

AUTUMN 2020

Community Matters

VICSES

EDITION 10



**VICSES MEMBERS
HONoured ON
AUSTRALIA DAY**

**VICSES
celebrates
pride at the
Midsumma
Festival**

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FEATURE

READ MORE ABOUT OUR STORM AND FLOOD RESPONSE ON PAGE 7



January and February storm and flood response

While our members were busy supporting the fires in January, our units were also busy responding to serious storm and flood damage across the state. Here are our request for assistance figures for January and February this year:

10,436 Total calls



879
Flood



2,967
Building Damage



5,062
Trees Down



1,528
Other

Most active units:

1,147

Malvern Unit

537

Manningham Unit





Emerald Unit.



Bellarine Unit.



Nillumbik Unit.



Metropolitan Fire Brigade and VICSES working as one.



Hailstorm in Warrandyte.



Emerald Unit.



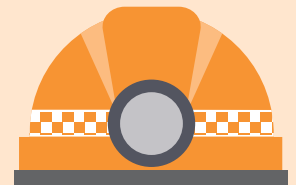
Corryong Unit responds to a landslide on fire affected hillside.

Requests for Assistance

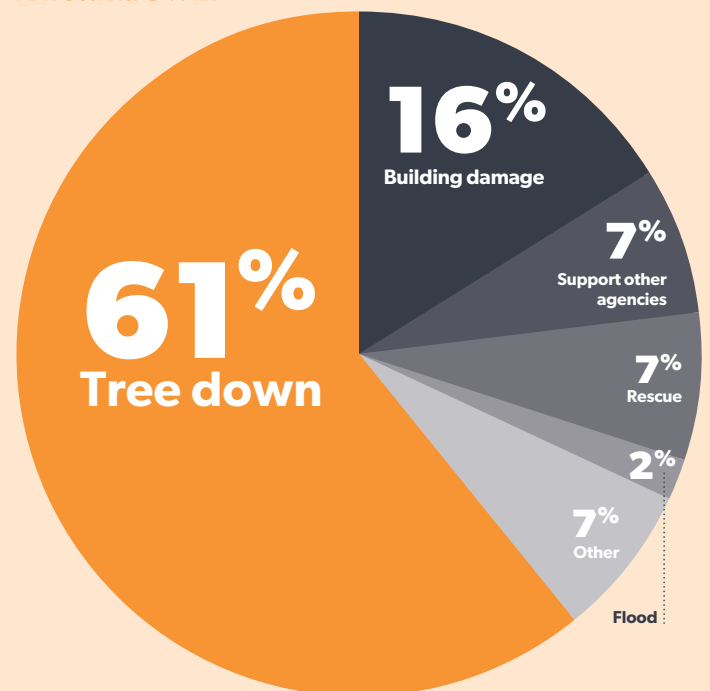
1 October - 31 December

Total

8,224



Breakdown



FEATURES

VICSES members honoured on Australia Day



Stawell Unit Deputy Controller, John Hooper (pictured second from right)

By Kath Jessop, Media Officer, VHO

Six VICSES members have been recognised as part of Australia Day celebrations, including volunteering veterans from Stawell, Pakenham and Bright, a Unit Controller from San Remo, and young guns from Craigieburn and Tallangatta.

Craigieburn Unit volunteer Tegan Denny was awarded Hume City Councils 'Young Citizen of the Year.' At 19 years old, Tegan was the unit's youngest member when she signed up in 2019. Tegan expressed how her volunteering helped her feel more connected to her community and fellow members, and actually looks forward to her pager buzzing at 3:00am. Since attending her first road rescue, Tegan has been keen to take on more leadership to contribute to helping her community.

Tallangatta Unit volunteer Nicole Peters was also awarded Young Citizen of the Year from the Towong Shire. Nicole has given back to her community through a range of volunteering experiences – including with VICSES, Country Fire Authority (CFA) and Girl Guides. Tallangatta Unit was also awarded a certificate of appreciation by Towong Shire alongside the local CFA brigades.

Another VICSES member that received a pat on the back was San Remo Unit Controller Michael 'Mick' Kenny, who has been in the role for just 12 months. The Bass

Coast Shire nominated Mick as their '2020 Citizen of the Year' in recognition of his leadership and dedication to VICSES – especially during his 6-day deployment to Omeo in East Gippsland.

Hats have also been tipped for long-standing volunteer of the Pakenham Unit, Bruce Monro. Bruce has been a part of his local unit for more than four decades, and has participated in numerous road rescues and storm-related call outs in his region. He was recently announced as a nominee for the Cardinia Shire Council Senior Citizen of the Year for 2020.

Stawell Unit Deputy Controller John Hooper received the nationally recognised 'Emergency Services Medal' (ESM) as part of the Australia Day Honours List – with the official investiture to be held later in the year. John has been part of the Stawell Unit for more than 40 years, during which he has specialised in road crash rescue as well as search and rescue operations. John has also gained a qualification in Urban

Search and Rescue, and was part of important search efforts during the 2009 Victorian Bushfires and Grampians landslides (2011), and even flew to Greece in 2018 to help with fire support efforts there. John has travelled to numerous countries to learn innovative rescue techniques, something he has brought back to Victoria and shared with fellow volunteers.

Another Deputy Controller to also be recognised on Australia Day was Graham Gales from Bright Unit, winning the 'Local High Achiever of the Year' award through Alpine Shire Council. Graham has been a VICSES volunteer for more than 30 years, attending a huge range of events across the alpine community of Bright during this time. He has also been instrumental in restoring historical (colonial era) huts in Victoria's high country.

Congratulations to all of our members and units who received awards, and for your continued dedication to VICSES and the community. ■



San Remo Unit Controller, Michael Kenny (pictured middle)



Craigieburn Unit volunteer, Tegan Denny



Bright Unit Deputy Controller, Graham Gales



Pakenham Unit volunteer, Bruce Monro



Tallangatta Unit volunteer, Nicole Peters



International Women's Day

By Gabi Barkmeyer, Corporate Communications Officer, VHO

International Women's Day takes place on 8 March each year, as a celebration of the social, cultural, economic and political achievements of women across the globe.

At VICSES we have many amazing women who contribute significantly to our organisation and their communities. We are proud of our commitment to promoting diversity and working toward a more gender balanced workplace, with 33% of our membership currently represented by women across Victoria.



When we think of equality, we think of how we can make our workplace more inclusive, harmonious, generous, and a better organisation to be part of. As a member of the Male Champions of Change, I hope that my leadership helps all of us tackle the issues of bias and leads us to a more inclusive workplace. All of us should take time out to think about our roles in eradicating gender bias and celebrating the great achievements of women in all walks of life."



VICSES CEO, STEPHEN GRIFFIN

From all of us at VICSES, thank you for all that you do every day! ■

FEATURES



VICSES celebrates pride at the Midsumma Festival

By Gabi Barkmeyer, Corporate Communications Officer, VHO

This year VICSES once again participated in the annual Midsumma Pride March and Midsumma Carnival, celebrating its 25th year running!

Established in 1996, the Midsumma Pride March is an annual celebration of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex community; embracing diversity, and uniting thousands every year in solidarity toward equality.

VICSES is a long-time supporter and participant of the Pride March, as an event that reflects the diversity within both the communities we serve, and our own organisation.

On 19 January our members rallied together to take part in Midsumma Carnival – a family-friendly event that celebrates the Midsumma Festival. The carnival provided our organisation with the opportunity to host a stall alongside our colleagues in emergency services, and to engage with community members to promote recruitment and diversity within our organisation. Handouts included badges, wristbands, and recruitment cards with QR codes that scanned through to our website.

Sunday 2 February was the grand finale – the awaited

Midsumma Pride March! Our members marched proudly in VICSES orange, waving the rainbow flag and handing out pride-themed freebies to those cheering the march on.

Chris Welsh, State Headquarters Unit volunteer and Pride and Diversity Events Co-ordinator at VICSES, spoke on the importance of our involvement in this great event.

“The community response this year was amazing, with tears coming from some members over the amazing level of support,” said Chris.

“We are looking forward to participating in further Midsumma events in 2021 to once again show our diversity, inclusivity, acceptance and pride as part of VICSES.” ■



Flooding in Stratford and surrounds

By Gabi Barkmeyer, Corporate Communications Officer, VHO

Parts of Wellington Shire were amongst the worst affected by torrential rain and flash flooding when a severe cold front passed across Gippsland in January.

Stratford, Briagolong and surrounding areas received more than 100 millimetres of rain in only a few hours, causing flooding of roads, houses, and building damage.

Some houses were damaged by rain entering through missing or damaged roof tiles, flood water entering front and backyards and an elderly person even became isolated in her house due to

surrounding floodwaters.

"This amount of rain in such a short amount of time has certainly caught some people by surprise," said VICSES Community Resilience Co-ordinator, Jane Fontana.

"It's a really good time for people to be thinking about what they need to do to prepare themselves and their properties for these types of situations." ■



Drone technology brings VICSES and MFB together after storms

By Kath Jessop, Media Officer, VHO

On 22 and 23 January, VICSES volunteers and Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB) fire fighters teamed up in storm-affected Melbourne, using MFB's Remote Piloted Aircraft Systems (RPAS) technology to scour Glen Iris for building damage.



MFB uses the cutting-edge technology at a wide variety of events, from bushfires and floods to police incidents. VICSES Duty Officer David Baker was the brainchild behind the idea to use drone technology to survey storm-affected homes. Within an hour of raising the suggestion, volunteers from Malvern Unit and 20 MFB firefighters were on the ground, setting up for a day of Rapid Impact Assessments (RIAs).

The technology allowed VICSES crews to stay on the ground instead of inspecting roofs themselves, making the operation much safer and up to 90% faster. According to Malvern Unit Controller Phil Munslow, a standard RIA set-up on a roof takes between 30 and 45 minutes – not including the time it takes to actually find building damage and assess whether it requires an emergency response. During this operation, drones were up and inspecting a home at each location within 3-4 minutes.

Images from the drones revealed damage on numerous buildings – ranging from 100 year-old townhouses to modern apartment buildings. Home owners were told to contact tradespeople and insurance companies to lock in permanent repairs.

MFB's specially trained RPAS Pilot, Leading Firefighter David Rylance, said that MFB was pleased to be able to provide this aerial intelligence to support VICSES in response to this incident.

"Having our RPAS on scene to provide an aerial overview increases safety for firefighters and other emergency responders, as we can see what hazards and situations our crews may be exposed to in advance," said David.

Following the successful operation, Malvern Unit members expressed their keenness to work alongside MFB in the future to serve their local communities. ■

GENERAL NEWS



Celebrating the life of Des Sinnott OAM

By Maffra Unit, East Region

In November, VICSES members said farewell to Maffra Unit member Des Sinnott OAM, forming a guard of honour at his funeral service held at the Boisdale Public Hall.

A long serving member with the Maffra Unit and Boisdale Country Fire Authority (CFA), Des has been involved in the emergency services sector for more than 45 years.

Des was born and raised in Maffra, and after attending agricultural and teacher's college, he returned to Maffra to teach at Maffra High School. Des was a total outdoors man, enjoying hunting, fishing and bushwalking, and soon had school students hiking in the high country to the north of Maffra.

Des joined the Maffra Civil Defence in 1971, also joining the CFA around this time. Des became Unit Controller of the now VICSES Maffra Unit in 1980, and remained Controller until 2008. He brought Maffra Unit to the forefront of bush/alpine search and rescue operations, with his professionalism recognised by the Victoria Police Search and Rescue Squad who continue to utilise and train with the Maffra Unit to this day.

Des was also heavily involved in flood operations for major flooding events in the Thompson, Macalister and Avon river systems since the 1970's. He implemented a flood warning telephone line for these rivers which was installed in the Maffra Unit Local Headquarters (LHQ). Des also recognised the value of educating the local population in understanding flood warnings for local rivers and what impacts could occur.

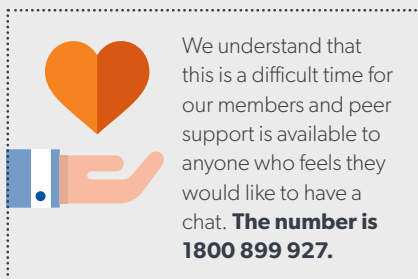
His efforts have contributed to the local flood information guides issued by VICSES today.

Des was a very astute money manager and fund raiser. He ran a raffle just before Christmas for many years and applied for many grants available to the unit, with funds being used towards the purchase of equipment, vehicles and a major extension to the LHQ.

His leadership of Maffra Unit and efforts in the wider community led to Des being awarded a VICSES Long Service Medal (45yrs), National Medal (First and Second Clasp), and the Order of Australia in 2000 for his work in the emergency services sector. This is fitting recognition of his tireless work, and his legacy will not be forgotten.

Des is survived by his wife Trish and son Aaron. We acknowledge their vital input to Maffra Unit alongside Des, and thank them for allowing us the privilege of knowing Des.

May he rest in peace. ■



New Snowmobile Operator Course

By Keith Mitchell, Projects Officer –
Learning and Development, VHO



The Learning and Development team has released a new Snowmobile Operator course (National Competency PUASES015 Operate Over-snow Vehicle) in readiness for the next snow season.

The course is specific to VICSES members from units with an agreed role in the use of snowmobiles in an alpine environment within Victoria's Emergency Management arrangements, and is tailored to be conducted within the Falls Creek area of operation.

Snowmobiles are typically used to supplement Alpine Search and Rescue (ASAS) operations at Falls Creek in:

- Reconnaissance
- Hasty search
- Evacuation
- Supporting ASAS teams with supplies

During the snow season, it is common for VICSES volunteers to practice skills activities with similarly equipped members of Victoria Police, Country Fire Authority and Ambulance Victoria.

Many thanks to North East Regional Trainer Rob Johnstone and Falls Creek Unit Controller Craig Moegel, who have greatly assisted in the development and piloting of this course. Now all we need is snow! ■



After Action Review – Lake Purrumbete

By Jacob Riley, Senior Advisor Public Information and Warnings, VHO

Camperdown and surrounding areas were impacted by a severe thunderstorm on 1 May 2019, resulting in significant damage to the Lake Purrumbete Caravan Park.

This event saw severe and widespread damage to structures, including trees down, destruction to cabins and caravans and overturned boats. First responders identified leaking gas bottles and downed powerlines as hazards upon arrival. VICSES, Victoria Police, Country Fire Authority (CFA), local government and other agencies were involved in the response.

Due to the rare and significant nature of the event, VICSES held a multi-agency After Action Review

(AAR) to discuss what worked well and what could be improved. Some of the key highlights are as follows:

What worked well?

- VICSES command and overall control of the incident was largely in place.
- Crews worked well to ensure the safety of the public, provided relief and reduced the risk of further damage to property.

- Crews provided information directly to members of the public on scene, helping the caravan park owner and residents to make decisions and stay safe.

What could be improved?

- Notifications to regional personnel and other agencies generally occurred in line with SOPs, however, some notifications within other agencies did not occur or

were delayed. This may have slowed down the arrival of extra support.

- At similar multi-agency events, crews should remember to ensure they're sharing relevant information with anyone who may need to know, and that other agencies are doing the same. This could include people who are not on scene, such as senior decision-makers, other agencies or media teams.

The Lake Purrumbete Storm Event was a localised, severe-impact weather event, which saw a significant multi-agency response. While some lessons have been identified for all agencies for future events, our members should be proud of their efforts. Well done to all involved in this significant event. ■

AFL Emergency Services Match

By Gabi Barkmeyer, Corporate Communications Officer, VHO

VICSES will be participating in the upcoming AFL Emergency Services Match between Hawthorn and Collingwood at the MCG on 4 April.

The Emergency Services Match is an annual event played in recognition of emergency services personnel from across the state, and includes other organisations such as Victoria Police, Country Fire Authority, Metropolitan Fire Brigade and more alongside VICSES.

This year we will again be seeking volunteers to get involved in this fantastic opportunity, both for on-ground celebrations and as part of a community engagement opportunity before the game outside the grounds. More information on this event is coming soon, so stay tuned! ■



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Working as one to build community resilience

By Susan Davie, Manger Community Connections, VHO

“Alone, we
can do so
little; together,
we can do
so much”

**AUTHOR,
POLITICAL ACTIVIST,
AND LECTURER
HELEN KELLER**

One of our VICSES staff members, Dr Hannah Macdougall, got to visit our colleagues across the border at the South Australia (SA) SES when she competed in the 2020 Santos Tour Down Under Para Wheel Race. Hannah met with Liz Connell and Oshanna Alexander to talk all things community resilience and engagement, and how the two

agencies can continue to build community capacity.

“We have a strong relationship with the SA SES Community Resilience team. Working with Liz and Oshanna, we are looking to share our community engagement training for our members so that they can increase their skills and confidence in engaging with the community. We will use a blended learning approach to provide training, with the goal of creating action steps towards emergency preparedness with our communities,” Hannah said.

The two agencies will continue to work closely in the community resilience space, sharing resources and collateral, ideas and support, as well as fostering connections with Red Cross through the use of RediPlan and the Get Ready app. A big thank you to the SA SES for hosting Hannah, and we look forward to our future endeavours together. ■



Neighbour Day 2020

By Stephanie Makin, Senior Advisor,
Corporate Communications and Brand, VHO

This year VICSES will once again partner with the Red Cross to celebrate Neighbour Day.

African Music and Cultural Festival

By Malvina Tsecoutanis, Community Resilience Coordinator, Central Region

On Saturday 14 December, VICSES attended the African Music and Cultural Festival to engage with the African community alongside Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB) and Victoria Police.

Members from the Greater Dandenong and Northcote Units participated in the event to promote VICSES, talk to the community about volunteering opportunities and provide a general awareness of who we are and what we do.

The key objective of the African Music and Cultural Festival is to contribute to community cohesiveness, and breakdown barriers to social and cultural understanding of the relatively new and emerging African

Australian community by the wider Australian community. The festival also created opportunities for all community members to better connect and engage with each other.

Our members displayed a rescue vehicle at the event, which proved to be an effective tool for engagement and a useful way to educate the public.

The festival was a great opportunity for VICSES, and we look forward to building our relationship with the African Community. ■



Neighbour Day is Australia's annual celebration of community, encouraging us to connect with others in our neighbourhood.

This Neighbour Day 2020, VICSES is challenging members to connect with their neighbours over a cup of tea on, or around, Neighbour Day on 29 March 2020.

To help start the conversation, VICSES units will be supplied with VICSES Neighbour Day teabags that promote the tagline, 'Connect over a cup of communit^{ea}'.



For more information on Neighbour Day, including tips and safety instructions for engaging with neighbours, head to the general news section on the Hub. ■



MEDIA

Social media highlights from storm and flood response

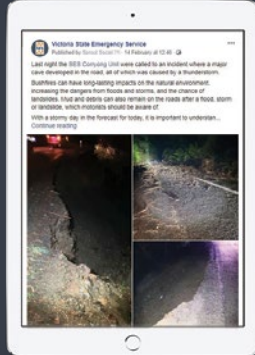
FACEBOOK

Reach:
15,554

Post clicks:
952

Reactions, comments and shares:
179

Corryong Unit responds to the sudden opening of a sinkhole caused by a thunderstorm.



Reach:
11,488

Post clicks:
567

Reactions, comments and shares:
142

Nillumbik Unit respond to storm damage and a tricky carport collapse in Eltham.



Reach:
17,942

Post clicks:
1,227

Reactions, comments and shares:
459

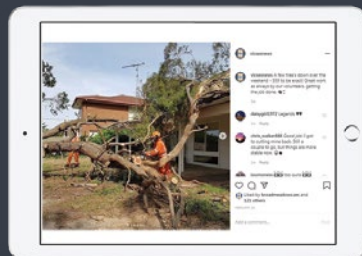
Our volunteers responded to 559 trees down over a weekend in February.

INSTAGRAM

Impressions:
1,984

Reach:
1,537

Comments, likes and saves:
127



Bellarine Unit responds to a large tree down on a property.

TWITTER

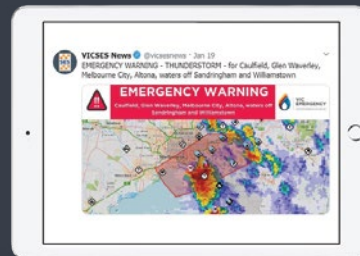
Impressions:
20,561

Media engagements:
1,410

Total engagements:
1,658



Upper Yarra Unit responds to a large tree down on a property in Millgrove.



Impressions:
34,548

Media engagements:
1,607

Total engagements:
2,008

An Emergency Warning - Thunderstorm issued for parts of Central Victoria in January.

Impressions:
34,034

Media engagements:
1,983

Total engagements:
2,711



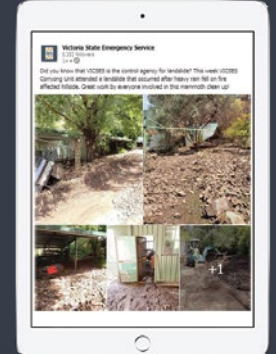
Action shots capturing our Emerald, Essendon and Narre Warren Units responding to damage after powerful storms passed through Victoria in January.

LINKEDIN

Impressions:
2,345

Clicks:
376

Reactions, comments and shares:
45



Corryong Unit attended a landslide that occurred after heavy rain fell on a fire affected hillside.

INFORMATION SERVICES (IS) UPDATE

Ensuring services work for members on deployments

You have heard me say many times that working at VICSES is something that I am very proud of. I say it once again, and will continue to do so.

The support for fire operations has been incredible – I and my team feel privileged to be able to support in any way we can.

And, we have been learning a lot from you all.

One of the more interesting things we have been learning and getting a better appreciation of is some of the constraints when operating from a Regional Control Centre (RCC) or Incident Control Centre (ICC) managed by other agencies.

In fact, Tom Wright (our Field Information and Communications Officer) and the team used the information they were learning to come up with a solution to improve

connectivity and capacity in those working environments.

Collaborating with the Moe Office for the Traralgon ICC, we implemented what we now call the 'ICT Kit', which is also being trialled now in Bairnsdale and Benalla. So far the feedback has been promising, and if it goes well we will collaborate with the State Operations team to fine tune and standardise it.

A lot of work is also going on in the background to support you all – making sure that services are working well, and keeping an extra special eye on any requests that come in which are directly related to operations and ensuring that they are attended to. Wherever possible we have been calling people, not just about IS matters, but to find

out if there is anything else we can support, especially if we are making a trip to a site.

So if you're in need of support across a few areas, feel free to let us know in IS when you put a request in – we'll be here to assist you.



Silvia Silverii
Chief Information Officer,
VICSES

Capturing accurate records for declared operations

By Ross Elford, Manager Information Security and Governance, VHO

As VICSES continues to provide invaluable assistance to other emergency service organisations in responding to the devastating bushfires in the North East, Gippsland and Alpine regions, and with a spate of recent storm-related events thrown into the mix, you could be forgiven for thinking good record keeping is probably the last thing anyone has time to think about.

The recent announcement, however, that the Inspector General for Emergency Management (IGEM) will lead an inquiry into Victoria's preparedness for and response to the bushfires has highlighted the need to capture a full and accurate record of our actions and decisions when in a Declared Operation. This shouldn't be an afterthought but something that is an integrated aspect of responding to an emergency event. In fact, as a recent news item on the Hub detailed, there is a number of existing VICSES and EMV protocols in place to ensure that this is so. It's vitally important that all members involved in a Declared Operation are aware of these and adhere to them.

Simply put, having records available to evidence our actions and decisions will ensure that VICSES is in the best position possible to improve how we prepare for and responds to Declared Operations and, in turn, better protect the communities we serve. ■