

### PROPOSAL

The COVID 19 response experience has magnified the need for a coordinated approach to the management of spontaneous volunteers during disasters. FNQ Volunteers Inc. in association with Volunteering Queensland are well placed to respond to this need.

During COVID 19 over 7000 Cairns region residents responded to the State government call, through its Care Army, to assist with various activities in a volunteer capacity. This is not unusual during times of disaster, and requires collaboration and coordination on many levels, to deploy people effectively and efficiently to areas of need within the local community.

This proposal outlines a potential partnership between Cairns Regional Council, through the Local Disaster Management Group, and FNQ Volunteers Inc. for the management of Spontaneous Volunteers and related activities, at times of emergency situations.

### BACKGROUND

Spontaneous Volunteers are individuals, groups or organisations (including staff time offered by corporate and professional entities) that offer to assist a community affected by a disaster. Volunteers provide crucial support to disaster affected communities and individuals. They can help build community resilience and assist with disaster response and recovery.

Coordinating and managing these offers of assistance, including spontaneous volunteering, can be challenging. In the past, whilst the activities of spontaneous volunteers during disasters have produced positive results for the community, they also at times have unfortunately caused additional stress for communities, as well as significant challenges for the effective coordination of the response and recovery processes. The effective use of spontaneous volunteers is essential in the response and recovery phases of any emergency.

As per the Queensland Disaster Management arrangements, Councils are required to have plans in place for the management of spontaneous volunteers.

#### **Models for the management of spontaneous volunteers**

The following models for the management of spontaneous disaster volunteers have been identified as being suitable for potential adoption by local government authorities.

**Model 1:** LG led management of spontaneous volunteers. LG is accountable and responsible for the management and coordination of spontaneous disaster volunteers.

**Model 2:** One key partner with the responsibility of managing spontaneous volunteers. Managed by one key nominated agency or organisation, which is then accountable and responsible for the management and coordination of spontaneous disaster volunteers. This organisation would work in partnership with the LG.

**Model 3:** A consortium of partners with the responsibility of managing spontaneous volunteers. Managed by a consortium of agencies or organisations who are then accountable and responsible for the management of spontaneous disaster volunteers

### What does Volunteer Management involve?

Volunteer management includes (but not limited to):

- Maintaining Personal Accident and Public Liability Insurance for all staff, coordinators, team leaders and volunteers
- Screening, recruitment, and registration of volunteers
- Volunteer inductions, briefings, and debriefings
- Training and supervision of staff, team leaders, coordinators, and volunteers
- Workplace Health and Safety policies, procedures, and volunteer obligations
- Equipment and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
- Transport
- Communications
- Reward and Recognition of volunteers
- Policies, procedures, codes of conduct
- Direct management, supervision, and coordination of activities

### OUR CAPABILITY

FNQ Volunteers Inc. has over 2 decades experience, working and supporting Volunteer Involving Organisations and volunteers, in the Cairns Regional Council LGA and across the FNQ region.

As a result of our work, FNQ Volunteers Inc. can demonstrate:

- Strong understanding of volunteer management frameworks
- Use of established volunteer management practices in its existing volunteer programs
- Strong connection to local Volunteer Involving Organisations (VIO's) and volunteers
- Long standing relationship with Volunteering Queensland (VQ) and its EV CREW
- Use of the centralised EV database for the management of volunteer registrations and deployment
- An openness to working in collaboration that enhances locally lead approaches e.g. We are currently testing new models for sharing data of volunteers registered through Care Army to support the placement of local volunteers.

NB. Care Army database utilises EV CREW frameworks.

NB. Support will also be provided by Volunteering Queensland within their capacity as lead volunteer agency in the recruitment and deployment of volunteers through the centralised EV database

### POTENTIAL PARTNERSHIPS

There is potential for partnership with other Local Governments within the FNQ ROC cohort of Councils. All face similar disaster situations which attract emergent volunteers from time to time.

It may be a cost-effective measure to train an **FNQ ROC Response Team** of Team Leaders who have capability to respond to the management and coordination of emergent volunteers throughout the Region. During emergencies Councils historically have assisted each other with specialist expertise and personal. This is an opportunity to explore the possible effectiveness of a joint volunteer response strategy, taking into consideration local capacity and need.

## FNQ VOLUNTEERS INC. SPONTANEOUS VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT

Based on the organisations self-assessment re its capability to undertake this role, FNQ Volunteers Inc. have noted key gap areas including:

Gaps	Solutions
Insurance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seek insurance to cover activities of Spontaneous Volunteers during disaster response</li> </ul>
Risk Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identification of risks associated with spontaneous volunteering activities</li> </ul>
Team Leaders for Spontaneous Volunteer crews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recruit and Train Volunteer Workforce to undertake the key roles of Team Leaders of Spontaneous Volunteers</li> </ul>
Skills mapping (Team Leaders)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Skills mapping to determine the requirements for Team Leaders</li> </ul>
Organisational mapping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organisational mapping to identify their potential roles in emergency situations</li> </ul>
Volunteer mapping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mapping of the requirements for volunteers, including health information that might preclude them from engaging with specific activities</li> </ul>
Provision of PPE equipment and uniforms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify and source the provision of appropriate PPE for various emergency situations</li> <li>• Provision of an identifiable uniform for Team Leaders</li> <li>• Provision of identifiable T-shirt for Volunteers</li> </ul>
Transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transport of Spontaneous Volunteers to and from their assigned volunteer activity</li> </ul>
Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Phone line/s dedicated during emergency</li> <li>• Appropriate communications equipment for Team Leaders E.g. Smart phones</li> </ul>
Finance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify associated costs in the engagement of Spontaneous Volunteers including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Insurance</li> <li>○ Communications</li> <li>○ Transport</li> <li>○ Recruitment and Training</li> <li>○ PPE, uniforms</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Establish a budget</li> <li>• Explore the potential for grants and sponsorships</li> </ul>
Limited experience and knowledge of working within the Queensland Disaster Management Arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Membership on the LDMG</li> <li>• Membership on the Local Human and Social Recovery Group</li> <li>• Undertake QDMA training provided by QFES</li> <li>• Participation in exercises to increase the organisations knowledge to support this role</li> </ul>

**PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

**Preliminary work:**

1. Identify work to be undertaken by spontaneous Volunteers.  
Examples of tasks being planned for by other LGAs for Spontaneous Volunteer activities include
  - Clean-up operations (green waste removal, household and yard waste removal, general household cleaning)
  - Assistance at community centres
  - Transport and/or delivery
  - Letterbox drops
  - Assistance at evacuation centres
  - Assistance at community events, following disasters
2. Volunteering Queensland to define how they manage Spontaneous Volunteers during disasters. There may be some process already utilised by VQ that can be easily adapted to local circumstances
3. FNQ Volunteers Inc. to determine information required for Public Liability and Personal Accident insurance coverage for Spontaneous Volunteers and the Leadership Team

**NB.** provide clear information to the Insurer on the tasks and activities volunteers will be undertaking and how the organization will be managing this workforce - screening, induction, supervision and work health and safety.

Suitable and appropriate insurance coverage for Volunteers is imperative for the establishment of a volunteer response during emergencies.

**Potential Costs**

FNQ Volunteers Inc. is a small non for-profit organisation with limited access to funds, we would not have the capacity to meet all costs connected to undertaking this role. Potential costs connected to this role would include:

- FNQ Volunteers Inc. currently carries the relevant levels of Public Liability Insurance and Personal Accident Cover for their volunteers.
  - Additional insurance would be required for Spontaneous volunteers and the Leadership Team
  - Insurance (Liability and Personal Accident) for Spontaneous Disaster Volunteers. These costs cannot be identified until the organisation is aware of the tasks expected to be undertaken by Spontaneous Volunteers and provided to the insurer
- PPE clothing and equipment, identifiable uniforms for Team Leaders + T-shirts for volunteers
- Any costs connected to screening Team Leaders E.g. Criminal History Checks, Blue Card
- Costs connected to training Team Leaders in the management of Spontaneous Volunteers during disasters.

**NB.** Volunteering Queensland has developed Team Leader training for Spontaneous Volunteering Costs will be associated with the organisation being able to deliver this training and will include transport (Brisbane – Cairns – Brisbane) and accommodation

- Any essential resources identified as being required that fall outside of what is currently available within the organisation and identified as part of this process, including transport and communications resources

## RISK

Government at all levels have been under closer scrutiny in terms of accountability, areas of responsibility and culpability with regards to damage (personal and property) caused through ignorance or negligence. This has been borne out in the outcomes and recommendations of various recent Royal Commissions and Investigations.

***Volunteer management carries inherent risks, particularly emergent volunteering. These willing helpers come from a wide variety of backgrounds and with a range of skills and expertise. Most have little experience in disaster response or volunteering under duress. With capable coordination an effective response can be deployed into areas of need. In engaging with emergent volunteers, strong leadership is required to facilitate their successful and safe participation during emergencies.***

The personal safety of volunteers is paramount. Appropriate insurance is essential. Pre-deployment briefings and orientation must be carried out, including WH&S and the issuing of appropriate PPE. Clear instructions regarding what they are permitted to do must be given. Management and monitoring of all sites is essential for the safety and wellbeing of participants. A line of command must be identified.

Given the associated risks in engaging with emergent volunteers a strategic approach is required to address any complications that may arise during their deployment. Currently the approach, at both State and local levels, has been reactive rather than responsive. A Volunteer Strategy is needed.

Funding from both State and Local Governments is required to ensure the effective and efficient deployment of emergent volunteers if the risks are to be addressed. Expectations are becoming more sophisticated, and the demands increasingly more onerous. Local volunteer involving organisations (VIOs) are not funded or equipped to respond to these situations. Their insurance covers existing volunteers not emergent volunteers who are only there for the duration of the emergency response. SES and other organisations such as Red Cross and the Salvation Army have specified response roles and responsibilities, and generally do not deploy untrained volunteers into disaster areas.

During the COVID 19 response the difficulty was in finding VIOs that were willing to take on Care Army volunteers, and to operate in areas outside their constitutional boundaries. Without an Insurance guarantee organisations were reluctant to engage with Care Army. This will be an ongoing problem that must be resolved for organisations to participate during emergencies.

**AGREEMENT**

Once agreement is reached the following would be undertaken to formalise the arrangement:

1. Council develop and adopt a Management of Spontaneous Volunteers during disasters sub-plan document
2. Identify and access funding sources
3. Establish a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Cairns Regional Council and FNQ Volunteers Inc. to formalise the partnership, apportion responsibility, and outline mutually agreed arrangements including funding
4. Establish an Agreement with Volunteering Queensland regarding training and any other assistance relating to emergency volunteering
5. FNQ Volunteers Inc. document their volunteer management practices, including relevant Policies and Procedures as an addendum to the MOU
6. Work in collaboration to develop Standard Operating Procedures, including lines of communication and command, to support coordination activities between the LDMG, LDCCC, and other partner agencies.
7. Provide relevant forums to assist FNQ Volunteers Inc. to be prepared to perform their role
8. Access insurance
9. FNQ Volunteers Inc. to commence recruitment of Team Leaders for Spontaneous Disaster Volunteers. Propose 50 are recruited in the first instance. Potential sources – Former ADF and similar personnel
10. Training of Team Leaders and Coordinators with Volunteering Queensland, and other identified training delivered by appropriate organisation/s or trainer/s
11. Coordinate monthly training meetings with Team Leaders

Annette Sheppard  
President FNQ Volunteers Inc.