



# Media Release

Victoria State Emergency Service

## VICSES members praise strength of Mallacoota evacuees

Volunteers continue to be at the very heart of the state's fire crisis, with VICSES and CFA recently working alongside the ADF, Victoria Police and other entities to get Victorians out of dangerous fire zones.

In the quiet, coastal town of Mallacoota over 1,100 people were evacuated on HMAS Choules and HMAS Sycamore from far East Gippsland to Hastings last week, with many greeted by friends and relatives.

Sorrento, Frankston and Hastings Units were also awaiting their arrival, with images circulating social media since of volunteers in the distinctive orange VICSES uniform helping the exhausted evacuees off the ships and onto dry land.

One volunteer in particular, Mark Daw, has been praised for his efforts during the emergency evacuation process. The Sorrento VICSES volunteer was on the ground at Hastings, surrounded by strangers that all had one thing in common - determination to help those in need.

Regional Controller for the Southern Metropolitan Region, Andrew O'Connell, says that Mark has been "exceptional in his attention to detail" and did an excellent job managing the VICSES contingent.

Volunteers developed a plan with traffic controllers, port staff and Bluescope Steel, getting people from the ships to organised transport and then relief centres.

Mark says that commanding was an enjoyable task as he was overseeing an amazing team of VICSES volunteers from the central region.

He also maintains that the resilience of the Mallacoota locals and tourists, was quite extraordinary in the face of so much hardship and challenge.

Mark wants to share his experience as volunteer during one of the state's most difficult weeks, a terrifying time that also brought us all together.

### **Quotes attributable to VICSES Sorrento Unit volunteer Mark Daw:**

"I remember a little old lady that refused to have her bags carried – even after a massive day she was still going strong."

"People from a range of backgrounds and industries worked together seamlessly, it was like we had been working together for years and years."

"It's easy to command when everyone works so well together, it was sensational. It was truly a fantastic effort by everyone that was there."

### **For more information, contact:**

VICSES State Media Duty Officer  
Phone: 1300 783 933  
Email: [media@ses.vic.gov.au](mailto:media@ses.vic.gov.au)



**Quotes attributable to Regional Controller from the Southern Metropolitan Region, Andrew O'Connell.**

“All VICSES members were empathetic to the traumatic experience that the arriving people had endured and this played a very important part in managing their well-being.”

VICSES Sorrento Unit volunteer Mark Daw is currently on deployment to far East Gippsland, but can speak to media after 5pm during the week.