

OVERVIEW OF KEY RESULTS

Project	Scoping a National Volunteer Sustainability Blueprint
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Purpose

This **Overview of key results** was prepared in consultation with the AFAC Volunteer Management Technical Group (VMTG) to share with participants in the ‘Scoping a national volunteer sustainability blueprint’ consultation, and as an attachment to a briefing paper shared with key stakeholder groups as part of discussions about next steps.

Background

‘Scoping a national volunteer sustainability blueprint’ was a project initiated by the AFAC VMTG and coordinated by Blythe McLennan from RMIT University (now with Natural Hazards Research Australia) with funding from the Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre (BNH CRC).

Its purpose was to gauge the level of stakeholder support for the concept of National Volunteer Sustainability Blueprint (‘the Blueprint’), and to determine their preferences for the Blueprint scope and development process, if there was support for developing it.

The purpose of the Blueprint proposed in the Discussion Paper is to:

- provide national level strategic direction for initiatives to support sustainable volunteering in the emergency management sector over the next 20 years.
- align current and future initiatives towards common, shared goals.
- support national-level, collaborative actions to address larger, more complex sustainability issues.

A **Discussion Paper** was distributed to groups that represent stakeholders with an interest in the outcome via direct email to key organisations, teams, and groups. Participants provided feedback via a submission form online through the SurveyMonkey platform or by email using a pdf form.

Two submission options were available: a ‘quick’ submission to provide a general indication of level of support, and a full submission to respond to 18 questions posed in the Discussion Paper.

Participation

37 submissions were received from a range of stakeholders and stakeholder groups:

- 68% used the full submission option while 32% used the quick submission option.
- 43% of submissions were made on behalf of an organisation or service, 16% on behalf of a team or network, and 41% on behalf of individuals.

- 49% of submissions were associated with state or territory fire or emergency service organisations, and 32% with volunteer associations or other volunteer representative groups (see Figure 1).

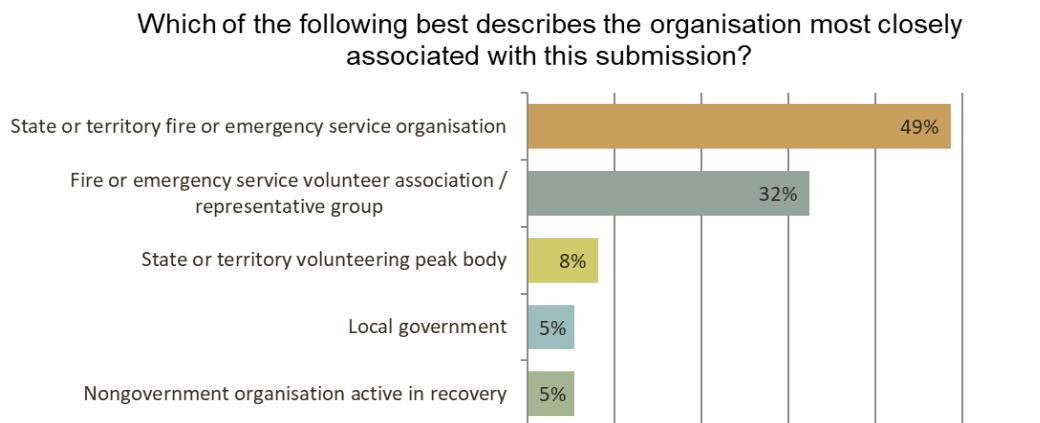


FIGURE 1: MAIN TYPES OF ORGANISATIONS REPRESENTED IN THE CONSULTATION (N=37).

Key Results

#1 There is wide support for developing a Blueprint.

The submissions showed a high level of support for the concept of a National Volunteer Sustainability Blueprint.

- 70% of submissions “definitely” supported the concept of developing a National Blueprint for Volunteer Sustainability in the emergency management sector, while 30% indicated they “maybe” supported the concept (see FIGURE 2). However, more supportive stakeholders are more likely to have responded to the consultation than less supportive ones.

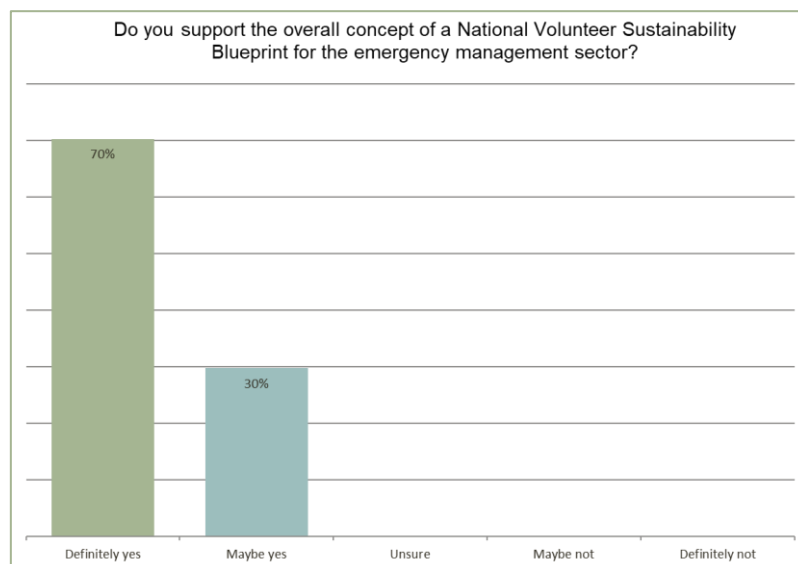


FIGURE 2: STAKEHOLDER SUPPORT FOR THE BLUEPRINT CONCEPT (N=37).

Additionally, half of all submissions indicated they liked the proposed Blueprint presented in the Discussion Paper “a great deal”, while almost half liked it “somewhat”.

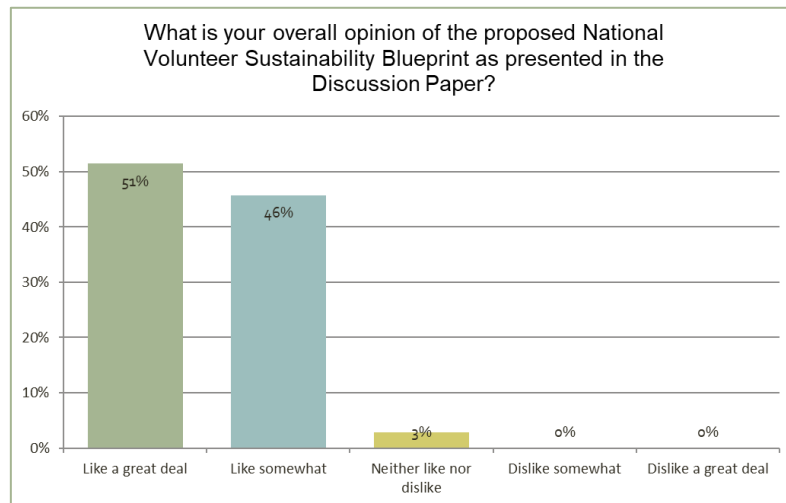


FIGURE 3: STAKEHOLDER SUPPORT FOR THE BLUEPRINT PROPOSED IN THE DISCUSSION PAPER (N=37).

The main reasons given by those who liked it “somewhat” rather than “a great deal” was a lack of detail available, given the Blueprint is in early stages of development.

“It would appear from a brief look that the idea is in its early stages and definitely needs some work in making its outcomes specific, so I support the concept, but it needs work.”¹

#2 There is consensus on the main benefits people see from a Blueprint.

The main benefits of the Blueprint described in submissions aligned closely with those proposed in the Discussion Paper, centring on:

- Building stronger strategic direction/guidance, and a shared vision of the future at a national level,
- Promoting national level collaboration and sharing,
- Advocating for, and increasing recognition of, the value and contributions of volunteers and volunteering.

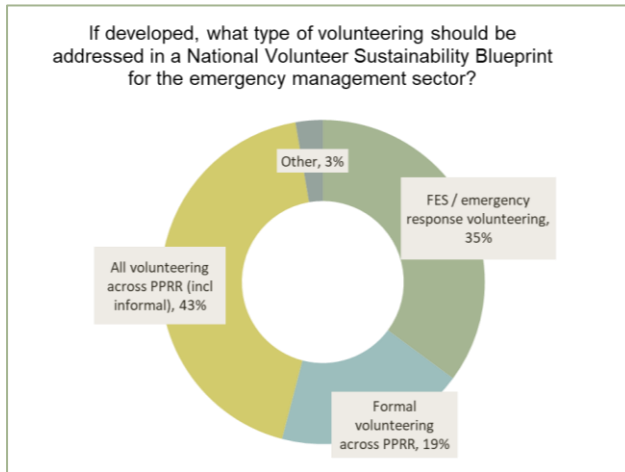
“Currently there are so many pockets of excellence going on in the area of programs and research to support volunteer sustainability. This also results in duplication of effort. The development of a National Blueprint will assist in providing an agreed approach moving forward and remove any issues that come into play across borders.”

“In my jurisdiction, volunteer management is often ad hoc and dismissive. Volunteers need respect and encouragement, and they need a national oversight mechanism to ensure their contributions are valued and appropriately acknowledged.”

#3 There are divergent views on the type of volunteering that should be included within scope of a Blueprint.

The emergency management sector is changing with a wider and more diverse array of stakeholders, organisations and volunteers recognised and involved today compared to the past. As such, it is more difficult today to draw boundaries around volunteering in emergency management for strategic and planning purposes. This was reflected in submission responses in relation to scope.

¹ Quotes in italics are sourced from submissions to the consultation.



- 43% of submission advocated for a wider scope to the Blueprint, including all volunteering across PPRR, both formal and informal,
- 19% advocated for an intermediate scope encompassing all formal volunteering across PPRR,
- 35% advocated for a more focused scope encompassing either fire and emergency service volunteering only, or all volunteering with responder organisations (i.e., ambulance, surf life saving etc).
- One submission did not specify type of volunteering.

All volunteering across PPRR (incl. informal)

"This would bridge the current gap that doesn't include spontaneous volunteering and would avoid us repeating the past."

"Should cover all volunteers - regardless of whether informal or formal. Many volunteers will fluctuate between formal and informal volunteer roles and may also volunteer across multiple organisations. Consistency is valuable."

"Important to include all volunteering formal and informal - because this best represents the mix of contribution that is required now and into the future."

Formal volunteering across PPRR

"Whilst other types of volunteering not seen as traditionally being part of EM, for example emergent groups, unaffiliated volunteers etc. who may assist across the PPRR spectrum are important considerations to the overall sustainability issue, I think the Blueprint needs to be more strongly focused on the sustainability issues for the traditional EM volunteer workforce (including relief & recovery orgs. and fire and emergency services) as they make up 90% of the EM workforce and are absolutely critical to the future of Australia's EM capability. Issues surrounding the sustainability of the non-traditional EM volunteer workforce are different and therefore capturing everything in one Blueprint may be too complicated. I would support the development of 2 complimentary Blueprints or if it needs to be all captured in 1, ensuring it is clear [...] which volunteer type/cohort the focus of the particular issue is relevant to."

FES/emergency response volunteering

"Should be for Fire and Emergency service volunteering only. That may be only a first step, with it later expanded to other sectors, but let's get it right for that sector first and not bite off too much!"

#4 The issues impacting on the sustainability of volunteering are wide-ranging and all are important.

The Discussion Paper asked submission to identify which issues are most in need of further action to support the sustainability of volunteering in emergency management (see **FIGURE 4**) and which drivers of change are most important for sustainability (see **FIGURE 5**).

Notably, all the issues and drivers outlined in the Discussion Paper were seen as “extremely” or “very” important in most submissions, with the exception of making space for wider community participation in emergency management (“moderately important”).

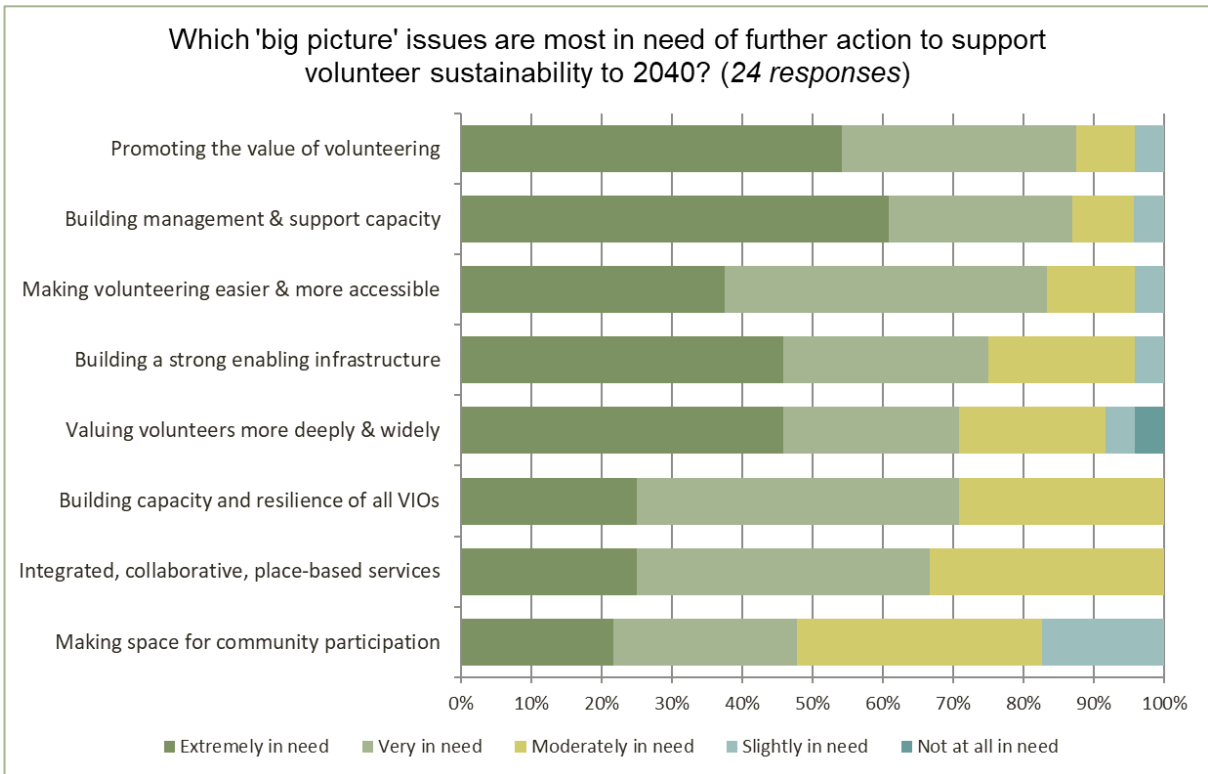


FIGURE 4: ISSUES MOST IN NEED OF FURTHER ACTION (N=24).

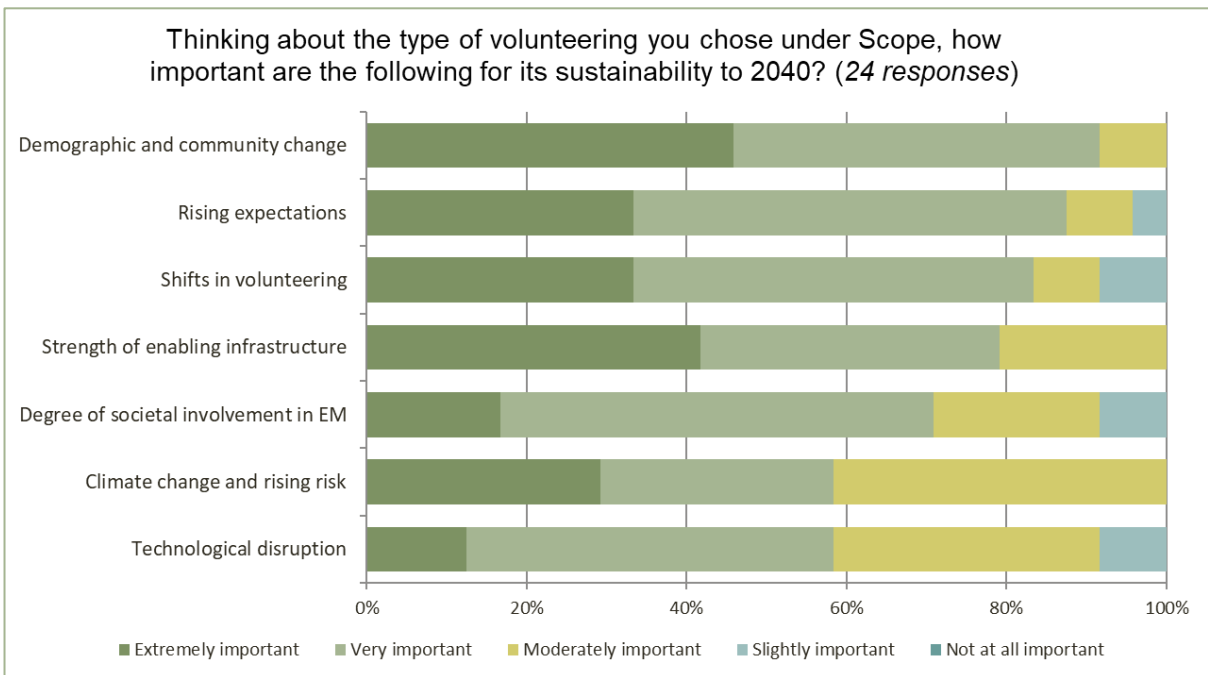


FIGURE 5: MOST IMPORTANT DRIVERS OF CHANGE (N=24)

#5 Stakeholders expect a collaborative and multi-faceted process to develop a Blueprint

Regarding the process to develop a Blueprint, most submissions indicated preference for a collaborative approach, with different levels of engagement for different stakeholder groups, and a strong volunteer voice. There was some divergence in how broad stakeholders felt the engagement should be, however:

- 70% (n=24) of submissions supported the IAP2 (International Association for Public Participation) [Core Values for Public Participation](https://www.iap2.org/general/custom.asp?page=corevalues) as guiding principles for engaging stakeholders <https://www.iap2.org/general/custom.asp?page=corevalues>.
- 42% (n=24) supported a process that sits on the 'Collaborate' level of [the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation](#), while 21% preferred a multi-faceted approach with different levels of engagement for different stakeholder groups (see **FIGURE 6**).
- While some stakeholders indicated that engagement should primarily be with a smaller group of key stakeholder organisations 42%, n=24), others preferred broader engagement (large group, 13% and general public, 17%), while others preferred a range be involved in different ways (combination/other, 29%).

E.g., "Similar to what you have now with the working group more actively involved ... with broader sector stakeholders able to contribute/ provide feedback via surveys etc."

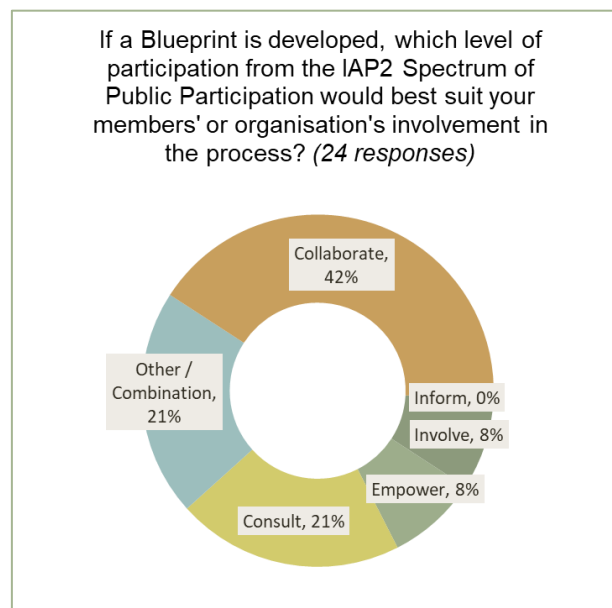


FIGURE 6: LEVEL OF STAKEHOLDER ENGAGED PREFERRED (N=24)

Groups and perspectives that were specifically identified for inclusion in the development process included, primarily, volunteers and their representative groups, as well as volunteer family members, employers, subject matter experts, First Nations people, volunteering peak bodies, and relevant government departments.

"Organisations that represent volunteer voices (Volunteer Associations for example). I think the volunteer perspective needs to be represented very strongly in this work - either via advocates or volunteer representative services."

6 Some stakeholder groups identified potential risks for developing a Blueprint.

Several submissions identified risks associated with a) implementation (being too broad, requiring a targeted implementation plan), b) securing funding to develop and implement the

Blueprint, and c) inadequate government/leadership support for volunteers and for change to support the sustainability of volunteering.

a) Implementation

“It would be important for an implementation plan or guide for organisations to implement the Blueprint to be considered to increase accountability and uptake.”

“There is a challenge in developing a national blueprint encompassing both a wide range of issues and a broad scope of volunteering, which still has practical value.”

“This discussion paper is very broad ranging, and I would be worried that if the scope is too broad, any resultant blueprint becomes too high-level to meaningfully effect change.”

b) Securing funding

“The work completed to date is impressive and thorough. We do hope that funding will be made available to complete the project.”

“strategic expectations should be aligned with current capacities to support them, unless backed up with appropriate funding or resources. This would particularly apply to the smaller volunteer-based emergency services organisations or NGOs.”

c) Inadequate government/leadership support

“There needs to be some traction, and governments are oblivious or in denial about the problem. If they do not take some notice the population outside the capital cities will not have an emergency service to call on!”

“There needs to be commitment for development and action at National and State/Jurisdictional levels by relevant Ministers, Commissioners, etc.”

One submission also suggested that the underlying assumption that a volunteer-based service delivery model will be “fit for purpose” in the future needs to be questioned.

“The discussion paper also seems to be predicated on a volunteer model still being fit for purpose in Australia’s emergency management landscape. The fires of the Black Summer demonstrate that although our EM services did a stellar job, it was an extraordinary and sustained burden to expect of volunteers. Other models of service delivery need to be explored.”

Arising Issues

1. Scope

- Lack of consensus on the types of volunteering to be included within a Blueprint. In particular, whether the Blueprint should include a) FES/emergency response volunteering), b) formal volunteering across PPRR, or c) all volunteering across PPRR (including informal). Three options to address this under discussion are: 1) Focusing on fire and emergency service volunteering initially, 2) developing 2 ‘sister’ Blueprints with a shared vision and underlying principles, and 3) developing a single but ‘two-pronged’ Blueprint.

2. Alignment

- Establishing how a Blueprint will align, and not overlap, with other important initiatives such as Volunteering Australia’s National Strategy for Volunteering (in development),² and jurisdictional emergency management volunteering and workforce strategies.

² See <https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/get-involved/national-strategy-for-volunteering/>

3. Ownership and funding

- Securing leadership support and funding for development of Blueprint, including which organisation, or group of organisations, should own or host the Blueprint. This question is directly related to the question of scope, above.

4. Prioritisation

- Recognising the broad range of issues that are important for the sustainability of volunteering, and the risk of developing a Blueprint that is too broad in scope to be implemented, a process is needed to prioritise issues to be addressed in the Blueprint.

Project Update

- A Blueprint Working Group comprised of VMTG members met via Microsoft Teams on Tuesday 23 November 2021 to discuss the results of the consultation and appropriate next steps towards developing a Blueprint.
- **Consultation Results** are being shared. Full Consultation Results were shared with the VMTG as project owner, and this Overview of Key Results is being shared with participants and key stakeholder groups.
- A **Briefing Paper** has been prepared to present to key stakeholder groups to seek advice and recommendations on arising issues and next steps, including scope, ownership and funding.
- Project ownership has been transferred from Blythe McLennan (RMIT University) to Catriona Freeman (AFAC) and Owen Ziebel (AIDR, Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience).

Further Information

A further update will be circulated to consultation participants following the next meeting of the Blueprint Working Group, date to be determined.

In the meantime, queries about the Blueprint can be directed to one of the following people:

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