

# EMERGENCY VOLUNTEERING CREW A CASE STUDY



volunteering  
queensland



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***Volunteers are the backbone of resilient communities particularly at times of disasters. Volunteering Queensland's Emergency Volunteering (EV) CREW program is a best-practice model of harnessing community good will and deploying it in an effective, coordinated manner.***

EV CREW is a digital platform for the registration, holding and deployment of spontaneous volunteers for disaster relief and recovery. It provides the ability for community members to register their interest to support disaster affected communities when an event occurs. The digital platform also currently holds more than 65,000 pre-registered, willing spontaneous volunteers. EV CREW was designed to support non-traditional forms of volunteering as well as increase the variety of ways people could contribute in all phases of disasters, particularly during early recovery.

Spontaneous volunteers offer enormous opportunity, capacity and diverse skills which are very valuable following a disaster. Short-term volunteers can assist in basic support roles such as general clean-up, logistics and administrative support, as well as in a professional or skills-based capacity. The Queensland Government has partnered with Volunteering Queensland to maintain and operate EV CREW.

Disaster affected communities directly benefit from EV CREW as it provides them with the support required to address their specific needs at a time and place to suit their recovery. EV CREW puts volunteers on the ground quickly, providing a valuable, flexible resource (a ready workforce) to aid in the recovery.

The work they complete is effective and impactful as volunteers are guided in the process of how best to help the local community. EV CREW provides volunteering opportunities that are sensitive to local needs and conditions, working side-by-side with community which fosters connectivity and cohesion. When volunteers provide various types of support including clean-up and wash-out of properties they provide a tangible socio-economic benefit – saving residents thousands of dollars and communities significantly more. EV CREW volunteers contribute to assisting communities to rebuild lives and restore hope for a positive future.

Local councils, not-for-profit organisations and smaller community groups also directly benefit from EV CREW as it provides them with spontaneous volunteers with the skills they need for specific roles in recovery. EV CREW identifies and works with well-established organisations that have proven track records and a long-term commitment in helping their community recover. The service provides these organisations with training, information and advice that supports the effectiveness of their volunteer operations.

Volunteers benefit from EV CREW as it provides them with well-designed and rewarding roles that make a real difference for people affected by a disaster. Volunteering Queensland ensures volunteers are managed by organisations who will insure, induct and supervise their work to minimise risks of injury or accidental damage to property or people. EV CREW is committed to making sure spontaneous volunteers have positive experiences and feel valued for their contribution. This approach means their help can be successfully called upon days, weeks and months into the recovery.

EV CREW was last activated in early 2017 to assist with recovery efforts from Severe Tropical Cyclone Debbie. The response saw Volunteering Queensland work in partnership with Logan City Council and a local volunteer organisation, Access Community Services, to deploy 350 spontaneous volunteers to assist with the clean-up and wash-out of over 180 properties in the local area.



Emergency Volunteering CREW volunteers helping with recovery efforts by cleaning up flood affected properties – Logan, Qld, April 2017.

It was hard, inspiring and heart wrenching work, as homes in the area were decimated by 3 metres of water, mud and debris with many houses left uninhabitable. John and Paula from Mount Warren Park were one family who had their house gutted. Speaking with ABC Radio they said “we have lost every bit of furniture and we have 5-10% of our possessions left... we are living out of suitcases, our family has been split apart.” The couple were overwhelming grateful to have the help of EV CREW volunteers who respectfully “asked what they could do, what they couldn't do”. John said “I had a huge job ahead of me and unfortunately I've got a medical condition that stops me from doing a lot of physical things... to be honest they saved my life... if I had to pick up all the logs, all the debris... I'd be in a world of hurt... they came in and they did this and they were thankful and happy... they are exceptional people, they really are.” Paula added “we are so humbly grateful at the caring way this group went about helping us out.”

The EV CREW volunteers were motivated to lend a hand at a time when people needed it the most. Eric was one volunteer with EV CREW who said “people are really struggling.... we really find it heartening to help out in disasters.” Janine, another volunteer on the team said the experience was life changing “I got to meet the most amazing strong humans I have ever met... I would do it again in a heartbeat!”



Emergency Volunteering CREW volunteers registering and attending a training briefing before starting recovery work – Logan, Qld, April 2017.

The economic value of this support was estimated at an outstanding contribution of \$92,066. The outpouring of community spirit at this time saw Volunteering Queensland register 1,925 new individuals as well as 70 groups (corporate, sporting, faith-based and service) which provided an additional 651 individual volunteers.

Emergency Volunteering CREW is 10 years old in early 2018. The service has been activated for 110 campaigns across the following major events in Queensland:

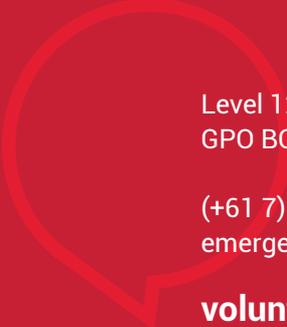
- **2008** – The Gap storms, North Brisbane
- **2010** – Coal ship grounding on Douglas Shoal, off Rockhampton
- **2010-11** – Queensland floods, Brisbane
- **2011** – *Tropical Cyclone Yasi*
- **2013** – *Tropical Cyclone Oswald* and associated flooding and landslides
- **2014** – *ex-Tropical Cyclone Ita*
- **2014** – super storm cell, Brisbane
- **2015** – flooding in the Tablelands Region
- **2015** – *Tropical Cyclone Marcia*
- **2015** – floods, south east Queensland
- **2015** – explosion, Ravenshoe Café, Ravenshoe
- **2017** – *Severe Tropical Cyclone Debbie*

To learn more about EV CREW visit [emergencyvolunteering.com.au/evcrew](http://emergencyvolunteering.com.au/evcrew)





*make a difference*



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