

ESF IMPACT

newsletter

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Helping Volunteers Transition to Retirement

100,000 Victorians are emergency service volunteers. We know that the benefits of volunteering are far reaching with positive psychological impacts on an individual's wellbeing including a decrease in stress and loneliness. Volunteering is also linked to helping people live longer and cope with physical ailments later in life. What we don't know is how do volunteers who have dedicated much of their life to the community through emergency service roles cope when they retire?

The process of retirement is complex and often difficult, as many people are unprepared for the change retirement brings. Emergency service volunteers often have a two-fold experience with retiring, first when they retire from their paid day-job and a second experience when they decide to leave their emergency service volunteer role.

A study undertaken for the ESF by Worcester Polytech Institute students Alexis Nichols, Jacqueline Novak, and Olivia Gedgaudas set out to understand how emergency service volunteers could be better supported as they transition to retirement. They spoke with agency managers, experts, and older volunteers from across the sector and concluded that there is much room for improvement in how emergency service volunteers are supported in their transition to retirement.

Five recommendations were made:

1. There is a need to prepare volunteers for retirement.
2. A process is required to keep volunteers engaged through less active roles.
3. The knowledge of older volunteers should be utilized to train and support emerging leaders.
4. Alumni programs for retired volunteers should be established.
5. Access to mental health support should be provided post retirement.

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The students presented their findings as an Insight Conversation webinar on 17 March 2021.

[YOU CAN LISTEN TO A RECORDING OF THE WEBINAR HERE](#)

REACTIONS

We now have a view of what the issues are but there is a need to also get some data so we can understand how many volunteers fit in this category and the extent of the issues to be tackled.

Patrick Kidd, Board Member ESF

The students have clearly demonstrated that the sector needs to spend more time and planning on this issue. We have not turned our minds to this enough as a sector and this report has challenged us to do that.

Stephen Griffin, CEO VicSES



The study highlighted some useful recommendations for CFA to consider for our older volunteers around exploring ways for members to continue to make meaningful contributions and maintain social connections as they reach retirement age.

Fiona McKinnon, Wellbeing Services Advisor CFA

This research helps us express a previously vague question – where does a volunteer go to at the end of their active time? What do they do when they age, but want to keep their identity, their sense of contribution and their social structure - all protective factors of volunteering? Congratulations to all involved with this research.

Margaret McCarthy, Co-ordinator Capability & Capacity Red Cross