

AUSTRALIAN EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT VOLUNTEER FORUM

SUMMARY OF MEETING

FRIDAY 26 AUGUST 2005

Membership.

Barry Smith will replace John Gresser as the St Vincent de Paul member. Laurie Russell from the SES Volunteer Associations, announced his retirement from the Forum. His replacement will be notified following a meeting of the Associations.

Challenges facing the Sector

A number of the member agencies of the Forum, particularly the emergency services agencies are not members of the "Third Sector", which is the volunteer sector. They appear to be included in the Government or "First Sector". This means that their contribution, which is very large, is "buried" amongst other government services, provided by paid staff.

The issues of payment for service and other financial rewards are complicated and controversial. The Forum continues to oppose payment for service, but has the position that being a volunteer should not leave the individual out of pocket.

The member agencies of the Forum acknowledge that they have a responsibility to teach their volunteers to deal sensibly with their employers, so that disruptions to their workplace are kept to a minimum.

Tax Incentives

There is widespread support for some form of tax incentive for volunteers of the emergency sector, and a search is being conducted overseas to ascertain whether such schemes are operating elsewhere.

COAG Review into Natural Disasters

Recommendation 58 of the COAG Review into Natural Disasters refers to tangible support for the volunteers of the sector, and members of the Forum were asked to bring suggestions to the next meeting, which can be progressed through EMA to the AEMC and the Ministerial Council.\

The Cost of Being a Volunteer

The Research project on the cost of being a volunteer has been trialled, and apart from some minor adjustments, is close to being ready. Member agencies were asked to assist

with the distribution and collection of the questionnaires. Details of what is required will follow. Members agreed to support this most important project.

Membership of the AEMVF

There have been several enquiries from organizations which are not members of the Forum about joining. They have been placed on hold until the new governance arrangements have been finalized. It was noted that member agencies generally need to be national in nature and integral to their home state emergency management arrangements.

AEMVF Website

Development of the new website is progressing well with the developer, Sportal, and Surf Lifesaving Australia. Doug Philpott from Anglicare has volunteered to become the webmaster.

National Emergency Management Volunteer Support Fund (NEVSF)

The Forum was briefed on the NEVSF. It was noted that all member agencies are eligible to apply, and members were asked to consider suitable research projects for financial year 2006-07. It was suggested that Recruiting and Retention might be a suitable project. Members agreed to bring proposals to the next meeting.

Training Advisory Arrangements

It was noted by members that there has been progress in negotiations with DEST about the inclusion of the Public Safety sector in the new structure, and agreement is expected soon which will lead to the revision of the Public Safety ITAB Training Package.

Australian Journal of Emergency Management (AJEM)

Members were advised that the November edition of the AJEM will be devoted to volunteer issues, and there will be information included on the AEMVF.

Australian Community Safety Awards

Members were reminded that they qualify to apply for the Australian Community Safety Awards, which are sponsored by EMA. Details are on the EMA website.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held at St Vincent de Paul Lewisham on 18 November 2005.