

To Whom it May Concern,

The community response to Queensland's recent natural disasters has been applauded with good reason. So many people wanted to help, and were willing to donate their time, physical strength and/or resources. However, unfortunately many of these people were turned away by Brisbane's four overwhelmed volunteer registration checkpoints, the residents of streets to which volunteers were bussed en-masse, or charities whose storage or collection/delivery capacity had been exceeded, or whose client group had sufficient supplies of the type offered. Yet, many people complained that they had been forgotten – that they desperately needed help and did not receive any assistance.

It is understandable that these problems arose, as matching volunteers' capabilities with victims' needs requires a large amount of administration, particularly with the numbers of volunteers and victims in natural disasters.

However, I believe that an efficient online system could be developed to match volunteers and victims, reducing the burden of administration and enabling a speedier and more effective response to natural disasters. Specifically, a single, government-authorised, online database could be developed, in which people wishing to contribute to the state's response to catastrophes could enter their contact details and select from drop-down menus of choices for Own Transport (Yes/No), Type of Help Able to Offer (e.g. Physical Labour, Provision of Accommodation, Provision of Meals, Provision of Transport, Assistance with Domestic Duties [e.g. washing clothes and crockery], Assistance with Domestic Cleaning, Administrative Assistance [e.g. assisting victims with disaster-related paperwork, telephone calls and locating available resources], Social Support, Delivery of Donations, Donations of Material Goods, Child Care/Entertainment, Pet Care, Electrician, Plumber, Handyman, Painter, etc), Availability (e.g. Weekends, Weekdays, Weeknights), and other fields relevant to volunteer coordination. Then automated emails or text messages could be sent en-masse to people able to provide the type of help required in particular sites at particular times. For example, a message such as: "Physical labour required at West End State School – meeting 9am Saturday at front gate," could be sent to the first 50 people registered as able to provide physical labour in the Brisbane area on weekends. As per automated medical practice appointment systems, volunteers could text reply "Y" or "N" and coordinators would know whether sufficient volunteers had been recruited, or whether to send the message to the next 50 people listed.

The initial set-up of this system up may cost money. However, I believe that harnessing the power of the community would save the government a substantial amount of money both in the short and long-term, as we recover from these disasters and await the next. I also believe that connecting community members in this way would improve the social integration and psychological well-being of our communities. Furthermore, I believe that a comprehensive list of options for assisting in disasters such as that provided by the menus in the database would assist people to identify a wider range of ways in which they are capable of helping.

Thank you.