

SUMMER 2020

Community Matters

# VICSES

EDITION 13

Your family, our family



**3 YEAR**  
Anniversary Edition



***2019-20 VICSES Year at a glance***



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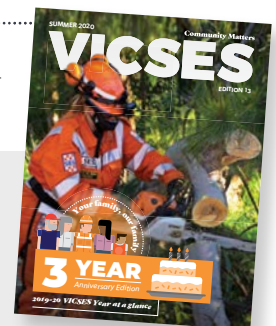
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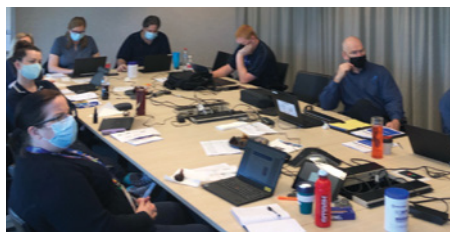
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### Interested in contributing?

Submit your article here:  
[publications@ses.vic.gov.au](mailto:publications@ses.vic.gov.au)



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 POLICE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

Welcome to the fourth edition of *Community Matters* for 2020.

As the year draws to a close, we reflect on what has been one of the most unpredictable and challenging years that many of us have ever known, starting with a devastating fire season followed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

2019-20 was one of the busiest years on record for VICSES volunteers who responded to 33,742 calls for assistance - that's 382,141 operational hours.

Over the course of one year, our volunteers attended almost 25,000 storm assistance calls, more than 2,000 for flood relief and carried out over 1,200 road rescues.

At the end of August, we continued to face icy conditions and wild winds, which resulted in over 3,200 calls for assistance in just one weekend.

While our weather remains typically unpredictable, Victorians can always rely on the support and assistance from dedicated VICSES volunteers. I'd like to thank each and every one of you for your unwavering dedication to the Victorian community and for always stepping up to the challenge.

With the seasonal outlook indicating a high likelihood of above average rainfall across the state, VICSES will continue to play a key role in supporting the community and other agencies in the state's response to major weather events.

In September 2020, we also released the State Emergency Management Plan. This ensures state arrangements

for managing flood events are clearly outlined and preparedness advice is clearly and efficiently distributed to Victorian communities.

VICSES continues to play an important role in the state's response to the pandemic. On top of operational support at our testing sites, border closures and the State Control Centre, our volunteers have continued to demonstrate their adaptability and resilience in responding to requests for assistance in a COVIDSafe manner.

We are continually looking at how we can improve our emergency services by providing our volunteers with the facilities they need to carry out their important work.

Over the past three State budgets, the Victorian Government has invested over \$54 million in VICSES facilities to ensure the state's emergency services volunteers are equipped with the resources they need to tackle any challenge now, and into the future.

Works are currently underway on two of our busiest units in Emerald and Knox, which will each be welcoming a brand new, fit-for-purpose facility later next year.

We're proud to be supporting our volunteers with infrastructure upgrades that will enable our units to continue their excellent work, while also providing additional space for training that will help with the retention and recruitment of new volunteers.

I look forward to visiting these new facilities and meeting with more volunteers when we reach a COVID normal, to personally thank you for supporting Victorians.

You have all done an incredible job throughout a very difficult 2020, and your efforts have been invaluable – thank you.

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



## Welcome

Hello everyone, and welcome to this special three year anniversary edition of *Community Matters*.

As we come to the end of one of our busiest years on record, I'd like to thank each and every one of our members for your continued dedication to VICSES and the community. Your commitment to the safety of Victorians through this time has been remarkable, and I can't thank you all enough. You can view the figures and events that contributed to the 2019-20 year at a glance on page 6.

The declared La Niña has seen a huge amount of work go into flood planning and preparedness, including community engagement and the release of the State Emergency Response Plan (SERP) Flood Sub-plan Edition 2.

As COVID-19 restrictions begin to ease across Victoria, I'd like to acknowledge our members who have shown great flexibility in dealing with new training and service delivery methods, demonstrating one of our key Values – *we are focused and adaptable*. It's important that we continue to adhere to hygiene and physical distancing requirements to ensure an ongoing commitment to our individual health, as well as other members and the community.

This year has also seen significant changes to our Board, saying farewell to Director Evelyn Duke, Chair Peter Akers, and Board member Barbara Yeoh. We also welcomed Greg Wilson to the board in February, who has taken on the position of Chair. I'd like to thank Evelyn, Peter and Barbara for their support and contributions during their time with our organisation, and welcome Greg to the Board with his wealth of government and departmental experience.

Coming into the New Year, I look forward to our growth as an organisation and working towards our vision: *Safer Communities – Together*. I hope you enjoy this edition of *Community Matters*, and stay safe.

Kind regards,

**Stephen Griffin**  
**CEO Victoria State Emergency Service**

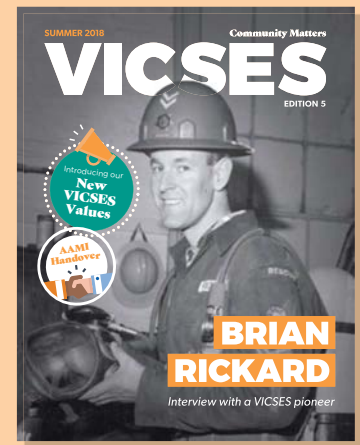


# FEATURES

## Celebrating three years of Community Matters



It's been three years since the first edition of *Community Matters* officially launched in 2017 – how time flies! Here's a look back at our past editions and the events, operations, and achievements that shaped VICSES and our communities.



### EDITION 5:

- Introducing our new VICSES Values and Volunteer Code of Conduct, better reflecting the VICSES we know today.
- VICSES receives a generous donation of more than 2,000 pieces of equipment as part of the AAMI Equipment Handover.

2017



### EDITION 1:

- VICSES says farewell to Trevor White as Chief Officer Operations after 40 years of service.
- Members from Ballarat Unit travel to Hobart, Tasmania in November to participate in the 2017 National Disaster Rescue Challenge.

### EDITION 3:

- Wear Orange Wednesday is officially launched on the steps of Parliament House in Melbourne.
- VICSES launch our Operational Capability Strategy for 2017-2022, outlining a holistic approach to our operational service delivery.



### EDITION 4:

- VICSES officially launches the new corporate style guide, including a refreshed colour palette, graphic elements, and greater focus on the volunteer experience.
- Volunteers from South Barwon and Corio Units join together to represent VICSES in the Australasian Rescue Challenge, held in Lardner Park in East Region.

2018

### EDITION 2:

- VICSES members Michael Hellwege, Dianne Dale and Ron Fitch honoured as part of the 2018 Australia Day Honours.
- Previous Minister for Emergency Services James Merlino visits Narre Warren Unit to sign a new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Victorian Government, VICSES and the Municipal Association of Victoria.





2019



## EDITION 6:

- WebEx Teams launched for all members, transforming the way we communicate as an organisation.
- Extreme overland flooding in North East Region traps vehicles on the Hume Highway, with approximately 120 people needing to be rescued from floodwater.



## EDITION 7:

- South West Region celebrates the lives of Port Campbell Unit members Ross and Andrew Powell, after their passing during a life-saving rescue attempt.
- VICSES competes in the Victorian Police and Emergency Service Games, winning 42 gold, 39 silver and 12 bronze medals.

## EDITION 9:

- VICSES launches our first ever *Your family, our family* campaign, aimed at highlighting the incredible people that love and support our amazing volunteers throughout the year.
- VICSES celebrates 17 years with our Principal Community Partner AAMI.

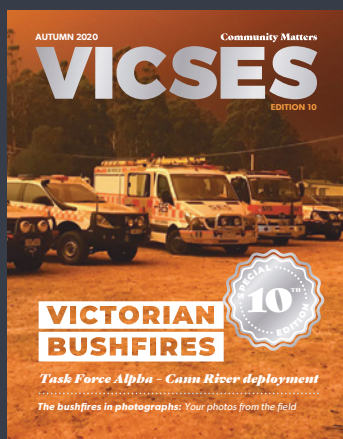


## EDITION 8:

- A rare EF-2 tornado event hits Axedale in North West Region, with gusts in excess of 200km per hour.
- In July, VICSES joined our emergency service colleagues to take part in the inaugural AFL Emergency Services Match.



2020



## EDITION 10:

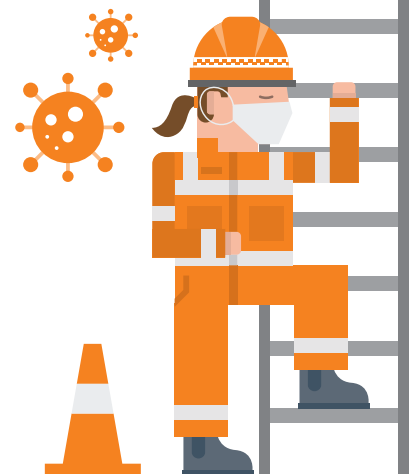
- A special 10th edition of *Community Matters*, highlighting the devastating Victorian bushfires and the hard work and dedication of many of our members who were deployed to support fire events.
- VICSES also responded to storm and flood events throughout the summer, with 10,436 calls for assistance in January and February alone.

## EDITION 11:

- COVID-19 restrictions come into effect across Victoria, with VICSES enacting the COVID-19 Pandemic Plan to ensure our members safety and continued ability to support our communities.
- VICSES Mallaacoota Unit volunteers are flown out to Melbourne for the AFL Bushfire Appeal State of Origin, to say thank-you for their hard work during the fire season.



An eerily orange Orbost, photographed by Sunbury Unit volunteer Nicole Dale.



## EDITION 12:

- Wyndham West Unit commences official operations in Melbourne's west as VICSES' 150th unit, to better support their local community.
- VICSES demonstrates how we've responded to the challenges faced as we adapt to a new COVID-19 compliant state, continuing to stand by and support communities across Victoria.

# GENERAL NEWS

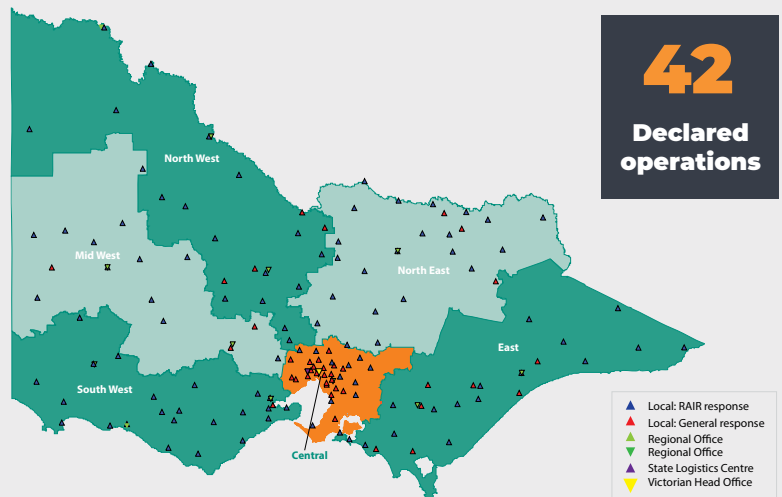
## VICSES Year at a glance 2019-20

By Gabi Barkmeyer,  
Corporate Communications Officer, VHO

The 2019-20 financial year has proven to be one of the most challenging 12 months that we've faced as an organisation, recording our second busiest year on record.

**F**rom flood and storm response and the devastating summer fire season, to supporting the response during COVID-19 and everything else in between, our members have continued to deliver world-class services to keep our communities safe.

Here's a glance at some of the facts, figures, and events that have contributed to our journey during these 12 months, highlighting the incredible dedication and contributions of our volunteers and staff throughout Victoria.



**149**  
Units\*

(\*150th unit launched July 1 2020)



**103**  
Road crash  
rescue accredited units



**14**  
permanently  
staffed offices

### OUR PEOPLE



**5,147** Volunteers

**33%** Female **66.9%** Male **0.1%** Non-binary

**Volunteer leadership**  
(Unit Controllers, Deputy Controllers)

**28.1%** Female **71.5%** Male **0.4%** Non-binary

**223** Staff

**43%** Female **57%** Male

**Staff leadership**  
(VPS6 and Executive)

**42%** Female **58%** Male



### THE 2019-20 FINANCIAL YEAR

**382,141**

Volunteer hours

**Flood**

**11,501**  
Hours

**2,139**  
Incidents

**Storm**

**150,748**  
Hours

**24,926**  
Incidents

**Road Crash  
Rescue**

**12,162**  
Hours

**1,261**  
Incidents

**33,742**

Requests for assistance

**Assisting  
agency**

**150,980**  
Hours across

**3,543**  
Incidents

**Community  
engagement**

**51,391**  
Hours

**Tsunami,  
landslide or  
earthquake**

**97**  
Requests for  
assistance

**Rescue  
(other)**

**3,226**  
Hours across

**714**  
Events

**80%** of all RFAs relate to flood and storm



## OPERATIONS OF SIGNIFICANCE

**8-9 AUGUST 2019**



### August storm events

In August Victoria was lashed with severe storms, beginning with the 'Bass Strait Low' storm event from 8-9 August, which saw strong winds and an intense low-pressure system affect parts of the state. Peak wind gusts reached 110km/h, resulting in over 850 requests for assistance. VICSES members also responded to a complex road crash rescue as a result of a large tree that had fallen on a vehicle travelling through the Black Spur (Maroondah Highway). On 27 August, damaging winds hit Melbourne's outer Eastern suburbs resulting in three fatalities, water and power consequences, and over 3,400 requests for assistance.

**19 JANUARY 2020**



### Hail storm event

Severe and dangerous thunderstorms brought heavy rainfall, resulting in flash flooding and golf ball sized hail that had a significant impact across metropolitan Melbourne. VICSES Malvern Unit received in excess of 1,000 requests for assistance, and VICSES Manningham Unit over 470. An Incident Control Centre was established with VICSES, Country Fire Authority and Metropolitan Fire Brigade (now Fire Rescue Victoria), contributing to incident management team positions. Crews from Mid West and South West Regions also deployed to assist Central Region units.

**NOVEMBER 2019 – MARCH 2020**



### Summer season

November saw the onset of a devastating fire season for Victoria, especially impacting East Gippsland and in the North East Region. On 21 November, the combination of a state-wide total fire ban and storms saw 150 new fires start, as well as 2,042 requests for assistance for VICSES for storm damage, including fallen trees and building damage. As the fires significantly increased in size over December and January, a State of Disaster was declared. 124 VICSES units supported the fire response across a huge variety of roles, including logistics capability, staging area and base camp management, Incident Management Team roles at control centres, road crash rescue assistance for deployed units, reloading aircraft and much more.

**8-10 JUNE 2020**



*Photo: Christopher Hopkins, The Age*

### Mount Disappointment search

On 8 June 2020, VICSES crews were tasked by Victoria Police to assist with the search of a missing 14-year-old male with autism in the Mount Disappointment area. The search effort ran for nearly three days, with approximately 160 volunteers and staff from VICSES Central and North East Regions assisting with the search. On 10 June, William was found safe and well by a community members and reunited with his family. ■

## GENERAL NEWS



### Remembering

### Rhys Maggs AM

On behalf of the volunteers, staff, management and the Board of VICSES, we recognise and celebrate the life and service of Rhys Maggs AM.

Tim Wiebusch, Chief Officer Operations, VHO



**R**hys served as State Director of VICSES from May 1987 to August 2005, and played an instrumental role in the organisation's history.

Positioned as the State Director, the equivalent of our current Chief Executive Officer and Chief Officer Operations roles, Rhys served under six different Ministers for Police and Emergency Services: The Honourable Mal Sandon, Pat McNamara, Bill McGrath, Andre Haermeyer, Tim Holding and Bob Cameron.

While VICSES is an emergency service, really we are a people organisation dedicated to helping members of the community in their time of need. Often our members face situations that are distressing or confronting to their own mental health and wellbeing.

Rhys always had our people at the front of his mind. Symbolic of this, in the late 1980's Rhys oversaw the establishment of the VICSES Peer Support program to foster meaningful connections with, and help our members cope with the work they were doing. This program continues to provide support to our volunteers today.

Having seen the success of that program and to ensure members also had access to pastoral care support, Rhys sought out and found a couple who had recently retired from the Salvation Army, Major's, Walter and Jean Smart who commenced service with VICSES in 1993. Rhys, Wally and Jean enjoyed a very close relationship over their years of service.

Throughout his service with VICSES, Rhys consistently advocated to government for VICSES to have standing as an outright emergency service, rather than just a business unit within the Department of Justice.

One of the significant recognition steps was when changes were made to the *Road Safety Act*, which allowed VICSES vehicles to respond under lights and sirens. In 1992 this progressed to authorising red and blue flashing lights to be used on VICSES vehicles. But, more significantly, Rhys advocated for VICSES to become a Statutory Authority, which was achieved in 2005 and at this point, Rhys retired from the service.



Rhys understood the funding challenges faced by VICSES, and considered alternate funding mechanisms. His vision was realized with the start of VICSES offering an emergency management consultancy service to large corporates such as the Australian Grand Prix Corporation. Later he secured significant sponsorship with RACV Insurance, which set the bar for sponsorship rights and joint badging on uniforms and vehicles. This has set the foundation for continued sponsorship with our current Principle Community Partner AAMI.

Prior to 1987, VICSES volunteers were using second or third hand vehicles that were over 20 years old and potentially dangerous. Rhys led the reforms that saw every VICSES unit receive a state-plated purpose designed vehicle for responding to emergencies in the community. The difference between the vehicle fleet of 1987 and post 2005 is a significant legacy in itself.

During his career Rhys led numerous large scale emergencies, including the record breaking floods in North East Region in 1993, and the large storm events across South West Region in 1995. I'm told it was not unusual for Rhys to answer calls for emergency assistance from the public himself, which were taken at our Victorian Head Office (VHO) up until 1995. In 2002, Rhys led the VICSES response in support of Victoria Police for the widespread 'White Powder' outbreaks.



***Rhys was a leader in promoting the biggest of standards and practice in Road Crash Rescue, with a focus on reducing the impact to community members trapped in vehicles."***

Rhys' legacy saw every Road Crash Rescue unit issued with vital hydraulic rescue equipment, rather than having to face exhaustive local fundraising efforts to get by and purchase their own jaws of life. His leadership around Road Crash Rescue put VICSES on the map as a leader in its practice as the largest provider in Australia.

Rhys led the formation of the Australian National Road Accident Rescue Association (ANRARA) in 1996, and was fundamental in broadening the focus to be renamed the Australasian Road Rescue Organisation (ARRO) in 2003.

In 1999 he was elected as Vice Chair of the World Rescue Organisation (WRO). Rhys later had ARRO accepted into membership of the WRO, and sought sponsorship to enable our first VICSES volunteer rescue team to compete overseas in the World Extrication Challenge. In 2002 the World Rescue Challenge was held in the City of Prague at which Rhys was elected as Chair of the WRO for two years.

Under his leadership of ARRO, this saw VICSES host the first Australasian Road Crash Rescue Challenge, involving international teams called Rescue Down Under and later iRescue (Cutting Edge) in 2010, where Rhys was still involved with ARRO in his retirement.

Alongside these revered roles and accomplishments, Rhys was also the inaugural Chair of the Australian Council of State Emergency Services (ACSES) when it was established in 2002. The various Directors of SES agencies across each Australian state and territory recognised that a collaborative national approach would be required if the value of their services to the community was to be maximised. Rhys represented ACSES on the Australasian Fire and Emergency Services Council (AFAC) until all SES agencies became members in their own right. Rhys was also the representative of AFAC on the Commonwealth Productivity Commission for several years.

Passionate about all-things volunteering, Rhys (often alongside his wife Lilian), would regularly travel across the state to ensure that volunteers received due recognition for the role they play in their communities. In doing so he oversaw the development of the VICSES Long Service Medal within the national honours and awards, which now play a centre role in annual recognition of volunteers across the service.

Rhys did not seek rewards, recognition or personal accolades for his tireless efforts. That said, Rhys did receive many accolades during his service to community, including being awarded the Centenary Medal in January 2001 for "service to the community as Director of VICSES". During the Australia Day Honours in January 2004, Rhys was awarded the prestigious Member of the Order of Australia for "service to emergency management and to the community, particularly through the VICSES."

I have very fond memories of Rhys. Having been a volunteer for a decade or so, in 2003 he convinced me to leave a corporate career

and take up the first Volunteer Support Officer role in the organisation – a role that he was personally passionate about establishing. I still remember him saying, "This will just be the start of a long career for you at VICSES," ... and he was right. Rhys would walk the hallways at VHO checking in with all of us, always with a smile on his face. When he was focused on an outcome he commanded accountability, but was always a very caring and compassionate man.

Rhys' unwavering passion for the welfare of our members saw him foster many deep relationships, which is clearly evident by the many past and present members of VICSES that attended the online funeral service to honour Rhys' life and service.

I know from the numerous messages that I have received from across our organisation and from across Australia, that Rhys epitomised the essence of what it means to serve the community and uphold the Values we have at VICSES.

To Rhys' family, Lilian, Robert and Caroline, I extend my heartfelt condolences with you and your extended family and friends. You can be proud of how highly regarded Rhys was within our organisation and across the broader emergency management sector in Australia.



***Rhys Maggs AM, we salute you for your empathy and skills to assisting our members when they were in need themselves, and the ability to clearly demonstrate to others the goodness of a life spent in service of others."***

Your selfless dedication has left us with an enduring VICSES that provides ongoing support to all our members and the Victorian community.

Rest in peace, you will not be forgotten.

**Tim Wiebusch**  
**VICSES Chief Officer Operations**

## GENERAL NEWS

# Chelsea Unit take social media by storm

By Jamie Devenish, Media and Communications Manager, VHO

Phil Wall is the designated Media Officer at Chelsea Unit where he's been a volunteer for the past 17 years.

With the demise of free local newspapers in the area, the Chelsea Unit have made the decision to utilise their social media presence on Facebook as a community page, rather than only sharing VICSES information on floods, storms or road crash rescues. The numbers speak for themselves, with their Facebook page reaching an audience of over 1 million people in 2020.

Popular posts have included the unique case of Spoonville with VICSES designed spoons to keep an eye over things, a VICSES response to release ducklings from a storm water drain (see more on page 14), and most recently an emergency services showcase for a young boy going through a tough time. What's consistent across these posts are good photos or videos to attract the browsing viewer, and regular content to build familiarity and to be active in people's newsfeeds.

"Not every single post is fully dedicated to something VICSES is doing. But if it's interesting to our audience, this content boosts our reach when we are recruiting volunteers, fundraising, or sharing important warnings with our community.

One of our VICSES Values is we are part of our community, so we try to live by that," Phil said.

The growth then becomes self-serving according to Phil, in the sense that the more interaction and engagement you have with an audience, the more it grows. "In 2018 we had 250,000 hits, in 2019 we hit 500,000, and then a million in 2020," said Phil.

Phil's advice for other social media administrators is:

- Be timely and regular with posts – share content while it's still relevant.
- Avoid jargon or any emergency response language – we're part of our community, so we need to talk like them.
- Visual aspects are so important – a great photo or video really makes a post.

For support with your unit's social media presence, you can check out the information on the Hub under **Media and Communications > Digital Toolkits > Social media support**, or contact [media@ses.vic.gov.au](mailto:media@ses.vic.gov.au). ■



## Stepping back in time...

Bacchus Marsh Unit members carry 'casualty' Gavin Gamston out of Lerderderg Gorge on a DIY bush stretcher as part of a training techniques weekend back in 1983.

The weekend saw 100 VICSES members from Bacchus Marsh, Gisborne, Craigieburn and Werribee Units, as well as members from the Ballarat Regional Headquarters, come together to undertake a series of theory and practical sessions, including principles of search operations, equipment, the construction of a bush stretcher and much more. ■



## Share with us

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





# End of an era as VICSES audits last MEMP

By Jamie Devenish, Manager Media and Communications, VHO

After many years of supporting the emergency management sector by auditing Municipal Emergency Management Plans (MEMPs), VICSES completed its final audit when the Hobsons Bay Council Plan was put under the microscope on Friday 27 November 2020.

**R**ecent changes to Emergency Management Legislation favours a new approach to assuring the quality of municipal based emergency management plans. The new arrangements support a self-assurance checklist from the municipality, with assurance provided by the Regional Emergency Management Planning Committee (REMPC) rather than VICSES led audits on a rolling three-year basis.

VICSES' long-standing role as the lead auditor function in supporting municipalities and agencies in emergency management planning under the *Emergency Management Act 1986*, has provided the

sector with great benefit for almost 25 years. The new arrangements will enable VICSES staff to provide better support to its volunteers, as well as focus planning efforts on VICSES control hazards such as Municipal Flood Emergency Plans (MFEPs).

"It's the end of an era, but we are looking forward to the approach of MEMP's being the shared responsibility of all stakeholders, and to be able to focus on VICSES' hazards and priorities within the community. VICSES should be very proud of its history in this space, having continually improved the process as things have changed over the years," said VICSES Manager Regional Officer

of Emergency Management (MROEM), Andrew Gill.

"As our team can recall, we started audits in the late 90s, and then it really stepped up in 2002 with Audit Assessment Tool being developed. The panel audits alongside our Victoria Police and the Department of Health and Human Services counterparts has been in place since 2010, which has really driven significant accountability improvements and better planning from Municipal Emergency Management Committees. We leave a fantastic legacy as we embrace the move to an assurance model which will continue to drive effective municipal planning," said Andrew. ■



## VICSES Community Safety Program for flood

By Kate White, Director Community Resilience and Communication, VHO

**V**ICSES is proud to launch our new publication, the VICSES Community Safety Program for flood.

This publication details how VICSES works with communities and partners to achieve more aware, informed and prepared communities; supporting them to understand their flood risk and the relevance of taking action before, during and after emergency events.

The publication expands on our community resilience agenda in a flood context for what has been achieved to date and arrangements currently in place, and will be provided to the Minster as part of the VICSES Spring and Summer Preparedness Assurance.

Further considerations are now underway to understand how to best to circulate this information to volunteers and staff as a key tool to gaining an increased awareness of the end-to-end approach for our flood engagement program.

I'd like to thank everyone involved in the development of this highly valuable resource.

You can view the program on the VICSES website under **Who we are > Publications**. ■



## New VICSES Orange Podcast

By Kathleen Jessop, Media Officer, VHO

**S**pearheaded by the Media and Communications team, the podcast gives an opportunity to listen to the tales of our members as they share their insights and experiences with VICSES. 'Episode one: Orange skies, orange uniforms', features members John Reed and Sara Matthews, who hail from VICSES Bendoc and Cann River Units in

Victoria's east. Hear how they contributed as VICSES members during the recent summer fire season, and how their small towns respectively coped during the bushfire crisis.

You can listen to the latest episodes on [www.podbean.com](http://www.podbean.com) and via Spotify by searching 'VICSES'. ■

The VICSES Orange Podcast is a pilot project highlighting the incredible work of VICSES volunteers across Victoria.

# CAMPAIGNS & EVENTS



## 15 to Float 2020

By Gabi Barkmeyer, Corporate Communications Officer, VHO

On 24 September, VICSES joined the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) at the Melbourne Sports and Aquatic Centre (MSAC) to talk about the rainfall outlook for spring, and to drive home our *15 to Float* campaign.

**T**aking advantage of the closed swimming facilities due to COVID-19, the water in the MSAC Olympic-sized swimming pool was filled to 15cm – the height of an average pen, or just the amount water that it can take to float a car. VICSES Chief Officer Operations Tim Wiebusch was joined by volunteers from Port Phillip Unit and BOM Climate Scientist Andrew Watkins to speak to the media on the above average rainfall and dangers of driving through floodwater.

With La Niña officially declared by BOM in September, the predicted heavy rainfall and increased chance of flooding across Victoria meant that our *15 to Float* messaging is more important than ever. ■



## 2021 Victoria Police and Emergency Services Games

By Gerry Sheridan, Operations Officer – Capability Improvement, VHO

The Victoria Police and Emergency Services Games are back for 2021, scheduled for 17-21 March 2021 in Geelong. This event will be a particularly special occasion, celebrating the games 40th anniversary since its beginnings in 1981.



### Download

You can download the *15 to Float* digital toolkit and more spring/summer storm and flood preparedness collateral on the Hub, under **My State > Media and Communications > Digital toolkits**.



# Your family, our family

By Gabi Barkmeyer, Corporate Communications Officer, VHO

On the weekend of 14-15 November, VICSES hosted our second annual *Your family, our family* campaign to say thank you to the friends and family that support our volunteers to do what they do, every day.

**B**ehind every brave and hard-working volunteer is a support network of people that help them achieve amazing things in their community. In 2020, our members' friends and family have stood by our volunteers through a busy bushfire season, major storm systems, and the COVID-19 pandemic. Because of them, our volunteers can respond to emergencies 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

This year looked a little different due to COVID-19, but our units were still encouraged to get involved through a range of activities, such as hosting a barbecue, picnic, or other outdoor gathering in line with current COVID-19 restrictions, putting together a 'thank-you' goodie bag or card for unit family members, sending an online message of thanks to a volunteer family member, friend or employer, promoting the campaign on unit social media pages, and engaging with local media.

At a state-level, we shared the stories of some of our amazing volunteers and the people in their lives that support them across our social media platforms and our VICSES website. This included stories from Broadmeadows Unit volunteer Shane Taylor, Bendoc Unit Controller John Reed, Gisborne Unit volunteer Ross Evans, Cann River volunteer Sara Matthews, Heywood Unit volunteer Rebecca Siddall, Hepburn Shire Unit Deputy Controller Emily Pullen, and Tallangatta Unit Deputy Controller Zachary West.

We also shared some fantastic videos of our VICSES volunteer members and their families, featuring members from the Katris, White and Connell families.

You can view all of our featured stories and videos on our VICSES website under **Media > Campaigns > Your Family, our family**.



**W**ith the COVID-19 pandemic forcing the cancellation of the 2020 games, the federation look forward to seeing all agencies come together to provide an opportunity for members to focus on their physical and mental health after what has been a very challenging year.

The City of Greater Geelong is excited to welcome the games in 2021 to utilise the regions many high-quality sport and recreation venues, which is sure to make the experience even more memorable for all involved participants. VICSES encourage all of our members to get involved and experience the comradery of this fantastic event. ■



## More information

More information will be available via the Victoria Police and Emergency Services Games website, including when registrations open: **[www.emergencyservicesgames.org.au](http://www.emergencyservicesgames.org.au)**



Thank you to everyone that supported this fantastic campaign for another year. And to all the people that support our volunteers every day – we couldn't do it without you. Thank YOU! ■





# CENTRAL

# A quacking good rescue



By Phil Wall, Chelsea Unit Deputy Controller, Central Region

1 July – 30 September

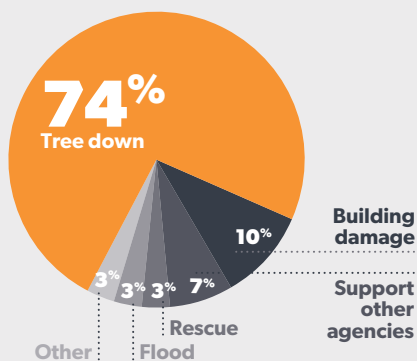


# 1,980

Volunteers

# 5,785

Requests for assistance



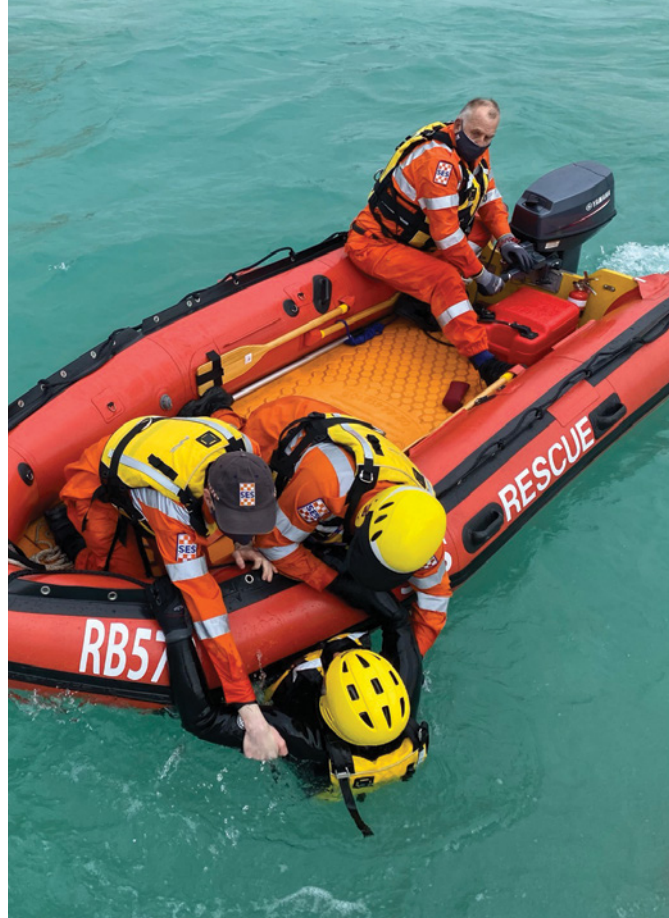
Just after 1:30pm on Sunday 18 October, VICSES Chelsea Unit received a request for assistance from a gentleman who had heard baby ducks in distress in a large drain, located on the bike path between the Edithvale Golf Club and the Edithvale wetlands. Our crews quickly turned-out to respond to the unusual incident.

Once we arrived, it became clear that seven baby ducks had somehow become stuck in the drain. Mum and dad were keeping a very close eye on them, as well as our crews! We decided on a plan of action to try to allow the ducklings to literally walk out by removing a set of bars at the back of the drain and constructing a ramp from some corflute, then patiently waiting to see what would happen. Right on cue, the ducklings seemed to understand what we were trying to do and that we were there to help, and very happily marched in a line, up the ramp, and out of the drain. Once they were out, they quickly made their way to mum and dad, and were reunited in a close-by pond.

The unique rescue was soon picked up by news outlets, with Channel 7, 9 and 10 news programs, the ABC, Daily Mail, MSN News and Crime Watch Victoria running the story. Through these media channels the duckling rescue managed to reach approximately 11 million people, which is an incredible result for everyone involved and a great feel-good story for the community during somewhat challenging times. ■







# Central Region training team making waves

By Jackson Bell, Operations Manager – Operational Improvement, VHO

A joint initiative between the Central Region training team and surf park URBNSURF in Tullamarine led to a trial weekend being run over the weekend of 17 - 18 October, focusing on boating handling skills.

**G**iven the associated spring/summer seasonal outlook and the increased likelihood of above average rainfall, Operations Officer Justin Navas and Operations Manager and rescue boat subject matter lead Jackson Bell ‘floated’ the training idea to URBNSURF, who were only too happy to facilitate the request to hold the boating training at the surf park.

The partnership was made possible due to the surf park being closed during COVID-19. This presented an opportunity for VICSES to approach URBNSURF to use its wave pool, with the resumption of core training in line with the Chief Health Officer’s exemptions for training. The venue was ideal due to its small operating area, which is

similar to riverine or flash flooding environments where rescue boats are limited in space or have to navigate around obstacles.

The weekend was run entirely within COVIDSafe guidelines, with smaller group participation numbers and crews remaining within their unit crews. One of the positives of the smaller group numbers was that it enabled a greater level of crew engagement, and the ability to receive tailored coaching with boat handling and casualty rescues.

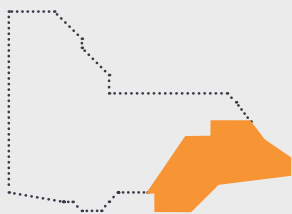
To generate a moving water environment, a series of 8-10 large waves were programmed, with boating members idling in the shallows waiting for the wave cycle to finish. Once the wave cycle finishes, the volume of water needs

to go somewhere. This creates a fast current, which gave members an opportunity to experience casualty pick-ups and boat handling in a safe and controlled moving water environment.

Members were instructed to take their time and remain in control so they could realise the key learning objectives of floodwater rescue. VICSES crews learned how to approach a casualty in water by simulating strong water currents that would be present in floodwaters. In addition to this, members were presented with real scenarios where they were able to practice different methods of retrieving people out of the water under simulated floodwaters. The softer skills were the focus, rather than speed.

“Similar to flooding, operating in a small area at slow speed with a casualty moving down stream is challenging. This environment gave our members the ability to operate in that environment, refreshing those soft skills and ensuring they thought about boat handling and movement, as well as contingency,” said Operations Manager Jackson Bell.

Overall the weekend was highly successful, with rescue boat members expressing increased confidence in preparedness for the coming season, as well as a strong desire to participate again. While there are no guarantees on future sessions being held at URBNSURF, this innovation is an example of partnering with local industries to provide our members with a targeted and tailored training environment, designed to test and build on existing skillsets. Further conversations with URBNSURF are continuing to ensure an ongoing relationship with the park to explore future opportunities. ■



**EAST**

**1 July – 30 September**

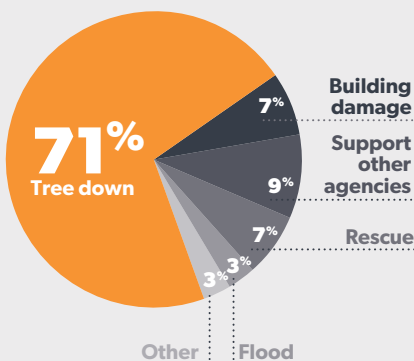


**675**

**Volunteers**

**772**

**Requests for assistance**



# WebExing around Gippsland

By Jen Harnden,  
Operations Officer, East Region

WebEx has been an important platform for all East Region members during COVID-19.

**D**uring 2019, the East Region training team rolled out WebEx training to all units across the region upon its official release within VICSES. Luckily, our units had some basic use of WebEx prior to COVID-19 restrictions setting in. It's been a challenging time for all members to adapt to the new normal of maintaining skills, communicating, and attending meetings and briefings using this platform, facing some technical challenges and connectivity limitations along the way.

The East Region training team needed to change the way in which we assisted our units in a virtual world. We facilitated the standard online training courses available through the Training Portal, which gave members an opportunity to engage during the sessions. This made online training more enjoyable and interactive, whilst building capability across the region and complying with the required skills for members. We also developed many presentations to deliver skills maintenance opportunities to our members, which allowed units to still be engaged in VICSES activities.

Our team has delivered and facilitated over 40 sessions during the COVID-19 pandemic so far, which has seen over 650 members participating throughout these sessions since July. Topics covered include aviation, road crash rescue case studies, First Aid, Crew Leader role information, flood boat operations, OIMS, and Unit Management Team and Unit Duty Officer training. We also ran three Incident Control Point sessions on storm, flood and landslide, with interactive scenarios at the end.

With training sessions available to members via Webex or the Hub, this provided training officers with access to resources to utilise at their

unit, so they weren't struggling to find topics to deliver online. Some units even used apps like Kahoot or phone devices to run quiz and trivia nights to keep connected. Everyone has done an amazing job, and continue to impress us with out-of-the-box training ideas.

As restrictions ease, so will our WebEx training sessions. However, as we see the future of training heading towards a more blended approach, we will continue to utilise WebEx and other online platforms to maintain skills, to ensure all members are up-to-date with the latest training and technologies. ■



**East Region units engaging with social media training**

By Jane Fontana, Community  
Resilience Coordinator, East Region





# Gippsland Units taking on Crew Member Supervised training

By Jen Harnden, Operations Officer, East Region

As COVID-19 restrictions ease across Victoria, over 75% of our units can now undertake the new Crew Member Supervised (CMS) training for new and existing members.

**E**ast Region has over 70 new and probationary members either starting the online training, or undergoing the face-to-face training component as part of the new CMS program. Some of these members have been on waiting lists or waiting for in-person training to commence since March due to COVID-19. Units can now recruit and train, which enables them to build capability across the region.

The General Rescue and Fundamental Skills training programs have been redeveloped, and will now be delivered under the new name: Crew Member Training Program. This renaming aligns with the redefined Crew Member roles within the VICSES role and training pathways. Crew Member role development integrates flexibility for

members and maximises training capacity within units and regions, capitalising on the efficiencies of the Training Portal. The content incorporates each of the VICSES control areas and is structured around the steps in the systems approach.

Unit Management Teams and Unit Training Officers have adapted to the new program, and are finding it relatively easy to train new recruits and have them out responding on the trucks. The CMS program takes a new recruit approximately 9 hours to complete.

For more information on the Crew Member Training Program, speak with your Unit Training Officer or regional training team. Resources can also be found on the Hub and via the Training Portal. ■



**W**ith the huge demand and reliance on social media nowadays for information and connections, East Region have recently delivered some social media basics training to units who want to get the most out of their unit Facebook pages.

The 1.5 hour WebEx session was delivered by East Region Community Resilience Coordinators Merryn Henderson and Jane Fontana, assisted by Gabi Barkmeyer from the state Media and Communications team, and Jen Harnden from the East Region training team.

Content covered during the training included a look at social media use in Australia today, important considerations to think about before posting photos and videos, VICSES social media related doctrine and resources, and a look at a few tips and tricks to maximise the reach of page content.

The session was well received with some really good discussions generated as a result, as well as a range of follow up suggestions including:

- The need for more social media training in different contexts, including face-to-face, one day workshops, WebEx, unit or cluster based sessions, or a combination through blended delivery.
- Social media 'quick help' resources, including short videos on key features on Facebook.
- Media Liaison training being conducted by the state Media and Communications team over WebEx.
- Additional digital templates for volunteers to quickly and easily populate local content.
- Scheduling regional sessions on community engagement awareness for units.

The East Region team will continue to work with the state Media and Communications team on the outcomes above, as well as further developing the support and training available to units in this space.

Please feel free to contact either Jane or Merryn for more information at [commengeast@ses.vic.gov.au](mailto:commengeast@ses.vic.gov.au). ■



## MID WEST

1 July – 30 September

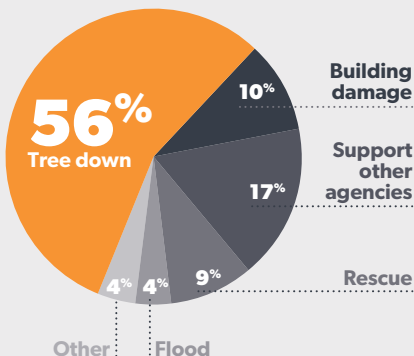


# 392

Volunteers

# 231

Requests for assistance



## Bacchus Marsh Unit bike riding group biking around the world

By Jane Patton, Community Resilience Coordinator, Mid West Region

**T**his time 12 months ago, the VICSES Bacchus Marsh Unit bike riding group visited Cambodia for the adventure of a life time.

A regular Sunday morning down at the Bacchus Marsh Unit local headquarters involves the riding group's eight members joking around with each other and discussing plans for the day's bike ride ahead, concluding with a well-earned cuppa that waits for them across the road at the local café. This tradition has been ongoing since the mid 1990's, but the group could have never dreamed that their casual Sunday morning bike ride could eventuate into memorable overseas bike riding holidays together.



The Bacchus Marsh Unit bike riding group have previously travelled to New Zealand, and only twelve months ago went to Cambodia. While exploring Cambodia the group came across many new landscapes and experiences, such as rice fields, river crossings, dirt and rocky roads, local cuisine delights, and extreme heat conditions. Each member of the group can recall the welcoming reception of the local people when they rode through the rural and quite remote areas of the country. The appreciation and affectionate smiles from the children when they received small gifts from the group and learning about Paddy the Platypus will remain a rewarding experience for all of the members involved. The question now is: where to next? ■

## 'Get Ready': Ballarat flood training exercise during COVID-19

By Liv Lorkin, Ballarat Unit Deputy Controller - Community Engagement, Mid West Region

What does a 50-year flood look like with a COVID-19 lens, and the impacts on crews and Incident Control Centres?

**T**hese questions were put to the test in October in Ballarat, with a 50 ARI flood training exercise held within COVID-19 guidelines by Ballarat Unit Deputy Controller – Training Cameron Maher, and the Unit Management Team.

The night began with a 5 ARI flood event and predictions of heavier rainfall for across the region. Command and control of the incident was quickly established by Craig



# Sand Striker training

**Amanda Larcombe, Community Engagement – Warracknabeal Unit, Mid West Region**

VICSES Warracknabeal Unit was the first to trial the 'Sand Striker' - a prototype sandbag aid designed to reduce manual handling and maintain COVID-19 physical distancing requirements.



**T**rish Wilde, Warracknabeal Unit volunteer and casual trainer, delivered spring awareness flood training to Mid West Wimmera units, including a sandbagging practical refresher. Some volunteers recalled events and response for the 2011 flood event, which severely impacted Wimmera

towns. But in these typically dry rural locations, many had not had any experience of sandbagging.

After the delivery of theory training including situational awareness, community engagement, manual handling safety and local intelligence, the question was posed on

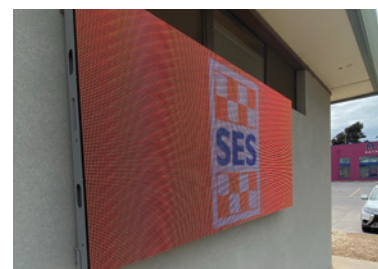
how long it would take to fill a sandbag using the traditional method.

A practical session was undertaken and timed before the Sand Striker was introduced. In every instance kneeling of members ceased, distancing of 1.5 metres was maintained, and bag fill-time reduced.

Because of the reduced manual handling and minimal training, any civilian who can manage a shovel can safely fill sandbags using the Sand Striker. The heaviest lifting is transporting the filled bags, which are of a consistent size and weight, and approximately two-thirds full due to the length of tubing used. A variety of sands were also tested, including wet, dry, fine and coarse.

The Sand Striker is easy enough to make at home or at a unit, and light enough for one or two persons to lift and transport. It's also ideal for a trailer with a load of sand and a crew of two or more persons, who can then turn out 25 sandbags in around 20 minutes.

If you would like more information on the Sand Striker for your unit and local community, contact the Mid West training team at [midwesttraining@ses.vic.gov.au](mailto:midwesttraining@ses.vic.gov.au).



## Innovation sensation!

**By Lauren Hawkins, Volunteer Support Officer, Mid West Region**

**T**he VICSES Horsham Unit have recently had installed an LED electronic sign at their unit headquarters. This sign is designed to be used to keep the community informed before, during and after emergencies, and also for recruitment. The LED sign was funded by the Emergency Services Volunteer Sustainability (ESVS) Grants Program from 2018-19.

The new addition can be operated as either a standalone one page message board, or be used as a scrolling slideshow. The sign provides major benefits for Horsham Unit, being in a prime location on the main highway in town. The sign arrived just in time for the unit to be able to promote spring/summer awareness for the potential flood and storm season. This is a great benefit to the local community, which experiences significant flooding from storms and the Wimmera River. ■

West, designated Incident Controller, who then briefed incoming crews as they arrived with what to expect and their initial tasks.

Taking a technology first approach, the unit had already strategically placed posters with QR codes in areas that were predicted to see the most flooding. Separate crews were dispatched out to job locations, where they scanned the QR codes with information to be relayed back to the Incident Command Point (ICP). This allowed the crews to take into consideration what they might need to know when responding to these areas, the terrain, flood risks, potential community impact, and how to respond while being COVIDSafe.

Back at the ICP, the operations teams worked quickly to triage the outstanding tickets and those that were coming in from the community. As the night progressed, a heavy rain band came through the south of Ballarat, causing the creeks in those suburbs to swell. At that point, the Intelligence team sent crews out for observations, which they determined had reached a 1 in 10-year flood event. Further sectioning of Ballarat was then needed to maintain control. The jobs increased, and Intelligence continued to monitor and compare against the regions Municipal Flood Emergency Plan to get a clear understanding of the impact that was being felt across Ballarat. On completion of the allocated jobs, each crew returned to the unit and the night ended in success.



This scenario provided the chance for the unit to gain invaluable insight on the impact of COVID-19 on the management of flood incidents and the region itself. Thank you to everyone involved. ■



**NORTH**

**EAST**

1 July – 30 September

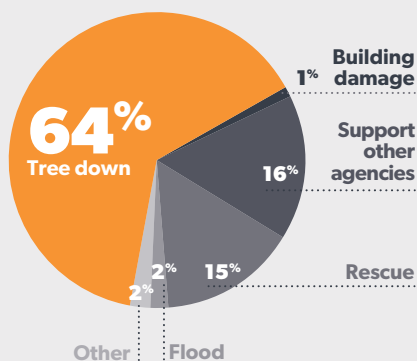


**702**

**Volunteers**

**327**

**Requests for assistance**



**MARTIN**

**FORBER**

**ESM:**



## 40 Years of service and a well-deserved retirement

**By Liz Frazer, Community Resilience Coordinator, North East Region**

Exactly 40 years and one day since joining VICSES, Martin Forber ESM was farewelled from North East Region Head Office via a unique COVIDSafe presentation of honours and well wishes on WebEx.

**A** dedicated and respected Volunteer Support Officer in North East Region since 2007, Martin's VICSES journey began way back in 1980 at Chelsea Unit, following with many years at Frankston Unit, before moving to the North East.

In 2014, Martin Forber was awarded the Emergency Service Medal for distinguished service to VICSES and the Victorian community. This included project managing the VICSES Frankston Unit build, working in the evacuation centre on Ash Wednesday, deployment to Wangaratta during the 1993 floods, and coordinating crime scene protection during

the Paul Denyer murders in Frankston in the early 90s.

Martin's lengthy and varied service to VICSES and the Victorian community is truly remarkable, and a testament to Martin's character, credibility, and passion for volunteering. This passion has been passed on to his son Jason, who is the current Yarrawonga Unit Controller.

"I wouldn't tell him this, but dad is the reason I am a volunteer," said Jason.

"He raised me to believe it's not enough just to show up and get by. You have to put your hand up and contribute, help out the Unit Management Team, and make sure VICSES is held in a good light within the community. You've got to stand up and really contribute something."

The North East Region family wishes Martin and wife Leesa all the very best in their next chapter. May your retirement be filled with adventure, relaxation, and plenty of time playing with beautiful grandchildren. ■







# Mule's first day out

By Dan Walton, VICSES Wangaratta Unit, North East Region

On the 9th of October, the VICSES Wangaratta Unit were called to assist Ambulance Victoria with transporting a member of the local community, who had fractured her ankle while walking with friends on one of the many popular trails in the Warby Owens National Park.

**T**his was the maiden voyage for the unit's 'mule', which was acquired through an earlier AAMI Equipment Handover Program. The mule aids in helping to avoid difficult casualty handling, improve manoeuvrability, and during events where members are asked to assist with accessing patients in the hilly country within our response area. Using the mule for the first time at a request for assistance, it was great to see that all of the

training sessions that the unit had undertaken had paid off.

Four Ambulance Victoria paramedics and five Wangaratta Unit members worked to stabilise the patient's condition prior to moving, and successfully navigated the walking track back to the ambulance.

Everyone who responded conducted the operation professionally and respectfully, while also successfully

applying COVIDSafe directions to keep everybody involved safe.

On the way to the ambulance, the patient was obviously enjoying the ride (and pain relief), repeatedly telling us how beautiful the clouds were above the tree canopy. We advised her that we were very glad she was comfortable and enjoying what was otherwise a terrible situation, but we do not encourage repeat customers! ■

## North East Region tests Incident Control Centre 'split' to get flood ready

By Sue Sheldrick, Community Resilience Coordinator, North East Region

North East Region has continued to prepare for possible flooding during the declared La Niña by testing out the regions Incident Control Centres (ICCs) whilst working under COVID-19 restrictions and physical distancing guidelines.

**B**uilding on exercises held with Hume Region emergency management partners earlier this year, members from North East Region, including a number of skilled volunteers on Incident Management Team (IMT) development pathways, led an exercise to test the working environment at an ICC during a flood event with COVID-19 restrictions in place. This included a 'split' ICC, which saw personnel working at two locations in Benalla and Wangaratta on the same flood exercise, ensuring physical distancing and limiting any potential exposure to COVID-19. The teams included representatives from VICSES, Victoria Police, Country Fire Authority, the Department of Environment, Land, Water

and Planning, the Department of Health and Human Services, Ambulance Victoria, Catchment Management Authorities, local councils and more.

"La Niña is well and truly here and starting to build with almost weekly rain events, bringing minor and moderate flooding to some of our flood-prone areas," explained Incident Controller and North East Region Operations Manager, Brendan Corboy.

"This 'split' ICC exercise was a vital test for what might soon be a real flood. We wanted to make sure that we could not only effectively manage the flood and help keep people safe during the emergency, but also work within the



COVID-19 restrictions on how many people can be involved, having enough space between the ICC teams while working, having briefings, eating meals and so on - all while wearing face masks and hand sanitising," said Brendan.

Observations, lessons and recommendations will be combined in a multiagency report to help ensure effective emergency management in IMTs going forward. ■



**NORTH**

**WEST**

1 July – 30 September

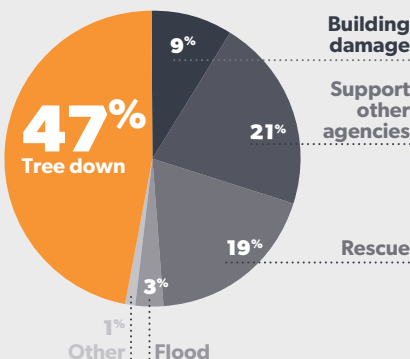


**607**

Volunteers

**253**

Requests for assistance



## PREPARING FOR FLOODS

# A community led approach by Rochester Unit

By Karen Dunstan, Community Resilience Coordinator, North West Region



We know how important it is for people to have a plan so that they can effectively respond when there is an emergency. We also know that having an emergency plan supports optimal recovery.



### The challenge is to:

- Help people understand why they need to have a plan: What is the risk to me? What's in it for me? What will happen if I do nothing?
- Help people to accept that they play a major role in staying safe in emergencies: If not me, who? If not now, when?
- Provide achievable actions that will make a meaningful difference: What can I do about it? How will that help me?



"The best outcomes to these challenges happen when we ask communities to help us find solutions," says North West Region Operations Manager, Andrew Gill.

"Community led solutions to local problems are more likely to be successful, and implementing them together can make a real difference."

Engaging with communities and asking them to come up with solutions is more successful than the traditional paternalistic approach to emergency preparedness. This is because it:

- Seeks to understand the community we want to work with.
- Capitalises on existing strengths, resources and community capital.
- Identifies what's important to the community, which streamlines recovery planning.
- Gives communities and individuals ownership of outcomes, which is more likely to lead to meaningful action.

Since the 2011 floods, the North West Region has been exploring ways to use the lessons learnt to help communities be better ready for floods.

That's where the community led approach initiated by VICSES Rochester Unit comes in. Working at a local and regional level with agencies, local government and the Catchment Management Authority, this long term project has resulted in a number of collaborative initiatives, including:

- A multi-agency floodplain management strategy.
- A community committee that helped assess a range of mitigation strategies.
- Flood warning system enhancements.
- Meaningful household level data on flood impacts sent

to each household and business in town, along with preparedness resources.

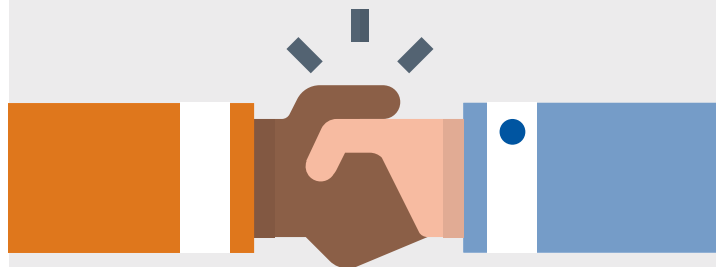
- Locally developed community awareness strategies including 'Plan to Stay Dry, Know How High'.

"Too often the necessity to help communities understand their risk and be flood ready means that, as an organisation, we revert back to the paternal approach," says Andrew.



***We need to constantly remind ourselves that whilst we have expertise in flood risk, each community member is an expert in their community, and that is where we need to seek to influence, rather than control."***

Community led approaches don't happen overnight - it takes time to build and nurture relationships and trust. But the outcomes can result in long term, generational behaviour change that builds resilience and connection, which is imperative for good outcomes in communities before, during and after emergencies.



## Connecting with hard to reach communities

By Karen Dunstan, Community Resilience Coordinator, North West Region

The North West Region is working together with the City of Greater Bendigo, Bendigo Community Health Service (BCHS) and Country Fire Authority on developing strategies and resources to inform migrant communities about emergencies.

It builds on previous work with the Karen community in the Bendigo region on heat health, fire preparedness and COVID-19, and flood preparedness work with the Dari community in the North East Region.

In September, VICSES delivered a presentation to BCHS staff that covered the following:

- Who we are, and what our role is during an emergency.
- The VicEmergency app – what it's for, and how to download the app, set a watch zone, and set alerts.
- What the warnings and notifications mean.
- What the flood risk is in Bendigo.
- What the key messages are for flood.
- Where to get help if you are impacted by a flood or storm.

The next step is the production of a series of videos for the three main migrant communities in

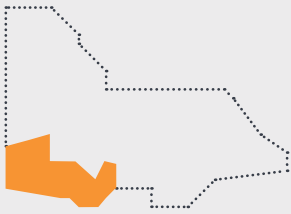
Bendigo - Karen, Afghan and South Sudanese. The videos will use plain language and images to convey key messages about:

- Staying safe in a flood and how to get help.
- How to prepare yourself, your family and your home for a flood.
- How to stay informed if there is a flood warning, and during a flood.

The roll-out of the videos will be supported by BCHS workers and trained community guides, who will be able to help people with things such as downloading the VicEmergency app and setting up a watch zone.

To help VICSES staff and volunteers understand the unique challenges faced by migrant communities, BCHS is offering pre/post settlement migrant experience awareness sessions. These will be rolled out to North West Region staff this year, and relevant units early next year. ■

# Torquay dam event



**SOUTH  
WEST**

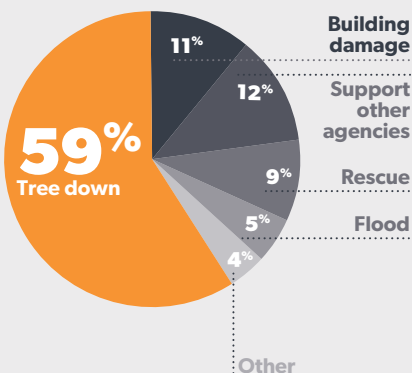
**1 July – 30 September**



**1,255**  
**Volunteers**

**693**

**Requests for assistance**



**By Melanie Gill, Community Resilience  
Coordinator, South West Region**



On Friday 2 October, VICSES Torquay Unit members were notified of water entering a number of residential back gardens in Torquay.

**W**hat initially commenced as a simple water pumping exercise quickly escalated when it became evident that the potential source was a nearby 180 mega litres (180,000,000 litres) private dam, with the potential for further flooding.

The Incident Control Centre in Geelong was activated along with an Incident Control Point on site, utilising the Field Operations Vehicle. Specialist resources were deployed such as lighting trailers and pumps, and Land Based Swift Water Rescue crews were on scene ready to respond if required.

VICSES volunteers assisted Victoria Police with a door-knock of the local area to advise residents in the immediate vicinity of the developing situation, and recommended that they evacuate their homes. Due to

the nature of COVID-19, a lot of considerations and additional safety measures were put in place when carrying out operations, including face masks being worn at all times and physical distancing being maintained.

Thankfully, the majority of residents were able to arrange temporary accommodation with family and friends, whilst others accepted the offer to stay at nearby accommodation providers. Communication with these residents was crucial in ensuring updated information was provided. This was done through:

- SMS service (facilitated by council).
- VicEmergency alerts.
- A virtual community meeting run on WebEx.

When residents were able to return home, VICSES members

also assisted with:

- Providing information to the affected community through the establishment of a community information point, with VICSES members available on-site to answer any questions.
- Providing information to the affected community through distribution of a letterbox drop.

The tremendous work of VICSES volunteers from eight different units (including two from Central Region), Country Fire Authority, Victoria Police and more, resulted in the incident being made safe for residents to return on the Sunday afternoon (4 October).

A huge thank you to all of our members and fellow emergency service colleagues for their assistance in this event. **#weworkasone** ■



# South West Region Service Awards

By Ysabel Cronin-Guss, Community Resilience Coordinator, South West Region

Each year Service Awards are presented to VICSES volunteers in the South West Region to celebrate important milestones and achievements.

While COVID-19 prevented us from physically presenting Service Awards to the members that earned them this year, this did not stop us from recognising the fantastic work they do, with medals delivered and celebrated remotely.

The Service Awards presented ranged between five and 50 years. Notably, there were seven members that received their award for 40 years' service. That's a combined total of 280 years of service!

An honourable mention goes to Peter Tew of VICSES Hamilton Unit. An integral member and formal Controller of the unit, Peter received his 50-year Service Award. He was a member of the Civil Defence before VICSES came to fruition, and was a founding member of not only Hamilton Unit, but the whole of VICSES as an organisation. Peter is currently writing a book about the unit, and has been instrumental in compiling their history as there is little documentation from the early days. Current Hamilton Unit Controller



Ben O'Leary



Michael Carman



Peter Tew



Michael Gunning

John McKenzie congratulated Peter on his incredible achievement, joking that he is "basically part of the unit's furniture."

Congratulations to all the dedicated members that received awards. Your commitment to the community is invaluable. ■

## Q&A: Get to know our newest dual Unit Controller - Charlie Debono

By Ysabel Cronin-Guss, Community Resilience Coordinator, South West Region

The South West Region has had a unique development, as two VICSES units are now led by one dedicated volunteer, Charlie Debono.

Unit Controller of VICSES Heywood Unit for the past two years, Charlie is now also Unit Controller at VICSES Portland Unit. No stranger to Portland, Charlie previously served as their VICSES Unit Controller between 2015 and 2016, giving him the unique experience and skills to lead both units. This move comes as past Portland Unit Controller Bernadette 'Bernie' Stiles has stepped down after four successful years in the role. A passionate and valued volunteer, Bernie will remain an active member at Portland. We thank her for her leadership and ongoing dedication to the service.

### Hi Charlie! When did you first join VICSES, and why?

I first joined VICSES on the 20th of December in 1982. Around that time I was involved in an incident, and a mate was a member of VICSES. He invited me to come down and have a look at the unit, and the rest is history. I've certainly learnt a lot since then.

### What drove you to put your hand up to be a dual Unit Controller of Heywood and Portland Units?

Very long and constructive conversations with many people, including a number of staff members. I'd always had the idea to combine some of our regional units, and this was one way to do it.

### What inspires you most?

The support from our unit crews inspires me the most. I find it very gratifying when everyone is working together - that's what VICSES is all about.

### What are your goals for the unit?

To increase membership, as well as the awareness and presence of VICSES in the local area, as that's been missing out here for quite some time. I'd also like to strengthen our relationships and work in conjunction with other emergency services in the area, in particular the local Country Fire Authority brigades.



### What do you do outside of VICSES?

There's not too much time for anything else... just kidding! I've recently taken up an interest in caravanning.

### Why would you recommend joining VICSES?

You're not only giving back to the community, but there is also so much to gain personally. VICSES has a lot to give - it's whether you want to be part of it or not! ■

# OPERATIONAL UPDATES

## New Emergency Vehicle Response Driving course

By Laura Dewilddt, Operations Officer Doctrine and Planning, and Jessie Schleibs, Operations Business Coordinator, VHO

In August, VICSES released a new Emergency Vehicle Response Driving (EVRD) training package to replace the existing face-to-face learning based package. The course has been developed by the Learning and Development team in conjunction with members from units, regions, and the state Operations team.

**T**he new course is delivered over six modules, covering the policy, standard operating procedures, relevant Victorian road safety rules, and snapshots of actual Code 1 response driving. Members can choose to complete the package in a self-paced environment, or at a unit facilitated session. As of late October, the package had been completed by 950 volunteers and 55 staff members, which is a total of just over 1,000 members completing the package in just over two months.

Feedback received on the new interactive training package has been overwhelmingly positive. This includes feedback from one of our Central Region units, who noted that “having members share their experiences and the use of videos is absolutely stellar,” and that the training is “such a fantastic improvement on the previous package.”

Based on the positive feedback on the course from members, the VICSES Learning and Development team are now also working with the Royal Flying Doctor Service to assist with the development of their own training for EVRD. ■



Our driver has decided to turn the sirens off, but leave their lights going to alert other drivers to their presence.



### More information

If you have not yet completed the EVRD training package and would like to, please head over to the Training Portal and type 'EVRD' in the search bar, or speak with the training team at your unit.





## ESTA dispatch staff to support VICSES in Incident Control Centres

By Aaron White, Operations Officer – Operational Communications, VHO

**V**ICSES has been working with the Emergency Services Telecommunications Authority (ESTA), to develop the opportunity for ESTA dispatch staff to be embedded into Incident Control Centres (ICCs) as part of larger scale deployments for VICSES - especially with the predicted heavy rain and flood season that has been predicted.

The purpose behind this innovative approach of having ESTA dispatch staff embedded into ICCs is to allow for the dispatch of events within a defined area of operations to units within a timely manner.

ESTA dispatchers will be set up within ICCs with a deployable Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) kit, allowing for real time event management and monitoring. This will assist in information being flowed to all areas of the ICC to assist with intelligence, operations, and the overall management of the event. It will also provide the field dispatchers with a stronger understanding of the broader operational context in being connected within the ICC.

ESTA dispatchers are highly trained and experienced in performing their role. As part of ESTA dispatchers being prepared for field operations, eight members of their team completed their Introduction to AIIMS certificate course with VICSES in October. This allows them to have a clear understanding of an ICC and its operations, which will also see them be an integral part of the successful outcome of large scale events.

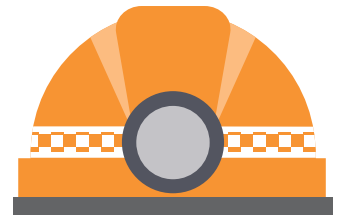
Our Operational Communications team have been working closely in partnership with ESTA to ensure field deployment of dispatch capability is a success. We look forward to working together to provide more support for our members. ■

# REQUESTS FOR ASSISTANCE

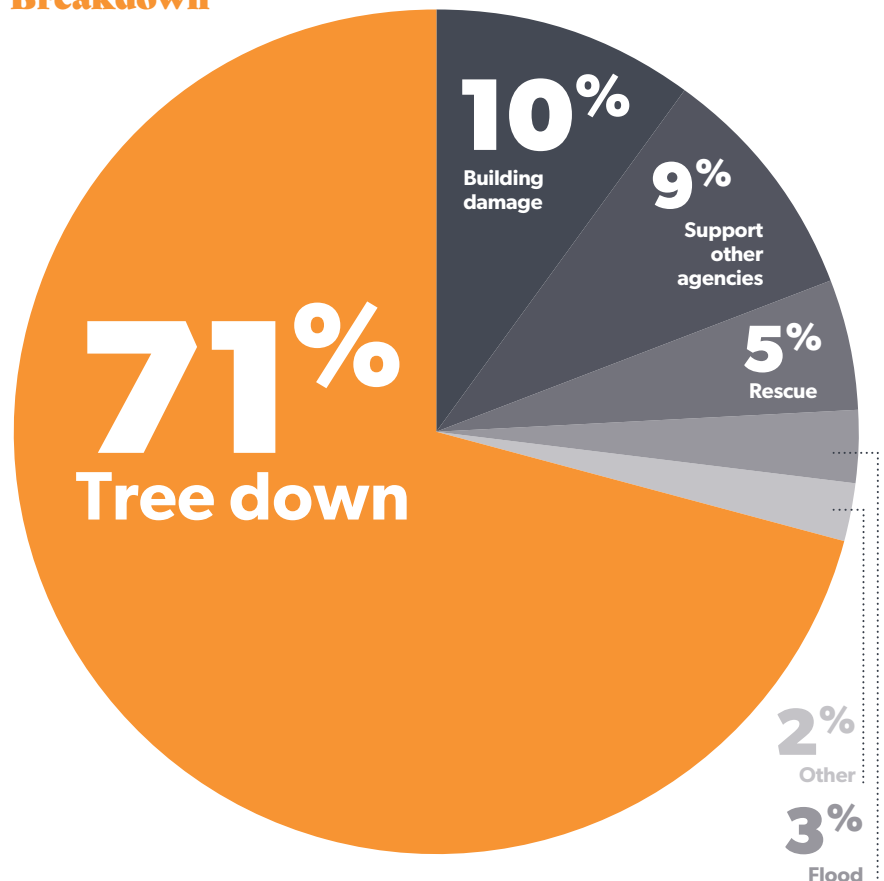
## 1 July – 30 September 2020

Total

# 8,071



Breakdown



# PROJECTS – WHAT'S NEW

## Facilities and Capital Works team

By Dixie Hogland, Relocation Project Manager, VHO

**T**he Facilities and Capital Works team is instrumental in helping to solve project related issues through centralisation, process efficiency, and best practices. Our team is responsible for:

- Building repairs and maintenance.
- Testing and inspections.
- Building administration.
- Contract management.
- Managing renovations and refurbishments.

- Office relocation projects.
- Security.

As part of our new communications, we are excited to announce the launch of the Facilities and Capital Works Service Centre on the Hub.

Our goal with this new Hub page is to create a one-stop, user-friendly browsing experience, and to provide you with the information you require quickly.

This includes information on the following:

- The Facilities and Capital Works team and contact details.
- Unit and Regional Head Office improvements.
- Unit and Regional Head Office relocations.

We hope you enjoy our new Service Centre, and our team look forward to working with you in the future. ■



### More information

To find out more about what we do and who we are, view the Facilities and Capital Works Service Centre Hub page under **My State > Equipment > Facilities and Capital Works**

## Launch of CERA Online

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

The Community Emergency Risk Assessment (CERA) Enhancement Project team have officially launched the new portal: CERA Online.

**T**he CERA tool has been undergoing a process of enhancement and modernisation to replace the current Excel

spreadsheet, to be superseded by a cloud based platform.

The transition to CERA Online assists Municipal Emergency Management Planning

Committees (MEMPCs) to participate in an efficient and effective risk assessment process.

The working group, steering group, and members from several MEMPCs, have worked well during recent User Acceptance Testing to provide valuable feedback.

With the launch of this new portal, all participating MEMPCs will undertake future risk assessments using CERA Online. To streamline this

process, any pre-existing data has been migrated into CERA Online to support a smooth user experience.

The project team would like to take this opportunity to thank all stakeholders for their commitment and contribution to the CERA Enhancement Project. ■





# Snap Send Solve app flooding in with positive reviews

By Jo Keggs, Emergency Management Planning and Risk Officer, VHO

Recent flood events such as the potential dam failure in Torquay and further flooding in the South West Region have provided perfect opportunities to test the Snap Send Solve app, including the apps processes and incoming data to Incident Management Teams (IMTs).

**V**ICSES volunteers and staff, the Country Fire Authority and Catchment Management Authority personnel across the state, have gradually been trained over the last few months in the use of the app, ready to be activated to capture images and information during a flood event. Nearly a year after simulated testing of the app, portal and EM-COP in South West Region, real flood events have started to occur to begin the evaluation of the app and other processes in place.

**Positive feedback has already begun flooding in:**



***Snap Send Solve was well and truly utilised... magnificent!*** Coupled with Fire Rescue Victoria (FRV) drone video footage it was the best way to brief people, especially those unfamiliar with the area. What an incredible tool we now have in our arsenal!"

**– Gavin Kelly, Mid West Region, South West Region flood incident**



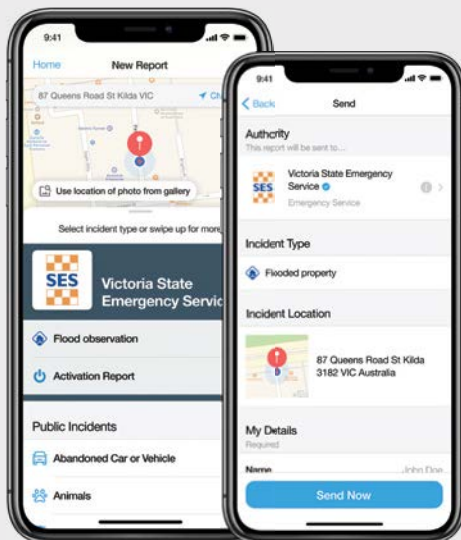
***A briefing that was held included displaying Snap Send Solve observations via EM-COP on the projector.***

I was able to explain and put real context into the event. Drones give a great overview, but not necessarily ground level detail. Combined, it is gold!"

**– Alan Barnard, Central Region, Torquay dam incident**

VICSES are certainly leading the way with innovative ways of supporting our response efforts and assisting communities.

Thank you to everyone involved in this project and the support provided to maintain strong leadership in this space, which helped in maintaining momentum of the project while we waited for flood events. ■



## New laptops and printers: Roll-out commences

By Peter Gaull, Project Manager, VHO

New laptops and printers have begun rolling out across the state. Those who receive new laptops will be able to set them up themselves with the help of remote support from our technology provider, Data#3.

**O**ver 200 machines in command and control facilities, including State Control Centres, Incident Control Centres, Divisional Control Points, Field Command Vehicles, Mobile Command Vehicles and Emergency Management Liaison Officer kits, will be swapped over.

Units and Regional Offices have also begun to receive new printers, which have been installed by Konica Minolta technicians. We're working closely with units and Regional Offices to find the best time for the installation of printers.

New hardware and software allows us to work better and faster, allowing our members to be more mobile and more responsive to the demands of the jobs that we do. Overhauling our entire fleet of devices has been a big project and a large investment by VICSES, but should serve us well into the future as we continuously update as devices fall due for replacement. ■



## More information

For more information, visit the Windows Refresh Project and Printer Rollout Hub pages under **Library > Projects**.

## WELLBEING, HEALTH & SAFETY

# Step It Up 2020: Round up and results

By Alison Wright, Health and  
Wellbeing Coordinator, VHO

This year our annual *Step It Up* contest looked a little different to previous years. With Melbourne in lockdown and restrictions throughout Victoria – how were we going to get our teams together and clock up our steps?

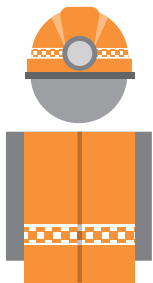


**I**t all came down to being a little bit more creative, and having a lot of fun along the way. COVIDSafe challenges were designed, and our Healthwatch team put together a wide variety of online classes to ensure every participant could find something to meet their needs. The focus of *Step It Up* shifted to encompass activities that were designed to support our physical and mental wellbeing, so mindfulness, nutrition, Zumba and yoga were added into the mix.

We opened this year's challenge up to households, individuals and teams. Our members came together from all over the state, finding new and creative ways to increase their movement, support each other, unite their teams and *Step It Up!*

**This year's challenge was our biggest *Step It Up* to date. This included:**

- **More participants:** Over 850 people and 65 teams.
- **More activities:** Yoga, mindfulness, fitness classes, Zumba, podcasts and cooking demonstrations.
- **More challenges:** Photo bingo, GPS art, trick shots, and smoothie making to name a few.
- **More prizes:** 46 major prizes including e-readers, Garmin watches, hydration packs and headphones, plus over 200 additional prizes handed out.
- **More steps:** Over 200 million - up from 180 million last year!



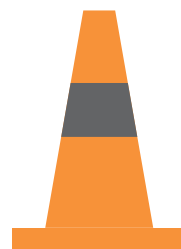
### Workplace inspections

October 2018 –  
September 2019

225

October 2019 –  
September 2020

197



### Injuries

October 2018 –  
September 2019

106

October 2019 –  
September 2020

92



# Step It Up Champions 2020

This year the VICSES Benalla Unit team beat 64 other teams to win the title of 'Most Active Unit', taking the coveted *Step It Up Cup* from Corio Unit.



## The top ten positions included:

- 1 Benalla Unit
- 2 Information Services team (VHO)
- 3 Brimbank Unit
- 4 Emergency Management and Planning team (VHO)
- 5 Nillumbik Unit
- 6 Footscray Unit
- 7 Healthwatch team (VHO)
- 8 Northcote Unit
- 9 Morwell Unit
- 10 Maroondah Unit

## MOST ACTIVE INDIVIDUAL:

Winners: Hannah MacDougal from VHO and Gary Hammett from Nillumbik Unit, who clocked up over 2 million steps between them – an astounding effort.

## MOST ACTIVE HOUSEHOLD:

Winner: Brenda Addicoat from Woodend Unit.

## BIGGEST STEPPER:

In our individual competition was won by Jill Perrett from Northcote Unit, with Harminder Singh of Craigieburn Unit, Jeff Burns of Kilmore Unit, Michael O'Connor of Maroondah Unit, and Chris Clewer of Central Office Rescue Support Unit rounding out the top five.

## MOST VALUABLE PLAYER 2020:

Was awarded to Stephanie Galea from Brimbank Unit for her leadership and dedication to the *Step It Up* cause.

Congratulations and thanks to all our members for their willingness to get involved, have fun, support each other, and *Step It Up*.

For all the information about this year's *Step It Up* with full prize lists, resources and leader boards, please head over to our *Step It Up* Hub page under **My State > Health and Wellbeing > Events > Step It Up**, and don't forget to join our VICSES Health and Wellbeing community on Facebook.

And remember – the Health and Wellbeing team is here to support you. Check out our Hub page under **My State > Health and Wellbeing** for information and resources. ■



A special thank you to VICSES Gisborne Unit Deputy Controller, Di Dale, for running our WebEx Zumba classes, Senior Advisor Community Programs and Campaigns (VHO), Hannah MacDougall, for our weekly mindfulness classes, and our Healthwatch team for their fitness and nutrition sessions.



## New MindFit Podcast

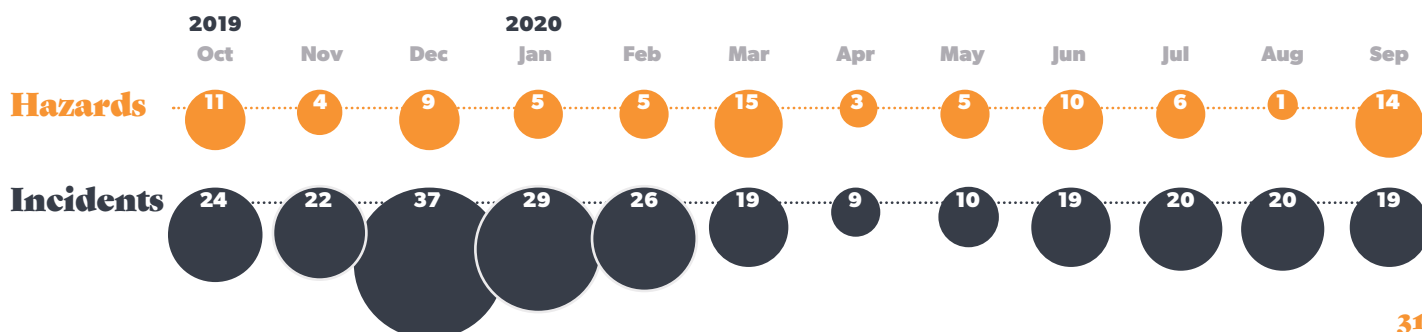
By Paul Fitzgerald, Psychologist, VHO

The Health and Wellbeing Team are proud to introduce the new VICSES MindFit Podcast, where we mic up and chat with those who truly know how to keep their 'Mind Fit'.

We talk health, nutrition, science, psychology, wellbeing, performance, resilience and post-traumatic growth, with those who are experts and industry leaders through qualifications or their own lived experiences. Our aim is to spread the word of good health and wellbeing to our members on the front line, who are serving our community.

Tune in to the MindFit Podcast to hear our guests' best health tips and powerful 'brain hacks'. Listen to the podcast on the move by searching 'VICSES MindFit Podcast' on the Spotify app or Podbean apps. You can also find links to the podcast on our MindFit page on the Hub, under **My State > Health and Wellbeing > Mind fit**. ■

## YEAR AT A GLANCE



# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

## New VICSES flood preparedness animation with catchy jingle

By Hannah Macdougall, Senior Advisor Community Programs and Campaigns, VHO





Following the devastating 2010-11 floods in Victoria, a VICSES volunteer leader realised that many community members did not know simple protective actions for flood preparedness.

**T**his includes actions such as how to protect their homes using sandbags (bag it), blocking toilets and drains (block it), lifting valuables up high (lift it), or normalising the decision to leave to get to a safe place (leave). In some cases, knowing how high the potential flood may be will inform if you 'bag it, block it, lift it and leave'.

Over the past ten years, the two key messages of 'plan to stay dry, check how high', and 'bag it, block it, lift it and leave', have been refined. Simple and clear calls to action have been created, and now go hand-in-hand with a catchy jingle and attention-grabbing animation set in regional Victoria. The creation of the animation saw involvement from many stakeholders, including volunteers, local communities, and the animations target audience (school children). The animation has been tested by an external social research company, who confirmed the key messages and animation are understood by adults and children.

Lesson plans and teacher notes have been developed linking to the Victorian school curriculum for grade 5 students. A member series guide provides an overview of the community engagement program, and is accompanied by a PowerPoint presentation and music sheet. These resources, along with a suite of social media tiles, are available on the Hub for all VICSES volunteers to get these important safety message into the minds of our young people. You can view this information on the Hub under **My State > Community > Community Engagement Resources**.

We are currently developing video assets that will promote the two key messages more broadly, including producing a video of a family preparing their home to support promoting these important flood protective actions when floods are imminent. ■

## HOW CAN WE SPEAK A COMMON LANGUAGE WITH OUR PARTNERS?

# VICSES move towards implementing the London Benchmarking Group Framework

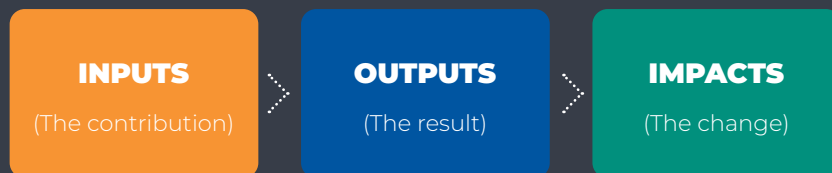
By Susan Davie, Manager Community Connections, VHO

The London Benchmarking Group (LBG) Framework provides a global language to measure and manage corporate community investment. VICSES are working with AAMI, our Principle Community Partner, to use the LBG Framework to measure targeted community engagement programs and campaigns.

One of our well-known campaigns, *15 to Float*, will be evaluated using the LBG Framework. The *15 to Float* campaign encourages people to never drive on flooded roads, using the tagline fact that "it only takes 15cm to float a small car – that's the size of an average pen!" Key metrics of the campaign are categorised as inputs, outputs and impacts. For example, an output would be how many people were reached and engaged by the *15 to Float* campaign. An impact would be

"has there been a change in protective action taken during a flood event, such as following instructions found within the *15 to Float* campaign?"

VICSES and AAMI have worked closely together to generate a range of inputs, outputs and impacts, ensuring planning, engagement and people who are at risk have been considered. The more we can identify what we measure and evaluate, the more we can recognise, celebrate and learn from the important work we do in community engagement. ■



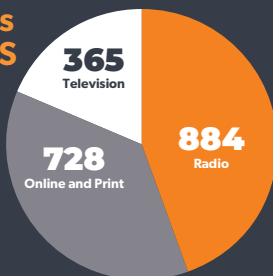
# MEDIA

July – October  
2020

## Campaigns and events:

- 15 to Float (press conference at Melbourne Sports and Aquatic Centre).
- Emergency Services AFL Game with Hawthorn Football Club
- 2020 Emergency Services Blood Challenge.
- #MaskUpMelbourne (collaboration with Australian Federal Police).

## Mentions of VICSES in the news:



## Social media highlights:

### FACEBOOK



**Reach:**  
127,118

**Post clicks:**  
7,043

**Reactions, comments and shares:**  
1,501

**27 August:** VICSES receives over 1,400 requests for assistance in one evening due to damaging winds.

### TWITTER



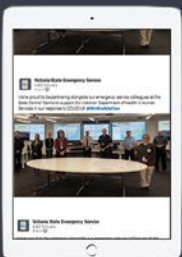
**Impressions:**  
131,766

**Total engagements:**  
1,026

**Likes, retweets and clicks:**  
87

**18 September:** Damaging storms, hail and heavy rainfall expected for parts of north west Victoria.

### LINKEDIN



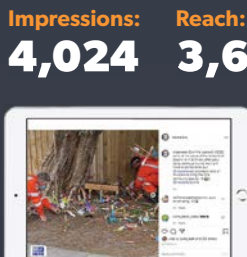
**Impressions:**  
4,651

**Clicks:**  
252

**Reactions, comments and shares:**  
115

**1 July:** VICSES works alongside our emergency service colleagues at the State Control Centre to support the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services in our response to COVID-19.

### INSTAGRAM



**Impressions:**  
4,024

**Reach:**  
3,607

**Comments, likes and saves:**  
248

**21 September:** VICSES Chelsea Unit come to the rescue of the residents of Spoonsville in Edithvale after being destroyed during the night, bringing the little community back to life.

## Media Liaison Officer spotlight – Ross Evans

### Hi Ross! What first got you interested in becoming a Media Liaison Officer (MLO) for VICSES?

At VICSES Gisborne Unit I was responsible for the unit's public relations and fundraising functions, as well as being an admin for the unit Facebook page at the time, so the MLO role was a natural fit.

### What do you enjoy the most about the role?

It's another aspect of emergency management that is seen, but its importance is not recognised as much. With media, we use our voice as a medium to communicate with communities in need. This includes providing information and warnings to the community, to help them help themselves.

### Are there any challenges that you've faced as an MLO during an incident?

I have always been direct with the media to assist them as best I can to help them get great footage, so I haven't had any challenges so far.

During the 2019-20 fires, we had a few media interactions near staging areas where I assisted the media in receiving footage of vehicle convoys and aircraft taking off from the Ovens staging area. While I wasn't on camera or interviewed, they were very grateful that I could assist with footage, which showed the efforts and resources being used.

### What importance do you think the media plays for our units and volunteers?

The media can be very helpful in raising the profile of a unit, or VICSES as a whole. During storm and flood events, helping the media gather footage of damage is great for supporting our emergency key messages. Media can also help add context to a local story, allowing important safety messages to resonate with the community. This includes messages around not driving through floodwater, and our other emergency key messages during severe weather events.

### Finally, would you recommend the MLO role to other members, and why?

I would strongly recommend members undertake the MLO course to gain perspective on what the media is looking for when they see us in the community. Due to COVID-19, our unit wasn't able to be seen at our usual community events. But thanks to the power of media, we have been still able to demonstrate that we remain fully functional in responding to emergency incidents and other activities across the state. ■



# INFORMATION SERVICES (IS) UPDATE

By Silvia Silverii, Chief Information Officer, VHO

Before we get into the latest updates from the IS team, I wanted to share a recent story with you all regarding my own experience with VICSES as a member of the community.

A few months back after a severe storm, I required assistance from VICSES to help with a loose roof flashing. VICSES Footscray Unit responded to my call, and were fantastic – from the very beginning, to the time they left. I'm so glad I got to experience first-hand the incredible service by our units in times of need, re-enforcing how valuable our volunteers are in their communities. Thank you Footscray Unit!

## COVID procedures for site visits

On to more technical matters now; As we experience the flood and storm effects of La Niña and move into the fire season, the IS team continues to work on the significant projects that were listed in the last IS Update for Community Matters.

COVID-19 plans are in place for these projects so that we can minimise contact and visits as much as possible. Where we can't, we are working with suppliers and the Pandemic Plan Response Team (PPRT), to ensure we do our site visits in absolute accordance with our COVIDSafe protocols to keep everyone safe.

The IS Support team is also keeping its eye on the current COVID-19 restrictions, and as we carefully transition back, they will start to contact units and offices to arrange visits.

## Windows desktop refresh and multi-function device projects – Logistics Officer

Dale Grant, who you may know in relation to our records management work, has

accepted the role of Logistics Officer for the Windows desktop refresh and multi-function device projects.

Dale will be your point of contact to organise equipment deliveries and site visits to all units, offices, and for those members who have elected to have equipment delivered to your home.

## Top 5 projects:

1. Supplementary Alerting System (SAS) – almost completed.
2. CAD upgrade.
3. Windows desktop refresh.
4. Multi-function device replacement.
5. Physical security solution.

## Supplementary Alerting System

Last but not least, I'd like to give congratulations to the Operations team for their work in realising the production release and roll-out of SAS. This has been a huge effort, with input from across VICSES and our fellow emergency service agencies. Well done to everyone involved.

## Shout-out to the IS team

Wrapping up another year, I also want to say thank you to our IS team for the work they have achieved through what has been a challenging 12 months to say the least. I look forward to the New Year in delivering our teams ongoing projects, and support for all VICSES members. ■

## MEET THE IS TEAM:



DALE

GRANT

**H**i Dale! Can you tell us a bit about your role as the Information Compliance Officer at VICSES?

I spend the majority of my time maintaining the HPE Records Manager system, plus also undertaking records disposal across the state and other information management related tasks. I often assist with member queries and requests for information, assistance and advice on a range of matters.

## What do you enjoy the most about your role?

I am often requested to locate records dating back quite a few decades, and when successful, I do get a kick out of this. VICSES hold records which actually pre-date VICSES. Successfully assisting staff with an information management issue is also often quite enjoyable.

## What challenges have you faced in your role during COVID-19, and how have you adapted?

It was quite a challenge to get my 'home office' operating, and then it became apparent I was having intermittent issues with WiFi. After purchasing a booster and a bit of trial and error, I eventually sorted it all out!

Also, at times, working from home can become monotonous. For an active mind and to keep fit, I often take an early morning walk or bike ride to the nearby beach.

## Finally - outside of work, how do you like to unwind?

I really do enjoy the outdoors. I am a keen bushwalker, and if not for COVID-19, this October I would have completed walking my final stage of the Bibbulmun Track - a long distance walking track in Western Australia stretching from the Perth hills down to Albany on the south coast.

While walking I have found photography can reduce the tedium, and occasionally I take a good photo! At home, I also enjoy cycling in the warmer months and swimming at a heated indoor pool in the Melbourne winter. ■

# Thank you to all the people who support our incredible volunteers.

Whether it's picking up the kids from school, heating up dinner, or being there for a hug after a long day or night – the support means everything to us.



**Your family  
our family**

#VICSESfamily