



# Media Release

Victoria State Emergency Service

## Quiet achievers: North-East VICSES helping in Victoria's fire crisis

Victoria's fire crisis is bringing out the best in our emergency services, including a huge effort from VICSES Units in supporting the fire agencies around the state.

As we see a brief reprieve from hot, windy conditions, stories are emerging of endurance, sacrifice and true, community spirit from volunteers - who are still travelling far and wide to assist in the state's North-East as well as East Gippsland.

According to North East VICSES Operations Manager Rob Johnstone, 65 SES volunteers in the region spent their weekend responding in Corryong, Burrowye, Bright, Harrierville and surrounds. Important VICSES tasks included assisting with the evacuation of residents, delivering P2 smoke masks, relocating non-ambulance patients and delivering hay to farmers.

Many volunteers are still on the ground working with the increased threat of fires in the area across Thursday and Friday this week.

Marcus Warner, Deputy Controller of the Bright VICSES Unit was on the ground from January 2 to 6, working alongside the CFA, Ambulance Victoria and the local pharmacist to make sure P2 smoke masks were available to locals.

Together with the Pharmacist and a local GP, they built a small triage unit treating patients and make sure P2 masks and other medical supplies were available to those in need.

Due to low visibility, Marcus was also called to assist Victoria Police with vital local knowledge around road closures, whilst clearing the roads and maintaining rescue response capability if required to provide ongoing assurance to the community – and ensure any impacts were minimised.

Megan Vearing, a volunteer for the Wodonga Unit, was deployed from January 3 to 6 covering the areas of Tallangatta up to Corryong and across to Burrowye. Megan worked on the relocation of 21 non-ambulance patients from Corryong to Yarrawonga health – approximately 300kms away. Megan also delivered hay to farmers, a vital service as livestock suffered.

VICSES has played a huge role in supporting the state's fire crisis, acting as a key support service during a challenging time for our nation. We thank local VICSES volunteers who have worked alongside their emergency service partners and for their dedication across various operations.

### Quotes attributable to Mr Marcus Warner, Bright VIC SES volunteer

*"It was quite a challenging time, but our presence gave the community a reassurance that our vital service as a state community organisation was always available."*

*"It was great to work with Ambulance Victoria and the community at large. We unified the community with all emergency services working as one. Residents saw our uniforms and saw no difference between all uniformed people. We were the same as Ambulance Vic, Victoria Police and others. It was a great feeling."*

### Quotes attributable to Ms Megan Vearing, Wodonga VIC SES volunteer

*"It gives me goose-bumps recalling the event, I'm quite connected to the community and being able to help them and reconnect them with the assistance they need makes you feel worthwhile, like you're doing a good job."*

### For more information, contact:

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*“Units from all over worked together, Swan Hill, Tallangatta, Yackandandah and Beechworth all worked together to assist as needed. Working together shows the community the contribution we can make.”*

*Marcus and Megan available to speak to the media about their experience as a VICSES volunteer in the North East.*