



▶ **Submission to Civil Defence and Emergency Management**

Submitted via email, 07/07/17

▶ **Contact Details**

This submission is by a group

Name of Organisation: Volunteering New Zealand

Contact Person: Scott Miller, Chief Executive

Postal Address: PO Box 25333
Featherston Street
Wellington 6146

Email: office@volunteeringnz.org.nz

Phone: +64 4 384 3636

► **Background**

Volunteering New Zealand

Volunteering New Zealand is the “voice of volunteering” in Aotearoa. Our vision is for a New Zealand that promotes, values and supports effective volunteering for the benefit of individuals and communities – and our mission is to promote, support and advocate for volunteering.

We are the only national organisation in New Zealand that focuses purely on volunteering. We hold the ‘big picture’ and are in a position to liaise, work with, and advise volunteers, government and business sectors. This helps ensure that volunteering occurs within a positive environment where it is encouraged and fostered.

Over the past 16 years, VNZ has raised the profile of volunteer groups, activities, and management. We promote volunteering and its value to New Zealand society through advocacy, sharing stories, and producing tools like the Best Practice Guidelines and Competencies for Managers of Volunteers.

We have a membership of 80 national and regional member organisations that involve volunteers in their work programmes. We advocate on behalf of these organisations and for other groups that are not members but are aligned to our mission and values.

New Zealand’s Voluntary Sector

New Zealand has more than 114,000 non-profit organisations, contributing to 4.4% of GDP when taking into account the volunteer labour contribution, and is similar to the contribution of the entire construction industry.

The most up-to-date data on the volunteer sector states that in New Zealand there are more than 1.2 million volunteers who give more than 157 million hours of unpaid labour to the sector. In 2008, 67% of the Community and Voluntary Sector workforce was made up of volunteers; 90% of New Zealand non-profit organisations employ no staff, and rely solely on volunteers¹.

¹ From the *The New Zealand Non-profit Sector in Comparative Perspective*, 2008

► **Summary**

The Civil Defence and Emergency Management (“CDEM”) Ministerial Review: Terms of Reference (“MR: TOR”) sets out its intentions to create a workforce where New Zealand’s emergency response framework is ‘world leading, fit for purpose and well placed to meet future challenges.’

VNZ are encouraged that the MR: TOR problem definition includes reference to volunteers, but we additionally subscribe to the view that this MR: TOR is an opportunity for its volunteers and volunteering for CDEM to fulfil a more comprehensive set of outcomes in New Zealand.

► **Issues**

The MR: TOR states that ‘volunteers may not be adequately supported by a professional emergency management force.’ Volunteering New Zealand submits that unless there is a coherent national strategy for its CDEM volunteer workforce, it is likely that such issues will pervasively persist.

Leadership of CDEM volunteers

From our understanding of CDEM, there appears to be issues of coordination and leadership of its volunteer workforce. There appears to be no senior management position directly responsible for coordinating and promoting volunteer interests within the CDEM. VNZ believes that for CDEM to be fit for purpose, volunteers need adequate leadership from the Board, through to the executive team and specifically positioned managers of volunteers.

Management of CDEM volunteers

VNZ strongly believe that there should be a greater emphasis on including and engaging with volunteers.

Given the scope of CDEM duties, and the standards expected of its entire staff (paid and unpaid), structured and professional organisational management of volunteers is expected. However, it is our contention that volunteers’ recruitment, retention and recognition are often under-managed in both passive and active duty.

For example, a recent research Report for the Fire Services Commission found that most rural fire volunteers join because of a sense of responsibility and duty to their communities.² As the MR: TOR notes, an increase in being ‘supported by a professional emergency management force’ is fine, provided its management style is based on trust and interpersonal relationships.

² New Zealand Fire Service Commission. (2013). *Motivating, recruiting and retaining volunteer fire fighters in Rural Communities in New Zealand*. New Zealand Fire Service Research Report. Wellington, New Zealand.

Other such reports emphasise that volunteers are distinct from paid employees: volunteers view their reward through a sense of purpose and achievement and not financial reward. Because of this, volunteers are less likely to embrace rigid directives that diminish or ignore their contributions.

To negotiate this organisational paradox, VNZ recommends that CDEM consider utilising the Volunteering New Zealand [Best Practice Guidelines](#) as a basis for approaching volunteer best-practice. The Guidelines provide a framework for organisations to assess their capability and capacity across the following four domains:

- How volunteers are viewed internally by the organisation?
- What steps the organisation can take to involve and recognise volunteers?
- Identify the support and resources needed for a strong volunteer programme.
- People with responsibility for volunteers have sufficient resources to effectively do their job.

We would also like to take this opportunity to reiterate the Government's Policy on Volunteering (2002) where the Government commits to "ensuring good practice in volunteer programs which government directly manages".

Valuing volunteering

Volunteering is not a cost neutral exercise. Volunteers often make economic and/or social decisions to forego loss of income and/or personal time. Employers and the families of volunteers inevitable "pay" in similar ways.

For CDEM volunteers, the demands on their time are particularly high, as most volunteers are effectively on call 24 hours a day. VNZ believes that it is critical that communities therefore continue to support volunteers. Providing communities with an easy way to have input and engage with their local/regional CDEM branch is one way to develop stronger community links.

From the recent Fire Service review, we advocate for protection for the employers of volunteers from financial disadvantage when staff are responding to long duration events.³ This type of indirect financial support may also encourage community support for volunteers.

► Conclusion

Overall, Volunteering New Zealand supports any effort that improves the outcomes and efficacy of volunteer involvement.

Volunteering New Zealand is happy to present to the Governance Group should it be beneficial to clarify/extrapolate any point referenced in this submission.

³ Swain, P (2012) *Report of the Fire Review Panel*. Department of Internal Affairs. Wellington, New Zealand.