EVERYDAY HUMANITARIANISM

DURING THE 2019/2020
AUSTRALIAN BUSHFIRE CRISIS
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Everyday humanitarianism during the 2019/2020 Australian bushfire crisis is a research project commissioned by Australian Red Cross, and funded jointly by Australian Red Cross and Swinburne University of Technology.

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1 | Executive Summary
1. Executive Summary

1.1 Background

In response to the 2019-2020 bushfire crisis, Australians engaged in an astounding level of charitable giving and volunteering in order to help communities and wildlife affected by the devastating bushfires.

Although humanitarian, wildlife and emergency service organisations, as well as Celeste Barber’s well-publicised crowdfunding campaign and donations from prominent celebrities and philanthropists, featured prominently in media reports of the humanitarian response to the bushfire crisis, the response to the bushfire crisis went well beyond these widely reported actions and events.

While it is true that established organisations played a critical role in the emergency response to the bushfire crisis, and will be instrumental in recovery and rebuilding efforts, it was also apparent that Australians bypassed charitable organisations and organised their own hyper-local, agile humanitarian responses to the crisis using the knowledge, skills and resources they had to hand.

Most of these activities and initiatives were invisible to people outside the communities in which these responses were enacted. Moreover, many of these initiatives flashed into and out existence, disappearing from view once they served their purpose.

It is a social and research priority to develop an understanding of these community-led initiatives so as to expand our awareness of the forms of hyper-local voluntary humanitarian behaviour in times of humanitarian crisis. It is the purpose of this project to document and make sense of these initiatives.

1.2 Project aims

The specific purpose of this rapid scoping project is to identify, describe and, where possible, map the location of the humanitarian behaviours enacted by individuals and community groups in response to the bushfire crisis.

This focus of this study is on the activities and initiatives enacted by individuals and community groups independently of established humanitarian, wildlife and emergency services organisations. Further, we focus on those activities and initiatives that were visible online and do not capture any activities and initiatives that were initiated and enacted off-line via word of mouth and which left no online trace.

It is important to note that this report does not, and cannot, capture the full range of activities that were undertaken in response to the bushfire crisis. We do not conduct a comprehensive audit of all the activities and initiatives enacted in response to the bushfires by individuals, community groups or established humanitarian, wildlife and emergency services organisations, nor do we catalogue the large-scale action by corporations who assisted in the provision of funds or resources. Given the focus of this report, this is not an oversight but a deliberate omission.

The voluntary humanitarian actions documented in this report represent the tip of the iceberg.
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1.3 Research questions

In order to understand and document the range of voluntary humanitarian behaviours enacted by individuals, community groups, and organisations in response to the bushfire crisis, we posed three research questions:

1. What did established humanitarian, wildlife and emergency services organisations do in response to the bushfire crisis?

2. What did individuals and local community groups do, independent of humanitarian, wildlife and emergency services organisations, in response to the bushfire crisis?

3. What were the key themes in social media posts about volunteering and donation during the bushfire crisis?

1.4 Research framework

Drawing on the insights of Efficiently Doing Good project for the qualitative coding scheme, and the insights of the Mapping Humanitarian Action project for spatial mapping and data visualisation methods, we revealed a number of hitherto unreported insights into the humanitarian actors and the forms and geographic distribution of humanitarian responses to the bushfire crisis.
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1.5 Key findings

What did established humanitarian, wildlife and emergency services organisations do in response to the bushfire crisis?

Operation within their domains of expertise:
Established organisations offered assistance in a manner that leveraged their existing domains of expertise in the service of those stakeholders that fell within their strategic and operational purview.

Widespread impact:
Established organisations applied their model of assistance across locations, reflecting a top-down approach to initiating and delivering assistance. While each organisation tailored assistance to individual needs and circumstances to some extent, their mechanisms for assistance were largely constrained by their existing standard operating processes and procedures.

What did individuals and community groups do, independent of humanitarian, wildlife and emergency services organisations, in response to the bushfire crisis?

Flexible, agile and practical:
Reflecting the agility of community-led initiatives, most community-led initiatives emerged in direct response to the bushfire crisis. Most community-led initiatives focused on one or a combination of actions: response, recovery and rebuilding. Moreover, most were focused on the immediate needs of people in affected communities. Two forms of community-led initiatives were discerned that turned on two different ways of construing community. The first form focused on the needs of those in the same geographic community, highlighting place-based affiliation. The second form focused on the needs of those in the same imagined community (e.g., farmers helping farmers, or army veterans helping veterans), highlighting social identity-based affiliation.

Interlocking humanitarian actions:
Consistent with this focus on local needs and the provision of practical support to address these needs, community-led initiatives tended to involve an array of interlocking voluntary humanitarian behaviours. This suggests that, in the context of community-led, hyper-local responses to crises, people contribute whatever resources they can – whether time, money, goods, food – in order to mitigate the crisis, minimise losses, bolster resilience and ameliorate recovery.

What were the key themes in social media posts about volunteering and donation?

Emotions and events:
Public discourse about volunteering and donation over the summer of 2019/2020 was emotionally expressive – expressions of anger, gratitude and sadness were especially frequent – and responsive to unfolding events. A variety of events and emotions were described in the tweets that resonated throughout the community during this time. A diversity of humanitarian behaviours were described by Twitter users.

Retweets – political and angry:
Using re-tweet frequency as a barometer of community sentiment, our analysis of the 20 most re-tweeted tweets revealed a range of events and expressions that has special resonance. Whereas some of the top 20 re-tweeted tweets were political (expressing anger), others shared a personal experience of the bushfires, and yet others expressed gratitude to the volunteers.
1. Executive Summary

1.6 Mapping humanitarian action

As demonstrated in Figure 1.1, it is apparent that most online initiatives that we identified were concentrated in either major cities or near bushfire affected areas in the south-east of Australia.

Closer inspection of the areas that were affected by the bushfires in South-eastern Australia (see Figure 1.2), reveals evidence of humanitarian actions by multiple people across all four online platforms.

To illustrate, on the south coast of NSW, between Cobargo (Green) and Batemans Bay (pink), multiple people enacted humanitarian initiatives via Facebook and GoFundMe. This demonstrates that, during the crisis, people in bushfires provided or sought to organise timely, targeted help to communities in need. In many cases, these hyper-local initiatives addressed needs in a manner and with an immediacy that is beyond the scope of established humanitarian, wildlife and emergency services organisations.

Figure 1.1
Map of where voluntary humanitarian behaviours were enacted across four online platforms.

Figure 1.2
Map of where humanitarian actions were enacted near bushfire affected areas.
1. Executive Summary

CASE STUDY

1.7 BlazeAid: an exemplary case study

BlazeAid is an exemplar of the flexibility and agility of a community-led and focused initiative. BlazeAid is a volunteer-based organisation that works with families and individuals in rural Australia after natural disasters such as fires and floods. This case study reveals how it operates across multiple platforms to drive localised programs, coordinate volunteering efforts and promote its effectiveness.

The organisation was established after the 2009 Black Saturday fires in Kilmore, Victoria by sheep farmers, Kevin and Rhonda Butler, who urgently needed help to rebuild their fences after the fires. From a small ad in a local paper the movement has grown to now offer help across the country.

Notably, although BlazeAid has a formal governance structure and initiates action from the top-down, its assistance is grounded in grassroots volunteering that is tailored to local needs.

BlazeAid goes into disaster-affected areas, as soon as it is safe to do so, to help farmers re-fence their properties. Working alongside the rural families, volunteers help not only to rebuild their fences after the fires. From a small ad in a local paper the movement has grown to now offer help across the country.

BlazeAid deals with medium-term/long-term recovery, and it falls into three different categories of our framework: charitable giving, volunteering time and skills, and organising and leading.

BlazeAid in our searches

On the Google search we were able to establish that BlazeAid was the recipient of charitable donations from a diverse range crowdfunding initiatives. For example the African Music & Cultural Festival Inc. (AMCF) has raised over $5,800 for BlazeAid from those who attended the festival, with the festival itself donating $2,500. Another example was two Western Australian Farmers who raised over $15,000 so that they can send teams of WA Farmers to Kangaroo Island to volunteer at a BlazeAid camp.

Through the Twitter search we were able to see localised actions from the BlazeAid group, as well as the promotion of the work through videos. In the tweet below, a video showing the work of BlazeAid in Ebor helped to understand both the impact of fires on farmers, and the need for help to rebuild.

Additionally, to support the feeding of the volunteers, Foodbank has partnered with BlazeAid in South Australia to cater the camps so that BlazeAid can focus their donations and funds on equipment to rebuild.

The federal government have also now allowed volunteering at blaze aid to count towards the 88 days farm work required for Working Holiday Visa holders to get an extension of their visa. Meaning that not only can BlazeAid be supported by local volunteers, but they are also really pleased to get an injection of young helpers as well.
2 | Conceptual Framework
2. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework used in this study was the inventory of voluntary humanitarian behaviour, which we developed as part of the Efficiently Doing Good project. This framework delineates five distinct types of everyday humanitarian behaviours that can be enacted in any humanitarian context.

Creating awareness using social media
This set of behaviours, which occur entirely in the digital realm, refers to the use of social media to develop or raise awareness about humanitarian problems. This type of voluntary humanitarian behaviour tends to involve relatively simple, low-effort behaviours, such as engaging with social media to learn about a problem or indicating support for initiatives or posting comments.

Charitable giving of money
Charitable giving refers to the one-off or regular donation of money to charitable organisations (e.g., humanitarian, wildlife), as well as the direct provision of financial assistance to those in need.

Volunteering time and effort
Volunteering time and effort refers to the one-off or regular donation of time and effort to charitable organisations in order to help address a problem. Regardless of whether unskilled labour or expertise is volunteered, volunteering is organised by established organisations.

Charitable giving of goods and ethical consumption
Charitable giving of goods refers to the giving of non-financial resources (e.g., non-perishable food, clothing) to those in need. This type of charitable giving can be done directly or indirectly via charitable organisations (e.g., charity bins, opportunity shops). This category of behaviour also includes ethical consumption, which refers to the consumption of goods from ethical sources.

Organising and leading
This set of behaviours refers to a range of self-directed influencing, organising and leading behaviours to address humanitarian problems. Unlike the foregoing types of voluntary humanitarian behaviours, these behaviours are complicated, even complex, require a good deal of initiative, and involve some degree of social risk. Notably, these behaviours sit outside volunteer-involving organisations.
The response of established organisations to the bushfire crisis
3. The response of established organisations to the bushfire crisis

3.1 Introduction

In this section, our focus is on the activities of humanitarian, wildlife and emergency service organisations during the bushfire crisis. The bushfire crisis of 2019/2020 saw an outpouring of public support for these organisations in the form of an influx of donations. These institutions functioned as experts trusted by the public to distribute resources where they were most needed.

Here, we quantify the donations received by major established organisations and describe the short-, medium- and long-term activities associated with these donations. We also describe their role in coordinating volunteer efforts.

The organisations chosen for inclusion in this section were those humanitarian, wildlife, and emergency service organisations that received significant donations from the public and attention from the media. This list is not intended to be exhaustive but indicative. The donation amounts and activities described in this section are the result of desktop research, scanning publicly available records.

The information contained in this section is indicative of the activities of the organisations included here, but we must emphasise that the methodology we employed in this section may not fully reflect the details and nuances of the organisations' activities, which would be better captured by the organisations' own internal records.
3. The response of established organisations to the bushfire crisis

3.2 Summary of findings

Of the nine organisations included in this section (five humanitarian, two wildlife, two emergency services), we could find data on donations for seven organisations. Collectively, these seven organisations received over $250 million in donations in this financial year. All nine organisations listed have dedicated some portion of their funds/effort to immediate responses to the bushfires, and some portion of their funds/effort to medium-term or long-term responses.

In all cases, the responses of established organisations were characterised by two key features:

**Operation within their domains of expertise**

All organisations offered assistance in the bushfire crisis that leveraged their existing domains of expertise. For example, organisations focused on mental health offered mental health assistance, whereas organisations focused on the welfare of animals offered help to animals in the bushfire crisis. While the bushfire crisis created distress that transcended existing categories, the established humanitarian, wildlife, and emergency service organisations largely operated within their domains of expertise, and relied on the gaps created by this approach to be filled by other organisations.

**Widespread impact**

Organisations applied their model of assistance across locations, reflecting a top-down approach to assistance. While each organisation tailored assistance, to some extent, to individual needs and circumstances, the mechanisms for assistance were applied across a wide range of locations to (a) determine those needs and circumstances and (b) administer assistance. To illustrate, the Australian Red Cross supported recovery centres and outreach to affected communities. They visited and phoned people identified as having a priority need, payed cash grants, and organised recovery training with local government.

In these two key features, the responses of established humanitarian, wildlife, and emergency services organisations differed markedly from the responses of individuals and local community groups, as will be explained in the next chapter.

It is important to note that the volume of data we were able to gather via a desktop search is a testament to the transparency of these organisations, and their flexibility in responding to public queries about the allocation of donated funds. Remarkably, only a few weeks after a significant national disaster, we were able to gather the data about how these organisations responded to the disaster and marshalled funds and volunteer labour.
3.3 Humanitarian organisations

**Australian Red Cross**

**Donations received**

Funds raised since July 2019: $150 million (as at 20 Feb, 2020)

**Immediate/emergency response projects**

$44 million has been paid in cash grants (as at 20 Feb, 2020). Also $5m has been allocated for 24/7 support including evacuations, relief centres and outreach services (for this financial year).

**Short- and medium-term response projects**

In Victoria, Red Cross teams are currently supporting people at Mallacoota and Bairnsdale. They are working with Agriculture Victoria to make outreach calls to people who have faced significant livestock losses, and recovery planning is underway. In South Australia, Red Cross teams are visiting and phoning people identified as having a priority need. In the Adelaide Hills and on Kangaroo Island they are supporting people at two recovery centres, as well as through outreach in person and over the phone. They are also carrying out outreach with affected communities on Yorke Peninsula, in particular at Price, Yorketown, Edithburgh and Coobowie. Red Cross personnel visited 344 homes in Cudlee Creek, Kangaroo Island and Yorketown. In Western Australia, Red Cross is supporting people impacted by the Katanning bushfire. Teams are making home visits, helping with grant applications, liaising with and supporting schools, and organising beginning recovery training with local government. Funds have been allocated for various aspects of short- and medium-term response projects: $40m to help people facing financial hardship to rebuild their destroyed homes; $50m to support people whose homes were destroyed (increased from $30m); $10m to make structurally damaged homes safe to return to; $1m for bereavement payments; $500k to support people hospitalised for injuries as a result of the fires.

**Long-term/recovery projects**

Providing support to affected communities at recovery centres, over the phone and through home visits. They are assessing needs and developing tailored recovery programs to help support communities over at least the next three years. Funds have been allocated for various aspects of short- and medium-term response projects: $18m to support community recovery for 3 years or more; $25.5m to be allocated to further unmet needs as they emerge.
3. The response of established organisations to the bushfire crisis

St Vincent de Paul

Donations received

To date, the Bushfire Appeal has raised a total of $20.5M. Of this amount: $9.8M has been distributed to people in bushfire-affected areas who meet the Society's criteria; and $10.7M remains for community recovery and the rebuilding phases.

(https://www.vinnies.org.au/page/Find_Help/Vinnies_Bushfire_Appeal/)

Immediate/emergency response projects

Paying for immediate needs, such as food vouchers, clothing, bedding, fuel and other costs of their household, and emergency accommodation.

Short- and medium-term response projects

Paying for living costs, white goods and furniture.

Covering damage to homes not covered by insurance.

Refer people to other organisations that provide crisis accommodation and specialised services.

Give emotional support and practical assistance after homes are lost.

Long-term/recovery projects

Continuing to work through how they can provide long-term recovery assistance to farmers and others.
3. The response of established organisations to the bushfire crisis

Salvation Army

Donations received
More than $18M has been received (as of Feb 11, 2020) - the Salvos have distributed $11.9 million of this amount. More than $7,064,000 has gone towards immediate emergency and relief efforts for first responders and evacuees, while $4.86 million in hardship payments has been distributed directly to people in need (https://www.salvationarmy.org.au/about-us/news-and-stories/media-newsroom/salvos-ramp-up-bushfire-recovery-operation/)

Immediate/emergency response projects
Salvation Army Emergency Services (SAES) teams activate at evacuation centres to respond to needs on the ground to provide immediate relief and support to firefighters, emergency workers, evacuees and communities by providing meals, bedding, care packs and cash grants.

Short- and medium-term response projects
Initial assessment and provision of emergency funds, including the provision of meals and refreshments, care packs, bedding, referrals, counselling and financial assistance.

Long-term/recovery projects
This is the longest stage where more financial support is provided for those who have been severely impacted by the disaster. For example, damage to, or loss of, homes and livelihoods. The Salvation Army is establishing a dedicated Bushfire Recovery Team, nationally coordinated and locally embedded. The BRT will lead the Salvos' engagement with federal, state, regional and community groups. BRT services will include financial assistance and counselling; a dedicated telephone line where workers can assess and deliver material aid; outreach workers embedded in local communities across Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia and; caseworkers based in communities to deliver holistic assistance, including financial, emotional and psychological responses.
3. The response of established organisations to the bushfire crisis

**Foodbank**

**Description of organisation**
Foodbank is Australia's largest food relief organisation, operating on a scale that makes it crucial to the work of the front-line charities who are feeding vulnerable Australians. Foodbank provides more than 70% of the food rescued for food relief organisations nation-wide (https://www.foodbank.org.au/hunger-in-australia/what-we-do/?state=vic). Foodbank is the only food relief organisation to play a role in times of emergency and natural disasters such as fires, floods and cyclones. As a trusted organisation forming part of the official emergency response network, Foodbank is able to act as a conduit for the generosity of the food industry which is always keen to assist with essential supplies to stricken areas.

**Donations received**
Estimated donations received nationally to date is $2.3 million in response to the bushfire crisis.

**Immediate/emergency response projects**
Foodbank SA distributed over 1000 school backpacks filled with lunchboxes, books, pencils and other school supplies to help families affected by the fires in and around the Adelaide Hills as well as Kangaroo Island ahead of school going back. Any carrots and sweet potatoes that are no longer suitable to provide to people are being fed to wildlife through Foodbank NSW’s relationship with the National Parks and Wildlife Service. In the last week, more than 5T of carrots and 1.5T of sweet potatoes have been sent to multiple national parks across NSW. Emergency relief hampers have been distributed across Vic and SA. Each hamper feeds a family of 4 for approximately 5 days. This is on top of 130 tonnes of food, groceries, bottled water and pet food which has gone out to NSW, Vic, SA and Tas. Personal care packs have also been distributed, specifically for firefighters and first responders. These included items like eye drops, wipes, lozenges and lollies.

**Short- and medium-term response projects**
Foodbank SA is looking to provide food to several BlazeAid camps. This means the charity, which helps to rebuild damaged and destroyed fences and structures, will be able to use its funds on the work at hand rather than providing meals for the volunteers.

**Long-term/recovery projects**
Foodbank will continue to deliver food and groceries to affected communities as they start the daunting task of rebuilding.
3. The response of established organisations to the bushfire crisis

Lifeline

Description of organisation
Lifeline is a national charity providing all Australians experiencing a personal crisis with access to 24 hour crisis support and suicide prevention services.

Donations received
We have been unable to locate data about donations received specifically in response to the bushfire crisis.

Immediate/emergency response projects
Lifeline created a dedicated phoneline (13 HELP) for people in bushfire affected communities.

Short- and medium-term response projects
Information about accessing the 13 HELP dedicated phoneline will be shared with affected communities in the near future through targeted local media and the utilisation of geotargeted advertising.

Long-term/recovery projects
Lifeline also provided online toolkits to help people: 1. Getting through bushfires, drought and extreme climate events. 2. Helping your children cope after a bushfire 3. Coping with loss and change in the community after a bushfire 4. Coping with Grief and Loss.

https://www.lifeline.org.au/about-lifeline/lifeline-information/who-we-are
3. The response of established organisations to the bushfire crisis

3.4 Animal and wildlife organisations

RSPCA Victoria

Description of organisation

RSPCA Victoria is a non-government, community-based charity that works to prevent cruelty to animals by actively promoting their care and protection. Since its establishment in 1871, and as member of RSPCA Australia (the federation of eight state and territory organisations in Australia), the RSPCA has collectively become Australia’s leading animal welfare charity (https://www.rspcavic.org/about-us). RSPCA Victoria is one of the agencies that forms part of the Victorian Emergency Animal Welfare Plan. So far, they have provided support to both companion animals and wildlife impacted by the devastating fires.

Donations received

Total funds received through the national and state/territory appeals: $8.4 million (approximate as at 18 Feb 2020) - https://bushfires.rspca.org.au/updates/

Immediate/emergency response projects

RSPCA Victoria employees created over 300 animal care packages to provide to people in affected communities in Victoria. The packs included food, treats, toys, a bowl and Advocate treatment for dogs, cats and small animals, helping people to care for their pets if they have been displaced by the fires. These will continue to be created and sent to communities as needs arise. Evacuation support - RSPCA Victoria Inspectors and operations staff assisted with the evacuation of more than 1000 people and 120 animals from Mallacoota arriving in Melbourne on two Navy ships. They assisted with emergency boarding for pets. Opened emergency boarding to pets in need at our Wangaratta Animal Care Centre. During January they housed more than 110 animals while their families made arrangements and evacuated from their homes. Volunteers have assisted with animal transfers from the local relief centre to their shelter. RSPCA Victoria deployed the Mobile Animal Care (MAC) Unit to Bairnsdale, to help care for wildlife impacted by the bushfires. Vets triaged and provided much-needed medical attention to alleviate suffering and help save some of the most vulnerable creatures from total devastation.

Short- and medium-term response projects

RSPCA Victoria is now reaching out to fire-affected communities to provide people help caring for their pets, horses and animals on hobby farms. They are: providing food, water, equipment and accessories to pet and livestock owners; providing medical supplies and veterinary treatment to pets and livestock; providing transport and shelter for affected animals of all kinds (including farm animals); helping locate, assess and treat injured wildlife.
3. The response of established organisations to the bushfire crisis

World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Australia

Australian Wildlife and Nature Recovery Fund

Description of organisation

WWF’s global mission is to stop the degradation of the planet’s natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature. WWF-Australia is part of the WWF International Network, the world’s leading, independent conservation organisation. Founded in 1961, they are active in over 100 countries and have close to five million supporters internationally. In Australia and throughout the oceanic region, they work with governments, businesses and communities so that people and nature can thrive within their fair share of the planet’s natural resources.

Donations received

As of 5 February 2020, they have deployed over AUD$2 million to front line organisations rescuing and treating injured wildlife in bushfire impacted areas and have started partnering with projects to start the recovery process.

Immediate/emergency response projects

WWF-Australia has partnered with wildlife rescue and care organisations in bushfire zones and is directing funds to respond to the emergency at scale. They are: getting veterinary supplies to bushfire triage sites; supporting specialist veterinarians who are providing care and medical treatment to injured wildlife across Australia; deploying koala detection dogs and drones to bushfire sites to search for surviving koalas and conducting rapid threatened species assessments in fire-affected areas.

Short- and medium-term response projects

WWF-Australia are: providing starving wildlife with food and water in bushfire impacted regions; partnering with wildlife response organisations, communities and scientists nationally for a swift and effective response and recovery at scale.

Long-term/recovery projects

WWF-Australia are focused on habitat restoration for people and nature - including restoring forests and damaged wildlife habitat, stopping deforestation, including cultivating habitat connectivity, core habitat and Indigenous and rural fire management. WWF Australia aim to future-proof Australia - including driving innovative solutions to help mitigate climate change, driving climate preparedness, species adaptation and long-term wildlife and nature conservation efforts towards securing Australia’s natural resources for people and nature.

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3. The response of established organisations to the bushfire crisis

3.5 Emergency services organisations

Country Fire Authority (CFA)

Description of organisation

The CFA are involved in the prevention, preparedness, response and recovery phases of emergency situations, providing a diverse range of risk reduction, fire suppression and incident management services to minimise the impact of fires and other emergencies on Victorian communities. CFA provides statewide fire and related emergency coordination, including: wildfire suppression; structural fire suppression; transport-related fire suppression; road rescue; technical rescue, such as high angle, trench and mine operations; hazardous materials transportation and storage incidents; other emergency activities including flood assistance. CFA is also involved in a range of non-emergency activities.

Donations received

We have been unable to locate data about donations received specifically in response to the bushfire crisis. There are two different funds to donate to: Public Fund and Brigades Donation Fund. Money donated to the CFA public fund is used to fund new initiatives such as research programs, development and supply of new education and community information materials as well as direct support to brigades where it is needed. Money donated to the Brigades Fund is used to help fund the work of Brigades in the local community. This includes equipping the brigades with trucks and safety equipment as well as funding community programs and initiatives to prepare the community ahead of the fire season.

Immediate/emergency response projects

Fighting Fires, Emergency Response and Strike Teams

Long-term/recovery projects

Non-emergency activities, including: community awareness, education, and safety programs; fire safety input planning for major community risks; fire prevention and planning; land use planning at municipal level; technical services including building code-related inspections, post incident analysis, and fire investigation; vegetation management; planned burning; and sustainable fire management.


Photo: CFA Media
3. The response of established organisations to the bushfire crisis

Rural Fire Service

Description of organisation

The NSW Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS) is the world’s largest volunteer fire service. They provide fire and emergency services to approximately 95 percent of NSW. NSW RFS members attend a range of incidents and activities, including: bush and grass fires; house and structure fires; storm damage; search and rescue; motor vehicle accidents; community education; and bush fire mitigation.

Donations received

Over $50M.

Immediate/emergency response projects

Fighting Fires, Emergency Response and Strike Teams

Long-term/recovery projects

Through its Donations Trust, the NSW RFS have identified four key areas to focus on. These are:

Rebuilding: Taking immediate action to rebuild and replenish, including the establishment of the $10 million fund for volunteer brigades, and providing emergency funding for brigade items which have been damaged or destroyed.

Supporting: Enhancing and extending our support of our members including volunteer welfare and their mental health, and consideration of a dedicated memorial for fallen volunteer firefighters.

Equipping: Ensuring our brigades are equipped to protect the community, property and the environment, including improving technology and connectivity.

Improving: Improving service delivery for members and the community such as education and training, emergency response and processes for volunteers.

The response of communities to the bushfire crisis
4. The response of communities to the bushfire crisis

4.1 Introduction

In this section, our focus is on the activities and initiatives of community groups, as indicated by their representations of themselves and these activities on their community group websites, Facebook groups, and online crowdfunding campaigns. Our focus is on those activities enacted independently of established organisations.

The bushfire crisis of 2019/2020 saw an outpouring of public support for these community-led activities and initiatives, both in the form of financial donations, but also, and more strikingly, in terms of the other forms of humanitarian action identified in our framework of voluntary humanitarian behaviour.
4. The response of communities to the bushfire crisis

4.2 Summary of findings

- Most community initiatives (60-70%) emerged in direct response to the crisis. This pattern was observed irrespective of the type of online platform used (i.e., websites, Facebook groups, online crowdfunding campaigns), testifying to the agility of community-led initiatives.

- Most community-led initiatives focused on one or a combination of response, recovery and rebuilding. In this way, community-led initiatives were not dissimilar to the initiatives of established organisations, which also focused on rapid response and recovery.

- Unlike the initiatives of established, which also demonstrated a strong concern for wildlife support, community-led initiatives appeared to be more focused on the immediate needs of people in affected communities. However, this does not mean that community-led initiatives were unconcerned with animal welfare, but rather that the focus was on those animals who were an intrinsic part of people's livelihood. This was exemplified by initiatives to rescue horses and livestock from fire-affected areas and to repair fences to help farmers contain livestock.

- Consistent with this focus on local needs and the provision of practical support to address these needs, community-led initiatives involve a complex of interlocking humanitarian behaviours, demonstrating that hyper-local responses draw on whatever resources people have to hand to mitigate losses, sustain resilience and promote recovery.

- Notably, crowdfunding campaigns that were community-led initiatives tended to involve volunteering more than campaigns created by established organisations, which focused on charitable donations of money. Community-led initiatives also appeared to focus more charitable donations of goods, than the initiatives of established organisations.

- Most community-led humanitarian responses were concentrated in either major cities or near bushfire affected areas in the south-east of Australia.

- Two forms of community-led initiatives were discerned that turned on two different ways of construing community. The first form focused on the needs of those in the same geographic community, highlighting location- or place-based affiliation. The second form focused on the needs of those in the same imagined community (e.g., farmers helping farmers, or army veterans helping veterans), highlighting social identity-based affiliation.
4.3 Google

4.3.1 Research questions

• How many initiatives were operating, and who organised them?
• Did these initiatives exist prior to the crisis or did they emerge in response to it?
• What types of initiatives were operating?
• What types of voluntary humanitarian behaviours are associated with these initiatives?

4.3.2 Key findings

• Of the 42 programs and initiatives identified, 40% were community-led and 60% were led by established not-for-profit organisations.
• Of the programs and initiatives identified, approximately 60% were established in response to the bushfire crisis, with the remaining programs and initiatives pre-existing. This pattern was found for both community-led programs and NGO-led programs.
• Community-led initiatives focused on recovery, rapid-response, and rebuilding. Less prevalent were initiatives targeting health and wildlife support.
• NGO-led initiatives focused on recovery, rapid-response and wildlife support. Less prevalent were initiatives targeting rebuilding and health support. Large, high-profile appeals to the public for charitable contributions of money were uniquely initiated by NGOs.
• The types of voluntary humanitarian behaviours demonstrated and sought by these initiatives appeared to vary as a function of the type of initiative.

4.3.3 Research method

Data collection and sampling

A search of Google was conducted using a Boolean search with the terms: (Bushfires OR "Bushfire Relief") AND (Volunteer OR Help OR Donate OR Support OR Relief OR Appeal). This search was conducted on the 18th of February, 2020.

The search returned over 38,000,000 results. Given that the purpose of this exercise is to identify and describe the voluntary humanitarian behaviours enacted by community programs and initiatives independent of humanitarian organisations, rather than to conduct a full audit these programs and initiatives, we reviewed only the first 200 returned entries. This was equivalent to approximately 20 pages of google searches. Of these 200 returned entries, 42 met the inclusion criteria (i.e., they related to distinct bushfire-related initiatives) and were retained for subsequent analysis. The remaining 148 entries were excluded because they were either news posts, blog posts, or replications of already included initiatives and organisations (e.g., entries were different pages of these initiatives’ websites).

Qualitative coding

The activities of online groups and forums were coded using the five-category voluntary humanitarian behaviour typology outlined in chapter 2. In addition to this, these initiatives were coded for whether they were: (a) a new or existing initiative; (b) related to a humanitarian organisation or a community Initiative; (c) location of initiative; (d) location of recipient; and (e) whether the recipients of charitable donation were existing humanitarian organisation or whether the donations were to be directly remitted to specific communities.
Method limitations

The limitations of the Google search approach relate to the broadness of search terms and the Google search algorithm. The Google search algorithms look at many factors, including the words of the query, relevance and usability of pages, expertise of sources, and location and settings. Further, the weight applied to each factor varies depending on the nature of the query. An implication of this is well-known and well-established organisations and initiatives appear early in the search results and newly established organisations and initiatives appear late in the search results, which means that some new organisations and initiatives may not be included in our data collection. Information about the Google search algorithm can be found here: https://www.google.com/search/howsearchworks/algorithms/.
4. The response of communities to the bushfire crisis

4.3.4 Results

How many programs or initiatives were operating, and who organised them?

Of the 42 programs analysed, 16 (38%) were community-led initiatives. By contrast, 26 (62%) initiatives were run by established NGOs (e.g., NGO, Philanthropy, Foundations, Religious Organisations, Trade Unions) and commercial organisations. This latter collection of 26 initiatives includes two established appeals run by established organisations.

Did these programs and initiatives exist prior to the crisis or did they emerge in response to it?

Of the 42 initiatives analysed, 27 (64%) were established in response to the bushfire crisis. 15 initiatives (36%) existed prior to the crisis.

Among the 16 community-led initiatives, 11 (68%) were established in response to the bushfire crisis. By contrast, 5 initiatives (31%) existed prior to the crisis.

Among the 26 NGO-led initiatives, 16 (62%) were established in response to the bushfire crisis. By contrast, 10 initiatives (38%) existed prior to the crisis.

What types of initiatives were operating?

Large-scale appeals for charitable giving was one prominent form of initiative enacted in response the bushfire crisis, but we identified five other types of initiatives.

For example, some initiatives focused on rapid response, whereby groups reacted to immediate, critical needs like the emergency provision of food and shelter. Other initiatives focused on rebuilding, whereby groups provide the skill and means to rebuild physical structures in communities, or recovery, which took a variety of forms such as the provision of financial support to affected people and communities or contributing to community economic recovery through online support (e.g., online initiatives like ‘It’s my Shout’ encourage people to ‘virtually’ purchase goods from fire affected businesses, thereby injecting much needed funds into the community).

Yet other initiatives focused on the provision of services to support peoples’ health, especially mental health. Notably, the humanitarian response was generalised to animals. To illustrate, some initiatives focused explicitly on wildlife support, which included the provision of feed and fodder, animal rescue and habitat restoration.
4. The response of communities to the bushfire crisis

Community-led initiatives

Collapsing across new and existing initiatives, community-led initiatives included:

- Specific appeal for money or help (0/16)
- Immediate response to the crisis when it was occurring (5/16)
- Aiding in recovery (i.e., clean-ups, supporting families and communities in the aftermath) (6/16)
- Offering aid in rebuilding (i.e., of homes, fences and other physical structures) (4/16)
- Supports for health in particular mental-health awareness and recovery (1/16)
- Caring for wildlife (i.e., animal rescue, healing, feeding and habitat restoration) (1/16)

Notably, most community-led initiatives focused on one or a combination of response, recovery and rebuilding. No major appeals for public philanthropy were found among community-led initiatives.

Community-led initiatives – new

As noted earlier, 11 of the 16 community-led programs identified were established in response to the bushfire crisis. Overall, these new initiatives comprised:

- Specific appeals for money or help (0/11)
- Immediate response to the crisis when it was occurring (4/11)
- Aiding in recovery (i.e., clean-ups, supporting families and communities in the aftermath) (4/11)
- Offering aid in rebuilding (i.e., of homes, fences and other physical structures) (2/11)
- Supports for health in particular mental-health awareness and recovery (0/11)
- Caring for wildlife (i.e., animal rescue, healing, feeding and habitat restoration) (1/11)

Two types of initiatives were most characteristic of new community-led initiatives; namely, rapid response and recovery.

Community-led initiatives – existing

As noted earlier, 5 of the 16 community-led programs identified existed prior to the bushfire crisis. Overall, these existing initiatives comprised:

- Specific appeals for money or help (0/5)
- Immediate response to the crisis when it was occurring (1/5)
- Aiding in recovery (i.e., clean-ups, supporting families and communities in the aftermath) (2/5)
- Offering aid in rebuilding (i.e., of homes, fences and other physical structures) (2/5)
- Supports for health in particular mental-health awareness and recovery (1/5)
- Caring for wildlife (i.e., animal rescue, healing, feeding and habitat restoration) (0/5)

Two types of initiatives appeared to be characteristic of new community-led initiatives; namely, recovery and rebuilding, reflecting a slightly stronger focus on medium-term initiatives rather than short-term responses to crisis.
NGO-led initiatives

Collapsing across new and existing initiatives, NGO-led initiatives included:

- Specific appeal for money or help (3/26)
- Immediate response to the crisis when it was occurring (8/26)
- Aiding in recovery (i.e., clean-ups, supporting families and communities in the aftermath) (9/26)
- Offering aid in rebuilding (i.e., of homes, fences and other physical structures) (4/26)
- Supports for health in particular mental-health awareness and recovery (1/26)
- Caring for wildlife (i.e., animal rescue, healing, feeding and habitat restoration) (7/26)

Most NGO-led initiatives focused on one or a combination of rapid response, recovery and wildlife support. What appears to distinguish NGO-led initiatives from community-led initiatives are the wildlife-focused initiatives and large-scale public appeals for financial support.

NGO-led initiatives – new

As noted earlier, 16 of the 25 NGO-led programs identified were established in response to the bushfire crisis. Overall, these new initiatives comprised:

- Specific appeals for money or help (1/16)
- Immediate response to the crisis when it was occurring (3/16)
- Aiding in recovery (i.e., clean-ups, supporting families and communities in the aftermath) (6/16)
- Offering aid in rebuilding (i.e., of homes, fences and other physical structures) (4/16)
- Supports for health in particular mental-health awareness and recovery (1/16)
- Caring for wildlife (i.e., animal rescue, healing, feeding and habitat restoration) (3/16)

Two types of initiatives were most characteristic of new NGO-led initiatives; namely, recovery and rebuilding. Whereas new community-led initiatives appear to give more somewhat weight to rapid response, NGO-led initiatives appear to give somewhat more weight to rebuilding.

NGO-led initiatives – existing

As noted earlier, 10 of the 25 NGO-led programs identified existed prior to the bushfire crisis. Overall, these existing initiatives comprised:

- Specific appeals for money or help (2/10)
- Immediate response to the crisis when it was occurring (6/10)
- Aiding in recovery (i.e., clean-ups, supporting families and communities in the aftermath) (3/10)
- Offering aid in rebuilding (i.e., of homes, fences and other physical structures) (0/10)
- Supports for health in particular mental-health awareness and recovery (0/10)
- Caring for wildlife (i.e., animal rescue, healing, feeding and habitat restoration) (4/10)

Three types of initiatives appear to be most characteristic of new NGO-led initiatives; namely, rapid response, wildlife support, and recovery.
4. The response of communities to the bushfire crisis

What types of humanitarian behaviours are associated with community-led and NGO-led initiatives?

Across all community-led initiatives and programs, evidence was found for all five types of voluntary humanitarian behaviours. However, the types of humanitarian behaviours enacted varied as a function of the nature of the program or initiative.

With respect to rapid response initiatives, whereby groups reacted to immediate, critical needs like the emergency provision of food and shelter, we found evidence for creating awareness using social media, charitable giving of money, charitable giving of goods, volunteering time and effort, and organising and leading. This pattern was found for community-led and NGO-led initiatives.

With respect to rebuilding, whereby groups provide the skill and means to rebuild physical structures in communities, we found the same pattern; that is, all five types of voluntary humanitarian behaviour were associated with community-led and NGO-led rebuilding initiatives.

The pattern was similar for community-led and NGO-led recovery and NGO-led wildlife support initiatives. However, for these initiatives, we only found evidence for charitable giving of money, charitable giving of goods, volunteering time and effort, and organising and leading.

Finally, organising and leading and volunteering time and effort, which are two sides of the same coin, were associated with health initiatives.

Yet other initiatives focused on the provision of services to support peoples’ health, especially mental health. Notably, the humanitarian response was generalised to animals. To illustrate, some initiatives focused explicitly on wildlife support, which included the provision of feed and fodder, animal rescue and habitat restoration.
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Where are these initiatives located?

As shown in figure 4.5, most initiatives identified via Google were concentrated in either major cities or near bushfire affected areas in the south-east of Australia.

Figure 4.5. Map of where voluntary humanitarian behaviours were enacted, as identified via Google.
The Animal Rescue Collective is a nation-wide project to support animal rescuers in need. They do this by fundraising and by sourcing large amounts of product, food, and volunteers to support Animal Rescuers and then giving this away to groups around Australia in need. RescuedPets is a GeoLocation platform backing the Animal Rescue Cooperative project, a huge program of volunteers and rescuers working in unison to get support to where it is needed across Australia. Connecting hundreds of groups with local hubs and volunteers to bring help where it is needed, get supplies, donated product and freecycled support for animals and volunteers.

The RescuedPets site is designed to connect Volunteer Animal Rescuers and help people find local support hubs to provide product donations. The focus is on connecting people and pets. The Animal Rescue Collective have created drop off hubs that allow an easy to find space that people can drop blankets, towels and basics that can then be picked up by a rescue or work their way through the system via the Hub Volunteers. The Animal Rescue Cooperative program is moving tonnage, daily all over Australia. Vendors and retailers can send stock and supplies so it is not wasted, it will be used to feed animals and support rescuers within days of donating.

Website: https://rescuedpets.com.au/about/
4. The response of communities to the bushfire crisis

CASE STUDY

Case study 2: Architects Assist
Architects Assist was established by Jiri Lev on 4 January 2020 as an initiative of the Australian Institute of Architects. It represents a coordinated effort of 500 practices from across Australia, willing to dedicate their resources to pro bono work, as well as 1400 students and graduates of architecture prepared to help as required. The aim of Architects Assist is to enable those affected by the present and future disasters to rebuild their lives, either by themselves or with help from the community, at once or in stages. Small businesses or communities may also apply for assistance. Committed to the principle of equity of access to architecture, Architects Assist encourages design outcomes that are architecturally considered, owner-builder friendly, resilient in natural disasters, built with sustainable materials, compact and spatially efficient, and affordable.

Website: http://architectsassist.com.au/about/

Case study 3: Eat cake create – mobilising4mogo
The group is an arts group that hosts art events and are located across US and Australia. In the first 3 weeks of 2020 they secured and donated over $100,000 in groceries, petrol, hardware, art, school supply vouchers and 7 tonnes of camping and customised grocery, baby, bathroom, and pet supplies.

Website: https://www.eatcakecreate.com/donate2mogo/
4. The response of communities to the bushfire crisis

4.4 Facebook

4.4.1 Research questions

• How many bushfire-related Facebook groups were operating?
• Did these Facebook groups exist prior to the crisis or did they emerge in response to it?
• What types of voluntary humanitarian behaviours are associated with Facebook groups?
• Who are the beneficiaries of Facebook-mediated charitable giving?
• Where are bushfire-related Facebook groups located?

4.4.2 Key findings

• Of the bushfire-related Facebook groups identified, approximately 70% were established in response to the bushfire crisis, with the remainder established prior to the crisis.
• All bushfire-related Facebook groups were instances of ‘creating awareness using social media’. However, most Facebook groups evinced other types of voluntary humanitarian behaviour.
• Notably, approximately half the bushfire-related Facebook groups were used to raise funds.
• A minority of these funds (13%) were raised for humanitarian organisations. However, most funds (80%) were raised directly for bushfire-affected communities.

4.4.3 Research method

Data collection and sampling

A Facebook search for independent responses to the bushfire crisis was conducted between the 29th of January and the 21st of February 2020. The keywords used in this search were a combination of the following search terms in Table 4.1.

Qualitative coding

The activities of online groups and forums were coded using the five-category voluntary humanitarian behaviour typology outlined in chapter 2. In addition to this, these initiatives were coded for whether they were: (a) a new or existing initiative; (b) related to a humanitarian organisation or a community initiative; (c) location of initiative; (d) location of recipient; and (e) whether the recipients of charitable donation were existing humanitarian organisation or whether the donations were to be directly remitted to specific communities.

Keywords

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bushfire-related</th>
<th>Humanitarian behaviour-related</th>
<th>Town-related</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bushfires</td>
<td>Volunteer</td>
<td>Mallacoota</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bushfirerelief</td>
<td>Help</td>
<td>Eden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australiasburning</td>
<td>Donate</td>
<td>Batemans Bay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australianbushires</td>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Cobargo</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bushfires Vic</td>
<td>Relief</td>
<td>Hawkesbury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bushfires NSW</td>
<td>Appeal</td>
<td>Kangaroo Island</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1 - Key words used for Facebook search
Method limitations

Facebook results were influenced by the researcher’s own Facebook profile. The combination of various key terms often led to similar search results. Thus, the variety of search term did not substantially extend the findings. Some of the groups found were set on ‘private’ what meant that the researcher could neither access to them nor gather any information about them. The search brought up numerous small events such as fundraisers at local pubs, BBQs and small gigs with local artists up with a seemingly low number of attendees. These were not included into the data collection.

During the search the researcher found that the description and links to some Facebook initiatives ran for a couple of days or weeks. By the time of this research notifications about these initiatives or links were not online anymore and thus could not be documented. Examples include initiatives by local shops who offered free goods during the emergency.
4. The response of communities to the bushfire crisis

4.4.4 Results

How many bushfire-related Facebook groups were operating?

Facebook initiatives

The Facebook search produced 85 findings. Of these 45 (53%) were actual Facebook initiatives such as pages, groups or events.

Initiatives sourced through, but not based on, Facebook

However, 40 (47%) of the 85 findings were initiatives that were found through Facebook but used other forms of media (e.g., other homepages, Instagram, or crowdfunding pages, such as Airtaskers, Airbnb, Vets beyond borders, and Spend with them) for the purpose of organising their initiatives.

To clarify, on a number of the Facebook pages that community groups had established, links were provided for people to find out more for themselves. For example, one Facebook group provided links to emergency accommodation services. Yet another provided a series of links to small initiatives that people could donate to, if they so desired.

Did these Facebook groups exist prior to the crisis or did they emerge in response to it?

Facebook initiatives

33 (73%) of the 45 Facebook initiatives were new programs, pages, events or groups that emerged in response to the bushfire events 2019/2020, whereas 12 (27%) existed prior to these events.

Initiatives sourced through, but not based on, Facebook

Of the 40 initiatives that were identified through Facebook, but not based on Facebook, 15 (38%) initiatives existed prior to the bushfire crisis and 25 (62%) were formed as a reaction to it.

What types of voluntary humanitarian behaviours are associated with Facebook groups?

Facebook initiatives

By definition, all 45 Facebook initiatives were coded as ‘creating awareness using social media’. For a number of these Facebook groups, keeping community members up to date with important information was their main purpose. The information these groups provided ranged from fire alerts, updates on roadblocks, state of affected communities and their members to information on how to access all types of support for those affected by the bushfire. However, most of the Facebook groups sought to more than simply create awareness using social media. Community pages, ranging from town up to shire level as well as Community Fire Authorities and similar often reflected 4-5 categories of voluntary humanitarian behaviour. They are covering a broad range of interlinked activities. These were often existing Facebook groups with a high level of traffic. To illustrate:

• 15 (33%) of Facebook initiatives focused on ‘charitable giving of goods’
• 24 (53%) of Facebook initiatives focused on ‘volunteering time and effort’
• 21 (47%) of Facebook initiatives focused on ‘organising and Leading’
• 11 (24%) of Facebook initiatives focused on ‘charitable giving of money’.

Initiatives sourced through, but not based on, Facebook

Akin to the Facebook initiatives described above, most of these initiatives reflected multiple forms of voluntary humanitarian behaviour. To illustrate:

• 10 (25%) of initiatives focused on ‘creating awareness via social media’.
• 12 (30%) of initiatives focused on ‘charitable giving of goods’
• 24 (60%) initiatives focused on ‘organising and Leading’. These were often fundraisers.
• 22 (55%) of the initiatives focused on ‘charitable giving of money’.
• 21 (53%) of initiatives focused on facilitating people’s ability to ‘volunteer time and effort’
4. The response of communities to the bushfire crisis

Who are the beneficiaries of Facebook-mediated charitable giving?

*Facebook initiatives*

Of the 45 Facebook initiatives identified, 6 (13%) stated that the funds raised would be remitted directly to Humanitarian organisations such as the Australian Red Cross or Wires and 36 (80%) stated that funds raised would be sent direct to affected communities. Finally, 3 (7%) of the Facebook groups set up for the purpose of fundraising did not specify where the funds would go.

*Initiatives sourced through, but not based on, Facebook*

Of these 40 initiatives identified through Facebook, but not based on Facebook, 23 (58%) raised resources directly for communities, 16 (40%) raised funds for Humanitarian organisations and 1 (2%) did not indicate where their resources would go to. Most initiatives that sought charitable donations for humanitarian organisations used crowdfunding platforms (e.g., www.gofundme.com). Humanitarian organisations that received these funds were often the Red cross, Wires, Victorian Wildlife.

Where are bushfire-related Facebook groups located?

As shown in figure 4.6, most initiatives identified via Facebook were concentrated in either major cities or near bushfire affected areas in the south-east of Australia.

![Location of humanitarian actions found on Facebook](image-url)
4. The response of communities to the bushfire crisis

CASE STUDY

4.4.5 Case studies

Case study 1: Coldstream CFA

Coldstream CFA is a local Country Fire Authority initially established in 1939. Their Facebook page has 6700 followers. During the bushfire crisis, they supported their community through their work as fire fighters and by organising and coordinating cash donations and gift cards for fuel and food. Additionally, their Facebook page creates awareness about weather events, fire alerts, safety tips for bushfire affected regions, roadblocks etc. This initiative reflects four types of voluntary humanitarian behaviour: creating awareness; charitable giving of money; charitable giving of goods and ethical consumption; and organising and leading.

Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/ColdstreamFireBrigade/

Case study 2: Mallacoota Community News

Mallacoota Community News. This is an established community group on Facebook founded in February 2017. The group was initially set up to share news and information relevant to the Mallacoota Community and District. It has over 8800 members on Facebook. During the 2019/2020 bushfire season the Facebook group distributed important information in relation to the ongoing fires, roadblocks, community members who were missing, how to access help and support when affected by bushfires. Additionally, they set up a separate fundraising page for wildlife shelter, fire station and community and another separate homepage to offer and coordinate accommodation, pet sitting and other services to community members in need. This initiative reflects all five types of voluntary humanitarian behaviour.

Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/groups/mallacoota/

Photo: Coldstream CFA Fire Brigade

Photo: Mallacoota Community News
4. The response of communities to the bushfire crisis

CASE STUDY

Case study 3: Animal Rescue Craft Guild
The Animal Rescue Craft Guild is an initiative by the Animal Rescue Cooperative, a joint project of many rescue groups around Australia with a registered business with the aim to support/rescue animals in need. At the moment their focus is on wildlife affected by bushfires. The Animal Rescue Craft Guild group was created in April 2019. It has over 230,000 members. The aim of the group is to support animal rescue. “Sewing, making, designing and recycling “everything” to make products that help animal rescue. Beds, crates, containers and support equipment to help rescuers.” This includes for example pattern to sew joey pouches. The group also does callouts for products and supplies. These things will then be used in the on the ground work of the Animal Rescue Collective.

This initiative reflects three types of voluntary humanitarian behaviour: creating awareness using social media; charitable giving of goods and ethical consumption; and volunteering time and effort.

Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/groups/arfsncrafts/

Case study 4: Gardens for Farmers
Gardens for Farmers is a community initiative founded on the 3rd of January 2020. The Facebook group has around 500 members. The aim of the initiative is to provide farmers and others who lost their gardens with small wicking beds, seed packs, fruit tree packages so that they have some green space to relax. The aim of the Facebook group is coordinating efforts, collecting resources and funding and distribution of materials.

This initiative reflects three types of voluntary humanitarian behaviour: creating awareness using social media; charitable giving of money; and volunteering time and effort.

Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/groups/439231336985590/about/
4.5 Crowdfunding

Crowdfunding is the practice of funding a project or venture by raising small amounts of money from a large number of people, typically via the Internet. Crowdfunding is a form of crowdsourcing and alternative finance. In recent years, crowdfunding has become a popular way for members of the general public to raise money and show support for causes they care about.

4.5.1 Research questions

• Who are the organisers of crowdfunding campaigns?
• Who are the intended beneficiaries of crowdfunding campaigns?
• What types of voluntary humanitarian behaviours are associated with crowdfunding campaigns?
• Where are crowdfunding campaigns located?

4.5.2 Key findings

• Most crowdfunding campaigns (75%) were community initiatives organised by individuals or groups of community members.
• Most campaigns (60%) sought to raise money for formal humanitarian, wildlife and emergency services organisations, such as the Australian Red Cross, WIRES, Victorian Bushfire Disaster Appeal and NSW Rural and Fire Service Brigade.
• A large minority of campaigns (38%, 104/273) sought to raise money for direct repatriation to affected communities.
• By definition, campaigns requires two interlocking types of voluntary humanitarian behaviour: namely, organising and leading by those who initiate the campaign and charitable giving of money by those who contribute to the campaign.

4.5.3 Research method

Data collection and sampling

For the purpose of this project, GoFundMe was chosen over other crowdfunding sites such as Givt and Chuffed for its widespread reach and popularity. A search using the Boolean term 'Bushfire' was conducted between the 10th of February and the 25th of February 2020. The initial search recovered 6099 Gofundme campaigns. Given that the purpose of this exercise is to identify range of voluntary humanitarian behaviours enacted by individuals and groups, rather than a full audit of behaviours enacted by the entire population of campaigns, we focused our analysis on the first 300 listed Gofundme campaigns.

Of these campaigns, 27 were excluded for various reasons (i.e., campaign had been deleted or had been deactivated, organiser was not in Australia, the bushfire was not in Australia or the campaign was from the 2017 bushfires). Following the exclusion of these campaigns, 273 campaigns were available for analysis.

Qualitative coding

Campaigns were coded using the five-category voluntary humanitarian behaviour typology outlined in chapter 2. In addition to this, these initiatives were coded for whether they were: (a) a new or existing initiative; (b) related to a humanitarian organisation or a community initiative; (c) location of initiative; (d) location of recipient; and (e) whether the recipients of charitable donation were existing humanitarian organisation or whether the donations were to be directly remitted to specific communities.

Method limitations

A limitation of this approach is related to Gofundme’s algorithm, which tends to surface successful fundraisers first, in part due to a recency bias, whereby recent donations are more likely to crop up while browsing the site.
4. The response of communities to the bushfire crisis

4.5.4 Results

Who are the organisers of crowdfunding campaigns?

As is typical of crowdfunding campaigns, most campaigns (75%, 204/273) were community initiatives organised by individuals or groups of community members. The remaining 25% of campaigns (69/273) were created by established organisations, such as Wildlife Victoria or Carlton Football Club.

Who are the intended beneficiaries of crowdfunding campaigns?

Most of the campaigns (60%, 165/273) sought to raise money for formal humanitarian, wildlife and emergency services organisations, such as the Australian Red Cross, WIRES, Victorian Bushfire Disaster Appeal and NSW Rural and Fire Service Brigade. Collectively, these campaigns had at the time of data collection raised $4,884,419 million.

A large minority of campaigns (38%, 104/273) sought to raise money for direct repatriation to affected communities (e.g., individual community members or families who had lost their homes or business in the bushfires or specific townships). Collectively, these campaigns at the time of data collection raised $1,615,894 million.

The top ten communities that crowdfunding campaigns sought to raise monetary donations, goods or volunteers for included; Kangaroo Island SA, Batemans Bay NSW, Nymboida NSW, Cobargo NSW, Lobethal SA, Mallacoota VIC, Batlow NSW, Quaama NSW, Tumbarumba NSW, Wandella NSW.

There were also a number of self-organised community initiatives, whereby members of specific communities (e.g., Mallacoota, Kangaroo Island, Cobargo, Bawley Point, Anglers Rest) organised campaigns for their community.

The remaining campaigns (4/273) did not disclose the intended recipients of the monies sought.

What types of voluntary humanitarian behaviours are associated with crowdfunding campaigns?

By definition, crowdfunding campaigns requires two interlocking types of voluntary humanitarian behaviour: namely, organising and leading by those who initiate the campaign and charitable giving of money by those who contribute to the campaign.

In addition to financial support, a small minority of these campaigns also sought charitable donations of goods (8/104) or volunteers (17/104).

Notably, crowdfunding campaigns that were community initiatives tended to involve more aspects of volunteering time and effort than campaigns created by established organisations, which focused on the solicitation of charitable donations of money. Community initiatives also solicited charitable donations of goods and non-perishable food, than the campaigns of formal organisations. Community campaigns prioritised localised, on the ground, practical actions. This was evident in campaigns created by individual community members that called for volunteers to delivering hay bales to areas affected by the fires or community members who were transporting horses to nearby safe locations.
Where are crowdfunding campaigns located?

As shown in figure 4.7, the locations of the organisers of the crowdfunding campaigns were spread out across the country with a concentration in major cities. Similarly, there were a smaller majority of campaigns organised from areas directly affected by the fires. These included locations such as Batemans Bay NSW, Cobargo NSW, Lobethal SA, Mallacoota Vic and Tumbarumba NSW.

Figure 4.7. Map of where voluntary humanitarian behaviours were enacted, as identified via GoFundMe.
4. The response of communities to the bushfire crisis

CASE STUDY

4.5.5 Case studies

Case study 1: Tumbarumba & Surrounds Bushfire Hay Drive

Tumbarumba & Surrounds Bushfire Hay Drive is a crowdfunding campaign organised by a local community member in Tumbarumba NSW. The campaign’s organiser donated a truck, a driver and other necessary equipment to deliver hay to the bushfire affected area. Farmers and anyone requiring the fodder are able to collect it from a nearby a drop off point in Tumbarumba. The campaign asks for monetary donations to ‘sponsor a bale for our local farming families affected by these horrendous bushfires’. The campaign has raised $4,695 to date with the aim of raising $20,000 in total.

This initiative reflects three types of voluntary humanitarian behaviour: charitable giving of goods and ethical consumption; volunteering time and effort; and organising and leading.

Gofundme page: https://www.gofundme.com/f/226r22j4

Case study 2: Rudder Equine - Horse & Livestock Bushfire Rescue

Rudder Equine - Horse & Livestock Bushfire Rescue is a community initiative crowdfunding campaign located in the mid-north coast region of NSW. The campaign is organised by local community members with the aim to rescue horses and livestock from fire affected areas. The crowdfunding organisers have donated their truck and are volunteering their time and effort to transport the animals to safe locations. The initiative has completed several evacuations to date with a backlog of requests to rescue others. This campaign asks for monetary donations to assist with the fuel costs associated with running the truck and any outstanding funds will be donated to local charities to assist community members who have lost their homes. The campaign has raised $7,375 so far with the aim of raising $8,000 in total.

This initiative reflects four types of voluntary humanitarian behaviour: charitable giving of money; charitable giving of goods and ethical consumption; volunteering time and effort; and organising and leading.


Photo: Tumbarumba & Surrounds Bushfire Hay Drive

Photo: Rudder Equine - Horse & Livestock Bushfire Rescue
4. The response of communities to the bushfire crisis

CASE STUDY

Case study 3: Cobargo Community Bushfire Recovery Fund

Cobargo Community Bushfire Recovery Fund is a collective impact approach community initiative in Cobargo, NSW. The crowdfunding campaign aims to raise funds to rebuild as well as implementing more sustainable solutions for energy usage, including a village micro-grid. The initiative aims to improve the readiness of the community to deal with future disaster, “Our aim is to ensure that we emerge from this tragedy as a stronger, regenerative community, guided by regenerative principles”. The Cobargo Community Bushfire Recovery Fund Inc has been set up by four local not-for-profit groups: the Yuin Folk Club Inc, which produces the annual Cobargo Folk Festival; the Bowerbird Opportunity Shop; the Cobargo Cooperative Society Ltd and the Cobargo Show Society Inc, which runs Cobargo’s annual agricultural show. The fund is run by community volunteers and all projects will be identified through community consultation; developed and implemented by local people, drawing on expert help as needed. Interestingly the community group is connecting with other communities who have been through similar bushfires such as Ash Wednesday, Black Saturday, the Canberra Fires and Tathra. Through these conversations they are aware that government and institutional support lasts for a short period after the event and that "communities with their own funds have the capacity to keep on supporting their people for the long haul".

The community group is aware that mental health is going to be a key issue for the area. The initiative plans to strengthen already existing community groups such as sports groups, music groups, social networks and volunteer groups as a way to aid community recovery by supporting the community networks that provide social support. To date the crowdfunding campaign has raised $183,199 with the aim of raising $1,000,000.

This initiative reflects four types of voluntary humanitarian behaviour: charitable giving of money; volunteering time and effort; and organising and leading.

Research Question 3: What did people talk about on Twitter?
Twitter is a platform on which people express and share their thoughts and sentiments, with expressions restricted to 280 characters. With approximately 6.6 million Australian visitors to Twitter in 2019, it is a platform that has become widely used by Australians who wish to share their thoughts, feelings, and responses to events. As such, Twitter provided a useful source of succinct, codable posts that were indicative of the national discourse and sentiments during the bushfire crisis.

5.2 Key findings

Our findings indicate that the keywords “donate” and “volunteer” gained significant traction during the bushfire period. Notably, their frequency was often linked to daily or weekly events of the 2019-2020 bushfire season. In particular, the smoky days in Sydney in early December, and the co-occurrence of three major fire events in the early January period, prompted large and sudden spikes in the frequency with which Australians were talking about volunteering or donation. Sentiments of gratitude and sadness (operationalised as use of the key words ‘thank’ and ‘heartbroken’) were similarly associated with specific events of the bushfire season.

Our analysis of the 20 most re-tweeted tweets, which we use as an indicator of the statements that have resonance among the public, revealed a range of events and expressions that caught the popular imagination. Some of the top 20 re-tweeted tweets were political (generally expressing anger), others were attempts to share an experience of the bushfires, and yet others were expressions of gratitude to the volunteers.

Similarly, the Twitter data (qualitatively coded original tweets) indicated that the humanitarian actions described by Twitter users reflected a range of actions identified by the voluntary humanitarian behaviour framework. Furthermore, the mapping of tweet locations demonstrates that the people who enacted these humanitarian behaviours are located across Australia.

These data suggest that the types of humanitarian actions documented via Twitter (like those on Facebook, Google, and GoFundMe) are diverse and widespread. Overall, the data from Twitter suggest that the public discourse about volunteering and donation over the summer of 2019/2020 was emotionally expressive (noting gratitude and sadness, as described above) and responsive to key events. A variety of events and emotions were also described in the tweets that resonated throughout the community during this time. The humanitarian actions described by Twitter users are widespread and diverse.
5.3 Research method

5.3.1 Data collection

We collected tweets that were posted within Australia, between November 1st, 2019 and February 1st, 2020, and which used any of six different hashtags: #bushfires, #bushfirerelief, #Australiaisburning, #NSWfires, #Vicfires, and #Australianbushfires. This resulted in a dataset of 213,474 tweets.

Each tweet contained the following information:
- the text of the tweet
- how often it was retweeted
- date created
- tweet user location; however, due to Twitter users needing to enter this information voluntarily, not all tweets contained location data.

Within the 213,474 tweets, 273 cities or towns were specified as locations (of the Twitter users who generated the posts). These locations are mapped in Figures 5.1 and 5.2 and indicate that our Twitter data provides reasonable coverage across all states and territories in Australia, with a concentration on the East coast.

Figure 5.1. Twitter user locations (n=273).
5. Research Question 3: What did people talk about on Twitter?

Figure 5.2 - Density of Twitter user locations.
5. Research Question 3: What did people talk about on Twitter?

5.3.2 Data analysis

To address the first research question (What are the key themes that emerge and how do those themes change over time or in response to key events?), the full set of tweets were analysed for a series of predetermined key words to explore how often these themes emerged and whether their frequency changed over time.

The keywords selected were donate and volunteer (to examine the pattern of conversation around these words) as well as thank and heartbreak (to examine the pattern of conversation around sentiments of gratitude and sadness). To search for each key word, asterisks were used to capture the full range of suffixes, e.g., for the key word, donate, the word ‘donat’ was used to capture the words donations and donating, rather than limiting our search to tweets that only include the word donate.

To address the second research question (What underlying motivations or sentiments are people expressing?), we conducted a qualitative analysis of tweets that gained traction in the public conversation during the bushfire crisis. An indicator of the degree to which a tweet resonates in the community is the number of times it is retweeted or shared with others. We selected the top 20 retweeted tweets (i.e. the 20 tweets that were retweeted most often), and qualitatively coded the key themes and humanitarian actions expressed in those tweets.

To address the third research question (What humanitarian actions are being enacted? Where do people indicate they are directing their efforts?), we examined original tweets only (i.e. removed all retweets from the dataset) and qualitatively coded the humanitarian actions people described in those original tweets. The retweets comprised 91% of the data set, so the removal of retweets resulted in a dataset of 20,126 original tweets. Due to time constraints, 5,000 original tweets were qualitatively coded. (N.B.: The hashtags #Australiaisburning and #Australianbushfires produced a large number of tweets that were from international twitter users and thus, were beyond the scope of this analysis.)

Finally, the qualitatively coded tweets were mapped alongside the locations of where people were enacting humanitarian actions on Facebook, GoFundMe and a google search to visualise patterns in where people were engaging in humanitarian action.
5. Research Question 3: What did people talk about on Twitter?

5.4 Results

5.4.1 Key word analysis

The most prominent key word was ‘donate’ (n=3994), closely followed by ‘thank’ (n = 3466) and ‘volunteer’ (n=3258), with ‘heartbreak’ having the fewest mentions (n=570). The only common combinations of key words were ‘donate and thank’ (n=1058) and ‘volunteer and thank’ (n=195). On reading the tweets that included both ‘donate’ and ‘thank’, the content generally consisted of thanking people for their donations to specific organisations, and encouraging people to thank firefighters and other volunteers for their efforts by donating.

The figures below indicate the frequency of our keywords in Twitter posts during the time period November 1st, 2019 to February 1st, 2020.

The first spike in tweets containing the word ‘donate’ occurred on December 10th, 2019, which coincided with the first major smoke event in Sydney. The largest spike in mentions of ‘donate/donation’ on Twitter was on January 4th, three days after the catastrophic New Year’s Day fires in NSW, during the Kangaroo Island, SA fire, and as the Mallacoota, Vic evacuation occurred. The co-incidence of these three major fire-related events was marked by a strong call on Twitter for people to donate. It is also important to note that this was the largest spike in frequency of any of the key words.

The whole world has banded together and donated almost $4mil so far to bushfire relief. Cannot believe the support we are receiving. If you can, please donate anything to help us https://t.co/JgqPk29Ps9.

#AustraliaOnFire #Australia Burning #AUSTRALIANBUSHFIRES (tweet posted on Jan 4th, 2020).
5. Research Question 3: What did people talk about on Twitter?

Similarly, spikes in tweets using the word ‘volunteer’ appeared during the first smoke event in Sydney on December 10, 2019 and during the Kangaroo Island, SA fire and Mallacoota, Vic evacuation on January 4th, 2020. Interestingly, the largest spike in tweets using the word ‘volunteer’ occurred on December 24th, 2020, which is Christmas Eve. On closer inspection of these tweets, we noted that many were expressing gratitude to the volunteers for their sacrifice in being away from their families over the holiday period.

Respect and salute to the volunteers who are out there even during #Christmas and #BoxingDay to combat the Australian bushfires https://t.co/62Nqf1R14x (tweet posted on Jan 4th, 2020).

Figure 5.4 - Frequency of key word “volunteer” on Twitter
5. Research Question 3: What did people talk about on Twitter?

The largest spike in tweets containing ‘thank’ occurred on January 4th, three days after the catastrophic New Year’s Day fires in NSW and during the Kangaroo Island, SA fire and Mallacoota. This again appears to be due to people thanking others for their donations as well as thanking volunteers for their efforts.

To all the volunteers and firefighters thank you for the endless hours, the sacrifice and protecting us all (tweet posted on Jan 4th, 2020).
5. Research Question 3: What did people talk about on Twitter?

The largest spike in tweets containing the word ‘heartbreak’ was on January 7th, 2020. This coincided with an announcement that the federal government was committing two billion dollars to a national bushfire recovery fund. Some of these tweets articulated “heartbreak” associated with the government’s failure to address the bushfire crisis more effectively, while other tweets expressed heartbreak over the scale of bushfires. In particular, some of the “heartbreak” tweets related to images of a little girl kissing her deceased firefighter father’s coffin while wearing his helmet.

Figure 5.6 - Frequency of key word ‘heartbreak’ on Twitter

This [is] the heartbreaking moment a fallen firefighter’s daughter wears her dad’s helmet and kisses his coffin (tweet posted on Jan 7th, 2020).
5. Research Question 3: What did people talk about on Twitter?

5.4.2 Top 20 retweets

The most retweeted tweets (Table 5.1) shared a variety of content including photos/videos of the scale of the bushfires, political commentary, charitable work and individuals' experiences of bushfire affected areas. Photos and videos in these tweets often depicted burnt/burning areas and distressed animals, while the political commentary in these posts was focused on controversial federal and state government (in)action. Viewpoints from both left and right leaning voters were expressed, providing an insight into how Australian voters felt about current bushfire / climate change policy.

Table 5.1 - The most retweeted tweets from November 1st, 2019 and February 1st, 2020.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial tweet location</th>
<th>Retweets (n=)</th>
<th>What are the tweets doing/expressing?</th>
<th>Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sydney, NSW</td>
<td>12,697</td>
<td>Sharing a photo</td>
<td>My last day of the decade felt like the apocalypse. Been covering the Australian bushfires for the last 6 weeks but haven't seen anything like yesterday’s fire that decimated the town of Conjola, NSW. #bushfirecrisis #AustralianBushfires #NSWisburning work for @nytime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>10,317</td>
<td>Raising awareness</td>
<td>MY COUNTRY IS ON FCKING FIRE AND NO ONE IS TALKING ABOUT IT!!!!!!!!!!! ITS BEEN GOING ON FOR WEEKS, IT HAS BURNT MORE LAND THAN THE AMAZON FIRES, FAMILIES ARE LOOSING THEIR HOMES PLEASE START DOING SOMETHING, EVEN IF ITS JUST TO RAISE AWARENESS!!!! #AUSTRALIANBUSHFIRES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sydney, NSW</td>
<td>6,989</td>
<td>Sharing their experience of bushfires</td>
<td>A firey stops to give a koala water ðŸ““. These aren’t tame animals; the koala is desperate. Please share info on my TL about how to help them #AustraliaBurning #AustraliaOnFire #AustralianBushfires</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>4,297</td>
<td>Sharing Art</td>
<td>&quot;I’ll call you Rocket&quot; #saveaustralia #bushfires @JamesGunn @FunkSolBrotherr @vindiesel</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Oakbank Country Fire Service in Adelaide
### 5. Research Question 3: What did people talk about on Twitter?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial tweet location</th>
<th>Retweets (n=)</th>
<th>What are the tweets doing/expressing?</th>
<th>Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adelaide, SA</td>
<td>3,925</td>
<td>Sharing the experience of bushfire relief</td>
<td>Take a look inside a makeshift koala rescue centre that’s been set up in a north-eastern Adelaide primary school gym 🧵♂️♂️♂️♂️. Adelaide Koala Rescue volunteers are taking care of about 110 koalas recently injured in South Australian #bushfires.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>3,166</td>
<td>Sharing the experience of bushfires</td>
<td>When the birds start mimicking fire engine sirens. The Australian magpie is well known for mimicking the sounds it hears most frequently. This is the #AustralianBushfires</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adelaide, SA</td>
<td>2,148</td>
<td>Sharing the experience of bushfires</td>
<td>“A mother took this photo. Her two primary school aged sons are in the boat with her. They’re out on the #Mallacoota lake trying to stay safe from fire, it doesn’t look like it - but it’s daytime.” ~ABC Gippsland. #bushfirecrisis #vicfires #NSWfires #Bushfires #bushfiresVIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>1,888</td>
<td>Political commentary</td>
<td>NSW RFS Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons has dismissed Barnaby Joyce’s claim that ‘green caveats’ stopped hazard reduction burns, leading to the bushfire crisis #AustraliasBurning #AustralianBushfiresDisaster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sydney, NSW</td>
<td>1,761</td>
<td>News</td>
<td>δỹş’ #BREAKING NEWS ’ yesterday was Australia’s hottest day ever, averaging 40.9C (105.6F) across the entire country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sydney, NSW</td>
<td>1,741</td>
<td>Political commentary</td>
<td>Advertising! There is something not right about running political advertising during a devastating National Crisis. It’s like being â€˜sold toâ€™ at a funeral. PR Crisis 101: say less and do more. (Btw, the bouncy elevator music is too juxtaposing and really annoying.) #bushfires</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>1,670</td>
<td>Thanking fire fighters</td>
<td>Our Firefighters δỹş’ δỹş’ #trueheroes #saveaustralia #worthy. Print available - all proceeds will go to the @redcrossau to help the fighters and the families affect by these tragic times <a href="https://t.co/s2Nhwzg8j2">https://t.co/s2Nhwzg8j2</a> #AUSTRALIANBUSHFIRES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sydney, NSW</td>
<td>1,670</td>
<td>Political commentary</td>
<td>PM - who now says his government has â€œalwaysâ€œ seen the connection between #climatechange and #bushfires stands next to the DPM who said in November only â€œraving lunatics took that view - announces new recovery funding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newcastle, NSW</td>
<td>1,556</td>
<td>Political commentary</td>
<td>@ScottMorrisonMP sighted a very short time ago (Fri 20/12 7pm) by my uncle in Hawaii. Looks like he’s in a real hurry to get back!! #auspol #ScoMo #bushfires #Scummo #bushfires #AustraliaBurns #wherethebloodyhellareya #whereisScoMo #WhereisScotty #AUSTRALIANBUSHFIRES</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## 5. Research Question 3: What did people talk about on Twitter?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial tweet location</th>
<th>Retweets (n=)</th>
<th>What are the tweets doing/expressing?</th>
<th>Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Melbourne, Vic</td>
<td>1,379</td>
<td>News</td>
<td>More than 40 per cent of the Victorian habitats of the sooty owl, diamond python, long-footed potoroo, long-nosed bandicoot and brush-tailed rock-wallaby have already been wiped out @theage #Australiabushfiredisaster #Australiaisburning #Australianfires</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>1,367</td>
<td>News</td>
<td>EXCLUSIVE: We spoke to 20-year-old Cobargo resident Zoe Salucci-McDermott, who attracted attention yesterday when she refused to shake Scott Morrison’s hand. Tune in to 10 News First at 5pm to watch @tegangeorge’s full story. #australiabushfires #NSWbushfires #australiaisburning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>1,286</td>
<td>Political commentary</td>
<td>Today I watched as my local firefighters fuelled up 9 trucks and 10 rfs cars, and I watched all of their government fuel cards get declined and watched these men FIGHTING TO SAVE OUR LAND pay for it with their OWN personal bank cards. Are you fucking kidding. #NSWfires #bushfires</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sydney, NSW</td>
<td>1,134</td>
<td>News</td>
<td>Another hazardous air quality today in Sydney. I've never seen it like this before. Stay safe and indoors. #AustraliaBurns #bushfiresNSW #nswbushfire #sydneysmoke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Braidwood, NSW</td>
<td>1,117</td>
<td>Political commentary</td>
<td>In 2009 PM Rudd responded to Vic BlackSaturday fires by: putting army on standby, setting up $10m disaster relief fund, authorising immediate cash payments of $1000 to victims, visiting the area. 2019, PM @ScottMorrisonMP goes for drinkies with the Murdochs. #bushfires</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>1,104</td>
<td>Sharing charitable work</td>
<td>Along with helping our customers during the #bushfires, we’ve also partnered with @KoalaHospital to provide urgent care items for koalas. Every home and every life is worth protecting. Special thanks to @TwoPaddocks for donating to the koalas and your voice to the campaign.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melbourne, Vic</td>
<td>1,077</td>
<td>Political commentary</td>
<td>Morrison held two press conferences and didn’t mention 5 million people being exposed to seriously hazardous air quality in Sydney. No advice. No action. No mention of it. He needs to be held him to account. #sydneysmoke #bushfiresNSW</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.4.3 Qualitative coding

Due to time constraints, 25% (5,000) of the original 20,016 tweets (i.e., no retweets) were individually read and qualitatively coded to an adjusted Efficiently Doing Good framework, which was amended to suit the Twitter data in the following ways:

- Since all of the data from Twitter could fit within the category of ‘using social media to spread awareness’, this category was renamed ‘creating awareness’.
- All tweets could be classed as “organising or leading”, so all tweets were coded as included in this category.
- The code ‘charitable giving of goods’ was combined with ‘volunteering time’ as it is difficult to discern between these two categories in short tweets that often just depict a photo of people acting.

The aim of this adjusted Twitter coding framework was to categorise the types of humanitarian actions about which people were tweeting. Given the availability of (some) location data in Twitter, we also recorded where these actions were being conducted, so that we could document the locations around Australia from where humanitarian actions (described on Twitter) were originating.

Of the 5,000 original tweets that were read, the vast majority were primarily political and involved an expression of anger about the bushfire crisis; only 132 (3%) original tweets fit the coding framework and were coded.

Table 5.2 - Number of coded tweets according to amended Efficiently Doing Good framework (n=132).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coding framework</th>
<th>Giving Money</th>
<th>Giving goods/ Volunteering time</th>
<th>Creating awareness</th>
<th>Organising and leading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># of tweets</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Aside from organising and leading (which underpinned all tweets), creating awareness (n=40) was the code that appeared most often in the tweets sampled. Mostly, “creating awareness” consisted of spreading warnings of smoke pollution, bushfire movement and transport closures (Table 5.2). There also were a few examples of people sharing safety tips on how to access protective masks from smoke inhalation.

Twitter posts indicated that people were volunteering their time via diverse humanitarian actions that ranged from defending properties, protesting, fundraising at primary schools, volunteering their time at local animal shelters, evacuation centres, and providing refuge for people escaping the fires.

All of the coded tweets were tagged to a specified location (n=132) and were mapped (Figure 5.7). Sixty-five percent of these actions took place near some of the worst affected areas including Kangaroo Island, SA, Mallacoota, Vic, Cobargo, NSW and Batemans Bay, NSW (Figure 5.8).
5. Research Question 3: What did people talk about on Twitter?

Figure 5.8 – Location of humanitarian actions shared on Twitter that are near bushfire affected communities in NSW and SA. The larger blue dots represent the location of three case studies, described in detail below.
Case study 1: BlazeAid

(EBOR, NSW; ref 1 in Figure 5.8)

Blaze-aid is a volunteer-based organisation that works with families and individuals in rural Australia after natural disasters such as fires and floods: https://t.co/MzogoI7cU6. Working alongside the rural families, BlazeAid volunteers help to rebuild fences and other structures that have been damaged or destroyed. The organisation brings trailers with donated tools, and long and short term volunteers set up camp in the local area providing power and food. BlazeAid goes into areas as soon as it is safe to do so, so that they can assist farmers in refencing properties to keep in their stock.

In this case study, volunteers from BlazeAid helped farmers tear down burnt infrastructure and rebuild fences to make their farms operational once again. These volunteers also emphasise a mental health approach – they prioritise assistance to affected farmers, who might be living through a bushfire and its aftermath for the second or third time. This community initiative is an example of a broad-based initiative that originates as a top-down initiative, but ultimately crafts assistance to localised needs. The initiative deals with medium-term/long-term recovery, and it falls into three different categories of our framework: charitable giving, volunteering time and skills, and organising and leading.)
5. Research Question 3: What did people talk about on Twitter?

CASE STUDY

Case study 2: “Take what you want, feed what is hungry” (Warrawong, NSW; ref 2 in Figure 5.8)

This one-off, individual act is captured in the photograph below (Figure 5.9). It depicts a sign that reads “take what you want, feed what is hungry”, placed between three large feed bags on the side of a country road. This type of humanitarian action consists of a person volunteering their time and resources in attempts to help farmers cope with food insecurity for their livestock.

https://twitter.com/search?q=warrawong&src=typed_query

This initiative is an excellent example of the immediate responses communities offer during crisis events that are often not captured in more traditional, top-down disaster recovery initiatives or structures. Initiatives such as these are driven by an unknown source but fill a critical gap in a community's ability to cope with a disaster event. This is an example of a localised, on the ground initiative that deals with short-term recovery, and it falls into two different categories of our framework: charitable giving/volunteering time and skills; and organising and leading.
CASE STUDY

Case study 3: Team Rubicon

(Cobargo, NSW; ref 3 in Figure 5.8)

Team Rubicon is a volunteer organisation composed of military veterans who help other military veterans. In the photo below (Figure 5.10), volunteers from Team Rubicon are sifting through a military veteran’s burnt home for his military medals. During this visit, Team Rubicon also helped remove debris from farmers’ driveways and properties.

Team Rubicon is a good example of communities that coalesce around those in need based on affiliation (shared interests/identity/values/history; in this case, communities of veterans), rather than location.

https://twitter.com/TeamRubiconAus/status/1223046994048301057.

Figure 5.10 - Team Rubicon
6 | Conclusion
In response to the 2019-2020 bushfire crisis, Australians engaged in an astounding level of charitable giving and volunteering in order to help communities and wildlife affected by the devastating bushfires.

Humanitarian and emergency service organisations featured prominently in media reports of the humanitarian response to the bushfire crisis. However, the response to the bushfire crisis went well beyond these widely reported actions and events.

While it is true that these established organisations played a major role in the response to the bushfire crisis, and will be instrumental in recovery and rebuilding efforts, it was also apparent that many Australians organised their own hyper-local, agile humanitarian responses to the crisis using the knowledge, skills and resources they had to hand.

Although the voluntary humanitarian actions documented in this report represent the tip of the iceberg, we demonstrated that community-led responses were flexible, agile and practical and reflected a range of interlocking humanitarian actions that provided practical, on-the-ground support to address immediate needs, promote resilience and initiate recovery and rebuilding.

**Future Directions**

The findings of the report indicate that Australians are often bypassing charitable organisations to drive their own agile, bespoke, and often ephemeral responses to humanitarian crises. Although this research project aimed to identify, describe and, where possible, map the range of humanitarian actions of individuals and groups in response to the bushfire crisis, the scope of the project was necessarily limited. As such, there are several directions in which we might proceed, in order to build on the findings of this initial work. Below, we outline a few possible directions for future work.

First, we could conduct a more comprehensive descriptive report, capturing a broader range of activities and initiatives enacted by individuals, as well as the temporary or enduring community groups, in response to the bushfires. A more exhaustive, systematic study of this phenomena would allow for more accurate quantification of the scale and scope of these activities, and could provide more insight into their specific beneficiaries.

Second, in our study of community-led activities and initiatives, we discerned two forms of initiatives were characterised by different construals of the meaning of ‘community’. The first form focused on the needs of those in the same geographic community, highlighting place-based affiliation.

The second form focused on the needs of those in the same imagined community (e.g., farmers helping farmers, or army veterans helping veterans), which highlights identity-based affiliation. Specifically, this latter form of community-led helping directed at those in the same imagined community highlights the importance of a shared social identity in enabling humanitarian action from a distance. In future work, it would be useful to determine the superordinate social identities that might be primed (and methods for doing so) that would prompt humanitarian action towards those in communities that are physically distant from the helper.

Finally, in our study of community-led activities and initiatives, we found that a large proportion of new community-led or individually-led initiatives had been created purely in response to the bushfire crisis. Future work might investigate the factors that drive people to form a new initiative rather than join/support an existing one. This investigation would not only help us to understand how the landscape of individual/community initiatives is built, but it may also help us to understand when and why individuals prefer to act on their own accord rather than joining/supporting existing efforts initiated by established humanitarian organisations.

**6. Conclusion**

The second form focused on the needs of those in the same imagined community (e.g., farmers helping farmers, or army veterans helping veterans), which highlights identity-based affiliation. Specifically, this latter form of community-led helping directed at those in the same imagined community highlights the importance of a shared social identity in enabling humanitarian action from a distance. In future work, it would be useful to determine the superordinate social identities that might be primed (and methods for doing so) that would prompt humanitarian action towards those in communities that are physically distant from the helper.
EVERYDAY HUMANITARIANISM DURING THE 2019/2020 AUSTRALIAN BUSHFIRE CRISIS