

WINTER 2020

Community Matters

VICSES

EDITION 11



SES
STATE EMERGENCY SERVICE



**WOW
DAY 2020**



YOUNG ACHIEVERS

VICSES' junior members rising up the ranks

**Responding
during
COVID-19**



**Neighbour
Day 2020**

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Phoebe Hall



VICSES would like to respectfully acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land throughout Victoria and acknowledge their ancestors and elders, both past and present.

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MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER FOR POLICE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

Welcome to the second edition of Community Matters for 2020.

The year is evolving in a way that none of us could have ever predicted. In the face of bushfires and now the coronavirus pandemic, VICSES units have continued to provide outstanding service to the community, right across the state.

Volunteers have been out in force responding to natural disasters, including significant events during April and May. VICSES units responded to over 4,000 requests for assistance during this busy time, including 391 flooding events, 2448 trees down, and 560 cases of building damage.

This followed wild storms in January, when units responded to a huge 3,300 requests for assistance in a single week.

Our VICSES volunteers also did an incredible job searching tirelessly for missing teenager William Callaghan in freezing and difficult terrain.

William became separated from his family on Mt Disappointment over the Queen's Birthday weekend and thanks to the efforts of our volunteers, along with others, he was reunited with them safe and well after two nights missing. I speak for all Victorians when I say we are so grateful for the work you did to ensure this amazing outcome.

So far this year, units have responded to almost 35,000 requests for assistance.

With these efforts in mind, it was fantastic to see the well-deserved support VICSES received from communities to mark Wear Orange Wednesday on 20 May.

WOW Day is an annual celebration marking the outstanding work of thousands of our volunteers.

Landmarks across Melbourne and regional centres were again flooded in orange in a show of thanks, and Victorians were encouraged to show their support by dressing in orange and posting messages to social media using the hashtags #ThankYouSES and #WOWDay.

Many aspects of life in Victoria have changed in 2020 as the coronavirus pandemic transforms how we live. Despite this, VICSES has continued to provide outstanding service, supporting communities across the state 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

Leading by example, volunteers have followed the Chief Health Officer's restrictions and guidelines when responding to call-outs and supported the 'stay at home' message on social media.

Looking out for one another will help ensure we can continue to create stronger and safer communities through this difficult period, and the dedication our VICSES volunteers have shown so far this year is a perfect example of that community spirit.

I want to extend my sincere thanks to all volunteers for your outstanding work, helping Victorians endure one of the most challenging years in living memory. With your continued service and dedication, I know we will overcome these challenges together.

**Hon Lisa Neville MP
Minister for Police and
Emergency Services**



Welcome

Hello everyone, and welcome to the winter edition of Community Matters.

On Wednesday 20 May we celebrated Wear Orange Wednesday, an opportunity to say thank you for the hard work and dedication of our incredible volunteers. Although we weren't able to celebrate in our usual way due to COVID-19, it was fantastic to see so many people still get involved right across the state. You can read more on page 4.

It has been challenging times during the recent pandemic environment, and I want to acknowledge each and every one of our members who have continued to work through and adapt to COVID-19 restrictions. This has included staff working remotely and from home, and all of our units maintaining physical distancing and hygienic cleaning during training and when responding to the community. I have also been involved in weekly meetings with our unit management teams via Webex, which has been a fantastic tool in keeping our organisation connected. As always, we have continued to deliver our services to the highest standard, demonstrating our vision: Safer Communities – Together. More information about our response during COVID-19 is located on page 8.

In exciting news, a construction firm has now been appointed for the new build of the Wangaratta Unit, and building has now commenced. I look forward to keeping you updated on this project as it progresses.

As always, thank you all for your contributions in making this another fantastic edition of Community Matters.

Kind regards,

**Stephen Griffin
CEO Victoria State Emergency Service**





FEATURES

Wear Orange Wednesday 2020

By Gabi Barkmeyer, Corporate Communications Officer, VHO

On Wednesday 20 May we came together to celebrate Wear Orange Wednesday (WOW Day), an annual event to say thank you to our thousands of volunteers for their incredible contributions.





WEAR ORANGE WEDNESDAY 20th MAY

Due to COVID-19 and physical distancing things looked a little different this year. But that didn't stop the community and our members rallying together to thank our volunteers for one of VICSES' busiest years yet.

Community members were encouraged to support WOW Day by dressing in orange, holding an orange themed event at home or online, or sending a message of thanks via social media to their local VICSES unit for their hard work. Facebook users were able to change their profile picture to include a WOW Day frame, and people participating in online meetings could use an orange themed WOW Day background.

Special thank you videos were also shared on social media, including messages from the Premier of

Victoria The Hon. Daniel Andrews, Australian actor Shane Jacobson, and Meteorologist and Channel 7 weather presenter Jane Bunn. Chelsea Unit were even able to get well-known Australian singer Dannii Minogue on board!

Landmarks in Melbourne were lit up in orange to help recognise WOW Day, including the Melbourne Cricket Ground, AAMI Park, Bolte Bridge and the State Theatre. Across regional Victoria we had more landmarks lit in orange than ever before, including the Giant Koala in Dadswell Bridge, the Catenary Lights in Geelong, water towers in Mooroopna, Wodonga and Swan Hill, and the McCrae Lighthouse.

Thank you to everyone that participated in celebrating our amazing volunteers. Until next year! ■



FEATURES

WOW Day photo competition

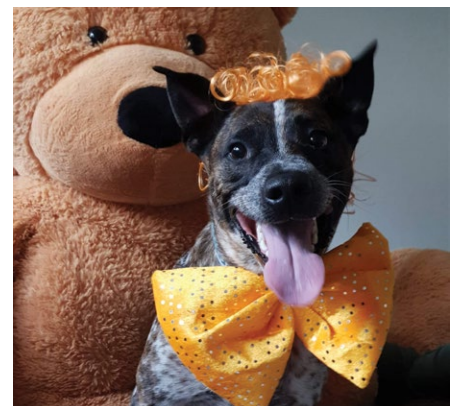
In celebration of Wear Orange Wednesday, an internal photo competition was held for our volunteers to find the best dressed pet in orange. With over 50 entrants, choosing a winner not an easy task!

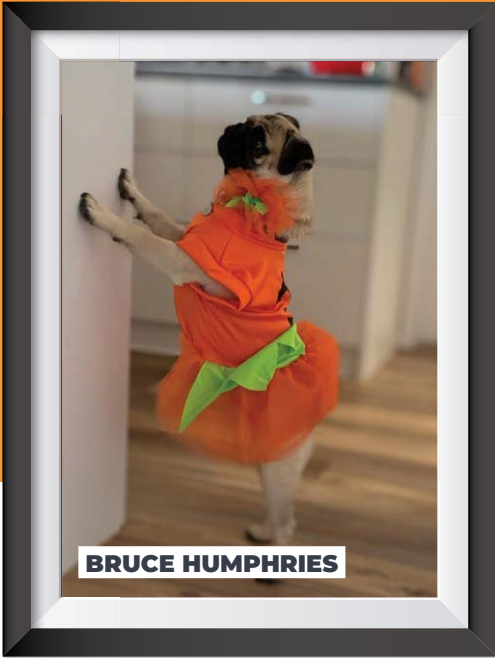
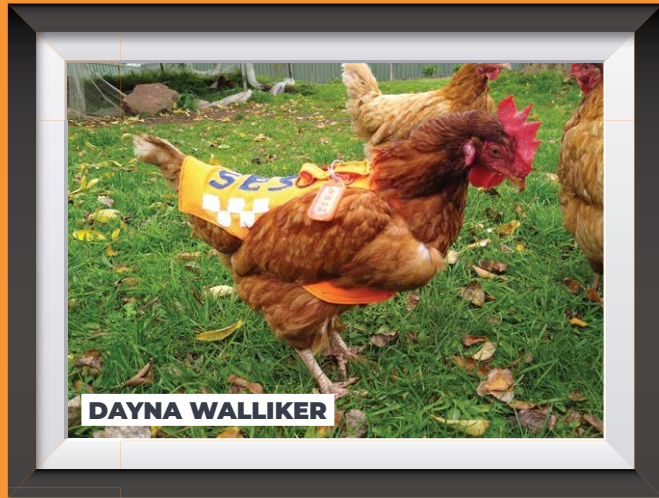
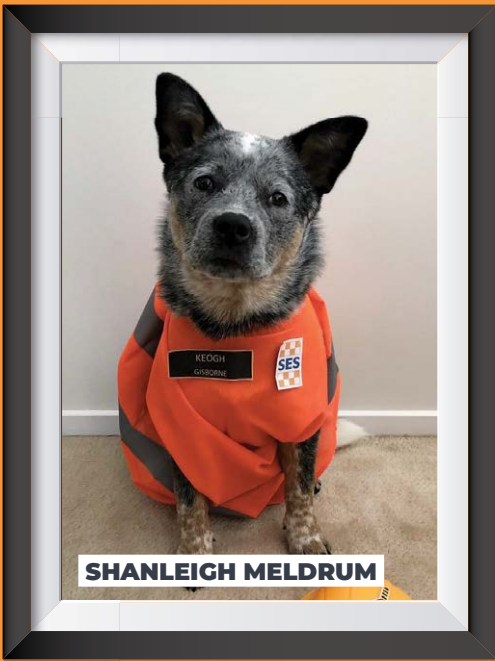


Congratulations to the following volunteers, who each won one of five \$100 Coles Express petrol vouchers, courtesy of our Principle Community Partner AAMI.



A big thank you to everyone that entered this competition. Here's a look at some of our other fantastic entrants:





Responding during COVID-19



As an integral part of Victoria's emergency services, VICSES has continued to provide high quality assistance to communities across the state during COVID-19.

Our continued response throughout this time has prioritised the health and safety of Our People, demonstrating our key Value, 'Safety drives our decisions'.

On 2 March 2020, VICSES enacted a COVID-19 Pandemic Plan as an appendix to the VICSES Business Continuity Plan.

The plan has provided our organisation with a strategic approach to reducing the

impact and consequences of VICSES' ability to safely deliver services to communities across Victoria.

A statement of intent was also established to align with our organisational Values, developed by VICSES Chief Executive Officer Stephen Griffin and Chief Officer Operations Tim Wiebusch. This statement provides the current position for VICSES on how we will operate together and across the organisation during COVID-19.

Although this pandemic environment has been unfamiliar and presented many significant impacts, VICSES has remained fully committed to providing emergency assistance and strengthening the community's capacity to plan, respond, and recover when emergencies occur – 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.



Some major events that our members have responded to during this time include:

| DATE COMMENCED | 01 Nov 2019 | 07 Feb 2020 | 14 Feb 2020 | 20 Feb 2020 |
|----------------|----------------|---|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| DATE CLOSED | 31 Mar 2020 | 12 Feb 2020 | 17 Feb 2020 | 23 Feb 2020 |
| OPERATION TYPE | Severe weather | Rainfall event in East Gippsland | Severe storms | Heavy rainfall |
| REGION | Statewide | East Region | Central, East and South West Region | North East and Central Regions |
| | Summer season | Interstate deployment | Severe thunderstorm | Wallan rail incident |
| | Statewide | Central, South West and North East Region | Statewide | North East Region |

Thank you!

Thank you to all of our members for your continued support, dedication, and adaptability throughout these challenging times.

VICSES would like to further acknowledge the contributions of the following specialist volunteers, in supporting the development of the VICSES COVID-19 Pandemic Plan and related arrangements:

ANTHONY WHITE
Sunbury Unit Controller

BEN PENROSE
Bendigo Unit

BRENDAN MACKINNON
South Barwon Unit

DANIELLE EYSSENS
Glen Eira Unit Controller

DANNIELLE LICCIARDO
Torquay Unit

ELIZABETH ENGLISH
Terang Unit

GEOFF BELL
Geelong Unit Controller

GIORGIO PALMERI
Warrnambool Unit Controller

JACKIE ASHMAN
Yackandandah Unit Controller

JAMIE ROWE
Terang Unit

JOHN BATES
Essendon Unit Controller

JOSHUA DEERAIN
Northcote Unit

JUDITH GLEDHILL
Rochester Unit Controller

JUSTIN NAVAS
Essendon Unit

MARC RABONE
Kaniva Unit Controller

MATT SAARIO
Leongatha Unit Controller

MEGAN VEERING
Wodonga Unit Deputy Controller

MIKE BAGNELL
Gisborne Unit Controller

NICOLE GUILLES-ACKAOUI

NICOLE TERRIL
Pakenham Unit Controller

NICOLE TERRIL
Bacchus Marsh Unit

SHAUN CAULFIELD
Lilydale Unit Controller

TONY STILL
South West Regional Support Office Controller



More information

For the latest up-to-date information on COVID-19 for all VICSES members, please visit the [Hub > My State > Health and Wellbeing > Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#).



Protecting VICSES information when working remotely

By Ross Elford, Manager Information Security & Governance, VHO

As if COVID-19 hasn't presented enough of its own problems, there seems to be no shortage of people out there who are looking to take advantage of the situation by attempting to disrupt the systems we use, and even access our information inappropriately.

To better equip Victorian government agencies in their working from home arrangements, the Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner has published some helpful tips on managing information securely whilst at home. This includes the security of accessing information remotely, secured WIFI networks, phishing scams and more.

You can view the full list at ovic.vic.gov.au, or contact Ross Elford, Manager Information Security and Governance at ross.elford@ses.vic.gov.au for further assistance. ■

12 Mar 2020

Current

28 Mar 2020

31 Mar 2020



COVID-19 Class 2

Statewide



Missing persons

East and North East Regions

03 Apr 2020

04 Apr 2020



Severe weather

North East and North West Regions



Wind event

East Region

14 Apr 2020

04 June 2020



Missing persons

East Region

29 Apr 2020

03 May 2020



Heavy rainfall

Central, East and North East Region

07 May 2020

08 May 2020



Wind event

Statewide

20 May 2020

21 May 2020



Severe Thunderstorm

South West Region

08 June 2020

10 June 2020



Missing persons

Central & North East Regions

GENERAL NEWS



VICSES Sunbury Unit Rescue Squad

Young achievers: VICSES' junior members rising up the ranks

By Gabi Barkmeyer, Corporate Communications Officer, VHO

The VICSES Sunbury Unit Rescue Squad was established in 2017, and has a dedicated youth development program for 15 to 18 year-olds. We sit down with the unit's junior members Rachael White and Phoebe Hall, who joined the squad last year to find out more about their VICSES journey so far!



RACHAEL WHITE



PHOEBE HALL

Hi Rachael and Phoebe, great to chat with you both. Can you start off by telling us how you got involved with VICSES and the Sunbury Unit Rescue Squad?

Phoebe: I joined the squad after years of watching my mum help the community as a VICSES volunteer. It was so amazing to see her so dedicated to helping other people, and how much she really enjoyed the training and the positive atmosphere it provided.

Rachael: As my dad has volunteered at Sunbury Unit for 12 years, I have been involved for 8 years and formally joined the squad program at the start of 2019. My sister Vanessa White was one of the founding members of the first Sunbury squad group, so I knew what was involved and I joined as soon as I became eligible.

What are some of the roles that you undertake as a junior member to support your community?

Phoebe: As a junior member we can do pretty much everything the senior unit does once we have completed the essential training and are qualified for some specific jobs. We can attend all storm and flood jobs, searches, and assist other agencies. Before we have completed our essential training, we can attend community engagement events and help out at unit level.

Rachael: Specifically, during COVID-19, I have been getting together with small numbers of senior members to produce some practical training videos that we present to the wider membership each week in our online training.

You have both almost completed your General Rescue training qualification which is very exciting! What has been the most challenging part of the training?

Phoebe: The hardest, but definitely most rewarding part of the training so far, is stepping outside my comfort zone and trying things I thought I never would have been doing, with people I didn't know very well to begin with. Throughout the training it has been great to get to know everyone better, and connect through our joined goal of becoming qualified.

Rachael: I think the most challenging part for me was jacking, as it has so many safety precautions to it. You not only have to pack your side, but also communicate to team members and keep in mind things to be cautious of, such as not positioning your arm under the object.

Would you recommend other people your age join VICSES, and why?

Phoebe: I would definitely recommend the Junior VICSES squad to other people my age. It's a great way to get out of your comfort zone, meet new people, assist the community, commit yourself to situations you would have never experienced otherwise and gives you an opportunity to move up into the senior section of the unit in the future.

Rachael: The skills and experiences I have gained as a result of my involvement with VICSES are unique. I am perhaps more comfortable around my adult peers than a lot of people my age. I

also have so many practical skills and knowledge that have really helped me in other areas of my life, such as school, getting my first job, and socially.

What are you most looking forward to in the future as a VICSES volunteer?

Phoebe: The thing I am most looking forward to is becoming qualified in Road Crash Rescue. I watch my sister and dad turning out to Road Crash Rescue and assist agency incidents, and I can tell how much of a difference they make to individuals and families in these situations. I would really like to make that much of a difference to someone one day.

Rachael: I'm really looking forward to attending jobs and making a difference in the community once I've finished my training, as well as forming strong bonds with the people I work with. As well as learning more skills from highly experienced members and other people in the junior squad, the most rewarding part would be interacting with the community through different jobs and local events.

Outside of VICSES, what do you both like to do in your spare time?

Phoebe: Outside of VICSES, I work at McDonalds 3-4 days a week. I also like to go walking or running when I have spare time, and spend time with family and friends.

Rachael: My hobbies include basketball, rugby, cooking and camping. I also enjoy exploring with my family and friends in the outdoors, and having new experiences.

Finally, who or what inspires you the most?

Phoebe: My mum definitely inspires me the most. She is my strongest supporter and is always there to drive me to and from training, and encourages me to try new things - even if it would normally be out of my comfort zone. Mum really is my idol, and I aspire to have her sense of courage and willingness to take on new things.

Rachael: Something that has always inspired me is the thought that people are always in need. If I help them, I feel like I have accomplished something, and it makes me feel like a better person. I think the world needs a bit of brightening up, and joining VICSES makes me feel like I can do that. ■

Stepping back in time...

Frankston Unit members pose in front of their brand new Cheverlot C20 in 1984. The vehicle was specially designed for the unit to assist with road rescue, storm and flood response. Equipment carried on board included the jaws of life, an electric winch and chainsaws. ■

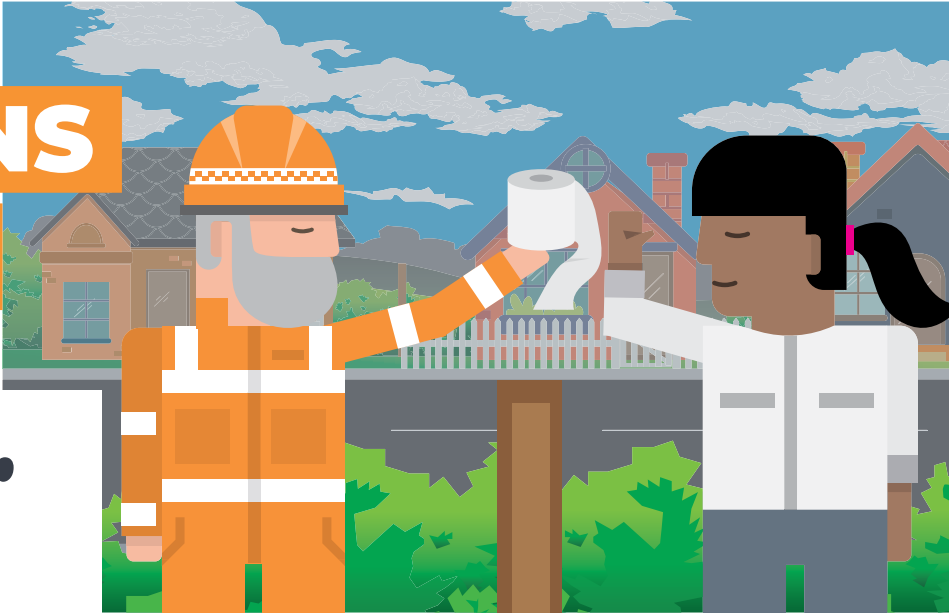


Share with us

Do you have a photo that you'd like to share as part of our 'Stepping back in time' feature? Email your submission along with a caption to publications@ses.vic.gov.au

CAMPAIGNS & EVENTS

Neighbour Day 2020



Social connection more important than ever before

By Hannah MacDougall, Senior Advisor Community Programs & Campaigns, VHO

Neighbour Day is an annual celebration held on the last Sunday of March. Coordinated by Relationships Australia, the objective of campaign is to strengthen social connections. This is the second year VICSES have participated in the campaign.

Originally, the VICSES campaign encouraged members to 'connect over a cup of communit**ea**' and have a cup of a tea with a neighbour. However, due to COVID-19 and physical distancing restrictions, we applied flexibility and adapted the campaign to encourage connection using digital platforms and non-face-to-face approaches.

New engaging social media collateral and online messaging was created, encouraging people to check-in with one another and maintain relationships with neighbours via social

media, phone calls, instant messaging, video chats, or popping your head over the fence.

A special 'calling card' was also developed so neighbours could exchange details and offer help with household staples and necessities, as well as develop friendly interactions - particularly for those most vulnerable during COVID-19 such as the elderly.

This new approach was well received by the community, reaching over 5.4 million people across radio, print and online news, and TV. A particular highlight was Channel Seven News

featuring VICSES Chelsea Unit connecting with their community in support of Neighbour Day. The unit also helped to organise a video featuring Alan Fletcher, aka Dr Karl Kennedy from the TV show Neighbours, encouraging people to get involved in the campaign via non-face-to-face communication.

Thank you to everyone who supported this campaign through various online sessions, working with different stakeholders, and encouraging the community to connect with each other. It truly was a very successful campaign. ■



What do we do with all the tea bags we hear you asking?

Well, please hold on to them for when we are able to 'connect over a cup of communit**ea**' again. The Community Connections team will be in touch when we can enjoy this well-deserved cup of tea and celebrate how **tear**rific you all are!



VICSES Mallacoota Unit volunteers fly to Melbourne for AFL Bushfire Appeal State of Origin

By Kath Jessop, Media Officer, VHO

On Friday 28 February, a crew of 10 VICSES Mallacoota Unit volunteers were flown out from far east Victoria to be a part of the contingent at this year's AFL Bushfire Appeal State of Origin double-header at Marvel Stadium.

The unit's volunteers were recognised for this special event based on their bravery in supporting their isolated community during the devastating bushfires that occurred during December 2019 and January 2020.

All proceeds from the event went towards re-building grassroots football clubs that were affected by fires across Australia. The AFL commissioned a special 'VICSES orange' Sherrin football with the names of the affected football clubs to remind the players on the night why the event was so important.

Alongside VICSES Mallacoota Unit volunteers were hundreds

of other VICSES volunteers and emergency services personnel, who were also recognised for their contributions in supporting the bushfires on the night. A Guard of Honour was held prior to the first bounce, led by VICSES Mallacoota Unit Controller Leo Op Den Brouw. VICSES volunteer's children alongside Country Fire Authority families were also invited on the ground to participate in the Auskick game at half-time and VICSES vehicles were on display outside on the Marvel stadium concourse.

Thank you to everyone who was involved in helping to facilitate this great event. ■

Celebrating the women of VICSES

By Gabi Barkmeyer, Corporate Communications Officer, VHO



In celebration of International Women's Day (IWD) on Sunday 8 March, VICSES was proudly involved in several events that highlighted the amazing work of women across the emergency services sector.

Victoria's Emergency Services Foundation (ESF) held a very special International Women's Day forum, giving away free tickets to VICSES female members. The event focused on gender and wellbeing, and included special guest speakers Governor of Victoria The Hon. Linda Dessau AC, and television presenter Johanna Griggs.

The event also coincided with the ICC T20 Women's World Cup Final with a pre-game performance by singer Katy Perry, which was a fantastic event that was enjoyed by many of our members to celebrate IWD. VICSES Whittlesea Unit member Donna Fenech proudly represented VICSES in ESF's online IWD campaign, uniting women from across the emergency services sector to join in this year's theme: Each for equal.

We thank each and every one of our female members, and

celebrate your achievements every day.



Growing up, I never really saw females active in leadership positions in the emergency service sector. It's great to see the change."

DONNA FENECH

VICSES Whittlesea Unit volunteer





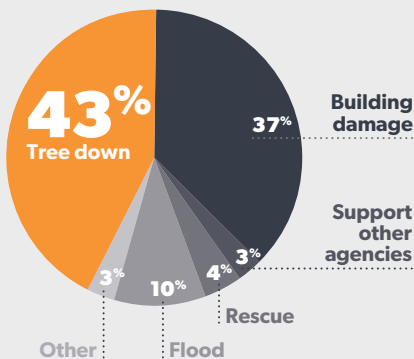
CENTRAL

1 January – 31 March 2020



2,018
Volunteers

7,276
Requests for assistance



Communicating with our volunteers during COVID-19

Priscilla Grimme, Volunteer Support Officer, Central Region

During the initial stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, volunteers requested guidance on implementing COVID-19 safe practices at their units so that they could seamlessly continue on with business as usual.

To assist in better communicating with volunteers during COVID-19, we decided to implement live streaming. This refers to recording and broadcasting online media in real time. Central Region had already utilised live streaming over the busy summer season to contact potential new members, after receiving more than 200 members inquiries.

The new live streaming project took the form of a panel, with a range of different presenters. The sessions were also recorded, so people who missed the session could watch at a later time. Topics that were presented included:

- Volunteer Support Officer updates, which included truck build updates, resupply of consumables, business plans, and other relevant current information.
- Trainers updates, which included how to make the best of online training, and some great examples of unit-made training videos to keep volunteers engaged.

- Mobile Command Vehicle and Field Command Vehicle familiarisation.
- Command and control sessions.
- Operational communications.

The feedback we received from volunteers was fantastic, and the sessions provided a great opportunity for volunteer's questions to be answered in real-time.

During our sessions we also presented a new VICSES promotional video that was created in late 2019, which came in handy for our new member sessions and demonstrated the great work that our volunteers achieve. Some great short promo videos were also presented showcasing individuals profiles, which could be used on units Facebook pages for recruitment.

Utilising livestreaming was a great opportunity to keep in contact with everyone whilst still maintaining physical distancing at the Mulgrave office, and is something that we would like to continue doing in the future.

Last but not least, a massive thank you to Fuzzy Media who helped us put these great live streaming events together. ■

Whittlesea Unit celebrates Sebastian LaSpina's leadership in Peer Support

Donna Fenech, Whittlesea Unit, Central Region

In March, Whittlesea Unit Officer Sebastian LaSpina was awarded the 2019 Peter Rabone Memorial Shield for his honourable leadership and contributions to the VICSES Peer Support Program.

The Peter Rabone Shield is dedicated to the memory of Peter Rabone - a leader, peer, trainer, companion, friend and inspiration to many during his 29 years at VICSES.

Sebastian joined Peer Support in 2016. Since then, Sebastian has been an integral member of the team, advancing to become the Regional Leader for the South West and Central Western Regions.

His kind nature and warming personality has been part of his success in being able to provide support to VICSES members during traumatic periods.

Following the death of two Port Campbell members in 2019, Sebastian provided support to unit members after the event and during the funeral, demonstrating that distance would not get in the way of supporting his peers.



"I am humbled by the award and did not expect it," said Sebastian.

"It has always been an honour to support my VICSES colleagues, who often find themselves in difficult physical and emotional circumstances due to their dedication and role in keeping their communities safe. Many of them are unsung heroes, even though they would never see themselves that way. Our volunteers and their families

deserve any support that Peer Support can provide them."

On behalf of the entire Whittlesea Unit, we congratulate Sebastian on this incredible achievement! ■

New staff driving results

John Chaplain, Manager – Regional Emergency Management, Central Region

Alan Barnard, Central Region Regional Officer - Emergency Management and the Community Resilience team recently took on four new staff members to assist with key targets and outcomes.

Ben Langan and Peter Duncombe both backfilled Operational Officer roles, whilst Jess Law and Sarah Stephen took on new roles supporting Melbourne Water key performance targets.

Ben and Peter not only created positive connections with agency partners in their nominated areas, but were also instrumental in Central Region's response during COVID-19.

Ben was instrumental in creating a regional project tasking tool to capture key projects and monitor tasking and outcomes, which may end up as a state-wide tool.

Peter was also instrumental in the development of a Level 3 flood exercise to test our processes. As more staff and volunteers will be working remotely from Incident Control Centre's due to COVID-19, this exercise was particularly important ahead of what is predicted to be a high rainfall period.

Jess was hard at work to finalise a number of local flood guides. With a background in public health, Jess also lent her expertise to the region's response during COVID-19, which assisted in achieving key outcomes. Jess also worked with Ross Butler on the next Melbourne Water



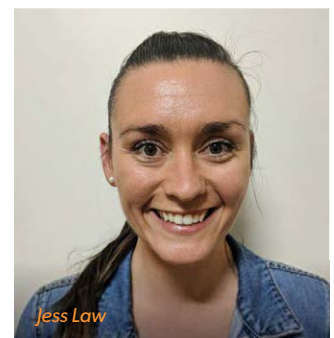
Peter Duncombe



Sarah Stephen



Ben Langan



Jess Law

Hotspot Strategy, which will set the direction of our community engagement.

Sarah has also been lending her expertise to the Melbourne Water Hotspot Strategy. Although it became more complex due to social distancing, Sarah harnessed the tools of virtual engagement to help keep work progressing.

Finally, thank you to Community Resilience Coordinator Malvina Tsecoutanis, who has been managing Sarah and Jess through these projects and the recent pandemic environment.

Well done by all! ■



EAST

1 January – 31 March 2020

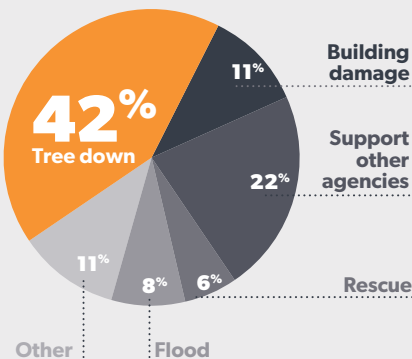


694

Volunteers

1,287

Requests for assistance



East Region units embrace technology during COVID-19

Jane Fontana, Community Resilience Coordinator, East Region

We have all needed to think outside the square during COVID-19; especially how we keep connected and engaged with things we would normally do face-to-face. This has included connecting via social media, video conferencing, and other online platforms.

Regionally, the training team has been providing more online learning options, including landslide awareness sessions and micro-learns on storm and flood. The team has also assisted units with WebEx training and getting members set up on portable devices so they can stay connected to unit activity.

Around the region, Phillip Island Unit moved their members out of their comfort zone and into training via WebEx. The unit's members had already been accessing the Hub for online courses, so the leap to WebEx was the next logical step. Alan O'Connor, the units interim Unit Controller during COVID-19, has been busy on his iPad joining in on the majority of region and state based teleconferences.

Over at the Leongatha Unit, members have also been using WebEx to catch up on a weekly basis. They have had a great uptake from the crew, averaging 15 members weekly. The unit has also run a series of online sessions, including an online quiz via Kahoot!, map and navigation revision and challenges, a radio refresher, a real-time show-and-tell session

with new hydraulic gear, knots revision, and a landslide awareness session. They also hosted a remembrance event via WebEx for the anniversary of valued member Brian Rintoule, who passed away last year.

The Moe Unit have dramatically increased their use of WebEx, including setting up an iPad for one of their senior members, Ted, through the region's iPad cache. Ted had never used an iPad in his life, and is now happily attending meetings and training online! Members have also broken into teams to demonstrate a

physical training method or skill, and presented it back to the unit over Webex. A Safe Working at Heights System kit session was also hosted, where members could discuss the kits tools. The unit's training team have used Google Docs to create their complete unit training plan for 2020/21, where a live document can be viewed by several participants and live changes made.

These are just some of the fantastic examples of how our units have overcome a challenging situation by embracing new technology. Well done to everyone! ■



New Regional Headquarters for East Region

By Merryn Henderson, Community Resilience Coordinator, East Region

On the Monday 4 May, East Region staff operating from Bairnsdale opened the doors to their new office for the first time.

After months of searching for the right venue, 231-233 Main Street in Bairnsdale was decided on for the new East Region Headquarters. The location was decided on upon key factors, including the building being situated in the heart of the Bairnsdale CBD, and plenty of available parking. The functionality of the building includes a sizeable warehouse out the back, which has allowed the region to combine the Logistics Store in the same location. This saves on rental costs, and improves productivity by having everything under the one roof.

Once the building was secured, the design and construction work became the priority. The building was a blank canvas with an open

floor plan, having previously operated as a retail building. Brainstorming began with ideas around how to combine all the office requirements into the one space, including a communications room, tea room, administration area, meeting rooms, toilets, desks, and everything else in between.

This was a massive project that Russell Wilmott, Manager Regional Operational Emergency Management and Joan Robinson, Regional Administration Officer devoted extraordinary hours towards.

On Friday 1 May, Bairnsdale Office members finally completed the move, with the long wait for the new building officially over.

I just want to say a big thank you to the team for achieving this," said Russell.



Morwell Emergency Services AFL Match

By Jane Fontana, Community Resilience Coordinator, East Region

VICSES Morwell Unit and Paddy Platypus attended the Emergency Services AFL practise match between Hawthorn and St Kilda on Friday 28 February at the Morwell Recreation Reserve.

The match formed part of Hawthorn's response to the recent bushfire crisis, and provided a fantastic opportunity to thank local emergency services personnel for their efforts.

Drawing a huge crowd, the match received a great response - especially for those footy fans that were able to watch their favourite team play without having to trek to Melbourne.

A great time was had by all! ■



This has been 12 months in the making, and it couldn't have been achieved without everyone's help along the way."

While the Bairnsdale Office postal address has NOT changed, please remember for anyone visiting, that the Bairnsdale office it is now located at 231 – 233 Main Street Bairnsdale, directly opposite McDonalds.

With only a few items left on the 'to-do' list, a new chapter for the Bairnsdale Office team has well and truly begun.

East Region would like to thank the VICSES Board, Chief Executive Officer Stephen Griffin, Chief Officer Operations Tim Wiebusch, Victorian Head Office business units, for their support towards this project. ■





Mid West Regions Annual General Rescue Training Weekend 2020

By Jarrod McLean, Regional Officer – Training, Mid West Region

**MID
WEST**

1 January – 31 March 2020

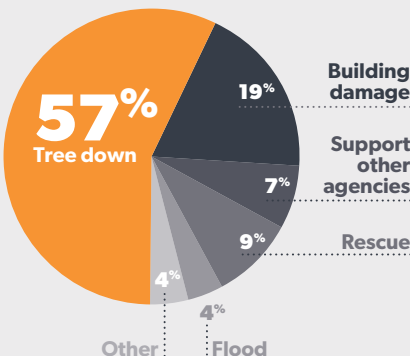


412

Volunteers

476

Requests for assistance



Mid West Region held their annual General Rescue training weekend on 14 and 15 March at the Magdala Motor Lodge and Leisure centre in Stawell. The weekend was well supported by Bacchus Marsh, Ballarat, Hepburn Shire, Horsham, Dimboola, Edenhope and Hamilton Units.



With 19 volunteers involved in General Rescue and Fundamentals training, we were able to conduct 16 assessments for these volunteers. This was due to the support of members from Hepburn, Warracknabeal, Ballarat and Stawell to assist in assessments as Crew Leaders, Trainer Assessors and Safety Officers. Two members were also able to fully complete their General Rescue and Fundamentals training.

in the delivery of training. Congratulations to Hepburn Shire Unit volunteer Matt Viola, who was this year's recipient due to his hard work, passion and dedication.

Well done to everyone who assisted, and who were able to become qualified in General Rescue over this great weekend. ■

Another highlight was the presentation of the Ian Mayberry Award, which is awarded each year to a member who demonstrates excellence



Keeping connected during COVID-19

By Jane Patton, Community Resilience Coordinator, Mid West Region



Mid West Road Rescue Workshop

By Jarrod McLean, Regional Officer – Training, Mid West Region

On Saturday 14 December, Mid West Region conducted a Road Rescue Workshop at Stawell Unit.

11 volunteers participated representing five VICSES units. The workshop involved four stands that were rotated through, including glass management and stabilisation, practical cutting techniques, cross ramming, and the crash recovery system.

Mid West Region were well supported by VICSES Operations Officer, Gerry Sheridan and Rod Wells from PT Rescue on the day. The Holmatro Battery Rescue Tools featured in the cross ramming strand were also integral to the workshop.

The feedback received from this event was so positive that members are already waiting for the next workshop! Thank you to everyone involved. ■

Wimmera Machinery Field Days 2020

By Jane Patton, Community Resilience Coordinator, Mid West Region

Over three days from the 3rd to 5th of March, the Wimmera Mallee region hosted the 58th Annual Wimmera Machinery Field Days at the Wimmera Events Centre in Longerenong.



Amongst the fragrance of diesel and fresh cut hay in the air, the event gave farming industry colleagues, friends, and family the chance to catch up over a cup of tea, delicious baked goods or a light beverage or two. The event also gave an opportunity for the farming industry, local community groups, schools, services and sport clubs to come together to explore innovative ideas, music, entertainment, participate in regional competitions such as the tractor pull, and more.

VICSES Mid West Region members undertook community engagement

activities, engaging with visitors at the static display in the Moore Exhibition Centre with other emergency service agencies and community organisations. Our members engaged with local residents and visitors about being prepared before, during, and after the impacts of

flooding within the Wimmera River district. The event also provided an opportunity to engage our 'Join Us' recruitment campaign, and to promote other key flood and storm safety messages.

A big thank you to VICSES Horsham Unit volunteer Kieran Loughran, Warracknabeal Unit volunteers Valarie Taylor and Trish Wilde, Ararat Unit volunteers William Maddern and Warren Pitt, Ballarat Unit volunteer Robyn Read, and Mid West Region staff Clare Mintern and Belinda Marchant for helping to make this community engagement opportunity such a success. ■



During COVID-19, units in the Mid West Region have kept connected on a weekly basis via Webex.

Support response roles and operational roles have retained communication by sharing stories and keeping

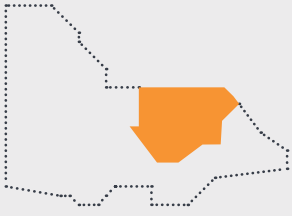
updated with the latest COVID-19 updates, which has increased morale, positive relationships and wellbeing.

In addition to this, all units have been allocated a regional staff member for contact and support during COVID-19. This has involved maintaining personal protective clothing and equipment, as well as administrative duties and requests.

The Mid West training team has adapted to physical distancing by setting up online skill maintenance training for all Mid West Region members on Wednesday nights. This has been facilitated by volunteers sharing their own knowledge and expertise on topics such as incident approach and positioning of vehicles, incident management, road crash systems, building construction and collapse, Map and Navigation,

and the upcoming Supplementary Alerting System.

As restrictions ease in Victoria, units have organised training teams for face-to-face skill maintenance training at local headquarters on a fortnightly rotating roster. Although it has been a challenging few months, our units have continued to support their communities and each other every day. ■



NORTH

EAST

1 January – 31 March 2020

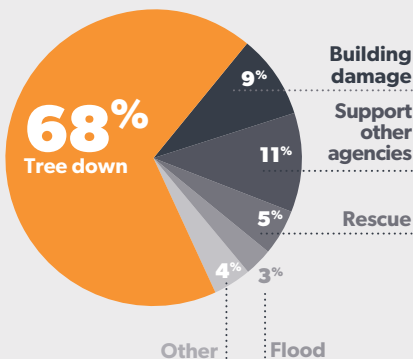


711

Volunteers

1,663

Requests for assistance



OPERATIONAL REVIEW:



Tallangatta Unit volunteer Carly on-stage with Katy Perry.

Not so quiet in the North East

Liz Frazer, Community Resilience Coordinator, North East Region

The statistics tell us this is shaping up to be one of VICSES' busiest years yet, which is already well underway in North East Region.

After a long and high intensity fire season involving every single VICSES unit in the north east, summer ended with damaging storms across central and southern parts of the region. Members in fire affected areas have seen regular landslides, particularly in the Upper Murray where rainfall has washed ashy debris over roads and farmland. In some cases parts of main roads have washed away, and at one point Corryong Unit responded to four landslides in a week.

Alpine Search and Survival members joined a missing person's search in the Wonnongatta, utilising alpine tent accommodation to maintain social distancing - really thinking outside the bunkhouse.

We also received a visit from performer Katy Perry in picturesque Bright. VICSES members who volunteered in fire affected areas enjoyed the show, including Carly from Tallangatta Unit who joined Katy on stage alongside other local emergency service personnel.

Finally, we've seen our fair share of technical rescues too. Unless you've been under a rock, you'd have seen the news coverage of Mansfield

Unit responding in Jamieson to help a wayward wanderer John, his dog, and his five camels, after slipping from the track on a 6,000km camel trek. You can follow John's unique and thought provoking journey at www.johnelliott.com.au and via Instagram [instagram.com/johnartelliott/](https://www.instagram.com/johnartelliott/). ■

Staying connected as a unit: Being a survivor of technology

Jess Zuber, Chiltern Unit, North East Region

As unit leaders, we have been faced with many challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic. One of the biggest changes was moving from face-to-face collaboration, to an online environment that had to include training, new procedures, modified

‘Double agent’ recruitment opportunity: Dual VICSES and CFA membership

Georgie Cardillo, acting Community Resilience Coordinator and Sue Sheldrick, Community Resilience Coordinator, North East Region

COVID-19 has had a disruptive and devastating impact on our community. But one of its silver linings has been creating time to share a unique recruitment opportunity that promotes dual VICSES and Country Fire Authority (CFA) memberships.

Although the launch of this campaign has been put on hold due to COVID-19 and the cancellation of the CFA State Championships, it’s still a fantastic opportunity that we look forward to driving in the future.

So, what’s unique about it?

Never one to waste an opportunity to attract new members, this North East Region approach is targeted at ‘sharing’ members with our CFA colleagues.

This particular recruitment drive was focused on attracting current CFA members to join VICSES as well. The

turn-out protocols and engagement for all members.

At Chiltern Unit, we harnessed the use of WebEx, emails and the Hub, and were able to cover training, information and other updates online. What we were still missing out on however was the interaction and fun of seeing our whole unit socially. How could we change this?

Firstly our unit had some fun online by creating a closed Facebook group for members to compete in weekly challenges. These included the bin isolation challenge, 25 push-up challenge, ANZAC Day pics, knot



campaign posters featured images of current dual VICSES/CFA members in North East Region.

In many small regional and remote units, this dual membership arrangement is almost by necessity, with some VICSES members also being certified ambulance and Red Cross volunteers as well. At VICSES Corryong Unit, 50% of their members have a dual membership with local CFA brigades. How amazing are volunteers!

We share many common skills and passions with our CFA colleagues, so why not combine what both worlds can offer to better support our communities. ■



tying, baby competition, and not so educational videos.

This initiative was a great way to support the health and wellbeing of our unit members during this challenging time, providing the opportunity to bond and learn so much more about each other. ■

Volunteer spotlight:



LISA WISE

Liz Frazer, Community Resilience Coordinator, North East Region

Lisa Wise first joined VICSES Wangaratta Unit in 1988 after finishing high school, and moved to Wodonga Unit in 1994. Currently, Lisa is positioned as Deputy Controller – Administration at Wodonga Unit, as well as undertaking the role of Peer Support Team Leader in North East Region.

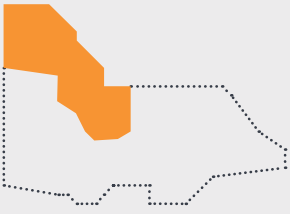
Back in the 80’s when Lisa and her best mate joined Wangaratta Unit (where both her parents had been active members), things were very different. There were hand-me-down uniforms, ill-fitting boots, and shared personal protective clothing. Training was not the nationally accredited package it is now, and they were part of the first handful of women to become rescue operators in the unit. Lisa remembers taking part in the notable Hume Freeway rescues, including ‘the bus crash’ near Wangaratta in the early 1990s - a complex event still remembered in the district.

Another memory from her time with VICSES was a storm job that was accidentally captured on dash cam. Lisa and her crew had completed a tricky stabilisation using rope and chainsaw work to remove a pesky tree from a house, car, and fence without it causing further damage. Little did they know that their celebratory jumping, back slapping and air punching after completing the job was caught on camera! The footage has since been used as an interesting case study for other responders at the unit - the rope work, not the jumping for joy!

Today, Lisa is an early adopter of technology. She has led Wodonga Unit into the future by mastering the new online cashflow management system, and has spent many hours using WebEx for VICSES meetings. Lisa has also harnessed COVID-19 to coordinate a unit phone-tree, giving unit leaders and members an avenue to connect and engage together in a way they haven’t previously.

“Lisa is a clear example of the VICSES Values in real life,” says North East Regional Trainer Dan Walton.

“She demonstrates credibility and connection to community, the ability to work effectively in a multi-agency response in tough circumstances, local knowledge and real skills, and maintains a focus on well-being and safety.” ■



NORTH

WEST

1 January – 31 March 2020

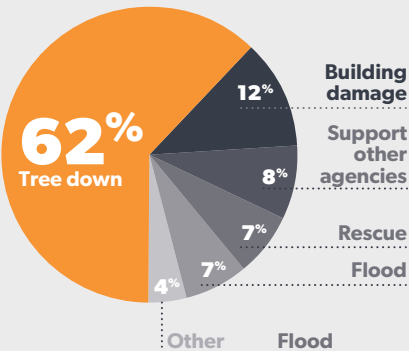


665

Volunteers

905

Requests for assistance



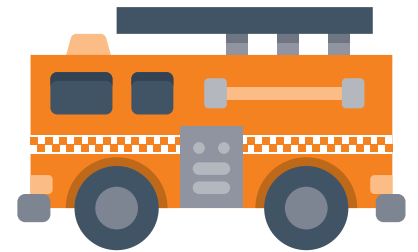
Joint working group for new rescue trucks

Lynette Connor, Manager Assets, State Logistics Centre



Bendigo Regional Office recently hosted a one-day joint working group, combining the Fleet Working Group and Road Crash Rescue - General Rescue Working Group.

18 volunteers and staff met to progress the outcomes by participants who attended the Rescue Truck Workshop held in August last year, and the great work that the Fleet Working Group has done to date in determining the requirement of the new rescue trucks.



The group collectively discussed and reviewed the equipment stowage, future capability requirements including new technology, and explored options for improving the current designs.

The group also reviewed the current contents of the domestic rescue kit, personal protective clothing, equipment and biohazard kit, and the hand hydraulics kits, with the aim of modernising, enhancing and reducing duplication of kit contents. Based on the outcomes of these reviews and discussions, the Road Crash Rescue - General Rescue Working Group will now go on to make recommendations to State Operations. ■





Neighbour Day during COVID-19

Gavin Quinn, Community Resilience Coordinator, North West Region

This year's Neighbour Day took an unexpected twist as COVID-19 and lockdown swept across Victoria.

North West Region had initially been planning a Neighbour Day event at Atkinson Park in Kerang, where many community groups such as VICSES, Lions Club, Country Fire Authority, Ambulance Victoria, and local council would all connect via a cup of 'communit**ea**'

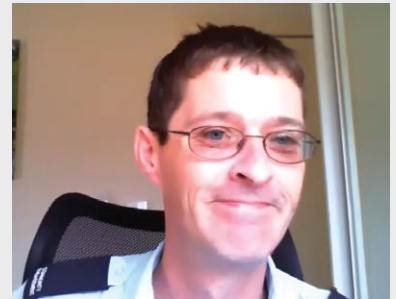
So with communities in lockdown and physical distancing restrictions in place,

many people were staying connected via their computers and smart phones by jumping on social media and video conferencing platforms.

We decided to harness one of these platforms to host an online Neighbour Day event by having a quick conversation over cup of 'communit**ea**', and to chat about alternative ways to connect with the community during COVID-19.

In response to this event, 15 community members joined the conference call – all the way from Gisbourne, through to Rochester, and then up to Robinvale. Participants included a mixture of VICSES volunteers and Neighbourhood House members joining together to celebrate the event.

Thank you to everyone who joined our virtual Neighbour Day celebration. ■



Heathcote Unit welcomes new Unit Controller

Sandra Koole, Heathcote Unit, North West Region

In March, Heathcote Unit welcomed a new Unit Controller, Steve Kern.



Steve is a dual volunteer for VICSES and Country Fire Authority, and also runs his own consultancy business.

North West Regional Controller Mark Cattell and outgoing Unit Controller Marc Pitt presented Steve with his new epaulettes. Marc was also presented with a thank you plaque on the night for his time as Unit Controller.

Marc served as Unit Controller for the past six years, and has worked tirelessly to increase the unit's membership to over 20 volunteers.



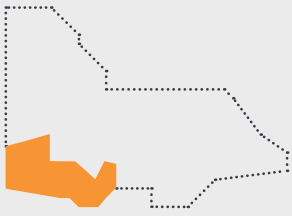
Marc has always lived by the VICSES Value 'Safety drives our decisions', and encourages these Values at every opportunity.



VICSES is my second family. Here we look after one another and share our knowledge," said Marc.

Heathcote Unit would like to thank Marc for his dedication during his time as Unit Controller, and look forward to having Steve on board! ■

Heywood Unit National Volunteer Award



SOUTH

WEST

1 January – 31 March 2020

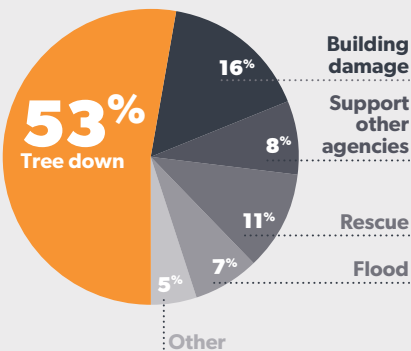


717

Volunteers

686

Requests for assistance



Bess Krause, Community Resilience Coordinator, South West Region

In early 2020, Heywood Unit joined forces with regional staff and the local Country Fire Authority (CFA) Brigade to run a joint recruitment campaign. The unit had previously had as little as eight members, and throughout this very successful recruitment, were able to almost double their membership numbers!

In addition to this wonderful outcome, the campaign also strengthened the working relationship between Heywood Unit and the Balmoral CFA Brigade.

In recognition of the unit's hard work and their success in rallying the community to support their membership, Heywood Unit was the recipient of a National Volunteer Award, presented by The Hon. Dan Tehan MP to Unit Controller Charlie Debono and Deputy Controller Stephen Collins. Assistant Chief Officer/Regional Manager Cain Trist and Volunteer Support Officer Bruce Humphries were also in attendance.

"We were absolutely chuffed," said Heywood Unit Controller Charlie Debono on the win.

"It was great to work closely with regional staff and the CFA on the campaign, and it's the teamwork that made it a success".

The new members are now General Rescue qualified, and are moving into specialist training such as Road Crash Rescue. Heywood Unit Controller Charlie Debono praised their hard work and the whole unit.

"They're doing really well and have been contributing to the running of the unit," said Charlie.

"The whole unit is doing well, and we are getting some really good feedback on our members from the other emergency service workers who have worked with our team". ■



The blended world of training!

Michael Boerner, Regional Trainer, South West Region

The blended world of training is here – combining face-to-face and online training. It's great to see that VICSES volunteers have willingly taken up the challenge of this newly introduced way of training, which commenced as a result of COVID-19 restrictions.

Online training has provided a platform to deliver the theory sessions of some of our courses in a different fashion, while ensuring we are still able to have discussion and learn. It has lent itself well to the current pandemic environment, and I believe we can utilise this form of training for other areas as we move forward.

We have received some great feedback from some of our volunteers about this blended learning approach, including the General Rescue Group from VICSES Port Campbell Unit, who are finalising their studies prior to their assessment, and the Camperdown Cluster Group, who have done all of their course work online!

Online training should not replace face-to-face training. However, it can certainly become a component by enhancing the overall training experience. By delivering some components online our members will have less travel time, giving us more time to focus on the practical parts of training.

I look forward to doing more in the blended space of training, and also sharing resources and learnings within our network. ■

VICSES Corio Unit Controller presented with Fred Grove Memorial Award

Melanie Gill, Community Resilience Coordinator, South West Region



Congratulations to Corio Unit Controller Brendan Marretta, who was the VICSES recipient of the Fred Grove Memorial Award in March.

Celebrations were held at the Rotary Club of Lara District, where one recipient from VICSES, Ambulance Victoria, Country Fire Authority (CFA) and Victoria Police were each awarded for their dedication and commitment to their community.

The award is in memory of Fred Grove, who was a much-loved and highly regarded member of Lara's emergency services and broader community. Fred was a CFA volunteer for 52 years, served with Victoria Police for over 40 years, and was an active Rotarian for more than 25 years.

Brendan was recognised for his dedication and passion for supporting the community, and the sacrifices he has made in ensuring

he and his team provide a high level of emergency response.

"It was an honour to receive this award in Fred Grove's name. In speaking to our fellow CFA volunteers and a range of community members, it was really clear the significant contributions and impact that Fred made and had on his community," said Brendan.

Brendan is a driven, well respected leader and role-model within Corio Unit. Joining the unit in 2016, he developed himself and his skills quickly, gaining an extensive range of specialist skills and competencies. He joined the management team as a Deputy Controller in 2018, before becoming the Unit Controller in 2019.

Brendan has consistently made himself available to respond to requests for assistance, attending almost 200 requests in 2019 alone. His skills and experience in road rescue led him to represent VICSES in the Australasian Road Rescue Organisation (ARRO) competition in 2018, and he shares his knowledge with members as a road rescue trainer.

Brendan's unwavering passion for his community and in ensuring Corio Unit can support them in emergencies is the reason that Brendan very much deserved to be awarded the Fred Grove Memorial Award. ■

Geelong Unit Proud to participate in Pako Festa 2020!

Melanie Gill, Community Resilience Coordinator, South West Region

On Saturday 27 February, members of the Geelong Unit participated in Pako Festa, which is Victoria's biggest free celebration of cultural diversity. Members attended the day in support of the diversity of the community that they live and volunteer in, and were fortunate enough to show their truck in the parade.

Pako Festa was first held in 1983, and celebrates and highlights the extraordinary contribution of individuals, cultural groups

and multicultural communities in Geelong and across Australia.

Usually the signature VICSES orange is a stand out – but not at Pako Festa! The parade was a wonderful vibrant stream of colours, accompanied by music, dance and performance. The stages were constantly full of life, showcasing the wonderful diversity our community has to offer.

VICSES members had a chance to participate in the parade, and also walk around the festival and chat to a number of the stallholders, festival participants, and spectators. They also got

the opportunity to sample a wide range of delicious foods!

Geelong Unit acknowledged that it is extremely important that everyone in the community is aware of not only VICSES, but all local emergency and other support services available. The unit was extremely proud to participate in the festival, as the values of diversity, acceptance and harmony really ring true for them.

Geelong Unit and surrounding units look forward to an ongoing association with this great event. ■

OPERATIONAL UPDATES

IMT volunteer deployments

By Natalie Stanway, IMT Capability Officer, VHO

During January and February 2020, 15 volunteers who are on agreed Incident Management Team (IMT) development pathways were deployed into a range of IMT roles, some with multiple deployments.

The roles they filled included Operations Officer, Management Support Officer, Mapping Officer, Logistics Officer and Information and Warnings Officer, among other roles. Deployment durations ranged from one to seven days, with the majority of these at Incident Control Centres in the fire-ravaged Gippsland and North East Regions.

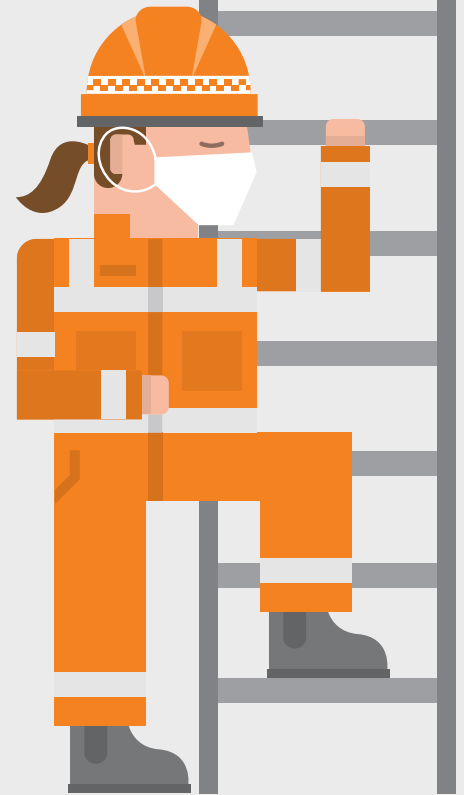
These 15 volunteers clocked up 62 days of deployment between them, once again proving their worth beyond any doubt. The feedback provided on their contributions and performance was overwhelmingly positive. This is a perfect illustration of demonstrating our Values, in particular 'We pride ourselves on our credibility'.

The following is a great example of this positive feedback received, provided by a fire agency on one of our volunteers who worked in extremely large and complex fire IMT:



I was very impressed with their ability to quickly adapt to the fast moving situation, to quickly acquaint themselves with our agency-specific systems, to quickly develop and maintain appropriate situational awareness, and to build a rapport with other IMT team members.

The quality of their situation reporting was excellent, and they were able to effectively



capture and report information regarding fire extent and behaviour, strategies and tactics, operational response, progress of impact assessment and community relief activities.”

Following their deployment during this time, six of these volunteers went on to become accredited at a Level 2 panel in May, which is the first time in the panel's history!

Well done to each of these deployed volunteers who executed their duties with professionalism. We certainly are proud of the way you represented VICSES in such challenging circumstances. ■

Replacement EAS pagers & network upgrades

Josh Gamble, Operations Manager – Operational Communications, VHO

VICSES, alongside our partner agencies, were recently part of an enhanced pager trial following feedback provided by members on the current Emergency Alerting System (EAS) alpha pager.

VICSES was represented by 50 members, both volunteers and staff, from a mix of units across the state who had previously reported Observation Reports for coverage deficiencies.

The new enhancements that were trialled on the enhanced EAS pager included:

- Enhanced volume of the pager
- LED flashing light for page notification and unread pagers
- Engineering improvements to reduce the number of corrupted messages with increased sensitivity
- User selectable capcodes

The overwhelming feedback from participants was that the trial pagers met mission critical operational requirements, and are looking forward to receiving the new enhanced pagers as soon as possible.

These enhancements to the EAS Pager, coupled with additional transmitter sites being built through the project, will see additional coverage in the following towns, which are due to be completed within the next 10 months:

- Berwick
- Drysdale
- Ocean Grove
- Coleraine
- Frankston
- Eskdale
- Maryknoll (completed)
- Beechworth
- Patchewollock
- Officer

The pagers will not be ready for distribution until late this year, and will see a rollout commence early in 2021.

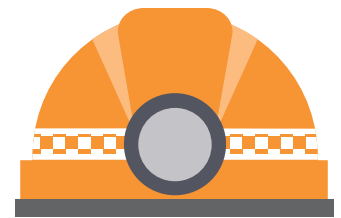
Further information will be released in Operations Updates as the project progresses. Should you have any comments or enquiries, please contact the team at comms@ses.vic.gov.au. ■

REQUESTS FOR ASSISTANCE

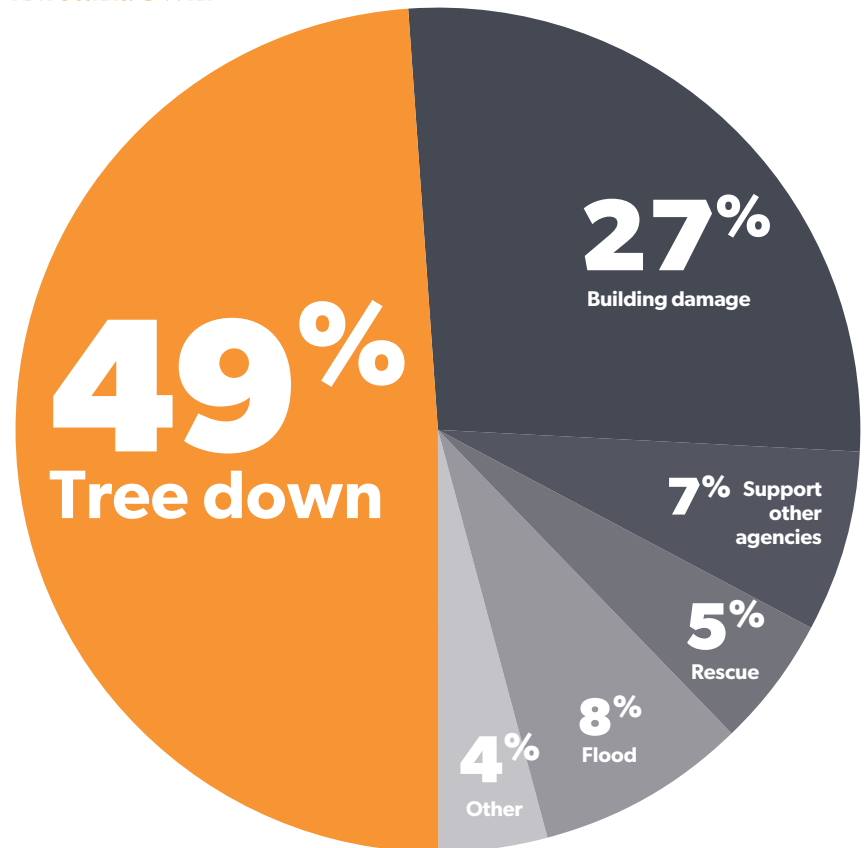
1 January – 31 March 2020

Total

12,324



Breakdown



PROJECTS – WHAT'S NEW

Flood Observer App

By Jo Kegg, Emergency Management Planning & Risk Officer, VHO

VICSES teamed up with Snap Send Solve in 2019 to pilot a community flood observer app. A working group of both internal and external stakeholders gathered to work through the risks, issues and considerations to support the app use and implementation.

The app and supporting resources were trialled during several simulated flood exercises in the South West Region earlier this year. All feedback was collated and changes were made where possible to the app, resources, and operationalisation processes.

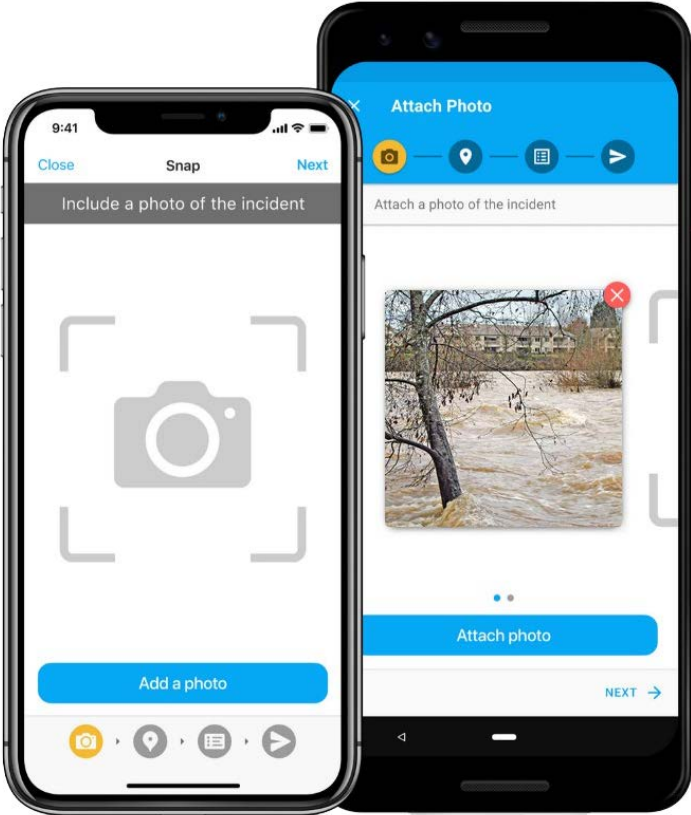
The app has since been released to regional champions who are supporting the implementation of its use to selected trusted flood observers.

VICSES also teamed up with Emergency Management Victoria to integrate the observations received with Emergency

Management Common Operating Picture (EM-COP). This provides incident management personnel with easy access to the incoming local intelligence during flood events.

It is intended that the use of this app will improve access to local knowledge, and will assist in maximising public information communications and flood response efforts.

With reports from the Bureau of Meteorology suggesting Victoria will receive high levels of rainfall this winter, the release is perfect timing to now test the app during a flood event. ■



Windows Refresh Project

By Jo Taylor, Project Manager, VHO



If working remotely and at home during COVID-19 has taught us nothing else, it is the importance of computer hardware and software to allow us to continue to do our jobs and serve the community.

With the support of the VICSES Board, new laptops, tablets and desktops will be rolled out to all volunteer units, Incident Control Centres, Divisional Command Points, the State Control Centre, vehicles, and most staff this year.

The Windows Refresh project will also update our software to Windows 10 and Office 2016. This is to accommodate members who are using devices that are eight years old, and the software running on them has been outdated by improved versions.

It's a mammoth task, but the project team is being ably assisted by volunteers and staff from across Victoria who have recently completed the trialling of devices from the two vendor finalists. A preferred supplier will be chosen soon, and work

on a rollout schedule can then commence.

Stay tuned for additional updates as the project continues! ■

Businesses to prepare for floods!



By Jo Kegg, Emergency Management Planning & Risk Officer, VHO

Castlemaine business 'The Mill' and the surrounding area is no stranger to flooding. The business is located next to Barkers Creek, which is subject to flash flooding during extreme rainfall events. Because of this, The Mill's owner Phil McConachy contacted VICSES and the North Central Catchment Management Authority (NCCMA) to learn about the flood risks. Flood studies and local knowledge helped Phil to develop measures to prepare and

mitigate potential flooding to his business.

Phil's business ethos is simple - rather than rely on emergency services for help when they are in great demand during a flood event, he would prefer that his business and staff are prepared to help themselves, allowing emergency services to assist other community members in need.

VICSES was so impressed by the flood preparation undertaken by The Mill that we decided to produce a short video to encourage other business owners to prepare for flooding. The Mill,

VICSES and NCCMA staff enjoyed a day of filming the property and discussing the excellent flood mitigation work that the business has undertaken, as well as their Business Flood Plan that helps to prepare for before, during

and after a flood event.

Our Business Flood Planning Toolkit has been developed to support local businesses to take action to improve their flood risk. ■



Business Flood Planning Toolkit

New resources are now available on the VICSES website to support local businesses to take actions to improve their flood risk. This includes a Business Flood Plan, planning checklist, video case-study of The Mill, and how Suncorp is assisting this initiative.

You can view all of this content at www.ses.vic.gov.au, and head to **Get Ready > At Work – Preparing Your Business**.



WELLBEING, HEALTH & SAFETY

Donating blood during COVID-19

By Alison Wright, Health and Wellbeing Coordinator, VHO

Lifeblood is preparing for the annual cold and flu season. This year, with the emergence of COVID-19, the nation’s blood supply could come under pressure if existing donors become unavailable and regular donations become disrupted.

Lifeblood have implemented thorough precautions across blood donation centres Australia-wide to ensure their donors are well looked after, including a strict screening process, wellness checks upon arrival (non-contact temperature taken and questions asked about your wellbeing, travel and other factors), stringent hygiene, and the implementation of social distancing across all centres.

Facts and figures

29,000

blood donations are needed every week.

1 in 3

people will receive blood during their life.

1 in 30

Australian’s donate blood.

Every donation has the potential to save

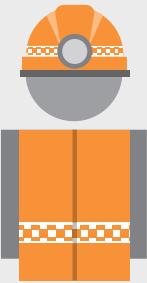
THREE LIVES.

If you are concerned about your safety when giving blood, please check out the information on the Red Cross Lifeblood Corona Virus Update page at www.donateblood.com.au.

Calling all VICSES members



The 2020 Red Cross Emergency Services Lifeblood Challenge is running from 1 June to 31 August. So if you’re eligible to donate blood, start rolling up your sleeve and please get involved. We’d love to beat our impressive 2019 VICSES tally of 287 donations.



Workplace inspections

July 2018 – April 2019

174

July 2019 – April 2020

156



Injuries

July 2018 – April 2019

77

July 2019 – June 2020

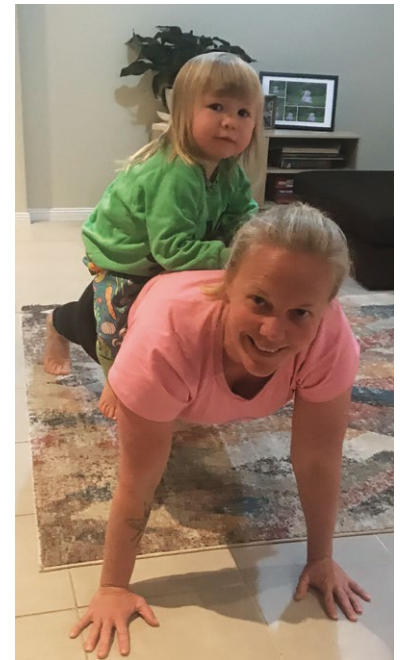
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Healthwatch @ Home

By Alison Wright, Health and Wellbeing Coordinator, VHO

With Healthwatch visits put on hold due to Covid-19, the Healthwatch team decided to come to you by developing our own space for health and wellbeing support via WebEx.



Our first Healthwatch @ Home exercise spaces were launched in April, and provided weekly workouts, exercise tips, competitions and nutrition ideas. Over 100 VICSES members signed up to get moving, with most participants battling the balance between working from home, kids at home, and staying fit and healthy. Our trainers designed creative ways for people to keep fit and

healthy to suit each kind of lifestyle.

Physical activity is important because makes us feel better! Those feel good endorphins help to boost our mood and feelings of wellbeing, in addition to offsetting stress and anxiety. And the best part is that it doesn't take much to reap the rewards.

We are looking forward to seeing you all in person once

our Healthwatch visits resume, and have been designing some brand new programs to get things started again. In the meantime, we'll see you in our WebEx spaces and on our Health & Wellbeing Facebook page. ■

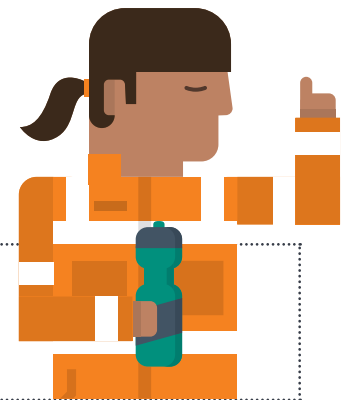
How to get involved:

- Book your appointment to donate by calling **13 14 95**, or visit www.donateblood.com.au.
- When at the donor centre, tell your nurse that you wish to join the 'SES Victoria Lifeblood Team'.
- Information can be accessed via the **Hub > My State > Health and Wellbeing > Events > Blood Challenge**. ■

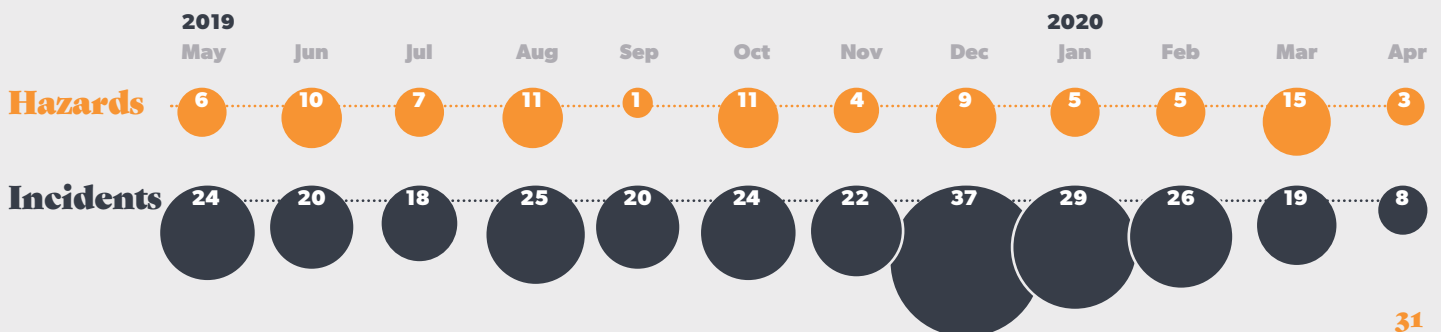


More information

You can contact us at Health&safety@ses.vic.gov.au.



YEAR AT A GLANCE



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Social Media Community Consultation for Local Flood Guides

By Jane Fontana, Community Resilience Coordinator, East Region

Recent restrictions due to COVID-19 have meant that we have had to cease face-to-face community consultation on projects for now. But in the East Region, this hasn't held up the production of priority local flood guides (LFG) for high risk locations, trialling consultations though Facebook instead.

Draft guides for Traralgon and Trafalgar were loaded as posts on the East Region Facebook page, accessible via a link to Google Drive. Further conversations regarding this have been supportive of locating draft guides on the VICSES website. This is so we have a secure and familiar platform for draft guides

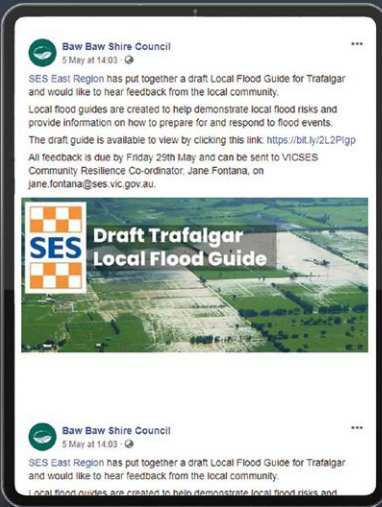
to be viewed from, with the added bonus of people being taken to the website and the possibility of them spending more time on the site as a result.

Some research was also undertaken on local community groups and agencies that are on Facebook, and they were tagged in the original post.

Analytics on Facebook allow you to track the number of engagements and people reached for each post. By the end of the first week, the Traralgon LFG had reached over 2,500 people and received 611 post engagements.

Some community groups and agencies tagged in the original post also shared it, including the Traralgon Community Development Association, Traralgon Chamber of Commerce, Traralgon Community Noticeboard, Latrobe City Councillor Kellie O'Callaghan, VICSES Morwell Unit, and more.

Trafalgar also received great coverage, but less than



Traralgon due to being a smaller regional location.

These analytics provide qualitative and quantitative data, and take advantage of the increased usage of social media and other technology during COVID-19. Paying to 'boost' a post on Facebook to reach more people and certain demographics is also something to be considered in the future.

This type of consultation is only in its early stages, but with further exploration could prove to be very effective. ■



Community Resilience Strategy Renewal

By Kate White, Director Community Resilience and Communications, VHO

VICSES is proud to release the Community Resilience Strategy Renewal, celebrating our ongoing commitment to achieving community resilience, and extending the approach introduced in the 2016-19 Strategy for a further three years.

The Strategy Renewal builds on the key achievements and lessons learnt during the initial term, and provides a road map for the design and development of community resilience activities, and delivery and evaluation of programs and resources throughout the next three years.

It reaffirms our commitment to better understanding community attitudes, key drivers and barriers, and details how we will continue to join with our communities before, during and after emergency events, develop positive partnerships and provide timely, effective reporting to the Victorian Government.

The Strategy Renewal strategic objectives remain the same - to build capacity, increase collaboration, and foster

connections. The work of our Community Engagement Facilitators will help us achieve these strategic objectives and increase community resilience.

Background

On 29 July 2016, the Minister for Emergency Services, Hon. James Merlino MP, launched the 2016-19 Strategy; an important enabling element of VICSES' vision to create Safer Communities – Together.

For VICSES, the 2016-19 Strategy was a landmark piece of work that helped to cement our evolution from an emergency response-centric organisation to one with a broader focus that included our efforts to build community resilience before, during and after emergencies. The 2016-19 Strategy detailed our plan for:

- How we will ensure we are accountable to deliver on our corporate imperatives.
- How we will join and connect with communities.
- How we will develop positive partnerships.
- How we will meet our traditional and emerging accountabilities as an emergency service organisation.
- How we will provide and share timely, effective reporting that is meaningful.

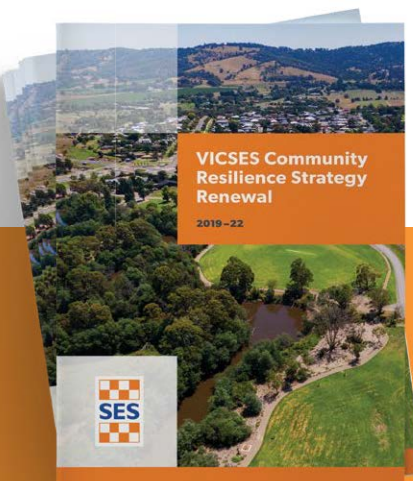
We collated annual findings and results throughout the duration of the 2016-19 Strategy to support continuous improvements of programs and initiatives during its lifetime.

These are publicly available as Yearly Outcomes Reports on our website at www.ses.vic.gov.au and under the tab **Who We Are > Resilience**.

Each Outcomes Report presents key highlights, activities and outcomes from the 2016-19 Strategy's implementation, including our achievements against the strategic objectives and reports on the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

The Strategy Renewal extends the approach introduced in the 2016-19 Strategy for a further three years.

You can view the Community Resilience Strategy Renewal by visiting the **Hub > My State > Community > Community Resilience Strategy**. ■



MEDIA

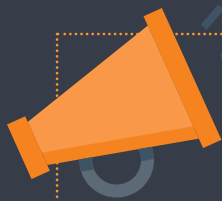
January to March 2020

Media releases:

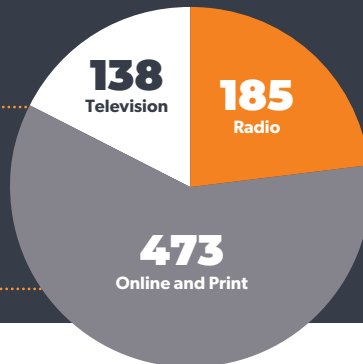
- Mallecoota heroes flying to Melbourne for AFL State of Origin game
- We work as one in ACT state of emergency
- High tech sonar - a string in the bow of Mallee VICSES units
- VICSES volunteers still powering through after huge storms
- Amazing! Over 80% of VICSES units assist during Victoria's fire crisis

Campaigns and events:

- Neighbour Day
- Cricket – Bushfire Bash
- AFL State of Origin Bushfire Support game
- International Women's Day 2020
- AFL pre-season opener – Coin Toss



Mentions of VICSES in the news:



New VICSES Image and Photography guide

By Gabi Barkmeyer, Corporate Communications Officer, VHO

VICSES has launched a new Image and Photography Guide.

The VICSES Image and Photography Guide is designed to help our volunteers and staff to take and select photographs that:

- Are consistent with the VICSES brand and style
- Portray correct personal protective clothing and equipment (PPC&E) at all times
- Depict safe work practices and accurate procedures
- Receive proper talent consent
- Are compliant with Victorian Child Safe Standards
- Meet the minimum resolution requirements

The guide also includes helpful tips and resources to help you get the best out of your photography, including:

- Instructions for using and contributing to the VICSES Image Library of approved and endorsed images
- Advice for planning your own photoshoot
- A range of tips for capturing visibly appealing photos

You can view the Image and Photography Guide via the **Hub > My State > Media and Communications > Image Library**.

For further information on anything within the guide, please contact the VICSES Media and Communications team at media@ses.vic.gov.au.

Social media highlights:

FACEBOOK



Reach:
198,035

Post clicks:
26,299

Reactions, comments and shares:
3,022

Neighbour Day – encouraging the community to stay connected during COVID-19

TWITTER



Impressions:
9,971

Media engagements:
527

Total engagements:
647

Thanking our volunteers for their response during the bushfires.

INSTAGRAM

Impressions:
3,143

Reach:
1,820

Comments, likes and saves:
214



Task Force Alpha story featured in the latest issue of Community Matters.

LINKEDIN



Impressions:
4,448

Clicks:
596

Reactions, comments and shares:
126

International Women's Day.

INFORMATION SERVICES (IS) UPDATE

Is it June already?

Yes, yes it is. I don't know about you all, but I feel like it was only last week we were seeing an ease in the bushfires and pondering some relief and a return to 'norm'.

With the onset of COVID-19 after the bushfires and everyone having to make so many adjustments, time has flown by. And here we are, coming into what is going to be one of, if not the wettest season.

And what an amazing organisation of people we are. The resilience and strength that I see across our staff and volunteers increases my pride for our organisation every day.

I know that it has been quite a challenging year for everyone, and hopefully our IS team has been making life a little easier for you all. Certainly the team have been working hard to ensure the smoothest transition possible for people to be accommodated with their different working from

home arrangements. The supply chain has been greatly affected, so we have had to make some decisions on priority. But I think that getting support from you all in understanding this has been a great help - so we thank you for your patience.

One of the most pleasing things that people have increased and taken advantage of is the new video and teleconferencing system Webex. In fact, we are now starting to get a few units deciding to ramp up their facilities to incorporate it a lot more for training and other purposes. I can't stress enough how important it is for all units that want to strengthen their conferencing capability, to read the Unified Communications page on the Hub, and then consult with our service desk team

to define what you are trying to achieve. We have saved money and time for quite a few units that have sought our advice on what to do, and others have been given assistance because they missed out on training or didn't quite understand how to participate, particularly using their mobile phones.

If you are a unit that has a number of members that missed out on training or you have a lot of new members, then you might want to get some training organised. Raise a service request by emailing ictservice@ses.vic.gov.au or by phoning **1300 737 101**, and we will help you get the right assistance.

Silvia Silverii
Chief Information Officer
VICSES

MEET THE IS TEAM:



TOM WRIGHT

Hi Tom! Congratulations on your new role as Manager Support Services within the IS team. Can you tell us a bit about the role?

Thank you very much. The role is a new one within the organisation - it was recognised as a gap in the IS team, and I thought my efforts and experience over the past four years lent me well to the job.

The role coordinates the day-to-day operations of the IS team – from the Service Desk, to our field visits, to working closely with our vendors and partners to ensure successful service delivery for all things IS.

What are you most looking forward to in your new role, and are there any challenges?

The biggest challenge for me is going to be stepping away from technical work. My whole career I've been a technical resource, so going into management is certainly going to be a big change for me, but one I already love. I'm fortunate enough to work in a great team with fantastic knowledge, and just generally brilliant to work with. So that, along with their support, is definitely making the transition smooth.

What are some of the memorable changes that you've seen in the IS field in VICSES?

I've really enjoyed the constant progression of our department - our processes and business practices have improved greatly over the last couple of years, and the technology we've implemented, such as WebEx, has been really well thought-out and is fit for purpose. COVID-19 has really highlighted that!

Outside of work, how do you like to unwind?

Football! The proper football I mean, which I definitely don't call soccer. I play for North Melbourne Athletic, although I'm not too far off calling it a day as the post-game soreness nearly lasts a week these days! ■

Updated or New VICSES Policies
By Ross Eford, Manager Information Security & Governance, VHO

VICSES is constantly reviewing and assessing its policy framework to ensure the guidance it provides is relevant and up-to-date. To this end, a number of VICSES policies have recently been developed or reviewed, amended and updated. You can view these policies by visiting the [Hub > Library > Policies and Standing Orders](#). ■

Thank you SES volunteers



**WEAR ORANGE
WEDNESDAY**

**20th
MAY**

#ThankyouSES