

AUTUMN 2023

Community Matters

VICSES

EDITION 22

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Emergency Service Medal Recipients

Western Australia deployments



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Front Cover:

Manningham Unit volunteer Kay Jayaweera for International Women's Day.



The Victoria State Emergency Service respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the lands and waters. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

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MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER FOR EMERGENCY SERVICES

Welcome to the first edition
of *Community Matters* for 2023.

I would like to start by congratulating the remarkable VICSES volunteers who have been recognised for their distinguished work in this year's Australia Day honours list.

Charlie Debono, Deputy and former Controller, Heywood Unit and Leanne Boyd, Controller, Ouyen Unit both received the Emergency Services Medal (ESM) for their distinguished service in the emergency management sector.

The diverse nature of emergency responses required by VICSES takes exceptional leaders, and Charlie and Leanne are well-deserving of this prestigious medal. You have both had profound impacts on your communities and played a big part in helping VICSES grow and develop into the organisation it is today.

I would like to share my sincerest appreciation for the Victorian emergency management personnel who were deployed to support local emergency services and communities in Western Australia due to flooding caused by ex-Tropical Cyclone Ellie. These committed VICSES personnel travelled to Perth, Broome, and Fitzroy Crossing to support communities in a range of roles, including incident management and air operations.

Victoria has seen first-hand the impacts of widespread flooding in recent months, and the VICSES

crews were well-prepared to provide invaluable support to our Western Australian counterparts. This was also an opportunity for Victoria to repay the incredible assistance Western Australian emergency services personnel provided in support of our own flood response.

The sacrifices you and your families make to support our neighbouring communities cannot be understated. I also want to recognise the partners and employers who take on additional responsibilities to enable these deployments. We appreciate not just the unwavering dedication of our volunteers and staff, but also their families and employers, who support what you do so that you can keep turning out to support our communities.

Looking ahead this season, we are reminded of another great sacrifice you make to support the efforts to minimise fatigue-related road trauma, with VICSES volunteers contributing thousands of hours each year towards hosting Driver Reviver sites. We know holiday periods increase the risk on our roads, and VICSES volunteers provide a critical service to Victorian drivers, responding to between 1,300-1,400 Road Crash Rescues each year.

Whilst I hope many of you will be taking some time to rest and recoup over the Easter break, I want to sincerely thank those who volunteer to ensure that drivers have somewhere to stop, rest and refresh, to ensure they arrive safely at their destinations.

As your Minister and as a Victorian, I'm incredibly proud of our SES units across the state and the support you give to the community.

Jaclyn Symes
Minister for Emergency Services



Welcome

Hello everyone, and
welcome to the first edition of
Community Matters for 2023.

Firstly, I'd like to congratulate VICSES Heywood Unit Deputy Controller, Charles Debono and VICSES Ouyen Unit Controller, Leanne Boyd, who were both honoured with the prestigious Emergency Services Medal on 26 January. Both Charles and Leanne have dedicated over 40 years to supporting VICSES and their communities, playing an instrumental role in large-scale operations, establishing strong relationships with partner agencies and community groups, and expanding their unit's membership. Thank you both for your ongoing commitment to our emergency services sector and your communities. Several of our volunteers and units also received awards as part of their respective municipalities, which was fantastic to see across social media. Read more about our awardees on page 6.

On 8 March we celebrated International Women's Day, an important day of recognition to acknowledge the incredible achievements of women across our sector, and our wider communities. Aligning with our VICSES Gender Equality Action Plan, it's important that we continue to work together to

identify and remove systemic barriers to achieve gender equality and create a diverse and inclusive workforce for all people. You can read more about just some of the incredible women of VICSES on pages 4-5.

In February I was fortunate to join our members once again at the 2023 Midsumma Pride March. It was fantastic to attend alongside our members and partner agencies to show support for our LGBTIQ+ communities, demonstrating one of our key organisational Values – 'Together, we are VICSES'. You can view all of the celebrations on pages 8-9.

Last but not least, I would like to extend my gratitude to those VICSES members who were deployed to Western Australia in January to support the state's significant flooding event. Your service in Perth, Broome, and Fitzroy Crossing as part of our Victorian contingent is greatly appreciated. Read more on pages 22-23.

I hope you enjoy this edition, and stay safe.

Kind regards,

Stephen Griffin
CEO Victoria State
Emergency Service





FEATURE

International Women's Day 2023

At VICSES, we have many amazing women who contribute significantly to our organisation and the community.

We are proud of our commitment to promoting diversity and working toward a more gender-balanced workplace, with 33% membership represented by women across Victoria.

Here's a look at just some of the amazing women at VICSES:



Kimba and Phil Wall from the VICSES Chelsea Unit (middle) joined with members including the Emergency Management Commissioner, Andrew Crisp at the Emergency Services Foundation IWD event in Melbourne on Monday March 6.

ASHIKA MENEZES

**Volunteer,
VICSES Greater Dandenong Unit**

Volunteering was always something Ashika wanted to do. When she came to Australia from India and saw the devastation caused by the Queensland floods and bushfires in 2017, it triggered her to apply.

"From the time I joined, it's been amazing. There's no pressure to do anything you're not comfortable with and you can give as little or as much time as you want."

"I also think it's important to remember it's not just giving back – you also get to learn a lot for yourself. There are certifications you can do through VICSES for free that can help you upskill in other areas of your life" she said.

Support from senior members at the unit has meant a lot for Ashika. "You can see they put in a lot of effort to check in and see if you're okay. Over time these simple gestures can easily be forgotten, but I see there's a conscious effort to check in with members regularly. It's also the little things, like putting hygiene products in the women's bathrooms, that makes all the difference."

As for her favourite event on the VICSES Greater Dandenong calendar: "I really enjoy our Christmas parties – no work, no training, awards, and a lot of food!"



KATELYNNE SORO

**Volunteer,
VICSES Southern Metro Support Unit**

It was on a trip to Queensland during the state's severe flooding event in 2022, that Katelonne Soro decided to join VICSES.

Now volunteering with the Southern Metro Support Unit, Katelonne is trained in incident management and situational analysis reporting, which includes in-office operational roles such as calling third parties to organise what resources are needed, and being deployed to Incident Control Centres across the state.

She attributes much of her success at VICSES to the support of Southern Metro Support Unit Controller, Roisin Lamprell. "She sets an impressive level and standard of commitment, always putting her hand up if no one else can" Katelonne said. "Roisin is definitely the 'go-to lady', a walking encyclopedia who really gets the team going."

It's role models like Roisin who are important for young women looking to join the service. "I think there's a preconceived notion of VICSES as a bunch of males with chainsaws outside in the rain. Having role models and representation of women doing those more difficult jobs is really important," said Katelonne.

"As a mum of three kids aged 10 and under, time constraints are a big issue for me. The online training meant I could do it in my own time, for example when the kids had gone to bed. I could pause and go back, it was great" she said.

For those thinking about joining, Katelonne encourages them to just give it a go. "It doesn't matter if you don't know how to fill a sandbag – everybody's there to help each other."



KAY JAYaweera

**Volunteer,
VICSES Manningham Unit**

After deployments to New South Wales, Echuca, Mildura and Swan Hill last year, VICSES Manningham Unit Team Leader Kay Jayaweera is a pro at fixing tiled roofs and easily fitting into manholes.

After arriving in Australia 10 years ago from Sri Lanka, Kay noticed VICSES crews at a community event, and her journey to eventually applying with the Broadmeadows and later Manningham Units, began. "It's like a family away from family. Everyone is so welcoming and knowledgeable; I've felt really supported as I completed my training," said Kay.

When posting about what she gets up to with VICSES on social media, Kay said a lot of her friends often say 'you did what?!'

"But if I can do it, then anyone can - what's stopping you?" said Kay. "You might be very good at it; you just don't know it yet!"

For Kay, giving back to the community is something that she takes pride in, and International Women's Day is a reminder to our communities that we're moving forward.

"It's about learning from our mistakes and remembering the journey that women have been on, as well as the contributions we all continue to make," said Kay.

"We're so lucky at Manningham Unit to have such supportive senior members, and I'm proud to say I'm a member."



REBECCA DO

**Volunteer,
VICSES Greater Dandenong Unit**

“When I was 10 years old, I saw VICSES at a community event and went up to them asking when I could start. They said to come back when I was a bit older, so here I am now!”

Two years of volunteering with VICSES has been Rebecca's way of giving back and doing something rewarding for herself. As a mum of three and working full-time, the unit's Monday night trainings are Rebecca's 'me-time.'

"It's something I want to do to upskill for myself and I want to be able to teach my kids also. I have one daughter and if I can teach her to cut a branch properly or other skills, I want to be able to do that, so I find the time."

One of her most memorable jobs was attending a leaky roof incident at an aged care facility. Despite not being able to do much, the residents were so happy to see the crew. Rebecca said it's experiences like these and support from unit members that makes it all the more worthwhile. "I feel really comfortable at this unit and supported. Someone's always asking if you're ok and if you need help with anything."

In addition to turning-out to respond, Rebecca values the unit's training nights. "I know this is cliché, but I enjoy our training nights. We're all together, having a good time, we're learning, and those are the best days. We put our skillsets together and get the job done." ■

GENERAL NEWS

2023 Emergency Service Medal Recipients

By David Murphy, Media Officer, VHO

This year, two VICSES volunteers were recognised with an Emergency Service Medal for their distinguished work as part of the 2023 honour list.

VICSES Ouyen Unit Controller, Leanne Boyd and VICSES Heywood Unit Deputy and former Controller, Charles Debono were awarded the medals in January, following a combined 80 years of experience and dedication to their communities.

Awarded by the Governor-General, the Emergency Service Medal was instituted in 1999 to recognise distinguished service as a member of an Australian emergency service.

VICSES Chief Officer Operations, Tim Wiebusch said "Leanne and Charles have both have played a big part in helping VICSES grow and develop as an organisation over the last four decades, as

well as being instrumental leaders in their units and communities."

Since joining VICSES in December 1982, Charles Debono has supported and contributed to VICSES and to the wider community for 40 years as a dedicated volunteer, and as a Deputy Controller and Controller within VICSES, for the Heywood and Portland Units. He has made a valuable contribution as a strong advocate of road crash rescue training, skills maintenance, and for volunteers.

Commencing in October 1982, Leanne Boyd has supported and contributed to VICSES as a dedicated volunteer for 40 years, and as a

leader of significance at her unit, across the Sunraysia District, and in the wider region. Her work has been the key driver in moving VICSES Ouyen Unit from a very small membership to a thriving community-based organisation, building relationships with other emergency services and local community groups.

VICSES Chief Officer Operations Tim Wiebusch said, "We are proud of our Emergency Service Medal recipients who are well-deserving of this prestigious medal. To receive such an award is a tribute from the people of Australia to those who dedicate their lives to service. VICSES is grateful to them both for their commitment and self-sacrifice, and we thank them". ■



CHARLES DEBONO



LEANNE BOYD



Photo credit:
VICSES Manningham Unit

Stepping back in time...

In the spirit of International Women's Day, we're shining a light on Pat Woolmer, who joined VICSES in 1969 and became the Senior Communications Officer for the Doncaster and Templestowe Units. In 1978, she was the first woman elected into the Australian Institute of Emergency Services – meaning she could 'attend meetings and put forward ideas.' We've come a long way since then – go Pat! ■



Share with us

If you have a photo to share in our Stepping back in time feature, email your submission along with a description to publications@ses.vic.gov.au

VICSES marks 40th anniversary of Ash Wednesday bushfires

By David Murphy, Media Officer, VHO

Content Warning: This story may contain elements that can be triggering for survivors or surviving family members of the Ash Wednesday tragedy.

On February 16, we marked the 40th anniversary of one of the deadliest fire emergencies in our state's history, during which many of our VICSES units were deployed to assist.

Then, as now, VICSES crews worked tirelessly to supply resources and logistics, clear roads, and evacuate residents. Although a harrowing memory which is marked in Victoria's history, it demonstrates how communities can come together in times of need, and

how we work as one across the emergency management sector to keep communities safe.

We spoke to three currently serving, or lifetime, members who played a part during the response effort.



VICSES Craigieburn Unit Officer, Kevin O'Callaghan

"It was one of the few times in my life I was scared," recalls VICSES Craigieburn Unit Officer, Kevin O'Callaghan. "Everything around you was on fire. All the grass was gone, with only a thick layer of black ash left, topped by glowing trees."

For five nights, the VICSES Craigieburn Unit volunteers set up a staging station at Riddells Creek depot, where trains arrived with water for the tankers. The volunteer crew went into the town centres and worked the distribution points set up to issue clothes and food.

"The ground was like powder," said Kevin. A haunting memory of a dark period in Victoria's history.

VICSES Port Fairy Unit Controller, Steve McDowell

"It was my first operational event, I was 16 years old and still in secondary school when I found myself on the back of a CFA truck - the day following Ash Wednesday - when we dispatched from our small, rural brigade of Spring Creek."

"With my current experience as a member of both agencies, I know that VICSES plays a vital role in freeing up qualified firefighters to go do the job they're trained to do," says Steve.

"When you are dealing with a fast-moving situation, firefighters don't have the opportunity to keep the roads open, transport supplies, door-knock and evacuate people whose lives are threatened," says Steve. "This allows the CFA volunteers to focus on firefighting, as well as protecting vital assets and infrastructure."



VICSES Frankston Unit Controller, Brian McMannis

"We worked very fast to evacuate the nursing home," recalls Brian. "The residents were a bit scared, uneasy about being moved, especially in the back of a VICSES vehicle. Some had dementia, so it was a lot to take."

Travelling in a convoy of two trucks, VICSES crews door-knocked throughout Cockatoo to find that most residents had already left.

Most who answered had made plans to leave. "We passed a Country Fire Authority (CFA) crew travelling by truck in the opposite direction. As we later learned, they were meeting another crew at the bottom of the road. Both trucks were discovered later, burned out."

"None of the firefighters survived," said Brian. "It could have so easily been us."

An important reminder of our commitment to working alongside our emergency service agencies. ■

CAMPAIGNS & EVENTS



VICSES among record-breaking crowds at the 2023 Midsumma Pride March

By Dior Sertori, Senior Advisor Publicity, Events and Partnerships, VHO

In February, VICSES was proud to participate once again as part of the annual Midsumma Pride March, joining approximately 13,000 people who marched through Fitzroy Street in St Kilda.

Reflecting the diversity of the communities we serve and within our own ranks, 40 volunteers from 20 VICSES units and VHO staff took part in the march. A rainbow-adorned heavy rescue truck on loan from VICSES Malvern Unit brought up the rear, a real hit among the crowds.

For Sarah Brennan-Dunn, the first openly transgender VICSES volunteer, the march was “an amazing experience, not just to have the camaraderie of other VICSES volunteers there, but also embracing our diversity with the service and with others in the community.”

“This journey I have been on is not just my journey,” says Sarah, “but everyone who is connected to me as part of my unit, region, state, and those who I meet on deployments.”

Sarah joined VICSES 19 years ago and is an active volunteer at the Sunbury Unit. She mentors new volunteers and has undertaken more than 300 road crash rescue incidents. Sarah was also deployed to Newcastle in 2015 for the Hunter Valley flood event.

VICSES Deputy Chief Officer Capability, David Baker, who marched with the volunteers alongside CEO Steve Griffin, has regularly attended Pride events for the last decade.

“I first attended Pride with the Country Fire Authority, and now as a VICSES Senior Officer,” said David.

Gippsland's Day Out

By Jason Clough, Diversity & Inclusion – Regional Champion, Eastern Region



"The diversity of our volunteer workforce, which is made possible by an inclusive culture, is what gives us our strength and capability now, and into the future."

In addition to attending the march, VICSES also hosted a joint stall alongside other agency partners within the Emergency Management Pride Network Victoria marquee for the Midsumma Carnival. Volunteers from VICSES Heidelberg, Knox, Malvern, Moe, Fawkner, Narre Warren, Wyndham, and Pakenham Units were on hand to answer questions from revellers, which offered a great opportunity to promote recruitment opportunities, network with other stallholders and vendors, and showcase the diversity of our people. ■



In February, our volunteers in Gippsland joined to support Gippsland Day Out (GDO), a celebration of our LGBTIQ+ communities in regional Victoria.

As soon as the day kicked off at midday, we had members of the local community coming up to see us and say hello.

Assistant Chief Officer Eastern Region, Cameron Rothnie was on hand as part of our stall to answer questions about what we do as an agency, recruitment, local flood guides, and the amazing support we receive from AAMI.

The stall itself was brightly coloured reflecting VICSES and eastern region pride with bunting, a banner and tear drop flags flanking either side of the stall. We of course had a selection of pride merch in the way of bandanas, slap bands and fans. Plus, AAMI branded ponchos and draw string sports bags which were kindly donated for this event and very well received.

GDO attracted over 2,500 people who attend the event over the course of the day. We had several hundred people visit our stall and other emergency service stalls. Everyone thoroughly enjoyed the entertainment throughout the day, visiting the stalls and enjoying a bite to eat.

"There was great collaboration and conversation between all the ESO agencies that attended on Saturday. The community who visited our stall was also very interested in what VICSES does – this was reflected in the types of questions we were asked throughout the day" said a spokesperson from the VICSES Gippsland Regional Unit.

Special mention goes to the members from the VICSES Gippsland Regional Unit and Moe Unit who assisted on the day as part of our fantastic stall and static vehicle display, as well as the ongoing support from Eastern Region Moe Office leading up to the event and on the day. We couldn't have done this without all your support and help, thank you.

I would also like to mention the ongoing work of the Emergency Services Gippsland agency working group – this event wouldn't have been possible without their input either, thank you.

Watch this space for what's to come for the remainder of 2023 and into next year. If you would like to know more or get involved in this ongoing diversity and inclusion project in the Eastern Region, please don't hesitate to email me at jason.clough@members.ses.vic.gov.au. ■





EASTERN REGION

1 October – 31 December 2022

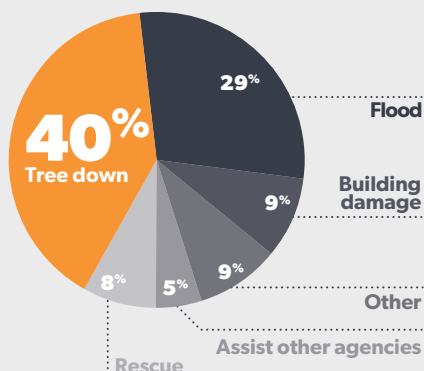


2,487

Volunteers

10,424

Requests for assistance



One of a kind: Seymour's rescue truck replica

By Krystal Buckle, Corporate Communications Advisor, VHO



It's not every day that you see a child-sized VICSES rescue truck replica. Putting in over 200 hours of work over three and a half months, VICSES Seymour Unit members Norm Duell, Kelly Mcleish, and Dave Wareham have created Seymour's very own miniature rescue truck.

Seeing a small hand-made truck in an old magazine, Kelly thought 'we could do that,' enlisting David and Norm. After approaching businesses around town, many of whom donated materials and offered discounts, they began building from the chassis up.

"After work, weekends, and with the floods in between, there was an amazing amount of work behind the scenes," said Norm.

"We had probably upwards of 20 people around town that knew about it, but we swore them all to secrecy. And not one of them let the cat out of the bag."

The truck's beauty is in its details. Complete with a miniature winch, aerial, flashing lights and sirens, a handmade steel bull bar, tarp roll and roller doors made from office cabinets, there's nothing these three didn't think of. "We put vinyl on the seats and then I thought,

well the dash would look good with vinyl on it too, and then it kept spiralling from there" Norm said.

"Every time we turned up to work on it, Norm would say 'Oh I've come up with this', or 'What do you reckon about that?'" Kelly said, "It was never ending."

Months of secrecy were almost spoiled on one occasion when Norm's daughter commented on the truck in front of the Seymour Unit Controller, Christine. Thinking nothing of it, she later realised the significance of the comment when they unveiled it at the unit and members were blown away. "In hindsight, many looked back and understood why we were collecting bits and pieces from the unit and snooping around the

Morwell Unit celebrates 120 years of combined service

By Ola Salako, Community Resilience Coordinator, Eastern Region

On Monday 12 December 2022, VICSES Morwell Unit held its annual awards night, celebrating a combined 120 years of dedicated service from its volunteers.

The awards were a combination of both the VICSES Long Service Awards and the National Emergency Medal.

Chief Officer Operations Tim Wiebusch and Assistant Chief Officer Cameron Rothnie presented the awards. It was a night of appreciation as the members had chosen to undertake services and duties to make a difference in their community.

The recipients of Morwell Unit awards included:

- **Kerrielee Kendall** (35 years of service)
- **Thomas Steadman** (30 years of service)
- **Raelene Billingsley** (30 years of service)
- **Sian Tubb** (5 years of service)
- **Dimiti Bates** (5 years of service)
- **Rachel Smithson** (5 years of service)



Special recognition was also given to Morwell Unit Controller Raelene Billingsley, who received her National Emergency Medal. ■

rescue truck looking at details" Norm said.

Since then, the truck's popularity has continued to rise, with the local Country Fire Authority Brigade even trying to put in an order for one of their own. Its first public outing at a Seymour Australia Day event was a great success, as kids waited in line for their chance to get inside, put on an SES hard hat, hold the toy chainsaw and smile for the cameras.

Kelly explained that they wanted to do something that could bring people together, "it's such a great unit, so to be able to do something like this for them is awesome." ■

First Aid Training in the East

By James Boler, Trainer, Eastern Region



In late January, VICSES Myrtleford Unit opened its doors to members from around the Eastern Region to join their First Aid Course. Five members from Myrtleford, four from Chiltern, and one from Tatura joined volunteer trainers Megan and Lisa from the Wodonga Unit.

The day began by checking online module completion, then straight into the assessments. Members were found competent in both First Aid and CPR and plenty of fun was had trying to resuscitate 'Annie'. Great news at the end of the day - Annie was OK.

The acting as part of the First Aid training scenarios was incredible, and resembled an episode of Channel 10's 'The Bold and the Beautiful.' Our Myrtleford members and volunteer trainers also showed us how adaptable they could be by being in the middle of training and getting paged for a road crash rescue call-out.

The course took a two-hour pause while the crews supported their communities, and were ready to jump straight back into things when they returned.

We acknowledge that training staff could not do what they do without the support from our volunteer trainers - the hard work put into this course by Megan and Lisa was hugely appreciated. Congratulations to everyone who attended and as always, it was a real privilege to work alongside our talented volunteers. ■



Manningham Unit celebrates 60 years of continuous operation

By David Murphy, Media Officer, VHO

An anniversary celebration was held on 22 February for the VICSES Manningham Unit to celebrate 60 years of continuous operation.

Unit volunteers created a display of historical photos and items from the unit's past and opened the mezzanine level for guests to view the newly installed indoor roof training facility. They also created an audio-visual presentation of a large-scale emergency response scenario, and set up truck, boat, and equipment displays.

Among the invited guests were Mayor Deirdre Diamante, VICSES Chief Executive Officer Stephen Griffin, Emergency Management Commissioner, Andrew Crisp, Cllr Carli Lange, Cllr Anna Chen, Cllr Stephen Mayne, and the Federal Member for Menzies, Keith Wolahan MP.

The Unit - formerly VICSES Doncaster Unit - was formed in March 1962 following a series of devastating bushfires. Then, as now, the VICSES volunteers worked tirelessly to supply

resources and logistics to the firefighters, to clear roads and evacuate residents. In 1974, unit volunteers dedicated nearly 500 hours of their time to Victoria Police at the Russell Street

Police Complex by assisting with tracing and registering the victims of Cyclone Tracey. Volunteers also assisted with aircraft accidents including a passenger plane that crashed into five Essendon homes in 1993. Miraculously, there were no fatalities.

The unit has since been called upon to perform this sort of role many times, right up to the present day. Now, as its members reflect on an illustrious past, VICSES Manningham Unit is looking to the future. ■



Stepping into the world of Crew Member Level 2

By Cameron Roach, Trainer and VICSES Chiltern Unit Deputy Controller Operations, Eastern Region

On the weekend of 21-22 January, 12 VICSES members from across the Hume and North-Eastern part of the region completed their Crew Member Level 2 Course.

Hosted by VICSES Wangaratta Unit, the course was led by Regional Trainer, Staff, James Boler, Mansfield Unit Volunteer Trainer, Michael Isbister, and myself, with volunteers coming from multiple units around the area.

Prior to attending the two-day course, members completed both their Crew Member Supervised Training and Crew Member Level 1 Training within their units. Day one of the course included learning about the practical skills

of different equipment they would need to use, and scenarios such as temporary repairs to buildings, safety for tree and storm events, lifting, cribbing and stabilising, and pumping and water diversions. The second day of assessment scenarios in which members had to work as part of a crew was a success – they all passed with flying colours.

It was the conclusion of 12 months of training for most members, who will now attain two nationally accredited competencies;



PUASAR022 Participate in a Rescue Operation and PUASES008 Undertake Storm and Water Operations. Despite not knowing

each other before the course began, members quickly adapted – their first step into the bigger world of the VICSES family. ■

Hume Region's Be Flood Ready Campaign

By Sue Sheldrick, Community Resilience Coordinator, Eastern Region

'La Niña No. 3' was on the cards as spring 2022 approached. Many parts of New South Wales and Queensland had already experienced devastating record-breaking floods, but after two La Niña's without much impact in Victoria, the question remained – what was in store for us this wetter-than-average spring?

Throughout the Hume Region prior to spring, our big storage dams were roughly 97% full – if not already overflowing. Our strategy in Hume was to reach out to all partner agencies and 'hot spot' communities at risk downstream of our big dams, including Dartmouth, Eildon and Hume.

To ensure a consistent approach our emergency management team developed an adaptable presentation package covering the three weather systems in play, key risks, preparedness, and safety messaging. Each presentation involved an update from key stakeholders including local

VICSES members, dam managers, catchment management authorities, local councils, Victoria Police, Ambulance Victoria, Country Fire Authority and other emergency services.

As we are very aware, the season did unfold to 'over-achieve' the forecast (and then more). We know in Hume that this pre-emptory work and engagement undertaken were worth the effort, and we received acknowledgement from across the community and at state level. We are sure there are many more flood learnings from other regions to share to create even safer communities in the future. ■



Multi-agency response at Mount Buffalo

By Graham Gales, VICSES Bright Unit Controller, Eastern Region

On 1 February, VICSES crews were called to a high angle rescue on the Chalwell Gallery walk at Mount Buffalo. A woman and her friend were camping in the area and decided to explore off the beaten track, clambering over some boulders.

One of the women fell approximately 10-15 metres, suffering only minor injuries, but unable to get herself out. Fortunately, her friend was able to raise the alarm.

VICSES Bright, Myrtleford, and Wangaratta Units were called to assist, as part of a team of 40 personnel and vehicles from the Country Fire Authority (CFA), Parks Victoria, Fire Rescue Victoria (FRV), Victoria Police and Ambulance Victoria.

As the sun began to set crews called in a helicopter, with

‘Plan B’ being a rope rescue. The patient was safely extricated by helicopter, and FRV and CFA members assisting the patient were retrieved. Fortunately, the patient only suffered minor injuries and is recovering well.

As for the partnership between agencies, when we show up on scene, it’s a matter of ‘we’ve worked together before, now what’s our plan.’ We’ve got a great working relationship with other crews in our local area, and everything flows. ■



Diversity is our strength

By Michael Prior, VICSES Greater Dandenong Unit Controller, Eastern Region

The VICSES Greater Dandenong Unit is located in the City of Greater Dandenong, which is one of the most culturally and linguistically diverse municipalities in Australia, with residents from over 157 different birthplaces. Diversity is our strength, and we're proud of it.

Our members speak over 33 different languages, which allows our messages to be heard and understood by our wider community.

During the 2022 Victorian Flood event, Greater Dandenong Unit translated the sandbag collection point leaflet into seven different languages, including Hindi, Punjabi, Marathi and Dari. The leaflets were delivered to known flooding hotspots, so the community could prepare their homes and collect pre-filled sandbags. In the space of eight hours, the community came to collect over two pallets of sandbags and plastic sheets to protect their homes. This built community resilience and allowed VICSES members to focus on other critical tasks - while looking after the most vulnerable people in our community.

In addition to written translation, the diversity of our membership is an asset when speaking with our community. In November 2022, Greater Dandenong Unit was called to a partial

ceiling collapse in Dandenong North. On arrival, the caller was in a state of panic and could only speak Polish. Fortunately, one of our members is fluent in Polish and they were able to translate directly for the team. This put the caller at ease and VICSES was able to talk to her about how we could help and avenues to seek additional support.

As a unit we've built community resilience by communicating with the community in their preferred language. It's essential that we continue to think about our audience and how the audience would like to receive the message.



Through diversity of unit members, we can tailor our messages, which makes our community more resilient. ■



Power Tool Training at Monash Unit

By Raman Sanjayan, VICSES Monash Unit Volunteer, Eastern Region

Our most recent use of power tools for training was designed to familiarise members with the various power tools we have on hand to use on jobs; such as the angle grinder, the demolition saw, and the reciprocating saw.

It makes for pretty good viewing, but importantly quite a few of our newer members may not have had much interaction with them before. With a big focus on recruitment and upskilling our members this year, training sessions like these are vital in ensuring that our members can use the various tools and equipment we have at our disposal! ■



WESTERN REGION

1 October – 31 December 2022

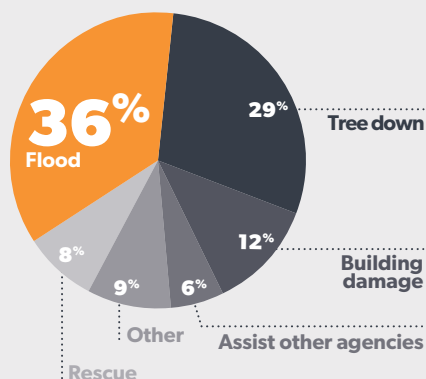


2,399

Volunteers

9,539

Requests for assistance



All invited to the Colac Truck and Ute Show

By Alex Suwitra, Community Resilience Coordinator, Western Region

The town of Colac in southwest Victoria is gearing up for the Colac Truck and Ute show in April 2023.

Proving that #WeWorkAsOne not just during emergencies but around the clock, the organising committee is made up of members from both VICSES Colac Unit and the Colac Fire Authority (CFA) Brigade.

Organising committee member and VICSES Colac Unit Controller, Steve Tevelein, is excited about the upcoming event. "The Colac Truck and Ute show is all about getting our community out and about, and for companies and individuals to put their pride and joy on show for everyone to admire," he said. "The event is also a joint fundraiser for VICSES Colac Unit and Colac CFA. It made a lot of sense to team up and combine efforts. As they say, many hands make light work!"

It's looking to be a big day for the community – with live music, a jumping castle, food,

market stalls, and of course trucks and utes on show. There will also be merch for sale, including bumper stickers and trucker caps, suited to the event demographic and locals attending.

"We're just trying to bring something new to our area and build on it from year to year. We want to give locals the chance to give back to their two biggest volunteer organisations, as well as having some family fun. And of course, we also want to attract people from far and wide to come and show off their big rigs and utes!" said Steve.

So, bring the family and that treasured truck or ute to the Colac Truck and Ute show, taking place on Saturday 1 April 2023 at the Colac Showgrounds. We'll see you there! ■



The Ultimate Trio



By Krystal Buckle, Corporate Communications Advisor, VHO

As the saying goes, all good things come in threes!

For VICSES Craigieburn Unit, it's the terrific trio; Kevin O'Callaghan, Alan Penaluna and Paul Ledwich. Since the unit became operational in 1981, 'Kev, AP and Paul' have been behind the scenes, united in their shared passion to help the community.

"When I started, our first rescue truck was an old fire truck. The jaws of life hadn't been invented, and now they're a standard piece of equipment," said Alan.

Formed initially from ex-defence, Country Fire Authority (CFA), Red Cross and Scouts members, the unit has come a long way from its early days. As Craigieburn grew over the years and welcomed new and more diverse communities, members have reflected that shift. Both Kevin and Alan's past experiences as Unit Controller has meant new members can feel supported to rise up the ranks and lean on their wealth of experience.

"We've seen it all," said Kevin. "We've had rescues involving sheep dogs down wombat holes, birds, sheep, pigs - there's almost no animal we haven't had to deal with."

Their most memorable rescue involved an overturned truck and trapped driver hanging inside the cabin. It took all 15 VICSES members alongside CFA and Ambulance crews, two and a half hours to free the man whose legs were trapped in the crumpled cabin. "He still sends us Christmas cards every year. Whenever he comes to Melbourne, he always comes down to see us," said Paul.

For Unit Controller Omar Sayegh, it's stories and experiences like these, alongside their unwavering support over the years, that has been invaluable to members joining the unit and building their operational skills.

"Three people, 120 years of service. They've trained thousands



of people, helped save lives, save property, support the community, more than the rest of the unit combined. It's a huge benefit to the unit, and I don't think these three gentlemen understand the level of respect they have from the members and management team" Omar said.

"I wouldn't be in the Controller position I am today if it wasn't for them. Because the workload, stress level, and expectations for a Unit Controller are so high, without people who've been there and done that to support me, it would make it very difficult," continued Omar.

He describes the work that goes on behind the scenes from all three as "non-stop".

"You give Kevin an idea or suggestion and the next day you'll have the SOP, the policy, six emails, and a date set. I have to fight Alan for the truck - he still turns out to almost every single job" said Omar.

It's no question that Kevin, Alan and Paul have had a long-lasting impact on their unit - an incredible contribution that will continue to be felt for many years to come. We can't think of a better way to sum it up, than by Omar's words - "They're part of the furniture here at Craigieburn Unit." ■

WESTERN REGION

VICSES volunteers lead multi-agency rescue in the Grampians

By David Murphy, Media Officer, VHO

On 3 January, emergency services were called to the Grampians Peak Trail at Hollow Mountain, to assist in an incident involving an injured climber who had had fallen from a height of 15 meters, and had sustained serious injuries.

Given the severity of the incident as well as the patient's injuries, volunteer crews from across the region were activated in an effort to reach the patient as soon as possible. Alongside the ground crews, high angle rescue teams

were deployed from VICSES Ararat, Horsham, and Stawell Units, alongside Country Fire Authority members in Laharum and Hamilton, as well as personnel from Ambulance Victoria, Fire Rescue Victoria, and Victoria Police.



Having set up a staging area at the car park, volunteer crews climbed the trail terrain for over an hour to reach the patient. The crews started out on a dedicated track which gave way to the steep, rutted scramble and loose chippings that lay beyond.

As the rescue operation progressed into the evening, an air ambulance helicopter was called

in to winch the patient to safety. The climber had unfortunately fallen into a pit under the cliff face, making the use of a winch too dangerous. Volunteer crews continued to work with paramedics on scene to extricate the patient from the pit using a system of ropes and a stretcher, to safely transport the patient past the fifteen metres of sheer rock from which he had fallen. Following this, the patient was then extricated and transported by helicopter.

The multi-agency response at Laharum is yet another example of our emergency service personnel working together, and around the clock, to protect and save lives. To manage this incident, 12 VICSES volunteers and one staff member contributed their skills and experience, along with 32 staff and volunteers from other agencies in multiple rescue trucks, support vehicles, and two helicopters. ■



Bacchus Marsh celebrates 40 years

By Jane Patton, Community Resilience Coordinator, Western Region

On Saturday 19 November 2022, the VICSES Bacchus Marsh Unit held their 40-Year Anniversary Dinner at the Back to Bacchus Restaurant. This was a celebration of the wonderful achievements and service recognition of the Bacchus Marsh Unit and their members.



On the night, the unit recognised a combined service of 120 years. Congratulations to the following recipients:

15 Years: Wendy Franklin, Marisha Patton
20 Years: Wayne Barnes, Peter Fryer
25 Years: Kylie Logan
25 Years – 1st clasp: Graham Wilkinson



The VICSES Bacchus Marsh Unit also reminisced about the historical achievements and stories collected from the unit over the past 40 years. In 1982, the unit began in a portable school classroom at the local primary school. Now it has two well-established locations - our headquarters on Gisborne Road in Bacchus Marsh, and a satellite unit on Wittick Street in Darley.

The evening was shared with important attendees from the Moorabool Shire Council,



Buy now

The Bacchus Marsh memoir book is available for purchase at \$25.00 each + postage. To purchase, please contact Jane Patton at jane.patton@ses.vic.gov.au

local businesses, neighbouring VICSES Sunbury and Gisborne Unit representatives, and past VICSES Bacchus Marsh Unit members. As part of this special occasion, the unit has published a memoir book titled 'Lost in the Gorge and Other Emergencies.' Many thanks to the hard work from all unit members who contributed to this publication, particularly Lyn Purcell and Sarah Bielecki.

A big thank you also goes out to the members from Gisborne and Sunbury Units, who supported the Bacchus Marsh Unit on the night by maintaining the requests for assistance and road crash rescue capability. ■

Geelong Storm Conditions

By Alex Suwitra, Community Resilience Coordinator, Western Region



While storms were forecast across the state on the afternoon of Tuesday 24 January 2023, the sheer amount of rain and strength of the winds that hit Geelong took many by surprise.

VICSES members watched as a rainband grew on the Bureau of Meteorology radar, heading east over Maude and Bannockburn to Geelong. Looking outside, the cloud looked menacing but nothing more – until it broke open over Geelong's northern suburbs at 2.30pm.

The impact was sudden, and community members were caught off guard just before the school rush. Local and major roads were flooded, and homes, shopping centres, some childcare centres and schools were damaged by the sudden deluge.

VICSES Corio Unit, covering Geelong's northern suburbs, received over 60 Requests for Assistance (RFAs) within only a few hours. Getting to RFAs was a challenge, with most

roads in the area inundated. VICSES Corio Unit Controller Felicity Hughes was involved in multiple rescue callouts for vehicles trapped in floodwater. "While some people were caught out in the deluge, we witnessed and attempted to stop many from actively driving into flooded roads."

Volunteers at VICSES Geelong Unit and VICSES South Barwon Unit were also kept busy. Multiple calls were made for rescues of people and vehicles trapped in floodwaters including along Latrobe Terrace, the major north-south highway through Geelong. Calls for storm damage and flooding of buildings came through mostly for suburbs across the city including Newtown, Geelong West, Belmont and Grovedale.

All in all, crews responded to 133 RFAs during this time. VICSES Regional Agency Commander Chris Longmore was full of praise for responders. To support VICSES volunteers, local Country Fire Authority (CFA) volunteers from brigades including Geelong West, Corio, Highton,

Belmont and Geelong City were tasked to RFAs to assist and provide further information to VICSES to aid in triaging assistance. "I was very impressed with the efforts of VICSES crews across the Geelong area in difficult conditions and thankful to the CFA for their assistance," Chris said. "This event is a fantastic example of how all our volunteers come together to help their community in times of need". ■





Glenelg Emergency Services Expo December 2022

By Ysabel Cronin-Guss, Community Resilience Coordinator, Western Region

On Saturday, 3 December 2022, the Glenelg Emergency Services Expo was held on the Portland foreshore. Volunteers in attendance were from VICSES Portland, Heywood and Dartmoor Units - and it was a spectacular day in terms of weather and community engagement!



The casualty car (alongside other VICSES equipment) was utilised for demonstration purposes, and served as a great talking point for members of the public wanting to know more about VICSES - who we are, and what we do. Many other emergency service and community organisations were also in attendance, and there was even a special opening from Deputy Commissioner Capability & Risk, Amanda Leck from Emergency Management Victoria.

The day was organised in conjunction with the local community and the Glenelg Shire Council's Municipal Emergency Planning Committee. Lynne McMahon, who is part of the Emergency Management team at Glenelg Shire Council, said that the "road crash rescue demonstration proved popular with all in attendance". She also

commented that "the collaboration and opportunity to network between all agencies was a highlight," and thanked everyone who made the day a "huge success."

VICSES Operations Manager Unit Support, Brendan Rasmussen, also attended the day. In his words, "the Glenelg Emergency Services Expo was an exemplary display of the emergency service organisations across the Glenelg Shire. I am biased, but our (VICSES) display was outstanding, with volunteers and equipment from three units representing VICSES in orange on the day."

VICSES has such a positive association in the Barwon South West area, and this type of event only further enhances our integral place in the local community. We look forward to an even bigger and better event in 2023! ■

Gisborne's big year of community engagement

By Toriana Collins, VICSES Gisborne Unit Section Leader Public Relations, Events and Presentations, Western Region

2022 saw a big year for VICSES Gisborne Unit in relation to community engagement! Coming out of COVID-19 and being my first year in the role as Unit Section Leader Public Relations, Events and Presentations, there was a lot to learn.

We held and participated in events ranging from music festivals, fairs, and many scout visits, as well as throwing in a couple of deployments to various areas.

Community Effort in Kerang and Swan Hill

By Jamie Macri, Community Resilience Coordinator, Western Region

In October last year, severe weather resulted in flash and riverine flooding throughout the urban and rural areas of the Loddon Mallee Region. An Incident Control Centre (ICC) was initially established at Bendigo, followed by Swan Hill and Mildura to manage the flood response within the area. With heavy rainfall significantly impacting homes, businesses, roads and bridges across the Gannawarra Shire and Swan Hill Rural City Council areas, it was determined that extensive sandbagging of risk locations would be required.

The impending floods meant that a sandbag fill point was required to assist preparation. With smaller towns unable to provide adequate support due to a shortage of crews, equipment, sand, and transport, it was decided that a sandbag fill point would be established in Swan Hill.

Originally, the Rapid Relief Team which had been working in Kerang told us that they would not be able to assist the operation in Swan Hill. With the Kerang township severely isolated this was understandable. However, the next day we



received a call saying that they had re-evaluated and would be able to assist after all. This included sending personnel to assist, as well as a sandbag machine which would be on the road later that day.

Additionally, a local business was contacted and gifted us the use of a large industrial shed equipped with a sizeable, fenced yard. This space was very useful, allowing us to successfully erect a large sandbag fill point.

Over the course of the next eight weeks, we were able to fill 102,000 sandbags and subsequently transport them to all the towns that required protection from the rising flood waters. This began with the first two trailer road trains being sent to Kenley.

VICSES would like to express their gratitude and appreciation to all those that assisted throughout the operation. Community resilience and the amazing ability to support and work together was the highlight of the 2022 flood event. Without the willingness to help from all those involved, it simply would not have been possible. ■



To add to that, we also experienced two weather events, but as always - came out on top.

Our unit is big about our community, and if it means we can get out and about and have a chat to the residents, we are all for it.

Our biggest yearly event is the Garden Lovers Fair at Bolobek - the 2022 event saw us park over 1,500 cars, with over 3,000 attendees.

In December, we took part in multiple events for the festive season. This included cooking sausages at the local carols, and Paddy Platypus, who ventured out to see what the festivals were all about.

2023 already looks to be another big year for us, and we look forward to jumping right in. ■



OPERATIONAL UPDATES

VICSES Deployment to Western Australia

By Jessie Schleibs, Operations Business Coordinator, VHO

The beginning of 2023 saw a 'record-breaking' flood event unfold in Western Australia (WA), isolating communities, cutting off roads, and devastating livelihoods.



Victoria, among other Australian states, was requested to provide Incident Management resources to support operations. 11 staff members and four volunteers deployed to Perth, Broome and Fitzroy Crossing on 20 January as part of a multi-agency contingent. On 30 January, three more VICSES members departed for Western Australia, replacing the original crew.

Roisin Lamprell was among the first group of VICSES volunteers deployed, working from Broome as a Management Support Officer for key stakeholder meetings.

"Not including the mosquitos that were the size of cockroaches, it was the most amazing experience. Hard work, long hours, hot weather, tremendous fellowship - we all worked as one. The only difference was the colour of our shirts," she said.

"The flooding was completely different because of the communities involved, their size, and the logistics around this. Working alongside people from the WA Department of Fire and Emergency Services was brilliant, observing their different systems and terminology," continued Roisin.

A highlight for Roisin was being welcomed home on their return by the Commissioner and other staff at the airport - "It was a lovely surprise," she said.

Among the worst hit was Fitzroy Crossing, a community of around 1,300 people. Flooded roads and significant damage to the Fitzroy River Bridge making it unusable, meant supplies had to be airlifted in. For deployed VICSES members, including VICSES Senior Media and Publicity Advisor Dharni Giri, the remote location added complexities not often seen during flooding events in Victoria.



The sheer impact the flooding had, and continues to have on these communities, was simply devastating to see firsthand” she said.

“Even seeing pictures of some of the devastation in and around the impacted area did not do the severity of the damage justice. Crucial infrastructure to and from many communities had been completely eradicated. It’s hard to comprehend the long-term impact the flooding has had on these communities.”

“One of the biggest complexities for us, was working to understand the most effective way we could communicate with heavily impacted and often displaced communities out there. Working through these language barriers, as well understanding the lay of the land itself, was a huge learning curve, and one that I’m so grateful to have experienced and learnt from,” continued Dharni.

Extensive repair works are now underway, however the recovery period is expected to take months. Our thoughts are with our partner agencies and communities in Western Australia during this devastating event.

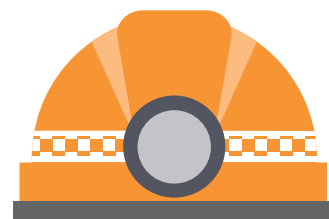
Last but not least, a big thank you to our deployed members who supported this event as part of our Victorian contingent. ■

REQUESTS FOR ASSISTANCE

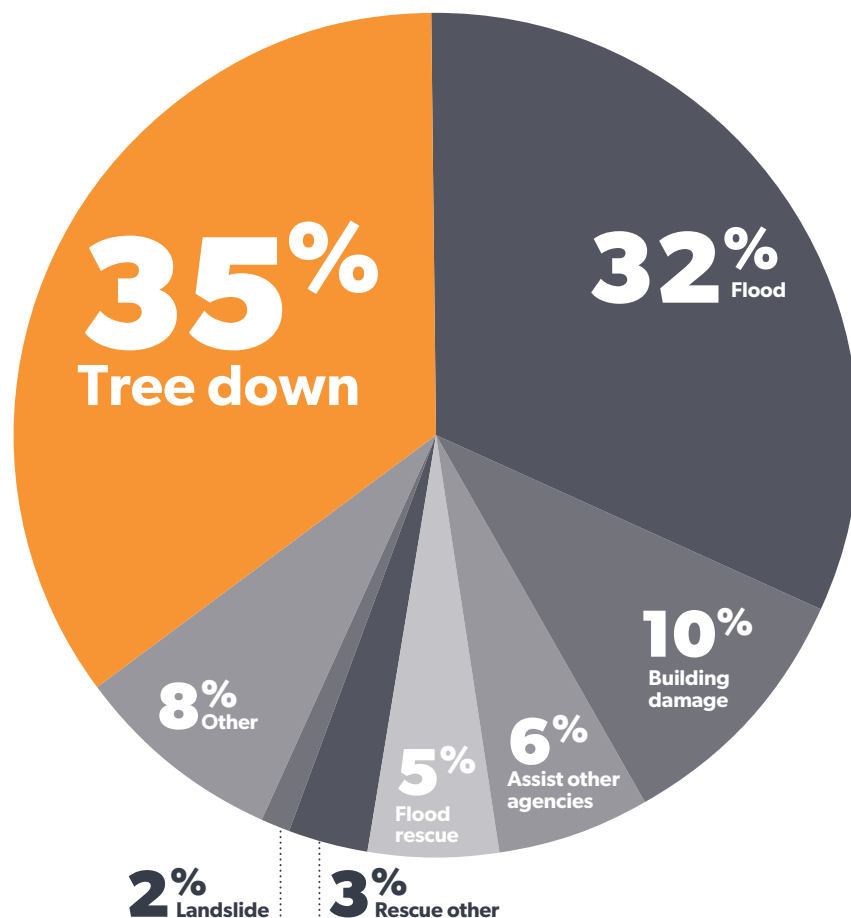
1 October – 31 December 2022

Total

20,024



Breakdown



PROJECTS – WHAT'S NEW



New Units: State-Wide Status Update

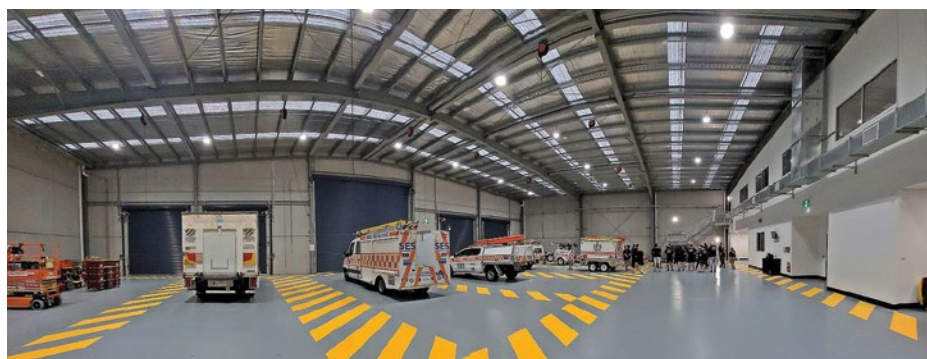
By Dave Pirie, Manager Infrastructure and Property, VHO

Work continues on a number of new and rebuilt VICSES unit facilities across the state.

Several new facilities have recently come online as part of the more than \$140m program investment into facilities infrastructure made by the Victorian State Government.

- **Completed:** Wangaratta (2020), Knox (2021), Emerald (2021), Essendon (2022), Heidelberg (previously Northcote, 2022), Chiltern (2022) & Chelsea (Feb 2023).
- **Close to completion:** Fawkner (previously Broadmeadows, March/April 2023)
- **Under construction:** Cobram (mid-late 2023), Wonthaggi (mid-late 2023), Port Fairy (mid-late 2023), Frankston (new satellite facility at Skye, early 2024) and LHQ for new units at Aintree, Point Cook, Cranbourne & Officer (early-mid 2024).
- **At concept design stage:** Corio, Dunkeld, Mallacoota (joint facility with Life Saving Victoria and Coastguard), Devon Meadows.
- **Site Identification phase:** Tarneit, Kalkallo, Rochester & Heathcote (joint facility with CFA).
- **Pre-election commitments – expected to be funded:** Bannockburn, Kilmore.

Other major works are also occurring at various units. The Infrastructure and Property team is focused on completing several projects that have been funded for several years, and we look forward to updating members on these projects as they progress. ■



Launch of new features on the Community Emergency Risk Assessment (CERA) platform

By Sean O'Donoghoe, Emergency Management Planning and Risk Officer, VHO

Personal Protective Clothing and Equipment (PPC&E) Update

By Irena Jurisic, Project Coordinator PPCE Project,
State Logistics Centre



Interim Female Fit PPC

All VICSES members are reminded that Interim Female Fit PPC is available for issue as part of the new member kits and replacements, using the temporary form available on the Hub.

Eligibility includes:

- Members eligible under the initial offer, but who did not take up the option at the time.
- Operational staff who were not included in the initial rollout.
- New probationary members.

Please note unit funded orders are still not available at this time.

If you have any further queries, please refer to the Hub under **My State > Assets and Fleet > PPC&E** or contact Assets at Assets@ses.vic.gov.au.

The Assets team, along with our software partners, are working to enable ordering of the Interim Female Fit PPC via Buy Online platform.

PPC&E Redesign Project

The project team has now concluded all member consultation, and thanks to everyone who made a submission or contribution via the survey, or regional or technical workshops. A huge amount of valuable data and feedback was captured by the project team for consideration in the development of future VICSES PPC&E.

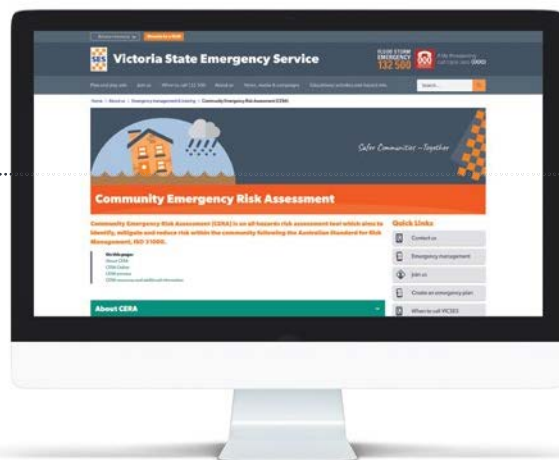
The team is currently progressing with the development of garment specifications and requirements. Additionally, the preparation of tender requirements and documentation is under development. As this is a significant undertaking, further information on timelines and outcomes including the roll-out of new PPC&E will be communicated once known. ■

Through VICSES facilitation, CERA Online supports the delivery of the municipal risk assessment process and associated outputs. Over the past 12 months, VICSES has been undergoing an update of the platform to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of risk assessments through enhancing the sharing of risk data, quality of life updates, and connectivity with the regional planning tier.

What has changed?

You'll notice a suite of changes throughout the CERA Online platform, with key enhancements including:

- An updated CERA map with new iconography, clearer data representation, and increased functionality in the map printing function.
- Support for creating risk assessments for cluster municipalities.
- Tracking of mitigation actions and reminder notifications for risk reviews and mitigation actions.



- Email notifications to users when updates to accounts are made such as account activation, adding/removal of municipalities, and user access level changes.

To support the launch of the CERA Online update, we have updated the CERA Online user guide, which can be found via the VICSES website <http://bit.ly/3Y61Bpd>. For further information and queries, please email emp@ses.vic.gov.au. ■

WELLBEING, HEALTH & SAFETY

Flood Response Thank You Events

By Alison Wright, Health and Wellbeing Coordinator, VHO

On a beautiful, sunny evening in January, our first barefoot bowls and BBQ event kicked off at Echuca Bowls club.



GEELONG BOWLS

Sunday 19 March 1 pm

FOOTSCRAY BOWLS

Monday 20 March 6 pm

SEYMOUR BOWLS

Thursday 23 March 6 pm

GISBORNE BOWLS

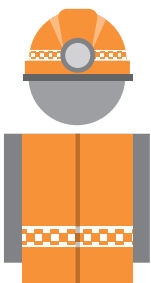
Sunday 2 April 1:30pm



Volunteers from Kyabram and Echuca joined their local Unit Support Team to throw down some bowls and enjoy a delicious barbeque. Sponsored by Bowls Australia and Henselite, similar events have been planned throughout parts of Victoria as a thank you for the huge response to the recent floods.

Our local bowls clubs have jumped on board to show their appreciation, hosting numerous events to demonstrate just how much they value their VICSES units.

In February, the Healthwatch team travelled to host events at Echuca, Shepparton, Kerang, Rochester, Bendigo, Tallangatta,



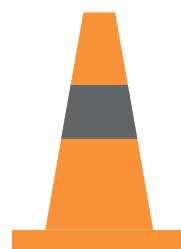
Workplace inspections

July 2021 –
January 2022

89

July 2022 –
January 2023

76



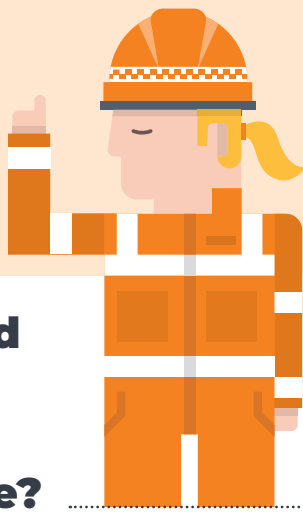
Injuries

July 2021 –
January 2022

65

July 2022 –
January 2023

145



Want to lead health and safety from the frontline?

Have you thought about becoming a Health and Safety Representative? We need you!

Health and Safety Representatives are elected by staff within the relevant Designated Work Group to represent them in Health and Safety matters. See more information on what the role involves on the Hub under **My State > Safety > WHS Representatives**. ■

Maryborough and Wangaratta. Needless to say, we are getting quite good at bowling!

Events are open to all VICSES members and their families, so feel free to sign up and join us in March. Don't forget to register via the QR link provided on page 26, so we can plan for catering.

A big shout out to Bowls Australia and Henselite for their continuing support.



Any questions?

Email the team at Wellbeing@ses.vic.gov.au

For those of you looking for a new pastime, check out www.bowls.com.au and find a club near you! ■

Understanding fatigue in the work environment

By Stewart Riddel, Health and Safety Advisor, Western Region

Fatigue results from both a physical and mental state of exhaustion, caused by prolonged and intense work, stress, lack of sleep, or illness that leads to decreased productivity, poor decision making, and an increased risk of accidents.

There are many potential causes for fatigue in the work environment, including long hours with little rest breaks, repetitive tasks, inadequate training, stressful working environments, insufficient lighting/ventilation/noise levels, and physical strains. Other factors such as lifestyle choices (e.g., smoking), diet (e.g., eating unhealthy foods), and age (older members may experience more fatigue than younger members) may also contribute to feelings of fatigue in the workplace.

When experiencing fatigue, there can be significant impacts on performance levels due to impaired concentration levels. This leads to slower reaction times and poorer decision-making skills, which in turn increases the risk of mistakes or accidents. Working repeatedly

with high levels of fatigue also impacts on morale and reduces job satisfaction.

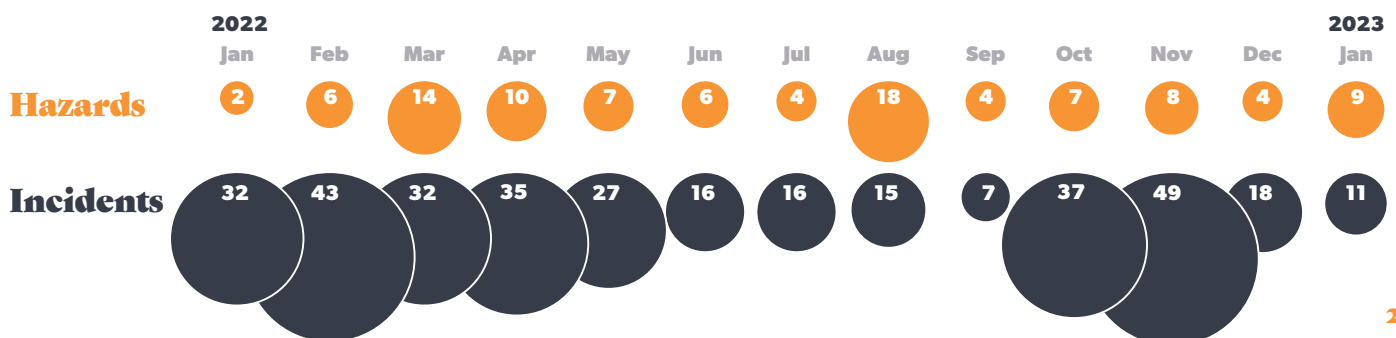
Fatigue is a high-risk factor for our members operating in emergency conditions. It needs to be considered in roster planning, and risk factors need to be documented, with risk controls put in place and monitored for effectiveness. ■



More information

For more information on fatigue management, visit the Hub under **My State > Health and Wellbeing > Fatigue**

YEAR AT A GLANCE



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Communicating with the community about local flood risks

By Susan Davie, Community Connections Manager, VHO

Communicating with the community about flood risks doesn't stop when flooding has passed.



This is especially true for those who live, work, and play along Victoria's rivers. Flooding can cause changes in the environment around rivers including altered water flows and increased debris in the water. With water storages and rivers at higher levels, it can take less rain to increase the risk of flooding in low lying areas, and this can have a particular impact on community members who spend their summer holidays camping in this beautiful environment.

Ensuring that holiday makers are aware of the risks can be challenging for a number of reasons. For example, visitors to flood affected areas may not have any awareness of

the impacts of the recent floods. The added challenge is that holiday makers would not have had any engagement from VICSES regarding flood safety.

Over the summer we harnessed the power of social media and local radio with our 'Summer Camping Safety Campaign'. We used short clear messaging relating to staying safe when camping, and we geo-targeted the delivery of the messages to the areas of our state that were most impacted by recent floods.

The social media tiles from the campaign have been included as part our digital toolkits on the Hub to help us all spread this message and work towards *Safer Communities, Together*. ■



Download

You can download the tiles under
My State > Media and Communications > Digital toolkits > Campaign and events toolkits

Hitting the road with Driver Reviver

By Jasmine Lewkowicz, Senior Advisor Community Programs & Campaigns, VHO



There are a few essential items you need to pack when hitting the road over the summer: sunscreen, water, and car snacks among the most important. Yet nothing is more essential than scheduling rest stops to break up the car journey – stretching your legs, and recharging before continuing to clock up the km's.

Each year, over key holiday peak periods, VICSES volunteers offer a free Bushells cuppa and Arnott's biscuits at selected Driver Reviver roadside locations to encourage drivers to stop, rest, and refresh, ensuring they arrive safely at their destination. Driver Reviver is a 30-year-old program with a mission to promote road safety and save lives.

VICSES members operate nearly half of the 48 Driver Reviver sites dotted across the state, greeting road trippers with a smile as holiday makers zig-zag across the country. Participating VICSES units include Colac, Dimboola, Dunkeld, Kerang, Lismore, Morwell, Rushworth, Murchison, Stawell, Tambo Valley, and Wedderburn.



Over the summer we have heard first-hand experiences of how Driver Reviver sites are helping people stay safe on the roads. On her two-day journey to Sydney, community member Jennifer Barfield visited our Balmattum Driver Reviver rest stop - between Euroa and Benalla - to grab a sausage and cup of tea.

Six hours into her journey, Jennifer was almost side swiped by a heavy goods vehicle, which prompted her to swerve onto the soft shoulder, while narrowly avoiding a collision with a tree. Jennifer credits her fast reflexes and awareness of her surroundings to using the Driver Reviver rest stop sites, and to our amazing VICSES volunteers giving up their time to operate them.

Driver Reviver stops are made possible thanks to the generous support from sponsors: AAMI, Shell, The Arnott's Foundation, Bushells Tea, Bushells Coffee and Sunshine Sugar. ■



MEDIA

**1 October –
30 December 2022**

Campaigns and events:

- Australian Women in Emergencies Day - 8 October
- International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction - 13 October
- International Rural Women's Day - 15 October
- Great ShakeOut - 21 October
- National safe work month - 1 - 31 October
- Movember - 1 November
- International Day of People with Disabilities - 3 December
- Do 1 thing - From 6 December

Media releases:

- Victorians flock to VICSES in record numbers for help during COVID years - 13 Oct
- VICSES receives thousands of calls for help following storm event - 29 Oct
- Busiest month on record for VICSES Volunteers - 2 November
- SES and EPA work together on floodwater contamination research - 4 November

Social media highlights:

f FACEBOOK



Impressions:
558,134

Engagement:
111,261

14/10/22:
VICSES responds to 2,660 RFAs in the last 24 hours.

TWITTER



Impressions:
64,696

Engagement:
2,415

13/10/22:
30 flood-related rescues for people entering floodwater.

in LINKEDIN

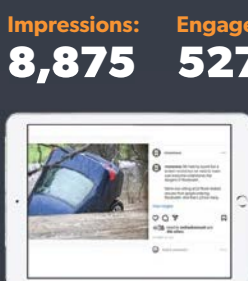


Impressions:
6,699

Engagement:
442

18/10/22:
VICSES volunteers continue to provide 24/7 assistance for flood-impacted communities.

Instagram



Impressions: **8,875** **Engagement:** **527**

13/10/22:
23 flood-related rescues for people entering floodwater.

- Incident Control Centres continue to monitor conditions - 4 November
- Heroic duo save the day - 4 November
- Man winched from roof of vehicle submerged in floodwater - 16 November
- Town turns out 2,000 sandbags in two hours - 7 November
- Mobile VICSES crews deploy to assist flood-affected communities - 18 November
- Damaging winds and falling trees prompt warning from VICSES volunteers - 21 November
- Bairnsdale volunteers join forces for water safety - 6 December
- SES Essendon Unit volunteers benefit from large local donation - 7 December
- SES volunteers thanked for Driver Reviver rest stops - 28 December

Mentions of VICSES in the news:

255
Television

562
Online and Print

2,093
Radio

Meet the Team

JENNY WEI



Welcome Jenny! Can you tell us a bit about your background before starting at VICSES?

It's great to join the Community and Communications team at VICSES, and work with such lovely people! Before this, I worked as a Digital Marketing Coordinator at Independence Australia - a non-profit organisation and social enterprise. I was responsible for website optimization and development, generating fresh and innovative content to enhance the customer experience in both digital and non-digital channels.

What are you most looking forward to in your role as Digital Content Officer?

I am most looking forward to working with the team, developing web content, improving our user experience, and facilitating internal and external audience engagement.

What made you decide to pursue a career in digital communications?

I was excited to see how digital communication has changed the way we communicate with the world, how we utilise powerful digital tools to tell stories, engage with audiences, and build our brand awareness. It is a job that involves creating, designing, and life-long learning, all of which I am passionate about.

What does an ideal weekend look like for you?

My ideal weekend would be going to the gym and enjoying a Zumba class. I love to go to the National Gallery of Victoria with my daughter to explore exhibitions, and have dinner and watch a movie with my family! I also enjoy traveling and reading in my spare time.

Do you have a Hub or website query? Contact Jenny at jenny.wei@ses.vic.gov.au ■

INFORMATION SERVICES (IS) UPDATE

Give yourself a technology health check

By Silvia Silverii, Chief Information Officer, VHO

In the last edition of Community Matters, we highlighted our permanent after-hours Service Desk and support, implemented exclusively for our volunteers to access.

We are pleased to be providing service in the times that are more accommodating for volunteers, and to be solving issues as they arise.

This year, the directorate wants to focus on more pro-active technology support, and we want to make up for the past three years during COVID-19 which prevented us from doing more than just emergency site visits.

So, this is a shout out to all volunteer Unit Controllers and Unit Support Team members who are overseeing technology matters.



Meet the team: Naveen Subbiah

Hi Naveen – welcome! Can you tell us a bit about your new role at VICSES?

I am responsible for ensuring the effective operations of VICSES' entire network platform systems and the information that cycles through them. My technical areas of responsibility extend to the systems which support all our members, offices, volunteer units, vehicles, and technology assets.

We are now reaching out to these volunteer members to contact us to book in a unit technology health check.

The health check can incorporate any work and discussions a unit may want, ranging from inspection and tidying up of servers, checking the performance of internet, quality of monitors, procurement advice, and even help with a technology plan.

If you are interested, log a ticket with the Service Desk at ictservicedesk@ses.vic.gov.au. Provide the name of your unit, the person you want us to talk with to arrange a visit, and what you are looking for. ■

What opportunities are you most looking forward to in this new role?

As part of my role, I get to interact with many different departments and I am particularly looking forward to working with people from all the offices and volunteer units, and supporting them in all their technology needs.

What inspired you to work as part of the emergency services sector?

When I was nine years old, I joined an organisation called the RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh). The organisation tried to instil good behaviour, positive attitude, and patriotism in young, underprivileged kids and taught us about our responsibility towards our community.

I was also a volunteer with the Red Cross as a teenager in India. I used to do 'road shows'

VICSES fundraising and your personal information

By Toby Köberle, Manager Information Security and Governance, VHO

Like many emergency service organisations, VICSES volunteers run authorised tin-shakes and fundraising stalls in their communities from time to time. When collecting donations, VICSES volunteers wear full uniform and carry photo identification, identifying them as volunteers from their local VICSES unit. During such fundraising events, personal information from members of the public is not collected.

Importantly, VICSES does not seek donations via phone, SMS, or email. If such a call or message is received from someone claiming to be from VICSES and asking for donations, it is a scam. Any such activity should be reported to the Service Desk on 1300 737 101 or via email at ictservice@ses.vic.gov.au

Lastly, please remember whenever anyone asks for donations on behalf any organisation, always check their credentials. ■

on the roadside usually in front of a highway restaurant educating truck drivers about the dangers of HIV in the late 80's.

So, it was exciting and natural for me to join the emergency services sector when the opportunity presented itself. Having seen the great work VICSES does around the state, I am proud to be part of this organisation.

In your spare time, where might we find you?

Most Saturdays in summer I play premier grade cricket. Every alternate Sunday, I'm training at the clay shooting club. I jump at every opportunity I get to go hunting or fishing, and also have a big flower, fruit, and vegetable garden, which I tend to most weekends. ■



Our Values



**We pride ourselves
on our credibility**



**We are part
of our community**



**Safety drives our
decisions**



**Focused and
adaptable**



**Together we are
VICSES**



Safer Communities - Together