



# Extreme Weather Heroes Project

Promoting emergency volunteering to Gen X/Y

## 1. What is the issue?

Australians are on the frontline of climate change.

Scientists say that floods, bushfires and cyclones will hit more often and harder because of climate change, but Australia's emergency response system which relies heavily on volunteers is not equipped for what lies ahead.

When an extreme weather events hit, Australia's 500,000 strong emergency volunteer force comes into play as the crucial "surge capacity". Because of demographic change, Australia's emergency volunteer base is aging with baby boomers providing the backbone of support. The system will break when stress tested.

Green Cross wants to appeal to Gen X/Y to future -proof our emergency response capability using social networking to inspire young people.

This campaign is especially crucial to build community cyclone preparedness for indigenous communities in Australia's north. As the 50 year cyclone map shows, Aboriginal Australia is crucially exposed to extreme weather.

## 2. Project aims

Green Cross will build an online social networking campaign to celebrate the contribution that emergency volunteers make; link this effort to climate change; make flood, fire and storm volunteering sexy to Gen X/Y; and grow an online community which takes action to save energy.

We will recruit six under-25 emergency volunteers from across Australia to spread their stories/videos/pictures over the Internet through Facebook and MySpace. An indigenous **Extreme Weather Hero** will help spread the message to communities in Northern Australia

Our **Extreme Weather Heroes** will be trained about the science and likely impacts of global warming so that they can spread the climate change message effectively.

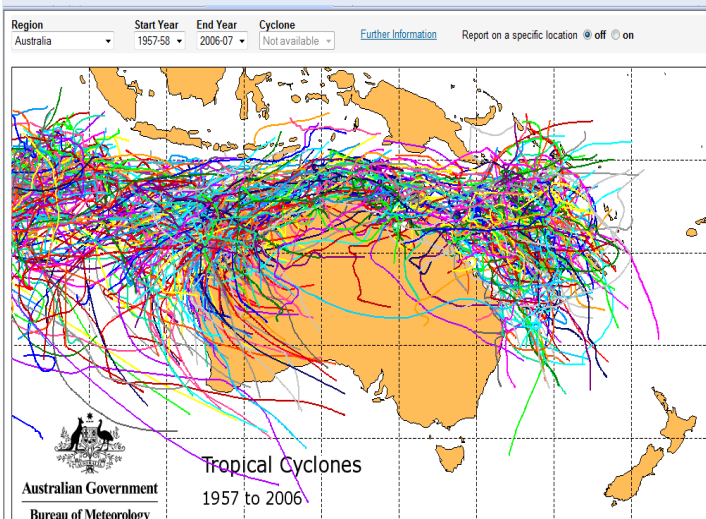
We will equip our **Extreme Weather Heroes** with camcorders, mobiles and blackberries, and we will upgrade their Facebook and MySpace pages. Young people will be able to follow the journeys of our heroes through enhanced social networks and blogs. We hope this will inspire young people to become emergency volunteers!

## 3. Partners

**Virgin Blue's staff Red Jet foundation** will support web development, volunteer recruitment and training.

Green Cross will introduce this project with key media partners. The national radio network **Nova** will promote the campaign nationally through community service announcements (CSA). Nova presenters will help us to select our six young heroes in January 2008. **Network Ten** will broadcast a national CSA developed by a class of Year 10 students.

To kick off the project Green Cross has organised an advisory team of young people from the **QLD Red Cross** and **VIC SES**, a seasoned **NSW Rural Bushfire Brigade** volunteer who is a leading environmentalist. Green Cross Australia Board Directors Tony Coleman (leading climate risk actuary) and Tom Kennedy (leading digital strategist) will anchor the effort.



### The Green Cross **Extreme Weather Heroes** online community will:

- Become Australia's largest youth extreme weather network, a place to learn about emergency volunteering from volunteers who are already involved, and to learn about what is causing climate change and its impacts
- Provide users with tips about saving energy and school/home/work
- Offer digital tools that help to spread the climate change message
- Provide an opportunity for people to follow the journey of our six emergency service volunteers
- Give users a first-hand look at what's involved in being an emergency volunteer in fires, floods, storms, etc and build confidence that we can get through what's ahead if we rely on each other
- Reach across MySpace, YouTube, Facebook and Flickr and back into the Green Cross website

The **Extreme Weather Heroes** program has a **core mitigation objective**. Each time a severe weather episode impacts on a community requiring extensive rebuilding, our aim is to work with thousands of emergency volunteers to encourage homes and businesses to be rebuilt adopting green technologies (insulation, solar hot water heaters, dual glazing, energy efficient globes and appliances etc). Green Cross is building partnerships with companies in the building and green tech sectors to promote this effort through point of sale information and discounts. We will inspire SES, Red Cross and bushfire volunteers to spread this message and will equip them with information that works.