

# Change it up

Three Western Australian volunteers attend the Young Emergency Management Volunteers 'Change It Up' event.

*Open to current emergency management volunteers aged between 18 and 25, the event was hosted by the Australian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council (AFAC). Held at the Australian Emergency Management Institute (AEMI) and AFAC headquarters in Melbourne, it took place from 2 to 4 April 2014.*

*This is what the volunteers shared about their experiences.*

## **Matthew Masters**

*Mandogalup Bush Fire Brigade volunteer*

I was fortunate to represent the WA Bush Fire Service (BFS) at the event, which hosted some of the brightest and most passionate individuals in youth emergency management volunteering from a variety of organisations and locations.

I was able to share my experiences as a BFS volunteer in WA. The opportunity to build relationships and share ideas about increasing youth recruitment and retention in emergency management volunteering was incredible. To learn that there are other young people who share the same passion and desire about emergency management volunteering as me was an eye opening experience.

Aside from meeting these great people, the facilitators from AFAC and Foundation for Young Australians taught us essential skills which will assist us to create long term change in our local communities. The event centred on the idea 'our voice, our impact'.

By applying this concept we have built our skills and self confidence to share our thoughts with those around us

and to help shape and develop youth emergency management volunteering within our local communities.

This was an amazing experience and I look forward to what the future has to bring and the opportunities I can create.

## **Sarah Thomas**

*Kalamunda Bush Fire Brigade volunteer*

I was lucky enough to be chosen to represent the WA Volunteer BFS and attend.

Young volunteers from across Australia came together to voice their ideas and opinions on recruiting and retaining more youth in the volunteering world.

The facilitators used many different techniques so they could get a better understanding of our ideas, and gave us a sense of reassurance that things are going to change.

Each participant came up with a big question that was formatted into our big idea and presented in front of a panel of four judges. The panel was so impressed with our ideas that they decided to fund the group's visit to Queensland for the 23rd International Association for Volunteer Effort to represent the volunteering youth of Australia.

'Change It Up' was such an amazing experience I would not change it for anything. The thought that other young people share my beliefs and passion is very encouraging and has made me even more determined to increase the volunteering youth ratio.

I have learnt more than I ever thought I would about other emergency services and I am so excited to see where we all end up.



Young volunteers Sarah, Matthew and Melusha represented WA at the "Change it up" event

## **Melusha Robson**

*Communications Support Unit State Emergency Service volunteer*

I was lucky to be selected to represent the WA State Emergency Service (SES) at the 'Change It Up' event.

It offered passionate and dynamic young emergency management volunteers the opportunity to share their experiences, identify 'big issues' along with potential solutions and pitch those solutions to experts in the field.

It was an amazing opportunity to meet other emergency management volunteers from a range of agencies across Australia. We shared our experiences, explored various ideas to increase youth engagement including recruitment and retention and identified potential hurdles and viable solutions.

The opportunity to meet such a fantastic bunch of people has further motivated me to try and develop more opportunities for youth engagement at a local and state level. Emergency management volunteering is an amazing adventure and more young people should get involved!