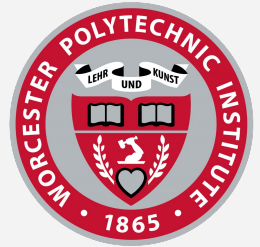


# More Than “Thank You”

## Appreciating Emergency Service Volunteers

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Dylan Connors  
Dan Divecchia  
Karen Ho

Advisors:  
Prof. L. Higgins  
Prof. U. Kumar

# Volunteer Retention is Vital to the Sustainability of Victoria's Emergency Services Model



54

x

1 week

=

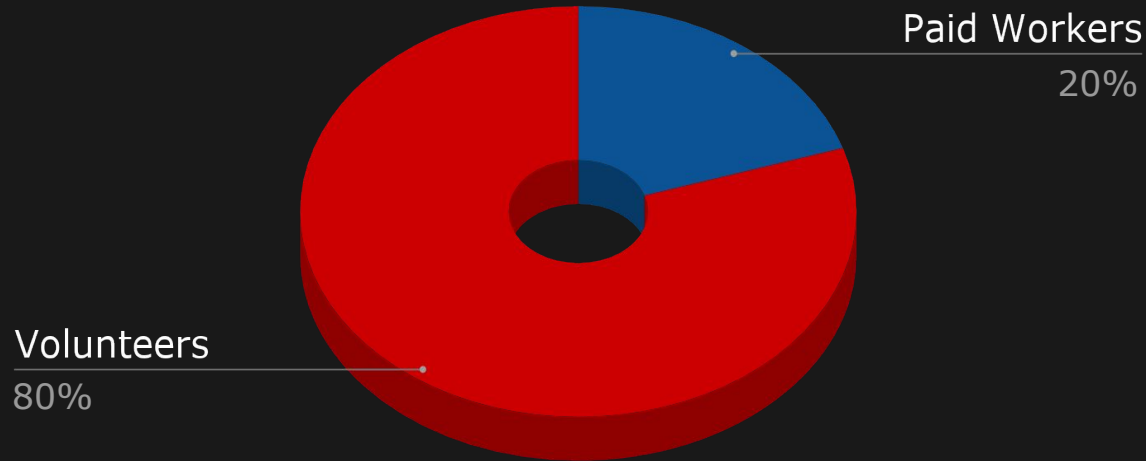
700 hours

67,900,000  
hours per year



# Volunteer Retention is Vital to the Sustainability of Victoria's Emergency Services Model

Emergency Service Workers in Victoria



Australian emergency service volunteers experience mental health problems at significantly higher rates than the general adult population.



# Some of Australia's Emergency Service Volunteers Feel a Lack of Recognition

Sector	Is your volunteer work recognised and appreciated by the management?			
	Never/hardly ever	Seldom	Sometimes	Often/Always
	%	%	%	%
Ambulance	5.7	9.8	29.2	55.3
Fire and rescue	6.0	7.9	27.2	59.0
State emergency service	6.3	9.5	24.6	59.7



# Project Goal

Make the appropriate  
recommendations for a  
meaningful, sector-wide  
volunteer recognition  
program

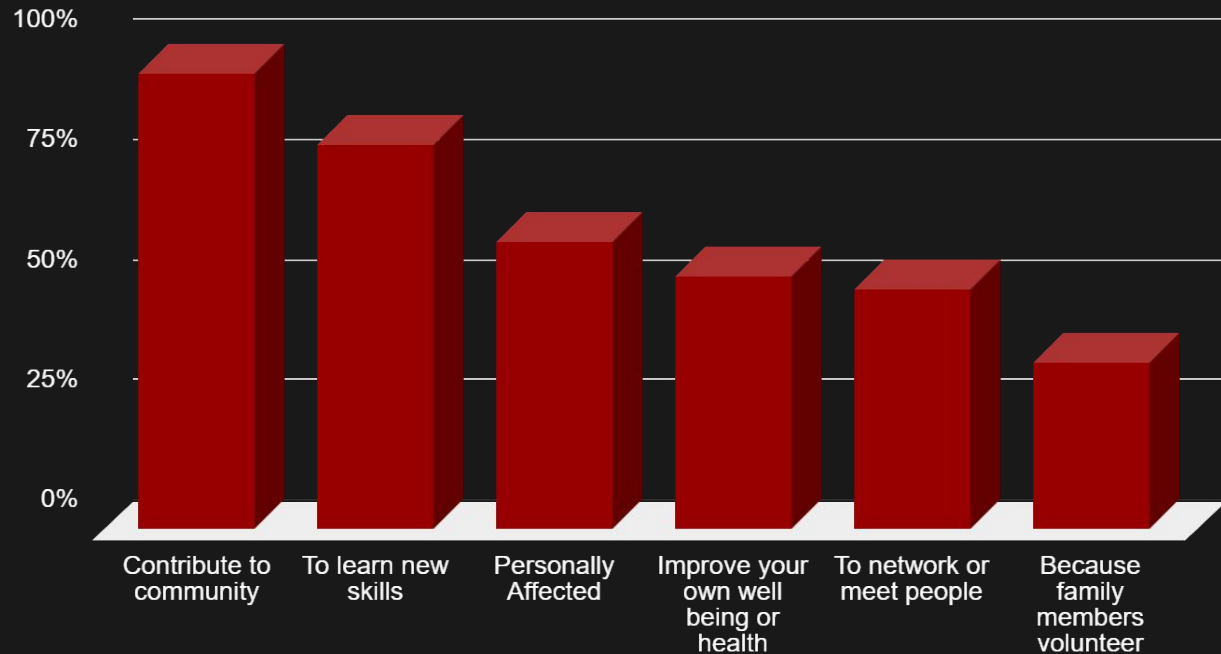
# Background on Volunteerism and Recognition

Why do people volunteer?



# Intrinsic and extrinsic rewards motivate people to volunteer.

Leading Reasons for Volunteering





**Emergency  
service workers  
endure extensive  
physical and  
emotional stress.**



When volunteers are recognized, their stress levels decrease and they become more engaged with and satisfied by their work.



## **Formal Recognition**

**Serves a Vital Role  
in Volunteer  
Satisfaction**

*banquets, formal gatherings,  
and public acknowledgment in  
newspapers, radio or television*

## **Informal Recognition**

**More Personally  
Valued by  
Volunteers**


*Cards, letters, phone calls,  
personal thank yous*

When **leaders**  
recognize volunteer  
achievements,  
work satisfaction  
increases.




# Volunteers Want to Know How Their Work Has Made a Difference

***Special  
Olympics  
Australia***




STORIES  
.....




**INAUGURAL GLOBAL VIRTUAL  
TORCH RUN**

[Find out more](#)



**SPECIAL OLYMPICS HERO'S  
LIFE OF HEAVY LIFTING**

[Find out more](#)



**SPECIAL OLYMPICS STRONG  
MINDS**

[Find out more](#)

# Methods



1. Understand the roles and experiences of volunteers within Victoria's emergency services agencies

Analysis of Organization Websites:

Roles & Responsibilities

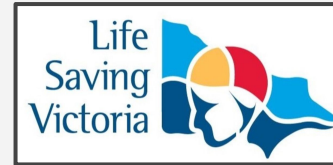
Preliminary Meetings w/

Supervisors & Volunteers





# Managers' Perspectives

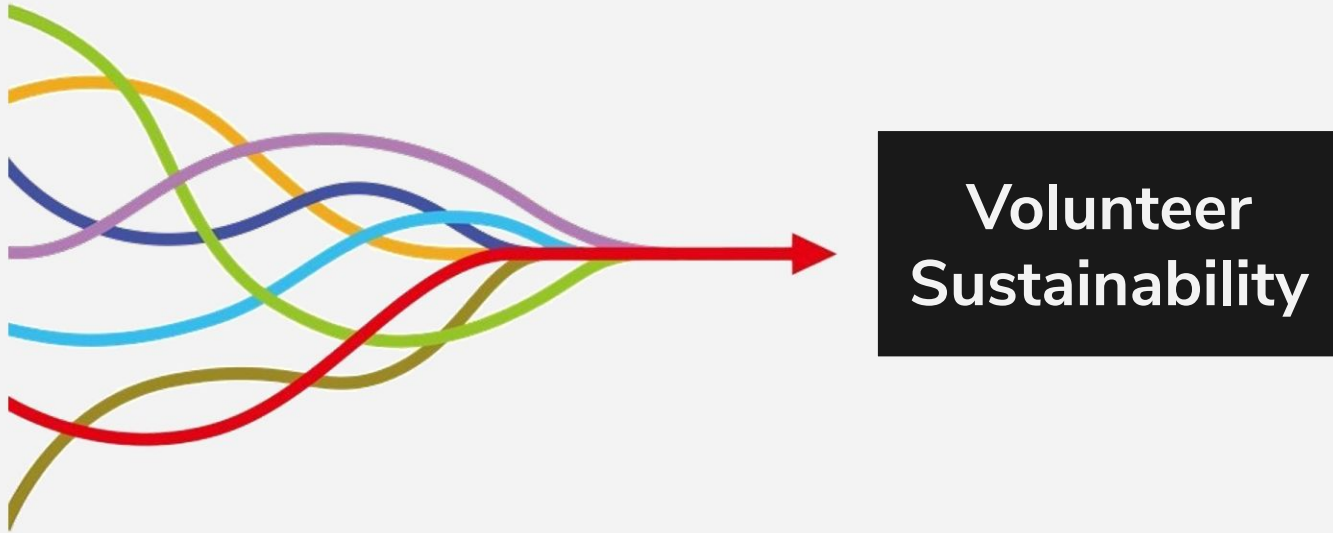


**The majority of managers feel service awards are strong forms of recognition.**





**Managers feel that the sector lacks consistency in terms of volunteer recognition.**



**Managers suggest the public must be further educated and informed on the roles and experiences of emergency service volunteers.**



***“It shouldn't take traumatic events for the public to finally recognize our work”  
~ Volunteer Leader***



# Volunteers' Perspectives



**The public needs to be educated on volunteer roles, responsibilities, and importance.**

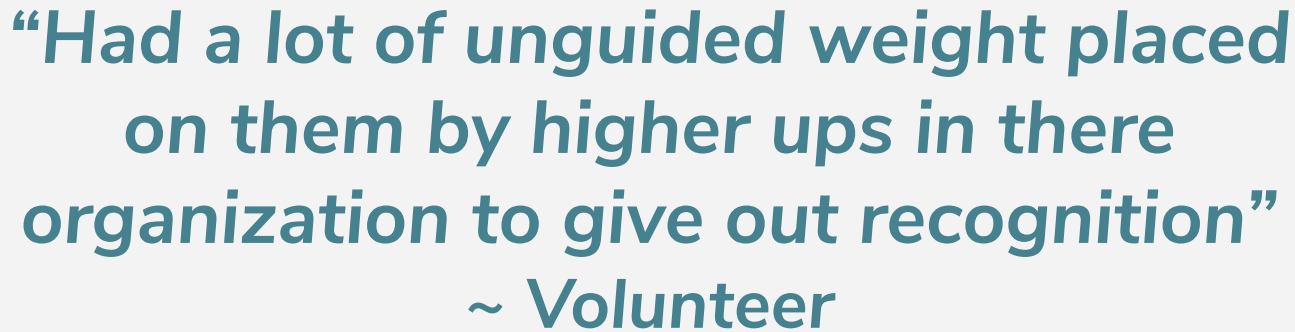


**Volunteers feel they are not recognized by upper agency management and their opinions and ideas are not heard.**



***“Designing with,  
rather than designing for”  
~Volunteer***

**Volunteer leaders are left to provide recognition without organization support.**



*“Had a lot of unguided weight placed on them by higher ups in there organization to give out recognition”  
~ Volunteer*

# Volunteers want to differentiate between Quality vs Quantity and Visibility vs Value



**“In some cases, 80% of the work  
is done by 20% of the volunteers,  
but they go unnoticed”  
~Volunteer**

Volunteers feel that the government does not recognize the magnitude of their contributions.



**“We work as one,  
[but] we fund as four.”  
~ Volunteer**



**There is a clear distinction between**

**facilitating  
meaningful  
recognition**



**and**

**creating a  
certificate for  
the bin.**

# This is what we heard...

Families need recognition, too

Don't forget the quiet achievers

Local/community level  
recognition is important

Informal recognition is highly valued

Leaders need to be  
trained to give recognition

There is a lack of  
understanding about what  
we do at multiple levels

We work as one, we need to  
be recognized as one

# Recommendations



# Recommendations

Sector

Develop a Sector-Wide  
Awards Program  
Because  
“We Work as One”

Provide Opportunities  
to Learn About Other  
Organizations and  
Roles

Help the Community  
Understand the Roles  
and Contributions  
of Volunteers

Develop Statewide  
Community-Based  
Awards Programs

# Recommendations

Agency

Review Systems Used  
for Nominating and  
Tracking Awards

Create More Opportunities  
for Volunteers to be  
Heard by Senior Leaders

Provide Team/Unit Leaders With  
Development to Help Foster Mutually  
Respectful, Equitable Environments  
of Appreciation

# Recommendations



Individual

Explore Opportunities with  
Government to Provide Valued  
Benefits to Individual Volunteers  
Across the Sector

Develop an Improved  
Member Benefit  
Style Program



Sector

Agency

Individual

**THANK  
YOU**

Does anyone have  
any questions?

gr-ESFB20@wpi.edu

# References

Slide 3: (ESF, 2020)

Slide 3: (Beyond Blue, 2018)

Slide 4: (Beyond Blue, 2018)

Slide 5: (University of Western Australia, 2018)

Slide 8: (Janus & Misiorek, 2019; “Volunteering With CFA,” 2020)

Slide 9: (Kitchingman et al., 2018; Mao, 2019; Walker et al., 2016)

Slide 10: (Abualrub & Al-Zaru, 2008; Angelopoulou & Panagopoulou, 2019; Sadovich, 2005; Spector, 1986).

Slide 11: (Culp, 2013; Red Cross, 2020; Special Olympics, 2020; UN, 2020)

Slide 12: (Dal Corso et al., 2019; Tessema et al., 2013; Walk, et al., 2018)

Slide 13: (Special Olympics of Australia, 2020)