



# Media Release

Victoria State Emergency Service

4 September 2020

## Meet VICSES' first ever DUAL unit Controller



An exciting and unique development in the state's south-west has seen two VICSES units headed by the same dedicated volunteer.

Current Heywood controller Charlie Debono has put up his hand to head the Portland unit, after existing unit controller Bernadette 'Bernie' Stiles' has decided not to renew another for another term after four years in the role.

Bernie remains a passionate member of the Portland unit, which is one of just two VICSES units in the South-West region that specialise in high angle rescues. The unit also welcomed a renovation grant recently thanks to the hard work of Deputy Controller Scott McFarlane.

Portland is familiar territory for Mr Debono, who was the VICSES Portland unit controller there between 2015 and 2016, and has been at the helm of Heywood for the last two years. Membership has also seen a boost at Heywood, thanks to a joint recruitment drive with a local CFA brigade.

Charlie is hoping that Portland can also get a boost in new participation in coming months.

It has been a busy 12 months for both local units, with Portland members attending 70 Requests for Assistance (RFAs) and Heywood called to 52 RFAs. In that time, members assisted the community after road accidents, trees falling on roads or properties, flood damage after rain, and more.

Local residents who want to give back to their communities are encouraged to sign up and join VICSES, with more information [on our website](#).

### For more information, contact:

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### **Quotes attributable to Charlie Debono, VICSES Dual Heywood & Portland Unit Controller**

*"It's great to be part of this unique process, I'm confident that two regional VICSES units can run well with one joint Controller."*

*"Heywood unit has benefited from a big boost in our membership recently. I think we have a really strong team there. The Portland unit is also incredible, and full of dedicated and loyal people. I hope they too can see a spike in new participation."*

*"Being a dual controller, I'm determined to make sure volunteers get the most out of training at both units, and feel part of the VICSES family."*

### **Quotes attributable to Bernadette 'Bernie' Stiles, former VICSES Portland Unit Controller**

*"I wish Charlie all the best, he will do a fantastic job. He's got massive respect from so many people - Charlie really is the perfect person to be a dual controller."*

*"We are lucky to have such an experienced and passionate group of people at Portland unit. The support is amazing, and you never feel alone."*