and discrimination, and sexual harassment. Physical difficulties identified include problems with protective clothing and inadequate station facilities. Most research on female fire fighters is based on the experiences of salaried firefighters in the US and UK. While the issues identified from this overseas literature may generalize to Australian women volunteers, this needs to be tested directly and barriers specific to the recruitment and retention of Australian women volunteer firefighters identified.

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17. Volunteers and Minority Groups

17.1 Overseas

17.1.1 General
As indicated in Section 2, there is a general trend, at least in the Western world, for members of cultural minority groups to report lower rates of volunteering compared with that of the dominant culture. In the USA, the *Bureau of Labor Statistics* (2003) reported that its Annual Survey showed participation rates for minority groups to be between half and two-thirds that for whites.

17.1.2 Fire and Emergency Services
Perkins (1990) discussed difficulties facing volunteer fire and rescue services in the USA and recommended several strategies for increasing the viability of these services. One strategy recommended was to increase the participation of volunteers from ethnic minority groups. Perkins presented data suggesting that volunteers from minority groups made up no more than 4% of the membership of volunteer fire and rescue services (p. 363):

> The most outstanding social characteristic of fire and rescue corporations is the under-representation of minority groups and females in fire fighting, which indicates that these organisations have not yet successfully adapted to a modern organizational environment comprised of individuals of different races and gender. One possible explanation for lack of minority participation is that nonwhites view these organizations as "clubs", with tight group boundaries that require too much emotional energy from "outsiders" to cross.

Manolakes (2002) concluded that in neighbourhoods where there are high concentrations of racial minority groups, the over-representation of whites in volunteer fire departments leads to resentment among minority segments of the population. These negative feelings reduce the likelihood that minority residents will identify with and respect volunteer firefighters and their departments.

17.2 Australia

17.2.1 General
The ABS (2001) survey found general volunteering participation rates of those born overseas to be about three-quarters of those for people born in Australia.

Kerr, Savelsberg, Sparrow, and Tedmanson (2001) conducted interviews and focus groups with members of Adelaide's Indigenous community. Kerr at al. noted that Indigenous Australians reported very low levels of participation in "mainstream" volunteering. However, they reported high levels of participation in voluntary activities within their own Indigenous communities. Voluntary activities were most likely to involve activities such as: caring for the sick and aged, childminding, maintenance of yards and dwellings, and providing transport to those without. Helping each other was said to be something "…that is deeply embedded within Indigenous culture" (p. 33). Involvement in mainstream 'structured' voluntary activities was less likely because these required a regular commitment to be at a certain place at a certain time, while cultural commitments to family would always take precedence. One key informant in the study reported that Indigenous people did not want to feel that they were being relied on for structured volunteering activities "…in case they could not attend there for

some reason. This would create feelings of shame or embarrassment for them—leading to them not returning to the organisation for volunteering activities" (p. 33).

Kerr et al. (2001) also conducted interviews and focus groups with non-English speaking background (NESB) members of communities. There was apparently a relative high participation rate in voluntary activities within ethnic communities, but rather lower levels of participation in mainstream volunteering. Three barriers to mainstream volunteering were identified: language difficulties; fear of not being accepted; and lack of knowledge of volunteering in Australian society in general—both as a concept (foreign to their culture) and as a process (how to begin). Four positive benefits from mainstream volunteering were reported: developing new skills; personal development; improving English language skills; and meeting new people.

17.2.2 Fire and Emergency Services
The CFA Corporate (1998) report of a focus group study of volunteer members noted, under 4.4.1 Recruitment Issues, "Within all Areas, the lack of attraction to CFA (for various reasons) of female volunteers, members of ethnic minorities and younger volunteers was noted…Other socio-demographic categories of people not represented were people of non-English speaking background…" (p. 8).

Regan (2003), in his Report to the *South Australian Country Fire Service Board* on volunteer recruitment and retention noted (p. 15) that:

> Society is becoming more multicultural yet the diverse range of cultures is not evident in the CFS. Opportunity exists for the CFS to consider what is important to potential volunteers from other cultures, look at ways of developing an organisational culture that is inclusive of minority groups, including women.

> A cultural change strategy designed to be inclusive of people from other cultures, Indigenous people, and women would benefit the CFS as at present people who do not 'fit' in usually do not approach the service to volunteer in the first place, or may self-select out if they do, as there may be perceptions of them not fitting in and thus adversely affect their volunteering experience.

There is thus some evidence of an appreciation within fire services that members of cultural minority groups are under-represented among their volunteers. However, only one study could be located concerned specifically with fire service volunteers from non-Anglo Australian backgrounds (Eureka Strategy Research, 1998). The then *Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs* and the NSW RFS commissioned *Eureka Strategy Research* to carry out research so as to inform a possible pilot project to encourage more people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds (including Indigenous Australians) to volunteer with the NSW RFS. The researchers conducted a total of 11 focus groups: 2 with current RFS volunteers, 5 with non-volunteers from a non-English speaking background (NESB), 2 with indigenous non-volunteers, and two with non-English speaking background and Indigenous community leaders. Current RFS volunteers described only minor barriers to involvement by NESB people, the major one being proficiency in English for safety reasons. Significant barriers were described for Indigenous people: some volunteers saw Indigenous people generally as lacking respect for property, likely to hinder firefighting efforts, and likely to light fires deliberately. However, the focus group volunteers said they would welcome Indigenous volunteers who demonstrated a commitment to the RFS.

NESB non-volunteers described several factors likely to encourage volunteering by NESB and Indigenous people:
- Gaining skills and experience likely to improve job prospects
- Opportunity to develop wider social networks
- Helping other people
- Excitement
- Help protect property

The following were identified as barriers to volunteering by NESB and Indigenous people:
- Lack of awareness or understanding of the nature of volunteer fire brigades (no cultural tradition of such)
- Time involved (instead of earning money, being with family)
- Uncertainty about employer's attitude
- Low levels of altruism (cultural)
- Perceptions of brigades as being 'closed clubs'
- Reluctance to being involved—fears of injury
- Language difficulties
- (Indigenous people): fears of experiencing racism

NESB and Indigenous community leaders had only limited awareness of the RFS and its volunteer nature. They supported the importance of the RFS broadening its volunteer base. They reported that community members were likely to volunteer if they saw clear benefits of being involved, favourable endorsement of volunteering by community leaders was likely to be an important factor.

One overseas study was located which reported focus group research aimed at discovering ways in which the numbers of career firefighters from minority backgrounds might be increased in a British (Berkshire) fire and rescue service (C3 Consulting, 2000). Focus groups involving current (white) firefighters indicated that current (career) firefighters saw little need for change to the existing situation—they were opposed to any form of positive discrimination in recruiting. Focus groups comprising members of minority groups emphasised that ethnic minority firefighters were invisible, and fire service was seen as only employing white males. They emphasised the importance of the fire service maintaining good relationships with minority community leaders—especially youth leaders. Personal contact of a positive nature between firefighters and community members was seen as essential.

17.3 Summary

Almost nothing is known about how Indigenous and NESB members of Australian communities perceive rural fire services, volunteers, and volunteering. This lack of knowledge will hamper agencies in attempts to broaden the ethnic and cultural base of their volunteer memberships.

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