

MANAGING SPONTANEOUS VOLUNTEERS:

A checklist for Local
Governments and Organisations
Managing Spontaneous
Volunteers in Queensland



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INTRODUCTION

PREAMBLE

The effective use of Spontaneous Volunteers is essential in the response and recovery phases to any emergency. There are many resources that explore the nature of Spontaneous Volunteering and provide frameworks that enable the effective activation of Spontaneous Volunteers.

Managing Spontaneous Volunteers: A Checklist for Local Governments and Organisations Managing Spontaneous Volunteers in Queensland (this document) is based on resources that include:

- [Making it Happen: Good practice in building local capability to manage spontaneous disaster volunteers \(2018\)](#)
- [Making it Happen: Toolkit to support good practice in building local capability to manage spontaneous disaster volunteers \(2018\)](#)
- [Communities Responding to Disasters: Planning for Spontaneous Volunteers \(2018\)](#)
- [Spontaneous Volunteer Strategy \(2015\)](#)
- [Spontaneous Volunteer Management Resource Kit \(2011\)](#)

This checklist takes the practical information from the abovementioned resources and provides clear checklists for use by Local Government and other organisations managing Spontaneous Volunteers to ensure they can effectively harness the energy, skills, capabilities, and goodwill of Spontaneous Volunteers in the preparation, response and recovery phases of an emergency.

PRINCIPLES FOR MANAGING SPONTANEOUS VOLUNTEERS

As per the National Spontaneous Volunteer Strategy, endorsed by the Australia-New Zealand Emergency Management Committee, the following principles are to be applied at all times in the preparation, response and recovery phases of an emergency:

- The people affected by an emergency are the first priority.
- Spontaneous Volunteering is valuable and aids community recovery and resilience.
- Jurisdictions and agencies will take considered policy positions on whether or not they will engage Spontaneous Volunteers.
- Processes are needed to effectively engage Spontaneous Volunteers and to avoid agencies being overwhelmed with offers of support.
- Standard volunteer management processes apply in times of emergency.
- Arrangements for managing Spontaneous Volunteers should be embedded within existing emergency management plans and operating guidelines.
- Everyone has the right to offer their assistance and to feel that their offer has been valued.
- The time when Spontaneous Volunteers are needed may not coincide with when offers of help are being made.
- Effective, timely, consistent communication is essential in the management of Spontaneous Volunteers.

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WHAT IS A SPONTANEOUS VOLUNTEER?

Spontaneous Volunteers are individuals or groups who seek, or are invited, to contribute their assistance during or after an event, and who are unaffiliated with any part of the existing official emergency management response and recovery system. Spontaneous Volunteers may or may not have relevant training, skills or experience.

NB: Spontaneous Volunteers come in many forms. For the purpose of this resource, Spontaneous Volunteers are those volunteers that will be supervised and supported by an organisation and will work through the LDMG.

There are two (2) phases for Spontaneous Volunteers:

1. Potential Spontaneous Volunteers

This is where individuals or groups register their offer to volunteer.

2. Spontaneous Volunteers

When individual or group offers to volunteer are taken up by an organisation as part of the coordinated formal response. These individuals are formally registered as volunteers to assist with the response / recovery effort.

HOW DOES SPONTANEOUS VOLUNTEERING WORK IN PRACTICE IN QUEENSLAND?

In Queensland, there are four (4) layers to effectively activate and support Spontaneous Volunteers in response to an emergency:

1. The Queensland Government facilitates the pre-registration and matching of offers to volunteer through the use of Volunteering Queensland's Emergency Volunteering - Community Response to Extreme Weather (EV CREW) service.
2. Local Governments are responsible for ensuring the effective planning for the use and management of Spontaneous Volunteers in their community.
3. Volunteer involving organisations are responsible for managing Spontaneous Volunteers' work within the coordinated arrangements to support the effective use and management of Spontaneous Volunteers on the ground.
4. Volunteering Queensland is responsible for administering the systems that support the registration and matching of spontaneous volunteers including through EV CREW.

In planning for the management and use of Spontaneous Volunteers, Local Government Authorities are encouraged to determine and appoint a suitable organisation that will manage Spontaneous Volunteers in their community.

This generally occurs in one of three (3) ways:

1. The Local Government determines it will take on the responsibility of managing Spontaneous Volunteers itself (Local Government Led Model).
2. The Local Government appoints an organisation to take on the responsibility of managing Spontaneous Volunteers (Organisational Led Model).
3. The Local Government appoints a consortium of organisations to take on the responsibility of managing Spontaneous Volunteers (Consortium Led Model).

Regardless of the model chosen, the Local Government will be responsible, through their respective Local Disaster Management Group (LDMG) in determining whether the Spontaneous Volunteer Management Sub-Plan needs to be activated. It is recommended that an LDCC Spontaneous Volunteer Coordinator is appointed to support the coordination of Spontaneous Volunteer operations and communication with the organisation responsible for managing Spontaneous Volunteers.

The LDCC Spontaneous Volunteer Coordinator and the organisation/s managing Spontaneous Volunteers will then work together to ensure the effective coordination and use of this resource, including liaising with Volunteering Queensland for the referral and use of volunteers who are registered with EV CREW.

HOW TO USE THIS CHECKLIST

The **Managing Spontaneous Volunteers: A Checklist for Local Governments and Organisations Managing Spontaneous Volunteers in Queensland** (this document) will guide you through the steps for the preparation, response and recovery phases of an emergency.

It provides a practical checklist (with links to accompanying templates) for Local Governments and organisations managing Spontaneous Volunteers to ensure each organisation is ready, knowledgeable and able to activate Spontaneous Volunteers immediately at times of disaster.



LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Capabilities at the local level are recognised as the frontline for disaster / emergency management, primarily due to the benefits of localised knowledge and networks.

As per the Queensland Disaster Management Act 2003 (section 4A.C): “Local Governments (Councils) should primarily be responsible for managing events in their local government areas”. This responsibility is provided through their Local Disaster Management Group (LDMG).

Local Governments are responsible for ensuring the effective planning for the use and management of Spontaneous Volunteers in their community.

Checklist for Local Government

This checklist will guide Local Governments through their responsibilities with regard to Spontaneous Volunteers in the preparation, response and recovery phases of an emergency to ensure Spontaneous Volunteers can be effectively deployed in their local area.

| ✓ PREPARE (prior to an emergency) | |
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| | <p>The Local Government has considered and documented the types of roles in the local area that Spontaneous Volunteers may be required to undertake in response to an emergency.</p> <p>Template: Local Spontaneous Volunteering Roles Scope</p> <p><i>Helpful tip: Volunteering Queensland can help guide you through this process, call us for a chat!</i></p> |
| | <p>When taking into consideration the types of Spontaneous Volunteers that may be required in the local area, the Local Government has determined who will manage Spontaneous Volunteers in an emergency.</p> <p>Template: Determining the Best Models for the Management of Spontaneous Volunteers in Your Local Government</p> |
| | <p>Once the organisation/s managing Spontaneous Volunteers have been determined, the Local Government completes a Spontaneous Volunteer Management Sub-Plan.</p> <p>Template: A Practical Guide: Spontaneous Volunteer Management Sub-Plan for Local Government</p> |
| | <p>If the Local Government has selected a model to outsource the management of Spontaneous Volunteers to another organisation or organisations, it has entered into a Memorandum of Understand (MoU) with the organisation/s.</p> <p>Sample MoU for the Management of Spontaneous Volunteers</p> |
| | <p>The Local Government should inform Volunteering Queensland of the model they have chosen and how they plan to implement it, including the organisation/s appointed as the managers of Spontaneous Volunteers.</p> <p>NB: Local Governments should enter into a written agreement with Volunteering Queensland, which outlines responsibilities of each organisation at times of disaster.</p> |

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| | <p>The Local Government has appointed a person to be the LDCC Spontaneous Volunteer Coordinator and provided ongoing training to that person and the other relevant LDCC cells.</p> <p>Sample Role Description LDCC Spontaneous Volunteer Coordinator</p> <p><i>Helpful tip: Volunteering Queensland can provide LDCC Spontaneous Volunteer Coordinator training.</i></p> |
| | <p>The Local Government has ensured the organisation managing Spontaneous Volunteers has access to appropriate training. Volunteering Queensland recommends the following training as a minimum:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psychological First Aid. • Queensland Disaster Management Arrangements. • Spontaneous Disaster Volunteer Team Leader training. • Spontaneous Disaster Volunteer Coordinator training. <p><i>Helpful tip: Volunteering Queensland can either provide or assist to arrange this training.</i></p> |
| | <p>The Local Government undertakes an exercise to test the outcomes of the Spontaneous Volunteer Sub-Plan.</p> |
| | <p>The Local Government will develop draft communications regarding offers of assistance.</p> <p>Sample Messaging</p> |
| <p>✓ RESPONSE (the assistance and intervention during or immediately after an emergency)</p> | |
| | <p>The LDMG will determine if there is a need to activate the Spontaneous Volunteer Management Sub-Plan.</p> |
| | <p>The Local Government will work with Volunteering Queensland to distribute communications about whether there is or isn't a need for Spontaneous Volunteers.</p> <p><i>Helpful tip: If volunteers aren't required it is important to communicate this to them, but also have a way to register their interest in case they are needed in the future.</i></p> |
| <p>The following only occurs if the plan is activated (note this may only be activated in the recovery phase in some emergencies)</p> | |
| | <p>The Local Government will ensure the Spontaneous Volunteer Coordinator has a position in the LDCC.</p> <p><i>Helpful tip: This position usually sits in the Operations Cell within the LDCC.</i></p> |
| | <p>The LDCC Spontaneous Volunteer Coordinator will determine the need for Spontaneous Volunteers in response to the emergency and seek approval from the LDCC.</p> |
| | <p>The LDCC Spontaneous Volunteer Coordinator will activate the organisation responsible for the management of Spontaneous Volunteers and will communicate with the organisation's Spontaneous Volunteer Coordinator the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which roles for Spontaneous Volunteers need to be activated. • The geographical area volunteers will be required to support. • Other important items such as times, WHS issues etc. |
| | <p>The LDCC Spontaneous Volunteer Coordinator will advise Volunteering Queensland's EV CREW service of the activation of Spontaneous Volunteer operations and will communicate the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The name of the organisation responsible for the management of Spontaneous Volunteers. • the primary point of contact within the nominated organisation that has the authority to request volunteers. • the reason for their activation. • Which roles Spontaneous Volunteers will be utilised in. • The geographical area they will be supporting. |

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| | <p>The Local Government will work with Volunteering Queensland to distribute messaging about the need for Spontaneous Volunteers.</p> <p><i>Helpful tip: Messaging templates should be given to the communications teams before an emergency.</i></p> <p>Sample Messaging</p> |
| <p>NB: It is then the responsibility of the organisation managing Spontaneous Volunteer to recruit the volunteers, induct, brief and deploy them.</p> <p>See the next section of the guide on Organisations Managing Spontaneous Volunteers for detailed information on this.</p> | |
| <p>✓ Recovery (the coordinated process of supporting emergency-affected communities in the reconstruction of physical infrastructure and restorations of emotional, social, economic and physical wellbeing)</p> | |
| | <p>The LDCC Spontaneous Volunteer Coordinator or other delegated person (e.g. Recovery Coordinator) will determine the need for Spontaneous Volunteers in response to the emergency.</p> |
| | <p>The LDCC Spontaneous Volunteer Manager will communicate with the organisation's Spontaneous Volunteer Manager the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which roles for Spontaneous Volunteers need to be activated. • The geographical area volunteers will be required to support other important items such as timelines, WHS issues etc. |
| | <p>The Local Government will work with Volunteering Queensland to distribute messaging about the need for Spontaneous Volunteers.</p> |
| | <p>The Local Government will work with relevant parties to develop the Recovery Plan and consider how Spontaneous Volunteers may be needed to support the Recovery Plan.</p> |
| | <p>The Local Government will liaise with the Queensland Reconstruction Authority regarding recoupable costs.</p> |

ORGANISATIONS MANAGING SPONTANEOUS VOLUNTEERS

Organisations managing Spontaneous Volunteers are critical to the local response.

Local volunteer involving organisations that have been identified as playing or being capable of playing a formal role in the management of Spontaneous Volunteers will be nominated by their Local Government and will be included in the Spontaneous Volunteer Sub-Plan. Recognised external organisations may also be identified and nominated for this role. These organisations will work within the coordinated arrangements to support the effective use and management of Spontaneous Volunteers on the ground.

This coordinated approach is important for the safety of volunteers and to ensure the response and recovery phases are as effective as possible.

Checklist for Organisations Managing Spontaneous Volunteers

Organisations managing Spontaneous Volunteers are those that are responsible for the overall management of Spontaneous Volunteers in an emergency.

Local Governments, through their Local Disaster Management Group (LDMG), will determine whether there is a need for Spontaneous Volunteers. Subsequently, the Local Disaster Coordination Centre (LDCC) Spontaneous Volunteer Coordinator will determine the roles that Spontaneous Volunteers are required to undertake, and will work with organisations managing Spontaneous Volunteers. These organisations will then recruit, screen, induct and deploy volunteers on the ground.

| ✓ PREPARATION FOR ORGANISATIONS (other than Local Government) | |
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| | <p>Determine your organisation's role in managing Spontaneous Volunteers in response to an emergency / disaster:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does your organisation have a formal role in the Queensland Disaster Management Arrangements? and / or • Has a Local Government appointed your organisation to manage Spontaneous Volunteers (if so, have you entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Local Government)? |
| | <p>Do you have all of the appropriate insurances in place (including volunteer personal accident and public liability insurance) and has your organisation sought professional legal advice on this matter to ensure volunteers will be covered?</p> <p><i>Helpful Tip: Understanding the type of tasks the volunteers will be undertaking and any risks associated with the task and how these will be mitigated will assist you in providing information your insurer may require to identify if the organisation will be covered.</i></p> |
| | <p>Has your organisation developed an operational plan to guide how you will manage Spontaneous Volunteers?</p> <p>A Practical Guide: Spontaneous Volunteer Operational Plan</p> |
| | <p>Have you appointed people to the appropriate positions within your organisation to be able to effectively manage Spontaneous Volunteers? These positions may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisation Spontaneous Volunteer Manager (responsible for liaising with the LDCC Spontaneous Volunteer Coordinator and to have general oversight of the Spontaneous Volunteering activities in your organisation). • Spontaneous Volunteer Team Leaders (responsible for the direct management of Spontaneous Volunteers). <p><i>Helpful tip: Remember, your workforce may be personally impacted by the disaster event. You will need to identify the number of Team Leaders you have available to help you calculate the number of Spontaneous Volunteers your organisation could support.</i></p> <p>Sample Role Description Organisation Spontaneous Volunteer Manager</p> |

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| | <p>Has the Organisation Spontaneous Volunteer Manager and Spontaneous Volunteer Team Leader received training?</p> <p><i>Helpful tip: Volunteering Queensland can assist in delivering this training. It is also recommended that the Spontaneous Volunteer Manager undertake the same training as the LDCC Spontaneous Volunteer Coordinator to ensure effective communication and aligned knowledge base.</i></p> |
| | <p>Have you created your Spontaneous Volunteer Operational Management Plan, which will outline the position description, risk assessment, screening, induction, briefing, support, debriefing and recognition activities for each Spontaneous Volunteer position you anticipate?</p> <p>Template Spontaneous Volunteer Task Management Plan</p> |
| | <p>Do you have documentation in place for a Spontaneous Volunteer Management Overview, Spontaneous Volunteer Operational Management Plan and Spontaneous Volunteer Management Plan that supports your existing volunteer management policies?</p> |
| | <p>Have you pre-prepared communications to support how offers of assistance from Spontaneous Volunteers can best be managed in an emergency?</p> <p>Have you worked with your Local Government to determine how these messages will be communicated?</p> <p>Sample Messaging</p> |
| | <p>Have you communicated your role and Spontaneous Volunteer Operational Management Plan with Volunteering Queensland?</p> |

✓ RESPONSE

Once the LDMG has activated the Spontaneous Volunteer Management Sub-Plan you should undertake the following.

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| | <p>The organisation Spontaneous Volunteer Manager and Team Leaders are to activate and be prepared.</p> |
| | <p>The organisation Spontaneous Volunteer Manager reaches out to Volunteering Queensland to advise of activation and of the appropriate contact person.</p> |
| | <p>The <i>[insert role title]</i> should advise your insurance agency of activation and the roles to be undertaken.</p> |
| | <p>The LDCC Spontaneous Volunteer Coordinator will advise the organisation Spontaneous Volunteer Manager the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which roles for Spontaneous Volunteers need to be activated. • The geographical area volunteers will be required to support other important items such as timelines, WHS issues etc. |
| | <p>The organisation Spontaneous Volunteer Manager will activate the necessary positions in the Spontaneous Volunteer Operational Management Plan.</p> <p><i>Note: if additional positions are required that have not already been included in the Spontaneous Volunteer Operational Management Plan, position descriptions and supporting information will need to be documented by the organisation before requesting volunteers from Volunteering Queensland.</i></p> |

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| | <p>The organisation Spontaneous Volunteer Manager will ensure capacity check is undertaken and reported back to the LDCC Spontaneous Volunteer Coordinator. Capacity will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • number of available team leaders • maximum number of volunteers that could be managed. • any resources required to assist • any issues that may impact on operations |
| | <p>The organisation Spontaneous Volunteer Manager will communicate the need for volunteers to Volunteering Queensland for recruitment and rostering of volunteers from EV CREW.</p> <p><i>Helpful tip: On the occasions you do not utilise EV CREW, please continue to liaise and share information with Volunteering Queensland on your Spontaneous Volunteer operations.</i></p> |
| | <p>The Team Leaders will implement the Spontaneous Volunteer Operational Management Plan for each position ensuring that policies and best practice volunteer management are adhered to.</p> |
| | <p>The organisation Spontaneous Volunteer Manager will regularly liaise with the LDCC Spontaneous Volunteer Coordinator regarding messaging required to advise the community of the need (or not) for Spontaneous Volunteers.</p> |
| <p>✓ RECOVERY</p> | |
| | <p>The LDCC Spontaneous Volunteer Coordinator and Organisation Spontaneous Volunteer Manager will review what further or ongoing activities are required for recovery and ensures Team Leaders remain activated and prepared.</p> |
| | <p>The Organisation Spontaneous Volunteer Manager reaches out to Volunteering Queensland to advise of activation.</p> |
| | <p>The LDCC Spontaneous Volunteer Coordinator will advise the organisation Spontaneous Volunteer Manager the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which roles for Spontaneous Volunteers need to be activated. • The geographical area volunteers will be required to support other important items such as timelines, WHS issues etc. |
| | <p>The organisation Spontaneous Volunteer Manager will activate the necessary positions in the Spontaneous Volunteer Operational Management Plan.</p> <p><i>NB: if positions are required that have not already been included in the Spontaneous Volunteer Operational Management Plan, these will need to be documented immediately by the organisation.</i></p> |
| | <p>The Organisation Spontaneous Volunteer Manager and Team Leaders will communicate the need for volunteers to Volunteering Queensland for recruitment of volunteers from EV CREW.</p> |
| | <p>The Team Leaders will implement the Spontaneous Volunteer Operational Management Plan for each position ensuring that policies and best practice volunteer management are adhered to.</p> |
| | <p>The organisation Spontaneous Volunteer Manager will regularly liaise with Volunteering Queensland and implement communications to advise the community of the need (or not) for Spontaneous Volunteers.</p> |