

WINTER 2022

Community Matters

# VICSES

EDITION 19



**WEAR ORANGE  
WEDNESDAY 2022**



*Women in Rescue* **pg. 08**

**VICSES supports flood response in New South Wales** **pg. 04**

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### Interested in contributing?

Submit your article here:  
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## MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER FOR EMERGENCY SERVICES

### Welcome to the second edition of Community Matters for 2022

As we head into the cooler months, I'm reminded of the many ways our VICSES volunteers dedicate their time and energy to protect the Victorian community and beyond, at all times of year and in all kinds of weather.

Whether it's responding to severe weather events across the country or attending a road crash rescue closer to home, our volunteers have once again shown their true value these past few months.

The past year has been the busiest in VICSES history – our volunteers have responded to more than 46,000 requests for assistance around the state.

In early autumn we saw large numbers of local volunteers heed the call to travel interstate and attend some of the most devastating floods in the nation's history.

Between March and April, close to 200 VICSES members were deployed to northern New South Wales to help support flood response efforts. During this time, many held roles as part of Incident Management Teams and on-the-ground, providing much-needed relief to their often exhausted NSW counterparts.

Protecting communities and supporting emergency services in other jurisdictions are brilliant examples of how our volunteers have been serving the community this past quarter.



I was so pleased to be among the Victorians celebrating our volunteers during national *Wear Orange Wednesday* (WOW Day) on May 18.

While WOW Day is always a great opportunity to shine a spotlight on our hardworking volunteers, it was fantastic this year to see one particularly dedicated volunteer - VICSES Chelsea Unit member Kimba Wall - celebrated as an official volunteer at the unit.

Kimba is one of the first official volunteers with Down Syndrome to be recruited, and it is wonderful to see her recruitment celebrated as part of the emergency service's commitment to diversity and inclusion.

The Victorian Government is doing its part to ensure all volunteers are recognised and rewarded for their efforts, and we are ensuring Victoria's emergency service volunteers receive the resources and equipment they need.

That's why, in the recent Budget, we invested \$26.1 million for the maintenance of VICSES facilities, the replacement of vehicles, vessel fleet maintenance and extra support for volunteers. We'll also deliver a further \$2.7 million towards VICSES volunteer training and professional development programs.

I'm proud of all our volunteers and I'll continue to support you in every way I can.

Thanks to you, thousands of requests for assistance around Victoria and beyond have been answered and will continue to be.

Keep doing what you do, take care and all the best for the season ahead.

**Jaelyn Symes**  
**Minister for**  
**Emergency Services** ■



## Welcome

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

**F**irstly, I would like to acknowledge the tremendous efforts of our members who have been deployed over the past few months to support the flood response in New South Wales. With so many communities devastated by this declared national emergency, the assistance provided by our highly-skilled members has been integral in ensuring the safety of those affected. I cannot thank you all enough for your resilience, and shared leadership as part of these deployments. You can read more on pages 4-5.

On the 18th of May, we came together to celebrate *Wear Orange Wednesday* – a national day of thanks for our incredible SES volunteers. Our volunteers are truly inspiring people, dedicating their lives to the safety of others. I am in awe of the achievements of our volunteers every day, and their commitment to our shared *Vision of Safer Communities – Together*. Read all about our celebrations on pages 6-7.

In March, we hosted our first ever state-wide *Women in Rescue* (WIR) event, aimed at providing women with the opportunity to showcase their skills in a fun, safe, and supportive environment. It was fantastic to have our regions come together to empower the women of VICSES, and

champion gender equality across the sector. The event also presented the opportunity to launch our new Interim Female Fit Personal Protective Clothing (PPC), which has now been rolled out across the state. You can view more information on both WIR, and the Interim Female Fit PPC Project on pages 8 and 25.

April saw the launch of our *Driver Reviver* campaign ahead of the Easter long weekend, with locations activated across the state to encourage drivers to take a break and arrive alive at their destination. A huge thank you to our volunteers who gave up time with family and friends during this holiday period, to support this important road-safety initiative.

Last but not least, new unit builds and refurbishments have continued to progress across the state, ensuring the response capabilities and sustainability of our units now, into the future. You can find out more information on one of our latest unit openings at Nillumbik Unit, on page 24.

Thank you all for contributing to another fantastic edition of *Community Matters*.

Kind regards,

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

# FEATURES

## Working as one across the border: VICSES supports flood response in NSW

By Gabi Barkmeyer, Corporate Communications Officer, VHO

Towards the end of February 2022, relentless heavy rainfall covered parts of Queensland and New South Wales (NSW), causing widespread flooding. With properties completely submerged underwater, and most devastatingly – the loss of lives - the severity of this event was felt far and wide.



**W**itnessing the impacts from across the border here in Victoria, our members were eager to provide their skills and time to deploy interstate to NSW to support the hardest hit areas, which would soon to be declared a national emergency by the Australian Federal Government.

Between 1 – 11 March, 121 VICSES members, both volunteers and staff, were deployed to NSW. Our members were tasked with a variety of roles across many locations, including:

- Boat crews sent to Coffs Harbour working in Grafton, Casino, and Mullumbimby.
- General Rescue crews and community liaison members into Goonellabah.
- Incident Management Team (IMT) crews deployed to Wollongong, Metford, Rhodes, and Taree.
- A Jurisdictional Liaison Officer (JLO) stationed at Wollongong.

Despite the massive response from our emergency service agencies, local councils, community members and more, the torrential rain only eased for a short period of time, returning within days. This saw

communities impacted once again, with many neighbourhoods re-flooded after only just beginning to recover from the weather's initial impacts.

This began our second round of VICSES deployments, with 74 members deployed to NSW between 29 March – 8 April.

Once again, our crews deployed to assist communities affected by flood and storm damage. This included:

- Referrals of support for displaced community members.
- Distributing much needed supplies such as food and clean water.
- Aiding NSW teams by covering shifts to give their members a much-needed break.

Locations and roles also included an IMT and JLO deployed into Wollongong, Goulburn and Metford, and Task Force Crews deployed into Port Macquarie and Lismore. Task Force Crews included a group of drivers to transport 12 VICSES vehicles, to provide extra on-the-ground emergency assistance.



Back in Victoria, our members headed up a range of leadership positions to assist our deployments, including our VICSES Chief Officer Operations, Tim Wiebusch as State Response Controller, and VICSES Operations Manager, Gerabeth Abbot as the VICSES State Agency Commander.

*As an agency we have a strong and ongoing commitment with our counterparts' interstate, and we will do whatever we can to assist," said Gerabeth Abbot on the support provided by VICSES.*

"Our volunteers once again answered the call, leaving work and family commitments behind to assist the flooding situation in NSW. We thank those volunteers who assisted, and also send our thanks to their employers who released them for deployment at short notice," continued Gerabeth.

Although our crews are back on home turf, there's still a long road

ahead in the recovery phase of this event for those communities impacted in NSW. We are so thankful to those of our members who have contributed to support these deployments, as well as our members who held the fort back here in Victoria, ensuring our local emergency response capabilities.

Thank you, all. ■





# GENERAL NEWS

## Wear Orange Wednesday 2022

By Gabi Barkmeyer, Corporate Communications Officer, VHO

On Wednesday 18 May, we came together to celebrate the incredible contributions of our volunteers as part of our annual *Wear Orange Wednesday* (WOW Day) celebrations!



The campaign kicked off with the media launch held on Sunday 15 May, the weekend leading into National Volunteer Week and WOW Day.

VICESES Chelsea Unit member Kimba Wall was the face of WOW Day this year, as one of our agency's first official volunteers to be recruited with Down Syndrome.

Breaking down stereotypes and prejudices, Kimba has a budding career in singing, modelling, and acting as part of print and TV advertisements and commercials, showcasing to the world that a disability will not stop her from doing what she loves most.

Acting as an unofficial mascot for the VICESES Chelsea Unit for over 10 years, Kimba is now an official volunteer and was presented with her volunteer certificate at the WOW Day media launch, to acknowledge her, and the work of our thousands of SES volunteers across the country.

On the day of WOW Day on Wednesday 18 May, the community came together to join with us in saying thanks to our amazing volunteers, by dressing in orange, hosting orange-themed lunches and events, and sharing special messages of thanks on social media.

It was fantastic to see so many of our partners get around the day in orange.

Staff of our Principal Community Partner AAMI, hosted a WOW Day morning tea across their offices in Melbourne and Brisbane, while the team at Emergency Management Victoria

and other VICESES members shared in the celebrations and dressed in orange as part of a masterclass held at VEMI.

Key leaders including Emergency Management Commissioner Andrew Crisp, and Australian personalities like Shane Jacobson and comedian Karen From Finance, also submitted their thanks with video messages that were shared on our state social media platforms.

Big and bold WOW Day banner flags were prominently displayed around Melbourne's CBD, flying high in recognition of our heroes in orange.

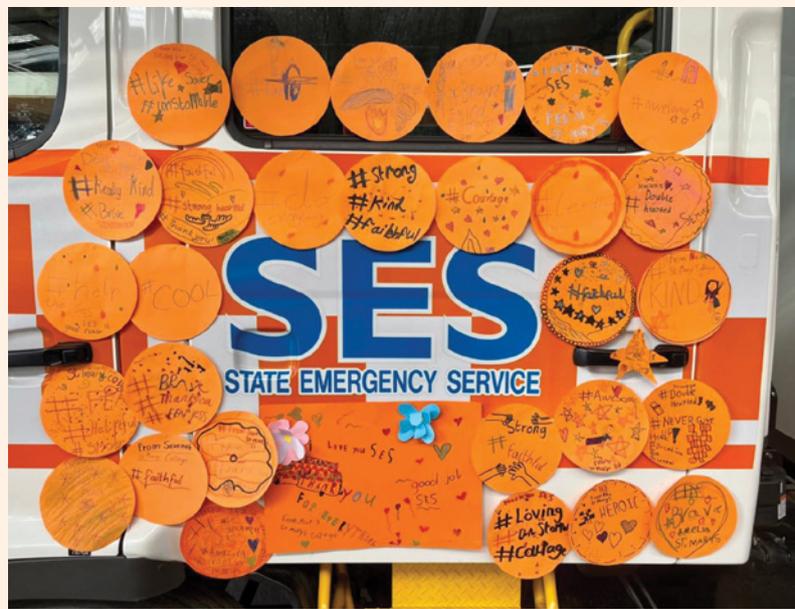
We once again held an internal photo competition to find the best dressed pet in orange, with five lucky volunteers each receiving a \$100 Bunnings voucher thanks to AAMI.

For the first time we also partnered with McDonalds, who generously offered a free coffee or other hot McCafé drink for every VICESES volunteer on the day.

We wrapped up the day's celebration with a colourful display of lights, seeing major landmarks across regional Victoria and metropolitan Melbourne lit up in orange, including the Bolte Bridge, AAMI Park, Melbourne Cricket Ground, and more.

We would like to thank everyone who joined in celebrating this fantastic campaign, and most importantly – THANK YOU, to our SES volunteers, for all that you do. ■







## CAMPAIGNS & EVENTS

# Women in Rescue 2022

By David Murphy, Media Officer, VHO

On 19 March, our regions joined together to host our first ever state-wide *Women in Rescue* event.

**F**ounded in 2018 by the VICSES Sunbury Unit, *Women in Rescue* is a training event designed to celebrate women in the operational space by getting hands-on with tools and equipment, sharing rescue skills, and most importantly, having fun in a safe and supportive environment.

This year eight events were held across Victoria, hosting a variety of specialised training and exercises to showcase the diverse capabilities that our VICSES volunteers rely upon. This included road crash rescue scenarios, domestic rescue, and much more.

Event locations included:

- Sunbury
- Bangholme
- Benalla
- Drysdale
- Huntly
- Lake Eildon
- Sale
- Stawell

"*Women in Rescue* is a fantastic initiative, where women can come together to share skills and techniques in the rescue space, experiment with different techniques and handling of equipment, and share this vital information back to their units for the benefit of all," said VICSES Sunbury Unit and *Women in Rescue* pioneer, Angela Lane.

"Our units and volunteers should represent the communities we serve, from the diversity in our education, to our ethnicity, and the skills we bring to our volunteer role. *Women in Rescue* is another way for us to come together, and learn how best to serve the communities we are a part of," continued Angela.

Excitedly, the event also aligned with the first ever showcase of our new, custom-made and fit-for-purpose Interim Female Fit Personal Protective Clothing (PPC), thanks to funding from our Principal Community Partner, AAMI.

The new uniform was showcased to members at our Sunbury and Huntly events, as well as media outlets who were in attendance to share the event with our wider communities.

The day also featured guest speaker Libby Murphy APM, Chief Operations Officer at Ambulance Victoria, who shared her wealth of experience working across the emergency management sector, and inspiring words on women in leadership.

"As an agency, VICSES is committed to being an inclusive organisation," said VICSES Chief Officer Operations, Tim Wiebusch.

"It is critical that we reflect the communities we serve, and continue to develop the specialist skills and leadership among our women in orange," continued Tim.

A huge thank you to everyone involved in hosting this incredible event. See you all in 2023! ■



## 2022 VICTORIA POLICE AND EMERGENCY SERVICE GAMES

By Gerry Sheridan, Operations Officer – Capability Improvement, VHO

**T**he Victoria Police and Emergency Service Games were held from 18 March to 27 March 2022, back in its traditional home of Melbourne after a very successful 2021 in the regional city of Geelong. The weather was terrific throughout the games, and the volunteer sport coordinators did a great job in making sure their sport

events were run professionally and with plenty of enthusiasm.

Competitors from all emergency services came together after what has been another difficult year with COVID-19 and busy operational periods. Our VICSES participants did not disappoint, seeing strong numbers again this year. We had 91 members participate, with 115 individual entries across all of the sports on offer. 115 medals were won across the same number of events, broken up into 59 gold, 37 silver and



# VICSES TAKES TO THE GROUNDS OF THE 'G'

**By Jamie Devenish, Manager - Community Resilience and Communications, VHO**

More than 30 VICSES volunteers were part of the on-field ceremony at the *Powercor AFL Country Festival game* between Geelong and Essendon at the MCG on Saturday 19 March.

**T**he annual match is held in support of regional communities, and helps celebrate their contribution to our country. It's about showing gratitude for country people and highlighting the wonderful things they do.

This year, major sponsor Powercor chose VICSES to join the pre-game activities to recognise the incredible work of VICSES volunteers in responding to storms, floods, and other emergencies. Powercor General Manager, Corporate Affairs, Jo Pafumi said, "We know first-hand how committed and driven SES volunteers are when responding to emergencies, as we saw in June last year."

VICSES volunteers took part in the pre-game celebration on the MCG, alongside Powercor engineers holding

the giant Australian flag, as Casey Barnes sang *Waltzing Matilda*. They then formed a guard of honour as the two teams came on to the ground, and were invited to stay and enjoy the game.

Emergency service volunteers are such an integral part of the make-up of regional and rural communities in Australia. Tying in with the theme of the Country Festival game, 61% of our VICSES volunteers hail from regional Victoria, making us a great partner for the event.

VICSES Gisborne Unit Deputy Controller Rosie McMahan and VICSES Winchelsea Unit volunteer Angela Hooper, joined AFL stars Tom Hawkins from Geelong and Zach Merrett from Essendon for the media launch in the lead up. ■

19 bronze medals, showing that every event we entered saw a medal won.

Having won the 2021 *Stuart Taylor Memorial Award*, which is presented each year for the "Best Performance of the Games", VICSES Craigieburn Unit volunteer Anita Lutz followed up with an outstanding 17 medals – what a fantastic achievement! Members Rainer Langhoff and Robert Reid also both put in a stellar performance, winning 26 medals between them.

Our members had fun participating in many sports, some of which they had

never competed in before. This is a testament to the game's environment, that you can give any sport a go no matter your ability. It's just about having a go, and having fun.

We now turn our preparations to the Australasian Games, which will take place in New Zealand in March 2023, with preparation well underway. Keep up-to-date on the games on the Hub, located at [My State > Emergency Games](#).

Well done to all members, and thank you for representing VICSES. ■

**By Chloe Jeffers, Senior Advisor – Corporate Communications and Brand, VHO**

Once again, VICSES volunteers had the privilege of heading out on the grounds of the MCG on Saturday May 14 as part of the second annual *Emergency Services Match* between Hawthorn Football Club and Richmond Football Club.

**T**he Emergency Services Match celebrated the efforts of our emergency service agencies, with a tribute to 14 agencies on-field before the game. First held in 2019, the match is an important opportunity to not only raise funds for the Emergency Services Foundation (ESF), but to also spread awareness of the mental health challenges faced by both our current serving emergency service workers, and also past.

38 VICSES members from units across Victoria, including as far as Swan Hill and Tambo Valley, took to the field pre-match, unfurling an orange silk as part of a pre-game show featuring a performance by singer Vanessa Amorosi. A few select members also took part in the guard of honour as each of the clubs came out on the ground – a 'money can't buy' privilege that will be remembered for years to come.

As well as the activity pre-game, some of our members from Essendon, Maroondah and Nillumbik Units created a great activity area in Yarra Park at the Emergency Services Fan Zone, engaging with kids and adults alike and educating about our preparedness initiatives – as well as showcasing our medium rescue, boat and 4x4 vehicles.

Two members also got a chance to take part in mid-game activities, with VICSES Maroondah Unit member, Derek Somers kicking a goal at quarter time to donate \$100 to ESF, and VICSES Nillumbik Unit member Liam Wickham racing the LED and winning – picking up a \$200 Hawks nest voucher!

It was a great opportunity to give thanks to our members with an experience on the 'G'. One of our members, VICSES Greater Dandenong Unit Controller Michael Prior, noting that after a tough couple of weeks for his unit, this was a fantastic day out. We can't wait to take part again in 2023, as the partnership with the Hawthorn Football Club continues. ■



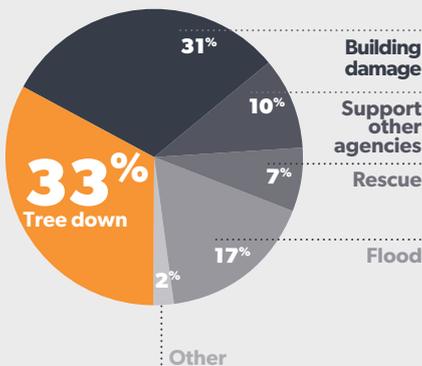
# CENTRAL

1 January – 31 March



**1,654**  
Volunteers

**4,381**  
Requests for assistance



# Continuing to champion women at VICSES

By Sarah Stephens, Community Engagement Coordinator, Central Region

Earlier this year, we proudly celebrated *International Women’s Day* - recognising the passionate, powerful, and talented women in VICSES.

**V**ICSES has progressed along with a modern world. We have come a long way in the service – roles for females are so varied. It doesn’t matter how tall you are, your age – there is always a role. Looking at role diversity, we have a lot of women in our leadership team, within finance, media, community engagement, operations, training - the list goes on.

In Central Region, over 28% of Unit Controllers or Deputy Controllers are female. At VICSES Greater Dandenong Unit, female leadership makes up 40% of the Unit Management Team, with a goal to reach 50% by the end of 2023 (and the possibility of reaching this earlier), as over the past five years the female membership has tripled – currently sitting at 16. Some of these women got together to celebrate the success of our women at VICSES (image below).

Anna, one of the Greater Dandenong team’s newest members, has enjoyed every minute of her time with VICSES since arriving in Australia:

“I am new to Australia – I have only been here for two years, and I can honestly say joining VICSES

has been the best decision of my life. I love every part of it. I know some people were questioning my ability to perform the role and I just said – ‘I’m going to try - I may not be able to do it, but I will have tried.’ Believe me, from the moment I applied, I have never received a negative word from this team,” said Anna.

Cindy, originally from New South Wales (NSW), joined for networking and friendship opportunities:

“Being quite short, I didn’t think I was physically capable for the job. I had a friend who joined the NSW SES, and that inspired me to join when I moved. Still a little apprehensive... I applied. Seeing a lot of female faces on the online information sessions during my application was really encouraging. Being around normal kind of women, like myself, gave me the confidence to keep going with my application,” said Cindy.

Anna and Cindy are just two of hundreds of women across VICSES, and thousands across our emergency service sector, that are making a real difference as part of their communities. Aren’t our women amazing! ■



## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

### at the Melbourne Autumn Home Show

By Bryce Wickham, Community  
Engagement Support  
Officer, Central Region

With community engagement and public relations displays now back on track, VICSES was given the opportunity to have a presence at the 2022 Melbourne Autumn Home Show at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre in late April.

Other exhibitors included St John's Ambulance, leading industry builders, and suppliers and contractors showcasing promotional information about their brands to the public.

This year's home show display saw 17 volunteers from VICSES Northcote, Pakenham, Nillumbik, Hobsons Bay, Port Phillip, Manningham and the State Headquarters Support Units, join together to deliver the *Bag it, Block it, Lift it, Leave it* campaign, featuring real-life props to bring home the important message of how to prepare for a flood emergency. This was a great opportunity for the volunteers to engage directly with the community, and with the watchful eye of 'Reg the Region' mannequin. The setup at the home show also introduced the Red Cross RediPlan to the community.

The three-day event proved to be successful, with the volunteers receiving much appreciation and thanks for their time and contributions. ■



# Grand Prix 2022: It's all go!

By Bryce Wickham, Community Engagement Support Officer, Central Region

VICSES was more than overjoyed to be able to stand alongside the Australian Defence Force, Victoria Police, St John Ambulance, Ambulance Victoria, Country Fire Authority and Fire Rescue Victoria at the 2022 Formula 1 Australian Grand Prix.

With over 400,000 people in attendance across the 7th to the 10th of April, the event was the first large-scale event for community engagers to be involved in as Victoria opened up again post pandemic restrictions.

18 VICSES volunteers from across the VICSES Craigieburn, Greater Dandenong, Manningham, Maroondah, Nillumbik, Northcote, Pakenham, and the State Headquarters Units came together to deliver VICSES key messaging to racegoers at the Grand Prix.

The VICSES stand was presented with a visual display showcasing the VICSES Chelsea Unit General Rescue Support Truck, which piqued the interest of people of all ages, particularly younger children and teenagers. In contrast, the kids rescue truck was a highlight for kinder aged children, which brought in parents and guardians, making it a successful way to start conversations and deliver our key messages at this busy event.

Thank you to everyone involved in this great community engagement event. ■





# EAST

1 January – 31 March

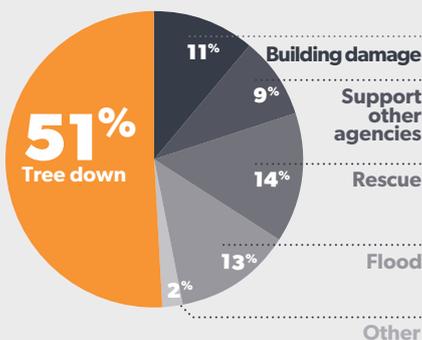


# 490

Volunteers

# 665

Requests for assistance



# A new group of Community Engagement Facilitators in East Region!

By Gail Cumming, Community Resilience Coordinator, East Region

On the weekend of the 19th - 20th of March, a dozen enthusiastic VICSES volunteers gathered at the VICSES Stratford Unit to participate in the latest Community Engagement Facilitation (CEF) course.

It goes without saying that being a VICSES volunteer requires some degree of community engagement, but the CEF course takes it to a whole different level. Much of the time was spent understanding and testing the VICSES Community Engagement Framework – the basis of any good engagement. To know who you’re talking to, what it is you’re talking about, and the best way to communicate with your particular audience, alongside an assessment of whether or not it actually worked.

Apart from a heated debate about questionable practices in the paper plane making segment... all was peaceful and very productive. We had four great presentations to wrap-up the day, focused on recruitment and increasing awareness about floods and other emergencies.

The course was delivered at a great learning pace and provided a fantastic networking opportunity, with participants noting it was great to meet their colleagues face-to-face and get to know each other.

Thank you to everyone involved for making this such an enjoyable day! ■



**CELEBRATING AN INSPIRATIONAL LEADER:**

**VICSES Warragul Unit Controller Alan Male**



# BEMM RIVER COMMUNITY RISES TO FLOOD CHALLENGE

**By Gail Cumming, Community Resilience Coordinator, East Region**

In early April, four days of extreme weather hit many communities in the East Gippsland region. Across the catchment, 250-300mm of rain fell, causing widespread flooding and damage.

**S**everal river systems reached major and moderate flood levels. VICSES units were out in force for what proved to be an exhausting, but hugely rewarding couple of weeks.

By the time an Incident Control Centre (ICC) was set up on the 2nd of April, the communities of Mallacoota, Bemm River, Genoa and Cann River, amongst others, knew they were in for some challenging times. Bemm River was isolated by flood waters, and without power or communications for over 48 hours. Mallacoota lost communications, and Marlo lost power for 24 hours. Over 150 roads were impacted by flood waters, with 31 complete road closures.

As is always the case in East Gippsland, isolation and loss of communications and power were the major issues for most of the impacted communities.

The situation in Bemm River was particularly serious, with a report of two metres of water over the road when the last phone went out.

But finally, there was some light at the end of the tunnel!

Bemm River is one of approximately 44 communities in East Gippsland to be part of the Strengthening Telecommunications Against Natural Disasters (STAND) program,

which places satellite and generator driven communications in community assembly areas, under the local area's Local Incident Management Program – managed by the East Gippsland Shire Council Emergency Management team.

After desperately trying to reach members of the Bemm River community, contact was finally made – the generator was turned on at the local Country Fire Authority shed, and the STAND system activated. That led to constant communication for the community and the ICC, and of course between community members and their families. The Ambulance Health Commander was even able to use Facetime to conduct medical assessments for those that needed urgent help.

The STAND system was also activated in Marlo, and rumour has it that the local school held their classes there on the day Marlo lost power. The kids might not have been happy, but what a success story for the resilience of residents across East Gippsland. ■

**By Gail Cumming, Community Resilience Coordinator, East Region**

**V**ICSES Warragul Unit Controller Alan Male first joined VICSES in 2016. He commenced his membership in the North East Region, before moving over to the East.

Alan is known to be an inspiration to his fellow unit members. With eight years' of service as part of the Royal Australian Air Force, and 16 years of volunteering in emergency operations, Alan has the experience, knowledge, and exceptional leadership skills needed to lead the unit.

As a mentor and a leader, Alan encourages unit members to engage in training and development programs that will enhance their skills and enable them to carry out their duties with the highest level of competency. He supports his unit members by mentoring them to succeed and believe in what they do.

Alan is passionate about community empowerment, and has been deployed to assist several communities during large-scale emergencies. This includes the recent flooding in New South Wales, where Alan was deployed as a Crew Leader.

"It's the need to give back to our communities; lots of our communities are vulnerable, and

they need support, especially during an emergency. They would need a friendly face, and this is what motivates me," said Alan.

A mentor of members of all ages, Alan's advice for younger members is to volunteer for the right reasons and consider family members.

"Our younger members need to think of the commitment and how it might affect their family, because family is the one that gives the most'," says Alan.

We're so thankful to have Alan as part of our team at East Region, hopefully well into the future! ■



**MID**

**WEST**

**1 January – 31 March**

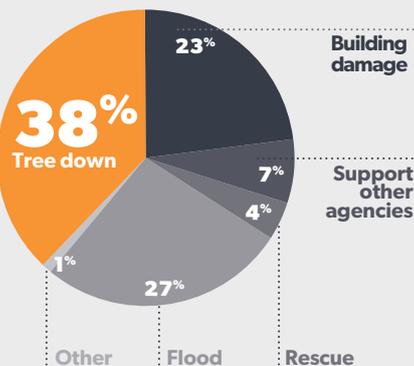


**305**

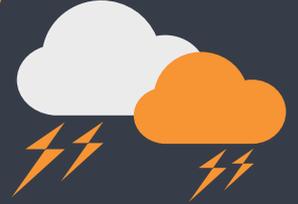
**Volunteers**

**810**

**Requests for assistance**



# Mid West Region supports NSW deployments



By Gavin Kelly, Operations Officer, Mid West Region

A first hand recount of the response to the extreme flooding in New South Wales (NSW).

**T**he VICSES response to the floods in NSW (as highlighted on pages 4-5), gave an opportunity for Mid West members to respond to the destruction caused by the unprecedented flood levels. In areas like Lismore, the height of one of those floods was more than 2.4 metres higher than the previous record event.

VICSES members were soon deployed as part of various Task Forces and in Incident Management Team roles to support this flooding event. The decision, based on previous deployments, was to have myself (Gavin Kelly) as a Task Force Manager, to manage, assist, and liaise with all other agencies both within NSW and back in Victoria. I was assisted by Central Region Volunteer Support Officer Dimity Lynch, which made managing teams easier in regards of staff support.

Prior to the arrival of the first Task Force, the State Operations team and others had arranged for six Medium Rescue Trucks and six 4WD vehicles to be ferried to NSW, specifically to the NSW SES Port Macquarie Unit. These vehicles came from VICSES units across the state, and were very much appreciated

as it gave all members a sense of familiarity.

The welcome and support from the NSW SES Port Macquarie Unit members was nothing short of amazing. Upon our arrival lunch was organised, along with access to all parts of the unit. When the Unit Controller left to return to his work, he left us the keys to the unit and told us their unit was ours for our use – one of the greatest gestures of good will that I have never seen.

Over six days, the Task Forces were made up of members from across Victoria - both from VICSES and Country Fire Authority (CFA). The CFA members were incredibly supportive and fitted into our crews and structure without a worry. In fact, they all said when departing that any time we were deploying again, they would be right there beside us.

It is hard to describe the devastation, damage, sights, and smells that we all encountered during this deployment. In some areas people had lost both their homes and their businesses - not once, but twice. To see the contents of entire households laid out on nature strips, is a site I hope to never see again.

The tasking that was accomplished by all members was wide and varied, and also gave NSW SES units a chance to stand down for a few days to rest. For us to take on their requests for assistance was a huge relief for them, especially as some members had been responding for up to four weeks straight.

Some issues we faced were of a usual nature, such as travelling long distances, navigating in unusual areas, and different taskings communications. Other challenges faced were those of lost/delayed luggage (from flights), and accommodation and catering. The second round of Task Force members that arrived on the 1st of April (that date should have been a sign!) arrived safely, but unfortunately their luggage didn't. All but one bag arrived on the last flight to arrive that night, which, thanks to the work of one member, meant all members had their luggage.

While there were challenges, long days and very high humidity, all members performed in a manner that made me very proud and humble to have been managing such a diversity of members from VICSES and CFA. Thank you all. ■



# Flood risk products prove invaluable for guiding Victoria Police evacuations

Clare Mintern, Community Resilience Coordinator, Mid West Region

Responding to flooding in a timely manner is extremely critical to VICSES during flood events, especially when large flood events occur. To aid our response, the Mid West Region are currently working closely with the Victoria Police to deliver targeted flood training sessions.

The focus of these sessions will be to ensure Victoria Police have the flood information needed to quickly respond to undertake evacuations of buildings at risk of flooding. This training will improve knowledge and access to flood risk information, enabling Victoria Police staff to evacuate people at risk of flooding efficiently, and effectively. Given that flooding in the Mid West Region occurs quickly, it's important that Victoria Police have access to detailed flood risk information that they can use to guide evacuations. This includes flood impact maps of buildings in flood risk locations.

Flood maps and flood trigger summaries are invaluable to guiding Victoria Police's evacuation response. This ensures Victoria Police have the information needed to take key actions, such as targeted doorknocking, which will help to better guide our on-the-ground response, and build flood awareness, preparedness, and community resilience.

The largest recent flood event that the Wimmera region has experienced is the January 2011 flood event. During this flood event VICSES received significant support from Victoria Police staff, assisting with ground flood observations.

Key elements of the flood training with Victoria Police include:

- Providing access to flood risk information.
- Providing knowledge of where to access real-time flood stream gauge height information, and what it means in terms of buildings impacted by flooding.
- Providing access to flood risk triggers.
- Providing access to maps of buildings at risk of flooding for a range of flood magnitudes.

To compliment this training, the Mid West Region are also working closely with Victoria Police to train staff to use *Snap Send Solve* – an app used to share real-time flood images via the administration portal Emergency Management Common Operating Picture (EM-COP). *Snap Send Solve* is used to substantially improve the efficiency and effectiveness of VICSES acquiring flood intelligence, and significantly improves our capability of managing flood emergencies. It can also be used to share information for a range of emergencies in addition to floods. You can read more about the latest on this app on page 24.

We look forward to delivering this training, and strengthening our partnership with Victoria Police. ■

## Mt Stapylton rescue success

By Jordan Bush, Volunteer Support Officer, Mid West Region

On Thursday 28 April, VICSES Ararat Unit received a call-out at approximately 7:30am to assist Ambulance Victoria Wilderness Response Paramedics with a carry-out of an injured rock climber at Mt Stapylton in the Grampians, above the renowned 'Taipan Wall'.

We were made aware that both VICSES Stawell and Horsham Units had been out there the night prior to attempt a rescue, however, the weather conditions didn't permit.

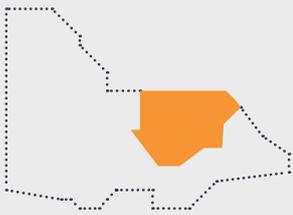
VICSES Ararat Unit members worked alongside around 20 other personnel from VICSES Horsham Unit, Fire Rescue Victoria, Country Fire Authority, Ambulance Victoria and Police Search and Rescue. Team members hiked 3km into the Grampians and up Mt Stapylton with the Horsham High Angle Rescue Cache to enact a High Angle Rescue, followed by a carry-out to the staging area due to their being low fog and poor weather.

Upon our arrival at the casualty's location, we noticed the weather had started to clear, so Ambulance Victoria activated their Helicopter Emergency Medical Service (HEMS). To be safe, the High Angle Rescue Technicians (HART) team still set up the system in case the HEMS was unable to winch the patient out.

Thankfully the weather had cleared for a long enough duration, that the HEMS was able to successfully winch the patient out.

This was a fantastic opportunity to work alongside our fellow emergency services and learn from some highly skilled operators in the field. It was particularly beneficial to the members from VICSES Ararat Unit, that have limited opportunities to be a part of such a great outcome in a multi-agency event. ■





**NORTH**

**EAST**

**1 January – 31 March**

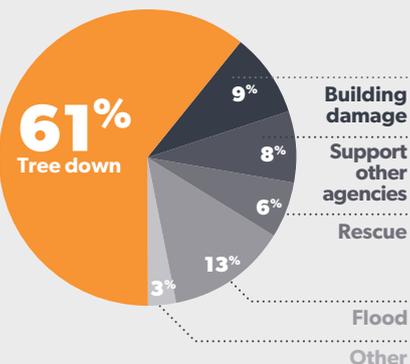


**575**

**Volunteers**

**1,273**

**Requests for assistance**



# Chainsaw course helps out locals in the North East

**By Dan Walton, Regional Officer – Training, North East Region**

If you remember back to early February, a wind-storm event passed through the North East Region causing widespread damage to trees and buildings.

**T**hese were all resolved in a matter of hours after the passing of the front, thanks to a quick and efficient joint response from VICSES and our partner emergency service agencies.

Unfortunately, there were - and still are - ongoing impacts from this event. But thankfully, through our scheduled chainsaw courses, we were able to assist one landowner in their recovery efforts.

Contact was made with a landowner in Bobinawarrah, where there were reports of “hundreds” of trees down on private property - quite a lot of work for any private resident in our community. After some quick discussions, the property was visited, Site Safety Plans were developed, our external chainsaw training

provider was brought on-board, and two courses were then approved to conduct the practical sessions of those training courses at the storm affected property.

The March course was completed successfully, however, COVID-19 reared its head one more time, and forced a last-minute postponement of the April course, which will be rescheduled and advertised soon.

Although we weren't able to get as much done to help this member of our community as we would have liked, this was still a great example of using training courses to continue to improve regional capability, and provided very realistic practical training for these candidates.

Thanks to everyone who helped to make this a reality. We were very proud to be able to utilise these two training courses to assist a landowner in the region.

Keep your eyes and ears open in your own community for similar situations that you could use either at a unit or regional level, to assist the community outside of operations and through training and skills maintenance opportunities. ■



**By Josephine Hunter, VICSES Marysville Unit Controller, North East Region**

**O**n Friday 13 May, the VICSES Bright Unit were called to assist Victoria Police with a search for a missing person at the Dinner Plain Alpine Resort, near Mt. Hotham.

Working through the night, by morning the search had quickly escalated. In total, more than 60 VICSES members would join the effort over the eight-day search period.

Volunteers from North East, East, and Central Regions searched through difficult terrain and weather, battling rain, sleet and snow. At times, search team members found themselves pushing through native grasses and shrubs up to their chests, landing in knee-deep mud and bogs, and crawling on all fours under or through walls of tea-tree.



# North East Region's 2022 Service Awards Ceremony



By Sue Sheldrick, Community Resilience Coordinator, North East Region

Held at Wangaratta Unit Local Headquarters on the last Saturday in May, around 100 VICSES members, family, and friends attended the North East Region 2022 Service Awards Ceremony.

**A**fter a pause during 2020-2021 due to COVID-19, it was great to see the three-years of combined awards being delivered to their excited recipients.

VICSES Chief Officer Operations Tim Wiebusch and acting North East Regional Manager Brendan Corboy, presented medals ranging from five to 50 years of service, representing a combined total of 1,780 years of service being recognised. An outstanding achievement for all those involved.

Two members were presented with the Life Member medal: Stephen Roberts and Joe Riella, both from VICSES Yackandandah Unit.

Here's a look at both of their Life Member citations:

## Stephen Roberts

Stephen has 30 years of service with the VICSES Yackandandah Unit, and was previously also a member of VICSES Albury Unit. He is an integral part of the unit's mentor program, developing new members. With over 70 training competencies, including Alpine Search and Survival, Coxswain, AIIIMS, and Map and Navigation, Stephen has an amazing skillset that he puts to use both serving his community, and passing on to new members without hesitation as a trainer. He has served as Unit Controller, Deputy Controller, Unit Leader, and Trainer, assisted in the flood events at Lakes Entrance with sandbagging and evacuations during deployment, and the 2003 and 2009 bushfires where he assisted the Country Fire Authority (CFA) to navigate their tankers through the bush clearing trees along the way.

## Joe Riella

Joe is a valued and well recognised member of the VICSES Yackandandah Unit, with over 35 years of service to the unit. Commencing with VICSES Wodonga Unit in 1985, he has held many roles in his extensive time including Unit Controller, Training Officer, and Crew Leader.

He has over 50 training competencies and was a valued member during the 2009 Victorian Bushfires, supporting the CFA to help them navigate trucks to remote destinations. Joe has also played a vital role in the North East Region floods, where his rescue boat skills, dedication, and compassion shone through.

Three members were also celebrated for just being in the right place at the right time - it's not often we have three Medal of the Order of Australia (OAMS) in the same room! This included volunteers George McPherson OAM, Irene Cracknell OAM and Valerie McPherson OAM (pictured above with Brendan Corboy and Tim Wiebusch). What a celebrated and decorated team we have!



A big thanks to the volunteers and staff that helped to set up and 'demob' after the ceremony. Many hands did make light work. We're all looking forward to the 2023 awards already, so start thinking who in your unit might be eligible for recognition! ■

By Wednesday, thick snow and frost had blanketed the area. Specialist VICSES and Victoria Police Alpine Search and Survival (ASAS) teams were called in, putting in a mammoth effort to continue the search in challenging conditions above the snowline. The police search and rescue teams commented on the fact they didn't hear a single complaint from any of our VICSES searchers regarding the difficulty, with everyone just getting on with the job at hand.

By day seven, the weather cleared overhead, and police were able to again use helicopters, Remote Piloted Aircraft Systems, and solo units to broaden the search. The VICSES Chiltern Unit's lighting tower was deployed

for ten days as a beacon, and described by the Victoria Police Forward Commander as a flagship part of the search effort. The VICSES North East Regional Support Unit deployed the Field Operations Vehicle to assist with communications, and VICSES Bright Unit's Alpine Search and Rescue Trailer was on standby at the staging area.

Unfortunately, despite the large-scale effort by VICSES, Victoria Police and others, the missing person has not yet been located.

These sorts of jobs can be difficult for members who've put their heart and soul into searching. However, we shouldn't lose sight of how important and valued our efforts

have been. We're all hopeful that further developments will allow the missing person to be returned to their family soon.

We encourage members who attend these sorts of events to share their experiences with their units, and reach out to Peer Support to talk about the emotions that come with an unresolved search.

This is also a timely reminder to ASAS members to start your seasonal preparedness now. If you are interested in undertaking roles in remote area searching or joining the ASAS team, chat to your unit training team about upcoming opportunities. ■



# NORTH WEST

1 January – 31 March

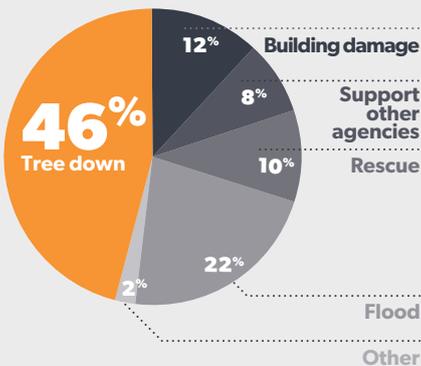


# 541

Volunteers

# 896

Requests for assistance



## North West Region Women in Rescue

By Jamie Macri, Community Resilience Coordinator, North West Region

In March, 38 women from 17 different units attended the North West Region *Women in Rescue* event, held at the Huntly Training Ground - a fantastic local facility.

The day included 10 volunteer trainers and two North West Region staff trainers, who helped run and coordinate all participants. Working in groups of six, they rotated through five different activities. This included two Road Crash Rescue (RCR) stands, two Safe Working at Heights System (SWAHS) stands, temporary building repairs, trailer parking and backing, alongside a 4WD course in the afternoon.

All of the women who attended got to have a go at each workshop, and develop and demonstrate existing and new skills. Everyone got along great, and we had so much positive feedback about the day. No one wanted to go home, staying to chat well after the event was over!

The feedback and comments that we received were all positive. Here's a snapshot of the commentary overheard on the day:

- "I loved going on the roof, I can't believe I did that!"
- "It was a wonderful opportunity to have a go at backing a trailer."
- "I would have never had a go in front of people at the unit."
- "This is the first time I have been on a roof; I was so nervous!"
- "I loved the 4x4 driving course - it was so much fun."



*I really enjoyed using the RCR tools, because I have never really had a go - the men at the unit just do it."*



*I have never backed a trailer in my life, but I had the confidence to have a go today and I was so proud of myself."*

- "Today was so much fun, and a great chance to meet other women from other units."

As you can read above, the day was a huge success and ran without any problems, thanks to all participants and the North West Region team. What a fantastic day! ■

# VICSES Woomelang Unit welcomes new interim Unit Controller

By Jamie Macri, Community Resilience Coordinator, North West Region

In February, VICSES Woomelang Unit welcomed Lisa Emblem as their new interim Unit Controller. Here's a look at Lisa's journey with VICSES so far.

In 2017, Lisa made the huge move from Sydney to Curyo, Victoria, with her parents Darlene and Eddie, and sister Lauren. In 2018, a Facebook post about an open night at the VICSES Birchip Unit piqued Darlene's interest, and she attended the open night with daughter Lauren. Excited about how interesting everything seemed and how friendly and welcoming the unit was, they signed up that night. It wasn't long before Eddie was on board too, as well as Lisa.

Lisa joined VICSES as a way to give back to the community. Having only recently moved to the area, she wanted to get to know the locals - and what better way to do that than joining a local community group. Lisa says it was one of the best decisions she has made, and definitely not one she has regretted.

Lisa loves being a volunteer and finds it rewarding - it's selfless, and brings the best feeling knowing that you have helped people in desperate times of need. She also loves that each volunteer, no matter what unit they are from, has a different experience with the service. No one is forced to do anything they

are uncomfortable with, and that diversity is promoted and highly encouraged.

In her four years with VICSES Birchip Unit, Lisa has held the positions of Unit Officer, Section Leader, and Administrator. When the opportunity arose to be interim Unit Controller at VICSES Woomelang Unit, she was shocked she was considered for the job, and felt it was a little daunting and terrifying knowing she was responsible for an entire unit. However, Lisa's mother and VICSES Birchip Unit Controller, Darlene Emblem, encouraged her to take on the role. Darlene is Lisa's greatest supporter in everything she has achieved so far in her journey with VICSES, and is a wonderful mentor.

Lisa hopes the VICSES Woomelang Unit will be as accepting of her as the VICSES Birchip Unit, while looking forward to all the challenges that come with being a Unit Controller. She is confident that she can overcome any challenges because of her great support system, including mum Darlene and the North West Regional team.

All the best, Lisa! ■



By Jamie Macri, Community Resilience Coordinator, North West Region

In the evening of Friday 8 April, VICSES Murrayville Unit held a presentation dinner in celebration of the achievements of their volunteer members.

Operations Manager Jim O'Donnell was on hand to conduct the awards presentation, with many members receiving VICSES long service awards varying between five and 40 years. These awards came to a combined total of 330 years of service, which is a significant milestone for such a small unit.

In addition to these awards, the function was also held to farewell unit member Bryce Pritchard.

Bryce has committed over 30 years in supporting both VICSES and his community, and recently moved to South Australia with his family to enjoy retirement. Bryce will be deeply missed by all of his colleagues at the VICSES Murrayville Unit, as well as the wider local community.

Congratulations and heartfelt thanks are extended to all of these award recipients and Bryce, for their dedication to VICSES and the community in which they live and work. ■

## Awards presented on the night included:

### 5 YEARS:

- Josh Willersdorf
- Regan Wyatt

### 20 YEARS:

- Christine Heintze

### 25 YEARS:

- Neville Heintze

### 30 YEARS:

- Megs Willersdorf
- Bryce Pritchard
- Alma McDonald (posthumously)
- John Heintze
- Marilyn Wyatt

### 35 YEARS:

- Beris Etherton.

### 40 YEARS:

- Kevin Willersdorf
- Brian Etherton
- Ned Wyatt





**SOUTH**

**WEST**

**1 January – 31 March**

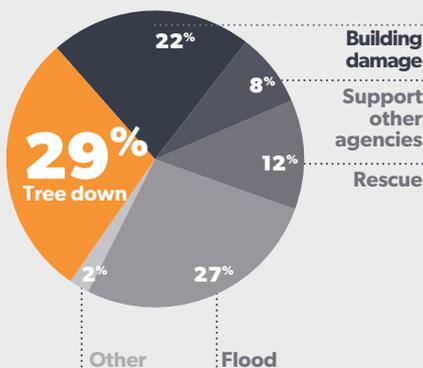


**528**

**Volunteers**

**1,163**

**Requests for assistance**



# South West Region recruitment drive

By Alex Suwitra, Community Resilience Coordinator, South West Region

Multiple units throughout the South West Region have opted in to a region-wide recruitment campaign - the first large scale drive for members in the region since the start of the pandemic.

Following the 2019-20 Victorian Bushfires, many volunteer units were approached by community members interested in learning how they might become emergency service volunteers. However, just as with all aspects of our lives, the COVID-19 pandemic prevented recruitment and training from occurring as planned.

With restrictions easing in 2022, VICSES units were finally able to move ahead with the recruitment of new members. The South West Region, which extends along Victoria's south west coast from Geelong to the South Australian border, was split into 'east', 'central' and 'west' clusters of units. This meant that nearby units in each area could work together in promoting, recruiting, and training new members.

A highlight of the campaign has been the joint information sessions at the VICSES Regional Office in Bell Park, Geelong. Five volunteer

units based in the Geelong area (VICSES Corio, Geelong, South Barwon, Winchelsea, and the Regional Headquarters Units), planned two sessions in which interested people could attend to find out more about volunteering for VICSES. Attendees were able to explore some of the equipment and vehicles that VICSES volunteers operate, including heavy rescue trucks, the Field Operations Vehicle, rescue boats, swift water rescue equipment, and more.

Over 40 people attended the sessions, which is a fantastic result for our units, and a great opportunity for potential future members to see and learn more about volunteering for VICSES.

The coordinated approach to recruitment across the region has been well received, and has allowed units to learn from each other and support their new members across a wide area as they begin their volunteer journey with VICSES. ■

## Vale Bruce Warton: VICSES Port Fairy Unit Deputy Controller



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

In late February, Bruce Warton, one of our long-standing South West Region volunteers, sadly passed away.

Bruce was the Deputy Controller of the VICSES Port Fairy Unit and will be dearly missed by all. He started his VICSES journey at the VICSES Tatura Unit in 2009, before

transferring to the VICSES Port Fairy Unit in 2011. Bruce was a well-respected member of the community and dedicated countless hours volunteering with VICSES. This included advocating for the new facility, which is due to be finished by 2023.

We remember Bruce for his leadership and meaningful

friendships within the unit, and VICSES as a whole. A memorial service was held on the 4th of March at the Port Fairy Uniting Church, where Bruce's family, friends and VICSES members celebrated his life. The VICSES Port Fairy Unit would like to thank all that have sent their well wishes and messages of condolences. Rest in Peace, Bruce. ■

# Celebrating the women of South West Region

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



We celebrate and appreciate all VICSES members in the South West Region, but in March we were able to highlight some of our inspiring female volunteers with our *Women In Rescue* event in Geelong, alongside International Women's Day.

**O**n International Women's Day we interviewed VICSES Hamilton Unit Deputy Controller – Training and Members, Jessica Mayne (pictured), to gain her perspective of what it's like to be a volunteer with VICSES.

## When was the moment you decided to become a VICSES volunteer?

I decided to join VICSES in 2016 when the floods were happening in Casterton. My family have always volunteered in some capacity and I felt that was the right time for me.

Outside of VICSES, I'm a medical receptionist for a radiology department.

## What is the biggest contribution or achievement that you've made in your role?

As a Deputy Controller of Training and Members, I have attained my Cert IV in Training and Assessor, which has allowed me to facilitate training at both a regional and unit level. This has allowed me to inspire other women to take on roles or complete courses.

## Have you had any surprises regarding your opportunities as a VICSES volunteer?

Surprises, yes! I am a Coxswain, a Divisional Commander, and I can even drive a truck. Never in my wildest dreams did I think I could do any of that. It's all thanks to the VICSES Hamilton Unit. Without their support, I wouldn't be where I am today.

## Would you like to see VICSES continue to improve its gender balance?

I am proud to see more females going through more courses,

and would love to see more females join VICSES.

## Reflecting on International Women's Day, why do you think it's so important to celebrate?

We should celebrate to show how far we have come and inspire others.

## What would be your advice to women wanting to join VICSES or the emergency services sector?

I would say give it a go - why not! I know some may be unsure, but it is rewarding. ■



## By Alex Suwitra, Community Resilience Coordinator, South West Region

**I**n mid-April, volunteers from the VICSES Geelong, Corio and South West Regional Headquarters Units, came together for an egg-cellent training exercise!

Around 40 volunteers participated in a large-scale search for crime scene evidence in open parkland surrounding VICSES Corio Unit's local headquarters in Lovely Banks. But there was a twist – with Easter not far away, members were searching for Easter eggs and other items which had been hidden around the scene by the organisers.

As well as practising search techniques, the exercise was a great opportunity to test new and potential Crew Leaders, who were mentored by experienced Sector and Divisional Commanders and Crew Leaders on the night. The Regional Headquarters Unit brought the Field Operations Vehicle for use as a command centre, and the VICSES Geelong Unit made use of their lighting trailer to support the search.

The session was a fun take on a serious role that VICSES play in supporting Victoria Police. VICSES volunteers are trained to search crime scenes for

evidence, or large areas of land or waterways for missing people.

VICSES Corio Unit Deputy Controller of Training, Nigel Cunningham, said the evening was a great success.

"We had a great turnout, with members from the different units combining to form three teams that all did a great job. There were smiles all around at the end of the evening."

A big thanks to the unit training officers that organised this well-received evening - the first such joint exercise for many members in the last two years. ■



# IMT Leadership Program

By David Baker, Deputy Chief Officer – Capability, VHO

VICSES has partnered with *Red Flag Leadership Solutions* and *PSI* to deliver an Incident Management Team (IMT) Leadership Development Program for accredited IMT functional leaders, progressing from Level 2 to Level 3 accreditation. Both volunteer and staff accredited IMT functional members participated in the program.

**T**he program was funded through VICSES IMT development funding. The first program was conducted in June 2021, and the second program in March 2022. Both were held as one-week residential courses at the Victorian Emergency Management Institute (VEMI) in Mt Macedon.

VICSES extended an invitation to our partners from Country Fire Authority, Forest Fire Management Victoria, Fire Rescue Victoria, Emergency Management Victoria, Northern Territory SES, New South Wales SES and Tasmania SES, who joined us on both courses.

The program was based on the Incident Leadership Course developed by United States-based *Mission Centred Solutions*, with the content being 'Australian-ised' and 'SES-ised' by *Red Flag Leadership Solutions* for our environment.

VICSES enhanced the program by ensuring leading emergency services sector psychologist Sam Dwyer from *PSI* was involved in delivering a 'personal operating instructions' element

at the commencement of the course, to guide the participants learning outcomes through the week.

The program involves a mix of theory and simulation sessions that mimic the pace of a working Incident Control Centre. Evenings included the opportunity to hear from senior emergency management (EM) leaders, and learn from their IMT and EM leadership experiences.

The involvement of our partner agencies enriched the experience for all participants, bringing broader thinking and options to the table. It has also helped with cross-agency and jurisdictional relationships, and building trust when we support each other during major emergencies.

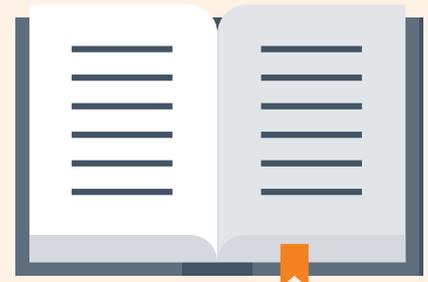
VICSES Bendigo Unit Deputy Controller Nat Stanway, who is an accredited Level 2 Operations Officer, offered some feedback on just how valuable she found the program.

"The scenarios are intense, supportive, fast paced, complex, challenging and fun. By far the

most valuable IMT training I have had of late. The networking opportunities are extraordinary - not only with fellow participants, but with guest speakers from all aspects of emergency management within Victoria and indeed Australia, and the evening panels were inspiring. I think we all found a new mentor or role model while on the course," said Nat.

"I have come out of the course a very capable IMT leader with every intention of gaining Level 3 Operations Officer accreditation, and progressing to Incident Controller in due course. I don't know that I would have thought either of these things were truly possible to achieve as a volunteer before this course - there is now no question in my mind at all. I want to be the first female volunteer Incident Controller and inspire those just starting their emergency management journey to have faith in themselves and take that step," continued Nat.

With such positive feedback, VICSES is proud to have sponsored and hosted the first two courses and are now looking at the possibility of delivering a third course, which will have a predominant female member focus. Stay tuned! ■



# Operational Communications Proactive Maintenance

By Phil May, Operational Communications Technical Officer, Central Region

The Operational Communications team has now recommenced visits to units around Victoria. The intent is for a member of the team to visit each VICSES location once every two years.

**T**he practise of proactive maintenance is to prevent unplanned downtime and premature equipment failure.

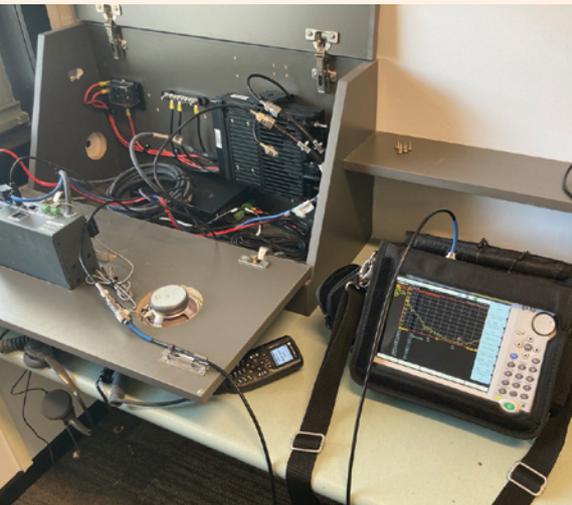
One of our technical officers will be inspecting all radios and Emergency Vehicle Status (EVS) equipment while on site, to ensure all equipment is operating correctly and within specification.

During the maintenance program, fixed station terminal radio power supplies and batteries will be replaced with new equipment as required.

A member of our team will be in contact with units to arrange a suitable time and date for these tests to occur. This will usually happen between one-two weeks prior to the planned maintenance run for each month.



Remember that any faults observed with EVS or communications equipment should be reported as soon as practicable to the Operational Communications team via email at [comms@ses.vic.gov.au](mailto:comms@ses.vic.gov.au) or by phoning 1800 045 939. ■

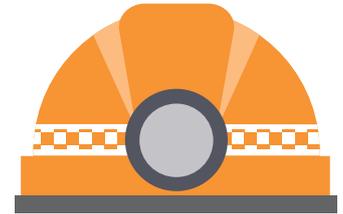


# REQUESTS FOR ASSISTANCE

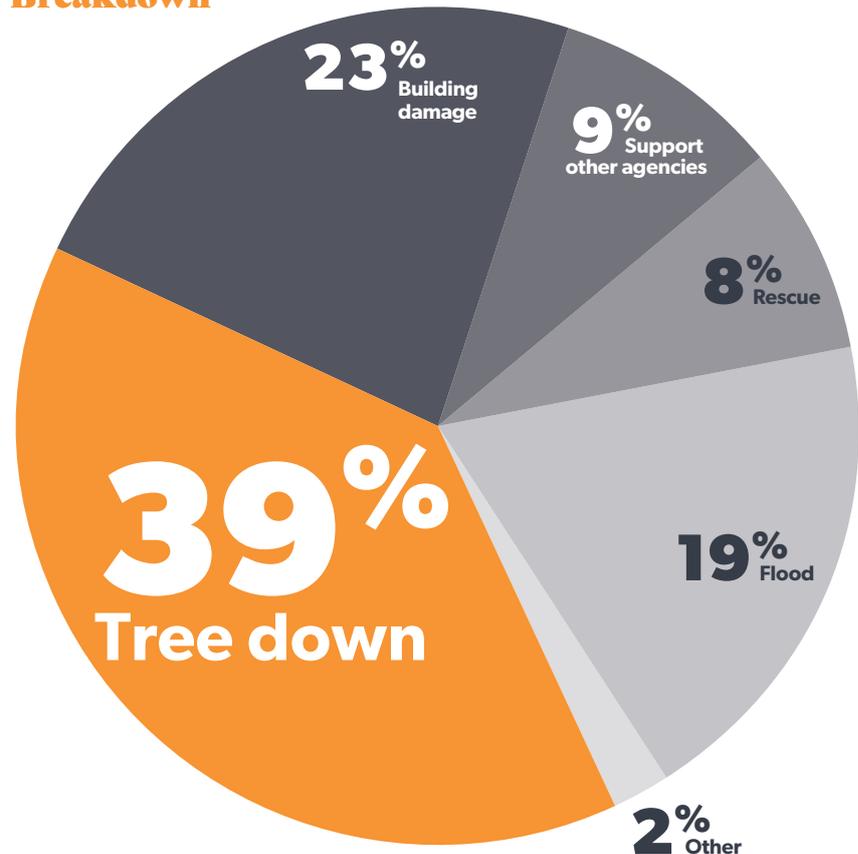
## 1 January – 31 March

Total

# 9,202



Breakdown



# PROJECTS – WHAT'S NEW



## VICSES Nillumbik Unit's newly refurbished facility opens

By David Murphy, Media Officer, VHO

On Saturday 2 April, VICSES Nillumbik Unit celebrated the official opening of its newly refurbished facility, funded by the Victorian Government's Emergency Services Refurbishment Fund (ESRF).

Operating out of their newly refurbished facility, located at 58 Susan Street in Eltham, the VICSES Nillumbik Unit has had a busy few years, responding to over 880 requests for assistance from local community members in the last 12 months, and 985 calls for help the year before.

Refurbishment works had been ongoing over the course of the last two years, thanks to the ESRF grant of almost \$190,000.

As part of the ESRF grant, the recent refurbishment works completed include a brand-new vehicle bay and kitchen, updated drainage and piping, various repair works, and a new security gate, in addition to:

- A new roof over the facility - an upgrade from the previous style.
- Fresh paint across the entire facility.
- Repaired veranda to make secure and safe.

- Landscaping of surrounds.
- Repaired and replaced retaining walls and created better water movement.

The refurbishment will enable VICSES' commitment and dedication to the local community, and support the retention and recruitment of new volunteers.

Over the years, the unit has received funding from ESVS and VESEP grants as well as other

community funding aspects, including the Nillumbik Council, with funds donated from the council to support the unit and help transform the building into a modern and fit-for-purpose local headquarters.

The unit has been in many locations since its establishment in June 1985. Since this refurbishment work, the unit is now better placed to serve the community than it has ever been before. ■



## Flood Observer changes

By Jo Kegg, Floodplain Management Liaison Officer, VHO

Since the release of the Flood Observer Project utilising the *Snap Send Solve* app in July 2020, we now have over 800 trained and trusted Flood Observers who have delivered more than 1,200 real-time local knowledge incident reports, including over 2,400 images during flood events to Incident Management Teams (IMTs).

Various emergency management personnel have found the data to be invaluable for response efforts, verification of information, situational awareness, public information and warnings, support for initial impact assessment, updates to numerous reports, studies and resources, and research support.

To continue the success of the Flood Observer Project, some important changes are being made:

- Field Observers will replace Flood Observers.
- Storm, geotech, tsunami, and logistics observations will be available on the app for selection.
- Flood Observer training will be superseded by Field Observer training on the Training Portal, with new storm, geotechnical, tsunami and logistics content added.

# Interim Female Fit Personal Protective Clothing (PPC): Rolling out across the state

By Irena Jurisic, Project Coordinator – PPC&E Project, VHO

The new Interim Female Fit PPC is now being delivered across the state to our units, and so far, we've received some fantastic positive feedback on the new clothing.

**F**or those who have received your latest Interim Female Fit PPC, here's some further information on the usage of your new clothing:

## The new Interim Female Fit PPC can be worn for all VICSES operational activities:

The new work shirt and pants meet all the requirements for all operational activities including road crash rescue (RCR), and replace the coveralls, two-piece heavyweight, and two-piece lightweight.

## Layering garments up and down as required:

The new Interim Female Fit PPC has been designed to be worn as a complete set, with consideration for layering of garments. For example, the soft-shell fleece jacket can be worn over the work shirt with, or without sleeves as the outer protective layer(s).

## Maximise the benefits of wearing the new PPC by limiting the street clothes worn underneath:

The benefits of wearing the new PPC means that you have the ability to regulate temperature in cool and warm conditions (for example, wear the rescue base layer under the work shirt).

It may not always be possible to change before attending a RCR call-out or before attending your unit, so it's recommended that members wear light clothing such as the provided rescue base layer and shorts, leggings, or bike shorts, as this will 'limit' interference with the layering and built-in functions of the new clothing.

Where members have the ability to change either before attending an incident or at the unit, VICSES recommends following the 'Garment Features and Layering Guide', which will be made available to members soon.

The Assets team are currently checking to ensure that all orders have been received. Knee pads haven't been sent yet for the initial order, and planning is underway to finalise this as part of the overall kit.



A number of supporting documents and updated FAQs relating to the new Interim Female Fit PPC are available on the Hub under **My State > Assets and Fleet > PPC&E > Interim Female Fit PPC**. These include how to manage warranty, returns and size exchanges.

Work is currently underway to enhance the *Buy Online* system to enable the ordering of the new Interim Female Fit PPC. Notification will be distributed to all units once these enhancements have

been completed. This will enable ordering of the Interim Female Fit PPC for new members, those members not eligible in the initial roll-out, or those wishing to order additional items.

More details will become available as soon as the system is finalised, so watch this space.

A huge thank you to everyone involved in supporting this milestone project so far, in better supporting the needs of our female members now and into the future. ■

*The first shipment of some of our Interim Female Fit PPC arrived on Friday. Very impressed, clearly a lot of effort and thought has gone into them... for me, no complaints, so thank you to all who had a hand in getting these organised and approved"*

- 'Maintain Safety at a Flood and Storm Event' training will need to be completed prior to undertaking Field Observer training.

It is an exciting time with advancements in technology, and encouraging discussions in Victoria and interstate with other agencies and businesses, about how emergency services are using app technology to gather real-time ground information before, during, or after emergency events,

to hopefully progress towards a collaborative approach.

The project team would like to thank all Flood Observers for your valuable contribution and continued support of the project. Without you our IMT's would not receive the critical and valid data required during events. We encourage you to assist other members to access the Field Observer training and download the app to further contribute to the increasing valuable data we are capturing. ■



Snap Send Solve

Further information about the changes and project can be found on the Hub under **My State > Operations > Field Observations – Snap Send Solve**.

# WELLBEING, HEALTH & SAFETY



## AV Smart 2.0 Program

By Paul Fitzgerald, VICSES psychologist, VHO

The Mental Health and Wellbeing team are proud to present the AV Smart 2.0 program for all VICSES members: A 90-minute one-on-one confidential wellbeing check-up with a fully qualified VICSES clinician, to see how you're tracking mentally.

**T**he program was first developed by Ambulance Victoria, perfected over the course of 13 years of continuous improvement, and has now been adapted for VICSES.

### How does it work?

As part of the VICSES MindFit initiative, the AV SMART 2.0 program is a 90-minute catch up with one of our VICSES clinicians

First, you'll take part in a screening, which will measure where you sit in relation to common difficulties, including anxiety, depression, PTSD, burnout, workplace conflict issues and bullying.

Then, we'll get a baseline of function across the mental health

continuum (pictured). This gives you a benchmark to compare annually as you continue as part of VICSES.

We'll talk through a proactive self-care plan, which will be able to gain insight and strategies into actively dealing with stress and building resilience.

If the assessment deems you in the 'green' on the mental health continuum, we'll help you understand and identify when stress can become negative for you, and the early signs of this in yourself and others.

By the end of the one-off assessment, you will have a better understanding of where you are sitting on the mental health continuum, which is a baseline

of your psychological health. We'll also work through some strategies to ensure you stay 'in the green'.

### How to access

The AV SMART 2.0 program is available now for all VICSES members to access, regardless of location, with sessions held either face-to-face or via video link.



Register your interest for a AV SMART 2.0 check-in by scanning the QR code, or visit the Hub under **My State > Health and Wellbeing > Mindfit > Mindfit AV SMART 2.0 Program.** ■

## POCKETSAFETY APP: DOWNLOAD TODAY

By Stewart Riddle,  
WHS advisor, VHO

**T**he pocketSafety mobile app is available now for download, enabling quick and easy reporting of health and safety incidents from your smartphone or device.

Benefits and features of the pocketSafety app include:

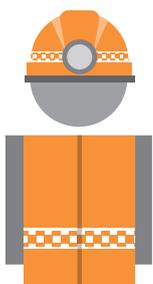
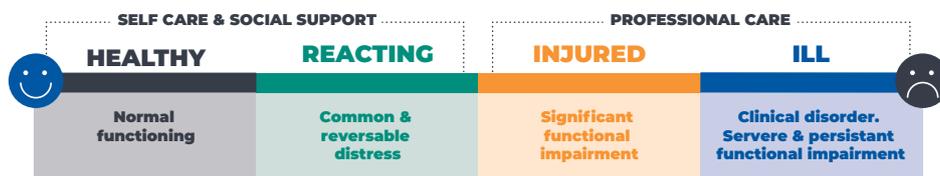
- Reporting incidents and hazards in real-time, no matter where you are.
- Upload photos instantly.
- GPS location tracking for more accurate information.
- Instant notifications to relevant parties.
- Immediately develop action plans and corrective actions.
- Close-off incidents and hazards within the app.
- Automatically loads into the Safegate system.

Overall, this new app enables a safer workplace through quicker responses, reducing the risk of issues going unreported or unresolved.

Download the app today via the App Store or Google Play.

For a quick reference guide, visit the Hub under **My State > Safety > WHS resources** ■

## THE MENTAL HEALTH CONTINUUM



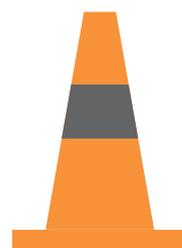
### Workplace inspections

July 2020 –  
March 2021

**183**

July 2021 –  
Mar 2022

**115**



### Injuries

July 2020 –  
March 2021

**113**

July 2021 –  
March 2022

**137**



# Healthwatch update

By Alison Wright, Health and Wellbeing Coordinator, VHO

After a few false starts, our Healthwatch team is finally getting out to deliver some of the fantastic sessions that we've been developing over the last two years.

**W**e are extremely proud to offer our new interactive wellbeing workshops, specifically designed to give practical advice and support the setting of achievable health goals.

Which of the following topics resonates with your unit? You can choose from:

**Fatigue:** Understand how fatigue can impact your role as a volunteer by identifying the key risk factors and causes of fatigue. This includes useful tools and ideas on how to manage and prevent fatigue.

**Nutrition:** Understanding what to eat to improve energy, information regarding the impact nutrition has on our health, and how to put together a nutritious snack. This includes useful tools and ideas on how to incorporate some healthy nutrition ideas into your VICSES schedule.

**Movement – mobility and injury prevention:** Why it's important and how it can help us with our roles at VICSES, as well as part of our lives in general. We look at how we can support each other to move more, and go through some simple exercises which can improve our mobility, increase our strength, and help to prevent injury in the first place.

**Resilience:** What is resilience and how do we build it? Some strategies and ideas on how to increase our capacity to bounce back.

Each Healthwatch session also includes free health checks for interested members and their partners, **plus** we cover the cost of a healthy meal!

These are great sessions for training nights - our knowledgeable team of health experts are passionate about wellbeing and supporting positive health choices.

*Wow, what a fantastic evening. Cannot thank you enough for the information and interaction with everyone tonight. It has opened the doors and minds to members of the unit... this is an evening we will talk about and do again!"*

*Well, another successful Healthwatch visit! Lots of information presented by the Healthwatch members, and fun and games with the giant rubber bands."*

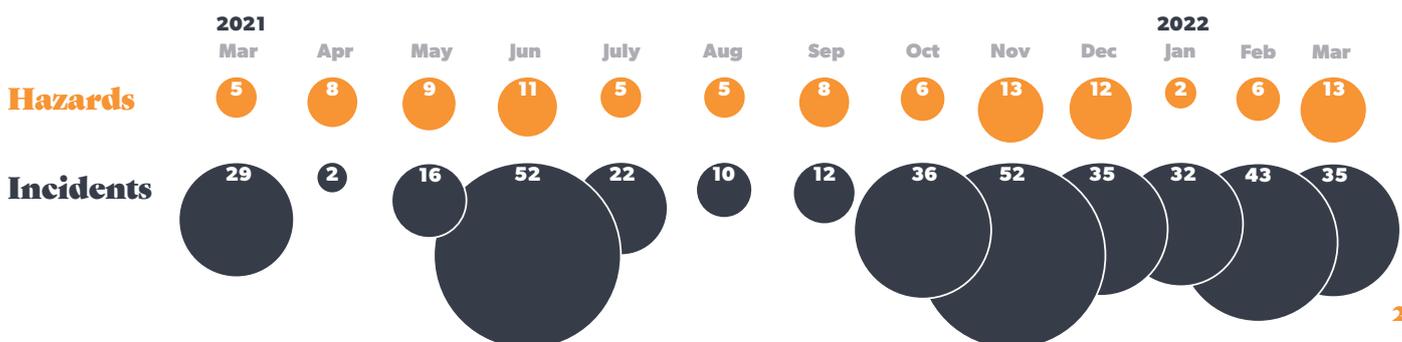
*Another great Healthwatch session - thanks to the team that came down. The session was definitely worthwhile, with a number of members commenting that they enjoyed it."*



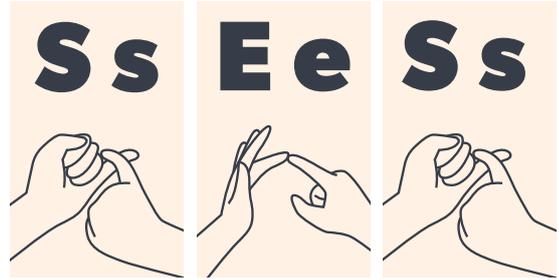
We are now taking bookings for the new financial year. Fill out the online booking form by scanning the QR code or email [alison.wright@ses.vic.gov.au](mailto:alison.wright@ses.vic.gov.au). ■



## YEAR AT A GLANCE



# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



## VICSES supports Expressions Australia Auslan interpreters' personal development

By Susan Davie, Manager Community Connections, VHO

Recently, Expressions Australia approached VICSES to facilitate a workshop for their Auslan interpreters, given an expressed interest in learning more about VICSES.

**A**cting VICSES Manager Community Connections Hannah Macdougall, delivered an online one-hour workshop to

the Expressions Australia cohort, complete with Auslan interpreters for the session itself. Hannah was advised that their members were interested to hear more about:

- Who is and what is VICSES – our roles and responsibilities.
- When do we become involved in a crisis, who decides, and what is the criteria for us to act?
- Who are our workforce?
- Our role before, during and after an emergency.

Hannah tied in the above questions into our Values, strategic doctrine at a state, national and international level, as well as our evidence-based approach

to community resilience. A rich discussion was had after the formal presentation around inclusion and how our deaf and hard of hearing community members can receive warnings and request information. A representative from Emergency Management Victoria was also present to hear the discussion and assist with actions regarding learnings, warnings, and how we can work towards supporting our deaf and hard of hearing community. ■



## Driver Reviver back in business

By Amy Miles, National Driver Reviver Program Coordinator, VHO

After a challenging two years due to the impacts of the pandemic, *Driver Reviver* sites were back in full swing over the Easter long weekend, with more than 30 sites operating across the state.

**O**n 13 April, volunteers from the VICSES Maryborough, Sunbury and Gisborne Units were joined by the Minister for Police, the Hon

Lisa Neville MP, Minister for Roads and Safety, The Hon Ben Carroll MP, Victoria Police, AAMI, and the Transport Accident Commission (TAC), to launch the *Driver Reviver*

# Digital community engagement training

By Hannah Macdougall, Acting Manager Community Connections, VHO

Evidenced in research and practice, we know that there is no 'one-size fits all' to engagement with community members. We need to invest the time into learning how we can effectively engage with our communities using online platforms.

To assist with this, VICSES have been offering two different training workshops. The first workshop is focused on ways to engage, share, and connect online. The second workshop is about generating ideas with community members using online platforms.

At both workshops, members experience and learn a range of online engagement tools, techniques, tips, and approaches to designing online engagement programs with their own communities. The aim? To build skills and confidence for digital

community engagement. Another purpose, equally as important, was to have fun and laugh and engage with each other.

The workshops have seen members from VICSES join with South Australia SES and Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council (AFAC) representatives, providing an ability to connect with other emergency service members and collaborate across the sector. Further workshops are planned for July 2022, and will be open for nominations on the Training Portal for VICSES members. ■

Easter campaign. A road crash rescue demonstration was featured, and the new purpose-built *Driver Reviver* caravan (pictured) for the VICSES Maryborough Unit made its debut.

For the past 30 years, *Driver Reviver* has been a national campaign with one objective - to reduce road collisions by alleviating driver fatigue. At these rest stops you can get free coffee, tea, and snacks at roadside locations throughout Australia.

VICSES provides the largest road rescue network in Australia, responding to up to 1,300 road crashes each year, so we understand better than anyone the importance of stopping to rest and refresh on your journey. After all, we would much

rather serve you at one of our *Driver Reviver* sites than cut you out of a car.

"Our VICSES volunteers dedicate themselves to serving the Victorian community responding in times of emergency – and they will be giving up their long weekend to serve you a cup of coffee or tea to avoid the alternative, which is far more devastating," commented Minister for Emergency Services, the Hon Jaclyn Symes MP in the lead up to the campaign.

A big thank you to everyone who supported our *Driver Reviver* sites over the Easter long weekend, ensuring the safety of drivers across Victoria. ■



## TEDDY BEAR HOSPITAL

By Amy Miles, National Driver Reviver Program Coordinator, VHO

This Easter, VICSES continued its support of the Teddy Bear Hospital event at the Royal Children's Hospital *Good Friday Kids Day Out*, with the donation of Paddy Platypus soft toys.

The Teddy Bear Hospital encourages children to bring their favourite teddy along to the event for a top-to-toe check-up from volunteer medicine, nursing, and allied health students from the University of Melbourne. The initiative is run as part of the Good Friday Appeal – an annual event held on Easter Good Friday to raise funds for The Royal Children's Hospital (RCH).

Six emergency service agencies supported the event by donating soft toys for sale, which saw approximately 10,000 people in attendance.

Our very own Paddy Platypus was the most popular toy mascot purchased on the day, with \$50 per Paddy going to the RCH – go Paddy! ■



# MEDIA

1 January -  
31 March 2022

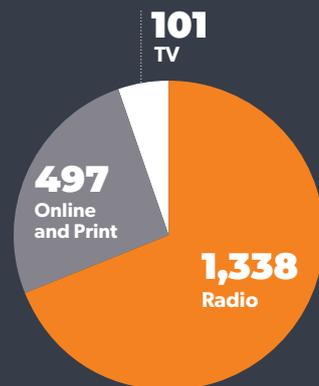
## Campaigns and events:

- International Women's Day (8 March)
- Women in Rescue (19 March)
- Harmony Week (23 March)
- Neighbour Day (27 March)

## Media releases:

- Donations vital for VICSES Nhill support their community (Feb 21).
- VICSES members deployed to assist with NSW flood response (1 March).
- Local to Geelong? Your VICSES unit needs you (18 March).
- VICSES women in mid-west VIC gather to showcase rescue capability (19 March).

## Mentions of VICSES in the news:



## Social media highlights:



**f FACEBOOK**

Impressions:  
**335,671**

Engagement:  
**54,062**

28 January: Image of vehicle submerged in floodwater in Elwood, Melbourne.



**t TWITTER**

Impressions:  
**124,000**

Engagement:  
**4,651**

15 January: Marine threat tsunami warning for Lakes Entrance.

**Instagram**

Impressions: **4,283** Engagement: **273**



7 January: Volunteers respond to over 300 requests for assistance for flood and storm damage.



**in LINKEDIN**

Impressions:  
**5,704**

Engagement:  
**436**

25 January: VICSES recipients of the Emergency Service Medal.

# BECOME AN MLO TODAY!

By Dharni Giri, Senior Media Advisor, VHO

Are you interested in becoming a Media Liaison Officer (MLO) for your unit?

Beginning in June 2022, the VICSES Media team will once again offer MLO courses throughout the remainder of the year, to be run over Webex, for members interested in becoming their unit's MLO.

The aim of this training is to provide our VICSES volunteers with the knowledge and confidence to deliver valuable, professional, and focused messages to the community through local forms of media.

MLOs will act as regular contacts for local media and must be comfortable with speaking and interacting with local journalists for local media.

The value of having an MLO at your unit comes into focus during operational events, when undertaking community outreach and preparedness initiatives, the recruitment of new volunteers, and promoting local events.

This course aims to provide you with the know-how and confidence to promote the valuable work that your unit does for the community.

Upon completion of your training and with the Media team's support and guidance, MLOs can:

- Conduct a live or pre-recorded television or radio interview.
- Write a media release on community events and operational incidents.
- Represent their unit as a spokesperson.
- Prepare a member of the operational team to represent VICSES and provide key messaging.
- Build a sustainable, and professional relationship with local media outlets.

After your MLO training, our VICSES Media team will stay in touch with you to help with key messaging, editing, managing local media contacts, and provide support for continuous improvement.



Keep an eye out on the Learning Portal for upcoming courses, or email the Media team for more info at [media@ses.vic.gov.au](mailto:media@ses.vic.gov.au). ■

# INFORMATION SERVICES (IS) UPDATE



## Privacy awareness for VICSES members

By Lisa Macdermott, Freedom of Information and Privacy Officer, VHO

Privacy Awareness Week occurs across the country annually. The theme for this year in Victoria was 'Privacy: The foundation of trust'.

Information privacy relates to an individual's ability to determine for themselves when, how, and for what purpose their personal information is handled by others. Privacy is all about the individual.

At VICSES trust is key. We are trusted to be there for Victorians, sometimes during difficult and challenging times. We are trusted to give advice on how to be prepared for possible incidents, avoid future harm, and we participate in many community events.

During the thousands of interactions with the community each year there are many

opportunities for VICSES members to collect personal information. Every individual has a right to privacy and to have control over their information. In turn as an organisation, we have a responsibility to protect the information of those individuals.

A commitment to protecting individuals' personal information is vital in order to create and maintain strong relationships with the public. Neglecting to do so can cause significant damages to the organisation, not to mention potential harm to the individual whose privacy has been breached.

### 'Personal information' means:

**Information or an opinion (whether true or not) that is recorded in any form about an individual whose identity is apparent, or can reasonably be ascertained, from the information or opinion...".**

#### Examples of personal information include:

- Name
- Addresses
- Phone numbers
- Bank account details
- Date of birth
- Gender
- Images
- Audio recordings

Information does not have to directly identify an individual by itself in order to amount to personal information. If, however you can use it in combination, it becomes personal information.

#### Ways to protect personal information include:

- Limiting the personal information collected. Think about whether you really need to have this information included. Why do you need it?
- Only use the information for the purpose it is collected.
- Handle the personal information securely.
- Share personal information to those who are approved to see it. If you are unsure, do not share it and seek advice.
- Destroy or de-identify personal information when it is no longer needed.

An online module for privacy awareness will be released shortly for all members in the Training Portal. This will explain how to manage personal information in order to ensure individual's privacy.



#### More information

For further information please contact VICSES Freedom of Information and Privacy Officer, Lisa Macdermott at [lisa.macdermott@ses.vic.gov.au](mailto:lisa.macdermott@ses.vic.gov.au), or visit *Your Privacy Right* at [ovic.vic.gov.au/privacy/your-privacy-rights/](http://ovic.vic.gov.au/privacy/your-privacy-rights/) ■



*Thanking our heroes in orange following our busiest year on record.*

#ThankYouSES