

Volunteer Consultative Forum

Terms of Reference

Role of the Volunteer Consultative Forum (VCF)

Volunteers play a critical role in the delivery of emergency management across Victoria. There are over 100,000 volunteers throughout the State across a wide range of agencies, supported by paid staff.

The Victorian Government's Emergency Management reform program highlights a fundamental shift in the way we think about the links between response, relief and recovery. Emergency management needs to reflect an 'All-Hazards, All-Agencies, All-Seasons, All-Emergencies, All-Together' approach.

As part of this reform process, the VCF has been established to facilitate the Government's commitment to consult and engage with emergency management volunteers and their representative bodies on matters that affect them, as outlined in the *Victorian Emergency Management Reform White Paper*.

The VCF will provide a voice for volunteers through direct feedback to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services and government on proposals (current and future) impacting Victoria's emergency management volunteers.

Members of the VCF will be responsible for representing and expressing the views of emergency management volunteers, and reporting back to agencies, volunteers and government on actions, initiatives and outcomes of the VCF.

The VCF will complement, not replace, existing arrangements within the emergency management sector.

VCF Objectives

The VCF will provide a forum for direct volunteer input and advice to the Minister on matters relating to:

1. issues affecting Victoria's emergency management volunteers, and matters relating to the capacity of volunteers to deliver emergency management services in Victoria
2. strengthening the culture of volunteerism in Victoria and building a shared understanding of, and respect for, the critical role that volunteers play in the emergency management sector
3. improving the understanding within communities and non-volunteer agencies of the fundamental importance and value of emergency management volunteers
4. maximising the capacity, capability and utilisation of volunteers through a collaborative sector-wide approach to issues such as recruitment, retention, training, welfare, development pathways and diversity, including recognition of their employers as key partners
5. monitoring the health and wellbeing of the volunteers and provisions to ensure a systematic approach to their protection
6. developing and reviewing the broader emergency management strategic direction, reform processes and legislative obligations to volunteers
7. consolidating a Victorian position on volunteer related issues for the national emergency management agenda
8. facilitating a communications/information sharing network between volunteers, agencies and government.

Reporting

The VCF, through the Chair, will brief the Minister as required.

VCF reports and recommendations to the Minister on any matter will be advisory in nature, and are not binding on the Minister or government.

Membership

VCF membership, as guided by the Emergency Management Manual Victoria (EMMV), comprises emergency management volunteers and agency nominees from the following departments and agencies:

Agency	Agency Nominees	Volunteers	Total
Ambulance Victoria	1	1	2
Australian Volunteer Coast Guard	0	2	2
Country Fire Authority	1		3
– Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria		2	
Life Saving Victoria	1	1	2
Red Cross	1	1	2
Salvation Army	1	1	2
St John Ambulance	1	1	2
Victoria State Emergency Service	1		3
– Victoria Emergency Service Association		2	
Victorian Council of Churches	1	1	2
<i>Total</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>20</i>
Government Representatives			
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Office of the Minister for Police and Emergency Services▪ Fire Services Commissioner (Emergency Management Commissioner designate)			

Where a member is unavailable to attend a meeting, a proxy may be nominated or teleconferencing facilities may be arranged.

The VCF membership will be reviewed on an ongoing basis.

Subject matter specialists may be called upon, if required.

Chair

An independent Chair will be appointed by the VCF for a period of time to be determined by the VCF.

The Emergency Management Commissioner designate will act as the interim Chair until such time as a permanent chair is appointed.

The role of the Chair will be to represent the VCF to the Minister, government and emergency management agency CEOs.

VCF Members Role Description

VCF members are responsible for:

- actively participating in the VCF
- representing and expressing the views of emergency management volunteers
- fostering new ideas to assist discussion at the VCF
- reporting to agencies, volunteers and government on actions, initiatives and outcomes of the VCF.

Funding and Resources

There has been no funding allocated to the VCF.

Expenses associated with holding VCF meetings will be met by the Department of Justice (Emergency Management Victoria).

Out of pocket expenses for VCF volunteer members will be met by the agency for which they volunteer. That agency will have the opportunity to seek reimbursement from the Department of Justice (Emergency Management Victoria).

Meetings

The VCF will meet a minimum of four times in a calendar year.

Secretariat

EMV will provide secretariat and administrative support for the VCF.

Communications Strategy

A communications strategy will be developed by the VCF.

Terms of Reference - Review

A review of the Terms of Reference will be conducted 18 months following the first VCF meeting. A review may be conducted earlier if required and agreed to by the VCF membership.

Next review: April 2015

Endorsed By:



**Mr Craig Lapsley, Fire Services Commissioner
Interim Chair, VCF**

Date: 15 October 2013