REFLECTIONS ON VALUES & FEAR

A collection of the writings of Bill Calcutt

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Preface

This collection of thirty-four published articles and essays explores the dynamic interaction between two of the most influential forces shaping human societies in modern history. Values are reason-based principles and rules that shape the nature of civilised societies. Fear is a primal emotion that can trigger a fight or flight survival reflex in the individual. These powerful forces intersect when the State acts to ensure collective security and protect citizens from various harms. These articles highlight the vital importance of a transparent risk management process for objectively determining national security priorities and justifying actions that impinge on individual rights.

My interest in writing on the balance between national security and civil liberties stems from my own experience working in sensitive intelligence roles from the early 1970s till the mid-1990s during a period of great change. During this period the legal and institutional framework governing the oversight, management and operations of Australian intelligence agencies was transformed under the guidance of Justice Robert Hope. Justice Hope's reforms included formalising the Westminster doctrine of the separation of powers through a clear division of functions between the different intelligence agencies; establishing different regimes of protection for the rights of citizens and non-citizens; and adopting rules-based ethical standards governing the actions of intelligence personnel. Justice Hope envisaged that Australia's future national security priorities would be founded on a transparent risk management process that would use high-quality intelligence advice to determine the relative risks and objective harms posed by a broad range of prospective hazards and threats.

Under Justice Hope's reforms, the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) evolved from a secretive, cold-war, anti-communist body to a more professional, publicly-accountable, risk and ethics-based organisation. Justice Hope revealed systemic weaknesses in ASIO, and proposed a broad range of measures to enhance ASIO's performance and public accountability. He also revealed that secrecy had been used to obscure serious intelligence failures, and acknowledged the inherent fallibility of all intelligence as it is based on a disciplined analytical process that applies inductive logic to incomplete information.

These formative experiences have given me an enduring interest in demystifying intelligence analysis, and in the use of secret intelligence as the basis for major national policies. As the head of a newly-formed strategic intelligence unit in the National Crime Authority (NCA), I contributed to the development of a comprehensive intelligence analysis methodology that was included in the curriculum of national intelligence training. My commitment to professional analytical standards was recognised in 1996 when I was awarded the Public Service Medal for outstanding public service to national and international law enforcement in the development of a strategic intelligence training programme.

The barbaric terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001 changed the world. As an asymmetric conflict strategy by a relatively limited number of extremists, the goal of terrorism is to use fear and propaganda to coerce regressive social and political changes. Terrorism does not “fit” within a traditional war paradigm as indiscriminate attacks on civilians are explicitly prohibited under the Geneva Conventions, though a key objective is to elicit a war-like response from the State. Using threats or acts of extreme violence, terrorists seek to draw the State into escalating cycles of violence and repression, with growing militarism damaging civil society, undermining democratic principles, eroding the State’s legal and moral authority, and creating new generations of radicalised youth. Internationally, the terrorist label is regularly used to delegitimise and dehumanise an opponent in a conflict.

In Australia, the 9/11 attacks generated widespread fear and a palpable sense of crisis and insecurity in the Australian community, and the imminent threat of terrorism was used as the rationale for major changes in national security structures, funding and legislation. An increasingly militaristic response effectively subsumed any semblance of an all-hazards risk management process for determining national security priorities. A number of these changes modified the principles and framework established by Justice Hope, including a simplification of the definition of intelligence as “covertly obtained information” in 2004. A 2017 review proposed the greater integration of the functions of the different agencies, and changes to the ethical framework governing the actions of intelligence personnel.

Fear and a sense of crisis have permeated public discourse on anything to do with national security since 9/11, with overwhelming political pressure to be tough in protecting citizens. Simplistic, sensational, alarmist perspectives are cynically used by the media and politicians to frighten and divide an increasingly insecure and distrustful community. In a toxic and reactive political environment, thoughtful, independent, evidence-based discourses on issues like border protection, migration policy, asylum seekers, citizenship, intelligence services, police powers, secrecy, mass surveillance and civil liberties are loudly denigrated as dangerously weak and naive. Only time will tell if the advent of a global pandemic in 2020 (a genuine existential threat) may have finally reset the national risk management process, with a return to relative risk and objective harm as the basis for determining national security priorities.

This collection of thirty-four published articles and essays is organised in date order, starting with short commentaries published online in Eureka Street in October 2007 and July 2008, and leading to the publication of a longer journal article titled “The role of intelligence in shaping public perceptions of terrorism” in October 2008. In 2010 I completed a Master of Human Rights Law and Policy at the University of NSW, and subsequently published a version of a thesis I had submitted during these studies titled “Just war theory and the war on terror” as a journal article in October 2011. From 2013 to 2016 I published a further series of articles in On Line Opinion and Eureka Street.

In 2014 I commenced postgraduate studies at the University of Wollongong examining the primary motives for emergency service volunteering. A Master thesis titled “Valuing volunteers: Better understanding the primary motives for volunteering in Australian emergency services” was subsequently published in June 2019. While the focus of the research and Master dissertation is on values and volunteering, the thesis explores national emergency management priorities and the changing nature of Australian values in two discussion papers. The most recent articles return to broader themes on the nature of Australian society, with the last addressing the nature of knowledge and the social implications of a breakdown in the traditional knowledge order.

It seems particularly appropriate that the last article completes the circle by coming back to the knowledge foundations of shared meaning. It is a great irony that technological advances that have facilitated the creation and sharing of huge quantities of new information should at the same time accelerate its degradation and misuse. While these articles do not address the implications of a growing reliance on artificial intelligence, it is clear that any system that automatically integrates information of unknown veracity has the potential to exacerbate an epistemic crisis.

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The human rights cost of intelligence activities

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The images of the September 11 terrorist attacks are now etched deeply into our psyche. The resultant global 'war on terror' has largely crystallised international efforts by governments to combat terrorism in a ‘new post-September 11 security environment'.

Struggling to respond effectively to the prospects of devastating attacks from a highly committed and unconventional foe, governments have adopted a range of exceptional and sometimes indiscriminate measures. Some of these measures have impinged significantly on important and longstanding conventions that have traditionally assured human and civil rights.

Covert intelligence operations have played a major role in the global war against an elusive enemy, and intelligence advice has been pivotal in the development of national and international responses to the threat of terrorism.

Because of the secrecy that invariably surrounds intelligence activities, the community remains largely oblivious to the true nature of intelligence and its inherent limitations. In national security matters the community has to trust in the government's integrity, and assurances that it would only act responsibly and with substantial justification.

While intelligence activities can include the collection, evaluation, collation and analysis of information, the overriding objective is to develop insights that provide direction for effective action (called intelligence product). A disciplined approach to the collection and analysis of information raises the level of confidence in the reliability and accuracy of the interpretations.

But even using multiple, diverse and independent information sources and the most critical and objective analysis, the intelligence produced remains intrinsically fallible because it always involves an element of human interpretation and subjectivity.

More than 20 years after the Hope Royal Commission spelt out the central role of analysis in transforming collected information into intelligence, and following a series of highly publicised intelligence failures, the Australian Government has moved to shield intelligence advice from further public scrutiny by blurring the vital distinction between intelligence activities and intelligence product — by portraying intelligence as 'covertly obtained information'.

Under this definition it is virtually impossible for the community to determine whether what is being presented as compelling 'evidence' of a serious and imminent threat is unassessed raw data or carefully evaluated intelligence product, and whether a proposed response is justified and proportionate. Intelligence can undoubtedly constitute a valuable source of advice in the absence of facts and evidence. But the sensitivity and intrinsic fallibility of this advice means that it is rarely suitable for use in the public domain or as the basis for accountable decisions.

The limitations of secret information and intelligence product as evidence were previously revealed following a bomb explosion outside the Sydney Hilton almost 30 years ago, for which three men were first convicted, then later pardoned on the belief there had been a miscarriage of justice. Further limitations are likely to be exposed again as legal proceedings commence against suspect individuals and groups under recently-introduced counter-terrorism legislation.

Since September 11 the threat of terrorism has been a catalyst for an unprecedented concentration of authority and the emergence of a powerful paternalism under the guise of national 'leadership' in a time of crisis. 'Secret' intelligence has been used to justify policies and actions that shift the balance between the rights of the state and the individual, at the same time avoiding public scrutiny of decision-making processes. National priorities have been transformed, reducing an already inadequate level of funding support for the most disadvantaged members of our community (the poor, young, sick, aged, and indigenous Australians).

A primary objective of terrorism as an organisational strategy is to engender disproportionate fear within the wider community, and to act as a catalyst for negative changes to society that advance the terrorists' goals. Because of this objective it is possible for terrorists to be highly effective without having to undertake any or many actual terrorism operations.

An alarmist and sensationalist media, an intelligence community that grows in importance and resources in the face of imminent threats, and a government that gains electoral advantage from appearing to be tough and protective, combine to reinforce community fear and inadvertently serve the terrorists' interests.

Since the start of the 'war on terror' Muslim communities across the world have experienced unprecedented discrimination and victimisation. In the absence of a genuine understanding of the values and motivation of Australian Muslims, simplistic, ill-informed and prejudicial stereotypes have driven policies and actions that have exacerbated the alienation of sections of the community. Ironically these actions have the potential to create conditions that will increase the future prospects of terrorism in Australia.

A government committed to maintaining a peaceful, just and humane society will always act to ensure that all Australians, regardless of their origin, religion, race or colour are respected as equals and enjoy fair access to the opportunities that this unique country offers.

Rudd in rut over national reforms

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The appearance in recent weeks of several media reports critical of the Prime Minister's demanding work ethic and sceptical of the new government's policy agenda may reflect the residual influence of attitudes prevalent during the Howard era.

The electorate has given the Rudd Government a clear mandate for major national reform. The government has a unique opportunity to capitalise on a high level of community goodwill, and widespread expectations for positive change.

However, aspects of the political environment that evolved during the Howard era have the potential to thwart reforms, and will need to be overcome if the government is to successfully advance a progressive agenda.

The last years of the Howard era were typified by reactive short-term politics, adversarial confrontation, polarisation and a resistance to transparency. In the end the level of cynicism within the community was high, and the integrity of publicly elected representatives was diminished.

The Howard era saw an unprecedented concentration of power and political authority at the apex of government. The politics of personality and the intense focus on key individuals can undoubtedly have great political benefits in terms of maintaining control and communicating a single message. But in a complex and rapidly evolving world the level of pressure on an individual to perform flawlessly is unrealistic and ultimately unsustainable.

Apart from being incompatible with democratic principles and proper checks and balances, the centralisation of authority is invariably at the cost of organisational growth and modernisation, capacity-building and succession.

There are more viable, sustainable and contemporary models of political authority than the present Australian focus on relentlessly undermining individuals. Labor has expressed a desire to move beyond a rancorous political environment to place greater emphasis on shared goals and the development of collaborative solutions.

The government has a unique opportunity to engender an ongoing dialogue about the sorts of ideals, values, principles and practices that underpin an effective and contemporary democracy and an inclusive society.

In addition to redefining the broader political and policy context, the Prime Minister needs to devolve authority (and accountability) to a wide range of talented

representatives, in particular ministers, senior public service representatives and co-opted partners in the public and private sectors.

The development of independent and diverse perspectives can be a virtue and central to transparent evidence-based decision making. The Prime Minister is then free to play a genuine leadership role as a facilitator and catalyst to inspire the efforts of others, not as the initiator and the focus of all attention.

One of the other beneficiaries of the concentration of power during the Howard era was the media. An authority figure needs direct access to the electorate through the media. As the arbiter of what is reported and how, the media grew to play a powerful role in both shaping public opinion and exerting pressure on the Government to modify decisions.

The change of Government and the new political dynamics have necessitated some adjustments in the role and expectations of the media. This was inevitable given the media's diminished influence on, and unfamiliarity with, those who had assumed power. The absence of sensational crises and the constant intrigue and speculation that surrounded the final period of the Howard era may make generating 'interesting' stories more difficult.

The media's negative response to the 2020 Summit suggests a degree of resentment and frustration at being effectively marginalised in a new national dialogue. The danger for a reforming Government is that a cynical and contemptuous media struggling for relevance will seek to influence the community's perceptions of the Government's competence and motivation through constant criticism, dissipating existing support and goodwill and making each new policy initiative a Herculean task.

A possible response to the negative influence of the media is to broaden and diversify Government channels of communication with the community, and to continue to build a broader inclusive national agenda.

Thousands of citizens took the time to make detailed online submissions on important national issues prior to the 2020 Summit, and there is no reason why this sort of opportunity/facility should not be established and expanded as a permanent and direct conduit from the community to the Government.

The role of intelligence in shaping public perceptions of terrorism

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Abstract

In responding to the threat of terrorism the former Australian government acted to redefine the nature of intelligence advice. While the intent may have been to shield secret information and intelligence from public scrutiny and conceal its inherent limitations, the effect could be to devalue and undermine the vital role of professional intelligence analysis in transforming collected information into valuable and reliable interpretations and insights.

Introduction

The graphic images of terrorist attacks on the very heart of the western world on 11 September 2001 are now etched deeply into our psyche. For governments across the world the spectre of a grave new security threat emanating from a capable, determined and apparently fearless enemy has necessitated a major rethink of how to balance individual human and civil rights with the need to ensure the community is protected from intimidation and violence.

The resultant global “war on terror” has largely crystallised international efforts by governments to combat terrorism in a new post-September 11 security environment. Struggling to respond effectively to the prospect of devastating attacks anywhere from a highly committed and unconventional foe, governments have adopted a range of exceptional and sometimes indiscriminate measures. Some of these measures have impinged significantly on important and long-standing conventions relating to human and civil rights (Public Interest Advocacy Centre, July 2006; SLRC, June 2006).

After six years of fundamental and wide-reaching changes to the national and international security environment it is therefore timely to review Australian responses to the threat of global terrorism. This paper specifically examines:

- The (mis)representation of “secret intelligence” as a reliable basis for national counter-terrorism policies.
- The viability of intelligence as evidence in legal processes.
- The use of intelligence as justification for the concentration of authority.
- The effectiveness of terrorism in changing Australian society.
- The alienation of particular religious and ethnic minorities within the Australian community, and the emergence of latent xenophobia.

Understanding the nature of intelligence

Covert intelligence operations have played a major role in the global war against an elusive enemy, and intelligence advice has been pivotal in the development of national and international responses to the threat of terrorism. Because of the secrecy that invariably surrounds intelligence activities the community remains largely oblivious to the true nature of intelligence and its inherent limitations.

The community's limited understanding of the intelligence function places it at a significant disadvantage in determining whether government responses to perceived threats are justified. A challenge for communities committed to public accountability and concerned about maintaining a balance between individual rights and national security has been to obtain sufficient information to judge whether government actions are proportionate. In intelligence and national security matters the community has to rely on, and trust in, the government's integrity and assurances that it would only act responsibly and with substantial justification. The community's confidence in such assurances has been undermined with revelations that the intelligence basis for a number of major national and international actions was flawed.

In Australia the various intelligence agencies operated under a cloak of absolute secrecy until the mid 1970s. It was mainly the conduct of two Royal Commissions by Justice Hope that raised community awareness of the existence and activities of these previously hidden organisations. The observations and recommendations of the two Hope Royal Commission reports remain highly relevant more than two decades later. The 1977 report of the Royal Commission on Intelligence and Security (RCIS) observed that:

- Assessments should be an integral part of the intelligence cycle. Whatever the source of information ASIO collects, it must be critically evaluated and assessed soon after collection. Simply to store it, or to sort and store it, does not produce intelligence.
- The process of intelligence production must be one of distilling what is most relevant from a large volume of material. In this way trends are identified and overall perceptions of the situation develop. The intelligence analyst faces a situation where his information, coming from different sources and with widely varying credibility, must be constantly and sceptically appraised. In security work nothing can be assessed to be what it seems…. Thus intelligence assessment is no simple or routine activity but a highly-skilled and subtle task (RCASIA, 1984, p. 164).

The 1983 report of the Royal Commission on Australia's Security and Intelligence Agencies (RCASIA) observed that:

- The assessments produced by ASIO vary in quality and format. I think there has been an overall improvement in quality since RCIS. However, an annoying

feature to an outsider is a tendency to state assertions or beliefs as facts and to mingle facts with inferences drawn from them (RCASIA, 1984, p.165).

Commenting on two cases where information in security assessments produced by ASIO had been proved to be incorrect, Justice Hope concluded:

- By its nature, the information available to an intelligence organisation will often be less than firm and precise. Checking is not always easy, and the time available may not allow much scope for it. However, given time, ASIO should be at pains to verify, as far as possible, any information on which it may base an adverse assessment of an individual. It must also be meticulous to correct any information which it has given and which it discovers to be inaccurate (RCASIA, 1984, p.171).

While the intelligence function encompasses a myriad of activities relating to the (often covert) collection, organisation and analysis of information, the over-riding objective is the development of insights that provide direction for effective action. While governments prefer to act on the basis of proven facts, in their absence it is sometimes necessary to interpret and infer. Available (but often incomplete) information is critically analysed to develop well-founded interpretations on the nature of existing activities, and predications on future activities. These valuable insights are called intelligence product.

There are broadly two types of intelligence product - strategic and tactical (or operational) intelligence. Strategic intelligence typically informs on broad trends and organisational capabilities, with implications for longer-term strategy and policy (sometimes including legislation). Tactical intelligence typically informs on specific activities and individuals, with implications for investigations and immediate responses.

The raw data and information that is collected and analysed to create intelligence product can take many forms. Information sources can be conversations, written communications, observed actions, hearsay, rumour or opinion. Information can be collected from public sources or through highly sensitive technical means. It can range from fantasy to speculation to fact. While individual pieces of (sometimes secret) information can be of vital importance, how or where the data is obtained (whether overtly or covertly) does not transform it into intelligence product.

The key to the development of high quality intelligence product is professional analysis (assuming the analyst can access sufficient relevant information). The intelligence analyst possesses the skills to process, absorb, analyse, interpret and transform the available information into valuable insights, and to add value in terms of meaning and implications. This can be an extremely difficult and demanding task where the intelligence analyst is required to demonstrate exceptional skill, judgement

and intellect, and can be held accountable for the accuracy and reliability of their intelligence product.

A highly disciplined approach to the collection and analysis of information raises the level of confidence in the reliability and accuracy of the interpretations (the intelligence product) from speculation/possible to probable/likely (but never certain). But even using multiple, diverse and independent information sources and the most critical and objective analysis, the intelligence produced remains intrinsically fallible because it always involves an element of human interpretation and subjectivity.

Quality intelligence assessments from professional intelligence analysts should thus be thorough, logical, realistic, balanced, thoughtful, perceptive, timely, relevant and appropriately qualified. Hence, the high-level skills and attributes required for professional intelligence analysis include:

- The ability to think laterally.
- A determination to establish the truth.
- Personal courage and independence.
- Communication and reasoning skills.
- A personal commitment to life-long learning.
- Intellectual rigour, scepticism and incredulity.
- A level of sophistication and sensitivity to nuances and complexities.
- The ability to remain objective (unbiased), open to new perspectives, and able to maintain a sense of proportion and balanced perspective.
- A capacity for meticulous and extensive research in order to develop valuable insights that provide direction for effective action.

Maintaining the authority of intelligence

The nature (and limitations) of intelligence product has important implications for its use in the public domain. Neither secret information, nor intelligence product, are necessarily produced to withstand rigorous public scrutiny. Using them as public justification for accountable decisions and actions has thus proved to be increasingly problematic.

More than 20 years after the Hope Royal Commissions clearly explained the central role of analysis in transforming collected information into intelligence, in responding to the threat of terrorism post-September 11 the vital differences between intelligence activities (in particular the covert collection of information) and intelligence product have become blurred. The effect (if not the intent) of this redefinition is to shield intelligence advice from further public (and possibly official) scrutiny.

In 2004, in the wake of what is now widely acknowledged as a profound intelligence failure relating to the exaggeration of Iraq’s capabilities and possession of weapons of

mass destruction, the government commissioned Philip Flood to conduct a review of Australia's foreign intelligence services. The resultant Flood report states:

- Intelligence is covertly obtained information. While it may take a number of forms, the key characteristic of intelligence information is that it is obtained without the authority of the government or group who "owns" the information (Report of the Inquiry into Australian Intelligence Agencies, July 2004, p. 5).

In October 2006 the Australian Government published a booklet titled *The Australian Intelligence Community*. The booklet restates the Flood definition (that intelligence is "covertly obtained information") and describes collected information as "raw or unassessed intelligence" (AGPS, 2006, p. 3).

These definitions of intelligence explicitly fail to specify:

- How and when raw data and information is transformed into carefully crafted and qualified advice that can be used with some degree of confidence in government decision-making.
- The inherent limitations of all intelligence product, given it is typically based on the interpretation of incomplete and sometimes inaccurate information.
- The unique professional analytical skills and expertise that are required to produce high quality intelligence product.

Under the "covertly obtained information" definition of intelligence it is virtually impossible for the community to determine whether what is being presented as compelling "evidence" of a serious and imminent threat (and justification for action) is unassessed raw data or carefully evaluated intelligence product (or something in between). The community is unable to confidently question whether a proposed response is proportionate and appropriate. Ultimately this ambiguity and lack of clarity serves to reinforce the illusion that all intelligence must be credible and important, simply because it comes from "secret" sources.

There is a fundamental difference between obscuring the true nature of the intelligence function and (sensibly) protecting the methods, sources and details of current intelligence operations/activities. There may be a number of motives for maintaining the mystique of the intelligence function and avoiding explicit public accountability. These could include sustaining the unquestioned status and authority of intelligence advice ("knowledge is power"); maintaining intelligence agencies' independence and dramatically increased funding; sustaining an illusion that information collection equates to intelligence production; avoiding comparisons in terms of cost-benefits between different intelligence agencies; and moderating expectations for high quality intelligence product (such as forewarning of terrorism activities) and diluting individual accountability.

The viability of intelligence as evidence in legal proceedings

Intelligence can undoubtedly constitute a valuable source of advice in the absence of facts and evidence, but the sensitivity and intrinsic fallibility of this advice means that it is rarely suitable for use in the public domain. The limitations of secret information and intelligence product are likely to be exposed as legal proceedings are commenced against suspect individuals and groups under recently introduced counter-terrorism legislation. By its nature, tactical intelligence (on specific individuals/groups and activities) is rarely suitable as evidence in legal proceedings, where the information tendered has to be able to withstand thorough external scrutiny and a jury has to be convinced "beyond reasonable doubt".

The complexities involved in the use of secret information and intelligence as evidence in terrorism-related criminal proceedings have arisen previously in Australia. The explosion of a bomb in a garbage truck outside the Hilton Hotel in Sydney in February 1978 killed three people and injured several others. The Hilton bombing is often portrayed as Australia's introduction to terrorism. The incident was immediately linked with a Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) that was being held at the Hilton Hotel. The police and intelligence actions that followed this event are illustrative of how early decisions by investigative agencies can ultimately confuse rather than clarify who is responsible for a terrorist action, and have the potential to increase rather than reduce the threat of (and capability to perpetrate) further acts of politically motivated violence.

It was immediately assumed that the bomb was intended for one of the foreign dignitaries attending CHOGM. At the time a number of Commonwealth countries were experiencing levels of internal dissent, some including threats and violence by various "radical" religious and separatist groups. In several instances there were representatives or affiliates of such groups in Australia.

Following the explosion, suspicion immediately fell on the Australian members of a particular religious sect. The spiritual leader of the sect had been incarcerated in a Commonwealth country overseas, and sect members across the world had been conducting a campaign for his release. Several members had been involved in various acts of violence in Australia and overseas pursuant to the campaign to free their spiritual leader. Intensive police investigations into the sect following the bombing were complemented by covert intelligence operations involving technical and physical surveillance, and the penetration of the sect by a police informant, later named as Richard Seary.

In June 1978, just over four months after the Hilton bombing, two members of the sect and Richard Seary were arrested in a vehicle carrying a bag containing explosives (gelignite). It was later alleged the group were on the way to bomb a member of a neo-Nazi group. A third sect member was arrested at another location. The three sect

members (who were to become known as the "Yagoona 3") were charged with attempted murder, and subsequently convicted and imprisoned in August 1979. During the trial, at which Richard Seary was a key witness, it was alleged that the Yagoona 3 had made admissions about their own involvement in the Hilton bombing. Due to the central role of a police informant and the use of verbal admissions the prosecutions attracted considerable controversy from the outset. There were allegations of a police conspiracy to "frame" the sect members using an "agent provocateur". Following the convictions an active public campaign was commenced to secure a legal review of the case.

In 1983, the Yagoona 3 successfully appealed to the High Court to review the relevance of all intelligence records held by the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) relating to the matter, rather than accept a public interest immunity declaration from the Attorney-General. The High Court determined that none of the intelligence records held by ASIO were relevant to the issues at the original trial (ie admissible as evidence).

In 1984 a judicial review was initiated and revealed flaws and inconsistencies in the police case against the three sect members. All three sect members were subsequently pardoned in May 1985.

Police investigations into the unsolved Hilton bombing continued, and in 1989 after the re-arrest and charging of one of the Yagoona 3, a former sect member came forward and confessed to planting the Hilton bomb. The former sect member was convicted of the three murders in September 1989. The Yagoona 3 member was convicted in October 1990 of the murders, but the conviction was quashed on appeal in June 1991.

After the acquittal, a Federal Member of Parliament asked the Commonwealth Attorney-General a series of questions in Parliament about the Hilton bombing, including whether intelligence agency personnel had been trained in the use of explosives, and whether intelligence agency personnel had trained others in the use of explosives.

Extensive media coverage and ongoing speculation about official complicity in the Hilton bombing continued and, in late 1991, an unidentified male appeared on the television public affairs program *Sixty Minutes*. During the interview the unidentified man claimed that he had worked for a number of years during the late 1970s and 1980s as an ASIO informant in the religious sect.

Following the *Sixty Minutes* program Richard Seary (the police informant) wrote to the Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security and complained that ASIO had failed to produce evidence in its possession (from its own informant, and other covert sources) that would corroborate his evidence. The Inspector-General subsequently

conducted a comprehensive review and concluded that ASIO had acted reasonably and with propriety in meeting its legal obligations to disclose relevant information and intelligence (IGIS, September 1994).

This saga highlights a number of the issues that are highly problematic in the use of secret information and intelligence in terrorism cases, and the use of human sources (informants). These include:

- The dangers of relying on uncorroborated hearsay in making assessments on the capabilities and intentions of a suspected terrorist group.
- The inherent unreliability of informant information as evidence in criminal proceedings.
- The degree to which an informant can legitimately participate in activities within a group of interest without enhancing the expertise and capabilities of the group (such as the provision of training in military or terrorism techniques).
- The sorts of violent or “revolutionary” activities that the informant should be authorised to participate in to maintain his cover.

A complicating issue for ASIO was the ongoing media speculation that it had been involved in the Hilton bombing in order to justify an increase in its resources. Any actions by an ASIO informant that resulted in, or contributed to, a terrorist incident would have reinforced the broader perception that ASIO was willing to be involved in illegal activities. The Hilton bombing case clearly demonstrates many of the pitfalls likely to emerge in any criminal proceedings that rely on intelligence advice.

Intelligence as justification for the concentration of authority

A general lack of transparency in national security decision-making processes makes an evaluation of the specific influence of intelligence advice quite difficult. It is important to acknowledge that, with the exception of ASIO’s detention and questioning powers, the national intelligence agencies are largely information collection and advisory bodies.

Intelligence product can go some way towards providing valuable insights on the nature and dimensions of a prospective terrorism threat, but ultimately the government decides how to respond to these threats. Examining the intelligence advice provided does not really explain the dynamics of, and major influences on, the policy-development process.

A detailed exposure of the interaction between intelligence advice and government decision-making processes usually only occurs when there is a major adverse outcome that is subject to official investigation (or revelations from a person with inside knowledge, such as a whistle-blower). Several recent public inquiries have revealed

in detail the normally concealed interaction between intelligence and government decisions. These include the circumstances surrounding the Australian Government response to the murder of five Australian-based journalists following the Indonesian invasion of East Timor in 1975, and the repeated misrepresentation of Australian intelligence assessments concerning Iraq's possession of weapons of mass destruction.

These public inquiries have revealed that the government's response to intelligence advice is shaped by a range of broader political, strategic and even personal considerations, not just the strength of the intelligence case. A government disposed to act quickly may need only limited advice to justify actions that are consistent with its prevailing ideological, political or national imperatives. A more cautious government may seek additional collateral and a range of different perspectives and options. In any event, one of the attractions of using "secret intelligence" as primary justification for decisions is the effective shielding from intensive public and political scrutiny.

Post September 11 the spectre of an imminent terrorism threat has been the catalyst for an unprecedented concentration of authority, and the emergence of a powerful paternalism under the guise of national "leadership" in a time of crisis. In the face of a perceived threat to "our way of life" governments have expressed a determination to "do whatever it takes" to counter terrorism and to prevent future attacks, virtually transforming national priorities and policies overnight.

It would appear that a complex interplay of forces and circumstances (not all terrorism-related) converged to transform the dynamics of power and national decision-making processes in Australia.

The factors that facilitated these unprecedented changes included:

- A level of zealousness amongst a number of world leaders who were/are apparently convinced that the magnitude and immediacy of the threat posed by global terrorism irrevocably "changes the rules" and warrants extreme measures (including compromises to long established human rights conventions). The changed situation has been portrayed as a "new paradigm".
- The apparent (re)emergence of a conviction that the security of the state can be assured through control and legal authority, rather than inclusion, equality and moral authority. Under this (largely discredited) belief national security and individual rights are viewed as being at opposing ends of a spectrum. History has repeatedly shown that stability and social cohesion have their roots in a collective commitment to the universal values of respect, equity and justice.
- In Australia, the former government's apparent determination to protect the community from terrorism threats at any cost spawned a powerful and autocratic paternalism. Risk avoidance supplanted risk management in

government responses to perceived terrorism threats, resulting in virtually unconstrained expenditure on national security and counter-terrorism measures.

- A heightened level of community anxiety and fear as a result of (government/media/intelligence-generated) perceptions of new and potent security threats from global terrorism and religious extremism, resulting in more defensive and conservative community attitudes.
- The emergence of normally latent xenophobia in sections of the Australian community, with heightened concern about the threat posed by "foreigners" and the level of integration of particular religious and ethnic minorities within our diverse multicultural society.
- The impact of information "overload" as the result of new technology, with mounting pressure on individuals to process and assimilate enormous quantities of often real-time data. The result has been the emergence of "intermediaries" who filter, simplify and make sense of often complex and ambiguous information. These intermediaries wield significant power and influence in terms of "shaping" and articulating community opinions.
- The same technologies have provided new and powerful opportunities for the distortion and manipulation of information by the government and the media, and the dissemination of disinformation. Simple 'sound grabs' replace the communication of complex issues. Simplistic and prejudicial stereotypes are used to marginalise particular religious and ethnic groups.
- Information has become a valuable commodity that is packaged and sensationalised to generate revenue. The media coverage of arbitrarily selected national events is so intense, immediate and competitive that an air of crisis is artificially created. In this environment there is little opportunity or interest in analysis, the provision of a sense of proportion or balance, or even the facts.
- The rapid emergence of new and alternative Internet-based communication mediums that are making traditional media less relevant.
- The ascendance of the "cult of personality" has accelerated the centralisation and concentration of power at the apex of government (matched by a corresponding reduction of the influence and authority of other Parliamentary representatives, the executive and the judiciary).
- A significant narrowing of the national political agenda to focus predominantly on economic issues, at the expense of a balanced perspective that recognises broader social and environmental imperatives.

The effectiveness of terrorism in changing Australian society

A primary objective of terrorism as an organisational strategy is to engender a disproportionate response within the wider community, and to act as a catalyst for changes to society that advance the terrorists' goals. Terrorism is as much an insidious psychological strategy as an actual capability for mass, indiscriminate violence. It is the community's powerful emotional response (typically fear) to an ill-defined threat that gives terrorists exaggerated power and influence.

Because of this effect it is possible for terrorists to be highly effective without having to undertake any, or many, actual terrorism operations. Once terrorists have demonstrated that they have a credible capability all they have to do is raise the spectre of an attack (no matter how improbably) and the disproportionate community response is rekindled. An alarmist and sensationalist media; an intelligence community that grows in importance and resources in the face of imminent threats; and a government that apparently gains electoral advantage from appearing to be tough and protective; combine to reinforce community fear and inadvertently serve the terrorists' interests.

The objectives of terrorism as an organisational strategy include to:

- Inflict maximum damage, humiliation and intimidation.
- Maximise publicity for the terrorism doctrine, and build the organisation's prestige, influence and adherents.
- Inspire others to undertake similarly spectacular and effective attacks.
- Induce an exaggerated level of fear in the community that far exceeds the actual prospects of and capacity for violence.
- Provoke a disproportionate 'knee-jerk' security, military or foreign policy response that confirms and reinforces the terrorists' ideology; draws the state into an escalating cycle of violence on the terrorist's terms; and demonstrates the "David and Goliath" nature of the conflict.
- Stimulate the adoption of authoritarian, undemocratic, inhumane, illegal or immoral policies and practices, thus undermining the government's legitimacy and political authority.
- Prompt an over-reaction (such as discrimination and repression) that leads to the alienation and radicalisation of other individuals or groups.

None of the first three objectives appear to have been achieved in Australia, although legal action is pending against a number of individuals who allegedly have been involved in planning for a terrorist attack. The threat of terrorism continues to induce an exaggerated level of fear within the Australian community, though this may be diminishing over time.

An evaluation of the impact of the remaining terrorism objectives on Australia is more ambiguous. Based on the (often intelligence-based) spectre of a "serious and imminent" terrorism threat, the Australian Government has:

- Participated in the invasion and occupation of Iraq, now widely acknowledged as one of the most serious foreign policy failure since WWII.
- Fundamentally changed the way we manage people seeking refuge in Australia, adopting a far less humane policy.
- Introduced various pieces of anti-terrorism legislation that compromise important and long-standing conventions that have traditionally assured human and civil rights, including authorising the state to act pre-emptively against individuals and groups on the basis of "reasonable" grounds (Public Interest Advocacy Centre, July 2006; SLRC, June 2006).
- Diverted significant public resources away from schools, hospitals, aged services, indigenous welfare and other essential public services to cover costly security and defence measures.

The extent to which the former government's legitimacy and moral (and political) authority may have been undermined by its involvement in a series of highly publicised and controversial security-related incidents will ultimately be the subject of historical analysis. In developing its counter-terrorism policies the former government consistently asserted that it had "acted in good faith" on the (sometimes flawed) intelligence advice it had received, and not intentionally deceived the community or acted arbitrarily. Unlike other countries, it has not been established that the government of the day resorted to disinformation and obfuscation in order to mislead and manipulate its own citizens.

Alienation of the Australian Muslim community

Arguably the former government's most serious counter-terrorism policy misjudgement was its handling of, and attitude towards, the Australian Muslim community. Since the start of the "war on terror" Muslim communities across the world have experienced unprecedented intolerance, discrimination and victimisation. In Australia, the government had remained largely silent while the compatibility of Islamic beliefs with Australian values had been repeatedly questioned, and cultural differences and communication difficulties had been exploited to humiliate and demean Islamic religious and community representatives.

Misconceptions about the nature and tenets of Islam still appear to be widespread, and the image of Islam as an extreme ideology is reinforced regularly with violent images from Iraq and Afghanistan. In late 2005 bigotry and resentment towards Muslims in the community escalated into open conflict between groups of angry and resentful youth. In the absence of a genuine understanding of the values and motivation of Australian Muslims, simplistic, ill-informed and prejudicial stereotypes

have driven policies and actions that have exacerbated the alienation of sections of the community.

For many young Australian-born men of Middle Eastern origin the rise in overt racism has verged on the intolerable. A disproportionate number have found it difficult to secure gainful employment due to prejudice, even though they speak good English and have undertaken secondary education. Like all minorities that encounter difficulties in gaining equitable access to social and economic opportunities, some of these youth have found a sense of belonging through participation in ethnic or religious subcultures. The combination of high levels of frustration and bitterness, a pervasive sense of social exclusion and isolation, and apparently arbitrary action by a government perceived as lacking moral authority had the potential to be a dangerous mix for individuals who may feel a growing sense of anger, hopelessness and despair. As has occurred overseas, alienated individuals may well question the legitimacy of Australia's prevailing social values, and may be more likely to be attracted to what may appeal as "morally superior" fundamentalist ideologies. A continuation of arbitrary and prejudicial government action focussing on Muslims is only likely to heighten a pervasive sense of victimisation, with the potential to turn a prospective threat into a self-fulfilling prophesy.

Conclusions

Intelligence advice has undoubtedly played a vital role in the development of national and international responses to the threat of terrorism, yet the community remains largely oblivious to the true nature of intelligence and its inherent limitations. Following a series of highly publicised intelligence failures, the former government acted to shield intelligence from further public scrutiny by blurring the critical distinction between intelligence activities (in particular the covert collection of information) and intelligence product.

Intelligence can constitute a powerful source of advice in the absence of facts and evidence. But the sensitivity and intrinsic fallibility of this advice means that it is rarely suitable for use in the public domain or as the basis for accountable decisions.

Since September 11 the threat of terrorism has prompted fundamental changes to national priorities and an unprecedented concentration of authority. "Secret" intelligence has been used by governments as the justification for policies and actions that shift the balance between the rights of the state and the individual, at the same time avoiding the intensive public scrutiny of an open decision-making processes.

It is apparent that the threat of terrorism has engendered a range of significant negative changes in Australian society. Core democratic principles and institutions have been compromised and human and civil rights diminished. National priorities have been transformed, reducing an already inadequate level of funding support for

the most disadvantaged in our community (poor/young/sick/aged/indigenous). The relationship between the community and its elected representatives has changed, with the emergence of a new and powerful paternalism under the guise of national leadership in a time of crisis.

It now seems likely that community anxiety about "foreigners" has been exploited for partisan political purposes to polarise society and to alienate Australian Muslims. Ironically this has the potential to create the conditions that will increase the future prospects of terrorism in Australia. Ignorance and prejudice threaten to damage the fabric of Australia's multicultural society through the radicalisation of sections of our own community. Should a terrorist incident occur in Australia in the future the inevitable response will fundamentally change the nature of Australian society.

A government committed to maintaining a peaceful, just and humane society will always act to ensure that all Australians, no matter their origin, religion, race or colour, are respected as equals and enjoy fair access to the opportunities that this unique country offers.

The inhumanity of branding people

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The digital age has provided consumers with access to virtually unlimited information and commentary on events as they unfold around the world. Prolific new information sources now challenge the relevance, influence and longer-term viability of the traditional media. Climate change, disasters, conflicts, terrorism, global financial crisis and crime all vie for the consumer's attention.

Struggling to be heard above the clamouring voices, the traditional media has increasingly resorted to sensationalist and alarmist coverage intended to engage (some may say manipulate) the community at an emotional and reactive level.

This approach is most clearly illustrated by the media's blatant exploitation of the law and order issue to engender fear, alarm and disgust in the community. Increasingly lurid reports of unconstrained and indiscriminate violence, intimidation and revenge, are used to create a sense of danger and imminent crisis, ultimately forcing authorities to act. A particularly distasteful example is the frenzy that often accompanies the public identification of convicted criminals living in local communities, with overtones of vigilantes and public hangings.

One of the more deceptive strategies employed by the media (and occasionally by authorities) is to "sex up" individuals or events by linking them with a broader category of criminal activity (or "brand") that is already widely recognised within the community. The association with an established criminal brand provides an alarming and threatening context that magnifies the seriousness and importance of reported individuals or events.

Over the last four decades the process of (often indiscriminately) linking-labelling individuals and incidents has progressed through a variety of criminal brands including "the mafia", the underworld, organised crime networks, ethnic gangs and paedophile rings, to the current focus on outlaw motor cycle gangs.

The common characteristic of all of these brands is that they simplistically stereotype the target groups as homogenous hierarchical organisations whose members are universally bound by a commitment to conspiracy, criminality, violence and secrecy (and often by a particular ethnicity). These groups are portrayed as posing a unique threat to the fabric and good order of society because they appear to be above the law and able to successfully conduct criminal activities with immunity.

The fundamental problem with the use of information in this way is that it invariably involves a gross distortion and/or selective representation of the facts; lacks any sort

of balance or sense of perspective; and often reflects a complete disregard for the rights of individuals. Moreover, where authorities are coerced to respond (in the face of overwhelming pressure from a strident media and a fearful community) there is significant potential for a disproportionate over-reaction that may prove to be ultimately counter-productive in effectively addressing a real problem.

Confronted by a relentless law and order media campaign and the spectre of open conflict between outlaw "bikie" gangs, New South Wales (NSW) authorities have responded with what could well prove to be unsustainable draconian laws. Initial public statements concerning the "essential" NSW anti-gang legislation suggest that the police and the courts may be given extended powers to:

- Act pre-emptively on the basis of suspicion (in the absence of hard evidence of criminality).
- Establish guilt by association (gang membership becomes a crime)
- Refuse access to bail.
- Admit secretly-obtained information as evidence that cannot be publicly scrutinised.

Having withstood various official attempts over many years to compromise basic human rights and erode the inviolate protection of habeas corpus, it is highly improbable that such exceptional legislation will be able to be sustained over the longer term. The validity of such legislation will invariably be examined dispassionately, away from a vociferous media and concerned authorities desperate to reassure an alarmed community that they are in control.

Part of the psychology that appears to underpin this sort of tough and confrontational "war on..." response is the simplistic notion that uncompromising enforcement can prevail over systemic lawlessness by members of socially alienated anti-establishment sub-cultures. Inevitably criminologists and police professionals will demonstrate that only a combination of effective and judicious law enforcement and broader socially inclusive policies will be successful in the longer term in diminishing the level of criminal activity within our communities.

Secrecy, intelligence & accountability

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Governments seek the protection of secrecy when public disclosure threatens to compromise their ongoing national security (and other) interests. The exposure of information sources, collection methods or foresight can negate the advantages afforded by exclusive possession.

However, secrecy can also thwart accountability by shielding justification (as well as mistakes and poor judgment) from public scrutiny. Public accountability is a vital safeguard against the abuse of power by enabling the rigorous scrutiny of justification and the attribution of responsibility.

Because of the clandestine nature and activities of intelligence organisations a great deal of confusion and speculation surrounds their work. Perceptions of intrigue, deception, danger and excitement are reinforced by screen and literary images of spies combating "evil forces". More than 30 years ago Justice Hope observed that the intelligence function had been unnecessarily shrouded in mystery and that this had impacted on staff recruitment and community support.

More recently, in responding to revelations of a series of highly embarrassing intelligence failures with profound adverse consequences, the former Australian government moved to redefine intelligence in an amorphous, generic and ultimately deceptive way as "covertly obtained information".

This largely meaningless "intelligence for dummies" definition appears intended to exploit and perpetuate the community's ignorance about intelligence matters. Under this definition virtually all information becomes intelligence simply by being collected secretly. In reality information collection is the first stage in a complex process that has intelligence production as its goal. Defining intelligence in this simplistic way is like saying that the purpose of brain surgery is to drill a hole in your head.

The "secret collection" definition may serve a number of purposes. It reinforces the association between intelligence and secrecy, subtly enhancing its importance. It masks the real nature of intelligence advice, obviating the need to acknowledge the inherent limitations of all intelligence. And it marks a return to an unsophisticated era where intelligence is used to describe virtually anything secret, and where the label "intelligence" carries more weight than its actual substance or content.

This is not simply a matter of semantics but represents a fundamental obstacle to accountability and the definition of a precise and appropriate role for intelligence in a liberal democracy. The production of intelligence is, to quote Justice Hope "no simple

or routine activity but a highly-skilled and subtle task". In striving to explain intelligence work Justice Hope stressed the central role that analysis plays in transforming raw information into something of real value. He observed that "to simply store and sort [information] does not produce intelligence".

Intelligence is thus the goal of a rigorous process that starts with the collection of information; moves through careful checking and cross-referencing; to thorough and critical analysis; and leading ultimately to the formulation of balanced judgments and valuable insights on what is probable but not certain.

The simplification of intelligence has had a number of adverse consequences. The first stems from the community's anxiety about the prospects of further terrorism, largely based on secret intelligence advice. An apprehensive community has been prepared to endorse an unprecedented extension of the government's national security powers, clearly at some cost to human rights.

The community's capacity to question the basis for government policies and determine whether responses are proportionate is likewise diminished by secrecy and confusion. While there may be some disquiet about expanded security measures the community has had little option but to place its trust in government assurances that its responses to real threats are measured and justified.

Since the start of the "war on terror" community confidence in the intelligence function has been shaken by the disclosure of a series of catastrophic intelligence failures. The human rights cost of what has been subsequently revealed to be unjustified actions is inestimable (for example, invasion of Iraq, extraordinary rendition, coercive interrogation methods, and indefinite incarceration of suspects without trial).

A further potential consequence of a simplistic approach is the compromise of the capacity of our intelligence organisations to provide forewarning of real security threats. If the government is actually confounded by the intelligence process and unsure of its purpose, then its capacity to demand and recognise real intelligence is likely to be diminished. If the government accepts that intelligence really is anything obtained secretly, it may find it difficult to differentiate between real intelligence and a torrent of unassessed information.

As the primary intelligence consumer, it is vital that the government understand what to require from our intelligence organisations, and hold them accountable for the reliability and accuracy of their intelligence advice. Ultimately the efficacy of these organisations is measured by their ability to provide forewarning of real security threats. History has shown that the human rights costs of flawed judgments, intuitive views and alarmist perspectives can be severe.

Just war theory & the war on terror

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Abstract

Almost a decade after the horrific events of September 11 it is timely to reflect on some of the lessons learned from the global 'war on terror'. The evolution of a more sophisticated understanding of the threat posed by contemporary terrorism has cast doubt on the value and accuracy of using a war metaphor to define an effective global response. Terrorism is fundamentally the use of intimidation and fear to force major social and political change. The willingness of terrorists to use indiscriminate force against civilians means that terrorism falls outside the scope of the international laws governing armed conflict. In responding to terrorism with extreme (war-like) measures there is a risk that the state could damage the social bonds that are the foundation for a cohesive, peaceful, inclusive and resilient society.

Introduction

Advances in technology since the Second World War have fundamentally transformed large parts of human society. Ubiquitous access to information and communications has reduced the distance between nations and peoples, and technology-enabled growth has progressively narrowed economic disparities between developed and some developing countries. Likewise the blending of different cultures as a result of migration has accelerated the 'great big melting pot' made famous in the 1960s by the band Blue Mink. Scientific developments have improved the quality and duration of life for many, but have also created new weapons that "can inflict massive and indiscriminate destruction far exceeding the bounds of legitimate defence" (NCCB, 1983).

Better communications and greater economic interdependence may well have diminished the prospects of conventional conflicts between states by narrowing ideological differences and reducing the potential for misunderstandings. However, the same technologies have created new opportunities for 'psychological' and low-tech unconventional conflicts that can gain international prominence (notoriety) and disproportionate influence through the media. 21st century anxiety about the phenomenon of terrorism has been the catalyst for the modern state to expand its capacity to monitor its citizens in the name of increased security, and to enact new counter-terrorism laws with the potential to impinge on civil liberties (ICJA, 2009). As observed by Brysk (2007) "human rights are the first casualty of unconventional warfare. Even in liberal democracies perceptions of national insecurity can rapidly destroy citizen support for international law and democratic values".

This paper examines the conceptual foundations for the resort to force by the individual and the state, and the international laws governing armed conflict. The paper evaluates how the phenomenon of terrorism relates to these laws, and considers whether there are elements of the 'just war' theory that may be useful in developing an appropriate and effective response to terrorism.

The individual & resort to force

Innate power is the capacity of the individual to threaten or use force. Relatively few people still rely on their own aggression and physical prowess for their day to day survival, and most live in various forms of ordered societies. The foundation of the social contract (between the individual and the state) is the individual's acceptance of the obligation to eschew force in return for the protection of collective security provided by the state. Under the social contract the state reserves the exclusive right to use force, with the exception of the individual's intrinsic right to proportionate self-defence. As will become evident throughout this paper, the intrinsic right to self-defence retains great potency to this day as the primary justification for resort to force at the individual, state and international levels.

Most of the rules that govern the relationships between individuals and with the state are codified as laws, though laws do not always prevent individuals from resorting to force. Individuals who choose to abrogate their obligation to comply with laws may do so at the cost of their own rights to state protection.

International imperatives for peace

The *United Nations Charter* is one of the foundations of the international law that governs relations between sovereign states. A primary rationale for the establishment of the United Nations in 1945 was to maintain international peace and security and to provide a mechanism to prevent future conflicts. Article 2(3) of the *UN Charter* states that all members "shall settle their international disputes by peaceful means in such a manner that international peace and security, and justice, are not endangered". Likewise, Article 2(4) of the *UN Charter* states "all members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state". Under the *UN Charter* there are only two circumstances where a state may use force against another state: in self-defence if under actual or imminent attack, or if authorised to do so by the Security Council (Posner, 2004).

In the period since the Second World War the international community and the United Nations have been beset by a profound dilemma. On the one hand there has been virtual unanimity on the need to avoid armed (in particular nuclear) conflict between sovereign states, with the urgency reinforced soon after the Second World

War by the outbreak of the Korean War and the intensification of the cold war. On the other hand there has been emphatic support for the right to self-determination and independence of peoples subject to colonialism and other forms of authoritarian rule, and acceptance of the legitimacy of armed action to overthrow such repression.

Wars of national liberation

Support for the right to self-determination is reflected in Articles 1(2) and 55 of the *UN Charter* that refer to "respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples". The same principle is reflected in the preamble to the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* that observes "whereas it is essential, if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the law".

In the United Nations each of the sovereign states enjoys equality, irrespective of their size, population, level of development or power. Overwhelming support amongst UN members for the rights of oppressed peoples to self-determination has meant that 'wars of national liberation' are recognised as 'just wars'. The widespread acceptance of the legitimacy of wars of national liberation has its origins in the often violent struggles of many indigenous peoples to break free of imperialism and colonial domination. Most states view colonialism as morally abhorrent and unjust, and some contend that a 'war of national liberation' is an act of armed self-defence under Article 51 of the *UN Charter* (the "inherent right of individual or collective self-defence if an armed attack occurs against a member") (Gorelick, 1979).

It is possible that Common Article 3 of the *Geneva Conventions* that defines armed conflict "not of an international character", and that applies minimum standards to the humanitarian treatment of lawful combatants, was drafted specifically to recognise the legitimacy of wars of national liberation (Green, 2008).

The legitimacy and legal status of wars of national liberation by peoples seeking self-determination were the subject of intense debate in the United Nations throughout the 1950s and 1960s, with western nations (in the minority) opposing the recognition of the legitimacy of the use of force other than by a sovereign state. A series of UN General Assembly resolutions during this period reaffirmed the inherent right of all peoples to self-determination and liberation from colonial domination. The debate culminated in the *Friendly Relations Declaration* (Resolution 2625) in 1970 that recognises that "the subjection of peoples to alien subjugation, domination and exploitation constitutes a major obstacle to the promotion of international peace and security." This was followed by Resolution 3314 in 1974 that defined aggression and excluded its application to peoples fighting for independence and self-determination.

The issue of the legitimate status of wars of national liberation was formally recognised in 1977 with the adoption (by many but not all states) of two Additional

Protocols to the *Geneva Conventions*. Article 1(4) of Additional Protocol 1 recognises "armed conflicts in which people are fighting against colonial domination and alien occupation and against racist regimes in the exercise of their right of self-determination" as having the same status as international armed conflicts, and are thus covered by the rights and obligations of the *Geneva Conventions*. The principal obligations under Additional Protocol 1 for national liberation forces to be recognised as lawful combatants is that they operate under a command structure with internal discipline able to enforce compliance with international humanitarian law rules (Article 43), and that they "distinguish themselves from the civilian population while they are engaged … in a military operation" and arms are carried openly in such operations (Article 44).

Article 7 of the *Rome Statute* governs the jurisdiction and operations (post July 2002) of the International Criminal Court. The *Rome Statute* identifies the crime of apartheid as one of a series of international offences that constitute 'crimes against humanity'. Crimes of apartheid are "committed in the context of an institutionalised regime of systematic oppression and domination by one racial group over any other racial group or groups and committed with the intention of maintaining that regime". The *Rome Statute* explicitly criminalises oppression and in doing so implicitly legitimizes armed action by national liberation movements.

'Just war' theory

Because war involves profound decisions about the value of human life and the sanctioned use of lethal force it is an issue on which law and morality overlap. At its broadest level 'just war' relates to the moral justification for state-sanctioned killing. The concept of 'just war' has its roots in theology and the writings of Saint Augustine of Hippo in the 5th century, but it was Saint Thomas Aquinas in the 13th century who articulated the main principles that are to be satisfied if recourse to war is to be morally justified. Much of the bloody conflict during this period of history was over religious differences, and questions about moral justification were considered by prominent theologians and philosophers during the 15th, 16th and 17th centuries, leading to the formulation of criteria to judge the morality of wars.

'Just war' theory encompasses two dimensions, *jus ad bellum* (justice in resort to war) and *jus in bello* (justice in the conduct of war). Their origins include the medieval precepts of chivalry, honour, civility and mercy. Both elements have humanitarian aims and are founded in the concept of self-defence (resort to defensive not offensive force). Theologians over many centuries have been deeply troubled by the moral dilemma of having to choose between respect for human life and the sometimes unavoidable necessity to kill (such as in order to protect the innocent).

The fundamental difference between the two complementary elements of 'just war' theory is that the moral principles of *jus ad bellum* (the reasons for going to war) were

not explicitly codified and were to a large degree subsumed in other international law, while the principles and practices of *jus in bello* (the way war is to be conducted) were ultimately translated into what is now called the law of armed conflict (or international humanitarian law), of which the four *Geneva Conventions* and three Additional Protocols form a major part.

It is possible that the concept of 'just war' (or more pointedly, the *jus ad bellum* element) fell into disuse because of the consolidation of the autonomy and sovereign authority of the post-Westphalia nation state, and because of the diminishing power and influence of religion on national and international affairs. To this day 'just war' remains an important and influential Catholic Church doctrine, as reflected in a recent edict that 'peoples have a right and even a duty to protect their existence and freedom by proportionate means against an unjust aggressor'.

Jus ad bellum (Justice in resort to war)

The agreed elements of the *jus ad bellum* criteria are:

- Competent authority – the decision to resort to war must be made by a legitimately constituted public authority.
- Just cause – the reason to resort to war is to protect life and confront a real and imminent danger.
- Right intention – the motives for and gaols of resorting to war are honourable (such as to secure a just peace).
- Comparative justice – neither side to a conflict is absolutely right or wrong, but does the issue under dispute warrant killing.
- Probability of success – there are reasonable ground to believe that resort to war will be effective and not futile.
- Last resort – all other non-violent options for resolution have been exhausted
- Proportionality – resort to war will do more good than harm.

Jus in bello (Justice in the conduct of war)

The principles of *jus in bello*, developed over many centuries, are directed towards the 'civilised' conduct of armed conflict and are now codified in the law of armed conflict. Broadly these embrace the concepts of distinction (as to who are legitimate targets and combatants), proportionality (in the level and nature of violence used), humanity (in the treatment of casualties and avoidance of unnecessary suffering) and military necessity (legitimate military ends). The rules are intended to prevent unnecessary suffering and destruction while not impeding the waging of war.

Codification of the rules governing armed conflict became increasingly urgent as growing industrialisation and new military technologies provided highly efficient but indiscriminate means of killing large numbers of people from afar. It was through the actions and humanitarian ideals of Henri Dunant that the International Committee of

the Red Cross (ICRC) was established in the mid-19th century, and in 1864 an international conference adopted the first *Geneva Convention* codifying the rules governing the amelioration of the condition of the wounded and sick (*hors de combat*).

Further treaties codifying the humane treatment of the victims of war were adopted at international conferences in 1906 and 1929, with a 4th treaty (primarily concerned with the protection of civilians during armed conflicts) adopted at Geneva in 1949 following the Second World War. Three additional protocols have since been added, two in 1977 and one in 2005. While the ICRC has primary responsibility for administering these treaties (most of which have been ratified by virtually all nations), there is no established international body (like the United Nations) to oversees their application.

The law of armed conflict that has evolved under the aegis of the ICRC is essentially a framework of rules and protocols that govern the conduct of military conflict between states and with non-state parties. These rules recognise that conflict is an undesirable but sometimes inevitable element of human relations, and as such need to be regulated to minimize the impact on non-combatants (civilians). The law of armed conflict is a harm-minimisation strategy that aims to keep organised conflict within limits.

The law of armed conflict regulates organized military conflict by imposing reciprocal obligations and offering reciprocal privileges for participants at both a command and individual level. The law of armed conflict recognizes war as a unique type of organised human activity where organised killing is officially sanctioned. The law of armed conflict is most effective where all of the parties (state and non-state) to a conflict accept the rules (agree to the 'contract'), but can also be used to constrain the activities of one party (the state) to a non-international conflict. The law of armed conflict offers parties to a conflict certain protections (including status as lawful combatants), but breaches of the conventions are crimes and grave breaches are international crimes.

The key rules of the law of armed conflict as stipulated by the ICRC are:

- Parties must at all time distinguish between combatants and the civilian population. It is explicitly prohibited to attack a civilian population.
- Attacks must be limited solely to military objectives.
- Combatants who can no longer take part in hostilities must be protected.
- It is forbidden to kill or wound an adversary who surrenders.
- It is forbidden to use weapons or methods of warfare that are likely to cause unnecessary loss or excessive suffering.
- The wounded and sick must be collected and cared for.
- The ICRC symbol must be respected.
- Captured combatants must be respected and protected from violence.

Difficulties in classifying non-international armed conflicts

The differentiation of what is and is not a non-international armed conflict, an internal armed conflict, legitimate self-defence, a war of national liberation or a 'just war' has dogged the United Nations since its inception. Virtually any action by an organised armed group can be represented as having some degree of legitimacy (including a resistance or guerrilla movement seeking territorial independence from a popularly-elected sovereign state). The law applicable in each instance where armed force is used in a non-international conflict will vary depending on its unique characteristics. The members of the United Nations have found it difficult to reach consensus on the legitimacy of various armed conflicts not of an international nature (whether they are 'just'), and as a consequence have been reluctant to take action against or impose restrictions on such activities. This reluctance extends to agreement on the nature of and response to terrorism.

Additional Protocol 2 of the *Geneva Conventions* extends the essential elements of international humanitarian law to non-international armed conflicts, and articulates a set of criteria for the recognition of dissident armed forces or other organised armed groups as lawful combatants. To gain lawful combatant status belligerents need to:

- Be operating under responsible command (system of discipline).
- Exercise such control over a part of its territory as to enable them to carry out sustained and concerted military operations.
- Agree to implement the Additional Protocol.

The essence of non-state international terrorism

As mentioned in the introduction, one of the most profound changes facilitated by technology has been global information-sharing and communications, enabling a dramatic reduction in the distance between peoples throughout the world. The power of a ubiquitous media to connect with and influence an almost universal audience has reduced the distance between diverse cultures, but it has also provided unprecedented opportunities for exploitation. A major incident in one location can be seen world-wide almost instantaneously.

What distinguishes the phenomenon of international terrorism in the 21st century is not that the goal of attacks is primarily psychological (to cause widespread horror and fear), but that an unprecedented capacity to intimidate and coerce is achieved through virtually instantaneous access to a world-wide audience. Engendering widespread fear is a form of psychological warfare, and the mass media (often supported by the state) are the primary means through which this effect is achieved and reinforced. Terrorism is predominantly a virtual conflict, though the death and damage that may be inflicted to establish an ability and a willingness to strike anywhere with unconstrained and indiscriminate deadly force against civilians are real. The horror of

September 11 has been deeply seared into the west's psyche, with the prospects of continuing to elicit a visceral response for many years.

Those seeking to use the leverage of terror to intimidate are willing to undertake any actions that will secure international attention, including targeting high profile or symbolic locations or prominent people and the use of 'suicide bombers' to cause explosions in enclosed and densely populated places. Most remarkably, the states targeted by terrorists have been co-opted into sustaining the psychological warfare in their own communities.

Terrorism is thus "the use of violence to create fear in the larger audience in order to create change in that larger audience" (Garrison, 2003). A relatively small number of determined and well-organised individuals using improvised weapons can acquire global power and influence through the judicious use of extreme violence. The longer-term strategic goal of terrorism is to catalyse permanent social change. This is achieved by 'forcing' the state to (over)react with a range of typically disproportionate security measures intended to prevent further physical attacks. Protecting the community against the (even remote) possibility of attack (or further attack) requires a readjustment of national priorities and the reallocation of significant financial and human resources to national security and defence measures. The consequent expansion of state surveillance capabilities and increase in police and security powers has significant potential to impinge on civil liberties. At the same time heightened community suspicion of 'foreigners' can erode social cohesion, with the potential to exacerbate a sense of alienation amongst particular individuals and groups.

There are a range of other tactical and strategic objectives for the use of terror. These can include to demean and humiliate a vastly superior power; to draw international attention to an ideology or grievance; to build the group's international prestige and capacity to recruit others; to retaliate for personal loss; and to inspire others who feel alienated and disempowered to undertake similar attacks. It is possible that the success of terrorism in the 21st century as a strategy to acquire power and prompt fundamental change through intimidation has provided considerable impetus for the continuation of further attacks.

A willingness to resort to indiscriminate violence against the community in order to force change is thus one of the unique characteristics of terrorism. Defining terrorism by the strategies used to acquire and exercise disproportionate power means that state actions to pre-empt and mitigate future terrorist attacks are more likely to be proportionate and based on an objective risk management approach. As an example, rather than addressing and confronting the threat posed by a relatively small group of Islamic extremists (Al Qaeda) following September 11, the conflict rapidly escalated into a full-scale global 'war' against Islamic fundamentalism.

Beres (2007) has noted the west's fondness for "projecting our own sense of rationality upon our adversaries" and "imposing our own notions of compliance and justice upon an altogether different kind of civilization". Much has been made in the media of the Islamic concept of *jihad*, which can mean an individual's struggle for religious purity, but also has a broader connotation (ironically) as 'just war'. The challenge for authorities confronting adversaries acting with profound moral conviction is that conventional precepts of common law, tolerance and compromise may have little influence. Reconciliation may have little appeal to radicalised and socially alienated young people who perceive themselves as 'outsiders' living in a morally corrupt society, particularly where a sense of righteousness and commitment to self-sacrifice have sacred meaning and offer a divine purpose (Arzt, 2002).

The recent emergence in a number of Western countries of renewed interest in fundamentalism amongst second-generation locally-born children of migrants has focussed attention on the potential for social and cultural alienation in a loose multicultural framework. Young male defendants in recent terrorism trials in Australia and the United Kingdom have claimed to feel like foreigners in their own country.

Some western countries have poorly articulated and largely un-codified cultural and human rights principles, meaning that core social values such as plurality, diversity, equality, secularism, liberty, respect, tolerance, ethics, democracy, rule of law and freedom of speech (to name a few) can be perceived as either relativistic or political (and often derided as 'politically correct'). A number of states (particularly in Europe) have recently reasserted the pluralist and secular nature of their societies, and have actively opposed attempts to assert one singular identity (such as religion) as taking precedence over all others. This has raised difficult issues about apparently irreconcilable differences between individual rights and broader cultural values.

Does terrorism 'fit' the (law of armed conflict) war paradigm

Several commentators have argued that the early adoption of a 'war' paradigm to depict the fight against global terrorism post September 11 has been highly counterproductive. While the coalition intervention in Afghanistan following September 11 was clearly an international armed conflict, the distinction between conventional military action against organised armed belligerents (the Taliban) and covert intelligence operations against a small but high profile terrorism group (Al Qaeda) has become blurred.

ICRC advice on the status of terrorism is clear. "Terrorism is a phenomenon. Both practically and legally war cannot be waged against a phenomenon, but only against an identifiable party to an armed conflict". "On the basis of currently available factual evidence it is doubtful whether these [terrorist] groups and networks can be characterised as a 'party' to a conflict within the meaning of IHL [the law of armed

conflict]" (ICRC, 2004). The law of armed conflict "does not regulate terrorist acts committed in peacetime" (ibid).

The deliberate use of unconstrained and indiscriminate deadly force against civilians as a modus operandi emphatically contravenes all of the tenets of the law of armed conflict in respect to distinction, proportionality, humanity and necessity. Additional Protocols 1 and 2 of the *Geneva Conventions* also prohibit "acts or threats of violence, the primary purpose of which is to spread terror throughout the civilian population". It is difficult to see how any armed group that was intentionally unconstrained in its resort to force could qualify as a party to an international or non-international conflict, nor could a member of such a group gain recognition as a lawful combatant.

If terrorism is not war and terrorist acts fall outside the jurisdiction of the law of armed conflict, it is unclear whether they might qualify as 'crimes against humanity' under Article 7 of the *Rome Statute* of the International Criminal Court. To be eligible as international crimes the acts (terrorist attacks) would need to be "committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against any civilian population … pursuant to or in furtherance of a state or organisational policy". It is conceivable the International Criminal Court could mount a case against an individual terrorist who was acting pursuant to the goals of an enduring and structured international terrorist group (Land, 2010).

A just (but not war) approach to counter-terrorism

Throughout history groups and individuals have been willing to act outside the bounds of normative behaviour, but what distinguishes the principled state is that it steadfastly maintains the standards and upholds the laws that are the foundation of a modern civilized society, including safeguarding the fundamental rights of its citizens. How then should the moral state respond to the real (physical) threat posed by future terrorism, and when and how should the state intervene pre-emptively?

Consequent to the earlier observations about the pivotal role of a ubiquitous media in facilitating widespread fear and intimidation, a practical first (non-violent) step is to deprive the terrorists of immediate and intensive media coverage. Without the access afforded by the media the capacity and incentive to publicly intimidate is significantly reduced, and the state can readily moderate its own (inadvertent) role in perpetuating community fear. While such an approach may have implications for civil liberties in the short term, there may be longer term benefits if the state can relax its security measures because of reduced community insecurity and a diminished real threat.

Widespread international debate about the efficacy, morality and legality of military and covert para-military activities post September 11 and the invocation of pre-emptive self-defence as the justification for unilateral armed operations has prompted growing

demands for a more explicit and transparent counter-terrorism policy (Wallerstein, 2006). The Bush administration contended after September 11 that “war is transformed”, and the consequences according to Crawford (2003) are that “we need to expect and accept different ethical, legal and military standards, such as pre-emptive strikes and military tribunals where suspected terrorists may not even know the evidence against them”. Subsequent revelations of the authorised use of techniques such as extraordinary rendition, indefinite incarceration, humiliating and degrading treatment of prisoners, targeted killing (assassination) and allegations of torture may have demonstrated how war is transformed (Hathaway, 2004). The *Geneva Conventions* do not recognise covert paramilitary forces as lawful combatants, and some activities challenge the very notion of *jus cogens.*

Several commentators have examined the ‘war on terror’ through the prism of the just war theory because of the central role of pre-emptive self-defence as justification. The consensus is that some of the military and many of the covert paramilitary operations may not comply with the *jus ad bellum* criteria. Given the original theological rationale for the just war doctrine was the “need to restrain an enemy who would injure the innocent”, and the continuing debate over what constitutes legitimate self-defence, it is understandable there are growing calls for the inclusion of ethics and justice in the consideration of future counter-terrorism strategies (Enemark & Michaelsen, 2005).

How might the *jus ad bellum* criteria apply to an assessment of an appropriate and measured state response to future terrorism threats? The first *jus ad bellum* criterion of ‘competent authority’ is intended to ensure that a decision to resort to force is made by a legitimately constituted public authority. Article 51 of the *UN Charter* permits unilateral defensive action by a sovereign state that is attacked or under imminent threat of attack. Where international action or multiple states were involved the authority of the UN Security Council would appear to be required.

The second *jus ad bellum* criterion of ‘just cause’ dictates that proposed armed action must be a defensive response to an actual armed attack (on life), or an imminent armed attack (where lives are threatened). Unprovoked offensive action is prohibited. Several authors have highlighted the subtle distinction between acting pre-emptively to prevent an imminent armed attack and to protect life (that would constitute a legitimate ‘just cause’), and acting to prevent a potential adversary from developing an attack capability (that may not constitute a legitimate ‘just cause’).

The key to establishing the ‘just cause’ criterion in the absence of an actual armed attack would be high quality information or intelligence advice on the imminence of a potentially deadly attack. However, as was demonstrated following the invasion of Iraq the reliability of intelligence providing forewarning of a threat can sometimes be highly suspect. Given the interpretative nature of intelligence advice it will always be inherently fallible.

One issue that poses challenges in the application of ‘just cause’ in a counter-terrorism context is whether it should extend beyond conventional military activities to include unconventional warfare and covert paramilitary operations (that are unlikely to be recognised as lawful combatants under the *Geneva Conventions*). The covert nature of paramilitary operations may make it extremely difficult to determine when armed operations have commenced and concluded, and the success of such operations is often reliant on secrecy and the element of surprise. Under these circumstances it may be difficult to establish whether covert paramilitary operations would satisfy the ‘just cause’ criterion.

The third *jus ad bellum* criterion of ‘right intention’ may be satisfied if the ‘honourable’ intent was to prevent mass civilian casualties as the result of the deliberate use by terrorists of unconstrained and indiscriminate deadly force. Covert paramilitary operations directed towards the prevention of mass casualties may well satisfy this criterion.

The fourth *jus ad bellum* criterion of ‘comparative justice’ would clearly justify resort to armed force if a prospective terrorist attack threatened the deliberate use of unconstrained and indiscriminate deadly force against innocent civilians. Its applicability to covert paramilitary operations may be limited.

The fifth *jus ad bellum* criterion, ‘probability of success’ may be difficult to determine, given the unpredictable, indiscriminate and opportunistic nature of terrorist attacks and the asymmetric nature of the conflict. One of the tactical advantages terrorists enjoy is an ability to meld into the target population and a capacity to improvise in the means used to maximise harm.

The sixth *jus ad bellum* criterion of ‘last resort’ would probably be satisfied and would justify the use of armed force as an appropriate response to a prospective terrorist attack threatening the use of unconstrained and indiscriminate deadly force against civilians. Covert paramilitary operations directed towards the prevention of mass casualties may well satisfy the ‘last resort’ criterion.

The last *jus ad bellum* criterion of ‘proportionality’ would be satisfied if the resort to armed force was to prevent mass civilian casualties that could result from the deliberate use by terrorists of unconstrained and indiscriminate deadly force. However, if terrorism is essentially a criminal act then there may be a question as to which state organ would be responsible for responding (police or military). There may be inherent difficulties in evaluating proportionality in the conduct of covert paramilitary operations.

The consideration of ‘proportionality’ may also have some broader relevance in evaluating the costs and consequences of non-military counter-terrorism strategies, in particular of the adoption of increased national security measures. Many states have

enacted comprehensive counter-terrorism legislation that has significantly expanded the powers and capabilities of the state to monitor citizens and to authorise pre-emptive action against individuals and groups under suspicion (Fleck, 2007). While the temporary derogation of certain rights is permissible in law in times of crisis, some of the measures that have been adopted (many enabled by new technologies) appear to be permanent and have the potential to fundamentally alter the balance of power between the individual and the state. The most overt example is the United Kingdom's extensive installation of CCTV in public areas. Industry figures suggest that there are between 3.2 and 4.2 million cameras installed in the UK, with a camera for every 20 residents.

Conclusions

This paper has examined the conceptual foundations for and the rules that govern the 'justified' resort to armed force by the individual and the state. The paper has highlighted the difficulty in determining the legitimacy of some types of conflicts. States are torn between opposing war in principle and sanctioning wars of national liberation, and this has created difficulties in gaining international consensus on the legitimacy of armed conflicts.

Under the *UN Charter* the only legitimate option for unilateral recourse to armed force by a state is in self defence (under actual or imminent attack). This constraint on the use of force by a sovereign state is being undermined by the progressive broadening of the concept of anticipatory self-defence in order to justify pre-emptive military and paramilitary action.

This paper has highlighted the psychological and virtual characteristics of terrorism and its reliance on a ubiquitous media (and the state) to maximise widespread intimidation. It has concluded that terrorism does not qualify as war and does not 'fit' within the law of armed conflict framework. The blurring of the distinction between military and covert paramilitary operations, and the broad application of the term terrorism to justify and encompass all sorts of armed activities (some of which should be properly governed by the law of armed conflict) is a cause for concern.

This paper questions whether a disproportionate and diffuse 'war like' response to terrorism threats may pose a greater long term threat to liberal democracies than the terrorist attacks themselves. In particular the zealous enactment of wide-ranging laws enabling intrusive security measures has significant potential to compromise fundamental human rights. The success to date of terrorism in catalysing major social and political change may have the effect of encouraging further attacks. Brysk (2007) has observed that "terrorism has succeeded in destroying democracy when a national security state, without the knowledge or consent of its citizens, tortures and kills detainees, runs secret prisons, kidnaps foreign nationals and deports them to third countries to be abused, imprisons asylum seekers, spies upon its citizens, and

impedes freedom of movement, association, and expression on the basis of religion and national origin”.

This paper concludes by revisiting the *jus ad bellum* element of the ‘just war’ theory and reviewing its potential utility as a more objective and transparent approach in determining how to respond in a legal, proportionate and morally defensible manner to future terrorism threats. The ‘just war’ doctrine retains significant relevance to conventional armed conflicts, but its viability as a framework to evaluate the justification for unconventional paramilitary operations may be limited.

The dark face of absolute liberty

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Conceptions of liberty and individual freedom are deeply embedded in contemporary western ideology and culture. However the dogmatic assertion of the inviolate rights of individuals may have adverse consequences for the level of commitment to a peaceful, harmonious, just and compassionate society.

Innate power describes the capacity of every individual to act unilaterally, including resort to force. In primitive times physically powerful people were able to dominate others. As human society evolved rules were developed to ensure collective security, resolve competing interests and regulate the arbitrary exercise of innate power (ensure law and order). The concept of a social contract neatly encapsulates the relationship (and natural tensions) between individual and collective interests. A central tenet of the social contract is the individual's obligation to eschew force (with the exception of an inalienable right to self-defence) in return for collective security, with the state holding a monopoly on the use of force.

History shows that power quickly accrued to the organised state able to mobilise a superior capacity for violence. After centuries of repression and violent conflict 18th century Enlightenment values sought to fundamentally recast the social contract and redress the power imbalance between the individual and the state. Given the preceding history the state was largely perceived as a malevolent force that acted for narrow interests against the common good. Enlightenment values asserted the pre-eminence of the free, autonomous and self-reliant individual, with the secular state deriving its power/authority/legitimacy through the willing consent of those governed.

Enlightenment values were embodied in the American Declaration of Independence and the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen in the late 18th century, and were instrumental in the formulation of the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights following the end of World War Two. These values are an now an integral part of the contemporary international law that institutionalises human rights and defines the circumstances in which resort to force is justified (in self-defence, and in wars of national liberation to achieve self-determination).

The question of an appropriate balance between individual rights and social obligations remains a universal quandary. Does a culture that emphasises individual autonomy and self-reliance impact on the broader commitment to a peaceful and harmonious society? Does a libertarian culture inevitably engender some level of mistrust in the state and an associated lack of confidence in collective security? Where self-reliance extends to individual responsibility for personal safety (by providing the

individual with the means and authority to resort to force), what are the implications for the nature and extent of interpersonal violence?

For many years the United States has defined itself as an exceptional culturally advanced society that stands as a bastion for liberty against repressive foreign forces. Upholding the citizen's "natural" right to self-defence by enshrining a right to keep and bear arms in the Second Amendment to the United States Constitution is an integral part of this culture. For the same reasons the United States asserts an absolute right to take pre-emptive military action internationally against foreign adversaries in pursuit of its own self-defence. Domestically there is obvious dissonance between this self-image and the reality of extraordinary levels of interpersonal violence, political polarisation, social alienation and economic inequity.

These complex issues are bought into sharp contrast when we try to comprehend why American citizens regularly resort to indiscriminate large-scale violence against innocent civilians (such as mass shootings and occasional bombings). Is it simply because citizens have relatively unrestricted access to the means to effectively undertake such violence, or are there deeper issues about the real level of community commitment to a civilised society?

What is particularly interesting in the public discourse on violence in the United States is the vital distinction that is made between the threat posed by "foreign" terrorists (that seems to engender a visceral fear) and an apparently permissive attitude towards violence by citizens/criminals. In reality the actual harm in terms of casualties and damage between the two types of violence is largely indistinguishable. Protecting against a foreign terrorist carrying an improvised explosive device can warrant the expenditure of many millions of dollars on security measures, yet every day more than 80 people die from the use of readily available guns (the majority being suicides). This remarkable contradiction (and lack of proportion) is revealed again in the current coverage of and community response to the bombing of the Boston marathon.

Culture wars & national identity

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At a Sydney Writers Festival event at the Town Hall last year an audience member asked Hugh White whether his attitude towards China represented appeasement. White responded eloquently that the allusion to appeasement (with its negative World War Two connotations) was intended to terminate thoughtful public discourse on an important national policy issue.

Numerous contributors to this and other forums have noted that one of the consequences of a frenetic 24 hour media cycle (in conjunction with the diversification of information sources) is that the reporting of many issues is both superficial and sensational, lacking content, perspective and depth. Slogans, stereotypes and sound-bites replace knowledge and analysis, over-simplifying what can be complex and difficult issues. This article explores the use of the term "culture wars" to denigrate and impede public discourse on the issue of Australia's core values and national identity.

The term "culture" encapsulates the diverse elements that comprise a nation's unique character, with a set of core national values at the heart of a distinctive and enduring cultural identity. Elements of culture can include history, heritage, language, art, customs, institutions, beliefs, ideals and the physical environment. For many countries a national culture and a universal commitment to core values underpins a sense of common purpose and social cohesion, providing a continuity and consistency beyond short-term political expediency. In many countries core national values are enshrined in constitutions, treaties, laws (such as a bill of rights), symbols and even national anthems. The term "culture wars" is thus used to describe conflict between different segments of a society over core national values.

In a 2006 Australia Day address Prime Minister John Howard praised as a virtue the absence of institutionalised or codified values as "a test of Australianness". Howard referred to the importance of an "ethos of a fair go for all", an "egalitarian tradition" and a British/Judeo-Christian heritage as the foundations for a tolerant and diverse society, and inferred that explicit national values have the potential to impose unnecessary constraints on a multicultural society. Howard's address is an implicit defence of the principles of classical liberalism, including a conviction that power should reside in the hands of democratically elected representatives rather than state institutions.

If Australia's core national values are amorphous and largely inferred, what does a clash of values mean in an Australian context, and how is the concept of culture wars used in social and political discourse? Settled as a European outpost in the late 18th century through the displacement of an ancient indigenous people, modern Australia

is now a relatively affluent and resource-rich developed country (6th in area but 50th in population) in a developing and dynamic Asian region. As a Western democracy, Australia's mainstream political spectrum ranges from a belief in the principles of classical liberalism (the pre-eminence of the autonomous, enterprising and self-reliant individual, free market economy and small government) to a commitment to elevate community, social justice and humanitarian considerations above individual economic self-interest.

In the absence of explicit and enforceable national values how is it possible for the community to identify and defend matters of fundamental principle (such as state's obligation to treat all humans equally with respect and dignity, or the state's responsibility to protect its vulnerable citizens, or the rights of all citizens to a minimum standard of living, or the moral imperative to acknowledge the nation's dispossessed indigenous people)? Are all issues to be resolved expediently in the political domain, irrespective of their national or moral significance?

This brings us back to the use of the term "culture wars" in Australia. In the political domain the term is used as a derogatory label to characterise any discussion about core national values as the deliberate exploitation of prejudices or divisions within the community for partisan political purposes. The term is specifically used to denigrate and dismiss the validity and legitimacy of the views of particular segments of the community by asserting their elitist and unrepresentative nature (the views of "latte-sippers" and "academic elites"). The term is also used to implicitly question the accuracy of recorded history by inferring that it represents a subjective and distorted interpretation of the facts. The most infamous example of the latter is the reference to a "black armband" view of the history of European colonisation and its impacts on the traditional custodians of Australia.

The term "culture wars" is thus used politically in Australia as a disparaging generalisation to dumb-down and hamper public discourse on a potentially vital national issue (not unlike the use of the term "appeasement"). Such derisory labels validate the outright rejection of challenging and alternative perspectives by questioning the motivation of the author rather than considering the merits of an argument. They gain credence and leverage in an often chaotic information environment where established facts and the application of thoughtful analysis have limited currency.

Does Woolwich killing lead to nihilism?

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The recent graphic and social network-enabled coverage of a gruesome cold-blooded murder in London has inevitably led to further soul-searching about how to respond to such appalling violence in order to prevent further similar incidents. At the time of writing it is unclear whether this attack constitutes the indiscriminate and unconstrained use of violence against civilians in order to terrorise the wider community for ideological reasons. If a primary goal of the attack was to generate intense global coverage, galvanise public horror and catalyse a state reaction, then it appears to have been effective.

With each new and shocking iteration of extreme public violence it is inevitable that the authorities and a fearful community will seek reasons for the apparently inexplicable. The simplest is to point to what are perceived by some (usually inaccurately) as intrinsic religious and cultural differences. Extremist actions by locally-born young men (citizens rather than foreigners) adds a further element of perplexity in understanding the motivation for such violence.

One of the recurring and deeply disturbing themes that emerges from the attitudes of radicalised young men is their abhorrence of "crass" Western values, complemented by a deeply personal sense of righteousness and empowerment that comes from self-sacrifice for (what they are convinced are) higher ideals. Understanding the visceral appeal of self-sacrifice (particularly to socially alienated young men seeking profound personal meaning) has been partly obscured by the advice of self-styled terrorism commentators minimising individual responsibility and asserting external organisation, direction, manipulation and ideological "brainwashing".

Western society is not entirely oblivious to the concept of self-sacrifice, given the central role of crucifixion and resurrection in Judeo-Christian beliefs, and the high status that the state and community confers on individual courage and self-sacrifice in armed conflict or in defence of the community. Stories of heroism in war by brave young men constantly emphasise the overwhelming odds and lionise the warrior willing to selflessly lay down his own life in order to cause mass causalities to the enemy.

Turning to the rejection of Western (Enlightenment/secular/classical liberal) values, it is widely recognised that broad community commitment to core national values is at the heart of a shared cultural identity, social cohesion and individual commitment to the social contract. These core values include respect for equality and liberty, democratic participation, pluralism, opportunity and economic mobility, application of

merit, the rule of law, compassion and non-violence, and are arguably crystallised in Winston Churchill's observation that "we make a living by what we get, we make a life by what we give". The dilution or distortion of these core values threatens to weaken social bonds.

It is also self-evident that these core secular values do not provide the profound meaning that some people crave, creating a sense of anomie in some and disillusionment in others. A sense of anomie is not limited to those originally from other cultures as it can also be an inevitable consequence of rapid social change. It is easy for altruistic values to be obscured by overt materialism, consumerism, exploitation and individual self-interest. The distortion of core values can be exacerbated in those who feel that they are denied access to and full participation in a society because of their membership of particular social sub-groups.

These issues are particularly relevant in a country like Australia where the core national values are only vaguely defined (compared to most other advanced societies). In addition, one of the most widely lauded attributes of the national character is a pervasive sense of egalitarianism which serves to undermine the articulation of broader higher ideals. This is because the Australian sense of egalitarianism is often translated into an abiding scepticism (and sometimes cynicism) of anything that is altruistic, idealistic, humanitarian or remotely perceived as elitist.

This abiding scepticism finds voice in the "tall poppy syndrome", the use of the term "politically correct" to denigrate anything that aims to define higher standards of behaviour, the dismissal of any discussion about national values as an attempt to resurrect "class warfare" or "culture wars", and the application of derogatory labels to anyone who seeks to advance a more thoughtful or nuanced perspective. Examples of recent derogatory labels include "academic elites", "latte sippers" and "bunyip alumni". Disturbingly the national inclination for scepticism now extends to the advice of internationally-recognised scientific and academic experts, most recently in respect to the causes and implications of climate change.

As I noted in an earlier article, in his Australia Day address in 2006 Prime Minister John Howard lauded the absence of explicit national values that have the potential to constrain an inclusive multicultural society. The corollary is that while there are no values to limit opportunities on the way up, there are also none to act as fundamental principles on the way down, allowing Australia to plumb the depths and act in ways that are universally decried (such as the inhumanity of the current asylum-seeker policies). Unfortunately such expedient policies have the potential to reinforce a perception that the state (and perhaps even society) lacks moral legitimacy, exacerbating the potential for the radicalisation of some already disenchanted youth.

Free markets, cyber security & the secret state

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Few now doubt that the exponential growth of global free trade over the last three decades has changed the economic circumstances of billions of people. While the post-war Bretton Woods institutions initially entrenched an economic advantage for developed Western countries, international economic liberalisation in the 1980s and the end of the cold war opened up global free markets. Championed by Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan, neo-liberalism asserted that competitive global markets, free of state intervention, are the most efficient way to allocate and exploit scarce resources. While not all countries have benefited equally from global free trade (many of the least developed countries have gone backwards), globalisation has facilitated pervasive economic interdependence and billions of people in emerging economies have seen their standard of living rise.

Technology has been at the heart of both global and social transformation. For many years after the war the developed countries fiercely defended their technological superiority (and their competitive advantage), some of which had its origins in defence and national security. As this technology has been progressively commercialised and made publicly available the West's clear technological and knowledge advantage has been eroded, leading to the rapid development of economies with a competitive advantage in a global free market. Technology has enabled the virtually instantaneous sharing of information, often making physical location irrelevant. From the West's perspective, the technology genie has escaped from the bottle.

Despite the connotations of an open and competitive free market a great deal of commercial activity continues to operate in the shadows. Markets in illicit goods and services have flourished at the same time as international trade in legal commodities. Economies of scale and the mobility of capital have taken precedence over the social, cultural and economic needs of particular nations. Huge state-owned enterprises have exploited their market power. Transnational corporations have abrogated their social and environmental responsibilities and their taxation obligations in particular locations. And despite the rhetoric of an open free market where competitive advantage prevails, many governments have continued to be intimately involved in advancing their national economic interests through extensive covert information collection activities.

The current controversy over cyber security needs to be seen in this context. (Remarkably, the sensational media reports about cyber attacks coincide with an annual information technology and security conference called CeBIT at Darling Harbour in Sydney.) For many years developed countries enjoyed a virtual monopoly on advanced technology, including the capacity to progress their national economic interests through extensive covert means. Cyber security has now emerged as an

issue of significance because a number of developing countries have evolved their own advanced technical capabilities, with developed countries losing their clear technological advantage.

Publicly discussing cyber security issues poses a terrible dilemma for governments because it threatens to expose a secret "shadow world", potentially revealing highly sensitive technical capabilities, and perhaps more damaging, highly embarrassing covert activities. This can be particularly awkward where there is a contradiction between overt Government policy and covert state action, and where the state uses its covert cyber capabilities to support private commercial ventures that are competing in a global marketplace.

If we accept that sensitive diplomatic and trade negotiations between the representatives of sovereign states are undertaken "in good faith" based on mutual respect, then the disclosure of covert actions by one party to secure advantage over (or exploit the vulnerability of) another may erode trust and undermine moral authority. In some respects the disclosure of the motives and attitudes of diplomatic representatives was the most enduring outcome from the Wikileaks documents. Many people would feel that the establishment and maintenance of strong and enduring relationships between nations is vital to securing a peaceful resolution of conflicts, with cynicism and mistrust threatening to undermine such relations. Apparently duplicitous actions may also conflict with the state's ethical responsibilities to uphold core national values such honesty, transparency and accountability.

Arguably it is the state's use of its covert cyber capabilities to provide competitive advantage to private enterprises operating in a global free market that potentially poses the greatest ethical ambiguity. This is because the developed countries have been the most vociferous proponents of allowing global market forces to prevail, including the removal of national barriers intended to protect local industries and employment. If it is revealed that "free" trade is not determined fairly on the basis of genuine competitive advantage then the social and economic costs for individual communities and nations may be more difficult to justify.

The difficulty for the community in making sense of the confusing (and potentially alarming) situation in respect to cyber security is that the discussion of all of these issues (including the national values that govern covert state action) is not undertaken in public. By treating as secret what are actually quite profound and ubiquitous changes in technological capabilities with implications for international relations (and for traditional conceptions of national security, by portraying cyber activities by other states through a traditional espionage prism), the community is excluded from a thoughtful and balanced consideration of an appropriate national response. Fortunately there are a growing number in the cyber security industry who recognise the need for a paradigm shift in respect to this important national issue.

What binds us?

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In an earlier article in OLO ("Culture wars and national identity") I argued that many of Australia's core values are only vaguely defined, and as a consequence our national character can seem amorphous and our cultural narrative confusing. In a 2006 Australia Day address then Prime Minister John Howard lauded the absence of institutionalised standards for "Australianness" and emphatically rejected the need to codify national values in a Bill of Rights. A lack of attachment to a distinctive national identity may partially explain why, in a 2004 World Values Survey, Australia is ranked 35th out of 59 countries in terms of social inclusiveness.

Values are the core beliefs, principles and ideals that guide and motivate individual and community attitudes and actions. Values are a vital and enduring part of the fabric of Australia's cultural narrative, and are much more than the formal rules and laws that govern society. Understanding the level of commitment to shared values is crucial in any discussion about social cohesion in a pluralist society, particularly as national differences pale in an increasingly integrated global world. Issues surrounding inclusion and alienation have been bought into sharp contrast as various governments have struggled to understand and minimise ideologically-motivated violence by their own citizens, most recently in the United Kingdom following the horrific Woolwich murder (prompting a resurgence of race-based nationalism).

This article seeks to identify some of the implicit values of the "lucky country" and to consider whether these values are reflected in our contemporary cultural narrative. Australian values have their origins in a two century old European colonial heritage. Many of our national institutions, including a prosaic constitution, a policy of cultural homogeneity until the mid-1970s, a faltering reconciliation with our indigenous people, and a continuing subordination to the British monarchy, reflect an adaptive and evolving rather than mature Australian society. In his 2006 address John Howard described the elements of Australia's "dominant cultural pattern" as Judeo-Christian ethics, the institutions and values of British political culture, and an "egalitarian temper" born of Irish and non-conformist traditions.

The Howard address also acknowledges that "a sense of shared values is our social cement". The "common values that bind us together as one people" include "respect for freedom and dignity of the individual, a commitment to the rule of law, the equality of men and women, and a spirit of egalitarianism that embraces tolerance, fair play and compassion for those in need." Many of the descriptions of the Australian character refer to egalitarianism as a key national trait, seemingly reflecting wide acceptance of the concept of "a fair go for all". Likewise an informality and sense of irreverence is reflected in the idiom "she'll be right" and "no worries", and much of the

historical narrative focuses on the role of the "larrikin" and resistance to authority (Ned Kelly, Eureka Stockade). The discourse around the Anzac tradition seems to encapsulate particular regard for the values of honour, courage, mateship and perseverance.

Does this vaguely romantic self-image accord with reality? In the absence of the explicit articulation of core national values do Australians actually behave in honourable and compassionate ways, or is the rhetoric of these ideals divorced from reality? How do we reconcile the idea of egalitarianism with thinly veiled racism and sexism? Many who have studied this nation from a afar have observed that Australia is a country of enormous contradictions. Despite our position as a relatively wealthy developed nation founded on migration, Australia continues to demonstrate great insecurity in responding thoughtfully and effectively to the challenges of 21st century globalisation.

The shallowness of Australia's cultural narrative (and the weakness of the underlying values) has been exposed as technology has challenged traditional power structures. As a healthy democracy, politicians have for decades been the primary custodians of the nation's (often contested) cultural narrative, perhaps augmented by the media. The ubiquitous extension of real-time information has eroded the role of elected representatives and shifted the power to inform, shape and represent public opinion to the media. While technology nominally enhances opportunities for democratic participation through the diversification of voices and avenues, it also means that "news" as a business has become highly competitive.

Technology has fundamentally transformed what was traditionally a symbiotic relationship between elected representatives and the media. Politicians have struggled to adjust to this new intense environment, increasingly reverting to simple slogans and ten second sound grabs suitable for populist consumption. As reporting has become more lurid (fighting to attract sales) politicians have reverted to personal denigration and vicious character assassination, seeking to undermine the community's trust in the opponent's integrity and to engender a toxic and seemingly chaotic political environment. With growing community cynicism of politics our elected representatives have struggled to articulate a coherent and enduring narrative on where Australia has come from, how and why it is adapting to the challenges of a rapidly changing world, and what sort of nation and society we aspire to become.

At the same time the mainstream media no longer purports to report the facts dispassionately but seeks to create a saleable information product (typically opinion) in a highly competitive market. Given the shift of power it was perhaps inevitable that elements of the media would seek to directly influence national politics and policy. By (re)framing the narrative the media is able to create a new "reality" and use the resultant public sentiment (fear, outrage, disgust) to bring ultimately unbearable pressure to bear to force political change. Intense media coverage is able to

systematically build a sense of urgency and crisis that demands political action, leading ultimately to the removal of key figures and the rejection of key policies.

It may be that the strongest sentiment that currently binds the Australian community is simply universal disgust at the standard of public discourse and the disintegration of our democratic institutions.

The most powerful word

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A fundamental tenet of democracy is that the state derives its legitimacy and authority by representing the will of the people. With a mandate derived through democratic elections, governments enact laws that are meant to reflect the rules and values of the broader community. At the heart of representative democracy are the principles of transparency and accountability, allowing the community to examine how government processes work and to hold individuals and organisations responsible for their decisions and actions. Public servants are likewise held to explicit legal, ethical and performance standards.

The requirements for government transparency and accountability are compromised when it comes to national security matters, ostensibly because the “first duty of government” is to safeguard the nation’s security and protect its citizens. Government actions undertaken under the aegis of national security are often secret in order to maintain the advantage of forewarning (of prospective threats) obtained from technical capabilities and sensitive sources. Ministers routinely decline to answer questions about national security matters on the basis of sensitivity.

Democratic states recognise the delicate balance between national security and civil liberties, and in Australia various statutory oversight bodies report publicly on the legality and efficacy of national security agencies’ operations. The government is also committed to determining national security priorities through the application of a rigorous risk management process. Such a process aims to estimate and objectively determine the probability and consequences of various threats that are ranked according to their potential harm, ensuring government actions are necessary and proportionate. While the risk of adverse events cannot be completely eliminated they can be mitigated through pre-emptive action.

The terrorism attacks on 9/11 have dramatically and permanently transformed the national security environment and the scope of the secret state. The government’s initially militaristic response to the threat of fundamentalist terrorism (that seeks to engender fear through mass-casualty attacks on civilians) may have been understandable in the immediate aftermath of the shocking attacks, and confusion over the nature and extent of the threat posed by Al Qaeda. However, decades-long conventions were subsequently discarded and established checks and balances were compromised post 9/11 through the introduction of powerful counter-terrorism legislation, shifting the balance between national security and civil liberties. Arguably the most dramatic measures involved endowing the nation’s (formerly advisory) national security agency with extraordinary questioning and preventative detention powers.

Over the last decade both the public and private security industries have grown exponentially, with the funds allocated to the various elements of the government's national security architecture increasing by almost 400%. During this period the national security sector has burgeoned, and there are now many thousands of people whose livelihood is directly or indirectly related to the threat of terrorism. If the primary goal of terrorism is to precipitate major social and political change by engendering fear and insecurity, then 9/11 has been remarkably effective.

Despite the passing of time and successful military action against the sources of terrorism overseas, the institutionalisation of effective detection and protective security measures, and a better official understanding of the origins and dynamics of threats, terrorism continues to play a powerful role in many areas of public policy that is quite disproportionate to its actual risk. There appears to be a number of reasons for this situation, the most significant being the politicisation and exploitation of the issue of national security, and its deliberate conflation with other contemporary public policy issues like migration and border security for partisan advantage. The ill-defined threat of foreign or locally-based extremism appears to have particular resonance with the community's historical and deep-seated apprehension about "foreigners".

There is no doubt that it is extremely difficult to keep the risk of terrorism in perspective when its aim and effect is to engender irrational fear. The community's capacity to question whether government counter-terrorism actions are effective, appropriate and necessary is hampered by the limited understanding of the phenomenon of terrorism. As a consequence there remains great potential for community fear and ignorance to be exploited for government or partisan political purposes. In addition, the paramilitary-related dimensions of front-line counter-terrorism measures inevitably engender a zealous "higher mission" attitude amongst those involved.

Terrorism relies on the leverage of global real-time coverage in order to engender widespread fear, and the same technology challenges the state's historical control over information dissemination. As states seek desperately to retain or regain a technological advantage to covertly collect digital data, the issue of protecting against the spectre of terrorism becomes a powerful rationale for additional powers and cyber security capabilities.

The oversight mechanisms that have been established by government to protect the community's interests and ensure accountability in the national security domain continue to operate. One of the authors of the 2011 Independent Review of the Intelligence Community has spoken of the need to ensure that national security agencies continue to comply fully with their statutory obligations and resist the development of a utilitarian (expedient ends justify the means) culture in the conduct of their operations. Reviews of the current counter-terrorism legislation by a COAG

committee and by the Independent National Security Legislation Monitor were table in the Federal Parliament in May 2013. Both reports recommend that preventative detention orders be abolished, with the INSLM concluding that both control and preventative detention orders are not effective, appropriate or necessary.

There has been negligible public or official discussion of these reviews and it seems they sit uncomfortably with an apparent desire and willingness to exploit the continuing political power of terrorism.

Power, politics & populism

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Power is the capacity to act. At the most visceral level it is reflected in the ability of the individual to resort to force to subjugate others or to act in self-defence. Under the social contract the individual forgoes recourse to force in return for the protection of the state, with the state's first duty being the maintenance of law and order (security). In a democracy the state derives its authority and legitimacy by representing the will of the people, with its mandate to govern being regularly renewed through democratic elections.

Politics describes a dynamic process through which power is negotiated, aggregated, shaped and exercised. Between elections representatives seek to maintain community support for policies and actions while mediating between competing interests and responding to emerging national challenges. In a Westminster system there is a deliberate separation of powers between executive government, the legislature and the judiciary that is intended to maintain checks and balances and ensure continuity in governance independent of adversarial day-to-day politics.

Technology has transformed relationships between individuals and with the state since the turn of the millennium. The net effect of the web and a ubiquitous social media is to empower individuals through virtually unlimited access to real-time information and to others. The disaggregation of power to the community has had a number of remarkable consequences, most dramatically illustrated by social uprisings in a number of previously undemocratic developing countries around the world. (Ironically the same technology has also enabled the secret state to undertake extensive and highly intrusive covert surveillance of its citizens, but this is an issue that warrants separate consideration).

This article seeks to explore some of the impacts of this evolving shift in power for governance and political processes in Australia. In this country the internet and the social media have transformed the relationship between a number of key political institutions, altering the political dynamic and challenging the role of the mainstream media. The availability of huge volumes of real-time undifferentiated information from diverse sources feeds into public discourse and the political process, challenging the capacity of both the community and the state to understand and respond in considered ways. For some who are overwhelmed by the information "noise" the most attractive solution can be to turn to community "interpreters" who can shape and simplify an increasingly complex and sometimes perplexing environment.

Struggling desperately to retain and attract customers and compete in an information-rich environment, the mainstream media has increasingly reverted to

sensationalist and alarmist headlines focusing on scandals and personalities. Despite the diversification of information sources the power to influence and mobilise public opinion remains with those with the means to shape the contemporary public narrative. The process of creating a growing sense of crisis and drama in order to sell product has become an integral part of the modus operandi of much the Australian media.

Contrary to their traditional conception as the "fourth estate", much of the mainstream media has evolved from objective reporters of the political process to intimate participants. The process of turning public life into a daily "soap opera" is exacerbated by the actions of some elected representatives who seek to delegitimize their opponents through personal invective, in the process creating a corrosive and cynical political environment. The inevitable erosion of community confidence in politicians and the political process is likely to have ongoing adverse consequences for all parties.

These changes in the political process have challenged a number of basic democratic principles. Potentially the most serious is the contention that political authority derived through democratic election is transient, and that ongoing political legitimacy is tied to the weekly polls commissioned by the various media outlets. Some in the media contend that intense scrutiny and constant polling represents a new level of political accountability. In such an environment a government struggling mid-term with confected crises may become obsessed with maintaining or regaining popular support, discarding long-term or difficult social reforms for short-term populist solutions. In such an environment the media pressure on political representatives can become unbearable, with prophesies of drastic action becoming self-fulfilling.

There are strong indications that there are many in the community who are deeply disenchanted with the current political process. Various analyses of the machinations surrounding the treatment and ultimate removal of Julia Gillard have exposed widely divergent community expectations of our political representatives and political process. While levels of community cynicism remain high, there are some who continue to expect that our political representatives demonstrate national leadership, despite the growing (in many respects inevitable) pressures for populism that have been facilitated by technology and the constant media demands for public accountability.

These altruistic expectations seem to ignore the reality that leadership is the antithesis of populism. Leadership seeks to engender respect and build community trust by demonstrating the courage to commit to enduring principles and a shared long-term vision, while populism seeks transient public support through expediency, compromise and rhetoric.

Civil liberties in a grave new world

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Since the Second World War Western democracies have championed human rights, decrying the abuse of civil liberties in undemocratic states. A defining feature of the Cold War was trenchant Western criticism of the pervasive surveillance of citizens in authoritarian Eastern Bloc states. In stark contrast Western democracies took great care in seeking to balance national security and civil liberties, often reflected in detailed legislation circumscribing the powers of intelligence agencies and upholding the rights of individuals.

Australia operates under a Westminster system of democratic governance that is intended to provide checks and balances against the concentration and abuse of power. Justice Robert Marsden Hope showed great foresight in crafting Australia's unique intelligence architecture, institutionalising the separation of information collection and analysis, national and foreign intelligence, and advisory and decision-making functions.

While Hope recognised that national security agencies need to operate under the cloak of secrecy to be effective, he established mechanisms to ensure proper oversight and accountability. He emphasised the intrinsic fallibility of intelligence advice (intelligence always involves an element of interpretation and subjectivity) and its limited utility as evidence in legal proceedings or as the sole basis for executive action.

Since the turn of the millennium three major technology-enabled developments have significantly altered the balance between national security and civil liberties. The first is that virtually universal access to information and communication technology has empowered individuals and groups to communicate and organise. This development, most graphically illustrated in the social revolutions in the Middle East (the Arab Spring), seems to represent the disaggregation of power from traditional state institutions to the broader community and diverse media outlets.

The second development is that technology has dramatically increased the capacity of the state to remotely surveil its citizens under the aegis of national security. As revealed by US National Security Agency contractor Edward Snowden, ubiquitous electronic linkages and a largely unregulated cyberspace make it technically possible for the state to monitor and collect virtually every single piece of personal digital data created knowingly or unknowingly by every citizen, potentially rending existing legislative frameworks regulating national security activities obsolete.

The third and arguably most significant development has been the rise of the threat of international terrorism, with violent individuals or groups able to engender global fear through the leverage of extensive real-time media coverage. Terrorism explicitly seeks to elicit a disproportionate state response, catalysing major social and political change. The 'global war on terror' in response to 9/11, and the threat posed by Al Qaeda, effectively shifted the focus of national security activities in many countries to counter-terrorism. Under emergency 'wartime' conditions, traditional civilian/peacetime constraints on military and intelligence activities are largely subsumed.

In fact the threat of international terrorism was perceived as so serious that many long-standing international conventions governing the treatment of lawful combatants, use of torture, resort to extra-judicial killing, exceptional rendition and incarceration without trial were suspended.

In pursuit of terrorists, new military technologies have been developed enabling precision/surgical strikes against military and intelligence targets using remote-controlled drones or special operations forces. States have developed paramilitary capabilities that can be deployed covertly virtually anywhere in the world, unconstrained by the international laws of war. Recent revelations indicate that states have also developed powerful global surveillance capabilities under the auspices of counter-terrorism.

Australia's counter-terrorism responses post 9/11 have been significant. Beyond the commitment of military forces to conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, expenditure on our intelligence capabilities has quadrupled over the last decade to over $1.4 billion. At the same time the legislation governing the operations of the intelligence agencies has been amended to add additional powers to respond to prospective terrorism threats.

It seems likely that a number of the careful security/liberties balances institutionalised by Hope have been compromised in a utilitarian response to the threat of terrorism. Pressures for the integration of military, police and intelligence functions and for the inclusion of secret intelligence as evidence in public legal proceedings directly challenge the essential checks and balances that are an integral part of Hope's intelligence model.

As noted earlier the goals of terrorism are to engender widespread fear and a disproportionate state response. In Australia counter-terrorism has proved to have powerful political connotations. Fear has great political currency here, and any suggestion of weakness on national security (or law and order) can be political poison.

This intense environment has made temperate and informed public discourse on appropriate risk-based national security priorities difficult, particularly in the context of

the secrecy, misinformation and sense of urgency that inevitably accompanies consideration of counter-terrorism issues. Counter-terrorism remains a potent rationale for many of the state's most secret activities, with ongoing demands from agencies for additional resources and unfettered access to increasing circles of data.

The hyper-politicisation of national security finds voice in the current discourse on the issue of border security, turning a complex humanitarian and policing challenge (asylum seekers arriving by sea) into an enormously controversial and expensive imbroglio. Government has legislated to add the protection of border integrity from serious threats to the definition of security, potentially enabling the deployment of intelligence and military resources against people desperately seeking humanitarian refuge in this country.

Stuck on the spin cycle

Published 16 August 2013 in On Line Opinion

In previous OLO articles I have observed that a ubiquitous social media and the pace and immediacy of a 24 hour media cycle can challenge the community's capacity to absorb and comprehend a torrent of often complex and contradictory information. In such an information-rich environment it may be difficult for the community to develop a sense of perspective or distinguish issues of real national importance.

Public issues can emerge and disappear so quickly there is little time for analysis of meaning or determination of the facts.

Given the competition for consumer attention from diverse sources the pressures on the commercial media to project simple but dramatic headlines that can cut through the clamouring information 'noise' can be overwhelming. Struggling to retain readership and differentiate their product, the commercial media's reporting of issues has become increasingly lurid and sensational. In such a highly competitive environment media outlets race to create the next great controversy or scandal, moving on once they have bullied some sort of official or personal response.

Some sectors of the media have largely discarded objective reporting for subjective opinion, with the associated coverage often being superficial, exaggerated or designed to engender an emotional reaction. Such coverage can depict public affairs in Australia as being in a constant state of crisis, not unlike a TV 'soap opera'.

The response of the community to the increased complexity and uncertainty of a sometimes chaotic and often overwhelming information stream has varied widely. Some have turned to media 'interpreters' who can simplify issues and reassure listeners about the essential truth of 'common sense'. Others have become enmeshed in the day-to-day drama played out in the mainstream media, with their 'reality' changing constantly as the story evolves. Others have disengaged from public affairs entirely to focus primarily on maintaining personal relationships and networks. Many are shocked at the vicious and intolerant abuse that is often expressed (usually anonymously) through online blogs and forums.

These technology-enabled changes have had a profound effect on the conduct of politics in Australia, where elected representatives have traditionally relied on established media channels to communicate with the electorate. The pressure on politicians to package their messages in simple sound-grabs, to respond immediately and credibly to real-time events, and to avoid making mistakes, is enormous. Weekly opinion polls place unrelenting pressure on elected representatives, reinforcing the immediacy of the political conflict. Under such intense media scrutiny Australian

politics has developed an overwhelmingly defensive and reactive dimension, with elected representatives routinely resorting to obfuscation and rationalisation.

The intensity of this environment has broken down long-established political norms. An acrimonious, bitter and polarised political contest has become more individualised, with antagonists increasingly resorting to personal denigration. Debate often degenerates into puerile and exaggerated invective over the most trivial matters, with the relentless pettiness feeding growing community cynicism. Constant questioning of the mandate and legitimacy of political representation has increased community uncertainty and eroded respect for both politicians and democratic institutions. For some in the community it seems that national leadership and moral authority have been divorced from the exercise of political power.

For citizens who are engaged with political processes and concerned about national issues the degradation of public discourse in Australia is viewed with dismay. The apparent inability (or reluctance) of Australia's current political representatives to genuinely engage with major national and global challenges in the 21st century in a sophisticated, principled and transparent manner is inexplicable. While Australia is a young and evolving nation it has a history as a robust democracy with a consistently sceptical and discerning electorate. The absence of a contemporary and coherent narrative on Australia's place and future as a prosperous and humane nation only serves to reinforce the perception of Australia's current political culture as reactive, shallow and parochial.

The ancient Greek playwright Aeschylus observed that truth is the first casualty of war, and it seems this axiom applies to Australia's contemporary political conflict. One of the more perplexing characteristics of the current political environment is the willingness of representatives to resort to rhetoric and propaganda (spin) in order to avoid accountability and shape community sentiment. The tendency towards expediency exploded after 9/11 when political leaders decided that the severity of the threat of international terrorism justified a militaristic response, and dubious intelligence was subsequently used to justify the invasion of Iraq.

In the decade since 9/11 political leaders have continued to assert simplistic and absolutist positions on a range of increasingly complex social, economic and environmental issues, effectively treating the electorate with contempt. Elections are now contested on whose version of 'reality' is most credible or appealing.

Arguably the most extreme of these positions involves Australia's policies towards and cruel treatment of people seeking asylum here by boat. Despite the relatively small numbers and limited social and economic impacts the issue has assumed huge political dimensions in Australia. History will show that our disproportionate response has sullied our international reputation as a civilised, humane and generous nation, and left many Australians feeling ashamed and politically impotent.

Smoke and mirrors & motorbikes

Published 13 November 2013 in On Line Opinion

A growing level of international controversy has accompanied the ongoing revelations of the ubiquitous electronic surveillance capabilities and activities of various states, ostensibly under the guise of counter-terrorism. The community is at a great disadvantage in understanding the meaning and implications of such disclosures because of the secrecy that invariably surrounds national security issues and state-sanctioned spying. Officials routinely respond to media inquiries about such activities with "we never comment on national security matters", and in many respects it is in the state's interests for such activities and capabilities to remain opaque.

Effectively ensuring the accountability of the various organs of state security remains a constant challenge in a liberal democracy. While the community determines an acceptable balance between national security and civil liberties through legislation, it has to rely on secret oversight mechanisms to ensure state surveillance activities remain proportionate and within the law. This necessitates a level of community trust in the efficacy of the oversight mechanisms, and confidence in the professionalism and integrity of those working in the various security and intelligence organisations. There is potential for this trust to be exploited when ill-defined threats to national security (such as terrorism) cause anxiety and fear within the community.

Despite widely-reported intelligence failures the community remains largely oblivious to the nature and inherent limitations of intelligence advice and its general unsuitability for use in the public domain. Community confusion is understandable given the amorphous and ambiguous way that intelligence is officially defined, even amongst the various security agencies. Some agencies define intelligence as secretly obtained information, with anything and everything collected covertly designated as intelligence product. For others intelligence is created through the analysis and interpretation of available information to reveal new insights (the application of inductive logic to develop reasonable inferences from limited premises).

The distinction as to what constitutes intelligence product has important implications for the accuracy and reliability of intelligence advice. Secretly obtained information may or may not be factual (remember reports on WMD in Iraq), while interpreted information is intrinsically fallible due to the element of judgment involved. This issue was explored in detail by Justice Hope during the two royal commissions into Australian intelligence organisations in the 1970s and 1980s. Justice Hope recognised that intelligence is created through the disciplined application of rigorous analysis and critical thinking, and acknowledged the limitations of intelligence product as the basis for public policy or as evidence in legal proceedings

Issues concerning the accuracy and reliability of intelligence advice and the effective oversight and accountability of security agencies have taken on greater significance since the terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001 (9/11). The horror and fear that these highly visible attacks generated transformed conceptions of security across the world. The threat posed by transnational terrorism was perceived to be so severe and immediate that the existing balance between state security and civil liberties was effectively compromised by the contingencies of a militaristic response under the "global war on terror". The powers of security agencies were broadened and the reach of the "secret state" expanded in the face of the threat of terrorism. In Australia the budget for the intelligence agencies increased by 400% in the decade following 9/11.

In the period since 9/11 the threat of terrorism has remained as a menacing and ever-present prospect that continues to dominate national security priorities in Australia. Counter-terrorism imperatives have subtly challenged long-established conventions that institutionalise the separation of powers and enforce checks and balances to limit the abuse of authority. In a security environment permeated by a latent fear of domestic terrorism, officials and politicians have sought to broaden the scope of national security and facilitate the convergence of the (traditionally separate) military, law enforcement and intelligence functions. The vision in the Australian Government's 2013 "Strategy for Australia's National Security" is for "a unified national security system that anticipates threats, protects the nation and shapes the world in Australia's interest". Key national security risks span military, law enforcement and intelligence responsibilities. This theme is replicated in the Australian Crime Commission's 2013 "Organised crime in Australia" report that notes that "Such is the risk posed by organised crime that governments around the world … have recognised for some time that organised crime has implications for national security. Australia's National Security Strategy … lists serious and organised crime as one of the seven key national security risks".

Now part of the national security architecture, the Australian Crime Commission's role is to collect, collate, analyse and disseminate criminal intelligence to a variety of stakeholders. Given Justice Hope's prescient observations about the limitations of intelligence for use in public policy and legal processes, it seems reasonable to evaluate the quality and impact of the ACC's public assessments. Such an evaluation is complicated by the fact that the specific meaning and connotations of the term "organised crime" are only vaguely defined. Do the ACC's assessments reflect careful, thoughtful, balanced and discerning judgments based on the rigorous analysis of incomplete and sometimes conflicting information? What are the foundations for the agency's conclusions about the nature and extent of the threats posed by organised criminal activities and groups?

The introduction to the ACC's 2013 "Organised crime in Australia" report makes a series of statements that are so general as to be indeterminable, and the term

"organised crime" is used (on fifty eight occasions) to infer a monolithic entity. The introduction states that "organised crime has become more pervasive, more powerful and more complex"; "organised crime now seems to have no borders or geographical constraints"; "organised crime is now a part of the everyday lives of Australians in ways that are unprecedented"; "today, any Australian on any day can be affected by organised crime"; "organised crime not only has a direct impact on individuals, but also affects our communities, our economy, ours government and our way of life".

The ACC's assessments on outlaw motorcycle gangs (OMCGs) appear to constitute a major part of the rationale for nationally-coordinated and high-profile law enforcement action against these groups, described in some sections of the media as a "war on bikies". Law enforcement has historically had great antipathy towards the highly visible and openly defiant (some may say threatening) members of self-described anti-social groups like OMCGs, but have had limited success in establishing the extent of organised criminal conspiracy within these groups (as distinct from the criminal activities of individual members). For many years some in law enforcement have (unsuccessfully) sought access to US-style Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organisation (RICO) legislation that would enable the prosecution of individuals based solely on their association with other criminals rather than individual criminal activity.

A July 2013 ACC crime profile on OMCGs states "some members of outlaw motorcycle gangs are responsible for serious criminal offences and form part of organised crime networks". The crime profile later states that "aside from these examples of group violence, most OMCG chapters do not engage in organised crime as a collective unit. Rather their threat arises from small numbers of members conspiring with other criminals for a common purpose".

These vital caveats (that only "some members" or "small numbers" are involved in organised criminal activities, and that most OMCG chapters per se are not organised crime groups) have not been reflected in widely-reported ACC statements that "outlaw motorcycle gangs remain one of the most high profile manifestations of organised crime" and "OMCGs have become one of the most identifiable components of Australia's criminal landscape". Such emphatic public statements have undoubtedly provided significant impetus for current state policing operations to indiscriminately "hunt down" all OMCG members. (Intriguingly, there is a discrepancy of 1500 OMCG members between the ACC's July 2013 crime profile that estimates 6000 members and an ACC media release in October 2013 that estimates 4483 members).

These examples illustrate the inherent risks of selectively reporting potentially fallible intelligence advice that may reflect the narrow perspectives of particular security agencies.

Spies like us

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Protecting the nation's security is widely acknowledged as the 'first duty of government'. The sovereign state's responsibility to ensure collective security (safety and law and order) is at the heart of the social contract and the individual's reciprocal obligation to eschew resort to force.

In a liberal democracy where the government derives its authority by and is held accountable for representing the will of the people, the balance between state powers and individual rights is defined in law. Because many national security activities are undertaken in secret it has been necessary to establish special oversight arrangements to ensure proper public accountability. Government representatives routinely refuse to publicly comment on security and intelligence matters because of their sensitivity.

Australia's unique national security architecture has its foundations in the foresight of Justice Robert Marsden Hope and various law reform bodies established by the Whitlam Government in the 1970s. Under a Westminster system of checks and balances the equilibrium between national security and citizens' rights has been maintained through structures and processes that deliberately separate advisory and executive functions; information collection and analysis tasks; domestic and foreign intelligence activities; and military/policing/intelligence roles.

Key principles underpinning these arrangements include extensive legal protections for Australian citizens, and a clear distinction between defending against specific threats to national security within Australia and aggressively pursuing our broader national interests overseas. In stark contrast to explicit legal and ethical constraints on defensive security intelligence activities within Australia there are limited controls on offensive foreign intelligence operations overseas. Legislation recognising and regulating Australia's foreign intelligence organisations was only passed in 2001 (the Intelligence Services Act).

The author of the 2011 Independent Review of the Australia Intelligence Community recently highlighted the potential for zealous and expedient action to displace rules-based protocols in critical operational situations. In reality utilitarianism (ends justify the means) is widely assumed to be a defining feature of the foreign intelligence operations of virtually all nations who assert an unqualified right to advance their national interests through any and all clandestine means, irrespective of international law and issues of national sovereignty.

This clearly represents a gap between the principled, civilised and diplomatic public posture of nations and the reality of expedient and aggressive covert action. Recent revelations by an NSA contractor have exposed the extent to which this gap has widened, with new technologies apparently providing some advanced countries with virtually unlimited opportunities to monitor and collect electronic communications across the world. While the ostensible justification for the development of ubiquitous electronic surveillance capabilities is counter-terrorism, the greatest beneficiaries may be private business interests gaining a competitive commercial advantage in a global free market.

There are a range of reasons why secrecy blankets national security matters. Obviously operational effectiveness could be compromised through the disclosure of specific activities and capabilities, degrading advantage and negating the benefit of forewarning. But the government also wants to avoid difficult and awkward questions about the legal and ethical dimensions of offensive foreign intelligence operations that have the potential to damage international relations and undermine trust and constructive collaboration between nations.

The recent observation by a close Asian ally that 'spying on friends is amoral' belies an apparently growing gap between the illusion of civility and honesty and the reality of our suspicion of 'foreigners'. Responding to the controversy about ubiquitous electronic spying, a representative of the Obama administration recently observed that it is important that 'we don't do it just because we can'.

Are these sorts of intelligence activities consistent with Australian values, and do they enjoy the community's endorsement as legitimate and accountable government functions? It is an indication of the secrecy and sensitivity surrounding national security matters that such questions are characterised as 'unpatriotic' by some. In such an environment it is virtually impossible to have an informed and nuanced public discussion about these important and complex ethical issues.

The government treats the community as naïve, but beyond regularly raising the ill-defined spectre of terrorism seems reluctant to openly engage in a public discussion on the rationale for an expansion of the secret state.

What do we value?

Published 27 March 2014 in On Line Opinion

For some time social commentators have reported growing levels of community disenchantment with the standards and behaviour of Australian political leaders, with suggestions of a decline in the Government's moral authority. Of particular concern to many Australians across the political spectrum are the harsh and authoritarian national policies towards asylum-seekers in the name of deterrence, leading to apparently cruel and inhumane (and increasingly secret) action against people seeking asylum by boat.

This article asks why such inexplicable and reactionary public policies have been adopted by a progressive and wealthy multicultural nation that has traditionally prided itself on its tolerance, generosity and principled international leadership.

Throughout the ages moral leadership has been reflected in the courageous defence of the intrinsic values that represent the ideal characteristics of a civilised human society. These intrinsic values include honesty, compassion, respect, humanity, dignity, humility, equity, altruism and consideration. In the past the community has expected its political leaders to embody and defend moral leadership in the face of short-term expediency, populism and cynicism. The state was required to mediate and balance competing social, economic and environmental interests while supporting the weak and disadvantaged.

Contemporary human history reflects the great ideological clash between individual self-interest and broader community welfare, and between social and economic forces. The West's capitalism is founded on a centuries-old conviction (classical liberalism) that individual enterprise is a fundamental human drive that facilitates innovation, growth and the creation of wealth. The principle of individual entitlement to acquire and own private property is embodied in Article 17 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights that asserts that "everyone has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others" and "no one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property".

Neo-liberalism, a more fundamentalist variation of classical liberal ideology that advocates a ubiquitous free-market society with minimum state intervention, has been in the ascendance in Western democracies since the 1980s (coinciding with the phenomenon of technology-enable globalisation). In a highly competitive and utilitarian free-market many social interactions can be treated as transactions and traded as commodities according to their nominal monetary worth. In such a rapidly changing environment the community's expectations of its political leaders have progressively shifted to the demonstration of strength, decisiveness and economic competence. Technology and a twenty four hour media cycle have placed huge

pressures on political leaders to be agile and responsive to confected short-term crises, with limited opportunity for thoughtful consideration of longer-term strategy or complex matters of principle.

In a market-based society many intrinsic values that are inherently difficult to monetise are denigrated by economic rationalists as quaint, amorphous and irrelevant anachronisms. Given the overwhelming power of economic forces in a market (and increasingly, global) society the defence of these intrinsic human values has been left to religions and the cultural and legal institutions entrusted to define and preserve higher human principles (typically historical instruments like declarations, constitutions and charters).

Australia is unique amongst developed countries in the virtual absence of cultural and legal institutions that articulate our society's intrinsic values and delineate the delicate and complex balance between individual rights, community standards and state authority. Then Prime Minister John Howard famously celebrated the absence of formalised measures of "Australianness" in a speech on Australia Day in 2006, arguing against the need to stipulate and encapsulate national values in a Bill of Rights and inferring these values were best mediated through political rather than legal processes.

Perhaps it is this national normlessness, in particular the absence of a Bill of Rights defining the decent, humane, responsible and respectful treatment of individuals, that partly explains the nation's willingness to officially sanction cruel and inhumane action against vulnerable and powerless asylum-seekers, apparently oblivious to the minimum, universal and inalienable rights of all humans. A national Bill of Rights would transparently define the delicate balance between civil liberties and state powers, constraining a Government that wanted to invoke national security (border protection) to covertly deploy paramilitary resources against a law enforcement and humanitarian challenge.

Perhaps it is also this same normlessness that spawns growing intolerance of the many thousands of citizens who struggle to compete in a Darwinian survival-of-the-fittest economy because they are old/sick/disabled/vulnerable/poor, or the community's lack of gratitude towards those willing to selflessly dedicate their lives to the welfare of the disadvantaged. Finally, there may be another more enduring consequence of a diminished (value-less) national identity. Social commentators have noted an apparently growing level of narcissism within sections of the Australian community, reflected in a decline in altruistic social participation and increased selfishness and greed. This may be an inevitable consequence of the absence of explicit national standards and the failure of leaders to model and champion intrinsic values.

Terrorism & the power of fear

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Fear is a visceral human emotion with the power to overwhelm and subsume all other feelings and rational thoughts. Terrorism seeks to coerce political and social change by threatening extreme and indiscriminate violence against the community. But the real power of terrorism is not the capacity of zealots to threaten or undertake violence but its ability to catalyse an extreme and disproportionate reaction from the state, effectively perpetuating and magnifying the community's fear and changing the nature of society. Terrorism relies for its enduring impact on the state (over)reacting in ways that permanently transform perceptions of national security. By responding to terrorism in expedient, oppressive and inhumane ways the state can erode its own democratic principles and moral authority, ultimately weakening social cohesion.

Terrorism has a unique capacity to undermine democracy by eliciting a militaristic response that suspends or compromises a number of the important conventions and principles of civil society, including democratic accountability. This is because the secrecy that invariably surrounds national security makes it virtually impossible for the community to determine whether counter-terrorism actions are justified and proportionate to a real (rather than exaggerated) threat, and to hold elected representatives to account.

Almost thirteen years ago a small group of terrorists hatched an audacious and improbable plan to take spectacular violent action that they hoped would be a catalyst for change in the course of human history, not unlike the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand in 1914 that ignited the Great War. Against virtually insurmountable odds terrorists managed to strike at global symbols of Western civilization by crashing commercial planes into several iconic buildings in the United States, igniting a war on terror.

The immediate tactical goal of the terrorists was to damage and humiliate the world's sole superpower. Their longer-term strategic goal was to catalyse fundamental social change by increasing community insecurity and engendering a disproportionate war-like response. The terrorists could only dream of triggering an enduring transformation of national and global security priorities with a shift towards an authoritarian and utilitarian approach in security-related policy, the militarisation and privatisation of civilian functions, and a realignment of the balance between national security and individual and civil rights.

In the period since 9/11 the terrorists have succeeded in achieving these strategic goals beyond their wildest dreams. Several wars have been undertaken at enormous human and financial cost. A large covert paramilitary apparatus, unconstrained by the

laws of war, has been established with the capacity to strike virtually anywhere in the world. Billons have been spent on security measures world-wide, including developing the technical capability to monitor anyone and everyone, anywhere. Human rights are increasingly defined by national citizenship, with certain classes of "non-citizens" no longer entitled to the protection of the rule of law.

Inexplicably, many of our political leaders tacitly participate in the continuing distortion of the threat of terrorism, and the perpetuation of the myth of the paternalistic state. They do so through their implicit acceptance that "national security" is inviolate and the security sector can and should be trusted to operate beyond the bounds of democratic oversight and accountability. Few leaders are apparently willing to publicly discuss and question the paradigm shift that has occurred in national security over the last decade, with the extension of the secret state with implications for many of the institutions that are central to a robust and progressive democracy.

Why have otherwise advanced, sophisticated and civilised societies responded to the actual threat of terrorism in these extreme and sometimes undemocratic ways? One possible explanation is that developed states actually need an existential threat to maintain their own identities in the face of an increasingly diverse and heterogeneous global community. In the period since the end of the cold war a number of developing nations have flourished, transforming geopolitical dynamics and challenging the West's economic and military hegemony. The interdependencies created through globalisation are progressively breaking down traditional distinctions between nations, challenging centuries-old concepts of sovereignty, national identity and Western exceptionalism.

Another possible explanation is that, post 9/11, the interests of a now extensive and resurgent security sector have become deeply entrenched and highly influential. The end of the cold war precipitated a progressive shift of resources and power away from the defence and security sectors as countries increasingly focussed on competing globally in a relatively stable world. At the same time many countries reduced state secrecy and increased transparency, reinforcing civil liberties and adopting a broader objective risk-based approach in determining national security priorities. After 9/11 the defence and security sectors moved quickly to reassert their preeminent role as the unquestioned protectors of the state, and secrecy displaced transparency as the default position in public oversight and disclosure relating to national security.

There is great irony that there is an alignment of the interests of terrorists threatening indiscriminate violence with those whose mission is to defend the state's security, both of whom benefit from the community's ongoing fear and insecurity. In the altered post 9/11 security environment Australians have been willing to tolerate a range of exceptional security measures including the extension of video and electronic surveillance; the blurring of the roles of civilian, policing and military functions; increasing the powers of the security agencies; the removal of the right to legal

recourse for some non-citizens; and the criminalisation of associations rather than activities. More recently border security has been militarised, with the covert deployment of paramilitary forces to protect against the perceived threat of drugs, guns, pests and asylum seekers.

The spectre of terrorism

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A defining feature of the arc of modern history has been the capacity of humans to reflect on and learn from the failures of the past, and to (slowly) move beyond the fear and violence of brutish survival to a civilised society that values respect, progress, compassion and social harmony. One of the greatest lessons of the 20th century is the resilience of the human spirit in the face of violence and overwhelming military force, with advanced technology largely impotent against struggle born of profound belief.

Democracy allows the community to choose its leaders and entrusts them with a sacred responsibility to protect our fundamental human values. Irrespective of their political orientation the community hopes and expects that its leaders will possess and demonstrate wisdom and will have a sense of perspective on the lessons of history. The community expects that in the face of sometimes great pressures leaders will maintain a sense of proportion and responsibility and demonstrate prudence and consistency in their decisions on important national issues. This has been the national leadership paradigm that has prevailed since the end of the Second World War, despite various periods of great global insecurity.

This paradigm has been shattered in the 21st century with the global ascendance of technology-enabled psychological warfare, with the spectre of terrorism emerging as a universal trigger for a hysterical emotional response. The actions of a disturbed and angry young man brandishing a knife can assume international notoriety by being linked with terrorism. Armed insurgents driving modified 4wds in distant conflicts become a global "death cult". Gruesome images pervade our lives daily. The spectre of terrorism magnifies everything it touches like an explosion, and everyone exposed to a ubiquitous real-time media is at risk.

The inexplicability of this phenomenon is that "we" consciously choose to allow this distortion and emotional over-reaction to occur. We give the power to extremists by attaching the label "terrorist" (and all the fearful things that it connotes), making them the centre of our world. We provide an incentive for extremists to resort to unspeakable barbarity in order to leverage media coverage and attract world attention. We have created and constantly reinforce the horrific images of terrorism which others are now willing to freely exploit. We are prepared to change our way of life to incorporate the spectre of terrorism.

As psychological warfare the spectre of terrorism has a range of insidious consequences in addition to creating a powerful impetus for emulation and perpetuation. Apart from engendering a heightened sense of insecurity in the community, the ill-defined menace of a violent alien in our midst threatens to galvanise

latent prejudices about Muslims and Islam. Suspicion exacerbates polarisation and alienation, ultimately tearing at the fabric of our unique pluralist society. Internationally, the deliberate conflation of terrorism (indiscriminate attacks on civilians) with armed conflicts threatens to once again draw states into an escalating spiral of violence in a "dirty" war where the moral imperatives are blurred.

Regrettably our national leaders have been willing to exploit the community's insecurity and have played a central role in perpetuating an alarming and disproportionate response to the threat of terrorism. The language of death-cult, evil and insidious has been accompanied by simplistic and disingenuous depictions of a "goodies-baddies" conflict. Dire warnings from self-styled security experts of an "existential threat" and "one hundred year war" have dramatically invoked Huntingdon's "clash of civilisations".

In this fearful environment national leaders are now warning the community that a number of long-established democratic institutions and conventions that have sustained the delicate balance between national security and civil liberties over many years will need to be compromised in the ongoing struggle against "home grown" terrorism. A raft of legislative changes are proposed that will extend significant additional powers to the nation's security services.

A number of these proposed changes not only show no sign of the proportionality or sense of perspective that the community expects from wise and responsible national leaders, but have real potential to degrade the nation's security over the longer term. In 2011 the Director-General of the Office of National Assessments noted that the Australian intelligence community's "strength lies in Justice Hope's recognition that an Australian intelligence system needs to be rooted in Australian interests, values and laws. The structure he recommended was nationally independent, separate from policy-making, subject to firm oversight by Ministers and with all its activities in accordance with Australian law".

The Australian Security Intelligence Organisation, as a predominantly defensive and advisory security agency, currently enjoys wide community support because it operates with probity within an explicit legal and ethical framework and is subject to extensive statutory and parliamentary oversight. Proposed legislative changes giving ASIO new executive powers and authorising its officers to engage in unlawful conduct have the potential to permanently change the nature of that organisation and undermine its vital collaborative partnerships with the Australian community.

Acquiescing to terrorism

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Fear of violence is a visceral human emotion that can readily overwhelm rational judgement and engender a survival response. The use of fear to coerce or subjugate others features prominently throughout human history. Man's capacity for violence (particularly organised conflict between states) is recognised in the international law of war and the core principles of distinction, military necessity, avoiding unnecessary suffering and proportionality. Armed conflicts conducted in accordance with the Geneva Conventions may accord combatants with certain legal and moral authority and may be recognised as "just" wars.

The post-WW2 formation of the United Nations further clarified the international norms that govern resort to force, with an inherent right to individual and collective self-defence embodied in Article 51 of the UN Charter. Likewise the preamble to the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights acknowledges the option of force in the statement "if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression", reflecting a wide acceptance at the time of the justness of wars of national liberation against colonisation and imperialism and in pursuit of self-determination.

The term terrorism is typically used to describe the threat or use of unconstrained and indiscriminate violence against civilians in order to coerce political and social change through fear. Because terrorism does not comply with any of the core principles of the law of war it will never gain recognition as legitimate armed conflict under the Geneva Conventions or afford combatants with legal immunity. The use of the adage "war on terror" has tended to blur an important distinction between lawful combatants involved in recognised armed conflicts and ruthless criminals determined to indiscriminately attack and murder innocent civilians.

Terrorism relies for its primary effect on an ability to engender widespread fear rather than an actual capability for extensive violence. Contemporary terrorism has been enabled by a global media that enthusiastically streams shocking and sensational real-time images world-wide, providing extremists with virtually limitless propaganda opportunities. Disparate individuals and groups can gain instant international notoriety by threatening or undertaking bizarre or barbaric action. The terrorist "brand" transforms and magnifies often crude and disparate acts of brutality into a homogenous and universally menacing spectre. In giving credence to the ("death cult") brand states targeted by terrorism inadvertently become the most vociferous proponents for exaggerating and sustaining its menacing threat.

Terrorism is essentially a political and psychological strategy that relies for its enduring impact on catalysing a militaristic and utilitarian counter-terrorism response to misperceptions of a grave and imminent threat. Decisive and expedient counter-terrorism strategies post 9/11 have required significant compromises to a range of long-established democratic principles and institutions, including altering the delicate balance between civil liberties and national security in favour of strengthening and extending the state's security and intelligence capabilities. New technologies have dramatically expanded the state's capacity for large-scale electronic surveillance of its citizens, and governments have sought the authority and resources to undertake extensive real-time data collection under the auspices of counter-terrorism. Even the threat of nuclear annihilation during the Cold War in the second half of the 20th century could not force such dramatic changes to fundamental democratic principles.

While the expansion of the state's surveillance powers and capabilities has obvious implications for individual privacy and civil liberties, burgeoning securitization and the expansion of the secret state has significant potential to permanently undermine essential democratic accountability. Democratic legitimacy is predicated on the capacity of citizens to periodically hold elected representatives to account for the public actions and performance of government. The capacity for democratic accountability is seriously impeded when a growing number of the government's key functions are undertaken in secret. This is no more graphically illustrated than the recent incorporation of border protection into the realm of national security, with the subsequent drawing of a veil of secrecy over a range of civilian law enforcement, migration and humanitarian functions.

The powerful emotional and fearful dimensions of the spectre of terrorism poses diabolical dilemmas for Australia's elected political representatives. In the face of perceptions of a grave and imminent threat to national security there is great electoral advantage in appearing strong and decisive, particularly when the first duty of government is to protect its citizens. Any suggestion of scepticism, caution or nuance on national security by elected representatives is immediately interpreted as weakness by sections of the media and poses enormous political risks. This treacherous political environment demands unquestioning bipartisan support for Team Australia's utilitarian approach towards counter-terrorism and acceptance of a simplistic us/them conflict paradigm. In such an environment there are few opportunities for informed and objective public debate on complex or sensitive issues or matters of principle, let alone critical consideration of the justification, cost, effectiveness and implications of existing counter-terrorism measures.

State-sanctioned killing

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Two issues have dominated the national public discourse in Australia over recent weeks, both of which relate to different manifestations of state-sanctioned killing. The first involved a sometimes highly charged discussion of the impending execution of two Australian citizens in Indonesia for their roles in a drug importation syndicate called the Bali 9, and the legal and moral foundations for capital punishment. In pleading for the commutation of the death penalty in the Bali 9 case the Australian Government enunciated its implacable opposition to capital punishment.

The second national issue was the commemoration of the centenary of the Anzac landings on the Gallipoli peninsula during WW1. It seems that the Anzac legend is becoming an increasingly important part of the national historical narrative, representing not only the horror and futility of war but also admirable virtues like comradeship, bravery and endurance in the face of adversity. A clear subtext in this narrative is that defensive wars can be just and honourable.

Societies determine the boundaries of civilised human behaviour, and laws define these limits. Most states have explicit rules that govern the circumstances where recourse to lethal force and state-sanctioned killing are justified. While civilian law enforcement officers are often armed and have standing authority to use lethal force against citizens, this power is only ever used in exceptional circumstances to protect life. Laws prohibit summary punishment and execution and due process is required to determine individual criminal culpability. Many societies have determined that the imposition of the death penalty for even the most serious crimes is unjustified.

In marked contrast to the constraints on the use of lethal force in an internal law enforcement context, the usual purpose for the deployment of military forces in an overseas armed conflict is to take the lives of alien combatants. War is a unique form of state-sanctioned killing that is regulated by international humanitarian law. Originally intended to minimise the suffering of casualties in armed conflicts between states, the Geneva Conventions articulate a series of binding principles (including necessity, distinction and proportionality) for the humanitarian conduct of international and internal armed conflicts and for the protection of civilians and the victims of war.

The different legal and moral justifications for state-sanctioned killing between citizen/criminal/internal/law enforcement and alien/armed conflict/overseas/military contexts have become increasingly blurred as the state has struggled to respond in a measured and effective way to the threat of extreme and indiscriminate ideologically-motivated violence against members of the community, sometimes by its own citizens. Now widely referred to as terrorism, the use of fear and propaganda to intimidate the

community and elicit a repressive state reaction is a phenomenon that has been enabled by new technology and universal connectivity.

As deliberate attacks against innocent civilians and extreme violence are both explicitly prohibited under the Geneva Conventions (and may constitute crimes against humanity), terrorism does not qualify as armed conflict and its proponents are not recognised as lawful combatants. Several armed groups involved in internal armed conflicts in the Middle East have been designated as terrorist because of their deliberate attacks against civilians and responsibility for widespread atrocities. Largely unconstrained by international humanitarian law, authorities have employed a range of exceptional measures against terrorism targets including extraordinary rendition, enhanced interrogation techniques and extrajudicial killing. Unmanned drones, surgical air strikes and special and para-military forces have been used to kill terrorism targets in countries like Iraq, Afghanistan and Syria.

Australia has recently experienced a number of its citizens (mainly youth) reportedly travelling to the Middle East to participate in internal armed conflicts, apparently due to a profoundly misguided sense of heroic duty and self-sacrifice. In a number of instances Australian citizens have joined insurgency forces that have been designated as terrorist groups, and several nationals have been killed in terrorist-related incidents in the Middle East.

The Australian Government's attitude towards citizens travelling to participate in overseas armed conflicts potentially poses significant moral and policy dilemmas. The Government has recently expressed implacable opposition to the imposition of the death penalty in Indonesia, and the Australian Federal Police were criticised for alerting the Indonesian authorities to the impending drug importation given the possibility of the death penalty for those apprehended in Indonesia. In contrast, the Australian Government has pre-emptively criminalised participation by citizens in overseas conflicts, and has reportedly agreed to share intelligence on nationals travelling overseas with countries like Turkey and Iran. The sharing of intelligence on Australian citizens with authorities overseas clearly has the potential to facilitate their targeted killing as terrorists.

Give the powerful community sentiments that have been stirred during the course of the recent public debate over the death penalty and the inhumanity of state-sanctioned killing, it is essential that the community has a mature and informed discussion about the potential implications of Australian Government policy towards Australian citizens who are planning to participate in serious criminal activities overseas.

The risks of terror

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Terrorism and the ominous spectre of a unitary "death cult" have featured prominently in national discourse in Australia in recent years. The graphic and confronting nature of indiscriminate barbarity has a unique capacity to engender visceral fear in many Australians, with powerful psychological and sociological effects. The shocking and sometimes bizarre nature of terrorism seems particularly effective in cutting through in a high-intensity 24-hour information environment. A lone extremist armed with a gun or knife can transfix a nation for weeks.

Like all phobias, terrorism relies for its enduring effect on sustaining and reinforcing irrational fear. Remarkably, terrorism co-opts credulous authorities who need to constantly dramatize the magnitude and imminence of the threat in order to justify exceptional government actions to protect the community. The reach and impact of the distorted "death cult" propaganda is reflected in the (absurd) characterisation of terrorism as an existential threat to civilised society. It is unimaginable to think that Winston Churchill would have gone into the British Parliament during WW2 to give credence and voice to Nazi propaganda.

One of the significant risks of terrorism is therefore its capacity to elicit an authoritarian response by zealous governments under the auspices of a new and more powerful (utilitarian) national security paradigm. By reacting in militaristic ways to misperceptions of the terrorism threat governments can damage the fundamental institutions and principles that are the foundations for a contemporary and cohesive liberal democracy, at the same time compromising the moral authority and legitimacy of the state and exacerbating the social marginalisation and radicalisation that governments are seeking to prevent.

Contemporary examples of terrorism's capacity to elicit expedient responses that damage long-standing principles and institutions include: diminishing public and parliamentary accountability (by drawing a veil of secrecy over an increasing number of government functions); undermining the Westminster separation of powers (by concentrating power in the hands of the executive); eroding the rule of law (by removing the right of citizens to be recognised before a court); shifting the balance between national security and civil liberties (through increased counter-terrorism powers and expanded surveillance); supplanting public evidence with intrinsically fallible secret intelligence as the basis for executive action; and giving authorities immunity from prosecution for illegality in special intelligence operations.

Ironically, Australian Governments have previously recognised the potential for alarmist, populist or reactionary perspectives to distort national priorities, and for a

number of years authorities have applied an objective risk management approach to identifying and evaluating the relative risks to the nation's interest from a broad range of hazards. An all-hazards risk management approach examines and compares the likelihood and consequences of a diverse range of actual and potential threats (from natural disasters to pandemics to terrorism), with mortality (deaths) being an important benchmark of severe harmful consequences. An all-hazards risk management approach can provide a transparent evidence-based process for determining national priorities and guiding where governments can and should allocate scarce resources to mitigate risks and minimise avoidable deaths.

A recent report from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare revealed that of around 140,000 deaths in Australia each year, around 130,000 are from "natural" causes (a variety of diseases). Of the remaining 10,000 people who die from fatal injuries, potentially preventable causes include accidental falls (3480 deaths), suicides (2247 deaths), transport accidents (1498 deaths), other fatal accidents (1355 deaths), accidental poisonings (1283 deaths), accidental drownings (290 deaths), homicides (240 deaths), and accidental thermal injuries (96 deaths).

These national mortality figures provide a useful objective context for evaluating the relative risks posed by terrorism compared to other potentially preventable life-threatening hazards. While any fatalities attributable to terrorism in Australia are not explicitly identified in these figures it seems likely they are included in the number of homicides. In the context of the many thousands of potentially preventable fatal injuries that occur in Australia each year, what would be a realistic and proportionate response to the risk of isolated "lone wolf" attacks on law enforcement officers? How would such a risk be compared with similar threats of violence that police officers confront regularly in mental health and family violence contexts?

Beyond the influence of propaganda-inspired fear there are a range of reasons why it is difficult to keep terrorism in perspective relative to other life-threatening hazards, and to successfully incorporate terrorism in an all-hazards risk management process. Terrorism threats will not translate into fatalities if covert counter-terrorism measures are effective in preventing attacks, one of the rationales for apparently limitless expenditure on such measures. Terrorism risks may be elevated because a goal is often to maximise civilian casualties, so that while the likelihood of an attack may be low the consequences in terms of fatalities could be severe. Finally, an assessment of the threats posed by terrorism is typically based on fallible secret intelligence produced by a specialist national security agency, advice that is not easily incorporated into a transparent evidence-based risk assessment process.

In the end it is virtually impossible for the community to objectively and independently evaluate the propriety, proportionality, cost and effectiveness of many of the counter-terrorism measures adopted under a new national security paradigm, primarily because of pervasive secrecy and a non-partisan convention to place

national security beyond meaningful statutory and parliamentary oversight. The community ultimately has little option but to trust the assurances of its elected representatives, some of whom may have an interest in perpetuating an environment of fear for partisan political advantage, or the advice of public officials who may have an interest in sustaining the substantial and growing public funding for a burgeoning national security industry.

Reality without virtue

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Humans are distinguished from other animals by their evolving capacity for complex communication, higher-level reasoning, sensitive emotional expression and creativity. Both science and philosophy agree on the central role of human perception and reasoning in interpreting, understanding and sharing "reality". A positivist ontology views reality as objective, external, permanent, measurable, predictable and physical, while a constructivist ontology views reality as subjective, internal, experienced, interpreted, dynamic and metaphysical.

The polarisation of positivist-constructivist ontologies on the nature of physical reality is matched by similarly divergent views on human nature. Some people react instinctively to others from an adversarial, sceptical, judgemental and expedient perspective (and are happy to be called realists). Others respond in good faith in empathic, sincere, inquiring and principled ways (and are happy to be called idealists). These perspectives are largely irreconcilable, with realists viewing idealists as naïve and weak and idealists viewing realists as cynical and tough.

Many of the fundamental principles that are the foundations for contemporary secular societies have their origins in pre-Christian Aristotelian virtues that define the characteristics of a "good" person in a humane and civilised society. Aristotle suggested a range of moral and intellectual ideals such as moderation, modesty, magnanimity, patience, honesty, friendliness and courage. These virtues have since evolved to include selflessness, decency, graciousness, humility, generosity, integrity, prudence, equity, dignity and compassion.

Some of these virtues have been embedded in the cultures of societies through various centuries-old institutions and rules (democracy, rule of law, freedom of speech). In the mid-20th century the Universal Declaration of Human Rights reiterated the principles of the dignity, equal worth, inalienable rights and fundamental freedoms of every person as the foundations for freedom, justice and peace. However, many of these virtues are discretionary and contested and are sustained through social and cultural norms and modelling by community leaders.

It is a great irony in the 21st century that ubiquitous technologies that universally empower people by facilitating access to virtually limitless information are also transforming individual perceptions of reality and challenging long-standing moral precepts on the attributes of a "good" society. The globalisation of free-market economic ideology (with the liberation of individual "animal spirits") has accelerated the displacement of (idealist) intrinsic value with (realist) monetary value, inevitably eroding long-standing social and cultural norms.

The information revolution has arguably had its most profound impact at the personal level. A growing crescendo of information "noise" challenges the individual's capacity to interpret and make sense of reality, disrupting existing processes for creating and sharing knowledge. A natural human response to the immediacy, intensity, complexity and quantity of largely undifferentiated information is the creation of filters that prioritize those issues that are of direct and immediate personal relevance while excluding more complex, detached and abstract ideas

In responding to the challenges (and opportunities) of the information revolution, some people have become absorbed in their own personal domains, and it is conceivable that recent data from the ABS 2014 General Social Survey that shows a 5% decline in volunteering from 36% in 2010 to 31% in 2014 represents a contraction in real social participation in Australia. Others have turned to "trusted" high-profile media commentators to interpret and simplify a sometimes complex and threatening world. Exclusive and secure social networks enable narrow sectional interests and extreme perspectives to be sustained without challenge, with the potential that knowledge/fact/science/complexity will be displaced by belief/prejudice/gossip/simplicity.

The devastating impact of the information revolution on the traditional media is now widely acknowledged. Responding to heightened competition and decreasing consumer engagement, information producers and reporters have adopted a range of strategies to "cut through" the information noise. Crude but seemingly effective strategies include making the message louder and more sensational by using shocking, outrageous or lurid dimensions; creating and building an air of artificial crisis; or seeking to exploit visceral emotions such as fear or grief by projecting threatening or horrifying imagery.

This changed dynamic has had profound implications for Australian politics that has relied on the traditional media for access to the constituency. The traditional media still retains significant power to influence the public agenda in Australia, partly because of an unusually high concentration of (partisan) media ownership in this country. Unrelenting crisis-oriented media coverage and the pressures of a 24 hour reporting cycle have forced politicians to revert to often demeaning and deceptive gimmicks, clichés and slogans to reach the electorate, at the same time increasing the appeal of highly-fickle populism. In the last five years media-generated crises have contributed to leadership challenges in both major political parties.

Given the unique leadership role of Australian politicians as primary custodians of the national narrative, the demonstration of cynicism, expediency, opportunism, hypocrisy and an apparent lack of genuine conviction or integrity have progressively eroded community confidence in and respect for both politicians and democratic processes in Australia. A pervasive sense of cynicism has settled on the Australian

community, providing little space for those who continue to argue for virtuous moral perspectives and an idealistic national vision.

In Australia the dominant media constantly derides as unrealistic and anachronistic the expression of intrinsic virtues and higher national aspirations, and the loss of the rare public champions for moral reasoning (such as the late former PM Malcolm Fraser) is highly regrettable. Whether it is public discourse on asylum seekers, gender equity, indigenous recognition or racism, the prevailing perspective is a pessimistic and utilitarian realism.

Principles, perceptions & power

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This article explores the ethical foundations of contemporary society and the impacts of unprecedented disruptive forces on the balance of power between the citizen and the state.

Both science and philosophy acknowledge the central role of human perception and reasoning in interpreting, understanding and sharing "reality". A positivist ontology views reality as objective, external, independent, predictable and knowable, while constructivist ontology views reality as subjective, internal, experienced, dynamic and perceived.

Innate power is the individual's inherent capacity for unilateral action, including resort to force (originally essential for survival in a brutal world). In freely choosing civic participation the individual relinquishes innate power (except in self-defence) and acquiesces to social rules. The social contract encapsulates the complex, evolving and sometimes conflicting nature of the relationship between the citizen and the state, and its ultimate purpose is to mediate a peaceful, orderly and humane society. The contract encompasses the citizen's duties (to comply with social norms) and rights (freedom and personal security), and the state's responsibilities (maintaining law and order) and powers (monopoly on the use of force).

The core values and ethical principles that have shaped the social contract and are the foundations for contemporary western society have their origins in ancient Greek philosophy. Aristotelean ethics locates primary moral agency in the free and reasoning individual, and defines the moral character of a "good man" living a virtuous and principled life. In contrast, deontological ethics defines the morality of actions by their compliance with social norms and duties, while teleological ethics (of which utilitarianism is an example) defines the morality of actions by their consequences (the greatest good).

The balance between the often competing elements of the social contract has shifted over the centuries, with major changes occurring after World War 2. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights asserted the principles of equality, mutual respect, non-violence, freedom of speech and democracy as the foundations for a peaceful, just, harmonious and inclusive society. The subsequent Cold War ultimately demonstrated that a nation's security cannot be enforced or assured through secrecy and state repression, and the impetus towards democracy and the capacity of citizens to hold officials and elected representatives to account gathered pace. In Australia the operations of the various national security functions were bought under explicit

principle-based civilian rules intended to maintain essential checks and balances and prevent the abuse of state power.

In the 21st century the convergence and interaction of powerful and unprecedented forces may be transforming key aspects of the social contract in Australia. These disruptive forces appear to be changing the nature of the relationship between the citizen and the state, incrementally shifting the balance of power away from the citizen towards the state and subtly compromising a range of vital but implicit social conventions intended to safeguard civil liberties.

These disruptive forces have been primarily enabled by technological advances that provide virtually universal access to communications and vast quantities of information. Global networks have demonstrably facilitated innovation, economic development, growth and trade, creating wealth by enabling private enterprise. In just over two decades global trade has transformed the lives of hundreds of millions of people previously living in poverty.

The same technologies have also provided an unprecedented opportunity and capability for the state, the media and enterprising individuals to influence and shape perceptions of reality, primarily through the use of intense visual and emotional imagery. Diverse forms of media stream an unremitting and overwhelming torrent of often superficial and undifferentiated information "noise" at the citizen. Constant projection of the complexity, intensity and dangers of contemporary life may ultimately challenge individual and social identity and undermine a sense of belonging and safety. In such an environment powerful but simplistic global brands can displace nuanced evidence-based discourse and real relationships.

Perhaps the most powerful of the disruptive forces in the 21st century is the emergence of the spectre of terrorism post 9/11 and its rise as a global brand representing an enduring existential threat. The spectre of terrorism has been uniquely effective in undermining liberal democracy by catalysing a utilitarian state response that has progressively suspended or supplanted a range of long-standing principle-based conventions and rules intended to balance civil liberties and national security.

Terrorism is fundamentally the use of barbarity to engender visceral fear in the community and coerce disruptive social change by catalysing a militaristic response from the state. Like all global brands, terrorism is an amorphous and pervasive phenomenon that partly relies on its diabolical nature for its capacity to engender fear. Terrorism is a form of psychological (not real) warfare, and its capacity to engender visceral fear in the absence of a real and imminent threat may represent a form of psychosis.

The initial characterisation of the international response to the 9/11 attacks as a "war on terror" seems largely intended to justify the post 9/11 deployment of mainly

Western military forces against armed insurgents in Afghanistan in 2001. In fact deliberate indiscriminate attacks on civilians do not "fit" within a war paradigm as such violence is explicitly prohibited under the Geneva Conventions, and extremists resorting to such violence are unable to gain recognition as lawful combatants. The description of one party to an armed conflict as terrorists may be intended to erode their legitimacy (as combatants) while reinforcing the apparently seamless connection between insurgents and the actions of extremists internationally.

21st century terrorism is a remarkable phenomenon in that it is largely reliant for its reach and impact on co-opting the state and the media into publicly amplifying and perpetuating its message of fear and imminent threat (promoting propaganda that sustains the terrorism brand). Barbarity is ideally suited to the intimacy and immediacy of a 24-hour real-time media cycle, and its emergence coincides with the mainstream media's increasingly desperate commercial need to "cut through" a crescendo of competing information noise with shocking images that elicit a visceral community reaction. Nightly graphic images of strewn body parts and distraught fathers carrying their dead infants in their arms reinforce a constant sense of dread. A single extremist with a knife or a gun and internet access can galvanise the world, and the prospects of "lone wolf" murderers stalking any and every community may be the latest iteration of the terrorism brand.

There may be no clearer example of the public confusion that surrounds the spectre of terrorism than the persistent mystification of the 9/11 attacks. The key enabler of the 9/11 attacks (that turned passenger planes into guided missiles to strike several iconic buildings in the US) was the absence of hardened and secured aircraft cockpit doors, and the success of the 9/11 attacks was primarily due to relatively simple risk assessment and physical security failures.

Australia's policy responses to the rise of the spectre of terrorism as the pre-eminent threat to national security may have been shaped by a range of unique national circumstances. Firstly, the country may be particularly susceptible to fear-based perceptions because many of our core national values are implicit and largely reliant on volatile political processes to interpret and articulate an evolving national identity. Australia is unique amongst developed Western nations in its failure to institutionalise many of its core values, particularly those that relate to civil liberties.

Secondly, in the increasingly complex, volatile and uncertain environment created by globalisation the spectre of terrorism has been exploited for both political and commercial advantage. Terrorism engages deep-seated underlying anxieties about multiculturalism and the challenges posed by ongoing social and economic changes. Australian politicians compete to bravely protect the community from the threat posed by an evil death cult, while burgeoning and opaque defence and national security industries struggle to consume the largess to flow from the redirection of significant resources towards enhancing defence and national security.

Thirdly, the effective displacement of an objective and transparent national process for estimating and comparing (using the measures of probability and consequences) the relative risks posed to the nation's security by a broad range of hazards has allowed the spectre of terrorism to proliferate. Adopted in the late 20th century, risk assessment enables the logical, evidence-based and proportionate allocation of scarce public resources to greatest effect to minimise the harm posed by all hazards through effective risk mitigation. In the absence of an all-hazards approach to managing threats to the nation's interests, anticipating and responding to the prospects of isolated attacks from armed youth has taken precedence over the prospects of the loss of hundreds of lives due to an inadequately-prepared-for natural disaster (flood or wildfire).

The war on terror has coincided with a dramatic (also technology-enabled) expansion of the state's capacity for mass surveillance. As revealed by Edward Snowden, in the digital age there is little that is not possible with sufficient resources. A combination of zealotry and obsolete statutory regulation has the potential to permanently transform the relationship between the individual and the state and render long-standing conceptions of privacy and civil liberties virtually obsolete. Australians may be particularly susceptible to such compromises in the absence of explicit statutory protections for civil liberties.

At a more general level a policy shift away from principle and rules-based approaches to national security towards utilitarianism (where the ends justify the means) has multiple potential (unintended) negative consequences. Encroaching and often unnecessary secrecy impedes both democratic accountability and essential oversight of government propriety and performance. The securitization of a range of previously civilian government functions (evolving from multiple services to a single force) has the potential to engender a mission-driven organisational culture in these functions.

A heightened level of vigilance amongst community police of a threat from so-called lone wolf attacks could lead to an increase in the unjustified use of lethal force in mental health and family violence confrontations. A growing community suspicion towards particular racial or religious sub-groups has the potential to exacerbate a sense of alienation and antagonism within these communities. And finally the intense coverage given to the isolated barbaric acts of extreme individuals may provide a powerful incentive for emulation amongst vulnerable alienated youth and others with mental health issues.

Implications of the rise of egoism for altruistic social participation

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Doctoral research being conducted under the auspices of the Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre into the primary motives for volunteering in emergency services in Australia has highlighted the potential broader implications of evolving social values for traditional forms of altruistic civic engagement.

Volunteers are the lifeblood of emergency services in Australia and constitute a unique skilled workforce that provides an essential public service. Volunteering in emergency services represents exceptional civic engagement for a range of reasons. These include the vital (sometimes life-saving) importance to the community of the unpaid services provided; the inherently demanding (sometimes arduous and hazardous) nature of the tasks undertaken in responding to emergency events; the specialist competencies required to undertake diverse emergency tasks safely; and the level of personal commitment required to respond at short notice to emergency events. Recent data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics show a significant decline in the rate of volunteering in Australia (from 34% in 2010 to 31% in 2014), and emergency services have experienced annual volunteer turnover exceeding 20%, which has major financial and capability implications.

The Valuing Volunteers study is seeking to better understand the primary motives for volunteering in Australian emergency services, and to determine what role the alignment of individual, unit and corporate values may play in volunteer satisfaction and turnover. Using the Schwartz theory of basic human values as the theoretical framework, I surveyed the values preferences of volunteer members of the State Emergency Service in two states. The surveys revealed statistically significant differences in volunteers' values priorities by gender and generation, with females and Baby Boomers expressing a stronger preference for altruism-related values and Gen Y expressing a stronger preference for egoism-related values.

These findings, and the apparent decline in volunteering nationally, raise broader questions about the changing nature of social participation in an increasingly complex, fast-paced and time-constrained world. It seems likely that the convergence and interaction of powerful and unprecedented disruptive forces in the 21st century is progressively transforming the way citizens in postmodern societies interpret and construct their own individual and social realities. The consequent diversification of perspectives is facilitating a generational shift in the community's dominant values from altruism to egoism.

Several powerful disruptive forces are driving this change. New information technologies that enable virtually universal and instantaneous access to vast

quantities of undifferentiated information challenge the capacity to distinguish between fact, opinion and emotion. New communication technologies enable and reinforce the capacity of autonomous individuals to construct and sustain their own unique and highly personal world view. There is growing social and economic polarisation related to globalisation-related dislocation and the ongoing displacement of labour through automation, while the corrosive influence of terrorism-inspired fear and suspicion post-9/11 has eroded trust and social cohesion.

A fundamental shift in the community’s dominant higher-order values from altruism to egoism has significant implications for many traditional forms of civic engagement, not just volunteering. The development of multiple divergent perspectives of social reality has the potential to erode the community’s commitment to shared core values (including conceptions of the common good), and diminish support for a range of long-established institutions (including confidence in democratic processes).

These social atomisation effects are likely to be accentuated in Australia because the nation has traditionally relied on amorphous politically-mediated narratives to articulate shared core values in the absence of formal institutions and explicit norms, such as a Bill of Rights. In an evolving pluralist society, the task of describing the enduring characteristics of a common Australian identity (who ‘we’ are) is fraught with complexity given such a fluid and dynamic environment. The coherence of shared values and a common identity are further clouded by palpable contradictions between the nation’s idealised image as a modern, affluent, progressive, fair and tolerant society and the reality for a growing number of citizens who are not included in or beneficiaries of this archetype.

The Federal Government’s introduction of an Australian values statement in 2007 was apparently intended to articulate more clearly a set of shared core values as the foundation for strengthening social cohesion. The recent introduction of Australia’s multicultural statement and the subsequent tightening of Australian citizenship requirements appear to have similar intent. Time will tell whether these belated efforts at articulating and formalising a set of shared core values will have meaning and resonance in highly diverse communities that are increasingly focused on individual autonomy and self-interest.

Valuing Volunteers: Better understanding the primary motives for volunteering in Australian emergency services

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Abstract

Volunteers are the lifeblood of emergency services in Australia, and are integral to the nation's emergency management capabilities and overall disaster resilience. The concurrence of an increase in the risks posed by a range of climate change-related natural hazards and a decline in formal volunteering rates threatens Australia's emergency preparedness.

The Valuing Volunteers Study aims to provide a better understanding of the primary motives for formal volunteering in Australian emergency services, and the broader contemporary influences on such important civic participation. The research aims to generate evidence-based outputs that inform policies and practices, with the ultimate goal of maximising the retention of emergency service volunteers.

The research applied the Schwartz *Theory of Basic Human Values* and associated *Portrait Values Questionnaire* (PVQ-40) survey to determine the shared and contrasting values of a large State-wide emergency service volunteer workforce. The research revealed statistically significant variations in values preferences within the existing emergency service volunteer workforce by gender and generation, with females expressing a stronger preference for altruistic (other-oriented) values, and males and younger volunteers expressing a stronger preference for egoistic (self-oriented) values.

The research affirmed the crucial role of values as primary motives for emergency service volunteering, and the values differences revealed by this research have important implications for how the divergent values needs of distinct sections of the volunteer workforce can be acknowledged and accommodated. Values are powerful motivators, and shared values can reinforce volunteer commitment and retention, while conflicting values can contribute to volunteer turnover. Satisfying and managing the different values needs of an increasingly diverse volunteer workforce will require a more nuanced and responsive approach, with a greater emphasis on building an organisational culture founded on the values of encouragement, respect and inclusion.

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The author joined a local (urban) unit of the NSW State Emergency Service in March 2013, and remained operationally active until mid-2016. The author acknowledges that his volunteering experiences influenced and informed the nature and scope of his research proposal to the BNHCRC and the University of Wollongong in 2014. The author also acknowledges that his role as an active NSW SES volunteer may have assisted to some degree in gaining the support of other emergency services volunteers to participate in the study. The author has made a conscious effort to dissociate his personal experiences and unit relationships in the NSW SES from the observations presented in this thesis. The author continues volunteering as a telephone crisis supporter at Lifeline.

This research would not have been possible without the vision and professional and financial support (scholarship) of the Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre (BNHCRC). The BNHCRC plays a vital role in facilitating constructive collaboration between academia and the emergency management sector, providing both parties with invaluable access to the expertise of the other. The author is enormously grateful to the BNHCRC for giving him a unique opportunity to undertake research on important social issues.

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Glossary of key terms

One of the particular challenges in undertaking research on complex but inter-related social science topics is the diversity of perspectives and terminology used in the literature. In order to clarify the terminology used throughout this thesis, the key terms and their meanings are outlined below. While much of the emergency management terminology is drawn from official publications, in instances where the meaning of a term is unclear or contested, the author has sought to provide a definition that reflects a synthesis of the contemporary usage.

- **All hazards approach** – "Dealing with all types of emergencies or disasters and civil defence using the same set of management arrangements" (Source: NERAG Glossary, 2015). Encompasses structure fires, rescues, medical emergencies, natural disasters, consequences of terrorism, other natural events, disaster events resulting from poor environmental planning/commercial development/personal intervention, technological and hazardous materials incidents, quarantine and control of diseases and biological contaminants (Source: Productivity Commission, 2016).
- **Altruism** (altruistic values) - A primary concern for the well-being, welfare and benefit of others (Source: author).
- **Civic participation** – "Involvement in activities reflecting interest and engagement with governance and democracy" (Source: ABS GSS Glossary, 2014)
- **Civil society** – "The wide array of non-government and not-for-profit organisations that have a presence in public life, expressing the interests and values of their members and others, based on ethical, cultural, political, scientific, religious or philanthropic considerations" (Source: World Bank, 2013). "The arena of un-coerced collective action around shared interests, purposes and values. In theory its institutional forms are distinct from the state, family and market, though in practice the boundaries between the state, civil society, family and market are often complex, blurred and negotiated" (Source: Productivity Commission, 2010).
- **Consequence – "**The outcome of an event that affects objectives" (Source: NERAG Glossary, 2015).
- **Core values** - The most important and influential guiding principles and beliefs for the individual and society, the foundation for conceptions of a collective (shared) interest and common cultural identity (Source: author).
- **Disaster** – "A serious disruption to community life which threatens or causes death or injury in that community. A disaster can also damage property to the point that is beyond the day-to-day capacity of the prescribed statutory authorities' ability to address the damage. This then requires special mobilisation and organisation of

resources other than those normally available to those authorities” (Source: NERAG Glossary, 2015).

- **Disaster risk management** – “The application of disaster risk reduction policies and strategies to prevent new disaster risk, reduce existing disaster risk and manage residual risk, contributing to the strengthening of resilience and reduction of disaster losses” (Source: UNISDR Terminology, 2016).
- **Egoism** (egoistic values) - A primary concern for the well-being, welfare and benefit of self (Source: author).
- **Emergency event** - “An event, actual or imminent, that endangers or threatens to endanger life, property or the environment, and requires a significant and coordinated response” (Source: NERAG Glossary, 2015).
- **Emergency risk management** – “A systematic process that produces a range of measures which contribute to the well-being of communities and the environment”. “The plans, structures and arrangements which are established to bring together the normal endeavours of government, voluntary and private agencies in a comprehensive and coordinated way to deal with the whole spectrum of emergency needs including prevention, response and recovery” (Source: AIDR Glossary, 2017).
- **Emergency service** – “An agency responsible for the protection and preservation of life and property from harm resulting from incidents and emergencies” (Source: AIDR Glossary, 2017).
- **Ethics** – Social rules that reflect normative and moral judgements about right actions and good outcomes (Source: author).
- **Formal volunteer** - “Someone who willingly gives unpaid help, in the form of time, service or skills, to or through an organisation or group” (Source: ABS Glossary, 2010).
- **Harm** – “A physical injury or damage to health, property of the environment” (Source: AIDR Glossary, 2017). Negative consequences (Source: author).
- **Hazard** – “A source of potential harm or a situation with a potential to cause loss. A source of risk” (Source: NERAG Glossary, 2015). “A process, phenomenon or human activity that may cause loss of life, injury or other health impacts, property damage, social and economic disruption or environmental degradation” (Source: UNISDR Terminology, 2016).
- **Informal volunteering** – Any spontaneous and/or sporadic helping activity (Source: author).
- **Leadership** – Inspiring, guiding and influencing others through personal ethical example and moral authority (Source: author).
- **Motives** – Rational and emotional reasons for actions (Source: author).
- **Morals** – Personal judgements, convictions and beliefs on the good/right and bad/wrong merits of a range of behaviours (Source: author).
- **Natural disaster** – “A naturally occurring rapid onset event that causes a serious disruption to a community or region, such as flood, bushfire, earthquake, storm, cyclone, storm surge, tornado, landslide or tsunami” (Source: Productivity Commission, 2014).

- **Probability** – “Measure of the chance of occurrence expressed as a number between 0 and 1, where 0 is uncertain and 1 is absolute certainty” (Source: NERAG Glossary, 2015).
- **Resilience** – “The ability of a system, community or society exposed to hazards to resist, absorb, accommodate, adapt to, transform and recover from the effects of a hazard in a timely and efficient manner, including through the preservation and restoration of its essential basic structures and functions through risk management” (Source: UNISDR Terminology, 2016).
- **Risk** – **“**The effect of uncertainty on objectives” (Source: ISO 31000, 2009). “The combination of the probability of an event and its negative consequences” (Source: Productivity Commission, 2014). “The chance of an event that will have an impact … measured in terms of consequences and likelihood” (Source: AIDR Glossary, 2017).
- **Risk assessment** – “Overall process of risk identification, risk analysis and risk evaluation” (Source: NERAG Glossary, 2015). A disciplined and transparent process for estimating and comparing the likelihood and severity of harms posed by a range of hazards (Source: author).
- **Risk management** – “Coordinated activities of an organisation or a Government to direct and control risk” (Source: NERAG Glossary, 2015).
- **Social capital** – “The relationships and trust that underpin the functioning of society” (Source: Productivity Commission, 2010). “A resource available to individuals and communities, and founded on networks of mutual support, reciprocity and trust. Research links strong social capital to increased individual and community wellbeing” (Source: ABS, 2015). “Networks, together with shared norms, values and understandings, that facilitate cooperation within or among groups” (Source: OECD, 2007).
- **Values** – “Desirable, trans-situational goals, varying in importance, that serve as guiding principles in people’s lives” (Source: Schwartz, 2005). Enduring principles and beliefs that guide and motivate individual and collective actions and attitudes. Influential and enduring human motives (Source: author).
- **Volunteering** - “Time willingly given for the common good and without financial gain” (Source: Volunteer Australia, 2015).
- **Volunteer emergency worker** – “A volunteer who engages in emergency activity at the request (whether directly or indirectly) or with the express or implied consent of the chief executive … of an agency to which the State emergency response or recovery plan applies” (Source: AIDR Glossary, 2017).

Chapter 1 - Introduction & background to the Valuing Volunteers Study

Introduction

Volunteers are the lifeblood of emergency services in Australia, and are integral to the nation's emergency management capabilities and overall disaster resilience. The concurrence of an increase in the risks posed by a range of climate change-related natural hazards and a decline in formal volunteering rates threatens Australia's emergency preparedness.

This thesis, the Valuing Volunteers Study, aims to provide a better understanding of the primary motives for formal volunteering in Australian emergency services, through the empirical examination of the shared and contrasting values of a sample of emergency service volunteers. The study also examines the broader policy and social contexts for emergency service volunteering in Australia.

This chapter explains the broader research context for the Valuing Volunteers Study; details the specific research rationale; outlines the research aim and objectives; explores the significance and intended contributions of the study; and provides a precis of the thesis structure.

Broader research context

Maslow's (1943) oft-cited "hierarchy of needs" emphasises the primacy of the basic human needs for personal and community safety, and collective security is a foundation element of the social contract between the individual and the state. All countries, irrespective of their economic and social development and level of preparedness, are susceptible to the risks posed by a range of natural and human hazards that can lead to emergency events, with the potential to become large-scale disasters resulting in mass casualties and great economic losses.

There is broad consensus that the risks (and potential dangers) posed by a diverse range of natural and human hazards world-wide have increased significantly over the last two decades, placing sometimes overwhelming demands on existing emergency management systems and capabilities in a number of countries. According to the 2015 *National Emergency Risk Assessment Guidelines* (NERAG) "emergency events and disasters stem from a range of natural, biological, technological, industrial and other human phenomena. These events impose significant social, environmental and economic costs on Australia, including: fatalities, injuries and illness; direct damage to property, infrastructure and facilities; financial costs and economic losses; ecosystem impairment and biodiversity loss; and social and cultural losses" (2015, p.2).

The 2011 *National Strategy for Disaster Resilience* (NSDR) notes (p.iv) that "Australia has recently experienced a number of large-scale and devastating natural

disasters, including catastrophic bushfires, far reaching floods and damaging storms. Natural disasters are a feature of the Australian climate and landscape and this threat will continue, not least because climate change is making weather patterns less predictable and more extreme". In a similar vein, a 2014 Productivity Commission report titled *Natural Disaster Funding Arrangements* notes (p.3) that "natural disasters are an inherent part of the Australian landscape. Since 2009, natural disasters have claimed more than 200 lives, destroyed 2,670 houses and damaged a further 7,680, and affected the lives and livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of Australians". Finally, the 2018 World Disasters Report from the International Red Cross notes that over the last decade the cost to Australia of natural disasters amounted to US$27 billion, placing the nation 10th internationally in total costs incurred (2018, p.179).

Emergency services are those agencies "responsible for the protection and preservation of life and property from harm resulting from incidents and emergencies" (AIDR Glossary, 2017), and include the fire service organisations, ambulance service organisations, State emergency services, marine rescue and coast guard organisations, and lifesaving organisations (Productivity Commission, 2016, p.D3). According to the Productivity Commission, State and Territory Governments "have primary responsibility for delivering emergency services directly to the community through emergency service organisations" (ibid).

Emergency service volunteers constitute a series of unique workforces that provide essential (often life-saving) community services, and considerable public resources are expended in training, equipping and supporting these workforces. A 2016 Productivity Commission report titled *Report on Government Service – Volume D Emergency Management* estimates (p.D9) that in 2014-15 more than 250,000 volunteers were on the records of the fire, ambulance and emergency service organisations, with total expenditure across these agencies nationally of $6.7 billion for the same period (p.D6).

While major changes in the environment and climate are transforming the nature and extent of the risks posed by natural hazards, powerful social forces are changing human values and altering forms of civic participation, including formal volunteering. Skinner and Joseph (2007, p.124) characterise voluntarism as a "barometer of change", as ageing communities adapt to the dynamic forces of globalisation, privatisation, economic and social restructuring, changing demographics, evolving lifestyles and the impacts of technology. The 2011 *National Strategy for Disaster Resilience* acknowledges the forces for change, noting (p.1) "many known factors are increasing our vulnerability to disaster. Work-life patterns, lifestyle expectations, demographic changes, domestic migration, and community fragmentation, are increasing community susceptibility, as well as altering local social networks and sustainability of volunteer groups" (COAG, 2011, p.1).

A decline in formal (organisation-based) volunteering rates in Australia is reflected in data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) that reveals a reduction in the proportion of people 18 years and over who volunteered from 34% in 2010 to 31% in 2014 (ABS, 2015). If this trend is translated into a decline in the rates of emergency service volunteering there is a potential for Australia's emergency and disaster management capabilities to be compromised, limiting the capacity to respond in a timely and effective manner to large-scale life-threatening events through the deployment of a highly-skilled and committed volunteer workforce.

Specific research rationale

In response to ongoing concerns about future volunteer resourcing in a dynamic emergency management environment in Australia, in 2008 the Ministerial Council for Police and Emergency Management (MCPEM) sought current information on the level of national preparedness for disasters and large-scale emergencies, and asked the Federal Attorney-General's Department to commission research into the future viability of Australia's emergency management volunteering systems (McLennan, 2008). A subsequent report by Dr Jim McLennan (2008, p.4) notes a "serious dearth of research concerning the recruitment and retention in volunteer-based emergency services other than the fire services".

A further report by Dr Judy Esmond (2009) identifies a range of potential challenges to the sustainability and growth of emergency service volunteering, and emphasises the need for evidence-based case studies on the most effective methods to attract, support and retain volunteers. Both the McLennan (2008) and Esmond (2009) reports highlight a number of significant challenges confronting emergency management in Australia, including growing pressure on agencies to professionally manage governance and risks and meet objective performance standards in respect to volunteer training and utilisation. Both reports recommend further research to address significant information gaps in the literature on emergency service volunteering.

The 2011 *National Strategy for Disaster Resilience* crystallises these concerns and emphasises the need for changes in Australia's emergency management systems. The strategy asserts that "ongoing support for the recruitment, retention, training, equipping and maintenance of paid and unpaid personnel in all aspects of the emergency services will strengthen our capability to respond and recover from disasters", with a priority outcome that "decision makers adopt policies and practices that support and recognise emergency services and the importance of volunteering in our communities" (COAG, 2011, p.12).

Acknowledging these challenges, in 2013 the Australian Government established the Bushfires and Natural Hazards Co-operative Research Centre (BNHCRC) to "undertake research that supports the development of cohesive, evidence-based policies, strategies, programs and tools to build a more disaster resilient Australia"

(BNHCRC, 2014). The BNHCRC pursues a broad industry-driven research agenda built around three national themes, with a series of end-user clusters overseeing a range of specific research projects. The BNHCRC research aims to address significant information gaps and provide high-quality scientific support for Australian emergency management. The facilitation of constructive engagement between academics and end-users in order to maximise the relevance of outputs is central to this program.

In mid-2013 the BNHCRC promulgated its research agenda across all Australian emergency services, and as a volunteer in an urban unit of the NSW State Emergency Service (NSW SES) the author became aware of sponsored research opportunities. The author subsequently applied to progress research into emergency service volunteer motivation through the University of Wollongong. As a then active NSW SES volunteer the research complemented the author's personal and academic interests, and lived experience as a relatively new emergency service volunteer (reflecting elements of ethnography).

The Valuing Volunteers Study commenced in 2014 as part of a BNHCRC-sponsored research project being undertaken by the University of Wollongong titled "improving the retention and engagement of volunteers in emergency service agencies", part of the "sustainable volunteering" cluster under the national theme of "resilience to hazards". The research coincided with a number of developments which have shaped the design and conduct of this study:

- An increased risk of catastrophic (climate change-related) emergency events.
- Changing social values and an associated decline in traditional (formal) emergency services volunteering.
- A complex and evolving multi-jurisdictional emergency management environment.
- Growing pressures on traditional member-based agencies to "modernise" and corporatize.
- New avenues for engagement and consultation between emergency services and research institutions, with a BNHCRC-organised sustainable volunteering end-user cluster providing considerable constructive input in the formulation of research aims and objectives.

Research aim, objectives & questions

As reflected in the thesis title, the research aim is to gain a better understanding of the primary motives for volunteering in Australian emergency services, a topic that encompasses both the specific impetus for, and dynamics of, the giving behaviours of individuals, and the broader policy and social contexts within which such important civic participation occurs. The research seeks to generate original empirical and theoretical insights to inform emergency management policies and practices on the future mobilisation of a skilled volunteer workforce.

In order to fulfil the overall research aim of generating insights that can inform emergency management policies and practices, five research objectives will need to be met. The first research objective is to demonstrate that emergency service volunteering is of great economic and social value to the Australian community, and represents exceptional civic participation. This objective will be achieved through a comprehensive review and synthesis of contemporary official reports on the operations, performance and cultures of the various volunteer-based emergency services in Australia, effectively “setting the scene” for the subsequent examination of volunteer motivations (Chapter 2).

The second research objective is to establish the validity and utility of a values framework for interpreting and understanding the primary motives for emergency service volunteering. This objective will be achieved by undertaking a comprehensive review of motivational theories that are relevant to emergency service volunteering, demonstrating the capacity of an inclusive multi-dimensional values framework to encompass and integrate diverse psychological, sociological and economic perspectives (Chapter 3). Values are widely acknowledged as influential and enduring human motives, and shared values can reinforce volunteer commitment and retention, while conflicting values can contribute to volunteer turnover.

The third research objective is to determine the distinct shared and contrasting values of a sample of Australian emergency service volunteers, and consider the implications of these values for volunteer policies and practices. This objective will be achieved through the use of a modified version of the PVQ-40 survey to obtain original empirical data on the values preferences of the volunteer members of the NSW State Emergency Service (NSW SES).

This third research objective aligns with the specific research questions that are the focus for empirical inquiry, developed in consultation with the BNHCRC’s sustainable volunteering end-users cluster:

- What are the distinctive shared values of Australian emergency service volunteers?
- To what extent and in what ways do these shared values impact on volunteer expectations of and commitment to emergency service organisations?
- In what ways can the formal values of emergency service organisations be better aligned with volunteer values in order to maximise workforce satisfaction, commitment and retention?

The fourth and fifth research objectives seek to rigorously challenge the dominant paradigms that currently frame the policy and social contexts for emergency service volunteering, informing an incisive re-evaluation of these complex phenomena. Objective four critically analyses the all-hazards risk management framework within which Australian emergency services operate, and evaluates the efficacy and integrity of current processes for determining and resourcing national emergency management priorities. Objective five explores the broader social and cultural contexts for

volunteering, highlighting the implications of changing core values for future forms of civic participation, including formal emergency service volunteering.

Significance & intended contributions of the study

The phenomena examined in this research are inherently complex, and this is reflected in the diversity of perspectives and terminology that appears in the literature. The inclusion of a glossary of key terms (immediately preceding this chapter) is intended to clarify the definition and meaning of terms and concepts used throughout this thesis. In the absence of a clear consensus on the meaning of some terms, several of the definitions reflect the author's synthesis of multiple divergent perspectives.

In respect to the first research objective, a comprehensive review of contemporary official reports on the operations, performance and culture of the various volunteer-based emergency services reveals that the use of a volunteer-based workforce to provide an essential public service is an inherently complex process, whose specific features are not well understood by the community or policy-makers. Beyond the stereotype of the heroic rescuer ready to respond in times of crisis, there seems little appreciation of the substantial personal commitment and goodwill required to undertake inherently demanding emergency response roles, or the conditional and potentially fragile nature of the relationship between the individual volunteer, the local unit, and the emergency service organisation. These circumstances are relevant to the third research question on the effects of values alignment on workforce satisfaction, commitment and retention.

In respect to the second research objective, a wide-ranging review of diverse motivational theories affirms that values constitute a comprehensive, multi-dimensional and multi-disciplinary theoretical framework for interpreting and understanding the primary motives for emergency service volunteering. The review reveals that the Schwartz *Theory of Basic Human Values* (Schwartz, 2012) has particular relevance to this study as the two bipolar (higher-order values) dimensions largely align with two of the major modernisation trends impacting on emergency service volunteering, namely growing individual reflexivity and encroaching corporatisation.

For complex social and political reasons that are explored in a discussion paper at Appendix F, there has been little empirical research to determine the most important (core) values in Australia, and this research examining the shared and contrasting values of a large State-wide volunteer workforce using paper and online versions of the Schwartz *Portrait Values Questionnaire* (PVQ-40) survey is unique.

In respect to the third research objective (and related research questions), the empirical findings from a State-wide survey of the shared and contrasting values of a large volunteer workforce reveals significant differences in values preferences by

gender and generation, with important implications for a range of volunteering policies and practices. The survey findings are consistent with a generational shift from collective (altruistic) to reflexive (egoistic) motives that is reflected in a marked decline in formal volunteering rates nationally post-2010 (ABS, 2015).

Various emergency services have responded to a decline in formal volunteering with the introduction of more flexible volunteer engagement strategies, and this research has informed these new approaches. In June 2017, the NSW SES Commissioner acknowledged the close collaboration with BNHCRC researchers in the development of a new flexible volunteering model called *Volunteering Reimagined*, noting that "the model will broaden both the capacity and capability of the organisation and is a fresh approach to overcome some constraints that have seen our numbers declining".

Finally, in respect to the fourth and fifth (theoretical) research objectives, an incisive re-evaluation of the broader policy and social contexts for emergency service volunteering aims to stimulate further academic discourse and research on the impacts and interaction of contemporary forces on the future resourcing of a vital volunteer-based emergency response capability. In respect to research objective four (policy context), a critical analysis of the way relative risks are measured and determined within an all-hazards risk management framework highlights the distorting influence of fear-based perspectives (specifically the spectre of terrorism) on national emergency management priorities in Australia, with important implications for the resourcing of various emergency functions. In relation to research objective five (social context), an analysis of contemporary indicators of changing core values in Australia confirms a progressive decline in altruistic values, with important implications for future forms of civic participation, including formal emergency service volunteering.

The various practical, methodological, empirical and conceptual insights generated during the course of the Valuing Volunteers Study constitute original and substantial contributions to existing information gaps, and to the general level of understanding of emergency service volunteer motivation. These insights have important implications for the way different parts of the existing volunteer workforce are managed, and for future forms of volunteer engagement. In integrating the separately-complex phenomena of emergency service volunteer motivation, all-hazards emergency management and evolving Australian values, this study seeks to contribute novel and thought-provoking insights to academic and public discourse on important social issues.

Thesis structure

This chapter has explained the broader context for the Valuing Volunteers Study; detailed the specific research rationale; outlined the research aim and related objectives; and explored the significance and intended contributions of the study. The following paragraphs signpost the overall structure of the thesis.

Chapter 2 sets the scene for this research by exploring the unique circumstances and distinctive characteristics of emergency service volunteering that justify its recognition as exceptional civic participation (first research objective).

Chapter 3 reviews the contemporary literature that is directly relevant to the motives for emergency service volunteering, and evaluates the relevance of various theoretical constructs, including the Schwartz (2012) universal values framework (second research objective).

Chapter 4 details the conduct of an organisation-wide survey of the values preferences of the NSW SES volunteer workforce, and documents the challenges involved in maximising volunteer participation in the face of a range of prospective impediments. Empirical data collection necessitated the adaption of the Schwartz *Portrait Values Questionnaire* (PVQ-40) survey, and the adoption of a range of specific strategies to encourage participation (second research objective).

Chapter 5 details the survey findings that reveal statistically significant differences in values rankings by gender and generation (but not location). The findings in chapter 5 on what motivates people to volunteer for highly demanding emergency service roles, and their changing expectations, address a number of important information gaps, and have significant implications for a range of emergency services policies and practices (third research objective).

Chapter 6 reviews the research aims, objectives and questions that were originally articulated in Chapter 1, and considers the degree to which these have been addressed and satisfactorily answered by the Valuing Volunteers Study. The chapter also explores the broader implications of the empirical findings and theoretical contributions for future emergency service volunteering, and concludes with the research's limitations.

Finally, this study also aims to advance a better understanding of the broader policy and social contexts for emergency service volunteering in Australia, and discussion papers at Appendices E and F seek to challenge a number of the dominant paradigms that frame these phenomena (fourth and fifth research objectives).

Chapter 2 - Emergency service volunteering as exceptional civic participation

Introduction

This chapter sets the scene for the Valuing Volunteers Study by: placing volunteering within the wider context of civic participation; reviewing contemporary trends in volunteering in Australia; outlining the exceptional dimensions of emergency service volunteering; and exploring some of the pressures for organisational reform in emergency services that may have implications for volunteer engagement and retention. The chapter provides a comprehensive review and synthesis of contemporary official reports on the operations, performance and cultures of the various volunteer-based emergency services in Australia, and seeks to demonstrate that emergency service volunteering is of great social and economic value to the Australian community, and represents exceptional civic participation.

Volunteering as civic participation

The term “social capital” features regularly in the literature to describe the latent and intangible nature and value of discretionary social relationships. The Productivity Commission (2010, p.xix) describes social capital as “the relationships and trust that underpin the functioning of society”, while the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) (2015, p.1) observes “social capital is conceived as a resource available to individuals and communities, and founded on networks of mutual support, reciprocity and trust. Research links strong social capital to increased individual and community wellbeing”. The OECD (2007, p.103) defines social capital as “networks, together with shared norms, values and understandings, that facilitate cooperation within or among groups”, highlighting the role that values play in motivating civic participation.

Volunteering is widely acknowledged as an important form of social capital. Berry and Welsh (2010) explore the structural (participating/networking) and cognitive (belonging/cohesion) dimensions of social capital, locating volunteering within a “civic engagement” component of the structural dimension. Hustinx, Handy, Cnaan, Brudney, Pessi and Yamauchi (2010, p.350) contend that “volunteering is a foundation block in the formation and sustainability of civil society across the world”.

Bittman and Fisher (2006, p.v) refer to the “contribution of volunteering to the stock of social capital”, and estimate that “voluntary welfare services are worth more than double the value of services provided by all levels of government in Australia”. In a discussion paper on social capital and social wellbeing, the ABS observes that “volunteering may be seen as an expression of reciprocity or potentially as a direct outcome of social capital. The act of volunteering demonstrates a balance between an individual’s self-interest and the public interest” (2002, p.18).

While major changes in the environment and climate are transforming the nature and extent of the risks posed by natural hazards, powerful social forces are changing human values and altering forms of civic participation, including formal volunteering. Skinner and Joseph (2007, p.124) characterise voluntarism as a “barometer of change” as ageing communities adapt to the dynamic forces of globalisation, privatisation, economic and social restructuring, changing demographics, evolving lifestyles and the impacts of technology.

Changes in the nature and level of civic participation and volunteering are reflected in the ABS General Social Survey (ABS GSS), one of the primary national sources of contemporary large-scale data on Australian social trends. The ABS GSS “measures resources that reflect the wellbeing of individuals and communities, with social capital being a particular focus” (2015, p.1). The four-yearly survey aims “to provide an understanding of the multi-dimensional nature of relative advantage and disadvantage across the population, and to facilitate reporting on and monitoring of people's opportunities to participate fully in society” (ibid). The ABS 2014 GSS notes “changes in the levels of involvement in activities connecting people to their broader community and the way people are interacting with the community outside their household”, with “a decrease in the time and opportunity that Australians have for recreation and leisure, and social and community interaction” (ibid). Acknowledging these trends, a report titled *Australia’s Welfare 2017* from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) observes (2017, p.170) that “the decline in the rate of volunteering is concerning as it has links to the economy and health and is thought to be an indicator of wellbeing”.

Contemporary trends in volunteering in Australia

Volunteering can be a difficult phenomenon to define precisely because of its diverse manifestations. Despite some contention in the literature over a common definition of volunteering, virtually all characterisations identify the discretionary exercise of individual free will for a positive social purpose without an expectation of direct financial reward. A 2008 Federal Government report titled *Volunteering in Australia* says simply “volunteering is something that people choose to do freely without an expectation of payment and for the benefit of the community” (2008, p.1). Dekker and Halman (2003, p.1) note that most definitions of volunteering contain “three or four common elements - it is non-obligatory; it is carried out…for the benefit of others; it is unpaid; and somewhat less common, it takes place in an organised context”.

For many years the term volunteering referred predominantly to formal activities that take place within the context of established organisations. The ABS has traditionally classified volunteer and community work as “unpaid work”, and has estimated the economic value of volunteering using measures of labour replacement costs or wages foregone (opportunity cost). An ABS 2010 Glossary defines a volunteer

as “someone who willingly gives unpaid help, in the form of time, service or skills, to or through an organisation or group”. Much of the contemporary literature now makes a clear distinction between “formal” volunteering that is undertaken on an ongoing basis within an organisational context, and “informal” volunteering that is any spontaneous and/or sporadic helping activity. In 2015, the peak body Volunteering Australia adopted a new and more inclusive definition of volunteering as “time willingly given for the common good and without financial gain”, encompassing both formal and informal volunteering.

Reports on the nature, extent and economic contribution of formal volunteering in Australia vary widely. A 2004 report by the Australian Institute for Family Studies (AIFS) titled *Diversity and change in Australian families* examined the use of time by Australian families, and estimated the financial value of unpaid voluntary work by the Australian community. Using an average pay rate of $13.73 per hour and a 1997 time use survey, the report calculated “the total value of voluntary work in Australia in 1997 is estimated to be $9.4 billion per annum” (AIFS, 2004, p.291). The AIFS report observed that the amount of time spent on voluntary work varies according to life stage, with women peaking between the ages of 45 and 74 (with a per capita value between $3779 and $4634), and men peaking between the ages of 55 and 75 (with a per capita value between $3000 and $5500) (ibid).

The social and economic contribution of formal volunteering is more comprehensively examined in a 2010 report by the Productivity Commission titled *Contribution of the not-for-profit sector* that observed that “community (not for profit) organisations play an important role in combatting social exclusion and enhancing the economic, social, cultural and environmental wellbeing of society” (2010, p.iv). The report defines civil society as “the arena of un-coerced collective action around shared interests, purposes and values. In theory its institutional forms are distinct from the state, family and market, though in practice the boundaries between the state, civil society, family and market are often complex, blurred and negotiated” (2010, p.xv). The report estimated volunteer numbers at 4.6 million in 2006, with a not-for-profit contribution to GDP of $42.9 billion in 2006, and with the value of volunteer time estimated at $8.9 billion (2010, p.53).

The Productivity Commission’s report on the not-for-profit sector explored the motivators and facilitators of civic participation, and notes that not-for-profits “are driven by their ‘community purpose’ which may focus on their members, targeted groups in the community (often the disadvantaged) or, more broadly, the ‘common good’”(2010, p.15). The report suggests strategies and processes that are conducive to the effective operations of not-for-profit organisations, including professionalism, inclusiveness and responsiveness. The report acknowledged the importance of altruistic motives, but also emphasises the need to satisfy self-fulfilment goals such as status and personal development.

The economic contribution of volunteering to Victoria is explored in a 2012 report by Associate Professor Ironmonger from the University of Melbourne, commissioned by the Victorian Department of Planning and Community Development. The report estimated the contribution of Victorian volunteers as equivalent to 359,100 jobs in 2006, adding an additional 14.2% to the paid workforce (2012, p.4). The report applied an ABS gross opportunity cost hourly wage rate of just over $24 in 2006 to estimate that organised (formal) volunteering in Victoria was worth $4.9 billion, while unorganised (informal) volunteering was worth $9 billion (ibid). Travel costs added a further $2.5 billion to these amounts, making the total estimated value of organised and unorganised volunteering to Victoria as $16.4 billion in 2006 ($65.8 billion nationally) (p.18).

The ABS 2014 GSS (discussed earlier) finds that 31% of the Australian population aged 18 years and over (5.8 million people) volunteered in 2014, contributing a total of 748 million hours (or 128 hours annually per volunteer) (2015, p.2). This represented a decline in the national rate of volunteering from 34% in 2010.

The 2014 GSS surveyed the residents of almost 13,000 households. It provides detailed insights on formal volunteering trends in Australia, finding that:

- 54% of all volunteers are female.
- 34% of people born in Australia volunteered, compared to 26% born overseas.
- 39% of people living in outer regional and remote areas volunteered, compared to 30% in major cities.
- 38% of people working part-time volunteered, compared to 30% working full-time and 31% unemployed.
- 41% of people with a tertiary qualification volunteered, compared to 25% without a non-school qualification.
- 39% of people in households in the highest gross household income quintile volunteered, compared with 23% in the lowest.
- Almost 50% of volunteers had participated for more than 10 years.
- Almost 66% of volunteers had participated with the one organisation.
- 64% volunteered to help others and the community.
- 57% volunteered for personal satisfaction.
- 54% volunteered to do something worthwhile.
- 45% volunteered due to personal and family involvement.
- 37% volunteered for social contact.
- 31% volunteered to use skills or experience.

Finally, the most recent estimate of the national economic contribution of formal volunteering is a 2017 report by Deloitte Access Economics titled *Economic contribution of the Australian charity sector*. Utilising the ABS definition of a formal (organisation-based) volunteer, the report estimates the economic contribution of Australia's approximately 55,000 charities in the 2014-15 financial year as $71.8 billion

directly, and a further $57 billion in flow-on contributions (2017, p.8). The report finds that “in 2014-15 the charity sector benefited from a total of 328 million unpaid volunteering hours” worth approximately $12.8 billion (ibid). The report notes that “the ageing population also poses an interesting challenge for the sector to accommodate the evolving demographics and desires of the next generation of volunteers” (2017, p.10).

Given its substantial economic and social contribution, Governments at all levels have a strong interest in promoting and sustaining volunteering, and in 2011 the Federal Government released a *National Volunteering Strategy* that aims to address changes in the way people volunteer. The report identifies a range of national trends, including a decline in community service and emergency management volunteering, a reduction in hours volunteered, the need for greater flexibility in volunteering roles, and greater competition for volunteers’ time. The actions proposed in the *National Volunteering Strategy* to respond to the trends identified above include: engaging young people; engaging older Australians; building inclusive volunteering; growing volunteering in workplaces; and sustaining emergency management volunteering (explored in detail later in this chapter).

Volunteering Australia (VA) is a national peak body that seeks to advance volunteering in the community. In 2016, Volunteering Australia commissioned PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) to produce a report titled *State of Volunteering in Australia* that explores contemporary issues with the potential to inhibit volunteering. The comprehensive findings of the PwC report are highly illuminating, revealing that:

- There is a disconnect between the volunteering roles that people are interested in, and the roles that organisations are offering.
- There is a misalignment between the sectors volunteers are interested in and the sectors with the most positions advertised.
- Informal volunteering is prevalent in society - 46% of respondents participated in informal volunteering in the last 12 months.
- Volunteers are deterred from volunteering because of a lack of flexibility, personal expenses incurred, lack of reimbursement for out of pocket expenses, and burdensome administrative requirements.
- Volunteer-involving organisations generally lack resources, both human and financial, and this can inhibit their ability to engage volunteers with barriers.
- Lack of resources may also reduce an organisation’s ability to recognise their existing volunteer base.
- Volunteers are not getting responses from volunteer involving organisations about opportunities fast enough.
- Online methods of recruitment and volunteering could complement the needs of future volunteers.

Contemporary trends in emergency service volunteering in Australia

Given the consistent reports above of a decline in formal volunteering generally, it is important to examine the contemporary trends in emergency service volunteering. Australian emergency services are those agencies “responsible for the protection and preservation of life and property from harm resulting from incidents and emergencies” (AIDR Glossary, 2017), and include the fire service organisations, ambulance service organisations, State emergency services, marine rescue and coast guard organisations, and lifesaving organisations (Productivity Commission, 2016).

Emergency service volunteers constitute a relatively small but distinctive subset of general volunteers in Australia, and estimates of volunteer numbers (sometimes referred to as “members”) have been highly variable. The ABS 2014 *General Social Survey* estimates that 217,100 people (or 3.8% of all 15+ volunteers in Australia) volunteered for emergency services in the previous 12 months, with each emergency service volunteer contributed an average of 42.5 hours per year. In comparison, in 2010 the ABS estimated that 421,000 people (or 6.9% of all 18+ volunteers in Australia) volunteered for emergency services. These figures represent a marked decrease in the percentage of the total 18+ population volunteering for emergency services from 2.45% in 2010 to 1.23% in 2014 (2015).

Over the last decade a series of official reports have acknowledged the growing pressures on, and a general decline in, formal emergency service volunteering (as reflected in the ABS data). The 2011 *National Volunteering Strategy* observes (p.17) that “the rate of natural disasters in Australia is predicted to increase in coming decades, and emergency management volunteering is facing a range of challenges. Declining numbers of emergency management volunteers is an issue for many Australian communities. The commitment required of volunteers in time, training, periods away during emergencies and associated costs is great. In many rural communities the population is declining and so too are the numbers of volunteers”.

Likewise, the 2011 *National Strategy for Disaster Resilience* observes (p.1) “many known factors are increasing our vulnerability to disaster. Work-life patterns, lifestyle expectations, demographic changes, domestic migration, and community fragmentation are increasing community susceptibility, as well as altering local social networks and sustainability of volunteer groups”. The strategy includes as a priority outcome (p.13) that “decision makers adopt policies and practices that support and recognise emergency services and the importance of volunteering in our communities”.

As Governments have become more conscious of growing threats to Australia’s emergency management capabilities, and more aware of the role and contributions of emergency service volunteer workforces, they have commissioned detailed research into the sector to address major information gaps. A significant contribution to

contemporary and comprehensive national data on the emergency management sector was provided by a 2016 report by the Productivity Commission titled *Report on Government Service – Volume D Emergency Management*. The report finds that:

- Nationally in 2014-15, total expenditure across ambulance, fire and emergency service organisations was $6.7 billion, or $283.82 per person in the population (p.D6).
- Nationally in 2014-15, 35,406 full time equivalent people were employed by emergency service organisations. Over half (54.9%) were employed in fire and emergency service organisations, while the remainder were employed by ambulance service organisations (p.D9).
- In 2014-15, 256,655 fire, ambulance and emergency service volunteers (and another 1122 community first response ambulance volunteers) were on the records of emergency service organisations (ibid).
- Nationally in 2014-15, emergency service organisations attended a wide range of emergency events including: 3.4 million emergency incidents attended by ambulance services; 385,118 emergency incidents attended by fire services including structure fires, landscape fires and road crash rescue events; 82,382 emergency incidents attended by State Emergency Service organisations, predominantly storm and cyclone events (67,439 incidents), followed by flood events (3759 incidents) and road crash rescue events (2411 incidents). State Emergency Service staff and volunteers contributed 354,515 hours of service" (p.D10).

There are a range of other official reports that provide valuable contemporary insights into the operations and performance of (largely State-based) emergency service agencies in Australia. These reports have typically been commissioned following major incidents (or controversies surrounding particular agencies), and have often provided significant impetus for reform. These reports highlight the inherent complexity of relying on a volunteer-based workforce to resource an essential life-saving public service, a situation acknowledged in the Productivity Commission's observations on the not-for-profit sector that the "boundaries between the state, civil society, family and market are often complex, blurred and negotiated" (2010, p.xv). The sorts of complexities identified by these reports include: how to effectively resource, manage and coordinate a State-wide volunteer-based workforce that is largely comprised of a diversity of autonomous work units; how to implement the organisation-wide reforms required by the community and Government without impinging on the autonomy of volunteers and units; and how to adapt to broader social changes and evolving values that are reflected in a decline in traditional sustained (formal) volunteering.

Reports from official inquiries following catastrophic natural events have provided more critical, and perhaps realistic, perspectives on the performance of volunteer-based agencies. Following the Black Saturday bushfires in Victoria in 2009 that

resulted in the loss of 173 lives, the Victorian Government asked the Victorian Auditor-General to prepare a report on the capacity of the State's key emergency services (Country Fire Authority and State Emergency Service) to effectively manage volunteers. The Auditor-General's subsequent report titled *Managing Emergency Service Volunteers* (2014) finds (p.x) that "neither the CFA nor SES have a sound understanding of the total numbers of volunteers needed to fulfil their operational requirements. … Both agencies assessment of current workforce capacity overestimate their emergency response capabilities, meaning neither agency can be assured that it has the capacity to respond to incidents as they occur". The report identifies deficiencies in the recruitment, training, support and retention of volunteers, and makes a number of recommendations to address these perceived shortcomings.

In a similar vein, following a series of catastrophic floods in Queensland in 2010/2011 in which 33 people died, the Queensland Government commissioned an inquiry to identify systemic issues that could be improved in future emergency response events. The subsequent *Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry – Interim Report* (2011, p.180) makes a number of specific recommendations relating to the operations of the State Emergency Service, including: "[stakeholders] should work together to identify and address deficiencies in the ability of the SES to respond effectively to flooding. At the very least, suitable flood boats and flood boat training should be provided to SES units which require them; the Queensland Government and councils should take measures, as soon as possible, to attract more SES volunteers, particularly in areas susceptible to flooding which do not have sufficient numbers. New SES units should be established where possible; the Commission acknowledges that it may not be possible to recruit and train sufficient numbers of SES volunteers to the extent needed before the next wet season. However, this should not prevent steps being taken as soon as possible to identify the factors impeding the recruitment and retention of SES volunteers, action being taken to address them, and the commencing of recruitment activity".

Finally, in 2014 the NSW Auditor-General conducted a performance audit of the State Emergency Service's management of volunteers. The report notes (p.2) that the "SES is different from other emergency services in NSW, in that all of its frontline units are made up wholly of volunteers. This presents particular challenges". The report finds that the "SES cannot be assured that it has sufficient volunteers to respond to future demands. It does not have strategies to establish what volunteers it needs and how to recruit, retain and train then effectively and efficiently".

The Auditor-General's report notes that "the number of active volunteers has fallen in recent years. Twenty-six percent of SES volunteers leave each year, many soon after joining. The high turnover imposes extra demands on SES and its volunteers for little benefit. This is a major challenge which SES has not addressed effectively and indicates problems with both recruitment and retention. Leadership, recognition, communication and training are the most important issues that SES needs to address

to improve the management of volunteers and reduce turnover" (ibid). The report recommends action to "establish clear priorities, integrate initiatives and improve monitoring to better manage and support volunteers" (p.4).

Subsequent to the NSW Auditor-General's report, the NSW SES commissioned Ernst and Young to review the agency's operational support model. The review report observes (2015, p.4) that the organisation "is a highly valued, volunteer-based service providing needed emergency response to the community. As the organisation has grown and matured, the nature of the services provided has moved beyond the legislated role, which covers emergency response to floods, storms and tsunamis (weather-based disasters)". The review report provides unique insights into the evolving culture of a hybrid employee/volunteer-based organisation, and its findings include:

- "The SES was established as a volunteer organisation and has evolved into a more regulated public sector agency. Within the organisation there is a prevailing belief that the SES has moved away from its volunteer origins, however our assessment of this reveals a more complex picture of the volunteer/staff relationship.
- The governance around decision-making is misaligned to the complexity of the decisions being made. Simple decisions such as ordering boots or organising dry-cleaning are being over-governed while more complex or far-reaching decisions are under-governed, such as the adoption of new services.
- The policy framework is not conducive to policies that are developed holistically and cross-functionally. Policies are developed frequently, not coordinated across the SES and are seen to be reactionary. Policies can be disseminated without context, consultation or reasoning which results in inconsistent application.
- The organisational structure is not aligned to simultaneously support business-as-usual and lengthy campaigns as emergency events take precedence.
- In assessing the performance of volunteers there is a lack of clarity about standards, accountabilities and management measures.
- Workforce planning is not currently used to affectively assess the current and future demand for staff and volunteers in the organisation or take account of how workforce supply is changing (i.e: is the profile of the volunteer workforce changing and what is the implication for the SES?). There is an underpinning philosophy in the organisation that there is a job for everyone.
- SES members have largely altruistic motivations for working or volunteering with the SES, underpinned by their desire to serve the community.
- The SES has no single identifying culture and is made up of a range of subcultures which have varying levels of inclusivity and diversity.

- SES members have an appetite for change which needs to be supported by adequate consultation and transparent communications.
- There are a series of underpinning beliefs, or paradigms, within the organisation that are key to addressing cultural and behavioural change across the SES" (p.9).

Acknowledging the changing patterns of emergency service volunteering, with a decline in formal volunteering and a rise in informal volunteering, in 2015 the Australian and New Zealand Emergency Management Committee (ANZEMC) commissioned a report titled *Spontaneous Volunteer Strategy: Coordination of volunteer effort in the immediate post disaster stage.* The strategy notes (p.3) that the "work of emergency management volunteers is being augmented through an increasing trend towards informal or 'spontaneous' volunteerism. …These spontaneous volunteers can contribute a wide range of skills and experience to the work of the emergency management sector". The ANZEMC strategy notes that "spontaneous volunteerism can provide the surge capacity that is critical in the disaster clean-up phase. However, it can also represent significant challenges for emergency managers and the community" (ibid). The strategy aims to recognise the inevitability of spontaneous volunteerism in the recovery (post-response) phase, and harness this capability through the national application of nine principles to facilitate their effective utilisation.

In the context of these various trends, and broader organisational concerns about the ongoing resourcing of its volunteer workforce, in 2017 the NSW SES announced a new organisation-wide strategy called *Volunteering Reimagined* that aims to "increase capability through the development of a sustainable volunteer workforce" (2017, p.2). With the objectives of reducing volunteer turnover and enabling more flexible and ad-hoc volunteering, the strategy introduces new categories of (informal) non-members called corporate and spontaneous volunteers. While retaining the existing (formal) "core" of volunteer members, the strategy provides new opportunities for flexible community engagement in less demanding support roles such as administration, logistics, field assistance, community engagement and incident management.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge that, in the context of Australia's historical susceptibility to a range of natural hazards, conceptions of the "heroic rescuer" have always had a place within broader Australian cultural narratives about duty, mateship, bravery and resilience in the face of adversity (explored in greater detail in the discussion paper at Appendix F). In 2016, political tensions over the autonomy and independence of volunteer firefighters in Victoria culminated in the passage by the Federal Government of the *Fair Work Amendment (Respect for Emergency Service Volunteers) Bill 2016.* The explanatory note accompanying the Bill states (p.i) that the purpose of the legislation is to "protect emergency services bodies and their volunteers by providing that an enterprise agreement cannot include terms that undermine the

capacity of volunteer emergency services bodies to properly manage their volunteer operations". Clause (1)(c) of the Act identifies the responsibilities of emergency services agencies to "recognise, value, respect or promote the contribution of its volunteers to the well-being and safety of the community".

Exceptional dimensions of emergency service volunteering

The various official reports on emergency service volunteering outlined above highlight the inherent complexity of this phenomenon. Many of these official reports characterise emergency service volunteers as a large and essential (unpaid) workforce that can be deployed in times of crisis. Such abstract generalisations can downplay the great social and economic value to the community of the services provided, or the quite exceptional nature of the roles undertaken.

Beyond the official statistics, reports, inquiries and sometimes heroic media characterisations, emergency service volunteering in Australia has a number of unique circumstances and distinctive characteristics that distinguish it from most other forms of formal volunteering, and that justify its description as exceptional civic participation. These include the:

- Demanding nature of emergency response roles.
- Level of dedication and personal commitment required to sustain emergency service volunteering.
- Specialist competencies required to undertake emergency tasks safely.
- Economic and social value to the community of the unpaid services provided.

Many of the following observations on the culture and operations of emergency service units are based on: the author's experience as an active volunteer with an urban unit of the NSW State Emergency Service from 2013 to 2016; the author's consultations with a broad range of volunteers and emergency service staff at National Council for Fire and Emergency Services (AFAC) conferences in 2014, 2015 and 2017; the author's active participation in and presentations to various Research Advisory Forums organised by the Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre, and related engagement with a diverse range of agency representatives on a Sustainable Volunteering end-users' consultation group; and a comprehensive report produced by the NSW SES Volunteer Association following a State-wide consultation with volunteer members in 2014.

Demanding nature of emergency response roles

Who would choose to leave the comfort of a warm bed at 3 am on a bitterly cold morning to go out into torrential rain to climb a ladder to place a tarpaulin over a leaking roof; to use a chainsaw to remove trees threatening to damage property or blocking access; to place sandbags to divert floodwater or bolster temporary levies; to evacuate

people at risk of inundation; or to rescue those caught in dangerous floodwaters? These are just a small sample of the multitude of challenging emergency tasks regularly undertaken by over two hundred thousand emergency service volunteers in Australia every year.

Often responding at short notice at any time of day or night, the emergency tasks undertaken by volunteers can be physically and psychologically demanding, and at times potentially hazardous. Manual work undertaken in the dark, wind, rain or cold using machinery or heavy equipment can pose inherent challenges, and every emergency incident can be different and unpredictable. Volunteers are expected to be constantly on call and available to respond immediately (sometimes with little or no notice), to be deployed for an indeterminate period of time (potentially days), with obvious implications for family and work relationships.

The roles require a sustained personal commitment (over a period of months and years) to develop and maintain competency in a broad range of skills, and to participate regularly (often weekly) in organised unit activities. Members are expected to become an integral part of work teams, where they rely on one another for mutual support and safety, and undertake complementary functions.

While personal risks to emergency service volunteers are mitigated by a pervasive safety culture, personal protective gear, modern high-quality equipment, explicit safety-focussed standard operating procedures, mutual care and a clear chain of authority, and a constant risk assessment process that explicitly prohibits any potentially dangerous actions, there will always be some element of inherent risk in managing unpredictable natural hazards despite the most careful planning and execution. Emergency service volunteers can be exposed to a range of stressful situations including rescuing people caught in floods, helping people severely injured or trapped in collapsed structures or in damaged motor vehicles, or finding deceased persons during land searches.

A 2018 report titled *When helping hurts: PTSD in first responders* by Australia21 acknowledges that “the risk of post-traumatic stress is inherent in the work that first responders do. First responders are the men and women who deliver the initial response to any kind of emergency situation, whether it be the result of a natural disaster, an accident or a deliberate human act causing or threatening injury or loss of life. They include police, fire, ambulance, paramedics, rescue and other emergency services personnel” (2018, p.11). The report proposes a range of organisational strategies to mitigate and manage the effects of traumatic stress on workers, and concludes that “the moral case is that everything reasonably possible should be done to protect the health and wellbeing of those who put themselves at risk on behalf of the community, and the health and wellbeing of their families” (2018, p.55).

There can be a tendency in discussing emergency service volunteering roles to over-emphasise the active emergency-response (seemingly heroic and exciting) dimensions of the work. In reality, volunteering roles can also be extremely tedious and routine, with long periods of inactivity (in which training and preparation occurs), and limited opportunities for operational deployment. Particular types of emergencies (fires or storms) tend to be concentrated at particular times of the year (seasons), with relatively short periods of intensive activity (for example, summer for fires) followed by many months of inactivity.

Because the magnitude of an emergency event is not completely predictable, volunteers can be mobilised in reserve, including extended travel to distant locations, only to be stood down. In units with few vehicles and many members, the opportunity for deployment even in busy times may be limited by the capacity of the vehicles. A 2007 report prepared for the Australian Council of State Emergency Services (ACSES) titled: *The value of volunteers in State Emergency Services* estimates that 61% of volunteers' time is allocated to training, 22% to unit management and other activities, 14% to response and recovery, and 3% to community service (ACSES, 2007).

Level of dedication and personal commitment required to sustain emergency service volunteering

The motives for emergency service volunteering are the primary focus of this research. It is axiomatic that the substantial demands of emergency service volunteering roles and tasks (outlined above) need to be matched by a high level of personal dedication and commitment. This research explores the contention that altruistic values play a seminal role in motivating this commitment, primarily through the collection of empirical data on the values preferences of the volunteer workforce.

Various official reports acknowledge the growing personal, organisational and social challenges to formal volunteering, raising even further the level of commitment required to sustain active participation. Time constraints, changing work and family obligations, financial pressures, competing interests, an ageing population, and the general demands of more complex and busy lives, are all impacting on volunteer availability, making the substantial level of commitment required for demanding emergency service roles increasingly unsustainable for some. Cowlishaw , Evans and McLennan, (2006, p.1) have studied the pressures that emergency services work can place on volunteers' families and, following a series of interviews with Victorian fire service volunteers, found that "many volunteers consistently prioritise brigade demands ahead of family responsibilities. The experience of being in second place to the fire-brigade often generates resentment from some family members".

As a vitally important (potentially life-saving) public service, emergency service volunteering is in many respects an anomaly in a developed market-based economy where value and service are typically remunerated. The community requires and

expects that Governments will respond immediately and effectively to potentially life-threatening natural hazards, much as they do in responding to other serious threats and emergencies with law enforcement, fire and rescue, and defence. Each of these emergency-response functions constitutes an essential public service that is directed and deployed by Governments to keep the community safe and protect against the loss of life. The fundamental difference with emergency service volunteers is that mobilisation of the workforce in times of crisis is largely contingent on the ongoing goodwill and charity of its individual voluntary members.

If emergency services are to effectively manage their volunteer workforces, it is important to acknowledge the role of individual volition (the power to freely choose) in the personal decision to commit to and participate in highly-demanding volunteering roles. In contrast to the formal and explicit obligations and duties of an employment contract with paid staff, many of the conditions that define and govern the relationship between the volunteer and the emergency service organisation are implicit, negotiated and conditional. Personal volition and goodwill need be sustained for volunteers to continue to serve, and may actually underpin a level of commitment and dedication that exceeds the duty-based obligations of paid employees.

Understanding the nuances and inherent contradictions between an essential emergency-response function and a discretionary workforce is thus critically important in managing and sustaining volunteer commitment and minimising turnover. The nature and strength of the implicit relationship between the individual, unit and organisation is pivotal to sustaining volunteer commitment and ongoing participation. Every time a volunteer is “called out” in an emergency situation they have to decide whether they are willing and available to step forward to serve. Theoretically, if a significant number of volunteers simultaneously decided not to participate, it would be difficult to resource an adequate response to a large-scale emergency event.

Individual commitment and goodwill is thus constantly conditional, and can be negatively impacted by a diverse range of internal and external factors, some seemingly minor. Factors that can erode goodwill include being treated unfairly or with disrespect, conflict with colleagues, a loss of confidence in local or state leadership, or growing resentment towards the increasingly bureaucratic requirements of the parent organisation. Capturing reliable data on the reasons why people cease volunteering can be difficult when exit interviews are not conducted as a matter of course, and many people just cease participating without explanation. An exception is a 2013 exit survey commissioned by the WA Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES) on the primary reasons for leaving that revealed that: 36% moved away; 26% management/supervision style; 25% did not feel valued; 18% employment demand including new job; 17% personality clash; and 14% lack of recognition (DFES, 2013, p.13).

The volition to participate may also give the volunteer the power to expect reciprocity from the organisation and fellow volunteers in terms of intangible issues like respect, consultation, recognition, competence and integrity. The strength and idealism of altruistic motives means that they may be matched by heightened personal expectations that the donation of time and effort will be a positive experience, will make a meaningful contribution to the well-being of others, and the activities will be congruent with core personal values. The empirical research conducted as part of this study and outlined in Chapters 4 and 5 will provide evidence of a correlation between the satisfaction of such altruistic expectations, and the level of volunteer commitment and turnover.

Specialist competencies required to undertake emergency tasks safely

Given the inherently unpredictable and dynamic nature of emergency events, emergency service volunteers require a diverse set of skills to be deployed operationally. Volunteers require ongoing training and accreditation in a broad set of generic and specialist competencies in order to undertake emergency tasks safely and effectively. Complicated or potentially risky activities (such as swift water rescue) may only be undertaken by specially trained and qualified personnel. The combination of the diverse set of minimum competencies required for accreditation and safe operational deployment are unique to emergency service volunteers. Training is a major financial and human resource investment by emergency service agencies, and the constant leakage of experienced operational capability is one of the reasons why agencies are so concerned about the relatively high turnover of volunteers (in some agencies exceeding 20% annually according to official reports).

New recruits undergo induction training that explains the rationale, principles, procedures, code of conduct, skills and minimum competency standards required for recognition and accreditation as an active volunteer (typically referred to as becoming a “member” of the unit and the organisation). Following the successful completion of induction, further core courses are provided on topics such as first aid, general rescue, storm and water damage operations, chainsaw operations, risk assessment, flood rescue boat operations, communication equipment operations, map reading and navigation, and working in an operations centre. All general volunteers are required to have a minimum set of generic competencies including first aid. Further specialist training is also available on a wide variety of subjects including land search operations, truck driving, vertical rescue and team leadership.

Emergency service volunteers can be called on to perform a highly diverse range of tasks in a single shift that each requires particular competencies. In one shift these tasks could include: evacuating families from their homes before rising waters prevent their move to higher ground; putting a temporary tarpaulin over a shattered roof in the rain; cutting up and clearing a large tree blocking vehicle access to a hospital; sandbagging the entry to an aged care facility to prevent damage from floodwater;

directing traffic around a flooded area or downed power lines; and rescuing a family from a stalled car in rising flood water in the middle of the night.

Economic and social value to the community of unpaid services provided

The volunteering page on the web site of the NSW Office of Emergency Management notes that “volunteers make an enormous contribution before, during and after natural disasters and other emergencies in NSW. Without these volunteers many people may have lost their lives, their homes or have taken much longer to get back on their feet after being involved in a natural disaster or other emergency. Volunteers can be involved in directly dealing with the emergency through roles such as firefighting, rescue or storm recovery, or through important support roles like catering, communications and transport”.

Estimates of the economic value of the gratis services provided by emergency service volunteers vary widely, with output methods imputing value to the goods or services produced (the replacement value), and input methods imputing value to the time worked by volunteers (such as the opportunity cost of wages forgone by volunteers). Other tangible measures of value include economic contribution of volunteering to gross domestic product (GDP), emergency management costs, emergency event costs, and estimates of economic costs mitigated.

In terms of an estimate of the opportunity cost of wages foregone by volunteers, using the Productivity Commission 2016 estimate of more than 250,000 emergency service volunteers, the ABS 2014 General Social Survey estimate of an average annual contribution of 42.5 hours, and an ABS gross opportunity cost hourly wage rate of $24, wage costs in 2014 would exceed $255 million. Given that active “members” of emergency services typically attend weekly unit and brigade meetings that can involve several hours of competency training and equipment maintenance, the ABS 2014 GSS estimate of an average annual contribution of 42.5 hours may be highly conservative. Using an estimate of 100 hours annual contribution, the wages foregone for 250,000 volunteers would amount to $600 million. Total expenditure across ambulance, fire and emergency service organisations in 2014-2015 was estimated by the Productivity Commission (2016, p.D6) to be $6.7 billion.

In terms of the costs of emergency events, the Productivity Commission’s *Natural Disaster Funding Arrangements Report* notes (2014, p.5) that “Australia is exposed to a wide variety of natural hazards that become natural disasters when they significantly and negatively impact the community. …. Over the past 40 years, storms have been the most frequent disasters causing insured property losses. Floods have also been frequent and, when they occur, typically the most expensive events. Bushfires are less frequent, but account for most fatalities. Across the country accumulated insurance losses have been greatest in NSW (mostly hail and storms), followed by Queensland (mostly floods and cyclones)”. The report estimates that insurance losses by natural

hazards in the period 1970 to 2013 amount to $29.4 billion, though the report notes that "the bulk of these losses arose from a relatively small number of events" (ibid).

The Productivity Commission report notes (p.3) that "natural disasters have also had a significant financial impact on the Australian, State, Territory and Local Governments. Over the past decade, the Australian Government has spent around $8 billion on post-disaster relief and recovery, with another $5.7 billion to be spent over the forward estimates for past natural disaster events".

In a similar vein, a 2014 report by Deloitte Access Economics titled *Building an open platform for natural disaster resilience decisions* notes (2014, p.12) that "that the economic cost of natural disasters to Australian communities amounts to an average of $6.3 billion per year, with $700 million of that borne by all levels of government, the majority of which is spent on post disaster relief and recovery. By 2050, this is forecast to rise to $23 billion annually in present value terms". Finally, the 2018 World Disasters Report from the International Red Cross notes that over the last decade the cost to Australia of natural disasters amounted to US$27 billion, placing the nation 10th internationally in total costs incurred (2018, p.179).

Pressures for organisational reform

In the context of the unique and exceptional dimensions of emergency service volunteering that are outlined above, it is important to also acknowledge the rapidly changing organisational context for such activities. As noted in various reports, emergency services across Australia are currently undergoing a period of significant transformation, and volunteers are subject to both personal and social pressures for change. The 2011 *National Strategy for Disaster Resilience* expressed concern about an increasing vulnerability to disaster, and acknowledges the contemporary forces impacting on both emergency services organisations and on volunteer workforces (2011). The 2011 National Volunteering Strategy explicitly acknowledges the growing pressures on emergency service volunteers, with declining numbers and increasing community expectations "that volunteers and emergency management organisations will operate at a highly professional standard" (p.17). In the context of an increase in the frequency and severity of damaging emergency events, there are growing external pressures on traditional member-based bodies to modernise and comply with formal legal and regulatory rules and standards relating to accountability, transparency, risk-management, advancement on merit, equity and competency-based training. This section will explore these pressures for change and consider the potential implications for what have often been traditional member-based bodies.

A 2010 Productivity Commission report titled *Contribution of the not-for-profit (NFP) sector* explores these pressures and the changing environment for volunteers, noting (p.xxxii) that "generic regulation, such as occupational health and safety requirements, are imposing disproportional costs on NFPs. These and more specific qualification

requirements are raising the cost of using volunteers. Such additional costs come at a time when volunteers are tending to volunteer for fewer hours on average, with younger volunteers preferring episodic and work-based volunteering. … There is also evidence that increasing professionalization, that also corresponds with employment growth, crowds out voluntary effort in community services and education”. The introduction in 2010 of new national work health and safety legislation extended the definition of worker to include volunteers, with implications for the legal obligations and responsibilities of both agencies and their volunteers (Eburn, 2011).

Organisational reform is a complex issue for many Australian emergency services. Many units and brigades originated as autonomous local community-based groups that were sponsored to varying degrees by Local Government. Over the last two decades these diverse groups have undergone major change as State Governments have moved to consolidate, formalise and enhance their emergency management arrangements. While it is difficult to generalise about the thousands of emergency service units across Australia, it is fair to say that all are in various stages of organisational and cultural transition as a result of contemporary changes in society, new accountability and governance obligations, and changes in the risks posed by climate change-related natural hazards.

While emergency service organisations have formalised hierarchical structures, paid staff at headquarters and regional levels, established command and control systems, and processes for coordinating responses to emergency events, the principal operational capability (the volunteer workforce) is located within local units or brigades. Local units continue to retain considerable autonomy with primary responsibility for the recruitment, training, administration, management, support and local coordination of their volunteer members. As reflected in the literature review, research consistently shows that volunteer loyalty and commitment is often centred on the local unit and personal networks, rather than the broader organisation.

Efforts at organisational integration continue, though wide variations in culture and standards remain between units, including member numbers, member demographics, length of service, levels of turnover, management styles and levels of operational activity. As noted earlier, a 2015 Ernst and Young report on the NSW SES observes (p.9) “the SES has no single identifying culture and is made up of a range of subcultures which have varying levels of inclusivity and diversity”. While agencies have developed and promulgated Codes of Conduct that emphasise the organisation’s core values, their influence on the day-to-day functioning of units can vary widely.

In such a dynamic and complex environment, the relationship between the parent agency (and paid staff) and its volunteer units can be volatile, with the potential that the top-down imposition of corporate requirements may impinge negatively on volunteer autonomy and motivation. In 2014, the NSW SES Volunteers Association

(SESVA) consulted with its members across NSW, and the subsequent report notes (p.10) that “staff and volunteers often came from the same point of frustration, but there seemed to be little understanding or acknowledgement that each were experiencing the same frustration. There tended to be references to ‘they’ and ‘them’, rather than more inclusive terminology from both sides”.

Similar sentiments are expressed in the Ernst and Young report quoted earlier that observes (p.9) that the [NSW] “SES was established as a volunteer organisation and has evolved into a more regulated public sector agency. Within the organisation there is a prevailing belief that the SES has moved away from its volunteer origins”. As recently as July 2017, a SESVA submission to a NSW Parliament Legislative Council inquiry into bullying states (p.28) that the SES’s values of trust, accountability, respect, professionalism, safety and service (TARPS) “have changed over a period of time from being statements that describe desired behaviours to now being used as a tool that is used to discipline members”.

The growing pressures for organisational reform are characterised by various authors as the inevitability of modernisation. Utilising a framework originally developed by Zimmeck (2000), Rochester, Paine and Howlett (2012) explore the differences between “home-grown” and “modern” models of volunteer management. The home-grown or traditional organisation involves volunteers “more from a core expression of values”, and has: shared ideals/interests; relies on informal authority; has friendship-based relationships; is egalitarian, democratic and consensual; and has a minimum division of labour (2012, p.153). In contrast, the modern corporate organisation involves volunteers “largely as a means to an end” and is: mission and rules-driven; hierarchical with volunteers subordinate to employees; applies direct control and formal authority; and has functional relationships, defined roles and a clear division of labour” (ibid). It could be argued that these characterisations are broadly consistent with the growing professionalization and corporatisation of Australian emergency services.

A shift from a traditional to modern management model may impact negatively on volunteer retention and turnover in a number of ways. There is some potential that those older/longer-term (collective) volunteers who identify with and are committed to traditional values may resent and resist pressures for corporatisation and formalisation. This same older cohort may also experience dissonance with the attitudes and overt self-interest of younger reflexive volunteers. Conversely, the younger/newer reflexive volunteers are unlikely to sustain their commitment to an increasingly bureaucratic organisation over the longer term. In both instances a relatively higher level of volunteer turnover may be anticipated.

Conclusions

This chapter has set the scene for the Valuing Volunteers Study by reviewing and synthesising a diverse range of contemporary official reports on the operations, performance and culture of the various volunteer-based emergency services in Australia. Given a reported decline in formal volunteering rates in Australia post-2010 (ABS, 2015), various official reports have identified a range of contemporary personal and social pressures that may impact on the community's willingness and availability to commit to formal emergency service volunteering roles, including a shift to more reflexive and spontaneous forms of volunteering.

Consistent with the first research objective, this chapter has revealed the unique circumstances and distinctive characteristics of formal emergency service volunteering that justify its description as exceptional civic participation. The chapter demonstrates that the use of a volunteer-based workforce to provide an essential public service is an inherently complex phenomenon, whose specific features are not well understood by the community or policy-makers. Beyond the stereotype of the heroic rescuer ready to respond in times of crisis, there seems little appreciation of the substantial personal commitment and goodwill required to undertake inherently demanding emergency response roles, or the conditional and potentially fragile nature of the relationship between the individual volunteer, the local unit and the emergency service organisation.

This chapter has revealed that the commitment and retention of emergency service volunteers may be particularly susceptible to specific external and internal forces, including changing social values (declining altruism) and growing pressures for organisational and cultural reform. The bulk of the volunteer workforce is comprised of thousands of individual units and brigades across Australia, each with its own distinctive culture, and organisational reforms that inevitably impinge on individual autonomy and sense of personal responsibility may add an additional level of complexity to sustaining volunteer motivation.

This chapter has demonstrated that emergency service volunteers constitute a vital and highly unique community resource, and continuing to churn through members without understanding and meeting their evolving needs may ultimately prove unsustainable. If predictions about the increasing severity of climate change-related emergency events are correct, then the demands on the emergency service volunteer workforce are only likely to increase over the longer term, with the possibility that a major emergency or catastrophic natural event could evolve into a large-scale disaster that overwhelms existing resources and capabilities.

The following chapter critiques various theories and related research that are relevant to an understanding of the primary motives for emergency service

volunteering, and identifies a relevant and useful instrument for measuring values amongst existing and potential volunteers.

Chapter 3 - Valuing Volunteers Study - Literature review

Introduction

Consistent with the second research objective, this chapter provides a comprehensive review of motivational theories that are relevant to emergency service volunteering, demonstrating the capacity of an inclusive multi-dimensional values framework to encompass and integrate diverse psychological, sociological and economic perspectives. This chapter also evaluates the efficacy of the Schwartz *Theory of Basic Human Values* and related *Portrait Values Questionnaire* (PVQ-40) survey for determining the primary motives of a large State-wide volunteer workforce (Schwartz, 2012).

Concepts & key definitions

One of the points of consensus in the contemporary literature on volunteering and civic participation is that these topics encompass a diverse range of inherently complex, multi-dimensional and dynamic phenomena. A review of texts on evolving forms of civic engagement by Bermudez (2012, p.533) observes "the picture of civic engagement that emerges presents us with an intricate set of cognitions, beliefs, behaviours and motivations resulting from interactions between individuals, groups, institutions and societies". Eccles and Wigfield (2002, p.127) reviewed the literature on motivation, beliefs, values and goals, noting that "the proliferation of different terms (and measures) for similar constructs makes theoretical integration more difficult", concluding that "the complex interactions of context and the individual need further explication". Consistent with these observations on the diversity of concepts and definitions, a glossary of key terms is included at the front of this thesis.

As outlined in the previous chapter, volunteering is defined as "time willingly given for the common good and without financial gain" (Volunteer Australia, 2015, p.3). This definition encompassing both formal volunteering that is "someone who willingly gives unpaid help, in the form of time, service or skills, to or through an organisation or group" (ABS, 2010), and informal volunteering that is any spontaneous or sporadic helping activity. For many years the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) defined and measured volunteering as "unpaid work", though it is proposing to broaden its definition for the next *General Social Survey* to recognise the important contribution of informal volunteering (2017).

In a comprehensive review of contemporary survey-based volunteerism research, Wilson (2012, p.178) observes that "it is to the credit of scholars working in this

specialised field that a wide range of disciplinary approaches can be found and that inter-disciplinary research is quite common. Psychological theories tend to emphasize intra-psychic phenomena such as personality traits, self-concepts, and motivation. Sociological theories focus on individual socio-demographic characteristics such as race, gender, and social class, and ecological variables such as social networks and community characteristics. Economic theories treat volunteerism as a form of unpaid labour, consuming resources and motivated by the promise of rewards". Einolf and Chambre (2011, p.298) make similar observations, identifying "three major theoretical perspectives in research on volunteering: social theories that stress the importance of context, roles, and integration; individual characteristic theories that emphasize values, traits, and motivations; and resource theories that focus on skills and free time" that "loosely match the disciplines of sociology, psychology, and economics".

Given the relatively narrow discipline-specific perspectives that are reflected in much of the volunteering literature, it seems logical to review the various contemporary motivational theories according to their discipline. The following sections review psychological theories that focus on intrinsic and individual motives for volunteering, followed by sociological theories that focus on extrinsic and social motives for volunteering, and concluding with economic theories that focus on functional motives for volunteering. This will be followed by an exploration of multi-disciplinary perspectives that transcend the limited outlook that this review identifies in discipline-specific perspectives on emergency service volunteering motives.

Psychological perspectives on the motives for emergency service volunteering

Clary, Snyder, Ridge, Copeland, Stukas, Haugen and Miene (1998) have played a seminal role in volunteering research through their development of a *Volunteer Functions Inventory* (VFI). The VFI proposes six motivationally distinct needs that can be satisfied by volunteering, with volunteering "simultaneously serving multiple functions for the same individual" (Guntert, Strubel, Kals and Wehner, 2016, p.312). Finkelstein, Penner and Brannick (2005, p.404) summarise the VFI motives as "values (to express values related to altruistic and humanitarian concerns for others); understanding (to acquire new learning experiences and/or exercise skills that might otherwise go unused); social (to strengthen social relationships); career (to gain career related experience); protective (to reduce negative feelings about oneself or address personal problems); and enhancement (to grow and develop psychologically)". Of the six VFI functions, the values motive clearly represents other-oriented altruism, while the remainder reflect varying degrees of self-interest.

In a study with particular relevance to the influence and implications of altruistic values for emergency service volunteering, Stukas, Hoye, Nicholson, Brown and Aisbett (2014) apply the VFI to examine the motives of over 4,000 Australian volunteers, and compare the results to five measures of well-being (self-esteem, self-

efficacy, well-being, social connectedness and trust). Their study concludes (p.17) that "Australian volunteers who engaged in service primarily for other-oriented reasons, to express their prosocial values or to reaffirm their relationships with close others … were more likely to report higher levels of well-being", and "higher satisfaction, perceived support from the volunteer organization, and intentions to continue volunteering". In contrast, "volunteers who engaged in service primarily for self-oriented reasons, to distract themselves from personal problems or to advance their careers (but not specifically to feel good about themselves), were more likely to report lower well-being and poorer outcomes". The authors caution that "volunteers are rarely purely other-oriented or self-oriented in their motivations" (ibid).

In a contemporary review of strategies to recruit volunteers that is directly relevant to this research, Stukas, Snyder and Clary (2016, p.251) conclude that "we are sensitive to the possibility that methods to encourage community involvement may potentially result in two different classes of volunteers – those who are primarily other-oriented and intrinsically-motivated, and those who are primarily self-oriented and extrinsically-motivated. Although no real harm (and potentially a lot of good) may be achieved by volunteers who are self-oriented and extrinsically motivated, their commitment to sustained service may be lower than that of volunteers who are more other-oriented and intrinsically motivated. … Methods that encourage people to develop and internalise a compassionate motivation to help others in need of their help may result in the most benefits for all". This suggests a shift in volunteering recruitment strategies to attract more extrinsically-motivated volunteers.

In a study that revealed generational differences in functional motives, McLennan and Birch (2008) surveyed the attitudes of 455 Country Fire Authority volunteers in Victoria. They conclude (p.7) that "those that volunteer do so because of a mix of community-safety, community-contribution, and self-oriented motivations. It appears that younger volunteers are more likely to be motivated by self-oriented perceived benefits from volunteering compared with older volunteers". These personal benefits include career enhancement, skills development, the challenge, and opportunities for friendship and camaraderie. A later study by Francis and Jones (2012) that surveyed 252 State Emergency Service volunteers found that the two highest functional motives for both younger and older volunteers were values and understanding, with a strong orientation towards the values of universalism and benevolence.

As enduring principles and beliefs, values represent more cerebral motives, and *Construal Level Theory* offers some valuable insights into individual thinking and reasoning processes by exploring the nature and influences of concrete (proximal) and abstract (distal) mental constructs. As explained by Gong and Medin (2012, p.628), "more weight is given to global, abstract features at high-level construals, whereas local, concrete features are more influential at lower-level construals". Given values represent abstract higher-level construals, the *Construal Level Theory* framework may have some utility in better understanding the interaction between

immediate (concrete) self-interest and broader (abstract) altruistic considerations. Trope and Liberman (2010, p.453) observe that “because of their relatively abstract and decontextualized nature, [values] will be more readily applied to and guide intentions for psychologically distant situations”, concluding that values “are better reflected in their intentions for the distant future than in their intentions for the immediate future or their actual behaviour”.

A study by Aknin, Van Boven and Johnson-Graham (2015) suggests that as a higher-level construal, values may be more influential in sustaining a longer-term commitment to the role rather than affecting the immediate decision on whether or not to respond to any particular emergency. They observe (p.458) that “prosocial actions are characterised by highly favourable abstract features and less favourable, sometimes unpleasant, concrete features”. Their study of emergency volunteers in the United States “suggest that abstract construal increases the anticipated emotional benefits of prosocial actions relative to concrete construal” and “the effect of construal was larger when the prosocial action entailed greater personal sacrifice” (p.459). They conclude (p.461) that the findings may explain “why people may appreciate the value of prosocial behaviour in the distant future but avoid opportunities to offer assistance in the present”.

In a study with possible implications for translating informal volunteering into more committed formal volunteering, Barraket, Keast, Newton, Walters and James (2013) surveyed the intrinsic motives of 712 spontaneous volunteers in Queensland following a spate of natural disasters. They concluded (p.35) that “the overwhelming initial motivation for spontaneous volunteering in response to natural disasters is a desire to help the community, which is consistent with the collective mode of volunteering. Yet for those who are new … to volunteering through such events, opportunities for more reflexive modes of volunteering beyond the immediate crisis appear to be important in translating initial enthusiasm into sustained civic engagement”. Their study notes the positive role that helping may play in meeting individual psychological needs in response to crises, and highlights the significance of relationships (proximity) with people and place as facilitators of initial and potentially ongoing participation.

Given the dedication and substantial personal commitment required to sustain involvement in inherently demanding emergency service roles (explored in the previous chapter), these psychological theories have relevance to an understanding of the nature and strength of individual intrinsic motives and internal reasoning processes, and highlight the significant implications of other-oriented (altruistic) and self-oriented (egoistic) values. They do not on their own provide a comprehensive explanation of the systemic drivers of emergency service volunteer participation, and a review of sociological and economic perspectives is thus warranted.

Sociological perspectives on the motives for emergency service volunteering

Much of the contemporary sociological literature emphasises the critical importance of understanding broader trends in cultural and social change. *Modernisation Theory* is a sociological approach that studies social evolution and social development, highlighting the changes that accompany the transition from industrial to technology and service-based economies (Marsh, 2014). While the approach was originally developed (in the West) in the mid-20th Century, before the globally transformative effects of neo-liberalism, globalisation and a ubiquitous internet, a contemporary iteration called *Reflexive Modernisation Theory* posits that traditional and enduring social institutions and identities are being progressively displaced by subjective, dynamic, fluid and self-defined constructs (Farrugia, 2016). Yeung (2004, p.22) notes that “modernisation has been characterised by increasing individualisation, including the reflexive reconstruction of identity and the decline in the institutional determination of life choices”.

Hustinx and Lammertyn (2003, p.168) use a *Modernisation Theory* perspective to explore fundamental changes in the broader social and economic contexts within which volunteering occurs. They note various reports of “a transition from traditional/classical/old to modern/new, from collectivistic to individualistic, from membership-based to program-based, or from institutionalised to self-organised types of volunteer participation”, observing that “individualisation and secularisation are assumed to restructure the motivational bases and patterns of volunteering” (ibid). They propose a new analytical framework to explore the interaction of personal and social influences on what they characterise as “collective” (other-oriented) and “reflexive” (self-oriented) styles of volunteering. They contrast “classic volunteerism” by collective volunteers who identify with traditional social norms, demonstrate predominantly altruistic and idealistic motives, and make a long-term commitment to their chosen formal organisation, with “new volunteerism” by reflexive volunteers who identify with and selectively pursue various personal interests, often concurrently and informally on a sporadic basis.

Hustinx and Lammertyn’s (ibid) exposition on a collective-reflexive motivational continuum concludes (p.183) that “major changes occur in the relationship between volunteer and organisation. Volunteer involvement loses its self-evident character: it decreasingly corresponds to strong identifications and long-lasting memberships. A shift towards more reflexive, self-directed forms of volunteering may result in a widening gap between the priorities of the volunteer and the organisational work that has to be done. Another source of conflict lies in the intermittent course of reflexive volunteer involvement. Chances of organisational survival will depend on structural adaptations that can accommodate more self-interested, flexible and detached forms of involvement”. These observations have particularly relevance to Australian emergency services that are in transition from traditional member-based bodies to

modern corporate entities, while continuing to rely on the availability of a mix of collective and reflexive members to respond at short notice to emergency events.

In a comprehensive review of contemporary volunteering literature and theory, UK-based Rochester, Paine and Howlett (2012) seek to broaden perspectives of volunteering beyond the dominant "volunteering as service" paradigm (formal, non-profit, altruism-driven, unpaid work), to include a "volunteering as activism" paradigm (reflecting self-help and mutual obligation), and a "volunteering as leisure" paradigm (reflecting genuine personal interest). In a similar vein, Chambre and Einolf (2008) utilise three overlapping models to represent the different manifestations of volunteering. The first (dominant) "unpaid labour" paradigm depicts volunteering as altruistic charity or welfare service through formally structured non-profit organisations. The second "civil society/activism" paradigm depicts volunteering as a collective mutual-assistance response to common challenges through democratic member-based associations. The third "serious leisure" paradigm depicts volunteering as intrinsically motivated involvement in areas of personal interest in the arts, culture, sporting and recreational fields through both large and small organisations. Formal emergency service volunteering, that which is encountered in this study, largely accords with the dominant unpaid-labour paradigm.

Sociological theories naturally focus on the interaction between the individual and their social context, and *Social Exchange Theory* posits that the relationship can be conceptualised in terms of the negotiated exchange of tangible and intangible resources that have costs and benefits for both parties. Hallmann and Zehrer (2016) use a *Social Exchange Theory* perspective to examine the costs and benefits affecting volunteer satisfaction, noting (p.749) that "it may be assumed that volunteers will be more likely to engage in future volunteering behaviour to the extent that they have experienced positive outcomes as a result of that behaviour in the past", and that "they will be less likely to volunteer again if they have experienced negative outcomes".

Kulik, Arnon and Dolev (2016) use a *Social Exchange Theory* perspective to study satisfaction levels among groups of organised (formal) and spontaneous (informal) volunteers working in emergency-response roles in Israel. They conclude (p.1298) that "the main variables that explained general satisfaction with volunteering among organised volunteers were the motives of personal empowerment and satisfaction with the extrinsic rewards of volunteering", while "satisfaction with the intrinsic rewards contributed to satisfaction only among the spontaneous volunteers". Interestingly, they comment (p.1301) on the need to adapt aspects of the theory "to the unique characteristics of volunteering in emergencies", because "contrary to the theoretical prediction, the assessment of the personal price of volunteering during an emergency did not play an important role among the organized volunteers, whereas it even increased the general satisfaction with volunteering among the spontaneous volunteers".

In a similar vein, Rice and Fallon (2011) apply a *Social Exchange Theory* perspective to explore the influence of interpersonal and group cohesion factors on volunteer satisfaction and commitment through a survey of 2306 Australian emergency service volunteers. They conclude (p.22) that “volunteers continually reassess and balance the rewards and costs of their involvement. Positive interpersonal relationships with supervisors, recognition, and group cohesion all appear to contribute to greater satisfaction and intention to remain committed to the agency in the longer term. … These are among the few benefits that emergency services volunteers receive”.

Bekkers and de Wit (2014) explore the facilitators and impediments of participation in volunteering in Europe, observing (p.17) that “resources like income, wealth, education and health as well as high levels of social and cultural capital enable volunteering, while low levels of resources and capital hinders it”. They note (p.12) that “citizens who endorse general prosocial values such as reciprocity, social responsibility and the principle of care are more likely to start volunteering and less likely to quit volunteering” This is a finding that is consistent with other research on the key role of altruistic values in motivating volunteering.

Seeking to identify barriers to volunteering, Willems and Dury (2017) have studied the reasons why people don’t participate at all. They use a framework developed by Brady, Verba and Schlozman (1995) that classifies three main groups of reasons for not volunteering – ‘can’t’ (lack of time, physical boundaries, lack of skills), ‘don’t want to’ (lack of benefits, uninterested, social boundaries, unwanted stress), and ‘nobody asked’ – to survey 1248 volunteers and non-volunteers. The study finds that there are often several concurrent reasons why individuals chose not to volunteer; that amongst active retired people (who have great potential as a target group for volunteering), physical boundaries and not being invited were the major barriers rather than lack of time; and that previous volunteering experience has a major positive effect on future volunteering intentions. They recommend that strategies to attract volunteers should focus on meeting the specific needs of homogenous sub-groups, an observation highly relevant to this study.

These sociological perspectives have relevance to an understanding of the dynamics of the relationship between the individual and their broader social and cultural context. The conceptualisation of a collective-reflexive individual motivational continuum has particular salience for locating the motives for traditional (formal) emergency service volunteering at one end. At the collective/altruistic/other-oriented end of the spectrum are concepts like interdependence, group identity, common purpose, teamwork, consistency and sustained commitment. At the reflexive/egoistic/self-oriented end of the spectrum are concepts like independence, personal autonomy, individual interest, self-development, spontaneity and sporadic involvement. This dichotomy will be applied later in this chapter in a consideration of the interaction of “modernisation’ trends.

Economic perspectives on the motives for emergency service volunteering

Given the highly formalised aspects of emergency service volunteering (regular meetings, uniforms, defined ranks, differentiated roles, competency-based training, minimum participation requirements, command-and-control hierarchy), organisational theories can be particularly useful in exposing the interaction between the emergency service agency and what is effectively a substantial unpaid (reserve) workforce. Understanding the dynamics of this relationship may be important where there are significant pressures on traditional member-based bodies for organisational reforms, with potential that encroaching regulation and corporatisation may impinge on the autonomy and altruistic motivation of a volunteer workforce.

Rochester et al. (2012, p.153) document research originally undertaken by Zimmeck (2000) that identifies two distinctly different models of managing volunteers. The “home-grown” or traditional organisation is member-driven with shared ideals/interests, informal, friendship-based, egalitarian, collectivist, democratic, consensual and adaptive, and involves volunteers “more from a core expression of values”. The “modern” efficient bureaucratic organisation is mission-driven, hierarchical and formal with explicit accountability and defined competency-based roles, and involves volunteers “largely as a means to an end” (ibid). In a similar vein, Drory and Zaidman (2007) explored the differences in the norms and structural characteristics between organic (home-grown) and mechanistic (modern) organisations, concluding that organic organisations rely far more on individual initiative and dedication to shared goals.

Particularly valuable insights on the nuances of the individual-organisational relationship are provided through the application of *Psychological Contract Theory*. The theory was originally developed as an empirical diagnostic tool to examine the informal and mutual obligations of workplace relations. It shares similarities with *Social Exchange Theory* as its focus is on the explicit and implicit transactions between the individual and the organisation. Because of its recognition of the inferred/implicit/intangible aspects of the individual/organisation “contract” it has particular relevance to an understanding of the subtle and multiple dimensions of discretionary social relationships that are sustained by choice and not bound by formal ties, such as occurs in emergency service volunteering. *Psychological Contract Theory* also has particular utility in exploring the potential implications of an evolving relationship between the individual and organisation, in particular encroaching bureaucratisation.

Vantilborgh, Bidee, Pepermans, Wilems, Huybrechts and Jegers (2011) use a *Psychological Contract Theory* framework, and the continuums of traditional-professional organisation and collective-reflexive volunteer, to explore the potential for contract violations of different mixes of approaches. Their study finds that the top-

down imposition of new policies and processes on predominantly collective volunteers has the potential to engender resistance to perceived goal displacement, leading to overt resentment and decreased loyalty. In a similar vein, Taylor, Darcy, Hoye and Cuskelly (2006) use a *Psychological Contract Theory* perspective to explore divergences in expectations of and tensions between individuals and organisations that are transitioning to corporatisation, concluding (p.143) that “contract breach is likely to remain common … as long as trends towards professionalization, bureaucratisation and managerialism continue to widen the chasm between the organisation and the volunteer”. Both studies highlight the inherent risks of “forcing” intrinsically-motivated volunteers into functional bureaucratically-defined roles. This issue is of particular relevance to this study, as Australian emergency service organisations are progressively imposing greater formal obligations and responsibilities on their volunteer workforces.

Lucas and Kline (2008) utilise a *Psychological Contract Theory* perspective to examine the influence of organisational culture and group dynamics on group learning and adaption to change among groups of paid and volunteer emergency service workers in the US. They identify a distinctive sub-culture amongst firefighters that is strongly hierarchical and command-and-control, exhibits characteristics of a “hero” culture that is sustained by tradition, group cohesion and a sense of a unique shared group identity, and that had the potential to resist pressures for organisational change.

Likewise, Thurnell-Read and Parker (2008) explore organisational culture and masculine identities amongst male firefighters at a UK fire station, noting (p.127) that “throughout popular culture the iconic image of the male firefighter is one of quintessential bravery incorporating notions of heroism, danger and courage”. They explore how “fire service personnel construct their identities within this highly masculinised occupational setting”, and conclude that “occupational identities were based primarily upon notions of emotional strength, physical and technical competence and collective understandings of risk and responsibility. A commitment to group solidarity was also central to the masculine identities” (ibid).

Lee and Olshfski (2002) examine the different focus of commitment (to the supervisor, work group and organisation) of paid and volunteer firefighters in the United States, concluding (p.36) that “paid firefighters appear to respond to motivational strategies that focus on the individual level, while the strategies directed at volunteers might best be focused at the organisational level. … Volunteers are more influenced by the peer group and the organisation as a whole in their decisions to remain with the organisation, while paid organisations need to focus on the individual level”.

Lois (2003) explores the emotional culture of search and rescue volunteers, revealing the complex interaction of intrinsic and extrinsic motives, organisational socialisation and culture, identity formation and status, and symbolic rewards. She

highlights the intrinsic gratification of heroism and an associated prestigious identity, noting (p.173) “the esteem gained from developing such a selfless identity was ironically self-gratifying. … For outsiders, the lure of this esteem made membership desirable. They wanted to associate themselves with the group so that they too could be viewed in a heroic light”. Lois concludes that individual and shared emotions play a vital role in the social construction of heroism, noting (p.195) “it appears that definitions of heroism involve not only the ability to manage one’s own emotions during crises, but also the superior ability to pass along that emotional control to others in distress”.

O’Toole and Grey (2016) study the phenomena of cultural control and resistance in a voluntary sea rescue organisation in the United Kingdom, exploring (p.56) the “tensions at the boundary between volunteers and their overarching management and organisation system”. They note that “whereas cultural control normally aims at the inculcation of strong, shared values and organisational commitment, in the voluntary context such values and commitment already exist to some degree in the very fact of volunteering. … Contrary to the typical paradigm which seeks to gain commitment by soliciting the responsible autonomy from workers, managerial strategies in this case were more targeted towards pulling back autonomy from highly committed volunteers” (ibid). They conclude (p.71) “the fact of being volunteers created a kind of moral economy. The sense of having special status by virtue of being at the sharp end is of course not unique, but the physical danger of the work allied to altruism of doing it by choice gave a kind of moral weight to the … volunteers that is unusual in ‘normal’ settings”. These observations may have equal relevance to emergency service volunteering which also combine altruism, localism and potentially hazardous work.

Self Determination Theory posits that “growth, integrity and psychological well-being stem from the degree to which innate basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence and relatedness are satisfied” (Bidee, Vantilborgh, Pepermans, Huybrechts, Willems, Jegers and Hofmans, 2013, p.35). Guntert et al. (2016) combine *Self Determination Theory* with a functional approach to examine the relative effects of self-determined (intrinsic) motivation verses controlled (extrinsic) motivation. Their study across volunteers in Swiss non-profit organisations found (p.319) that “values, understanding, and social justice motives were positively associated with relatively self-determined motivation, whereas career, social, protective and enhancement motives showed negative correlations”. They acknowledge (p.324) that volunteering can serve both self-oriented and other-oriented functions simultaneously, however “whether these motives are accompanied by the experience of either self-determination or control significantly affects volunteers’ satisfaction”. Of particular relevance for emergency services are the observations (ibid) that “volunteers’ efforts can be grounded either in interest and identification or in external pressure and control”.

Conservation of Resources Theory posits that “humans are motivated to protect their current resources (conservation) and acquire new resources (acquisition). Resources are loosely defined as objects, states, conditions and other things that people value” (Halbesleben, Neveu, Paustian-Underdahl and Westman, 2014, p.1335). The theory seeks to explain the motives for peoples’ behaviours in seeking to avoid losses and maximise gains in social interactions, in particular in their workplaces. Allen and Mueller (2013) apply a *Conservation of Resources* perspective to examine two potential antecedents of volunteer burnout in the United States - a volunteer’s lack of voice in the decisions that affect them (and an associated sense of powerlessness and lack of autonomy), and ambiguity in the volunteer’s understanding of their role. They conclude that both circumstances threaten to drain the volunteer of their cognitive resources leading to burnout and increasing the intention to quit, an observation with particular relevance to organisations undergoing the process of corporatisation. Likewise, Scherer, Allen and Harp (2016) apply *Conservation of Resources Theory* and person-organisation fit to examine the influence of poor fit of volunteer goals, personality and values on burnout and intentions to quit, finding that the greater the incongruence the more burnout was experienced, and reinforcing the importance of aligning volunteer and organisational values and goals in strategies to reduce turnover.

Many of these economic/functional theories seek to reveal the key influences on the relationship between the individual and the organisation, and in the case of volunteers this is often crystalized in a discussion of whether they should be characterised as “members” of an organisation or group. In the context of the social and economic value and importance of unpaid workers, Cameron (1999) explores the distinction between volunteers and members, noting (p.54) that a primary concern in the extant literature is “the balance between empowerment and control in dealing with volunteers. Organisations want enthusiastic volunteers, but they want their energies channelled to serve the organisation’s purposes”. Cameron acknowledges that volunteers can operate in the grey area between formal organisations and community associations, and that characterisation as a member can serve to distinguish between different levels of commitment and authority.

Social Identity Theory explores the influence of group membership on an individual’s attitudes to others, and provides a framework for understanding group dynamics and intergroup relationships. The theory contends that individuals categorise themselves (and others) according to their nominal status as part of an “in-group” in order to secure recognition and a positive social identity. Stirling and Bull (2011) adopt a *Social Identity Theory* perspective to examine the collective agency of Australian rural ambulance volunteers, noting (p.197) that “central to the volunteer-organisational relationship is the match between values that prompt people to volunteer and their subsequent experiences”. They identify two dominant collective identities amongst rural ambulance volunteers, with “moral volunteers” characterised as special (though functionally invisible) people motivated by selfless altruism, and

“professional volunteers” characterised as an integral part of (unpaid workers in) a professional ambulance service. They conclude that the organisation’s tacit preference for the moral volunteer identity is intended to marginalise the workforce and creates opportunities for their disempowerment and exploitation.

In contrast, *Role Identity Theory* posits that a strong alignment between the concept of self and the social roles that individuals play, through the internalisation of a group identity, can reinforce the personal importance of and commitment to group activities. Marta, Manzi, Pozzi and Vignoles (2014) defined role identities (p.200) as “self-definitions that individuals apply to their identities as a consequence of the structural role position that they have”. Their longitudinal study of the influence of role identity on people’s motivation to sustain their commitment to formal volunteering concludes (p.198) that volunteer “role identity fully mediated the relationship between behavioural intention and attitude, social norms, past behaviour and parental modelling”. The theory may have particular relevance in understanding the strength of emergency service volunteers’ affiliation with, and loyalty to, their local unit or brigade.

Finkelstein, Penner and Brannick (2005) examine the strength of role identity in sustaining volunteer engagement, observing (p.414) that “the individuals who are most likely to engage in ongoing, discretionary helping are those who have internalised a pro-social role and who strongly feel that others expect them to continue in a manner consistent with that role”. In their study “the strongest correlate of role identity was the values motive” (p.415). In a later survey of 194 students in the United States, Finkelstein (2010) explored the implications of individualism (reflexivity) and collectivism for volunteering. Her study found (p.450) that “with individualism came evidence of self-focussed career aspirations, while collectivism was most closely associated with other-oriented motives and the development of a volunteer identity. … Motive fulfilment may be particularly important for individualists, who are less persuaded then collectivists by social pressures to volunteer and who … do not show close associations with the development of a volunteer identity”.

Emergency service volunteers are often perceived and characterised as a large unpaid workforce, and Governments and communities invest significant resources in equipping and training volunteers. Retention and turnover rates can have major financial and capability implications, and a range of authors have explored the barriers to sustaining emergency service volunteering. Malinen and Mankkinen (2018) surveyed 762 Finish volunteer firefighters and found that lack of time, work/school conflict and other work-related challenges were rated the most frequent and severe of thirteen barriers to voluntary participation. The next most severe barriers were “negative atmosphere in the fire brigade” and “interpersonal conflict with leadership”, with the authors concluding that “as a positive brigade climate is likely to enhance volunteer satisfaction, leadership development appears a good place to start for building an organisational culture that supports retention” (p.618).

In a study to examine the strength of identification with the nature of the work and the work group and the importance of personal relationships, Baxter-Tomkins and Wallace (2009) conducted in-depth interviews with 72 NSW State Emergency Service and NSW Rural Fire Service volunteers. They concluded (p.9) that "interpersonal relationships and group dynamics are two key issues affecting recruitment and retention of volunteers in emergency services". They note (ibid) that "three main areas of complaint by emergency service volunteers may prompt thoughts of resignation. The first is a perceived lack of equipment, operational and personal: second is a perceived lack of effective leadership from headquarters paid emergency response professionals; and thirdly, and considered by volunteers to be the most important, disharmony and friction within the primary group".

In a survey of 682 volunteer firefighters on the relationship between volunteer-family conflicts and volunteer satisfaction and intentions, Cowlishaw, Birch, McLennan and Hayes (2014, p.184) observed that "simply reducing volunteer demands may be counter-productive - insufficient opportunities to engage in operational activities may reduce the psychological rewards associated with being a volunteer. Strategies should thus focus on minimising conflict between volunteering and family to help reduce negative outcomes, without effecting positive experiences".

Dadich (2012) examined the impacts of stress on workplace relationships amongst Australian rural fire-fighters, observing that the three main sources of stress are the actual demands of their difficult and unpredictable fire-fighting roles, organisational issues and broader pressures for social change. The study found that volunteers could better integrate learned behaviours (including more professional management, communication and negotiation skills) into emergency situations when the training was more closely aligned with (similar to) the reality of their workplaces.

In a similar vein, Webber and Jones (2011) examined the positive and negative impacts of volunteering following the 2009 Victorian bushfires, finding (p.33) that "sustained volunteering involving intensive commitments of time resulted in role conflict between the demands of their family and the demands of volunteering. Volunteers found it difficult to reduce the amount of time spent on their voluntary activity… They also had difficulty handing over leadership roles to others. As volunteers became exhausted, their ability to make clear judgements was impeded and conflicts sometimes arose".

Catts and Chamings (2006) examined the relationship between organisational culture and flexibility of training in six emergency services in Australia, finding that the four fire services studied had more mechanistic cultures (bureaucratic, authoritarian, vertical communication, focused), while the two State emergency services had more organic cultures (group decisions, democratic, vertical and lateral communication, holistic). Their study concluded (p.451) that "mechanistic organisations had high levels of insular trust and relied on training as a means of socialising new volunteers into the

norms and practices of the organisation. They required all recruits to undertake the same training and did not recognise competencies acquired outside the organisation. In contrast, those organisations with a more organic structure had more flexible training strategies and used holistic assessment to recognise current competencies that volunteers brought to their roles”. Their research suggests that new and more flexible training strategies will be required to build trust in roles requiring a team-based emergency response capability.

Acknowledging that emergency service volunteers are sometimes perceived as a large unpaid workforce that can be mobilised to protect the community in times of crisis, these economic theories have value in exploring the complex and evolving relationship between agency and volunteer, and between paid and unpaid workers. The identification of two distinct volunteer management models is conducive to the development of an organisational culture continuum that largely reflects the current process of organisational evolution. At the traditional end of the spectrum are organisations that are informal, democratic, team-based, autonomous, member-directed, horizontal and inclusive. At the modern end of the spectrum are organisations that are formal, hierarchical, command-and-control, program-managed, compliant and highly-regulated. Australian emergency services organisations have been under growing pressure to move towards the latter model.

In conclusion, it may be useful to apply the multi-dimensional framework proposed by Vantilborough et al. (2011) to examine the interaction between two of the major “modernisation” trends in volunteering to emerge from this literature review. Figure 4 below illustrates the possible interaction of these modernisation trends in an emergency service volunteering context. The horizontal (x) axis represents an individual motivational continuum that ranges from collective/altruistic/other-oriented to reflexive/egoistic/self-oriented volunteers, as proposed by Hustinx and Lammertyn (2003). The vertical (y) axis represents an organisational culture continuum that ranges from traditional/member-based to modern/corporate bodies, as explored by Rochester et al. (2012).

Figure 3 below demonstrates the (perhaps inevitable) shift towards reflexivity and corporatisation, highlighting the potential for conflict between distinctly different perspectives and sub-groups with divergent values as they move towards new forms of volunteering. This framework will assist in the consideration of the implications of the research findings on the shared and contrasting values preferences of emergency service volunteers, and will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 6.

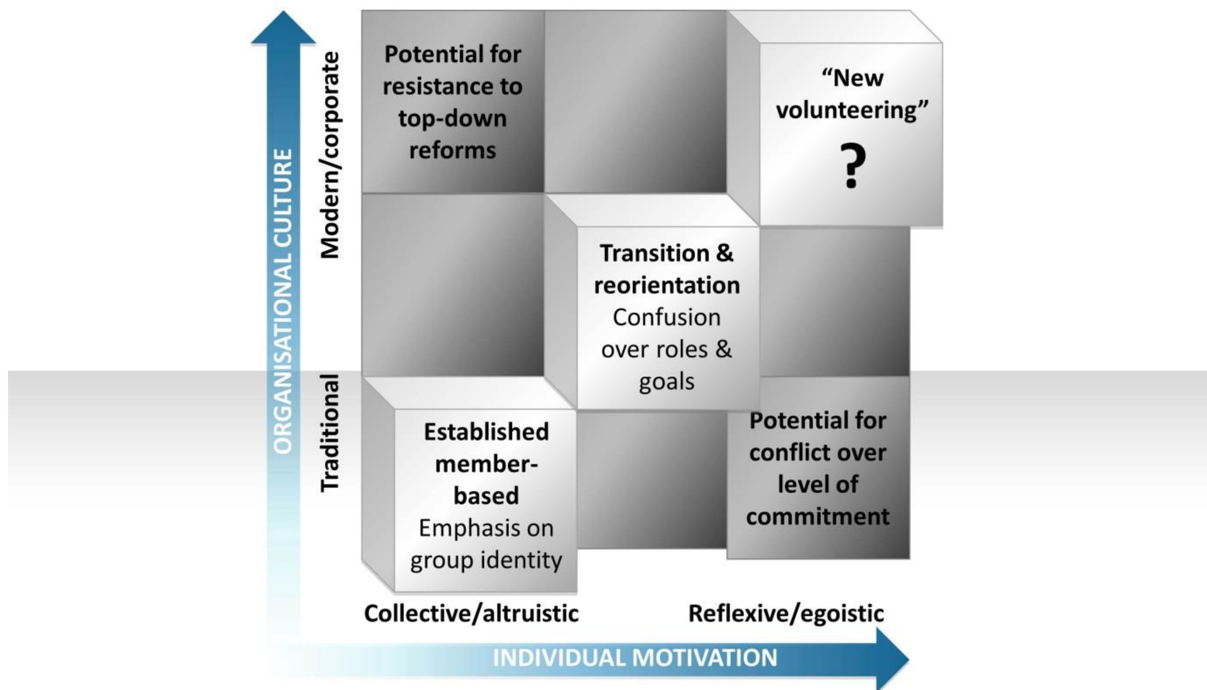

Figure 3: Interaction of modernisation trends (Source: author)

Multi-disciplinary & multi-dimensional perspectives on the motives for emergency service volunteering

While many of the discipline-specific theories outlined above make a valuable contribution to an understanding of particular aspects of emergency service volunteer motivation, few provide a comprehensive understanding of the complex interactions of multiple influences. This section reviews multi-disciplinary and multi-dimensional perspectives that emphasise the key role of values (particularly altruistic values) as primary motives for volunteering, confirming the efficacy of an inclusive values framework for interpreting and understanding diverse individual and social behaviours.

Highlighting the limits of discipline-specific perspectives in interpreting the intrinsic motives for volunteering, Haski-Leventhal (2009) reviewed perceptions of the role of altruistic values in volunteering across the disciplines of psychology, sociology, economics and socio-biology. She concluded (p.293) that "none of the four disciplines here studied can offer an inclusive theory of altruism, since they base most of their research on the perception of rational, economical and utilitarian man. It is time to more broadly acknowledge the possibility of a moral and alter-centred humanity, and to see that not all altruism demonstratively serves the helper. First, altruism can be perceived as a continuum and not as a dichotomy. Second, an alter-centric approach

recognises the impacts of values, conscience and altruistic perspective on altruistic attitudes and behaviour". Haski-Leventhal's observations emphasise the inherent complexity of interpreting the diverse motives for behaviours, and the need for a more holistic and nuanced approach is echoed by a range of authors.

Carpenter and Myers (2007) adopted a multi-dimensional approach when they examined the influence of altruistic values, reputational concerns and (extrinsic) material incentives as motives for volunteering amongst firefighters in the United States. They conclude that altruistic values are a primary motive for choosing to volunteer, and are positively correlated with participation in training, but did not appear to influence the decision to "turn out" in response to specific emergency events. In contrast, reputational concerns were positively correlated with both choosing to volunteer and responding to call outs. Their study also demonstrated that offering extrinsic incentives (in the form of small stipends) to volunteers had the direct effect of increasing call response, though offering such incentives to volunteers motivated by reputational concerns had no effect. They conclude (p.21) that "volunteers may value monetary rewards, but such rewards can also have the indirect and presumably unanticipated effect of discouraging prosocial behaviour among those who care about being perceived as altruistic". These observations affirm the influence of intrinsic values (specifically altruism) in emergency service volunteering.

In a similar vein, in an extensive cross-cultural study of the social and cultural origins of volunteering motives, Hustinx, Handy, Cnaan, Brudney, Pessi and Yamauchi (2010) surveyed 5794 students across six countries, finding (p.370) that "with but a few individual item variations, students in all countries rated altruistic and value-driven motivations as the most relevant to their volunteering… To give time and skills to benefit others requires, first and foremost, the willingness to be altruistic, but also carries concurrently the expectation of benefits to the volunteer". While acknowledging (p.372) that "numerous studies have found that the number one reason for volunteering is the desire to help – an altruistic motivation", they note that the strength of such motives may vary across countries.

Likewise, Briggs, Peterson and Gregory (2010) use a *Behavioural Reasoning Theory* perspective to explore how other-oriented (altruism) and self-oriented (egoism) reasoning towards volunteering influence the pro-social attitude formation of volunteers. Using survey data from several Australian non-profit organisations and focussing on the Schwartz basic human values of benevolence and achievement, they note (p.74) that "values and reasons that are other-oriented appear to be much more influential on pro-social attitudes than values and reasons for volunteering that are self-focussed". They also identify important generational differences, finding "age negatively correlated with me-oriented reasoning. The younger the volunteer, the more importance placed on values and reasons for volunteering that are self-focused" (ibid). These findings will be tested in this research's examination of the shared and contrasting values preferences of emergency service volunteers.

In their comprehensive review of contemporary volunteering literature, Rochester et al. (2012, p.80) note that a "combination of demographic, economic, social, cultural and political change, which is already underway, will alter the climate in which volunteering takes place". They note (p.81) that "the weakening of family ties, the loss of a sense of community based on location, secularisation, the professionalization of voluntary and community sector organisations and the reduction in the number of 'public spaces' – all tend to undermine the institutions and networks through which people found their ways into volunteering". At the society level they identify major issues like enduring poverty and inequality, disengagement and a "democratic deficit", and challenges to social cohesion, issues that are explored in detail in a Discussion Paper at Appendix F. Their proposed solutions involve "concerted action to overcome or find a way past the increasing number of obstacles in the way of engagement in voluntary action and civil society which would include mitigating the excesses of bureaucracy. On another – more important – level it would involve expressing and actively promoting some key values [cooperation, wellbeing, citizenship] at the expense of other societal norms [individualism, material wealth, consumption]" (p.83). These observations by Rochester et al. highlight the influence of broader social and cultural forces (context) on the nature and extent of civic participation.

Bang, Ross and Reio (2013) surveyed the attitudes of 214 volunteers in US not-for-profit sports organisations and use *Social Exchange Theory* to examine the mediating role of job satisfaction in the relationship between volunteer motivation and effective commitment. They note (p.99) that the initial commitment of a volunteer's time and effort is likely to reflect an expectation of shared core values, and over time "as the fit between the values of volunteers and the values of the organisation get closer, the strength of the volunteers' commitment becomes greater". They conclude (p.107) that "the direct effect of values on effective commitment suggests that volunteers' intentions to be involved with an organisation may be likely based on their perception of the opportunity to express their values regarding altruistic and humanitarian concerns for the organisation". While their study did not establish a significant link between egoistic (self-oriented) motivation and effective commitment, it did emphasise the importance of individual-organisation values alignment.

Finally, almost two decades after they proposed the influential *Volunteer Functions Inventory,* Stukas, Snyder and Clary (2016) examined the different strategies required to recruit intrinsically-motivated/other-oriented volunteers versus extrinsically-motivated/self-oriented volunteers. They tellingly observe (p.249) that "fortunately, in the administration of the VFI, we have often found values motivation to be rated most important, and because volunteer activities are generally framed in terms of their humanitarian or prosocial gaols, this motivation may also be relatively easy for volunteers to feel they have fulfilled. As such, volunteers who have strong needs to express and to act on their personal values may be the easiest to attract and sustain". In respect to the influence of altruistic values, they note that "research that has

investigated this issue has generally found that the self-transcendence values, universalism and benevolence in Schwartz's typology … are most associated with volunteer behaviour. …These values focus on enhancing the welfare of a personal network (benevolence) or the welfare of all people and of nature (universalism)" (ibid).

Each of these contemporary and highly relevant texts emphasise the primary role of values (in particular altruistic values) in motivating volunteering, and the role of values as influential and enduring motives for diverse behaviours has been studied extensively over the last two decades. (Gollan and Witte, 2013; Lee, Soutar, Daly, Louviere, 2011; Bilsky, Janik and Schwartz, 2011; Datler, Jagodzinski and Schmidt, 2013; PIRC, 2018; Perry, 2011; Kasser, 2011; Kulin and Svallfors, 2013; Kirmanoglu and Baslevent, 2011; Morris, 2014; Datler, Jagodzinski and Schmidt, 2013; Aleman and Woods, 2015; Verkasalo, Lonnqvist, Lipsanen and Helkama, 2009; Longest, Hitlin and Vaisey, 2013).

The empirical study of the influence of individual and shared values systems, and their correlation with motives and behaviours, has been greatly assisted by the conduct of several large-scale, cross-cultural, longitudinal studies including the World Values Survey (WVS) and European Social Survey (ESS). "The World Values Survey is a global network of social scientists studying changing values and their impact on social and political life, led by an international team of scholars. …The survey, which started in 1981, seeks to use the most rigorous, high-quality research designs in each country. …The WVS seeks to help scientists and policy makers understand changes in the beliefs, values and motivations of people throughout the world" (WVS, 2018). According to Schofer and Fourcade-Gourinchas (2001, p.807), the WVS "constitutes a unique dataset for testing hypotheses about the structural basis of individual value orientation and behaviour".

Professor Shalom Schwartz, the author of the *Theory of Basic Human Values* (2012), has been instrumental in the development of an integrated values framework that has been widely applied and extensively evaluated across multiple organisational and national setting over two decades. Schwartz defines values (2005, p.1) as "desirable, trans-situational goals, varying in importance, that serve as guiding principles in people's lives". Gollan and Witte (2013, p.11) observe that "in psychological research, Schwartz's (1992) circumplex model is widely accepted as the standard theory on the structure of motivational conflicts between different values. It is important to note that, unlike other theoretical models on values structure… the circumplex model was not developed in a data-driven way (bottom-up), but derived from theoretical considerations about which values are compatible and which are incompatible with one another"". Likewise, Lee et al. (2011, p.234) observe that "Schwartz (1992, 1994) made an important contribution when he noted the importance of understanding values as a system, rather than concentrating on individual values".

The Schwartz universal values framework identifies ten basic human values and four higher-order value clusters, across two bipolar dimensions, that reflect conflicts and congruities between basic and higher-order values. The dynamic relationship between the Schwartz values can be visually represented in a circular motivational continuum (also referred to as a circumplex), that is replicated in Figure 4 below.

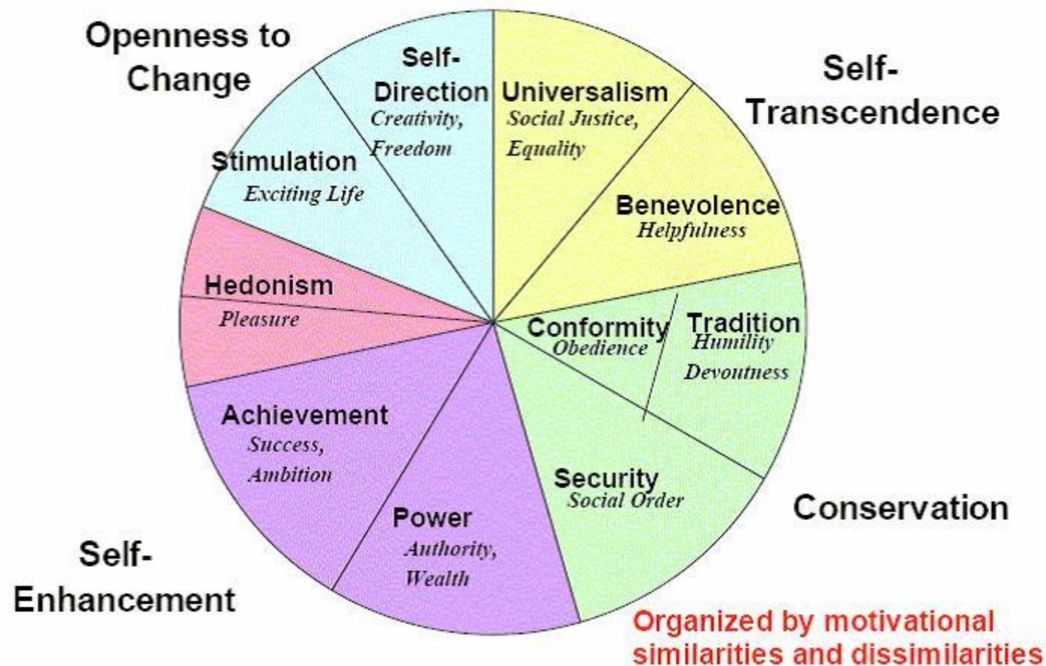

Figure 4: Schwartz circular motivational continuum

Each of Schwartz's ten basic human values are characterised by defining motivational goals (Schwartz, 2012).

- **Benevolence –** the defining motivational goal of this value is preserving and enhancing the welfare of those with whom one is in frequent social contact. Manifestations include valuing true friendship, mature love, helpfulness, loyalty, forgiveness, honesty and responsibility.
- **Universalism –** the defining motivational goal of this value is understanding, appreciation, tolerance and protection for the welfare of all people and nature. Manifestations include broad-mindedness, social justice, equality, a world at peace, a world of beauty, unity with nature, wisdom and protection of the environment.
- **Self-Direction** – the defining motivational goal of this value is independent thought and action, choosing, creating and exploring. Manifestations include freedom, creativity, independence, personal autonomy, curiosity and self-respect.
- **Security –** the defining motivational goal of this value is safety, harmony and stability of society, of relationships and of self. Manifestations include social order, family security, national security, reciprocity of favours, cleanliness, sense of belonging and good health.

- **Conformity –** the defining motivational goal of this value is restraint of actions, inclinations and impulses likely to upset or harm others and violate social expectations or norms. Manifestations include obedience, self-discipline, politeness, honouring parents and elders.
- **Hedonism –** the defining motivational goal of this value is pleasure and sensuous gratification for oneself. Manifestations include pleasure, enjoyment of life and self-indulgence.
- **Achievement –** the defining motivational goal of this value is personal success through demonstrating competence according to social standards. Manifestations include ambitious, successful, capable and influential.
- **Tradition –** the defining motivational goal of this value is respect, commitment and acceptance of the customs and ideas that one's culture or religion imposes. Manifestations include respectful of tradition, humble, devout, moderate, acceptance of one's place in life.
- **Stimulation** – the defining motivational goal of this value is excitement, novelty and challenge in life. Manifestations include an exciting and varied life, daring.
- **Power –** the defining motivational goal of this value is social status and prestige, control or dominance over people and resources. Manifestations include authority, wealth, social power, reputation, preserving one's public image.

As noted earlier, these ten basic values can be condensed into four higher-order value clusters across two bipolar dimensions. The higher-order value cluster of self-transcendence (emphasising concern for the welfare of others) is comprised of the basic human values of universalism and benevolence, while the contrary higher-order value cluster of self-enhancement (emphasising pursuit of self-interest) is comprised of the basic human values of power, achievement and hedonism. The higher order value cluster of conservation (emphasising order and resistance to change) is comprised of the basic human values of security, conformity and tradition, while the contrary higher-order value cluster of openness to change (emphasising independence and readiness for new experiences) is comprised of the basic human values of self-direction, stimulation and hedonism (Schwartz, 2012).

The Schwartz universal values framework has been operationalised through the development and extensive use of a complementary values survey instrument, called the *Portrait Values Questionnaire* (PVQ-40) that can reveal the individual and shared values preferences of defined groups and communities. Several of the PVQ-40 survey questions are included in the European Social Survey. Despite its limited utilisation in Australia, the Schwartz values framework and associated PVQ-40 survey have particular relevance and utility for this research for two distinct reasons. Firstly, the two bipolar dimensions of the Schwartz values framework (self-transcendence versus self-enhancement, and conservation versus openness to change) clearly align with the

major modernisation trends identified in the literature (the continuums of collective-reflexive motivation and traditional-modern culture). Secondly, because of its brevity and ease of use, the PVQ-40 survey instrument is particularly suited to maximising the collection of empirical data on values preferences from a diverse and widely dispersed volunteer workforce, including respondents who may not have access to the internet.

Conclusions

This chapter has provided a comprehensive review of diverse motivational theories that are directly relevant to emergency service volunteering; evaluated the relevance of various psychological, sociological, economic and multi-disciplinary perspectives; and explored the validity and utility of the Schwartz universal values framework for understanding the primary motives for emergency service volunteering. This chapter has addressed the theoretical dimensions of the second research objective by demonstrating the efficacy of values as a comprehensive, multi-dimensional and multi-disciplinary theoretical framework for interpreting and understanding the primary motives for emergency service volunteering.

The following chapter details the conduct of an organisation-wide survey of the values preferences of the NSW SES volunteer workforce, and documents the challenges involved in maximising volunteer participation in the face of a range of prospective impediments.

Chapter 4 - Valuing Volunteers Study - Research methodology

Introduction

This chapter documents the actions taken to obtain original empirical data on the values preferences of a sample of Australian emergency service volunteers. The chapter expands on the organisational and policy impetus for the research; explains the research philosophy; lists the research aim, objectives and questions; outlines the research and survey design (including the adaption of the Schwartz Portrait Values Questionnaire survey); reviews the survey marketing; summarises data collection and analysis; and identifies ethical and methodological issues.

Research impetus

As outlined in Chapter 1, Federal and State Governments concerns about information gaps and the absence of contemporary data on a range of issues concerning emergency management in Australia were crystalized in the establishment in 2013 of the Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre (BNHCRC). The BNHCRC is a unique national collaborative body that represents not only the interests of State and Federal Governments, but the various emergency

services and a broad range of academic institutions across Australia. The BNHCRC undertakes “end-user inspired applied research to: reduce the risks from bushfire and natural hazards; reduce the social, economic and environmental costs of disasters; contribute to the national disaster resilience agenda; build internationally renowned Australian research capacity and capability; and enable Australian small to medium enterprises to be innovative in natural hazard products and services” (BNHCRC, 2016).

The BNHCRC’s research agenda is divided into three distinct themes: the policy and economics of hazards; resilience to hazards; and understanding and mitigating hazards. A series of research clusters focussing on particular issues and topics have been established under each theme, and specific research projects are guided and overseen by end-user clusters comprised of (often senior) representatives from a range of relevant agencies. Agency representation on end-user clusters is intended to maximise the relevance, practical value and ultimate utilisation of the research commissioned by the BNHCRC, and where necessary facilitate support for specific research endeavours.

The BNHCRC advances its research agenda through grants to academic institutions and through the provision of scholarships to higher-degree students. The Valuing Volunteers Study was funded by a scholarship from the BNHCRC under the sustainable volunteering cluster (part of the resilience to hazards theme), and was a component of a multi-faceted research project at the University of Wollongong called “improving the retention and engagement of volunteers in emergency service agencies”. As part of its support for higher-degree students, the BNHCRC establishes and maintains a substantial web presence for both the author and the Valuing Volunteers Study at https://www.bnhcrc.com.au/people/bill-calcutt .

The importance of BNHCRC sponsorship for this research cannot be overstated, and not solely because of the financial support for the student and the supervising university. The active participation from the outset of key personnel from various emergency services in a sustainable volunteering end-user cluster ensured invaluable input to the formulation of research questions and the development of data collection strategies, and ultimately facilitated access to volunteers for the purposes of data collection. Put simply, without the emphatic commitment of agencies at the most senior level the Valuing Volunteers Study would not have been feasible. It may be extremely difficult for an independent researcher to gain access to and secure the active participation of paid staff and the volunteer workforce without official support, and explicit (written) executive support was vital in securing ethics approval for the research through the UOW Human Research Ethics Committee.

BNHCRC sponsorship also provided the author with multiple opportunities over several years to engage with diverse stakeholders across a broad range of Australian and overseas emergency services, including personal access to hundreds of

volunteers and to the senior executive of a number of Australian agencies. The public profile provided through posters and personal representations at various Australasian Fire and Emergency Services Authorities Council (AFAC) annual conferences and at BNHCRC-organised Research Advisory Forums was vital in securing broad interest in and diverse contributions to the research direction and findings.

Research philosophy

The subjects explored as part of this research (motives, values, volunteering, civic participation, risk and emergency management, forces for change) are each complex and volatile phenomena, and making sense of their dynamic interaction is inherently challenging. Given that the focus of this research is on examining and interpreting subjective and highly variable individual and social motives and behaviours, this study broadly reflects a constructivist ontology, and sits squarely within the realm of the social sciences, in particular the discipline of sociology.

This thesis aims to integrate empirical data with broader social theory and apply a critical, independent and multi-disciplinary perspective to understand various complex and diverse social phenomena. The epistemological tradition that most closely accords with this research approach is pragmatism. Situated on a continuum between positivism and interpretivism, a pragmatist epistemology acknowledges the inherent fallibility of social inquiry and “recognises that there are many different ways of interpreting the world and undertaking research, no single point of view can ever give the entire picture, and there may be multiple realities” (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2012).

A pragmatist perspective examines the relationship between actions and actors and social structures, and contends that human habits create social norms rather than being determined by them (Gronow, 2012). A pragmatist approach validates the flexible use of mixed methods that are best suited to inform practical action, and accepts the use of inductive and abductive logic, reflexivity and critical thinking in order to create original insights on dynamic social phenomena.

A paradigm “is a framing set of concepts, beliefs and standard practices that guide human action” (Ehrenfeld, 1997, p. 88), or “a vocabulary with which we make sense of the world and it is the basis of our underlying world view” (Korhonen, 2002, p.67). A dominant paradigm is “the values, metaphysical beliefs, institutions, habits etc that collectively provide social lenses through which individuals and groups interpret their social world” (Milbrath, 1984, p.7). The author seeks to critically analyse and challenge the dominant paradigms that currently frame the policy and social contexts for emergency service volunteering, informing and catalysing a critical and incisive re-evaluation of these complex phenomena.

Author's reflexivity

The author's perspectives on and approach to this research have been shaped by various explicit and tacit influences. Key amongst these is a life-long commitment to inquiry and critical thinking. The author acknowledges a clear view that rigorous social research should question assumptions and should seek to create new insights that inform academic and public discourse. At a personal level, the author acknowledges strong moral and ethical values, including convictions on the essential role of honesty, transparency, accountability and integrity in democratic governance and public administration. The author's experience over two decades in highly responsible national research and policy roles have engendered an awareness of the importance of articulating and communicating clear objectives and strategies as the foundation for coordination and effective action. The author's relatively recent experience as an active emergency service volunteer informed the adoption of research methods (survey), and the focus on shared values as primary (replicable) motives. The author is unaware of any personal or professional conflicts of interest in undertaking this research.

Research aim, objectives & questions

As outlined in Chapter 1, the research aim is to gain a better understanding of the primary motives for formal volunteering in Australian emergency services. This topic encompasses both the specific impetus for and dynamics of the giving behaviours of individuals, and the broader policy and social contexts within which such important civic participation occurs.

In order to fulfil the overall research aim of generating insights that can inform emergency management policies and practices, five research objectives were determined. These objectives are to:

- Demonstrate that emergency service volunteering is of great economic and social value to the Australian community, and represents exceptional civic participation.
- Establish the validity and utility of a values framework for interpreting and understanding the primary motives for emergency service volunteering.
- Determine the distinct shared and contrasting values of a sample of Australian emergency service volunteers, and to consider the implications of these values for volunteer policies and practices.
- Evaluate the efficacy and integrity of current processes for determining and resourcing national emergency management priorities.
- Identify trends in changing core values with implications for future forms of civic participation, including formal emergency service volunteering.

Consistent with these objectives, in particular objective three, and in consultation with the BNHCRC's sustainable volunteering cluster, a series of specific research

questions were formulated that are the focus for empirical inquiry in this study. The research questions are

- What are the distinctive shared values of Australian emergency service volunteers?
- To what extent and in what ways do these shared values impact on volunteer expectations of and commitment to emergency service organisations?
- In what ways can the formal values of emergency service organisations be better aligned with volunteer values in order to maximise workforce satisfaction, commitment and retention?

Research design

The observations in various Government reports (Chapter 2), and in the literature review (Chapter 3), on significant information gaps and the dearth of reliable contemporary information on emergency services volunteering provide some indication of the challenges of undertaking research in this complex and dynamic area. From the outset it was acknowledged that gaining access to and securing participation by a critical mass of emergency services volunteers could prove problematic, and the research design was specifically tailored to maximise both opportunities and incentives for volunteer participation.

Emergency management and volunteering are each evolving social phenomena in their own right, and their study is further complicated by a volatile operational and cultural context. In an all-hazards risk management environment, priorities can quickly change in agencies that are required to react at any time to the powerful and destructive forces of nature, while the unique aspects of the volunteer-organisation relationship can make data collection problematic. As detailed later, both issues impacted to some degree on the conduct of this research.

In the research planning stages, the author had the opportunity to extensively discuss the nature and design of the Valuing Volunteers Study with a range of emergency service stakeholders (both paid and volunteer) through various BNHCRC-organised consultation forums. In April 2015, the author gave a Three Minute Thesis presentation to a BNHCRC Research Advisory Forum in Sydney, and received considerable constructive feedback from participants during and after the presentation. In August 2015, the author participated in a DFES-organised emergency service volunteering workshop in Perth, again receiving considerable constructive feedback and an expression of interest in participating in the project from volunteer representatives from a diverse range of WA agencies.

The proposal to apply the Schwartz universal values framework and use the associated PVQ-40 survey instrument to determine the primary motives of emergency services volunteers was readily endorsed by agency representatives on a BNHCRC-

sponsored sustainable volunteering cluster. Somewhat coincidentally, the NSW SES had only recently promulgated a new code of conduct and ethics that articulated a set of core values called TARPS (an acronym for trust, accountability, respect, professionalism and integrity, safety and service). The proposed provision of qualitative data from the survey on the shared and contrasting values of the existing volunteer workforce had clear relevance to the SES's introduction of TARPS.

The research was subsequently represented in a poster display (titled "Volunteering challenges for emergency services") at the national AFAC conference in Adelaide in September 2015, and the author took the opportunity to consult with a wide range of volunteers during the four days of the conference. Later in that same month the author gave a presentation on the project and survey to the Board of the NSW SES Volunteer Association, securing their endorsement and receiving various valuable suggestions on maximising volunteer participation. Finally, the author informally discussed the research with various members of his own SES unit on several occasions, receiving considerable constructive input and personal encouragement.

Prospective impediments to the research that were identified during these various consultations included:

- The possibility that the research would be interpreted (and to some degree resisted) as a top-down management-driven attempt to collect personal data on individual volunteer's motivation.
- A high degree of survey fatigue amongst volunteers due to recent intensive organisation-initiated consultations.
- A degree of volunteer cynicism during a period of disruptive organisational change.
- The potential that urgent operational exigencies (a major and protracted emergency event) might disrupt engagement and information collection.
- The possibility that participation could be perceived as disloyal to or critical of local unit leadership.
- The possibility that executive changes or organisational reforms might impact on the interest in, commitment to and relevance of the research.

The empirical research was initially intended to have two distinct and complementary data collection stages, an anonymous large-scale values survey followed by focussed participative action research consultations, each of which required and secured ethics approval through the University of Wollongong's Human Research Ethics Committee. For reasons that are detailed later, the second stage consultations did not proceed.

While the first data collection stage originally envisaged an Australia-wide survey (using a modified version of the PVQ-40) of the values preferences of emergency service volunteers from a diversity of agencies, and several emergency services initially expressed an interest in participating, the practicalities of securing an

adequate and broadly representative level of participation across multiple agencies soon became apparent. Emergency services volunteers in thousands of units across Australia represent a broad cross-section of the community, and a percentage of volunteers are not frequent or competent internet users (or have restricted internet access). In such circumstances the conduct of a web-based survey was unlikely to capture the views of a broadly representative group of volunteers, and as a consequence it was decided that survey participants would need to be given the choice of a paper or web-based response.

Mailing sufficient quantities (tens of thousands) of paper-based surveys to thousands of emergency service units across Australia would have been logistically difficult and financially prohibitive. With the endorsement of end-users it was decided to maximise the level of participation by the volunteer members of one agency (the NSW State Emergency Service) in order to determine if sufficient participation could be secured to be broadly representative (an organisation-specific case study to determine the viability of a volunteer workforce values audit). This would also assist in determining the efficacy of the PVQ-40 survey instrument and process in an emergency services context. This approach also capitalised on a long history of research collaboration between NSW SES Headquarters (based in Wollongong) and the University of Wollongong.

In addition to the decision to offer all prospective survey participants the option of a paper or online response, a range of other strategies were implemented to maximise volunteer interest and participation in the survey. These included:

- As the completed surveys could nominally provide sensitive information on the personal values preferences of individual respondents, anonymity and confidentiality were vital requirements and were constantly stressed.
- The independence of the research was strongly emphasised in the promotional material encouraging volunteer participation, with the study described as “independent research being undertaken by University of Wollongong researchers”. Given the earlier discussion about local loyalties, unit autonomy and the sometimes ambivalent nature of the relationship between the volunteer and the organisation, even with assurances of anonymity a degree of volunteer reticence to participate in the collection of personal data may have been anticipated.
- The opportunity presented by the survey to express the needs of the volunteer workforce was strongly emphasised in an attempt to overcome “survey fatigue” and volunteer cynicism. The documentation accompanying the survey advised “it is hoped that this research will give voice to the collective expectations of NSW SES volunteers, and highlight the vital importance of recognising and respecting shared values in sustaining volunteer commitment and satisfaction”.

- Unambiguous executive support was confirmed through the NSW SES Commissioner's endorsement. At the launch of the survey in September 2015 the Commissioner sent a personal email to every NSW SES volunteer stating "I would like to invite all volunteer members to participate in a survey being undertaken by one of our members into volunteer values". The Commissioner stated "I fully support this research and am keen to see the findings. These will be used to assist us in looking at volunteer attraction and retention strategies. I encourage all members to contribute to Bill's research".
- The NSW SES Volunteer Association (SESVA) endorsed the survey by publishing a positive article titled "university study to focus on the values and needs of NSW SES volunteers" in its September 2015 magazine.

The proposed second stage of the research envisaged a series of intensive participative action research engagements with interested NSW SES volunteer units to explore how the shared and contrasting values preferences to emerge from the values survey are and could be better accommodated within a command and control culture, and their compatibility with the agency's core values. This stage was specifically intended to inform the third research question on the impacts of the alignment of individual and agency values. While two preliminary unit consultations were undertaken in early 2017, the completion of the stage two consultations were delayed and ultimately abandoned due to a convergence of factors. These included: heavy operational demands (responding to a series of large-scale emergency events); major unexpected management changes in the NSW SES; and the organisation-wide roll-out in 2017 of a new flexible volunteering program that made further unit consultations largely irrelevant. It should be noted that in announcing the introduction of the new flexible volunteering model (called *Volunteering Reimagined*), the NSW SES Commissioner acknowledged close collaboration with BNHCRC researchers, meaning that the work already undertaken in the first stage of this research had informed decisions on new models of volunteer engagement.

Survey design & conduct

The purpose of the values survey was to determine the shared and contrasting values preferences of a sample of emergency services volunteers, and to reveal statistically significant differences in values rankings between different demographic sub-groups. Given the requirement for anonymity the demographic dimensions sought (gender, age range, location) were accepted by the UOW Human Research Ethics Committee as sufficiently generic to minimise the possibility of identification of individual participants. In discussions with the NSW SES, the possibility of adding an additional demographic question on length of service was also considered, but was eventually excluded due to its specificity when combined with the other demographics. In any event a relatively small number of survey respondents elected not to answer one or more of the demographic questions.

Approximately 3000 paper copies of a set comprising a one-page double-sided participant information sheet, a three-page doubled-sided survey form, and a DL size reply-paid envelope were printed, packaged and mailed to more than 220 SES units across NSW in late 2015. Each package of surveys to units also contained a covering letter from the author titled "invitation to participate in values survey". The inclusion of pre-addressed reply-paid envelopes was intended to facilitate the easy return of completed individual surveys to a University of Wollongong post box. The strategy of distributing paper copies to maximise opportunities for diverse participation was subsequently affirmed with 300 paper surveys returned by mail over several weeks, representing a 10% response rate on the 3000 surveys distributed.

The online survey was constructed using Qualtrics survey software and hosted on the University of Wollongong's server. The online survey was identical to the paper survey, except that respondents had to click on response buttons. A web page titled Emergency Volunteers Project (EVP) that outlined the aims of the survey was hosted on the UOW server and provided a PDF copy of the participant information sheet, a PDF copy of the paper survey, and a link to the Qualtrics online survey. A link to the URL address of the EVP web page (http://www.uowblogs.com/evp/valuing-volunteers-survey/) was included in various correspondence to volunteers encouraging their participation (including in an email from the NSW SES Commissioner to all members in September 2015).

Access to the UOW's Emergency Volunteers Project web page and to the Qualtrics online survey was not password-protected, and the survey did not force responses to all questions. (In reviewing the online responses a check was undertaken to ensure there were no multiple submissions from a single IP address). The online survey attracted a total of 222 responses, 180 (80%) of which were completed in the five days immediately following an email from the NSW SES Commissioner in September 2015 encouraging members to participate.

PVQ-40 Survey

The PVQ-40 survey asks respondents to disclose their own personal values preferences by rating (on a scale of six to one) how much they are like (or not like) forty different portraits (or character types). Each of the PVQ-40 portraits contains two statements that are intended to describe actions or attitudes that are comparable representations of one of ten basic human values. Three of the basic human values are represented by three portraits, five of the basic values have four portraits, one of the basic values has five portraits, and one of the basic values has six portraits. The six rating options for each of the PVQ-40 portraits are numbered from six to one on a Likert scale, and are listed vertically below each portrait with the direction "please circle the statement below that is most like you", with response options ranging from "this person is very much like me" (6) to "this person is not like me at all" (1).

The survey consists of a total of forty-three questions, three initial demographic questions with varying response options, and forty PVQ-40 portraits, each with six response options. Each of the ten basic human values is represented by between three and six portraits, and the strength of preference for each value (and the order of values preferences) is represented by the mean score for the relevant portraits. Means of one and two represent a weak preference for the value (not like), means of three and four represent a moderate preference for the value (somewhat like), and means of five and six represent a strong preference for the value (very like). Likewise, the higher-order values preferences are determined by calculating the mean for the relevant basic human values.

The original PVQ-40 survey has separate male and female versions, necessitating considerable additional printing and adding an unnecessary level of administrative complexity for respondents (having to select the right paper survey for their gender). The survey used in this research was de-gendered by replacing “he” and “she” with “you”. While the global question remained “how much like you is this person?”, the portraits changed from “thinking up new ideas and being creative is important to him. He likes to do things in his own original way”, to “thinking up new ideas and being creative is important to you. You like to do things in your own original way”. In addition, the six response options were changed by adding “this person is” to each response. These changes align the question “how much like you is this person?”, with the portrait “[action] is important to you”, and the rating choice “this person is like/not like me”.

Survey marketing

Securing the interest and participation of a diverse and widely dispersed workforce poses inherent challenges, particularly in the context of the unique relationship between the emergency service organisation, unit and individual; highly variable channels of direct communication with individual members; and the potential for a degree of resistance, cynicism and survey fatigue amongst volunteers. Considerable efforts were made to explain the purpose and independent nature of the research to volunteers, and these efforts may have positively influenced the level of survey completion. Promotion of the research and the survey to members needed to balance executive support with an emphasis on the independence of the research, and the potential value to individual members of the anticipated results.

In addition to the detailed information contained in a participant information sheet that accompanied each paper survey, each of the packages of surveys mailed to SES units across NSW included a covering letter outlining the purpose of the research and inviting volunteer participation. All of the marketing documentation included the URL of the UOW’s Emergency Volunteers Project web page, as well as the email contact

details for the author and an invitation for further questions or feedback on the research.

The impending conduct of the values survey was publicly canvassed in an online bulletin called Hazard Note (titled “Ensuring volunteering is sustainable”) published by the BNHCRC in July 2015. This was followed by a poster display (titled “Volunteer challenges for emergency services”) at the annual conference of the Australasian Fire and Emergency Services Authorities Council (AFAC) in Adelaide in early September 2015. At the same time a detailed article on the research (titled “University study to focus on the values and needs of NSW SES volunteers”) appeared in the September 2015 edition of the SES Volunteer Association magazine The Volunteer.

On 25 September 2015 the NSW SES Commissioner sent an email to all SES volunteers endorsing the research and strongly encouraging members’ participation in the values survey. An article on “an independent study being undertaken by the University of Wollongong” appeared in the October 2015 edition of the NSW SES newsletter Compass. Posters on the research progress were subsequently displayed at the BNHCRC-organised Research Advisory Forum in Hobart in May 2016 (poster title “Valuing volunteers”), and the AFAC17 conference in Sydney in September 2017.

Data collation & analysis

The anonymous survey of the values priorities of NSW SES volunteers attracted 522 valid responses, 300 (57.5%) in paper form and 222 (42.5%) online using Qualtrics software. Prior to substantive analysis the raw data was manually screened to detect any obvious anomalies (such as no questions answered, or all values questions answered with the same Likert rating). Two paper surveys were returned blank, and six online surveys were submitted uncompleted, and all were eliminated from the sample. The online surveys were also checked for replication of IP addresses to detect any multiple submissions from the same respondent.

In order to facilitate data standardisation and analysis, each of the 300 paper surveys were manually entered into the Qualtrics software. This enabled an initial analysis of the demographic composition of the sample, and calculation of the means and standard deviation for each of the PVQ-40 portraits, ten basic human values and four higher-order value clusters. In both paper and online surveys, respondents could choose not to answer particular questions, and non-responses were subsequently excluded from consideration in the statistical analysis.

In addition to respondents’ values preferences (from strong to weak), the inclusion of general demographic characteristics can reveal differences in values preferences by gender, generation and location. When the demographic data was collated the eight age ranges were condensed into three generations. Age options one to three (under 18, 18-30, 31-40) broadly align with Generation Y and younger (born after

1980); age option four broadly aligns with Generation X (born 1965-1980); and age options five to seven broadly align with Baby Boomers and older (born before 1965). The seventeen regions were condensed into urban location (regions 2, 6, 8, 12 and 17) and rural location (regions 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15 and 16).

The data was subsequently exported from Qualtrics into Microsoft Excel to facilitate data organisation and consolidation, to assist in coding of the consolidated (new) generation and location categories, and to cull superfluous imported data such as to/from date, start/end times and IP addresses. The significance of differences between means for each of the ten basic values and four higher-order clusters for all respondents was compared using unpaired 2-way t-tests using a GraphPad Prism program.

The data was then exported from Excel into SPSS to facilitate a more comprehensive statistical analysis of differences between basic and higher-order values, and the three demographic variables. Comparisons and statistical analysis were undertaken via one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) with Bonferoni post-hoc analysis. Levene's test for homogeneity of variances was performed for each variable. All variables for gender were homogenous. All variables for generation were homogenous. The variable of 'enhancement' for rurality was heterogeneous (Levene's $p = 0.49$), and so was assessed for significance using Welch's ANOVA.

Ethical & methodological issues

Both the stage one survey and stage two unit consultations required and secured ethics approval through the Human Research Ethics Committee at the University of Wollongong. Issues raised during the ethics approval processes included ensuring the anonymity of participants; the provision of comprehensive information to prospective participants on research aims and methods; advice to participants on their ability to withdraw at any time; and explicit processes for consulting and communicating with stage 2 participants.

While the researcher's close collaboration with the NSW SES was instrumental in gaining access to volunteers and successfully undertaking data collection (a State-wide values survey), the researcher was also heavily reliant for the ultimate completion of the research on internal agency processes and personnel, sustained executive support, and dynamic operational demands. This highlights the critical importance of timing in undertaking research that meets a clear and immediate organisational need. At the time agency participation in the Valuing Volunteers Study was being sought through the BNHCRC's sustainable volunteering cluster, the NSW SES was undergoing a period of major organisational change, and a newly appointed Chief Executive with a clear mandate for progressive organisational reform agreed to champion the values survey and wrote personally to all members encouraging their participation.

Turning to the efficacy of the PVQ-40 survey instrument, a specific issue was raised by fifteen respondents, three in emails to the author and a further twelve in written comments on completed paper surveys (one respondent attached an additional typed page of detailed comments to the returned survey). Each of the PVQ-40 portraits contains two statements that are intended to be comparable (are intended to reflect different examples of the same value), and all of the comments received related specifically to the incomparability of the two statements in a limited number of the portrait questions.

Typical respondent comments were “strange survey as each question has two statements which can have different responses” and “these two statements mean different things” and “I totally agree with one of the statements while totally disagreeing with the other”. Several respondents crossed out one of the statements before providing a rating for the other statement in one or more questions. The two statements in survey question 28 (“you believe you should always show respect to your parents and to older people. It is important to you to be obedient”) attracted comments from six respondents, with one crossing out the word “obedient” and replacing it with the word “considerate”, and another writing “depends on the situation”. While feedback on the issue of comparability was less than 3% of all respondents, it highlights the seriousness with which some participants approached the task of completing the survey.

Conclusions

This chapter has detailed the conduct of an organisation-wide survey of the values preferences of the NSW SES volunteer workforce, and documented the challenges involved in maximising volunteer participation in the face of a range of prospective impediments. Empirical data collection required the adaption of the Schwartz Portrait Values Questionnaire (PVQ-40) survey, and the adoption of a range of specific strategies to encourage participation by a diverse and widely dispersed workforce.

This chapter has addressed the methodological dimensions of the second research objective by demonstrating the viability and efficacy of the PVQ-40 survey instrument in determining the primary motives of a large Australian volunteer workforce. The following chapter details and analyses the survey findings that reveal statistically significant differences in values rankings by gender and generation.

Chapter 5 - Valuing Volunteers Study – Research findings

Introduction

This chapter summarises the key findings from a State-wide survey of the values preferences of NSW State Emergency Service (NSW SES) volunteers. A modified version of the Schwartz *Portrait Values Questionnaire* (PVQ-40) survey was distributed to over 3000 NSW SES volunteers across NSW in late 2015, and subsequently elicited 522 responses, representing a nominal participation rate of almost 6% of an estimated volunteer workforce of 9000.

Demographic profile of survey respondents

Respondent anonymity was a core requirement for ethics approval for this research, but it was also an essential requirement for maximising volunteer workforce participation (both total numbers, and honesty of responses) by ensuring there could be no individual consequences from involvement. For these reasons the demographic details sought from respondents was limited to the generic criteria of gender, age range and region.

It was originally proposed that the demographic profile of the survey respondents would be compared with the demographic profile of the NSW SES volunteer workforce in order to determine how broadly representative the response sample was, but apart from the criterion of gender this data was not readily available at the time.

Gender

Gender is the first survey question, with options of male, female and no response. Of the 522 survey respondents, 324 (62%) were male, 187 (36%) were female and 11 (2%) did not disclose their gender. The response rate by gender broadly accords with the NSW SES's 2017 estimate of 35% of active volunteers being females.

Age ranges & generations

Age range is the second survey question with options of eight age ranges (<18, 18-30, 31-40, 41-50, 51-60, 61-70, 71-80, and >80) and no response.

When compared with the age profile of all volunteers nationally in the ABS 2014 GSS (2015) there is a noticeably lower level of representation of people in the 34-44 age range in the NSW SES.

The eight age ranges were subsequently consolidated into three generations that broadly align with the categories of Generation Y and younger, Generation X, and Baby Boomers and older (ABS, 2006). While there is some contention in the literature

about the start and end years for each of these generational categories, for the purposes of this analysis:

- Gen Y (also called Millennials) were born in the years 1977 to 1995 (representing respondents in the three age ranges from less than 18 to 40).
- Gen X were born in the years 1965 to 1976 (representing respondents in the age range 41-50).
- Baby Boomers were born in the years 1946 to 1964 (representing respondents in the four age ranges from over 50 to over 80).

Of the 515 survey respondents who disclosed their age range, 155 respondents (30%) were classified as Gen Y and younger, 80 respondents (15%) were classified as Gen X, and 280 respondents (54%) were classified as Baby Boomers and older.

Regions & urban/rural locations

Region is the third survey question and offered 17 response options reflecting the division of responsibilities across the NSW SES. These 17 regions were subsequently consolidated into rural and urban locations, with rural location comprising the 12 regions of CW, CN, FW, Lac, Mac, MNC, Murray, Murrum, Nam, NW, RT, SH, and urban location comprising the five regions of Hun, ISC, SN, SS, SW. Of 512 respondents, 228 (44.5%) were from an urban location, and 284 (55.5%) were from a rural location.

Basic human values rankings

To answer the first research question “what are the distinctive shared values of Australian emergency services volunteers?”, the basic human values for all survey respondents were ranked (from most to least important) according to their means, and the means were compared to determine the significance of differences between values.

Ranking 1: Benevolence (personal relationships)

The defining motivational goal of the value of benevolence is “preserving and enhancing the welfare of those with whom one is in frequent social contact (the in-group)” (Schwartz, 2012, p.7), and according to Schwartz “benevolence values provide the internalised motivational base” for “positive, cooperative social relations in the family” (p.15). Benevolence ranks as the most important value in the survey of 522 NSW SES volunteers, with a mean score of 4.850. This top ranking is consistent with a Schwartz pan-cultural hierarchy of general population values, based on cross-cultural studies over two decades across 82 countries (ibid).

With a mean of 4.934 and p-value of 0.036, female respondents expressed a statistically significant stronger preference for the value of benevolence than males (mean 4.799). With a mean of 4.997 and p-value of 0.003, Gen Y respondents expressed a statistically significant stronger preference for the value of benevolence than Baby Boomer respondents (mean 4.766), with Gen X in the middle (mean 4.848). With means of 4.868 and 4.822 respectively, there was no statistically significant difference between urban and rural locations.

Ranking 2: Universalism (social relationships)

The defining motivational goals of the value of universalism are “understanding, appreciating, tolerating and protecting the welfare of all people and nature” (Schwartz, 2012, p.7), and according to Schwartz “universalism values are functionally important primarily when group members must relate to those with whom they do not readily identify, in schools and work places” and thus contribute to positive social relations (p.15). Universalism is ranked the second most important value in the survey, with a mean score of 4.791. This ranking is consistent with the Schwartz pan-cultural hierarchy of general population values (ibid).

With a mean of 4.904 and p-value of 0.003, female respondents expressed a statistically significant stronger preference for the value of universalism than males (mean 4.715). With a mean of 4.851, Gen X respondents expressed the strongest preference for the value of universalism, followed by Baby Boomer respondents (mean 4.787) and Gen Y respondents (mean 4.751). With means of 4.826 and 4.749 respectively, there was no statistically significant difference between urban and rural locations.

Ranking 3: Self-direction (personal autonomy)

The defining motivational goals of the value of self-direction are “independent thought and action – freely choosing, creating and exploring” (Schwartz, 2012, p.5), and according to Schwartz self-direction values “foster creativity, motivate innovation and promote coping with challenges. Behaviour based on these values is intrinsically motivated. It satisfies individual needs without harming others” (p.15). Self-direction is ranked the third most important value in the survey, with a mean score of 4.781. This ranking is consistent with the Schwartz pan-cultural hierarchy of general population values (ibid).

With a mean of 4.786, the value of self-direction ranked the second strongest values preference for males, compared to the third strongest values preference for females (mean 4.771). With a mean of 4.835, Gen Y respondents expressed the strongest preference for the value of self-direction, followed by Gen X respondents (mean 4.814) and Baby Boomer respondents (mean 4.737). With means of 4.829 and 4.746

respectively, there was no statistically significant difference between urban and rural locations.

Ranking 4: Security

The defining motivational goals of the value of security are “safety, harmony, and stability of society, of relationships and of self” (Schwartz, 2012, p.6), and according to Schwartz “security and conformity promote harmonious social relations … by helping to avoid conflict and the violation of group norm” (p.15). These values ”are usually acquired in response to demands and sanctions to avoid risks and restrict the self” which “conflicts with gratifying self-oriented needs and desires” (ibid). Security is ranked the fourth most important value in the survey, with a mean score of 4.460. This ranking is consistent with the Schwartz pan-cultural hierarchy of general population values (ibid).

With a mean of 4.484, female respondents expressed a marginally stronger preference for the value of security than males (mean 4.436). With a mean of 4.596 and p-values of 0.001 and 0.007 respectively, Baby Boomer respondents expressed a statistically significant stronger preference for the value of security than both Gen Y (mean 4.299) and Gen X (mean 4.291) respondents. With means of 4.439 and 4.461 respectively, there was no statistically significant difference between urban and rural locations.

Ranking 5: Conformity

The defining motivational goals of the value of conformity are “restraint of actions, inclinations and impulses likely to upset or harm others and violate social expectations and norms” (Schwartz, 2012, p.6), and according to Schwartz “tradition and conformity values are especially close motivationally as they share the goal of subordinating the self to socially imposed expectations. They differ primarily in the objects to which one subordinates the self” with “conformity entailing subordination to persons with whom one frequently interacts” (ibid). Schwartz notes (p.15) that the “emphasis of these values [security and conformity] on maintaining the status quo conflicts with innovation in finding solutions to group tasks”. Conformity is ranked the fifth most important value in the survey, with a mean score of 4.378. This ranking is consistent with the Schwartz pan-cultural hierarchy of general population values (ibid).

With a mean of 4.409, male respondents expressed a marginally stronger preference for the value of conformity than females (mean 4.307). With a mean of 4.464, Gen Y respondents expressed a stronger preference for the value of security than Baby Boomer respondents (mean 4.360) and Gen X (mean 4.287). With means of 4.436 and 4.340 respectively, there was no statistically significant difference between urban and rural locations.

Ranking 6: Hedonism

The defining motivational goal of the value of hedonism is “pleasure or sensuous gratification for oneself” (Schwartz, 2012, p.5), and according to Schwartz “the importance of hedonism and stimulation values derives from the requirement to legitimize inborn needs to attain pleasure and arousal” and “unlike power values their pursuit does not necessarily threaten positive social relations” (p.16). Hedonism is ranked the sixth most important value in the survey, with a mean score of 4.165. This ranking is consistent with the Schwartz pan-cultural hierarchy of general population values (ibid).

With a mean of 4.159, male respondents expressed a marginally stronger preference for the value of hedonism than females (mean 4.146). With a mean of 4.539 and p-values of 0.015 and 0.000 respectively, Gen Y respondents expressed a statistically significant stronger preference for the value of hedonism than both Gen X respondents (mean 4.160) and Baby Boomer respondents (mean 3.960). With means of 4.136 and 4.181 respectively, there was no statistically significant difference between urban and rural locations.

Ranking 7: Stimulation

The defining motivational goals of the value of stimulation are “excitement, novelty, and challenge in life” (Schwartz, 2012, p.5). Stimulation is ranked the seventh most important value in the survey, with a mean score of 3.997. This ranking is two places higher (more important) that the Schwartz pan-cultural hierarchy of general population values that ranks stimulation as ninth (ibid). There are a range of reasons why stimulation might be ranked higher for emergency services volunteers than the international norm, including the fact that such roles may seem to offer an element of excitement, adventure and risk (and perhaps the opportunity for heroism).

With a mean of 4.346 and p-value of 0.014, male respondents expressed a statistically significant stronger preference for the value of stimulation than females (mean 3.857). With a mean of 4.346 and p-value of 0.000, Gen Y respondents expressed a statistically significant stronger preference for the value of stimulation than Baby Boomer respondents (mean 3.781), with Gen X respondents in the middle with a mean of 4.079. With means of 4.007 and 4.009 respectively, there was no statistically significant difference between urban and rural locations.

Ranking 8: Achievement

The defining motivational goals of the value of achievement are “personal success through demonstrating competence according to social standards” (Schwartz, 2012. p.5), and according to Schwartz “both power and achievement values focus on social esteem. However, achievement values (e.g. ambition) emphasise the active

demonstration of successful performance in concrete interaction, whereas power values (e.g. authority, wealth) emphasise the attainment or preservation of a dominant position within the more general social system" (p.6). Schwartz notes (p.15) "on the positive side these values motivate individuals to invest in group tasks and legitimize self-enhancing behaviour as long as it contributes to group welfare. On the negative side these values foster efforts to attain social approval that may disrupt harmonious social relations and interfere with group goal attainment". Achievement is ranked the 8th most important value in the survey, with a mean score of 3.600. This priority is ranked one place lower (less important) that the Schwartz pan-cultural hierarchy of general population values that ranks achievement as seventh (ibid).

With a mean of 3.693 and p-value of 0.003, male respondents expressed a statistically significant stronger preference for the value of achievement than females (mean 3.407). With a mean of 4.038 and p-values of 0.000 respectively, Gen Y respondents expressed a statistically significant stronger preference for the value of achievement than both Baby Boomer respondents (mean 3.432) and Gen X respondents (mean 3.338). With means of 3.667 and 3.555 respectively, there was no statistically significant difference between urban and rural locations.

Ranking 9: Tradition

The defining motivational goals of the value of tradition are "respect, commitment, and acceptance of the customs and ideas that one's culture or religion provides" (Schwartz, 2012, p.6), and according to Schwartz tradition "entails subordination to more abstract objects – religious and cultural customs and ideas" (ibid). "Acting on tradition values can also contribute to group solidarity and thus to smooth group functioning and survival" (p.15). Tradition is ranked the ninth most important value in the survey, with a mean score of 3.514. This ranking is one place lower (less important) that the Schwartz pan-cultural hierarchy of general population values that ranks tradition as eighth (ibid).

With a mean of 3.513, female respondents expressed a marginally stronger preference for the value of tradition than males (mean 3.507). With a mean of 3.549, Gen Y respondents expressed a marginally stronger preference for the value of tradition than Baby Boomer respondents (mean 3.523) and Gen X respondents (mean 3.451). With means of 3.502 and 3.525 respectively, there was no statistically significant difference between urban and rural locations.

Ranking 10: Power

The defining motivational goals of the value of power are "social status and prestige, control or dominance over people and resources" (Schwartz, 2012, p.5), and according to Schwartz "power values (e.g. authority, wealth) emphasise the attainment or preservation of a dominant position within the more general social system" and "may

harm or exploit others and damage social relations” (p.15). Power is ranked the least important value in the survey, with a mean score of 2.883. This ranking is consistent with the Schwartz pan-cultural hierarchy of general population values (ibid).

With a mean of 3.00 and p-value of 0.000, male respondents expressed a statistically significant stronger preference for the value of power than females (mean 2.643). With a mean of 3.101 and p-values of 0.006 and 0.008 respectively, Gen Y respondents expressed a statistically significant stronger preference for the value of power than both Baby Boomer respondents (mean 2.808) and Gen X respondents (mean 2.715). With means of 2.907 and 2.872 respectively, there was no statistically significant difference between urban and rural locations.

Higher-order value cluster rankings

Similar to the process for determining the ranking order of the ten basic human values, the four higher-order value clusters for all survey respondents were ranked (from most to least important) according to their means, and the means were compared to determine the significance of differences between values.

Ranking 1: Self-transcendence higher-order value cluster

Comprised of the basic human values of benevolence and universalism, the self-transcendence higher-order value cluster emphasises concern for the welfare of others, and is the antithesis of the higher-order value cluster of self-enhancement. Schwartz (2012, p.8) notes that the self-transcendence versus self-enhancement bipolar dimension “captures the conflict between values that emphasise concern for the welfare and interests of others (universalism, benevolence) and values that emphasise pursuit of one’s own interests and relative success and dominance over others (power, achievement)”. The self-transcendence value cluster has particular relevance to this study because it largely aligns with values like altruism and collectivist that are reported to be in decline, and are reflected in changing patterns of civic participation.

With a mean of 4.819, self-transcendence clearly ranks as the most important higher-order value cluster with all survey respondents. With a mean of 4.919 and a p-value of 0.004, female respondents expressed a statistically significant stronger preference for the higher-order value cluster of self-transcendence than males (mean 4.757). With a mean of 4.874, Gen Y respondents expressed a marginally stronger preference for the higher-order value cluster of self-transcendence than Gen X respondents (mean 4.850) and Baby Boomer respondents (mean 4.777). With means of 4.847 and 4.786 respectively, there was no statistically significant difference between urban and rural locations.

Ranking 2: Openness to change higher-order value cluster

Comprised of the basic human values of self-direction, stimulation and hedonism, the higher-order value cluster of openness to change emphasises independent action, thought and feeling and readiness for new experience, and is the antithesis of the higher-order value cluster of conservation. Schwartz (2012, p.8) notes the openness to change versus conservation bipolar dimension “captures the conflict between values that emphasise independence of thought, action and feelings and readiness for change (self-direction, stimulation) and values that emphasise order, self-restriction, preservation of the past and resistance to change (security, conformity, tradition)”. The openness to change value cluster has relevance to this study as it largely aligns with the impetus for major organisational reforms that are currently sweeping through Australian emergency services.

With a mean of 4.315, openness to change ranks as the second most important higher-order value cluster with all survey respondents. With a mean of 4.340, male respondents expressed a marginally stronger preference for the higher-order value cluster of openness to change than females (mean 4.258). With a mean of 4.573 and p-value of 0.000, Gen Y respondents expressed a statistically significant stronger preference for the higher-order value cluster of openness to change than Baby Boomer respondents (mean 4.159), with Gen X respondents in the middle (mean 4.351). With means of 4.324 and 4.312 respectively, there was no statistically significant difference between urban and rural locations.

Ranking 3: Conservation higher-order value cluster

Comprised of the basic human values of tradition, conformity and security, the higher-order value cluster of conservation emphasises self-restriction, order and maintenance of the status quo, and is the antithesis of the higher-order value cluster of openness to change. As will be discussed in the following chapter, the conservation value cluster has relevance to this study given the potential for traditional member-based bodies to be resistant to pressures for “modernisation”.

With a mean of 4.119, conservation ranks as the third most important higher-order value cluster with all survey respondents. With a mean of 4.117, male respondents expressed a marginally stronger preference for the higher-order value cluster of conservation than females (mean 4.101). With a mean of 4.160, Baby Boomer respondents expressed a marginally stronger preference for the higher-order value cluster of conservation than Gen Y (mean 4.104) and Gen X (mean 4.009). With means of 4.112 and 4.109 respectively, there was no statistically significant difference between urban and rural locations.

Ranking 4: Self-enhancement higher-order value cluster

Comprised of the basic human values of power, achievement and hedonism, the higher-order value cluster of self-enhancement emphasises concern for the pursuit of self-interest, and is the antithesis of the higher-order value cluster of self-transcendence. As discussed in detail in the next chapter, the self-enhancement value cluster has particular relevance to this study as it largely aligns with values like egoism and reflexive that are reported to be in the ascendance.

With a mean of 3.549, self-enhancement clearly ranks as the least important higher-order value cluster with all survey respondents. With a mean of 3.617 and a p-value of 0.003, male respondents expressed a statistically significant stronger preference for the higher-order value cluster of self-enhancement than females (mean 3.399). With a mean of 3.893 and respective p-values of 0.000, Gen Y respondents expressed a statistically significant stronger preference for the higher-order value cluster of self-enhancement than both Gen X (mean 3.402) and Baby Boomer (mean 3.400) respondents. With means of 3.570 and 3.536 respectively, there was no statistically significant difference between urban and rural locations.

Conclusions

This chapter has summarised the findings from a State-wide survey of the values preferences of NSW SES volunteers. The findings have revealed distinct differences (by gender and generation) in values preferences within the volunteer workforce, with important implications for a range of volunteering policies and practices. The findings point to the need for nuanced, differentiated and targeted policies and strategies to meet the distinctly different values needs of a highly diverse and volatile volunteer workforce, issues that will be explored in further detail in the following chapter.

Chapter 6 - Valuing Volunteers Study – Discussion & Conclusions

Introduction

This chapter reviews the research aims, objectives and questions that were originally articulated in Chapter 1, and considers the degree to which these have been addressed and satisfactorily answered by the Valuing Volunteers Study. This chapter also explores the broader implications of the empirical findings and theoretical contributions for future emergency service volunteering, and concludes with the research's limitations.

Scope of the Valuing Volunteers Study

This study has revealed a diverse range of contemporary influences on emergency services volunteering, and these are graphically summarised in Figure 11 below.

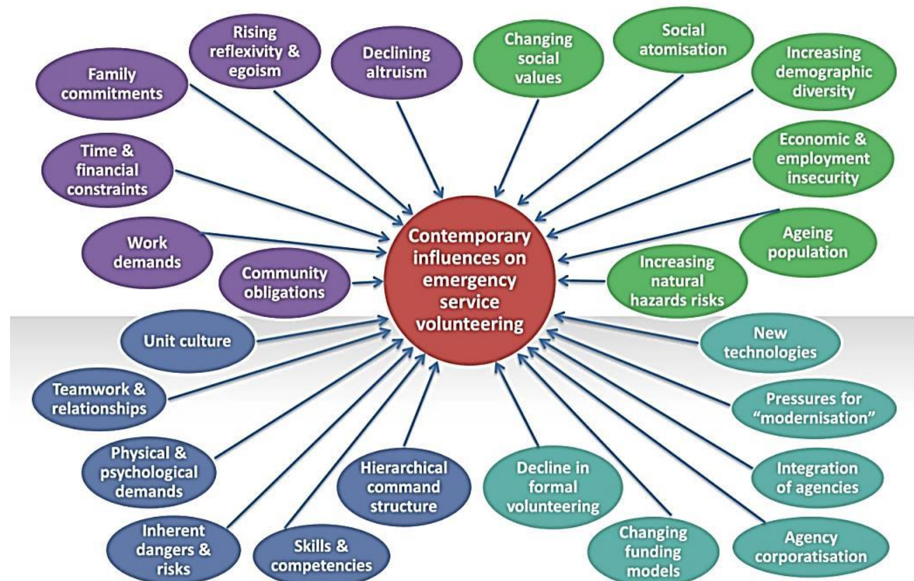

Figure 11: Contemporary influences on emergency service volunteering (Source: Author)

Research aim, objectives & questions

As outlined in Chapter 1 of this thesis, the research aim is to gain a better understanding of the primary motives for volunteering in Australian emergency services. In order to fulfil the overall research aim of generating original empirical and theoretical insights that can inform emergency management policies and practices, five research objectives were determined. These objectives are to:

- Demonstrate that emergency service volunteering is of great economic and social value to the Australian community, and represents exceptional civic participation.
- Establish the validity and utility of a values framework for interpreting and understanding the primary motives for emergency service volunteering.
- Determine the distinct shared and contrasting values of a sample of Australian emergency service volunteers, and to consider the implications of these values for volunteer policies and practices.
- Evaluate the efficacy and integrity of current processes for determining and resourcing national emergency management priorities.
- Identify trends in changing core values with implications for future forms of civic participation, including formal emergency service volunteering.

Consistent with these objectives, in particular objective three, a series of specific research questions were formulated that are the focus for empirical inquiry in this study. The following research questions were developed and shaped the study:

- What are the distinctive shared values of Australian emergency service volunteers?
- To what extent and in what ways do these shared values impact on volunteer expectations of and commitment to emergency service organisations?
- In what ways can the formal values of emergency service organisations be better aligned with volunteer values in order to maximise workforce satisfaction, commitment and retention?

First research objective - Demonstrate that emergency service volunteering is of great economic & social value to the Australian community, & represents exceptional civic participation

This thesis has satisfied this first research objective, and finds that emergency service volunteering is demonstrably of great economic and social value and does represent exceptional civic participation. The following elements from Chapter Two of this thesis support this finding.

The chapter sets the scene for the Valuing Volunteers Study by reviewing and synthesising a diverse range of contemporary official reports on the operations, performance and culture of the various volunteer-based emergency services in Australia. These collated and reviewed reports identified a range of contemporary personal and social pressures that can and do impact on the community's willingness and availability to commit to formal emergency service volunteering roles, including a shift to more reflexive and spontaneous forms of volunteering.

The chapter also revealed the unique circumstances and distinctive characteristics of formal emergency service volunteering that justify its description as exceptional civic participation. The chapter highlighted the demanding nature of emergency response roles; the level of dedication and personal commitment required to sustain emergency service volunteering; the specialist competencies required to undertake emergency tasks safely; and the economic and social value to the community of the unpaid services provided.

The use of a volunteer-based workforce to provide an essential public service is an inherently complex phenomenon, whose specific features are not well understood by the community or policy-makers. Beyond the stereotype of the heroic rescuer ready to respond in times of crisis, there seems little appreciation of the substantial personal commitment and goodwill required to undertake inherently demanding emergency response roles, or the conditional and potentially fragile nature of the relationship

between the individual volunteer, the local unit and the emergency service organisation.

The commitment and retention of emergency service volunteers may be particularly susceptible to specific internal and external forces, including changing social values (declining altruism) and growing pressures for organisational and cultural reform. The bulk of the volunteer workforce is comprised of thousands of individual units and brigades across Australia, each with its own distinctive culture, and organisational reforms that inevitably impinge on individual autonomy and sense of personal responsibility may add an additional level of complexity to sustaining volunteer motivation. In such an environment of dynamic change, continuing to churn through members without understanding and meeting their evolving needs may ultimately prove unsustainable.

Second research objective - Establish the validity & utility of a values framework for interpreting & understanding the primary motives for emergency service volunteering

This thesis has satisfied the second research objective, and has established the efficacy of a values framework for understanding the primary motives for emergency service volunteering. The following elements from Chapters Three and Four of this thesis support this finding.

Chapter Three of the thesis provided a comprehensive review of a wide range of discipline-specific motivational theories that are relevant to emergency services volunteering, demonstrating the capacity of an inclusive values framework to encompass and integrate diverse psychological, sociological and economic perspectives. The chapter established the efficacy of a values construct as a comprehensive, multi-dimensional and multi-disciplinary theoretical framework for interpreting and understanding the primary motives for emergency service volunteering.

Chapter Three demonstrated that values are powerful motivators, and altruistic values playing a crucial role in motivating emergency service volunteering. Importantly, shared values can reinforce volunteer commitment and retention, while conflicting values can contribute to volunteer turnover.

Chapter Four of this thesis summarised the various actions taken to obtain original survey data on the values preferences of the NSW SES volunteer workforce. From a methodological perspective, the successful use of a modified version of the Schwartz *Portrait Values Questionnaire* (PVQ-40) survey to determine the values preferences of a large Australian volunteer workforce may be unique to this study.

Third research objective - Determine the distinct shared & contrasting values of a sample of emergency services volunteers, & consider the implications for volunteer policies and practices

The findings detailed in Chapter Five on the shared and contrasting values of a sample of 522 emergency service volunteers are directly relevant to this research objective, and specifically address the first and second research questions on distinctive shared values and their impacts on volunteer expectations and commitment. The findings are also partially relevant to the third research question on values alignment, insofar as they highlight differences in values preferences between distinct demographic sub-groups within the workforce, rather than between the workforce and the parent organisation. The survey reveals significant differences in values rankings by gender and generation, with important implications for the management and motivation of specific sections of the volunteer workforce.

In interpreting the survey results, it is important to reiterate that the Schwartz (2012) universal values construct is a comprehensive and integrated framework that explicates the relationships and interaction between complementary and contradictory basic and higher-order value clusters, across two bipolar dimensions. Schwartz's circular motivational continuum is thus a valuable tool in interpreting the implications of the trends in values preferences that have emerged from the survey. The bipolar dimensions of the Schwartz construct have particular relevance in this study as they largely align with two of the major "modernisation" trends identified in the literature, namely the shifts from collective/altruistic/other-oriented to reflexive/egoistic/self-oriented motives, and from traditional to corporate organisational cultures.

Implications of basic human values rankings

Chapter Two of this thesis argued that, because of the substantial personal dedication required to commit on an ongoing basis to inherently demanding roles, emergency service volunteering requires an exceptional level of commitment and motivation. The overall dominance and importance of the other-oriented values of benevolence and universalism in the survey responses (which combined represent the higher-order value cluster of self-transcendence), is entirely consistent with a contention on the crucial role of altruistic values as a primary motive for highly formalised volunteering roles.

Comparing the order of values rankings of a sample of Australian emergency service volunteers with the Schwartz pan-cultural hierarchy of general population values (2012), it is interesting to note that the value of stimulation amongst emergency service volunteers ranked two places higher in importance than the pan-cultural ranking for this value. This result may reflect the inherent appeal of emergency response roles to the motivational goals of the stimulation value of "excitement, novelty and challenge" (Schwartz, 2012, p.5).

Implications of differences in basic and higher-order value clusters rankings by gender

The clear differences in values preferences to emerge by gender are one of the most important findings of this research, in particular a marked divergence between females and males in the bi-polar dimension of self-transcendence versus self-enhancement. The Schwartz values construct suggests that conflicting higher-order values can be significant de-motivators, and values conflicts may ultimately contribute to volunteer turnover.

For complex reasons beyond the scope of this thesis, males dominate operational emergency response roles, and various official reports have alluded to cultural impediments to female advancement. A 2016 report titled *Women in fire and emergency leadership roles* commissioned by the Victorian Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, and based on a survey of staff, found (p.4) that "more than half (54%) of respondents agreed there were barriers to women taking on fire and emergency leadership roles, with 67% of women and 37% of men agreeing. Echoing this finding, only 26% of women did not see their gender as a limitation to their future career prospects, compared with 84% of men". Barriers identified in the report included unconscious bias, a boys club mentality, an emphasis on operational experience, stereotyped roles, expectations of a higher standard for women, and the absence of female role models.

In a similar vein, Wemlinger and Berlan (2016) analysed the influence of gender on the type of organisation that an individual volunteers for, and the relationship between the level of gender equality and volunteering habits, using cross-national data from the World Values Survey. They concluded (p.869) that "while women are significantly less likely to volunteer in traditionally male organisations, this segregation exists in all gender equality contexts. In countries where women have changed their roles and have become part of the economic and political sphere, they are still less likely than men to volunteer at these traditionally male-dominated organisations".

The survey findings on gender differences add credence to a general contention that females often bring a different set of values and expectations to many roles. Compared with males, female survey respondents expressed statistically significant stronger preferences for the (other-oriented) basic values of benevolence and universalism, and the higher-order cluster of self-transcendence (altruism). In marked contrast, male respondents expressed statistically significant stronger preferences for the (self-oriented) basic values of stimulation, achievement and power, and the higher-order cluster of self-enhancement (egoism). As noted earlier by Schwartz (2012, p.15), "on the positive side these values [power and achievement] motivate individuals to invest in group tasks and legitimize self-enhancing behaviour as long as it contributes to group welfare. On the negative side these values foster efforts to attain social

approval that may disrupt harmonious social relations and interfere with group goal attainment". In an emergency service volunteering context, such negative effects may be inconsistent with the maintenance of a respectful team environment that is essential for effective operations.

The clear incongruity of some of the basic and higher-order values suggest that distinctly different organisational strategies may be necessary to manage gender issues. It may be that a self-oriented male culture may be largely incompatible with the values preferences of many women, and values conflicts may ultimately contribute to volunteer turnover. If volunteer recruitment and retention strategies are to continue to appeal to and rely on the strength of prospective members' altruistic values, then efforts need to be increasingly targeted towards attracting a greater proportion of female members. In addition, organisations will need to be more sensitive to meeting the needs of existing members holding altruistic values if they are to be retained.

Implications of differences in basic and higher-order values rankings by generation

The survey findings also revealed statistically significant differences in values rankings by generation, specifically a clear divergence in values preferences between younger Gen Y and older Baby Boomers. Compared with Baby Boomers (and Gen X in most instances), Gen Y respondents expressed statistically significant stronger preferences for the basic values of benevolence, hedonism, stimulation, achievement and power, and the higher-order clusters of openness to change and self-enhancement. In contrast, Baby Boomers expressed a statistically significant stronger preference for the basic value of security than Gen Y and Gen X.

Chapter Three explores the literature that finds major differences in the values preferences of different generations. Hustinx and Lammertyn's (2003) seminal exposition on the shift from collective (other-oriented) to reflexive (self-oriented) volunteering concludes (p.183) that "major changes occur in the relationship between volunteer and organisation. … A shift towards more reflexive, self-directed forms of volunteering may result in a widening gap between the priorities of the volunteer and the organisational work that has to be done. … Chances of organisational survival will depend on structural adaptations that can accommodate more self-interested, flexible and detached forms of involvement".

In a similar vein, in their contemporary review of strategies to recruit volunteers, Stukas, Snyder and Clary (2016, p.251) conclude that "we are sensitive to the possibility that methods to encourage community involvement may potentially result in two different classes of volunteers – those who are primarily other-oriented and intrinsically-motivated, and those who are primarily self-oriented and extrinsically-motivated. Although no real harm (and potentially a lot of good) may be achieved by volunteers who are self-oriented and extrinsically motivated, their commitment to sustained service may be lower than that of volunteers who are more other-oriented

and intrinsically motivated". The observations by Hustinx et al. (2003) and Stukas et al. (2016) suggest strongly that emergency service agencies need to make clear decisions on how they will promote their volunteering roles to particular sub-groups of prospective members, and this will need to be complemented by distinctly different management strategies once these specific (age, gender) groups become members.

The survey findings in respect to both bipolar dimensions indicate that, compared with older Baby Boomers, younger Gen Y respondents are more reflexive and self-oriented, and more amenable to change. Given the clear incongruity of these higher-order values, the findings highlight the potential for inter-generational values conflicts between older "traditional" collective volunteers and younger "modern" reflexive volunteers, with the possibility that such values conflicts may contribute to volunteer turnover. Such values differences could be reflected in greater reluctance amongst existing and prospective Gen Y volunteers to commit to long-term established roles; higher expectations of concrete personal development opportunities and benefits from volunteering; and greater amenability to organisational reforms (in contrast to Baby Boomers who may be more actively resistant to change). These different motives may have particular relevance to a sector undergoing major organisational reform, and again highlight the requirement for differentiated management strategies that meet the divergent needs of different sections of the volunteer workforce, with a generic one-size-fits-all approach potentially failing to meet any one group's needs adequately.

Fourth research objective - Evaluate the efficacy & integrity of current processes for determining & resourcing national emergency management priorities

The discussion paper at Appendix E titled "All-hazard risk management and emergency management priorities in Australia" examines a national policy that commits to manage "all types of emergencies or disasters and civil defence using the same set of management arrangements" (NERAG, 2015), and to determine national emergency management priorities by objectively assessing and comparing risks using measures of probability and consequences. Mortality represents a catastrophic consequence (severe harm), and an effective national emergency management system would focus resources and efforts on minimising mortality due to potentially avoidable causes.

The discussion paper asks, of the more than 10,000 potentially preventable deaths in Australia annually, how do we decide which lives are more precious and are worth saving, and at what cost? The paper contrasts the inestimable resources dedicated to counter-terrorism (where the harms in terms of mortality are relatively limited) with the reliance on unpaid volunteers to protect whole communities from the devastating effects of natural hazards (where the harms in terms of mortality can be catastrophic). The paper concludes that while climate change-related natural hazards pose

substantial and growing risks to life and property, Australia's national emergency management priorities are distorted by fear-based perceptions of terrorism.

This discussion paper seeks to contribute novel and thought-provoking insights to academic and public discourse on the resourcing of a vital volunteer-based emergency response capability.

Fifth research objective - Identify trends in changing core values with implications for future forms of civic participation, including formal emergency service volunteering

The discussion paper at Appendix F titled "Trends in contemporary Australian values" has critically examined Australia's core values, the contemporary global forces that are driving changes in values, and various indicators of a decline in altruistic values in Australia.

The discussion paper has noted that for many years Australia has been unique amongst developed Western nations in its reliance on amorphous politically-mediated narratives to articulate and sustain its core national values, and as a consequence defining what it means to "be" Australian in a rapidly growing and evolving pluralist society is fraught with complexity. The paper contends that the unprecedented convergence of powerful disruptive forces is fundamentally reshaping human conceptions of individual and social reality, changing the community's shared core values by catalysing a shift towards individualism and egoism. This shift is reflected in growing political and social volatility, a decline in community participation in a range of traditional forms of altruistic civic participation, and increasing social atomisation and polarisation.

The discussion paper has reviewed a highly diverse range of official reports on current policies towards the most disadvantaged in the Australian community, and concluded that these reports collectively confirm a decline in altruism as a core national value in Australia, with implications for many traditional forms of civic participation, including formal emergency service volunteering. The paper has suggested that community functions and organisations that have traditionally relied on goodwill, empathy and a sense of collective responsibility and duty will need to develop different strategies (that specifically acknowledge and satisfy individual and personal needs) if they are to continue to secure the level of participation required for the provision of important community services into the future.

Broader implications of findings for emergency service policies & practices

This research has explored the diverse and complex individual and social influences on the phenomenon of emergency service volunteering (graphically represented in Figure 11 above), and has highlighted the crucial role of altruistic values as primary

motives for formal volunteering. Both the empirical research and the theoretical expositions have concluded that altruism is in decline in Australian society, meaning that new models of community engagement will be required in the future to resource essential volunteer-based emergency response capabilities.

While new flexible volunteering models may be able to engage with people who don't want to commit intensively to a formal role on an ongoing basis, there will always be a significant and ongoing requirement for a critical mass (core) of highly-skilled and dedicated volunteers who can be mobilised at short notice in times of crisis to mitigate the immediate harms caused by major natural hazards. If predictions about an increase in the frequency and severity of climate change-related events are accurate, then the demands on such a dedicated volunteer workforce are only likely to increase (National Strategy for Disaster Resilience, 2011; National Volunteering Strategy, 2011; Productivity Commission, 2016).

This research has revealed distinct values differences within the existing volunteer workforce by gender and generation, and has suggested that emergency services need to consider differentiated management strategies to meet the distinct and divergent values needs of particular sub-groups. This is most apparent in respect to female members. This raises broader issues about how agencies can develop and champion their core values (in particular inclusion and respect), as the vehicle for developing and strengthening a shared consensus between the individual, unit and agency on common goals, principles, ethics and professional standards. The literature review highlights the importance of values alignment for volunteer commitment and retention, and shared core values can be powerful motivators that define and shape a positive and inclusive organisational culture.

Given the critical importance of personal values as primary motives for emergency service volunteering, the values differences revealed by this research have significant implications for how the divergent values needs of distinct sections of the volunteer workforce can be accommodated, reconciled and ultimately satisfied to sustain their commitment. This will require a more nuanced and responsive approach to the management of diverse volunteers, with a greater emphasis on building an organisational culture that is founded on the values of encouragement, respect and inclusion.

Research limitations

The utilisation of the Schwartz *Theory of Basic Human Values,* and associated *Portrait Values Questionnaire* (PVQ-40) survey instrument, as the primary conceptual and empirical constructs for interpreting volunteer motivation, clearly reflect the author's confidence in the utility of this extensively-used theoretical framework. In respect to the efficacy of the PVQ-40 survey instrument, the author acknowledges the concerns raised by fifteen survey respondents on the incomparability of the two

statements in a number of the portrait questions, but these valid observations on comparability are unlikely to have significantly impacted on the overall survey findings.

While the goal for responses to the survey on the values preferences of NSW SES volunteers was originally 900, representing a participation rate of around 10% of an estimated workforce of 9000, after extensive efforts to facilitate diverse participation (including the organisation-wide distribution of over 3000 paper survey with return-paid envelopes), the survey ultimately attracted 522 responses (almost 6%). While the efforts to secure wide and diverse participation by SES members from over 220 units across the State was successful, the author accepts that the opportunities for generalisations across both the NSW SES and emergency services more broadly are limited with a sample of this size.

Future research suggestions

To the author's knowledge there has been no commensurate intensive application of the PVQ-40 survey (in both paper and online forms) to determine the values preferences of a large State-wide volunteer workforce in Australia, and as a consequence the opportunities to compare findings on values preferences in other Australian emergency services are limited. Should other emergency services decide to conduct values audits of their own volunteer workforces (using the tools and engagement strategies developed for this study), then it is possible that a broader body of comparable data could be developed.

This study has identified and encountered a diverse range of factors that makes research on the motives for emergency service volunteering challenging. A number of these challenges relate to the highly unique culture of emergency service organisations, and the complexity and sensitivity of relationships between individuals, units and agencies, and between paid staff and volunteers. Agencies may create greater opportunities to obtain valuable qualitative data while facilitating change if they were to actively encourage and empower all volunteers to participate in and take ownership of organisational reforms.

At a broader level, one of the shortcomings of values research in Australia is the virtual absence of empirical data on shared and contrasting values, as a benchmark for determining and comparing values norms in the broader community. The absence of such empirical data takes on additional significance given the volatile and sometimes opaque nature of Australia's core values, as explored in the discussion paper at Appendix F. Given the relative ease with which the PVQ-40 can be utilised, there may be opportunities for further large-scale data collection should the question of defining core values gain greater public currency.

Finally, the discussion papers at Appendices E and F that critically analyse the broader policy and social contexts for emergency service volunteering are intended to

stimulate further academic and public discourse and research on the impacts and interaction of contemporary forces on the future resourcing of a vital volunteer-based emergency response capability.

All-hazards risk management & emergency management priorities in Australia

Published in June 2019 as a Discussion Paper at Appendix E in a thesis titled "Valuing Volunteers: Better understanding the primary motives for volunteering in Australian emergency services"

Introduction

Volunteers are the lifeblood of emergency services in Australia, and are integral to the nation's emergency management capabilities and overall disaster resilience. The concurrence of an increase in the risks posed by a range of climate change-related natural hazards and a decline in formal volunteering rates threatens Australia's emergency preparedness. The Valuing Volunteers Study aims to provide a better understanding of both the primary motives for formal volunteering in Australian emergency services, and the broader policy and social contexts.

Consistent with the fourth research objective, this discussion paper critically analyses the all-hazards risk management policy context within which Australian emergency services operate, in order to evaluate the efficacy and integrity of current processes for determining and resourcing national emergency management priorities. This paper seeks to rigorously challenge the dominant paradigm that currently frames the policy context for emergency service volunteering, informing and catalysing original insights on this phenomenon.

Challenging dominant paradigms

This thesis aims to fill a number of important information gaps by providing original empirical data on the primary motives for emergency services volunteering in Australia, and novel theoretical perspectives on the changing social and conceptual context for the phenomena of volunteering and emergency management. As demonstrated by BNHCRC sponsorship of this research, interest in emergency services volunteering is not simply academic, but is driven by serious national concerns about the ongoing capacity of the community and Governments to respond effectively to protect lives and property in the face of the increasing risks posed by climate-related natural hazards.

Volunteering and emergency management are both highly complex and dynamic social phenomena, and there are a range of possible explanations (beyond the scope of this thesis) for the seemingly widely divergent perspectives that often exemplify the discourse on these phenomena. A degree of zeal, determination and conviction may be inevitable in emergency-response agencies with responsibilities for protecting lives and property. Differences in priorities may be natural *when* emergency management

responsibilities and sometimes scarce resources are shared across different levels of government and between (sometimes competing) agencies. Personnel from military or law enforcement backgrounds can bring entrenched attitudes towards secrecy, authority and hierarchy. Pressures to safely and strategically deploy volunteer resources in the face of potential dangers may make a (para-military) command and control approach essential. And perhaps the use of a volunteer workforce to provide vitally important public services might be inherently anomalous in a market economy where some emergency services functions are remunerated and others are not.

Whatever the reasons, divergent perspectives on concepts, relationships and priorities have the potential to constrain the development of flexible and innovative strategies to adapt to changing circumstances and respond effectively to the evolving risks posed by natural hazards. This discussion paper seeks to inform this discourse by challenging a range of prevailing assumptions that can obscure a clearer understanding of the strategic context for emergency services volunteering.

Understanding risk management

Risk is an internationally recognised measure of “the effect of uncertainty on objectives” (ISO 31000, 2009), and is comprised of “the combination of the probability of an event and its negative consequences” (Productivity Commission, 2014). According to the 2015 *National Emergency Risk Assessment Guidelines* (NERAG), risk management is “coordinated activities of an organisation or a government to direct and control risk”, while emergency risk management is “a systematic process that produces a range of measures which contribute to the well-being of communities and the environment” (AIDR Glossary, 2017).

A disaster is “a serious disruption to community life which threatens or causes death or injury in that community” (NERAG Glossary, 2015) According to NERAG (p.2), “emergency events and disasters stem from a range of natural, biological, technological, industrial and other human phenomena. These events impose significant social, environmental and economic costs on Australia, including:

- Fatalities, injuries and illness
- Direct damage to property, infrastructure and facilities
- Financial costs and economic losses
- Ecosystem impairment and biodiversity loss
- Social and cultural losses”.

A hazard is “a source of potential harm or a situation with a potential to cause loss”, or “a source of risk” (NERAG Glossary, 2015). For more than a decade the Australian Government has been committed to a comprehensive, integrated and consistent national risk management process for evaluating and responding to the relative risks posed to the nation's interests from a diverse range of hazards and emergency events. Characterised as an “all-hazards” policy, the approach “deals with all types of

emergencies or disasters, and civil defence, using the same set of management arrangements" (NERAG Glossary, 2015). Emergency events included in an all-hazards approach include structure fires, road crash rescues, medical emergencies, natural disaster events (landscape fire, earthquake, flood, storm, cyclone, tsunami, land slide), consequences of acts of terrorism, other natural events (drought, frost, heatwave, epidemic), technological and hazardous materials incidents, quarantine and control of diseases and biological contaminants (Productivity Commission, 2016).

A commitment to estimate/measure and compare a broad range of *relative* risks using standard objective criteria is arguably the most important advancement in democratic governance and public accountability for decades. Applied across the diversity of government functions, risk management provides a rational evidence-based framework and process for transparently determining the relative importance of every single government function. In terms of advancing public accountability, a transparent national risk management process empowers the community to question and evaluate both Government and public sector activities and performance, moving beyond the rhetoric of volatile politics and sectional interests to evidence-based decisions and policies.

The implementation of a transparent, accountable and evidence-based risk management system for determining national emergency management priorities is intended to enable authorities to move beyond reactive short-term crisis-driven responses to emergency events, and to develop and implement proactive emergency management plans and build enduring risk mitigation capabilities across the nation. The importance of an inclusive all-hazards approach in ensuring an effective, proportionate and coordinated response to emergency events cannot be overstated, particularly when significant (but increasingly finite) financial and human resources are expended, and when responsibility for managing different risks falls to different levels of government and different agencies.

Mortality represents a catastrophic consequence (severe harm) in a risk calculation, and national mortality rates constitute an important objective measure of significant human costs. Data from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) has revealed that of the more than 158,500 deaths in Australia in 2016, 10,726 deaths (6.8%) were from (potentially preventable) external causes (AIHW, 2018). A breakdown of the various external causes of death are illustrated in Figure 12 below.

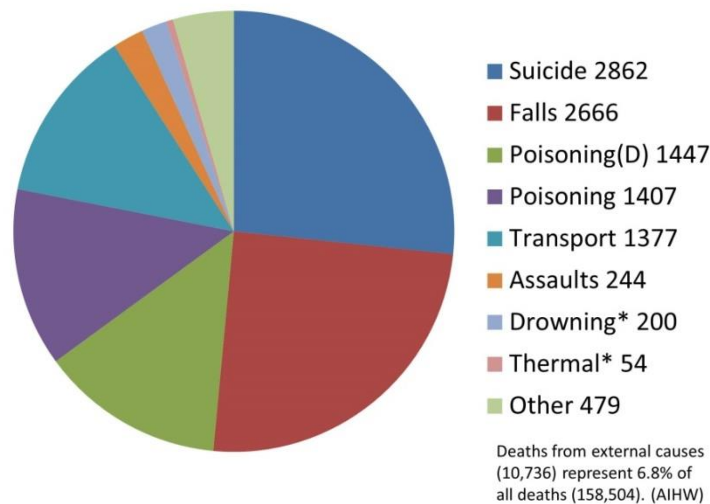

Figure 12: Deaths from external causes in 2016 (Source: AIHW)

These figures provide an important benchmark for considering the actual, potential and relative risks of mortality posed by a range of hazards. Of the more than 10,000 potentially preventable deaths in Australia annually, how do we decide which lives are more precious and are worth saving, and at what cost? An effective national emergency management system would focus resources and efforts on minimising deaths due to all potentially avoidable causes.

Deaths attributed to natural hazards like floods and wildfires will be reflected in the mortality rates for accidental drownings and exposure to smoke, fire and flames. A 2014 Productivity Commission report titled *Natural Disaster Funding Arrangements* observes (2014, p.3) that “since 2009, natural disasters have claimed more than 200 lives, destroyed 2670 houses and damaged a further 7680, and affected the lives and livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of Australians”. The loss of 173 lives in the Victorian bushfires in 2009 and 33 lives in the Queensland floods in 2010/11 further illustrate the magnitude of the risks posed by natural hazards.

Terrorism as a national hazard

While terrorism is nominally included in Australia’s national all-hazards risk management system, in practice it is treated in an entirely exceptional way that is largely divorced from objective measures of actual or prospective risk and harm (including mortality). At the same time national policies continue to maintain the illusion

of a commitment to a balanced all-hazards approach, as reflected in the 2015 *National Guidelines for Protecting Critical Infrastructure from Terrorism* that advises infrastructure owners to "consider terrorism as one of the hazards in an all-hazards risk management approach" (p.2).

Terrorism sits outside Australia's national all-hazards risk management system because it is, at its core, a powerful political and psychological phenomenon that seeks to undermine fundamental democratic principles and institutions. Because terrorism is shrouded in secrecy and managed in the arcane and discrete world of national security, it defies objective and transparent quantification as a relative risk, and secrecy remains a constant obstacle in discussing terrorism in the context of other potentially life-threatening hazards.

By threatening and undertaking highly-visible indiscriminate attacks on civilians, terrorists aims to engender widespread fear and insecurity in the community while directly challenging the first duty of the State to keep citizens safe. Beyond the individual acts of barbarity (sometimes resulting in mass casualties), the strategic goal of terrorism is to coerce the State into implementing wide-ranging and regressive social changes that will ultimately undermine the State's legitimacy, erode social cohesion and create the conditions for further alienation and radicalisation.

Terrorism seeks to damage civil society and ultimately undermine humanity by drawing the State into an escalating cycle of increasingly repressive, generalised counter-terrorism actions (responding to the prospects of an amorphous ever-present threat), effectively displacing a decisive, targeted, proactive, proportionate, multi-faceted, evidence and risk-based law enforcement response to reduce the threat posed by base criminality (the actions of ruthless killers). By catalysing the visceral emotions of fear, anxiety and distrust, terrorism seeks to neutralise the moral ideals of respect and equality that are the foundations for democracy and a civil society.

Under the aegis of a global "war on terror" following the 9/11 attacks on the United States in 2001, counter-terrorism became the rationale for military action in Afghanistan and Iraq and increasingly stringent security measures across the world. Largely due to a basic physical security failure (the absence of secure commercial airline cockpit doors), many thousands of civilians have been killed in military conflicts, various insurgent armies have emerged across the region, centuries-old enmities have been reactivated, and inestimable amounts have been spent on globally-invasive intelligence, surveillance and military capabilities. Ironically, a war metaphor was never appropriate for terrorism, as indiscriminate attacks on civilians are explicitly prohibited under the Geneva Conventions (have no possibility of moral justification), and extremists determined to murder civilians are unable to gain recognition as lawful combatants in international law.

As an asymmetric conflict strategy for individual extremists to coerce regressive social change, terrorism has been transformed in the 21st century through unlimited access to a ubiquitous media that offers instant global reach and infamy to a lone attacker wielding a knife or driving a vehicle with homicidal intent. Since the 9/11 attacks, terrorism has grown into a powerful universal brand that serves to transform and magnify isolated and often small-scale acts of brutality into globally-significant events that perpetuate terrorism propaganda. Utilising data from the Rand Corporation, Weimann and Winn (1994) have provided a prescient critique of the symbiotic relationship between the mass media and international terrorism, identifying a "contagion effect" in which media coverage of terrorist attacks create powerful incentives for emulation.

Securitization theory explores the social purpose and process of threat construction, in particular the political framing of an existential threat as the rationale for a shift in the power relationship between the individual and the State (Balzacq, Leonard and Ruzicka, 2016). The invocation of a war metaphor and characterisation of terrorism as an existential threat have been used in a number of democracies as justification for far-reaching changes to national security policies and practices that fundamentally alter the long-standing balance between national security and civil liberties. Under the aegis of strengthening national security ("keeping Australians safe") and bolstering counter-terrorism capabilities, a range of legislative changes have been progressively introduced in Australia that expand the State's executive powers, extend the reach and scope of covert surveillance and State secrecy, and increase the security responsibilities of a range of (previously service-oriented) government agencies.

At the same time the spectre of terrorism threatens to incrementally erode an inclusive and resilient pluralist society by spawning a divisive narrative that demonises others along racial, religious or ethnic lines, ultimately undermining the shared core values of equality and respect for the freedom and dignity of all. In Australia, growing community apprehension about an amorphous threat from "foreigners" has seen a hardening of attitudes towards issues such as migration and border protection. Zealous counter-terrorism over-reach can inadvertently serve to validate an extremist narrative on Western morality and repression, with the potential to further alienate already marginalised individuals and sub-groups in the community.

Governance & ethical risks

While these implications are important, they pale when compared with the possibility of compromising long-standing Westminster principles that are essential for democratic governance, accountability and ethics. Since 9/11 there has been constant pressure to integrate and subsume various civilian law enforcement, intelligence, home affairs and defence functions; to broaden the veil of secrecy; and to extend the application of a more "flexible" (utilitarian) governance regime. It is axiomatic that

official secrecy, while often necessary, inevitably impedes public accountability and transparency, and obliges the community to place great trust in the competence and integrity of the State and its agencies.

In the 2011 *Independent Review of the Intelligence Community* (IRIC) Cornall and Black (2011) acknowledge the pressures for greater integration, noting (p.29) that “some people argue that, in the globalised Information Age, it is artificial and hinders effectiveness to maintain the distinction between domestic security and foreign intelligence”. The IRIC emphasises the importance of striking an appropriate balance between civil liberties and national security, noting (p.21) that “in a free society, it is always important to keep the safeguards of our liberty, privacy and other human rights under review to maintain the balance we have struck as a nation between these individual rights and our security as a community. The Review believes the legal framework that enshrines that balance is sound and does not need any adjustment at present. … This balance is not just protected by law and the regulatory and oversight regimes that regulate and monitor agency conduct. It is also protected by the culture of each agency and the intelligence community as a whole. Maintaining the culture that sustains the balance between security and liberty, especially after a period of dramatic AIC growth, will require continued attention”.

The IRIC highlights a highly sensitive issue on the architecture and governance of the Australian intelligence community that is not widely understood by the broader Australian community. Put simply, different levels of legal and ethical governance and oversight apply to different agencies, according to the degree to which their intrusive surveillance and operational activities impinge on Australian citizens. These deliberate oversight and regulatory arrangements were essentially put in place following various commissions of inquiry in the 1970s and 1980s, and remain effective today. These governance regimes are vitally important as there are a spectrum of potential individual harms that can be caused by the lawful activities of security and intelligence organisations, ranging from: a theoretical invasion of privacy; restrictions on freedom of movement; reduction in employment options; damage to public reputation through suspicion and humiliation; feelings of social isolation, persecution or coercion; through to detention and other physical harms.

Arguably the most important elements of this governance framework are the deontological ethics that impose explicit, transparent and enduring rules-based duties on those security and intelligence agencies (such as ASIO) whose work potentially impinges on the rights and civil liberties of Australian citizens. The IRIC observes (p.29) that “it is important to the protection of the rights of Australians that ASIO’s culture and practices are shaped by an unambiguous legal and ethical framework which balances individual rights with national security concerns”. In contrast, those agencies whose primary targets are “foreigners” (such as ASIS) are not similarly constrained by rules-based duties, and are able to apply the more relative utilitarian ethical precepts of the “greater good”.

It is critically important to understand the essential difference between deontological and consequentialist/utilitarian ethical frameworks, and the way they interpret and influence ethical behaviours. Under deontological ethics, the morality (rightness) of an act is internally judged by its conformity with explicit rules (such as do no harm), and the actor has a personal responsibility to comply with his/her moral duty, irrespective of the ultimate outcome. Deontological ethics play a crucial role in ensuring public accountability by clearly stipulating what acts are right and wrong and who has a moral duty to comply, particularly in circumstances which may present a degree of moral ambiguity. These rules are often articulated in codes of conduct and ethics.

In contrast, under consequentialist (utilitarian) ethics, the merit (goodness) of an act is externally judged by its contribution to a desirable outcome (such as community safety), with the act itself being amoral and the actor being absolved of personal responsibility providing the actions are consistent with conceptions of the greater good. Under utilitarianism, the State can authorise amoral means in pursuit of “greater good” ends, including actions that cause both intangible and real harms to citizens. In absolving the actor of personal responsibility for the morality of specific actions and removing rules-based duties, utilitarian ethics can provide a morally neutral framework for potentially harmful actions, an approach that would be intolerable in regulating the broader public service.

An unsettling shift in the rhetoric on the governance of the Australian intelligence community is reflected in the 2017 *Independent Intelligence Review* (IIR) that concludes (p.5) “a central theme of this report is to provide a pathway to take those areas of individual agency excellence to an even higher level of collective performance through strengthening integration across Australia’s national intelligence enterprise”. Responding to the recommendations of the IIR, in May 2018 the Attorney-General announced a review of the legal framework of the national intelligence community. The inference that a new and threatening national security (presumably counter-terrorism) environment necessitates the greater integration of a range of security and intelligence functions will have profound implications for Australian governance and democratic accountability if it involves an extension or expansion of utilitarian ethics (and associated secrecy) across a broader range of government functions that deal with the Australian community.

An extension of the expedient and relative ethical precepts of utilitarianism across broader government functions that deal with the Australian community, with the potential for a higher (political) authority to secretly direct and sanction amoral and individually-harmful state actions, may pose unprecedented moral and ethical risks to the professionalism, integrity and independence of the Australian public service, with the potential to compromise essential democratic accountability.

Implications for emergency management

The distortions caused by the spectre of terrorism are pervasive and directly relevant to emergency management and emergency service volunteering in Australia. The allocation of substantial government resources to fund a burgeoning, costly and opaque national security (counter-terrorism) industry has clear implications for the risk-based resourcing of emergency management in Australia, particularly in an environment of growing fiscal restraint.

The implications of the distortions caused by the spectre of terrorism for national emergency management priorities and resources are palpable. The dedication of inestimable resources to counter-terrorism (where the harms in terms of mortality are relatively limited) can be starkly contrasted with the reliance on unpaid volunteers to protect whole communities from the devastating effects of natural hazards (where the harms in terms of mortality can be catastrophic).

The effective exclusion of terrorism from an all-hazards national risk management system has a number of serious consequences in terms of the proportionate risk-based allocation of finite government resources to the hazards that objectively pose the greatest threat to life and property in Australia. If terrorism is responsible for less than 20 of the more than 10,000 potentially preventable deaths in Australia annually, what sort of resources should be reasonably allocated to risk mitigation relative to the risks posed by other potentially fatal hazards? How do we compare the risks of mortality posed by the actions of a small number of isolated “lone wolf” extremists, with the possibility that whole communities could be consumed by wildfires or devastated by floods? What is the basis for deciding that hundreds of millions of dollars will be applied in mitigating one potentially fatal hazard, but managing other more deadly hazards will be devolved to unpaid and under-resourced volunteers?

Conclusions

Consistent with the fourth research objective, this discussion paper has critically examined the all-hazards risk and emergency management policy context within which Australian emergency services operate, in order to evaluate the efficacy and integrity of current processes for determining and resourcing national emergency management priorities. The paper concludes that while climate change-related natural hazards pose substantial and growing risks to life and property, Australia’s national emergency management priorities are distorted by fear-based perceptions of terrorism.

Trends in contemporary Australian values

Published June 2019 as a Discussion Paper at Appendix F in a thesis titled "Valuing Volunteers: Better understanding the primary motives for volunteering in Australian emergency services"

Introduction

Volunteers are the lifeblood of emergency services in Australia and are integral to the nation's emergency management capabilities and overall disaster resilience. The concurrence of an increase in the risks posed by a range of climate change-related natural hazards and a decline in formal volunteering rates threatens Australia's emergency preparedness. The Valuing Volunteers Study aims to provide a better understanding of both the primary motives for formal volunteering in Australian emergency services, and the broader policy and social contexts.

Consistent with the fifth research objective, this discussion paper explores the broader social and cultural contexts for volunteering, highlighting the implications of changing core values for future forms of civic participation, including formal emergency service volunteering.

The nature of values

Feather (1992, p.111) describes values as stable "generalised beliefs about what is or is not desirable" that motivate people's actions. Halman and de Moor (1994, p.22) describe values as "deeply rooted dispositions guiding people to act and behave in a certain way", while Longest, Hitlin and Vaisey (2013, p.1500) observe that values "direct human action and imbue it with meaning". Schwartz (2005, p.1), the author of the *Theory of Basic Human Values*, defines values as an integrated set of "desirable, trans-situational goals, varying in importance, that serve as guiding principles in people's lives". As reflected in the literature review (Chapter 3), values are widely acknowledged as influential and enduring human motives, and extensive empirical research has demonstrated the efficacy of a values paradigm as a comprehensive, multi-dimensional and multi-disciplinary theoretical framework for interpreting and understanding such motives.

Core values are fundamental (strong) beliefs and guiding principles, and shared core values can represent important and enduring social norms that are the foundation for conceptions of a collective interest and common cultural identity. The nature of specific core values, and the extent to which they are explicitly articulated and reinforced, can vary widely between different societies. In some societies, core values are deeply embedded, highly formalised and publicly championed, while in others core values are largely implicit, fluid and subject to constant re-interpretation. A charter of

rights and responsibilities that defines a nation’s core values can act like a code of conduct for a society, and the absence of explicit principles and norms can contribute to moral and ethical deficits in society.

The Common Cause Foundation (2016, p.27) is a not-for-profit organisation in the United Kingdom that is dedicated to the study of shared cultural values, described as being “of profound influence in shaping our motivation to engage with bigger-than-self problems”. The Foundation identifies three challenges confronting contemporary UK society: “to mount proportionate responses to profound social and environmental problems; to deepen public commitment to civic participation; and to rebuild social cohesion and trust in social institutions”. The Foundation utilises the Schwartz universal values framework to promote compassionate and altruistic (self-transcendence) values that emphasise the well-being of others.

Altruistic values, and their influence on traditional forms of civic participations, are a central focus of the Valuing Volunteers Study, and the literature reflects a diversity of perspectives on their origins and manifestations. Noting the Oxford Dictionary definition of altruism as “disinterested and selfless concern for the well-being of others”, the phenomenon is typically characterised as one pole of a motivational spectrum that represents the individual’s primary orientation towards and concern for others. At the other-oriented (altruistic) end of the spectrum are concepts like collectivist, pro-social, helping and self-transcendence (a Schwartz higher-order cluster), while at the self-oriented (egoistic) end of the spectrum are concepts like individualistic, reflexive and self-enhancement (a Schwartz higher-order cluster),

In the absence of their institutionalisation and formal articulation, the degree of community and Government commitment to altruistic values (whether they genuinely represent core values and enduring social norms) can be reliably inferred by examining the policies and actions of Governments and the community towards the circumstances of those who are most disadvantaged. Contemporary economic and social indicators can provide clear measures of the extent to which altruistic values such as respect, dignity, equality, fairness, inclusion and compassion represent genuine social norms that are reflected in public policy.

Interpreting Australian values

Public discourse on Australian culture, core values and national identity has been highly politicised for many years, in part reflecting the dynamic and rapidly evolving nature of Australian society. Acknowledging the tens of thousands of years of settlement by the traditional custodians of this ancient continent, the establishment of Australia as a British outpost/colony in a predominantly Asian region dates from the late 18th century, meaning that Australia’s European heritage spans only two and a quarter centuries.

Alluding to this relatively short European heritage in a paper titled *The Adolescent Country* for the Lowy Institute, Hartcher (2014) describes Australia's "provincial reflex" where "big matters are commonly crowded out by the small". Less charitably, Catsaras (2014) observes that "the roots of our adolescent behaviour lie deep in the lack of maturity of our national consciousness. The juvenile language of our leaders, our false bravado, and our burning need to constantly prove ourselves on the sporting world stage all reflect the characteristics of an adolescent: insecure, uncertain of their place in the world, reluctant to come of age and enter adulthood".

The Constitution of the Commonwealth of Australia came into effect on 1 January 1901, providing an administrative framework for the federation of the States (formerly separate British colonies). The Constitution is largely silent on the attributes and values of the citizens of the constituent States, although it institutionalised a White Australia policy that maintained a European mono-culture for the first half of the 20th century. Political decisions in the latter half of the 20th century transformed an archaic social policy from cultural homogeneity to heterogeneity, and Australia has undergone significant social and cultural changes since multiculturalism and non-discriminatory migration policies were implemented in the mid-1970s. These relatively recent changes mean that many Australians over the age of 40 lived under the previous exclusory policy.

Any brief critique of Australia's history would be incomplete without an acknowledgement of the various national character traits that are regularly mythologised as being part of the Australian cultural idiom. These character traits centre on narratives on conceptions of mateship (solidarity), egalitarianism (equality and scepticism of authority), a "fair go" (consideration), "she'll be right" (complacency) and "the lucky country" (resource-rich) that broadly have their origins in Australia's penal, colonial and gold-rush pasts.

One of the more enduring narratives from the early 20th century is the Anzac legend, and the idealisation that the national character is embodied in a spirit of courage, endurance, resilience, mateship, sacrifice, ingenuity and good humour. These sentiments are exemplified by fifteen stained glass windows in the Hall of Memory at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra, representing: the personal qualities of resource, candour, devotion, curiosity and independence; the social qualities of comradeship, ancestry, patriotism, chivalry and loyalty; and the fighting qualities of coolness, control, audacity, endurance and decision.

In the last three decades Australia has undergone dramatic social, cultural and economic changes. The nation's population has grown by more than 50% from 15.75 million in 1985 to 25 million in 2018, with the majority of that increase being attributed to overseas migration (ABS, 2017). In 2016 more than 25% of those living in Australia were born overseas, and "nearly half of all Australians were either born overseas of had at least one parent who was born overseas" (ibid). Australia's heterogeneity is

reflected in the 2016 Census where 36.1% of respondents identified their ancestry as English, followed by 33.5% as Australian, 11% as Irish, 9.3% as Scottish, 5.6% as Chinese, 4.6% as Italian, 4,5% as German, 2.8% as Indian, 1.8% as Greek, and 1.6% as Dutch (ibid).

Average life expectancy in Australia has risen from 75.6 years in 1985 to 82.75 in 2014, and has been complemented by a rise in healthy life expectancy (AIHW, 2016). According to the ABS "by the late 20th century low fertility, declining mortality and the ageing of the large baby boom generation combined to see an increase in the numbers of older people" (ABS, 2017, p.4). According to the 2015 Intergenerational Report, between 1974/75 and 2014/15 the proportion of the population aged over 65 rose from 8.7% to 15%, and the number of people aged 15 to 64 for every person aged over 65 fell from 7.3 to 4.5 people (Treasury, 2015). Over the same period the employment of females aged 15 to 64 rose from 46% in 1974/75 to 66% in 2014/15 (ibid).

International comparative studies on core values and social norms provide limited insights on Australia relative to other nations. Eder (2017) reports on the results of an International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) that examined attitudes towards citizenship in 34 countries. The "good" citizen was defined as either individually righteous (self-oriented) or socially responsible (other-oriented), and Australia ranked second highest amongst the nations on individual righteousness. Deeming (2016) used data from the ISSP to examine community attitudes towards social welfare, finding (p.174) that "57% of Australians claim that it is not the State's duty to ensure that everyone has a job", and "many Australians oppose the unconditional welfare state model that provides social security for unemployed workers" (p.178).

In a similar vein, Gelfand (2012) used World Values Survey (WVS) data to examine the "tightness" or strength of social norms among 33 nations, with Australia ranking 24 out of 33 countries (not strong). Jiang, Li and Hamamura (2015) also used WVS data to examine the relationship between the strength of social norms and morally debatable behaviours, finding that Australia ranked 16 out of 20 countries (not strong). They observe (p.335) that "the strength of social norms in a society may greatly influence whether individuals in the society are free to make personal judgements regarding morally debatable behaviours or obliged to follow the moral rules rigidly".

In the context of major and relatively recent demographic changes, defining what it means to "be" Australian in a rapidly growing and evolving pluralist society is fraught with complexity. For many years Australia has been unique amongst developed Western nations in its reliance on amorphous politically-mediated narratives to articulate and sustain its core national values, in the absence of their formal articulation in a founding Constitution or Charter of Rights. Williams (2009, p.1) observes that "Australia is now the only democratic nation in the world without a national charter or bill of rights", noting that "without a charter of rights, freedoms can be ignored or taken away too easily". In a similar vein, Garnaut (2005, p.3) has written of a "great

complacency” that descended on Australia in the new millennium, with Australians reverting “to their traditional preference for having popular politics in command of resource allocation and economic decision-making”, with a “return to traditional approaches to economic policy-making, favouring the ad hoc and expedient over the economically rational”.

A tacit approach to the articulation of core national values was reflected in then Prime Minister John Howard’s 2006 Australia Day address, which argued that the strength of Australia as a cohesive multicultural society is founded on a balance between tolerance of diversity and respect for our European cultural heritage. Howard described Australia’s “dominant cultural pattern” as “Judeo-Christian ethics, the progressive spirit of the Enlightenment, and the institutions and values of British political culture”. Howard praised that “no institution or code lays down a test of Australianness”, and warned of the potential constraints on the Parliament of a legal instrument like a Bill of Rights.

Less than a year after Howard’s 2006 address, the Australian Government moved to articulate and progressively formalise a set of core national values. This development occurred in the context of growing community and political concerns about the integration of migrants into the Australian community, and a broader environment of terrorism-inspired fear and insecurity. In 2007 the Federal Government introduced an *Australian Values Statement* accompanied by a booklet titled *Life in Australia – Australian Values and Principles*. These were widely promulgated to encourage those seeking to travel to or settle in Australia to “gain an understanding of Australia, its people and their way of life”.

The *Australian Values Statement* identifies Australia’s national values as:

- English as the national language and an important unifying element.
- Respect for the freedom and dignity of the individual.
- Freedom of religion.
- Commitment to the rule of law.
- Parliamentary democracy.
- Equality of men and women.
- A spirit of egalitarianism that embraces mutual respect, tolerance, fair play and compassion for those in need and pursuit of the public good.
- Equality of opportunity for individuals, regardless of their race, religion or ethnic background.

The accompanying *Life in Australia* booklet restates Australia’s national values as:

- Respect for equal worth, and the dignity and freedom of the individual.
- Freedom of speech.
- Freedom of religion and secular government.
- Freedom of association.
- Support for parliamentary democracy and the rule of law.

- Equality under the law.
- Equality of men and women.
- Equality of opportunity.
- Peacefulness.
- A spirit of egalitarianism that embraces tolerance, mutual respect and compassion for those in need.

On 20 March 2017 Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull launched *Australia's Multicultural Statement* that asserts that "the glue that holds us together is mutual respect – a deep recognition that each of us is entitled to the same respect, the same dignity, the same opportunity". The statement lists a range of shared values that "unite us and create social bonds between us", including:

- Respect for the rule of law and allegiance to Australia; respect for the liberty and dignity of all individuals; valuing diversity and embracing "mutual respect, inclusion, fairness and compassion".
- Support for the equality of men and women; belief in equality before the law; belief in equality of opportunity for all.
- A fundamental commitment to freedom; support for freedom of thought, speech, religion, enterprise and association; a commitment to parliamentary democracy; responsibility for fulfilling our civic duties.

Contemporary forces for change

A key contention of the Valuing Volunteers Study is that declining altruistic values are increasingly challenging the volunteer resourcing of essential emergency services in Australia. As reflected in the literature review, a range of authors have highlighted the implications for traditional and formal modes of volunteering of a rise in self-oriented motives (Rochester et al., 2012; Clary et al., 2016). Haddara and Lingard (2017, p.839) explore the phenomenon of "lost altruism" amongst doctors in Australia and Canada, with a longitudinal study of the values embodied in professional codes of ethics. They find "a gradual and uneven loss of altruistic content over time", concluding that "loss of altruism is not merely a current generational issue but extends through the past century and is likely due to political and social forces" (ibid).

Hustinx and Lammertyn (2003, p.180) apply *Modernisation Theory* to explore the implications of a shift from collective to reflexive styles of volunteering, observing that "modernisation theorists predict a progressive erosion of traditional group belonging, and thus a weakening of the collective roots of volunteering". They contrasts "classic volunteers" who identify with traditional social norms, demonstrate predominantly altruistic and idealistic motives and commit long-term to formal organisations, with "new volunteers" who identify with and selectively pursue various personal interests, often concurrently and informally on a sporadic basis. Recent Government reports have also acknowledged the implications for emergency service volunteering of major changes in individual and social contexts (Productivity Commission, 2016), and the

ABS 2014 General Social Survey reports a decline in formal volunteering rates for people aged 18 years and older in Australia from 34% in 2010 to 31% in 2104.

Consistent with Modernisation Theory, this thesis contends that the unprecedented convergence in the 21st century of powerful disruptive global forces is fundamentally reshaping human conceptions of individual and social reality, catalysing a shift from altruistic to egoistic values. These disruptive forces are largely facilitated by major advances in new technologies that are progressively transforming all aspects of humans' physical and intellectual lives. The nature and influence of each of these disruptive forces is worthy of further academic examination, and the following precis is not intended to be exhaustive.

Advances in communication technologies

The first disruptive force is new communication technologies that facilitate the process of individualisation and social atomisation by enabling the autonomous individual to construct and sustain their own unique and highly personal paradigm. Communication technologies allow the reflexive individual to control and focus their interests and efforts on relationships and activities within a narrow realm of direct personal relevance, effectively filtering out unwanted external influences and contradictory broader perspectives. Educational psychologist Borba (2016) has referred to an "epidemic of self-absorption" that has been accompanied by a decline in empathy amongst youth in the United States. Likewise, as the author of a controversial article titled *Have smartphones destroyed a generation?*, Twenge (2017) documents changes in behaviours amongst teens in the United States and has written extensively on the negative implications of the obsessive use of technology by the "me generation".

Makarovic and Golob (2013) explore the fluidity of identifications and fragmentation of social meanings in the European Union, noting (p.291) that the "complexity of information has an impact on perceptions of the self in relation to external referential frames, which have undermined traditional conceptions of social reality". They observe (p.292) that "social context has lost its continuity and stability and the complexity and ambiguity of information-encouraged individual reflexivity", and conclude (p.301) that "the role of individual imagination and self-categorisation has thus gained an increased influence in attaching the meaning to the world around".

Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2001) have explored the manifestations and implications of transformative social change, and the processes of individualisation and reflexive modernisation in a globalised world. They observe (Preface, p.2) that "neoliberal economics rests upon an image of the autarkic human self" who "alone can master the whole of their lives, that they derive and renew their capacity for action from within themselves. … The ideological notion of the self-sufficient individual ultimately implies the disappearance of any sense of mutual obligation". They observe

(Ch.2, p.1) that “we live in an age in which the social order of the nation state, class, ethnicity and the traditional family is in decline. The ethic of individual self-fulfilment and achievement is the most powerful current in modern society. The choosing, deciding, shaping human beings who aspire to be the author of his or her own life, the creator of individual identity, is the central character of our time”. The Becks’ analyses have proved prescient given they predated the pervasive influence of information and communications technologies on the process of individualisation.

Farrugia (2015, p.17) examines youth homelessness “as a late modern form of inequality which emerges from the individualisation process”. He attributes the rise of contemporary secular individualism to the process of structural fragmentation that weakens “social bonds that formerly provided collective sources of meaning and resources for identity”. He explores (p.19) de-traditionalisation and dis-embedding processes “that break apart the coherence of these ways of life leading to the dissolution of collective sources of meaning and identity”. Farrugia explores (p.23) the implications of growing subjectivity and reflexivity where “subjects take themselves as the authors of their own biography, constantly reflecting on the kind of person they have become and wish to be”, and concludes (p.25) that “despite the cultural emphasis on choice and rationality in late modernity, the individualisation process may actually erode young people’s capacity to exert control over their environment”.

In a report prepared for UNESCO titled *Ethical and societal challenges of the information society, Mukherjee (2013, p.40)* observes that “social media have created new forms of virtual community, but they have also redefined classical visions of society. These networks, while allowing many people to accumulate millions of connections and ‘friends’, have also given rise to new forms of solitude”. The report notes (p.41) the “increasing destabilisation of our notions of nature and the natural. The ethical question is whether such a destabilisation also means rethinking the normative and ‘natural’ frames that we have used to inform our values systems and beliefs about the world”. The report concludes (p.46) that “for all its strengthened social connectivity, the information society has also given rise to new forms of narcissism, personal branding, network capital, and consumption of the self and ‘status’”.

Advances in information technologies

The second (related) disruptive force is new information technologies that provide the individual with virtually universal and instantaneous access to limitless quantities of often complex, contradictory and intense information from a vast array of sources. A virtual crescendo of information “noise” can make it increasingly difficult for the individual to distinguish between fact, opinion and emotion, creating incentives for intuitive sentiments to displace the rigour of logic, reasoning and empirically-based science in the creation of knowledge. In a highly competitive and volatile information environment, the dominant public discourse is often framed around simplistic and populist narratives or confected short-term crises, marginalising reasoned,

dispassionate and evidence-based discussion. As alluded to in the report to UNESCO, this dynamic can give disproportionate influence to those who can shape a distorted perception of “reality”, with the control of dominating images representing propagandising by the State, the media or those individuals seeking fifteen seconds of infamy (such as extremists).

In such a chaotic and distorted information environment, established science (such as climate change) can be depreciated as ideology, and long-standing “traditional” ethical values (such as dignity, loyalty and honour) can be denigrated as anachronistic and “politically correct”. Tellingly, the terms post-fact [era] and post-truth [age] have entered the lexicon of the Oxford dictionary, both described as “relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief”. At a 2017 Harvard University-organised conference in the United States on media disruption, Baum, Lazer and Mele (2017, p.3) observed “recent shifts in the media ecosystem raise new concerns about the vulnerability of democratic societies to fake news and the public’s limited ability to contain it. … An abundance of information sources online leads individuals to rely heavily on heuristics and social cues in order to determine the credibility of information and to shape their beliefs, which are in turn extremely difficult to correct or change”.

Marshall (2017, p.3) argues that “human reflexivity is one factor that makes society what is known as a ‘complex system’ which interacts with other complex systems”. He concludes (p.19) that “contemporary ‘information society’ is not ‘knowledge society’. Deceit, ‘fake news’, data smog, and information blockage are part of people’s day-to-day lives. This arises because communications has social functions other than the transmission of accurate information. … People invest heavily in information groups around identities and meaning, and develop ‘information paranoia’, embracing an ordering of doubt or suspicion”. Likewise, Madden, Lenhart and Fontaine (2017, p.3) explore “eroding trust in journalistic institutions and the rise of a highly-politicised networked digital media environment”. Their interviews of high school graduates in the United States revealed (p.4) that “most teens and young adults express low levels of trust in the news media and are relying on networked strategies to help them navigate the stories they most care about”.

Growing uncertainty & insecurity

The third disruptive force is growing social and economic polarisation due to globalisation-related dislocation from the unrestricted international flow of goods, services, capital, knowledge and labour. Those in (mainly) developed countries displaced and marginalised by the exodus of capital and labour to more efficient low-cost destinations have responded with resentment and growing cynicism to the inability of their national leaders to protect their sovereign interests and ensure equitable access to the benefits of global free trade. Community confidence in and support for a range of established institutions, including trust in democratic processes,

have diminished in a number of developed countries, reflected in a rise in electoral support for populist candidates promoting protectionist and nationalist policies.

Demos (2017) explores a rising culture of fear (of the unknown, of the other, of the future) in Europe, reflected in the growth of populist politics that support tighter border controls, the erosion of liberal freedoms and welfare chauvinism. Demos observes (p.14) that the social impacts of fear are “seen in the increasingly nativist and ‘othering’ discourse in the public realm; the disintegration of civil society and declining social trust; and the resurgence of exclusive national and regional identities” (ibid). In Australia, research conducted by the Australian National University (2015) reports (p.11) that “mapping the political mood over time reveals that the political mood has been in steady decline since 2008. Net satisfaction among Australians … has fallen from more than 50% in March 2008 to 19% in March 2015”.

Further economic and social disruption is likely (in both developed and developing economies) with the prospective large-scale displacement of traditional labour-based work by new technologies, particularly through automation. Characterised by some in the media as “precarious work in the gig economy”, diminishing access to stable paid work has great potential to further erode confidence in existing social and economic systems and institutions. In a 2017 report titled *Preparing Young People for the Future of Work* by the Mitchell Institute, Torii and O’Connell (2017, p.3) find that “future generations will navigate a vastly different world of work to that of their predecessors. Technology is rapidly disrupting how we live and work – many tasks at the core of low and medium skill jobs are being automated or contracted offshore. Some research estimates that 40 per cent of jobs in Australia are at high risk of being automated in the next 10 to 15 years”. In a similar vein, in a report prepared for the International Monetary Fund, Berg, Buffie and Zanna (2018) apply a general equilibrium model to analyse the implications of advances in artificial intelligence and robotics for output, wages and inequality. Their report finds that the modern world is at the threshold of a new industrial revolution that could have significant negative consequences for employment, wages and inequality.

The politics of fear

The final disruptive force is the emergence post-9/11 of the spectre of international terrorism, and the corrosive influence of fear and suspicion in undermining trust and social cohesion within the Australian community. As explored in the discussion paper at Appendix E, a largely State-fed fear of terrorism threatens to incrementally erode an inclusive and resilient pluralist society by spawning a divisive narrative that demonises others along racial, religious or ethnic lines, undermining the shared core values of equality and respect for the freedom and dignity of all. An amorphous and uncertain threat of extreme violence may have particular emotional resonance with communities already anxious about the implications of rapid social change and the ill-defined threat posed by “foreigners”. Data from a 2017 IPSOS survey of attitudes

towards world affairs in 24 countries reported that 67% of Australian respondents felt there was a very or somewhat real threat of a major natural disaster occurring in Australia, while 82% of Australian respondents felt there was a very or somewhat real threat of a terrorist attack taking place in Australia in the next twelve months (10% more than the average for all other countries).

At a deeper institutional level, the State's counter-terrorism responses threaten to undermine essential democratic accountability when they include far-reaching changes to national security policies and practices that alter the long-standing balance between national security and civil liberties. While pervasive secrecy impedes essential public accountability, the extension and normalisation of the expedient and relative ethical precepts of utilitarianism across broader government functions may pose unprecedented moral and ethical risks to the professionalism, integrity and independence of the Australian public service.

In conclusion, the convergence and interaction of these powerful disruptive global forces may be changing the community's shared core values by catalysing a shift towards individualism and egoism. This shift is reflected in growing political and social volatility, a decline in community participation in a range of traditional forms of altruistic civic participation (including formal volunteering), and increasing social atomisation and polarisation. The response of many Governments to these emerging trends (in particular growing insecurity) is to increase the public emphasis on national values in an attempt to counter a marked decline in many traditional forms of civic participation. In some states the response has included a rise in nationalism.

This critique of globally disruptive forces would not be complete without an acknowledgement of the profound implications of an increase in the risks posed by climate change-related hazards. Climate change is a generic term used to refer to long-term changes in global climate patterns due to a rise in the level of atmospheric carbon dioxide, and leading to an increase in ocean water temperatures (warming). Climate change poses great challenges globally as it pits longer-term environmental and social sustainability against immediate and long-term economic interests, in particular the growing energy needs of emerging economies like China and India. Climate change poses a particular dilemma for Australia because the nation is one of the world's largest per-capita emitters of greenhouse gases and one of the world's major coal producers.

Catastrophic climate change-related natural events (principally extreme temperatures and fire weather, prolonged droughts, extreme rainfall and floods, severe storms and damaging winds, sea level rise and inundation) are beginning to threaten previously safe communities in both developed and developing nations. Climate change is important for this research because of the likely implications of an increase in both the severity and frequency of destructive climate-related events

requiring a coordinated response from a skilled emergency services volunteer workforce.

Indicators of contemporary Australian values

As noted earlier, altruistic values reflect a primary concern for the well-being, welfare and benefit of others, and this thesis contends that such values play a crucial role in motivating formal emergency service volunteering. The importance of altruistic values (whether they are an integral part of core national values) are reflected in the degree to which a country's economic, social and political systems operate to uphold other-oriented values such as equality, fairness, inclusion, compassion and opportunity, and in the policies and actions of Governments and the community towards the circumstances of those who are most disadvantaged. Kasser (2011) examined values data on twenty wealthy nations to determine the extent to which (shared) cultural values influence the level of concern for the well-being of current and future generations of children. He concluded (p.211) that "the values espoused by a nation may affect the extent to which it enacts policies and pursues practices that promote or diminish the well-being of present and future generations of children".

As noted earlier, Australia is unique amongst developed Western nations in its reliance on amorphous politically-mediated narratives to articulate and sustain its core national values. In the absence of their formal expression in a founding Constitution or Bill of Rights (and acknowledging the relatively recent promulgation of the *Australian Values Statement*), objective measures of Australia's core values largely need to be inferred from evidence-based reviews of the actual effect and consequences of public policy and Government action.

Applying the Oxford Dictionary definition of altruism as a "disinterested and selfless concern for the well-being of others", the following official reports provide some broader indications of contemporary trends in real levels of Government and community concern for the welfare of others, in particular for those who are most disadvantaged. These reports encompass the dimensions of aged care, business ethics and public governance, child and youth welfare, civic participation and philanthropy, equity and opportunity in income and wealth, health and wellbeing, housing and homelessness, and social inclusion and cohesion.

Aged care

A 2017 report titled *Elder Abuse – A National Legal Response* from the Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC) finds that (p.17) "as Australia faces the 'inescapable demographic destiny' of an ageing population, the potential reach of elder abuse may grow". The ALRC report finds that the majority of aged care and support is provided in the community by informal carers, and concludes (p.18) that "vulnerability does not

only stem from intrinsic factors such as health, but also from social or structural factors, like isolation and community attitudes such as ageism".

In May 2017 a fact sheet titled *National Prioritisation System* from the Australian Government Department of Health outlined the commencement of a national prioritisation system for access to a capped number of home care packages (130,750 in total in December 2017) in order to address "significant variations in waiting periods across Australia", and with the aim of "the fairer allocation of packages to clients, based on their individual needs and circumstances" (p.1). A March 2018 report titled *Home Care Packages Program* from the Department of Health indicates that "as at 31 December 2017 there were 104,602 consumers in the national prioritisation queue, with 45.8% either in, or assigned, an interim package" pending the Government's allocation of more home care packages.

In an address to the *National Press Club* on 25 October 2017, Aged Care Minister Ken Wyatt noted that up to 40% of people in aged care homes never get visitors and asked "Do I want to be abandoned in my later years? Is this what my elders deserve? Is this how I want to live out my days?" The Minister noted "when I talk to people in aged care I find so many who crave simple touch, a hug, the warmth of palms clasped together, or a soothing hand on their shoulder".

Business ethics & public governance

A 2014 *Report of the Royal Commission into the Home Insulation Program* by Ian Hanger revealed systemic deficiencies in the administration of a Federal Government business stimulation program that resulted in several fatalities, and concluded (p.2) that "it ought also to have been obvious to any competent administration that the injection of a large amount of money into an industry that was largely 'unregulated' would carry with it a risk of rorting and other unscrupulous behaviour".

A 2017 report titled *Wage Theft in Australia* by Berg and Farbenblum (2017, p.5) finds that "a substantial proportion of international students, backpackers and other temporary migrants were paid around half the legal minimum wage in Australia" and (p.7) "international students, backpackers and other temporary migrants also experienced other indicators of exploitation and criminal forced labour. The report concluded that "the findings also invite scrutiny of how certain businesses profit from wage theft and gain advantage over others that pay workers in compliance with Australian labour law, and how wage theft among temporary migrants may be driving wages down for all workers in certain industries" (ibid).

A 2017 report titled *Black Economy Taskforce – Final Report* commissioned by the Australian Government finds (p.1) that "the black economy is a significant, complex and growing economic and social problem". The report notes (p.11) "in our opinion the black economy could be as large as 3 per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP)

today, up to 50 per cent larger than the Australian Bureau of Statistic (ABS) 2012 estimates". The report concludes (p.2) that "the black economy is an endemic cultural problem. It is supported by values and assumptions that participation in the black economy is a "victimless crime", that "everyone does it". We are seeing it become more entrenched with such views spreading through families and communities including through social media".

A 2017 report titled *Corporate tax transparency report for the 2015-16 income year* from the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) finds that of 2043 major corporate entities only 64% paid tax, and there had been a decrease in tax payable from the previous financial year of 8.7% ($3.6 billion). Reasons for the non-payment of taxes included deduction of prior-year losses; entitlement to offsets; reconciliation of items like deductions against an accounting profit; and accounting losses (p.12).

A report titled *Corruption Perception Index 2017* by Transparency International that measures perceived levels of public sector corruption worldwide finds (p.6) that "since 2012 several countries significantly improved their index score,…while several countries declined, including Syria, Yemen and Australia". The report reveals that Australia's score fell from 85 in 2012 to 77 in 2017.

An August 2017 report titled *Shifting the dial: 5 Year Productivity Review* from the Productivity Commissions explores a range of strategies to enhance productivity in health, education, cities and confidence in institutions. The report notes (p.7) that "in the period between now and the next of these reports in 2022, income growth in Australia is likely to be about half of historical levels. … We estimate that on a business as usual basis, productivity growth in Australia is more likely to fall than rise over the medium term". The report observes (p.8) that "governments and commentators should be very wary of the seductive claim that something is well under way already in the areas to which we devote most attention. The Commission's analysis … is that the headline is not often supported by reality; or has not yet achieved the cooperation of all necessary participants. … We were told by countless participants that governments themselves – their structures, relationships, incentives and capabilities – are today the key impediment to (but could be the crucial catalyst for) essential reform".

A June 2018 report titled *Restoring electricity affordability and Australia's competitive advantage* from the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission into Australia's electricity markets concludes (p.iv) that "high prices and bills have placed enormous strains on household budgets and business viability. The current situation is unacceptable and unsustainable". The ACCC report notes (p.v) that "electricity retailers have also played a major role in poor outcomes for consumers. Retailers have made pricing structures confusing and have developed a practice of discounting which is opaque and not comparable across the market. Standing offers

are priced excessively to facilitate this practice, leaving inactive customers paying far more than they need for electricity”.

Evidence presented by various major financial institutions to the *Royal Commission into Misconduct in the Banking, Superannuation and Financial Services Industry* in 2018 has demonstrated repeated, consistent, significant and systemic patterns of unconscionable conduct. In addressing the reasons for such systemic behaviours, the Interim Report published in September 2018 concludes (p.xix) that “too often, the answer seems to be greed – the pursuit of short term profit at the expense of basic standards of honesty”.

Child & youth welfare

A report titled *Society at a Glance 2014 Highlights: Australia OECD Social Indicators* from the OECD finds (p.1) that “relative poverty in Australia (14.4% of the population) is higher than the OECD average (11.3%)”, and while poverty rates for youth and those over the age of 65 had declined, child poverty increased. The OECD report also notes (p.2) that confidence in the national government had fallen from 55% in 2008 to 44% in 2014.

A 2015 report titled *The mental health of children and adolescents,* based on an extensive Federal Government-funded survey, found that almost 14% (or 1 in 7) of 4-17 year-olds (560,000) were assessed as having mental disorder in the previous twelve months, with one fifth of adolescents experiencing high or very high levels of psychological distress, and one third of 11-17 year-olds having been bullied in the previous twelve months. The same report found that almost 25% of 11-17 year-old spent 3-4 hours per (week) day on the internet, with 17.6% spending 5-8 hours per day, and over 10% spending more than 9 hours per day.

A 2016 *Youth Survey 2012-16* from Mission Australia and the Black Dog Institute finds (p.5) that “in 2016 just under one in four young people aged 15-19 years who responded to the Youth Survey met the criteria for having a probable serious mental illness. Concerningly, there has been a significant increase in the proportion of young people meeting this criteria over the past five years (rising from 18.7% in 2012 to 22.8% in 2016)”. In relation to indigenous youth, “in 2016 over three in ten (31.6%) of ATSI respondents met the criteria for a probable serious mental illness” (ibid).

A 2017 report titled *Independent review of out of home care in NSW – final report* by David Tune that examined child protection systems in NSW concludes (p.3) that “the NSW system is ineffective and unsustainable”, and “the system is failing to improve long term outcomes for children and to arrest the devastating cycles of intergenerational abuse and neglect. Outcomes are particularly poor for Aboriginal children, young people and families”.

A 2017 report titled *Generation Stalled* from the Brotherhood of St Laurence finds (p.2) that “precarious employment is hindering the capacity of many young people, especially those without qualifications and skills, to build satisfying and productive adult lives, as the pathways that were open to their parents appear to have stalled”. Using data from the ABS and HILDA, the report finds that “underemployment, at 18 per cent of the youth labour force (February 2017), is the highest in the 40 years since the count officially began. The challenge now affects even more young people than unemployment, currently at 13.5 per cent; young people are far more likely to be in casual and part-time jobs than at the beginning of this millennium; in the past 15 years the average gap has widened between the actual working hours of young underemployed people and the hours they would like to work” (ibid).

A 2017 report titled *Family Matters* from SNAICC finds (p.5) that “Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children make up approximately 36 per cent of all children living in [out of home care], the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in OOHC is almost 10 times that of other children, and disproportionate representation continues to grow (AIHW, 2017a). This has eventuated despite – or because of – the laws, policies, and programs of successive Australian governments”. The report concludes (p.74) that “this report exposes the alarming trajectory that some of Australia’s most vulnerable children face. … For the future of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, it is incumbent upon our collective responsibility as government and non-government stakeholders to work together … to change the story of the past 200 years and begin to provide an environment which is in the best interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and sees them safe and thriving”.

A April 2018 report titled *What price the gap? Education and inequality in Australia* by David Hetherington from the Public Education Foundation examines educational inequality and (p.3) “analyses the costs of students at the bottom falling further below those at the top and estimates that over the six years from 2009-15 alone this growing inequality has cost Australia around $20.3 billion, equivalent to 1.2% of GDP”. The report notes that “Australia’s school performance (as measured by international test scores) has been falling. What’s less understood is that this headline buries a stark, unpalatable fact: our international test results show that kids at the bottom of the performance distribution are falling faster and further than kids at the top” (ibid).

A 2018 report from **headspace** has reported that “nearly one in three (32%) young Australians (12 to 25 year olds) are reporting high or very high levels of psychological distress – more than treble the rate in 2007 (9%)”. The report indicates that rates of psychological distress are higher among young women, and that that 18 -21 year olds are reporting the highest levels.

The 2018 Final Report of the *Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse* concludes (p.5) that “tens of thousands of children have been sexually abused in many Australian institutions. We will never know the number.

Whatever the number, it is a national tragedy, perpetrated over generations within many of our most trusted institutions. … It is not a case of a few rotten apples. Society's major institutions have seriously failed. In many cases those failings have been exacerbated by a manifestly inadequate response to the abused person. The problems have been so widespread, and the nature of the abuse so heinous, that it is difficult to comprehend".

Civic participation & philanthropy

The ABS 2014 *General Social Survey* (2014 GSS) aims "to provide an understanding of the multi-dimensional nature of relative advantage and disadvantage across the population, and to facilitate reporting on and monitoring of people's opportunities to participate fully in society. … The themes include how Australia has progressed on aspects of social capital such as participation, support, feelings of safety and trust". The 2014 GSS "results show changes in the levels of involvement in activities connecting people to their broader community and the way people are interacting with the community outside their household" that are consistent with previous ABS data "showing a decrease in the time and opportunity that Australians have for recreation and leisure, and social and community interaction" (2015, p.xx).

The ABS defines a volunteer for statistical purposes as "someone who is over the age of 15 and, in the previous twelve months, willingly gave unpaid help, in the form of time, services or skills, through an organisation or group" (2010 Glossary). The 2014 GSS finds that in "in 2014, volunteering rates declined for the first time since the ABS began national voluntary work surveys in 1995. Between 1995 and 2010, volunteering rates increased, reaching a peak of 34% in 2010, but in 2014, the proportion of people aged 18 years and over who were volunteering fell to 31%. Both men and women were less likely to volunteer in 2014 than they were in 2010".

A 2016 report titled *The Australia We Want* from the Community Council of Australia (CCA) finds (p.9) that "Australia is currently a place where our incarceration rates are three times that of Ireland and rising, our suicide rates are higher than our road toll, and inequality is growing. We volunteer less and give less as a percentage of our income than we did five years ago. We are slipping down the international corruption scale just as we are slipping down the scale of international generosity. These are not good indicators".

A report titled *Australian Organ Donation Performance* from ShareLife reveals that as at December 2016 Australia's organ donors per million of population was less than 50% of world leading practice, with Australia ranked 17th in organ donation rates in the world. Despite the expenditure of over $300 million over 7 years, Australia's number of organ donors per million increased by 8.6 whereas other countries such as Croatia and Iceland increased by more than 20.

A report titled *Australia's Welfare 2017* from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), commenting on the trends revealed by the 2014 GSS, finds (p.170) that "the decline in the rate of volunteering is concerning as it … is thought to be an indicator of wellbeing (for example, by building social connections)". The AIHW report concludes (p.172) that "rates of volunteering appear to be on the decline. Data on why this is occurring – such as societal factors (including changes in work patterns and living arrangements) – and on the impacts on society (for example, on trust and social cohesion) are not readily available".

A November 2017 report titled *Economic contribution of the Australian charity sector* from Deloitte Access Economics defines a volunteer (p.3) as "an individual who provides unpaid help willingly", and estimates (p.77) "that in 2015 there were 3.35 million individuals who volunteered with ACNC registered charities and collectively contributed 327.7 million hours of volunteer time" that "has been valued at $12.8 billion in 2015 dollars". The report notes (p.10) that "population ageing and income inequality have been identified as two of the major social challenges for Australia in the coming decades. The ageing population will put increasing pressure on health related services provision such as aged care, disability support and community health services. And, to the extent that the gap between rich and poor widens into the future, demand for charity support from lower income households will become a critical issue for the outlook for charity sector services".

A 2018 report titled *Charity still ends at home* by Browne, Swann and Grudnoff from the Australia Institute examines Australia's declining levels of official development assistance (ODA). The report notes (p.3) that ODA as a percentage of Gross National Income (GNI) has fallen 33% over the period 2013-2018, placing Australia 17th internationally as a donor.

Equity & opportunity in income & wealth

A 2014 report titled *Income & Wealth Inequality in Australia* by Richardson and Denniss from the Australia Institute notes (p.2) that "inequality between those with the most and those with the least is rising in Australia. Australia is one of the wealthiest countries in the world, but there are many people in our society who are falling behind. For instance, the minimum wage and unemployment benefits have failed to keep pace with the rise in average earnings, resulting in a divergence between low-income earners and the average employed Australian. A divergence has also occurred between the average Australian and those at the top. Senior executive pay is now 150 times greater than average weekly earnings".

A 2015 report titled *Living Standard Trends in Australia: Report for Anglicare Australia* by Ben Phillips from NATSEM at the University of Canberra examines (p.3) "changes in living standards for a broad range of family types in Australia between 2004 and 2014". The report finds (p.4) that "living standards have increased in

Australia over the past 10 years however, that growth was not shared evenly by all. The gap in the living standards between the richest and poorest grew by around 13 percentage points during this period and we project a further widening by 10.4 per cent over the coming decade. Growth in living standards of the top 20 per cent grew by around 22.1 per cent while the bottom 20 per cent grew by just 13.8 per cent". The report concludes (p.26) that "while all groups have enjoyed an increase in their living standards there are some groups who, from a relative perspective, are falling behind. These groups include low income households, single parents, younger households, and those on allowances such as new start, parenting payment partnered and youth allowance.

A 2015 report titled *Inequality in Australia – A Nation Divided* from the Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS) observes (p.8) that "excessive inequality in any society is harmful. It is harmful to the ability of people to participate in social and economic opportunities, and it undermines social cohesion". The report finds (p.10) that "wages growth was very unequal over the period and acted to increase income inequality. Over the 25 years to 2010, real wages increased by 50% on average, but by 14% for those in the bottom 10% compared with 72% for those in the top 10%" and "wealth is far more unequally distributed than income. A person in the top 20% has around 70 times more wealth than a person in the bottom 20%".

A 2017 report titled *The Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia: Selected Findings from Waves 1 to 15* (HILDA) from the Melbourne Institute aims to provide "a nationally representative longitudinal study of Australian households". Utilising "the most commonly employed definition applied to the study of poverty in developed countries, which conceives of poverty as *relative* deprivation or socio-economic disadvantage, and which measures deprivation in terms of inadequacy of *income*", the report finds that the relative poverty rate in Australia has shifted only marginally from just below 12% in 2003 to the current rate of just below 10% in 2015 (p.33). The report also finds (p.34) that relative poverty rates are high for people living in single-parent families, amounting to 21% in 2015.

The OECD's *Better Life Index 2017* compares a range of social and economic indicators across 38 countries annually. The current OECD report ranks (p.xx) Australia's household disposable income as 21/38 for social inequality, and 22/38 for gender inequality; employment rate as 22/38 for gender inequality; personal earnings as 28/38 for gender inequality and 20/38 for social inequality; job security as 20/38 for gender inequality and 27/38 for social inequality; quality of support networks as 26/38 for gender inequality; very long hours as 29/38; leisure and personal care time as 32/38.

A report titled *Australia's Welfare 2017* from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) finds (p.354) that "real net disposable income per capita rose steadily over the 30 years to June 2016 but has dropped since 2012". The report concludes

“while the distribution of income in Australia has shown little change in recent years, income inequality has risen since the mid-1990s as measured by the Gini coefficient” (ibid).

A report titled *OECD Economic Surveys: Australia 2017* finds (p.5) that “inclusiveness has been eroded. The Gini coefficient has been drifting up and households in upper income brackets have benefited disproportionately from Australia’s long period of economic growth. Real incomes for the top quintile of households grew by more than 40% between 2004 and 2014 while those for the lowest quintile only grew by 25%. … This partly explains the increasing share of income going to the very top end of the income distribution. In addition, large socio-economic gaps between Australia’s indigenous population and the rest of the population remain and there is room to reduce gender imbalance”.

A 2018 report titled *Household financial comfort report* by ME Bank that surveyed 1500 respondents on how comfortable they feel about their financial situation using 11 measures, concludes (p.2) that “with subdued and stagnant incomes, more Australians are feeling strapped for cash, and are being forced to dip into their savings to cover the rising cost of living”. The report notes that “currently, around a quarter of Australian households have less than $1000 in cash savings” and “consistent with ABS wage data, the latest HFCR data found nearly half (42%) still had the same income as a year ago” (ibid).

A 2018 report titled *Rising Inequality? A stocktake of the evidence* by the Productivity Commission examines contemporary trends in inequality, economic mobility and disadvantage across Australian society, including (p.5) “the nature and extent of deep and persistent disadvantage in Australia”. The report defines (ibid) disadvantage as “a multidimensional concept that can take the form of low economic resources (poverty), inability to afford basic essentials of life (material deprivation) or being unable to participate economically and socially (social exclusion)”. The report finds that “about nine per cent of Australians (2.2 million people) experienced relative income poverty (income below 50% of the median) in 2015-16, with children and older people having the highest rates of relative income poverty. … Despite 27 years of uninterrupted growth [this aggregate figure] has not declined”.

A March 2018 report titled *The cost of privilege* from Per Capita (commissioned by Anglicare Australia) examines the tax measures that benefit the wealthiest Australians (including CGT concessions and exemptions, superannuation concessions, private education tax exemptions, private health tax exemptions, negative gearing and discretionary trusts). The report finds (p.5) that “the cost of forgone tax revenue from the richest 20% of Australians is over AU$68 billion per annum”, compared to $6.1 billion in benefits to the bottom 20%. The report concludes (p.6) that “Australian society is becoming increasingly stratified, with growing inequality of wealth and income”.

Health & wellbeing

A 2017 report titled *Pillars of Communities* by Bourne, Nash and Houghton from the Regional Australia Institute finds (p.4) that "between 1981 and 2011, the number of professionals in inner regional small towns grew by 85 per cent, but there was growth of only seven per cent in small towns in remote and very remote areas. This is despite the fact that education and health outcomes are consistently worse in remote and very remote areas". The report found many people in Australia's small towns are unable to access basic services and concludes (p.5) that "although there are instances where the gap in service delivery personnel between major cities and small towns is closing, overall these gaps remain significant and for some professions the trend is that the gaps are widening rather than narrowing".

A 2018 report titled *Australian Wellbeing Index* from the National Australia Bank (NAB) finds (p.1) that "Australian wellbeing has fallen to survey low levels, with a marked improvement in anxiety offset by low happiness, life worth and life satisfaction". The report notes (p.2) that "the NAB Australian Wellbeing Index fell to a new survey low 62.8 points in Q1 2018. This was down from 64.6 points in Q4 2017 and now sits well below its long term average of 64.4 points".

A 2018 report titled *Australia's health 2018 in brief* from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) notes (p.16) that "mental illness and substance use disorders are responsible for 12% of the total disease burden in Australia – the third highest disease group after cancer and cardiovascular diseases. Mental illness affects individuals, families and carers. It also has a far-reaching influence on society as a whole, through issues such as poverty, unemployment and homelessness". The report identifies particular groups experiencing increased rates of mental illness, noting "females aged 15-24 account for nearly 3 in 5 community mental health care service contacts for eating disorders (58%) and hospitalisations for eating disorders (57%)" (ibid).

A 2018 report titled *Family, domestic and sexual violence in Australia* from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) finds (p.ix) that "one in 6 Australian women and 1 in 16 men have been subjected, since the age of 15, to physical and/or sexual violence by a current or previous cohabitating partner", while "almost 1 in 4 (23%) women and 1 in 6 (16%) men have experienced emotional abuse from a current or previous partner since the age of 15" (p.x). The report notes (p.xii) that "in 2014-2015 Indigenous women were 32 times as likely to be hospitalised due to family violence as non-Indigenous women, while Indigenous men were 23 times as likely to be hospitalised as non-Indigenous men".

Housing & homelessness

A 2017 report titled *Housing Australia* from the Committee for Economic Development of Australia (CEDA) notes (p.86) that "these trends present a distinct picture of a growing divide between generations in terms of access to housing market opportunity. It would appear that young people's access to both home ownership and property investment opportunities has lagged further and further behind the opportunities available to older age groups. The property ownership trends have inadvertently resulted in housing wealth becoming increasingly concentrated in the hands of smaller sub-groups". The report concludes (p.88) that "Regrettably, it would appear that property ownership has become the new class divide in Australia. It is increasingly a marker of distinction between young aspiring home buyers and older home owner-investors. In addition, it is exacerbating intra-generational inequality, creating a widening chasm between the haves and have-nots as young people are fortunate enough to receive substantial transfers of wealth from their parents while others miss out on such intergenerational transfers".

A 2017 report titled *The opportunities, risks and possibilities of social impact investment for housing and homelessness* by Muir, Meltzer, Moran, Mason, Michaux, Ramia, Findlay and Heaney from the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI) finds (p.7) that "despite an extended period of economic growth and increasing prosperity for the majority of Australians in recent decades (in part due to rising property prices), Australia faces numerous housing policy challenges that negatively impact on health and wellbeing outcomes and increase associated costs, reduce the opportunity for people affected to achieve their potential and contribute fully in society, and have potential broader consequences for social cohesion and economic outcomes for the country". The report concludes (p.1) that "the waiting lists for social and affordable housing are long (and a significant proportion of the social housing stock is no longer fit-for-purpose), large proportions of the population are in housing stress and too many people are experiencing homelessness".

A report titled *The Hard Road – National Economic & Social Impact Survey 2017* from the Salvation Army finds (p.4) that "unacceptable persistent disadvantage and exclusion experienced by individuals and families" in need. A large proportion of the Salvation Army's clients experience "housing issues including housing stress, homelessness and transience; financial difficulties, managing on inadequate income and resulting from prolonged unemployment; persistent hardship, financial pressures due to costs of living in Australia and multiple deprivations; limited opportunities and exclusion for individuals and their families; and reduced participation and access, disconnectedness and inequity for children" (ibid).

Social inclusion & cohesion

A 2015 report titled *National prevalence survey of age discrimination in the workplace* from the Australia Human Rights Commission (AHRC) finds (p.2) that "over a quarter of Australians aged 50 years and over report that they had experienced some form of age discrimination in the last two years", and "when managers were asked if they factored age into their decision-making, a third responded that they did".

A 2016 report titled *Mapping Social Cohesion* by Andrew Markus from the Scanlon Foundation notes a marked decline in community trust in Australia's political system, with 48% of respondents to a 2009 survey indicating that the government in Canberra can be trusted 'almost always' or 'most of the time', but by 2016 this had dropped to 29%. The Scanlon Foundation report concludes (p.4) that "there are emerging signs of increased pessimism, relatively high levels of negativity towards Muslims and an increase in the proportion of people experiencing discrimination on the basis of skin colour, ethnicity or religion".

A 2016 report titled *Australians Today* by Andrew Markus from the Scanlon Foundation explores the results of an extensive survey of Australian social attitudes, finding that 43% of respondents indicated (p.48) that "you can't be too careful" in trusting others. On the question of tolerance towards cultural diversity, the report finds (p.48) "18% strong negative scores in major cities, 39% in outer regional areas, and within major cities, strong negative scores range from 13% in areas of highest cultural diversity to 28% in areas of lower diversity". The report concludes "a prominent theme in focus group discussions was the difference between culturally diverse and homogenous areas, the multi-cultural and mono-cultural. Participants discussed environments in which they felt a sense of 'belonging', 'at home', 'comfortable', 'normal', contrasted with areas where they were 'out of place', a 'stare object', an 'alien.' Areas of diversity are seen as a separate world, one that is distinct from 'white Australia'" (ibid).

A 2017 report titled *Concluding observations on the eighteenth to twentieth periodic reports of Australia* from the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) finds (p.3) that "the Committee notes the State party's definition of multiculturalism and social cohesion and appreciates the implementation of the National Anti-Racism Strategy. The Committee is, however, concerned that expressions of racism, racial discrimination, and xenophobia, including in the public sphere and political debates as well as in the media, are on the rise. The Committee also expresses concern that migrants, notably Arabs and Muslims, asylum seekers and refugees, as well as Africans and people of African descent, South Asians, and Indigenous Peoples are particularly affected by racist hate speech and violence".

The CERD report recommends (p.3) that the State "ensure that anti-racism related measures are implemented effectively in collaboration with grassroots organizations

and community representatives that are active in the fight against racism and racial discrimination; reconsider the anti-terrorism and national security clauses of the Multicultural policy, 'Multicultural Australia: United, Strong, Successful', as these may lead to practices prohibited under the Convention, such as ethnic and racial profiling by law enforcement officers and agencies, targeting in particular Arabs and Muslims; increase its measures to combat racist hate speech and xenophobic political discourse, and ensure that public officials not only refrain from such speech but also formally reject and condemn hate speech, in order to promote a culture of tolerance and respect".

A June 2018 report titled *Understanding Australian attitudes to the world* by Alex Oliver from the Lowy Institute, based on a random survey of 1200 Australian adults, reports (p.1) that "for the first time, the poll finds that a majority of Australians [54%] think the current rate of immigration to Australia is too high", with 40% seeing "large numbers of immigrants and refugees coming into Australia" posing a critical threat (p.3). "Only 17% of Australians are satisfied with the way things are going in the world today", with 49% "satisfied with the way things are going in Australia today".

A 2018 report titled *Everyone's business: Fourth national survey on sexual harassment in Australian workplaces* from the Australian Human Rights Commission finds (p.7) that "more than four in five (85%) Australian women and over half (56%) of Australian men over the age of 15 have been sexually harassed at some point in their lifetimes", and more seriously "almost one quarter (23%) of women have experienced actual or attempted rape or sexual assault at some point in their lifetimes, and nearly one third (31%) of women have experienced unwelcome requests or pressure for sex or other sexual acts" (p.8).

Implications for altruistic values & the nature of civic participation

These diverse (post-2010) official reports across multiple dimensions of disadvantage constitute a substantial body of empirical evidence on the real circumstances of (and significant challenges confronted by) the most disadvantaged in Australia (children, aged, sick, poor, disabled, migrants, indigenous, homeless). These reports provide substantial objective evidence of Australia's current policies towards and treatment of those in the community who are most disadvantaged, and are indicative of the real levels of empathy and altruism in public policies (irrespective of statements about "compassion for those in need" in the National Values Statement).

These reports consistently reveal a widening gap between a relatively affluent majority and a poor but growing minority in Australia. While Australia projects itself internationally as a modern, affluent, progressive, fair and tolerant pluralist nation (a secular democracy), these reports raise serious questions as to whether this archetype accurately reflects Australia's core values and actual social norms. The reports suggest that there are great inconsistencies between Australia's idealised

identity (as an egalitarian society concerned with fairness and the welfare of others), and the economic and social reality for a significant and growing number of citizens. Moreover, in the context of a powerful and bipartisan ideological commitment to free markets and competition, a range of essential social services for vulnerable people are being progressively transformed into large publicly-subsidised industries, where the interests and welfare of both "clients" and employees are increasingly subordinate to broader business and commercial considerations.

These often substantial evidence-based reports collectively confirm a decline in altruism as a core national value in Australia, with implications for many traditional forms of civic participation, including formal emergency service volunteering. It is clear that the changes that are occurring in values, culture and social norms in Australia in the 21st century are transformational, and community functions and organisations that have traditionally relied on goodwill, empathy and a sense of collective responsibility and duty will need to develop different strategies (that acknowledge and satisfy individual and personal needs) if they are to secure the level of participation required for the provision of important community services into the future.

Conclusions

Consistent with the fifth research objective, this discussion paper has explored the broader social and cultural contexts for volunteering, highlighting the implications of changing core values for future forms of civic participation. The examination of contemporary indicators of Australian core values has confirmed a progressive decline in altruistic values, with important (potentially adverse) implications for future rates of formal emergency service volunteering.

The emperor’s new clothes

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The first duty of Government is to protect the safety of its citizens from a range of actual and potential risks and harms. The Australian Government has adopted an all-hazards risk management policy that commits to rigorously examine and compare the risks posed to life and property by a diverse and evolving range of emergency events (hazards). Risk is a calculation that estimates probability and consequences, with mortality representing a catastrophic consequence (harm).

The emergency events included under Australia's all-hazards risk management policy are diverse, and include: structure fires, road crash rescues, medical emergencies, natural disaster events (wildfires, earthquakes, floods, storms, cyclones, Tsunami), consequences of acts of terrorism, other natural events (drought, frost, heatwave, epidemic), technological and hazardous material incidents, quarantine and control of diseases, and biological contaminants. In terms of mortality, 10,736 people died from external (potentially avoidable) causes in Australia in 2016, including suicides (2862), all poisonings (2854), falls (2666), transport accidents (1377), assaults (244), drownings (200), thermal (54), and others (479). These potentially preventable deaths represented 6.8% of all deaths in Australia in 2016.

The loss of 173 lives in the Victorian bushfires in 2009 and 33 lives in the Queensland floods in 2010/11 highlight the magnitude of the risks and harms posed by natural hazards in Australia. In 2014 the Productivity Commission estimated that in the previous five years, "natural disasters have claimed more than 200 lives, destroyed 2670 houses and damaged a further 7680, and affected the lives and livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of Australians" (2014, p.3).

Despite the established risks and demonstrated harms (including significant mortality) posed by a range of hazards (including natural hazards), Australia's national emergency management priorities are dominated and distorted by fear-based perceptions of terrorism. A terrorism connotation distorts all that it touches, removing any sense of proportion or objective perspective on relative risk, and reinforcing a community-wide phobia and sense of continuing insecurity. As a result, inestimable public resources are dedicated to counter-terrorism (where the harms in terms of mortality are relatively limited and/or amorphous), while the task of defending communities from the devastating effects of natural hazards (where the harms in terms of mortality are clear and have been severe) are devolved to unpaid and under-resourced emergency service volunteers.

While volunteers are the lifeblood of emergency services in Australia and are integral to the nation's emergency management capabilities and overall disaster

resilience, the concurrence of an increase in the risks posed by a range of climate change-related natural hazards, and a marked decline in the rates of formal volunteering, threatens Australia's emergency preparedness. This is placing both the community and emergency service volunteers at heightened risk of harm or death from the catastrophic effects of severe storms, floods or wildfires.

This begs the question of why, given objective measures of harms such as multiple fatalities and huge economic losses that are attributable to other hazards, the spectre of terrorism has such a powerful influence over Australia's emergency management priorities and resourcing. The reasons for this influence are complex and unique to the 21st century. Key amongst them are that information and communications technology have transformed the way individuals are exposed to and perceive the world, bringing great intimacy and immediacy to dramatic world events. A cacophony of conflicting voices can challenge the most advanced reasoning and comprehension capabilities, while graphic and shocking violence designed to engender terror can cut through the information "noise" and engage visceral emotions for great effect.

Contemporary terrorism is thus a powerful psychological and political phenomenon that relies on fear, uncertainty, exaggeration and deliberate deception for its impact. With its simplistic depiction of a fanatical unitary enemy, and conflation of civilian and military and national and international contexts, the strategic effects of terrorism are to polarise and concentrate power in the hands of the State and extremists, while diminishing the power and democratic rights of the community and citizens. The continuing threat of terrorism is often characterised (for political and national security purposes) as an existential threat to our way of life, justifying counter-terrorism measures that challenge democratic principles, erode civil liberties, diminish privacy, expand secrecy and extend the reach of mass surveillance.

The exaggeration of the threat posed by ideologically-motivated violence is thus one of the unique and powerful dimensions of contemporary terrorism. In no small part this is due to the enduring influence of the graphic and shocking images of the mass-casualty attacks of 9/11 that have become emblematic of the extreme threat posed by all terrorism. Terrorism has become the dominant paradigm for interpreting virtually all ideologically-motivated violence, with relatively minor or isolated incidents becoming representative of the most extreme threat. Mass-casualty attacks like 9/11 are thus appropriated by lone knife-wielding fanatics, giving them international notoriety and relevance. In the absence of public data that objectively quantifies probability and consequences, it is entirely possible that the relative risk of being attacked by a terrorist in Australia may be less than the risk of being attacked by a shark.

For the victims of a person wielding a knife or driving a vehicle with homicidal intent it is of little consequence whether the perpetrator is ideologically motivated or suffering a psychotic or drug-induced episode. As reflected in the earlier statistics on the number of fatal assaults annually in Australia (244), there is a consistent level of

extreme violence in all communities. While enormous intelligence and law enforcement resources are dedicated to mitigating the potential risk of indiscriminate attacks by ideologically-motivated extremists, the resources allocated to reducing the established risk and demonstrated harms of other (potentially avoidable) causes of mortality (like family homicides) are negligible. An appropriate risk-based response to the threat of terrorism would involve proportionate and effective law enforcement and intelligence action to mitigate the risks and protect the community,

Finally, so much of the public discourse on terrorism is compromised by conjecture, myth and disinformation (with echoes of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction). This is exemplified by the coverage of the 9/11 attacks that ultimately served as the catalyst and rationale for a global "war on terror". The simple and disturbing truth is that the 9/11 attacks were essentially enabled by a very basic physical security failure, with the removal of secure aircraft cockpit doors (as a cost-saving measure following the deregulation of the airline industry) allowing passenger planes to be hijacked and used as guided missiles directed at highly symbolic targets in the United States.

One can only imagine how the hundreds of billions of dollars that have been spent since 9/11 on waging war and building (previously unimaginable) mass surveillance capabilities in the name of countering terrorism, could have been used to mitigate the established and growing risks to life posed by climate change-related natural hazards.

Emergency service volunteering: Current & future challenges

Published 19 December 2019 in the TASA newsletter NEXUS

Introduction

My article in *Nexus* (Vol 29, No. 2) in August 2017 foreshadowed research being undertaken under the auspices of the Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre (BNHCRC) and the University of Wollongong that was examining the contemporary forces impacting on the resourcing of the emergency service volunteer workforce in Australia. This article summarises the key findings of a Master thesis titled "Valuing volunteers: better understanding the primary motives for volunteering in Australian emergency services" that is available at https://ro.uow.edu.au/theses1/558/. The Valuing Volunteers study provides new insights on the motives for formal emergency service volunteering through empirical research on volunteers' shared and contrasting values, and critically evaluates the broader policy and social contexts for such important and essential civic participation.

Emergency services are responsible for the protection and preservation of life and property from harm resulting from emergency events, and include the fire service organisations, ambulance service organisations, State emergency services, marine rescue and coast guard organisations, and lifesaving organisations. Volunteers are the lifeblood of emergency services in Australia and are integral to the nation's emergency management capabilities and overall disaster resilience. The concurrence of an increase in the risks posed by a range of climate change-related natural hazards and a decline in formal volunteering rates threatens Australia's emergency preparedness.

The study explores five key research objectives:

- Demonstrate that emergency service volunteering represents exceptional civic participation.
- Establish the validity and utility of a values framework for interpreting and understanding the primary motives for emergency service volunteering.
- Determine the distinct shared and contrasting values of a sample of emergency service volunteers.
- Evaluate the efficacy and integrity of current processes for determining national emergency management priorities.
- Identify trends in changing core values with implications for future forms of civic participation, including emergency service volunteering.

Research findings

In respect to the first research objective, the study identifies the unique circumstances and distinctive characteristics of emergency service volunteering that justify its description as exceptional civic participation. These include: the physically and psychologically demanding nature of emergency response roles; the level of dedication and personal commitment required to sustain emergency service volunteering; the specialist competencies required to undertake emergency tasks safely; and the social and economic value to the community of the unpaid services provided by volunteers. The research highlights that the goodwill required to sustain volunteer commitment can be fragile and is easily exhausted, particularly when motivating values are not satisfied or are challenged.

In respect to the second research objective on the validity and utility of a values framework, the study demonstrates the efficacy of a values construct as a comprehensive, multi-dimensional and multi-disciplinary theoretical framework for interpreting and understanding diverse individual and social behaviours. The study finds that values are powerful motivators, with shared core values reinforcing volunteer commitment and retention, and conflicting and amorphous values contributing to volunteer turnover. Volunteering is a cultural phenomenon that reflects the community's attitudes towards duty, civic responsibility and concern for the welfare of others (altruism).

The study utilised the Schwartz Theory of Basic Human Values as a theoretical framework to highlight congruities and conflicts between ten basic and four higher-order values across two bipolar dimensions. Schwartz (2005, p.1) defines values as "desirable, trans-situational goals, varying in importance, that serve as guiding principles in people's lives", and has been instrumental in the development of an integrated values framework that has been widely applied and extensively evaluated across multiple organisational and national settings over two decades. The Schwartz values framework had particular relevance to this study as the bipolar higher-order dimensions (self-transcendence versus self-enhancement and conservation versus openness to change) largely align with the major trends currently impacting emergency service volunteering in Australia (declining altruism and pressures for corporatisation).

The third research objective necessitated the empirical examination of the values preferences of the NSW State Emergency Service volunteer workforce through the utilisation of the Schwartz Portrait Values Questionnaire (PVQ-40) survey, ultimately attracting 522 respondents. The survey revealed statistically significant differences in values preferences by gender and generation, with female volunteers expressing a clear preference for the higher-order value of self-transcendence (altruism), and males and younger (Gen Y) volunteers expressing a clear preference for the contradictory higher-order value of self-enhancement (egoism).

The fourth research objective critically evaluates Australia's national all-hazards risk management policy that commits to determine national emergency management priorities on the basis of evidence and objective analysis of relative risk, not emotion or ideology. The study finds that despite the established risks and demonstrated harms (including significant mortality) posed by a range of hazards (including natural hazards), Australia's national emergency management priorities are dominated and distorted by fear-based perceptions of terrorism. A terrorism connotation distorts all that it touches, removing any sense of proportion or objective perspective on relative risk, and reinforcing a community-wide phobia and sense of insecurity. As a result, inestimable public resources are dedicated to counter-terrorism (where the harms in terms of mortality are relatively limited and/or amorphous), while the task of defending communities from the devastating effects of natural hazards (where the harms in terms of mortality are clear and have been severe) is devolved to unpaid and under-resourced emergency service volunteers.

The fifth research objective examines trends in evolving community values in Australia, finding that technology is facilitating fundamental changes in shared core values and social norms, leading to a rise in individualism and growing social atomisation. A community-wide decline in altruistic values and changes in the nature of civic participation are reflected in ABS data on the level of formal volunteering in Australia, with a drop from 34% in 2010 to 31% in 2014. The research notes that Australia may be particularly susceptible to volatile values due to the absence of an established and consistent national values framework (in a Constitution or Charter), and deficits in principles, ethics and humanity are apparent in many aspects of Australian society.

Implications

The implications of these findings for emergency service volunteering in Australia are significant. A decline in altruistic values is already making the recruitment and retention of formal (committed) volunteers challenging, with the potential that in the future it may be more difficult to mobilise and sustain an adequate skilled volunteer workforce in the face of a large-scale or protracted emergency event. The research highlights the critical role of organisational culture, in particular the importance of shared core values, in sustaining volunteer commitment and retention. Shared core values can be the "glue" that keeps people together for a common social purpose. This means that agencies are faced with critical choices about clearly defining their core values, and the nature of the work culture that they are seeking to engender. Given that thousands of (partly autonomous) emergency service units are scattered across Australia, each with its own unique culture, developing and sustaining a consistent organisational culture may pose particular challenges.

The research also reveals the presence of divergent and potentially conflicting values preferences within the existing volunteer workforce (by gender and generation), raising the possibility that incongruous or unsatisfied values may be contributing to volunteer turnover. It may be difficult to sustain a culture that accommodates and meets the needs of both altruistic and egoistic values, and agencies may be forced to decide where they can source sufficient numbers of suitable candidates and tailor their marketing accordingly. This could, for example, mean emphasising the altruistic and intrinsic (community benefit) dimensions of emergency service volunteering, with recruitment mainly targeting females and older volunteers who share these values. Alternatively, marketing could emphasise the egoistic and extrinsic dimensions of emergency service volunteering (how it meets individual and personal needs), with recruitment mainly targeting males and younger volunteers who share these values.

Whatever values choices emergency services make, satisfying and managing the different values needs of an increasingly diverse emergency service volunteer workforce will require a more nuanced approach that emphasises the values of encouragement, respect, inclusion, competency and integrity.

Without prejudice

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The global resurgence of the Black Lives Matter campaign reminds Australians of the ongoing disproportionate rate of incarceration of indigenous people in this country, and the failure to hold public officials to account for several hundred deaths since the 1991 Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody.

Mega trends are the powerful social, economic, environmental, technological and global forces that interact to shape the world and drive major changes. This article acknowledges several key influences on prejudicial attitudes towards racially and culturally diverse citizens in Australia, and specifically explores the influence of fear on community cohesion and tolerance following the terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001.

Key influences on prejudicial attitudes in Australia include:

- The largely unacknowledged and sometimes violent dispossession and subjugation of First Nations people following the settlement of this country as a European penal colony in the late eighteenth century.
- The subsequent relegation of First Nations people as non-citizens for almost two centuries until 1967.
- The maintenance of a racially selective (white) migration policy for the first three quarters of the twentieth century, followed by the rapid transformation into a pluralist society over the last forty years.
- The absence of a formal national commitment to the core values of equality and dignity in a Constitution, Charter or Bill of Rights.
- A heightened emphasis on national security following the 9/11 terrorist attacks, accompanied by a hardening of official and community attitudes towards racially and culturally diverse citizens and foreigners.

In the shadow of the Second World War, the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) acknowledged dignity and equality as the foundation for a free, just and peaceful world, and enunciated a set of principles to balance the rights of the individual and the powers of the State. These principles were subsequently embodied in two international covenants (that came into force in 1976) that provided significant impetus to formalise and legislate for the protection of civil liberties.

In the ensuing years Australian Governments enacted legislative reforms to enhance transparency and public accountability, and to strengthen the protection of individual rights and civil liberties. Relevant legislation included the 1979 ASIO Act, 1979 Telecommunications Interception Act, 1982 Freedom of Information Act, and the 1986 Australian Human Rights Commission Act. However, Australia has assiduously avoided a formal national commitment to the core values of equality and dignity in a

Constitution, Charter or Bill of Rights, and as a consequence may be particularly susceptible to shifts in the balance between civil liberties and national security.

The devastating high-profile terrorist attacks on 9/11 effectively ended Australia's governance reform agenda, and has since catalysed a marked shift towards enhancing national security. A primary aim of terrorism (as an asymmetric strategy) is to coerce social and political change by engendering irrational fear, and this objective has been wildly successful in eliciting a disproportionate militaristic response from many Governments. The characterisation of the global response as a "war on terror" was particularly inappropriate, given armed conflict suspends many of the conventions of civil society and justifies State-sanctioned killing.

The same fears have also played out in the Australian community, with a rise in Islamophobia and a diminished level of tolerance towards racially and culturally diverse citizens, and foreigners seeking refuge. The success of terrorism has, in no small part, been due to its symbiotic relationship with technological changes (and the rise of social media) that have facilitated, amplified and globalised the psychological and propaganda effects of indiscriminate barbaric violence.

Each year more than ten thousand people die from external and potentially avoidable causes in Australia, including a growing number of deaths caused by climate change-related natural hazards such as bushfires. Despite a commitment to determine national emergency management priorities on the basis of an objective evaluation of the relative risk of all hazards, in Australia fear-based perceptions of terrorism have dominated and distorted national priorities and permeated intelligence, security and law enforcement functions. Governments have enacted legislation to strengthen national security and extend the veil of secrecy, while inestimable amounts have been spent on counter-terrorism measures.

Pressures to integrate traditionally-separate military, intelligence and law enforcement functions in Australia have grown stronger, most recently reflected in the 2017 Independent Intelligence Review that proposes "a pathway to take those areas of individual agency excellence to an even higher level of collective performance through strengthening integration across Australia's national intelligence enterprise". Moves to reform Australia's national security architecture through the alignment of functions and extension of utilitarian ethics are fundamentally incompatible with long-held Westminster principles of the separation of institutions in order to safeguard against the concentration and abuse of power, and the explicit rules-based governance of the activities of secret agencies.

The current national terrorism threat level of 'probable' has a direct impact on the law enforcement environment and culture, and is thus relevant to official attitudes towards and treatment of racially and culturally diverse citizens (including First Nations people). The prospects of an imminent terrorism threat requires front-line police to

remain alert for indiscriminate violence by 'lone-wolf' extremists, potentially including attacks on police. Such a fraught security environment may be conducive to a more rapid escalation of the use of lethal force, irrespective of whether those threatening extreme violence are ideologically-motivated extremists, experiencing a severe mental health psychosis, disoriented due to language or cultural differences, or simply reacting viscerally (fight or flight). A constantly heightened level of alert may mean some police become more wary of and defensive towards citizens generally, particularly those members of the community who are racially or culturally different, potentially increasing the prospects of misunderstandings and recourse to the use of excessive force.

She'll be right mate: Australian complacency & national responses to wicked social problems

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The Cambridge English Dictionary defines society as "the state of being together with other people". A society is formed when individuals coalesce to pursue their mutual interests, and the relationship between the individual and the collective can be conceptualised as a social contract that imposes costs and benefits on both entities. Values are enduring principles and convictions on what is important (and morally right) that can guide and motivate individual and collective actions and attitudes, and shared core values can be highly influential in facilitating community collaboration for a common social purpose.

After a millennium of conflict and unimaginable violence, two developments in Western history reshaped the social contract and redefined the foundations for collective power. The mid-17th century Treaty of Westphalia articulated the principles of national autonomy, independence and equality, thus establishing the sovereign State as the dominant mode of social and spatial organisation. More than a century later, Western philosophers proposed the Enlightenment values that would ultimately be codified in the American Declaration of Independence and the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen. The American and French declarations assert the inalienable rights of individuals to life, liberty, equality, dignity, property, justice (due process of law), Government by and for the people, and personal autonomy and the pursuit of happiness.

With reason supplanting belief and divine rule, Enlightenment values reflect a commitment to individualism, rationality, constant progress through innovation and scientific discovery, and a repudiation of the role of monarchy, religion, superstition and tribalism. The same reasoning illuminated the nature of the social contract as an agreement between the secular State and the individual on the benefits and obligations of social participation, and clarified the source of State authority as the collective will (consent) of its citizens (democracy).

In the shadow of the Second World War these same Enlightenment values were embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), adopted by a fledgling United Nations in 1948. The UDHR Preamble acknowledges that respect for the inherent dignity and worth and the equal and inalienable rights of men and women are founding principles for a free, just and peaceful world. The declaration's thirty articles enunciate a set of fundamental human rights to balance the interests of the individual and the powers of the State. In the context of the horrors of the war and the abhorrent actions of some nations, the declaration was an emphatic reassertion of individual rights in response to the abuses of power by authoritarian States.

There were initial hopes that the UDHR would be transformed into a globally-binding International Bill of Rights, however the aspirations for a new world order were dashed with the outbreak of conflict between the democratic capitalist West and the autocratic communist East (the Cold War). As the prospects for agreement on an International Bill of Rights faded, two international treaties were subsequently adopted by the United Nations in the mid-1960s, to come into effect a decade later. The (individual-focussed) International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) was supported by the West, and the (collective-focussed) International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) was supported by the East.

Throughout the four decade-long Cold War (leading up to the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1991), developed Western nations championed democratic principles and formalised (through domestic legislation) their commitments to dignity, equality and social justice, while seeking to balance civil liberties with national security. These latter policies included protections for individual privacy, access to freedom of information, avenues for administrative appeal of Government decisions, demands for increasing transparency in the operation of Government bodies, and constraints on the highly-intrusive mass surveillance activities of security and intelligence organisations. During this period effective national leadership was often equated with and measured against the defence of shared core values, sometimes in the face of great social and global challenges.

Australia's contemporary status as a developed, pluralist, liberal democracy belies its relatively short European history. Established as a British penal colony in the late 18th century through the forced and sometimes violent dispossession of the millennia-old First Nations people, the country was populated through racially-selective (white) European migration for almost two centuries. This policy was formally abandoned in the mid-1970s, and in the period since a non-discriminatory migration policy has seen Australia's population grow from around 14 million in 1975 to over 25 million in 2020. This unique heritage has created a set of exceptional social challenges.

While Australia played a central role in the post-war establishment of the United Nations and in the formulation of the UDHR, it has since assiduously avoided a commitment to a set of shared core values in a formal national values framework (such as a Bill of Rights) that institutionalises respect for dignity and equality in legislation. While Australia ratified the ICESCR in 1975 and the ICCPR in 1980, neither international treaty has been incorporated into domestic law. Eminent constitutional lawyer George Williams observed in 2009 that "Australia is now the only democratic nation in the world without a national charter or bill of rights", noting that "without a charter of rights, freedoms can be ignored or taken away too easily".

Shared core values can be highly influential in defining and shaping national character, and are central elements of a country's distinctive cultural identity. In his 2006 Australia Day address, then Prime Minister John Howard contended that the

strength of Australia as a cohesive multicultural society is founded on a balance between tolerance of diversity and respect for our European cultural heritage. Howard described Australia's "dominant cultural pattern" as "Judeo-Christian ethics, the progressive spirit of the Enlightenment, and the institutions and values of British political culture". Howard praised that "no institution or code lays down a test of Australianness", and warned of the potential constraints on the Parliament of a legal instrument like a Bill of Rights.

While shared core values can provide powerful motives for social collaboration and can influence national leadership, their absence can contribute to anomie, complacency and social atomisation. In the absence of a formal national values framework, Australia is largely reliant on subjectively-interpreted, implicit and informal values, and the politically-expedient mediation of an evolving, volatile and sometimes amorphous national narrative. Australia's fluid national narratives include conceptions of mateship (solidarity), egalitarianism (equality and scepticism of authority), a "fair go" (consideration), and "she'll be right mate" (complacency). The Anzac legend adds the values of courage, endurance, resilience, mateship, sacrifice, ingenuity and good humour to the idealisation of the national character. Regrettably, serious public discourse on the topic of national values is often denigrated and dismissed as ideologically-motivated "culture wars".

This detailed context is provided in order to examine Australia's national responses to a number of wicked (highly complex) social problems, and to identify where respect for dignity and equality have been compromised or neglected due to the absence of a formal national values framework. Examples of wicked social problems confronting Australia in the 21st century include:

- Formally acknowledging and addressing the multi-generational abuse and continuing neglect of Australia's First Nations people, who were not officially recognised as equal Australian citizens until 1967. Australia's ambivalence and inertia on this issue is exemplified by official inaction on the 339 recommendations of the 1991 Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, and in the intervening period more than 400 First Nations people have died in custody. National complacency was again reflected in a muted official response to the grace and wisdom embodied in the 2017 Uluru Statement from the Heart that provides a rationale and pathway for indigenous constitutional recognition.
- The maintenance since 1992 of a policy of mandatory detention of people seeking asylum in Australia without a visa (who are designated as unlawful non-citizens). The policy is contrary to Article 9 of the UDHR ("No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile") and Article 14 ("Everyone has the right to seek and enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution"). The policy was hardened in 2001 by the decision to process offshore all asylum-seekers arriving by boat (unauthorised arrivals), and in 2013 by the decision that asylum-seekers arriving by boat would never be resettled in Australia.

These policies mean that some asylum seekers and accepted refugees remain in indefinite detention offshore.

- A latent but deep vein of racism and bigotry in Australia, possibly as a residue of the former racially-selective White Australia policy, and a long history of distrust of non-European neighbours in the Asia-Pacific region (xenophobia).
- The systemic physical and emotional neglect and abuse of many of Australia's elder population through their warehousing in industrial-scale for-profit aged care facilities. Currently the subject of a Royal Commission.
- The widespread tolerance of incompetence, inefficiency and a lack of accountability in the delivery of vital public services across Australia, and in the Government regulation of the private sector. Deficits in regulatory capability have exacerbated the social, economic and environmental harms caused by the failure of the private sector and free market to fairly and effectively deliver essential public services. A series of (expensive) public inquiries over recent decades have forensically examined the causes of often catastrophic system failures in a range of public services, with inquiry recommendations on essential reforms often ignored, and responsible officials rarely held to account.
- Diminishing community trust and confidence in a range of important Government and political institutions and democratic processes, due in part to ambivalent official support for systems that uphold ethical behaviours (including protection for whistle-blowers) and ensure transparency, accountability and integrity in public office.

The sudden and unexpected emergence in early 2020 of a global pandemic, and the resultant imposition of community-wide constraints on basic personal liberties like freedom of movement and association in order to limit disease transmission, have redefined the relationships between the citizen, community and State in a time of existential crisis. Community acceptance of these constraints in Australia may in part be due to the severity of the threat to life posed by the COVID-19 virus, the limited duration of their imposition, and the widely-accepted authority of scientific experts who have played a central role in the national response to date.

As the course and consequences of the pandemic have evolved throughout 2020, the longer-term implications for Australian society are beginning to emerge. In the absence of a formal national values framework that protects and defends the founding principles of dignity and equality, existing systemic weaknesses in community resilience and social cohesion in Australia have been revealed and exacerbated, including:

- Catastrophic failures in the public systems dedicated to protecting and caring for Australia's most vulnerable elderly citizens. The potentially preventable deaths of hundreds of elderly residents in a profit-driven aged care industry due to failures in publicly-managed infection control measures may be one of the most tragic legacies of this pandemic.

- A rise in anti-Asian sentiments in Australia due to prejudicial media and political references to a “Chinese virus”. In the context of a level of latent racism in Australia, these sentiments have been further exacerbated by growing tensions in the strategic relationship between the Australian and Chinese Governments. Marked differences in generational attitudes towards risk (of contracting the virus), social responsibility and compliance with social distancing restrictions have also emerged.
- Deficits in governance, trust and national leadership. While the early establishment of a National Cabinet ensured Federal/State harmonisation and the adoption of an expert-driven national response to the virus, traditional partisan enmities, State-base parochialism and the usual complacency have re-emerged, undermining community confidence in the legitimacy and efficacy of virus suppression strategies.

In the longer term these systemic failures may be overshadowed by rising frustration and anger amongst a growing number of citizens who have become socially, economically and politically marginalised in an increasingly unequal and unjust Australia.

Can society function in an epistemic crisis?

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The recent national debate over whether to enshrine the rights of First Nations Peoples in Australia's Constitution has laid bare a troubling gap in our public discourse, with clear deficiencies in our ability to engage in constructive and respectful dialogue. It seems we're at an impasse, where a once-unifying conversation has devolved into a battleground with an intense clash of viewpoints threatening social conceptions of the common good.

And this isn’t just a matter of differing opinions. Rapid advances in our digital landscape have altered how individuals and society at large perceive reality, splintering the communal lens through which we once viewed our world and our responsibilities within it.

Now, more than ever, it is crucial to address how these divergent perceptions of reality affect our dedication to our societal obligations and the upkeep of our shared core values. If left unchecked, this drift away from a shared understanding of the common good will further undermine trust and mutual respect that bind us together, challenging the very foundations of a humane, civilised and inclusive society.

To understand how we got here, we need to look back with a wide-angle lens. Over the course of human evolution, symbols, sounds and languages have been developed to create and share meaning, allowing us to share, interpret, and understand the world around us. This evolution was facilitated and complemented by the development of higher-order cognitive capabilities in the frontal cortex of our brains; the parts that govern memory, language, reasoning and problem solving. With the development of these cognitive processes, primal instincts, visceral emotions, brute force and superstition have progressively given way to science, reason, shared knowledge and an evolving hierarchy of rules and values that shape the relationship between the individual and the collective.

The principles that shape social relationships in contemporary Western societies are largely derived from 18th century Enlightenment values that assert the inalienable rights of individuals to life, liberty, equality, dignity, property, justice, and with State authority derived from the collective will of its citizens. In this shift, the light of reason began to outshine the lamps of belief and the divine right of kings. The Enlightenment instilled a deep-seated belief in individualism and rational thought, in the notion that we are always moving forward, propelled by the twin engines of innovation and scientific inquiry. It also signalled a move away from the shadows of monarchy, the dictates of religion, the chains of superstition, and the confines of tribal identity.

With reason supplanting belief and divine rule, Enlightenment values reflect a commitment to individualism, rationality, constant progress through innovation and scientific discovery, and a repudiation of the role of monarchy, religion, superstition and tribalism.

These values lie at the heart of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which acknowledges dignity and equality as crucial for a world that is free, just, and peaceful. Australia played a key role in the post-war creation of the United Nations and in shaping the UDHR. However, it has notably steered clear of embedding these shared core values in a national charter or Bill of Rights, making it the only developed nation to do so. This reluctance to formally commit to these values, especially in terms of dignity and equality, could be a factor in the amorphous and sometimes conflicting societal views on the common good. It might also contribute to the occasional lack of civility and the presence of conflict we observe in public discussions on sensitive national issues. This absence leaves a gap in our national identity, one that might explain some of the challenges we face in forging a cohesive and respectful societal consensus.

That goes some way to explaining why we disagree, but the current situation goes beyond simple disagreement and cuts to our very understanding of what is true and what is real. Epistemology, the branch of philosophy concerned with the nature of knowledge, examines how we determine what is true, and explores the relationship between beliefs, reason and empirical facts in the construction of reality. In 2020 former US President Barack Obama observed 'if we do not have the capacity to distinguish what's true from what's false, then by definition, our democracy doesn't work. We are entering into an epistemic crisis'.

And the roots of this epistemic crisis are manifold. The 21st century's technological revolution has drastically reshaped the landscape of information — its volume, nature, and intricacy have transformed how we perceive reality. The internet has revolutionized our access to information, altering the dynamics of what, when, and where we consume it. With the widespread adoption of smartphones, this connectivity has become even more immediate and personal. From an early age, our understanding of the world is now being moulded by a relentless and often emotionally-charged deluge of digital content, shaping our realities in ways previously unimagined.

Part of this might be to do with the way content is delivered rather than the content itself. Neuroscience offers fascinating insights into how our vision is intricately linked to our brain and, in turn, to our primal instincts. The optic nerve forms a direct pathway from our eyes to the visual cortex at the back of the brain and connects to the sympathetic nervous system, which is responsible for our fight-or-flight response. A 2012 study by Monash University delved into how we process what we see. They found that a more primitive part of the cerebral cortex might provide a 'direct line' to

brain areas that control emotions and rapid responses. This suggests that sight can be a trigger for raw emotions like fear and aggression. Given our increasing reliance on screens, this could imply that these visual inputs might bypass our higher-order cognitive functions, influencing our reasoning and decision-making processes.

Which leads us to consider the explosive growth of social media over the last twenty years, a phenomenon that has played a crucial role in the creation and dissemination of immense volumes of new information. This information, often undifferentiated and unvetted, has radically altered how we participate socially. Social media has transformed the nature and extent of social participation by enabling individuals, many anonymously, to have almost instant and largely unmoderated access to a global audience. The immediate and impulsive nature of social media is particularly adept at broadcasting unfiltered emotions. In this new digital landscape, where it's possible for anyone to publish virtually anything, the lack of established standards to assess the truthfulness or accuracy of online content is deeply challenging our traditional systems of knowledge. We find ourselves navigating a world where the lines between fact and fiction are increasingly blurred, reshaping how we understand and interact with information.

A growing body of literature examines the disruption of the traditional knowledge order, analysing the basis – and impact – for phenomena like fake news, post-truth, misinformation, disinformation, alternative facts, and echo chambers. Much of this analysis points to an increasingly frequent breakdown in the distinction between different types of information, and the blurring of lines between subjective opinion and objective facts, but with particular emphasis on our media.

Conflict, shock, and fear have always been staple elements of the mainstream media diet. But in the face of a ubiquitous social media, it has been forced to increasingly turn to sensationalism and populism to retain market share. Over the last two decades, the mainstream media has adopted populist, simplistic and sensationalist narratives, dispensing with long-standing journalistic standards on balance and accuracy. Subsequent media industry changes have included the further concentration of ownership, increasing the selective reporting of narrow sectional interests, and the emergence of outspoken media identities who attract ratings by deliberately generating controversy and conflict.

This strategy often involves deliberately highlighting societal divisions and pandering to base prejudices, stoking suspicion and discord among different community groups. In their 2018 book Network Propaganda, Benkler, Faris and Roberts outline an 'epistemic crisis' affecting media and politics that endangers democratic integrity, erodes trust in public institutions, and exacerbates social divisions. Their examination of the media landscape during the 2016 US Presidential elections revealed 'a highly polarised and asymmetric media ecosystem' that enabled the extensive propagation of disinformation. The authors found that Fox News had

‘promoted a series of exaggerated and fabricated counter narratives’ to deflect negative coverage of President Trump.

In ‘Journalism’s epistemic crisis and its solution’, Steen Steensen describes ‘discourses of disinformation and the general datafication of society’ that threaten to render journalism irrelevant due to an inability to produce trustworthy knowledge. A similar view is presented in a 2020 essay ‘Knowledge democracy, action research, the internet and the epistemic crisis’, Rowell and Call-Cummings observe that the challenge posed by social media to the nature and scope of knowledge ‘has created a crisis in which people doubt the extent to which they share realities with others’.

And as the notion of ‘truth’ becomes increasingly contested, the misrepresentation and selective sharing of unverified information has become endemic in both social and mainstream media. It’s becoming harder to differentiate subjective beliefs and opinions from facts grounded in empirical evidence and logical reasoning. Concurrently, fringe viewpoints and highly marginal perspectives, including conspiracy theories, have gained a mainstream appeal that would have been unimaginable several decades ago.

British author Richard Reeves observes, in his 2021 article ‘Lies and honest mistakes’, that ‘truth is empirical, but truthfulness is ethical. Truth is the end product, truthfulness a vital element in its production’. Reeves concludes that ‘there has been a catastrophic corrosion in the virtue of truthfulness’. Likewise, in his 2022 article ‘Senses of truth and journalism’s epistemic crisis’, Perry Parks notes that ‘people approach contested subjects from many, sometimes incommensurate, senses of truth. When journalists fail to identify the competing senses embedded in varying truth claims, they reproduce confusion as to the validity and verifiability of such claims and contribute to a rolling epistemic crisis in the public sphere’.

The progressive breakdown of long-standing principles and processes for evaluating information accuracy is undermining public confidence in all forms of information, and weakening community trust in the public institutions, including scientific bodies. In her 2022 article ‘Scientific disinformation in times of an epistemic crisis’, Thaiane Olivera details the spread of disinformation about science in social media that results in ‘all institutions that produce knowledge and truth, including science, are delegitimised or discredited by society’. She concludes that ‘even though there is distrust about the relationship between science, government and industry, scientific authority is a symbolic capital of extreme importance for the circulation of information on conspiracy theories related to science’. This decline in trust has given rise to a variety of fact-checking initiatives in response to growing scepticism.

Amidst this increasingly chaotic information environment, politicians have shown a willingness to resort to sometimes-inflammatory and divisive disinformation for short-term electoral gains. Take the increasingly acrimonious debates within Australia's

national parliament. As we witnessed over the last few months, the political contest often degenerates into derisory personal attacks and short-term petty point-scoring rather than substantial discussion. Addressing all these factors will be key to elevating future public discourse.

While the implications of the failed referendum will take time to process, during the referendum itself we saw a range of forces interacting to engender highly polarised perspectives on the merits of Constitutional recognition of First Nations Peoples. The debates and discussions — or, in some cases, the lack thereof — laid bare a concerning deficit in our collective ability to engage thoughtfully and respectfully on matters of profound national importance.

At the heart of this divide are the relentless tides of technological change that have reshaped how we perceive the world around us. These advancements have not just diversified our perspectives; they've fragmented them, leading to an isolation of opinion that undermines any shared sense of societal interest. It is this very atomisation that complicates our path to consensus, challenging the fabric of communal understanding and the pursuit of a common good.

We're witnessing an escalation in extreme, hardline stances that are, more often than not, fundamentally at odds with one another. This surging tribalism isn't just fostering a culture of antipathy, disdain and cynicism towards our most venerable institutions — it's actively dismantling the traditional knowledge order, and has led to our current 'epistemic crisis.' And as this crisis progressively erodes the bedrock of our mutual understanding and the belief in a common good, it in turn threatens to undermine the trust and mutual respect that are the hallmarks of any society that dares to call itself humane, civilised, and inclusive.

Postscript

Compiling an anthology of articles and essays published over almost two decades has been a personally enlightening experience as it charts the evolution of my interests, ideas and values. These articles represent the fusion of my love for critical thinking and writing, and a passionate dedication to personal integrity, public accountability and social justice. Having worked in sensitive intelligence roles for over two decades I believe I can contribute some unique insights on the potential for secret intelligence to be used to engender unnecessary fear and insecurity in the community.

What do all these words amount to? After a lifetime of analysing information I have recognised that my primary motivation is to influence and empower others to make better decisions, hopefully through the provision of objective independent advice. At times this has necessarily involved challenging dominant paradigms or questioning conventional wisdom with reason and evidence.

In these writings I hope it is obvious that I care deeply about people and the nature of a just, humane and ethical society. Since the end of World War 2 it has become increasingly apparent that the limits of a civilised society are not defined by the strengths of our shared values, our humanity and capacity for reason, but by the individual constraints of fear, self-interest and distrust. In the 21st century it seems that technological advances are further accelerating individualisation, social atomisation and the degradation of centuries of knowledge and wisdom.