



# Media Release

Victoria State Emergency Service

## Heavy metal in Gippsland – tales from VICSES in Mallacoota



While cool, stormy weather has helped to dampened serious fires across the state, Victoria State Emergency Service volunteers remain busy in various regions.

Communities in far East Gippsland are among those deep in ‘recovery mode,’ following multiple large fires that joined together earlier in January. VICSES members from across the state have been helping in many unique ways, with one instance highlighted recently.

Wonthaggi Unit volunteer Michael Butera (above) spent time in the coastal town on deployment from 7 January to 10 January, 2020 - as well as in Omeo between 27 December and December 31, 2018.

In the latter deployment he travelled to Mallacoota by air, as all roads in and out of the area at that time were closed. During that time, Michael supported DELWP, Victorian Fisheries Authority Officers and the ADF alongside fellow volunteers - and decided to leave a mark on the community in his own way.

After finding a piece of scrap metal that was partly melted down the fires, Michael decided to create a make-shift plaque - dedicated to all the VICSES members that had travelled down to assist the fire-ravaged, but extremely tough, town.

The Wonthaggi Unit volunteer was tasked by his Controller to make the rustic emblem, with molten aluminium also found among the cars that had been destroyed by fire.

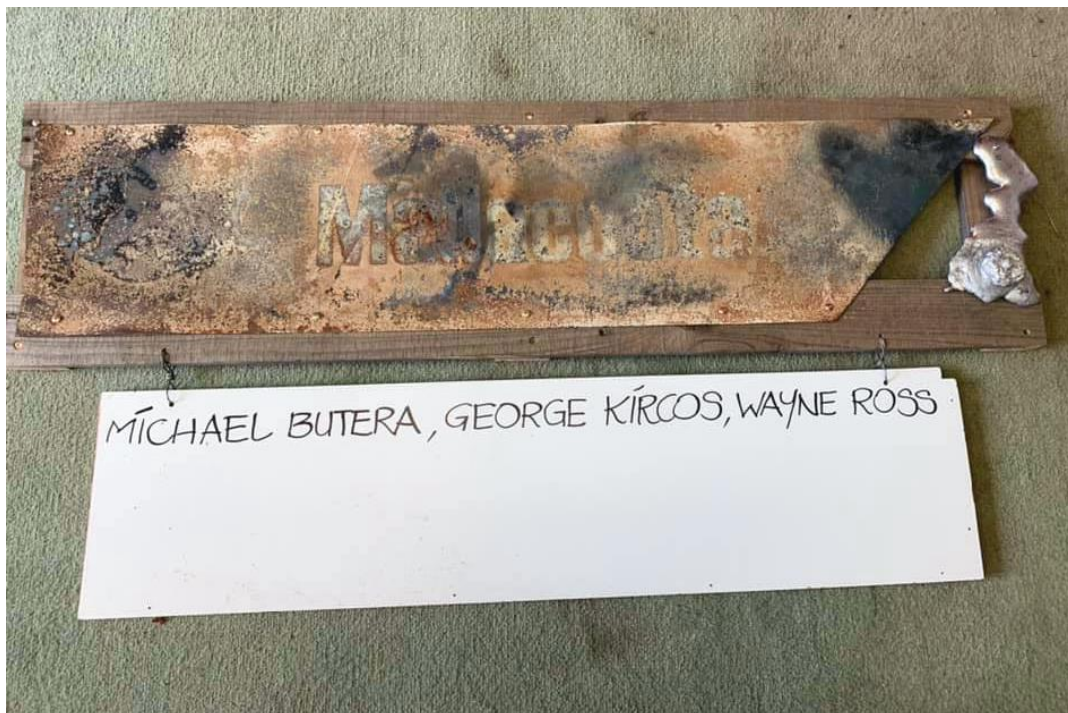
The sign now sits proudly in the Mallee Unit office, with many names yet to be pinned to the panel below.

### **Quotes attributable to Wonthaggi Unit volunteer Michael Butera:**

*“We were sitting down, thinking of unique ways we could help folks in Mallee, and commemorate all the people, all the volunteers that came down to help them.”*

*“I told my Controller that I wouldn’t mind making up a kind of honour board or a plaque, something to remember us all by. I was able to flatten the piece of metal and feed some wire through – it even has the word MALLEE on it.”*

*“I would have put my hand up for all the possible deployments if I could have.”*



Michael is happy to speak to media about his experience as a volunteer in Mallee.