

# Meeting the Needs of our Volunteers

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Thank you for this opportunity to present to you today on Meeting the needs of our Volunteers.

Before I start, I am reminded of my first experience teaching one of my four daughters how to drive.

After two minutes, I asked her to pull over. I stated: "DO WHAT I THINK; NOT WHAT I SAY". Please note, I support the Agency or Organisation you are engaged with.

My primer objective is assisting Volunteers; My secondary objective is to collaborate with Emergency Agencies to produce the best results for public safety and community resilience.

So, if I seem negative or critical to emergency agencies, I AM NOT. For the last 40 years I have been developing systems from the TOP DOWN and I taught that approach over those years. My passion is developing systems for first responders, from the BOTTOM UP, to assist in achieving a Common Operating Picture with the collaboration of Emergency Agencies with their systems.

**My message today is for you to sing the praises of BART to your agency;** your chosen solution. Please let them know that the BART Team wants to work with them for the benefit of volunteers and more importantly for community resilience and interoperability.

We all know that volunteers are a crucial element to maintaining the safety of our communities. Day in, day out, volunteers are donating their time and putting their safety at risk to serve and protect our local communities.

As technology has now embedded itself into our everyday lives through the use of smartphones, tablets and computers, it would be reasonable to expect a flow on benefit to emergency services volunteers going about their tasks throughout the thousands of towns in Australia; protecting and saving lives.



**Unfortunately, this is not happening quickly enough, as in many cases the volunteers continue to rely on the telephone, SMS's and paging devices – even though most of them have some of the most sophisticated technology already sitting in their back pocket or hand bags.**



Approximately 8 years ago I was faced with a small project to help make it easier for a group of volunteers within a CFA station to assist in turnouts. Although at the time it only took a small donation of my time and resources to complete, I could see the profound impact it had on their everyday lives.

That was the major turning point for me, as I realised exactly how much volunteers could benefit if I took the very same methods and practices that I had been using to help businesses save time and money and apply them to the emergency services.

After redirecting my focus, that same small localised project I took on years ago has since been re-engineered into a dynamic inter-agency management platform called

### **BART: Broadcast. Alert. Respond. Turnout.**

From its humble beginnings as a silo solution, BART was transformed into a system that could easily be adopted even within the most remote areas anywhere in the world.

Usage has skyrocketed across Australia with over 24,000 individual members using the system across 2,500 different brigades, units and groups **24/7**. Volunteers had discovered a solution in BART that is beneficial and they can relate to. This is the count in 2017.



## Protecting Local Communities

Over the past 15 years or so, volunteers throughout Australia have been developing, implementing and deploying their own in-house software systems using their own time and resources. These systems can cater for a range of specific tasks; for example:

- Feeding pager messages through to a smartphone
- Member availability
- Feeding pager messages through to a computer that will then print out of the alert
- Setting up a website to listen to radio feeds

Whilst these systems continue to assist some volunteers, they generally target very specific tasks and aren't easily adaptable on a larger scale for general use.

Regardless of the effectiveness of these systems, one thing is clear:

### **Volunteers realise the potential that technology has to offer them.**

So much so, that they're willing to put in their own time, money and resources to make their own lives and the lives of their team mates easier.

Through the combination of necessity and the resourcefulness: **Volunteers are adopting new systems and new ideas without the backing or approval of their overarching agencies.**

**It is obvious that Volunteers need a forum where they can share their ideas and opinions, where they 'not only' feel comfortable to speak freely but know they are listened to.**



### Thinking Outside the (Blue) Box



Emergency personnel need to think **“OUTSIDE THE BOX”**

An initiative in 2014 was carried out by the principal police body in the US, where they were encouraging members to think outside the box. Their main slogan: was

*“NOT ONLY THINKING ABOUT IT,*

*but SHARING your ideas within your team*

*and with your community*

*and IMPLEMENTING the good ones.”*

It's clear that an open process of problem-solving will facilitate a more effective future. Ideally this process would involve:

- Encouraging volunteers to share their ideas
- Listening to their ideas and determining which ones to pursue
- Pursuing the good ones and seeing implementation through to the end

The bigger the pool of ideas, the better chance there is of finding solutions to common problems.

Even on an individual brigade, unit or group level, there are examples of inventiveness by the volunteers in the way they use BART.

Some teams for example, use BART to ask members if they can attend special training nights. By utilising the same 'accept' or 'decline' options they use for incidents, they're able to maintain closer and easier contact with their team members. BART is now being used as a local communication tool.

In 1996, I met two of the engineers that built the first computer in Australia – the fifth computer in the world. Built in 1949, SCIRAC was moved to Melbourne (As a new computer MARK1 was built for Sydney). The general consensus in the 1950ies was:

## *Every city should have a computer!*

*This view in various forms has been passed down through to today.*



Every city should have a computer!

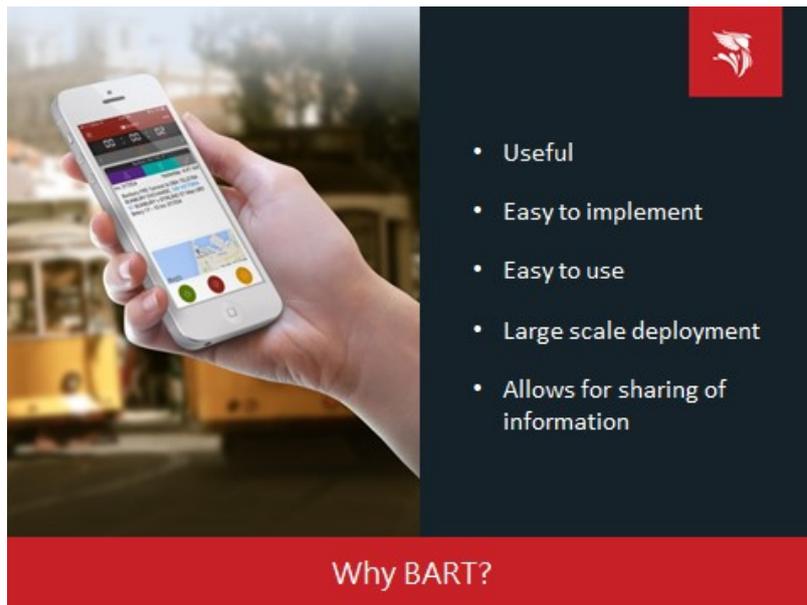
Moving away from silo systems has been key to BART's success. If an idea is good enough to be implemented into any one brigade or unit, why can't it form part of an overarching solution that encourages interoperability? Why not link BART to Agency systems and benefit everyone?

This is why it's vital to stay focused when designing solutions, to ensure that they are flexible enough to benefit volunteers and the Agencies on a larger scale.

BART has resulted from volunteer suggestions and input right from the first version at the local CFA Station. Some examples of suggestions:

- (1) The **Other Button** to the left of the ACCEPT and DECLINE buttons to allow brigades to determine another condition for rural brigades or units eg going direct to the incident or say busy but can attend if needed
- (2) Mapping of the incident and routing to the incident
- (3) Windows phone even though there are not too many members that have that phone
- (4) Changing from rectangular buttons to round buttons
- (5) Introduction of customised alert sounds
- (6) Availability of members
- (7) Documents
- (8) Member and Vehicle tracking from a South Australian BART Supporter
- (9) RAMP (Resource Allocation Management Platform) from a Western Australian BART Supporter reflecting on Euan Ferguson's recommendations in WA
- (10) Station and regional platform being the Dashboard and Turnout web facilities
- (11) Radio streaming feeds
- (12) Team functionality from SES BART members
- (13) Completing of incidents
- (14) Reporting after an incident is closed
- (15) ETC ETC ETC

The overwhelming features are suggestions from our BART members



Emergency services volunteers have been crying out for a system that is **simple**:

- **Is useful**; helps them save time and resources, assists with the planning and gathering of members, allows them to keep track of appliances and other resources and helps improve communication – one on one, within a group, between groups and across agencies
- **Is easy to implement**; minimal setup and training costs required
- **Is easy to use**; a lot of volunteers aren't technically savvy and there's a large variance in age; Peer assistance from younger members
- **Is capable of implementation on a large scale** thus reducing costs
- **Allows them to share important information with other groups and Agencies**

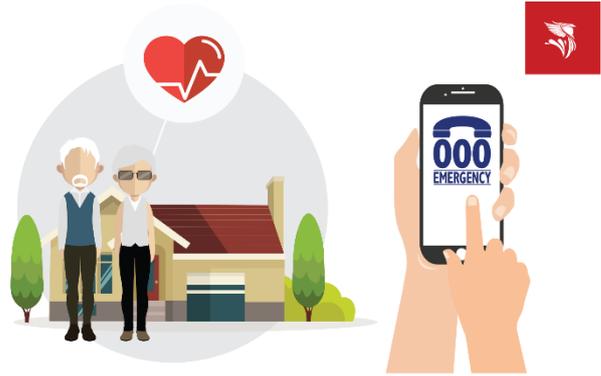
These are the objectives we followed when transforming BART into the universally accepted tool that you can see and experience today.

By applying the following methodology, we were able to create a roadmap that was both effective yet flexible:

- Constant and ongoing consultation with members and listening to members
- Utilises the best and newest technology available
- **Utilises hardware that members already own and are comfortable with**

There are so many possibilities for technology to assist our volunteers in their many duties. There are however, a number of hurdles to conquer before we can see innovation really flourish into the future:

- **We need to do away** with stand-alone silo systems and work together collaboratively
- Agencies need to be more supportive of the ever-changing culture of technology
- Interoperability can be achieved **organically** through the use of a common first responder software system like BART

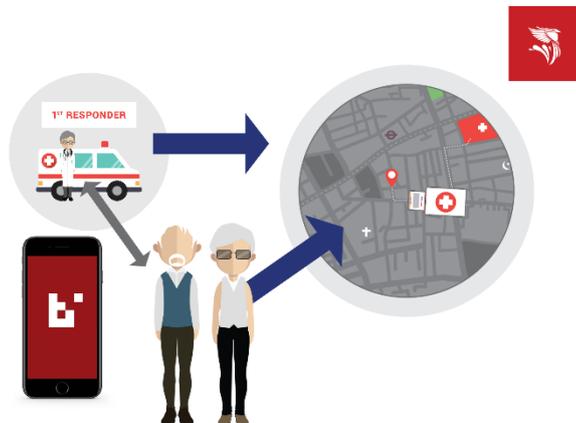


Today

**Following this blueprint, the possibilities for innovation are endless.**

For example, what I hope to see during my lifetime is a system in place that:

**allows those people who have contacted triple zero to be able to have two-way contact with the first responder.**



Into the future

**This doesn't even necessarily need to be in the form of talking.**

**Where it would benefit both parties if both of their locations were displayed on a map. Just like Uber, it would be possible to see a first responder appliance's location moving in real time.**



The closer communication between the two parties would provide:

- A way for the first responder to notify the caller if they are delayed
- A choice for the caller to make a decision on whether they should wait for the first responder - based on their location, or take the sick or injured person to hospital themselves
- A way to correct any mistakes or changes in location or situation

If we can track an Uber Taxi or a Pizza, then why can't we track a first responder whose arrival is life-impacting?

BART's progression has been driven by first responders. Working alongside with them at a grass roots level has allowed us to develop a system

**that they have ownership in, find effective for them,  
and that works in naturally with their everyday lives.**



Volunteers are a very specialised group within the emergency services, where they already work hard at their regular day jobs. All their time and effort is donated through the need to protect their community. As part of that community, we need to ensure that they're not lagging behind the rest of the world in terms of technology and that they have the right access to the best resources.

BART is an opportunity for Volunteers and the Agency Management to access what is happening in real time. BART is a solution that they love because they feel they have and continue to have ownership in.

It requires minimal set up, minimal training and BART members can work with their peers to solve device issues. They use their own data plans. They are listened to.

**BART reduces the amount of clerical work they have to do and can ultimately provide management with more and better information.** BART cultivates innovation from the ground up, recognising the need for volunteers and agency personnel to work together and through the collaboration of those capable of implementation.

To wrap up my presentation, I want to leave you with some principals that are outlined within a book by Ken Blanchard and Sheldon Bowles called 'Gung Ho!'.

The **GUNG HO** principals are based on SQUIRRELS collecting and storing food for winter, BEAVERS working together as individuals building a water home and GEESE flying south cheering each other on, on their long journey.

These principals have helped form the culture that BART operates on; and I believe they've been significant to BART's success. **The three principles of Gung Ho! are:**

***The Spirit of the Squirrel:** The BART Team and volunteers are doing extraordinary worthwhile work for emergency services.*

***The Way of the Beaver:** The BART Team and volunteers are working as individuals towards achieving a common Goal in protecting and saving lives in their community.*

***The Gift of the Goose:** The BART Team and volunteers are all cheering each other on, in their quest for a system that assists in protecting and saving lives in their community.*

**The BART Team wants to work with your Agency for the benefit of volunteers and more importantly for community resilience and interoperability.**

**Thank you for listening here today; I'm more than happy to answer any questions.**