

SUMMER 2022

Community Matters

# VICSES

EDITION 21

**VICTORIAN**

**FLOODS 2022**

*Sharing the incredible stories of our members leading Victoria's flood response*



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#### Front Cover:

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese with a VICSES volunteer at the Epsom Incident Control Centre.



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

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## MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER FOR EMERGENCY SERVICES

Welcome to the fourth edition  
of *Community Matters* for 2022.

I would like to start this edition's message by extending a heartfelt thank you to our incredible emergency services personnel who have been working so hard in the recent emergency flood response and recovery operations.

We have found ourselves experiencing yet another large-scale and significant natural disaster. The ability of both our emergency services representatives and the community to mobilise in the face of crisis continues to amaze me.

Recent severe weather has presented enormous challenges for communities right across Victoria, with widespread flooding causing significant damage and disruption across several regions.

I had the opportunity to visit several flood-affected areas and saw first-hand the remarkable work being done by VICSES volunteers and partner agencies.

As always, our VICSES volunteers and staff have been at the coalface of the flood emergency and ongoing severe weather events, and the community spirit and strength shown by so many of you continues to shine through – so too does a lot of warmth and humour.

The dedication shown by VICSES volunteers and staff in response to the ongoing flood event is deeply

appreciated by not only me and the government, but the many families, businesses and communities that have relied on VICSES services, expertise, and support during this difficult time.

Since flooding began on 12 October, VICSES has experienced its busiest operational period on record, with 147 VICSES units from across the state supporting the flood response and recovery efforts. There were more than 16,100 requests for assistance, the majority for flooding impacts, as well as fallen trees, technical and floodwater rescues, and building damage.

These statistics demonstrate the immense scale and impact caused by this flood event, and the dedication and tireless work shown by our Victorian volunteer and emergency service organisations to help keep our communities safe.

It's difficult to comprehend that despite the ongoing flooding and severe weather events being experienced across the state, the warmer months are upon us which we know brings further risks and challenges.

I continue to admire the remarkable and relentless efforts of our emergency services personnel and thank you for your time and dedication, many of you go over and beyond and it is truly inspiring.

I have the honour of continuing in the role as the Victorian Minister for Emergency Services following the state election. The people I meet and the selfless work you do motivate me every day to bring my best to this position – I look forward to again working with you in 2023.

**Jaclyn Symes**  
Minister for Emergency Services



## Welcome

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

**I**n October, Victorians were hit with unprecedented heavy rainfall and severe flooding, seeing one of the most significant flood events in our state's history.

It was devastating to see the impacts of this event on our communities, with entire towns and neighbourhoods being evacuated, isolated, or inundated by floodwater.

At the forefront of our state's emergency response, was our VICSES volunteers.

For the month of October alone, our volunteers responded to 13,035 requests for assistance – our busiest month on record.

Whether it was undergoing flood rescues, assisting evacuations, supporting sandbagging efforts, deploying to support impacted communities across the state, or a range of other critical emergency responses – the contributions of our volunteers during this event have been truly remarkable. In particular, our volunteers who continued to provide assistance while their own properties and loved-ones were also impacted. An incredible demonstration of resilience, and dedication to the safety of others.

Alongside our volunteers on-the-ground, VICSES members and partner agencies also dedicated their expertise at local, regional, and state control centres, working 24/7 across a range of Incident Management Team roles to ensure our coordinated emergency response.

As part of this special edition of *Community Matters*, we share the incredible first-hand experiences of our members during this historic flood event, and the strength and resilience of our communities.

I'm extremely proud of the tireless contributions of our members during this time, and cannot thank you all enough for your service. To our heroes in orange – what would we do without you.

I hope you enjoy this edition of *Community Matters*, and stay safe.

Kind regards,

**Stephen Griffin**  
CEO Victoria State Emergency Service





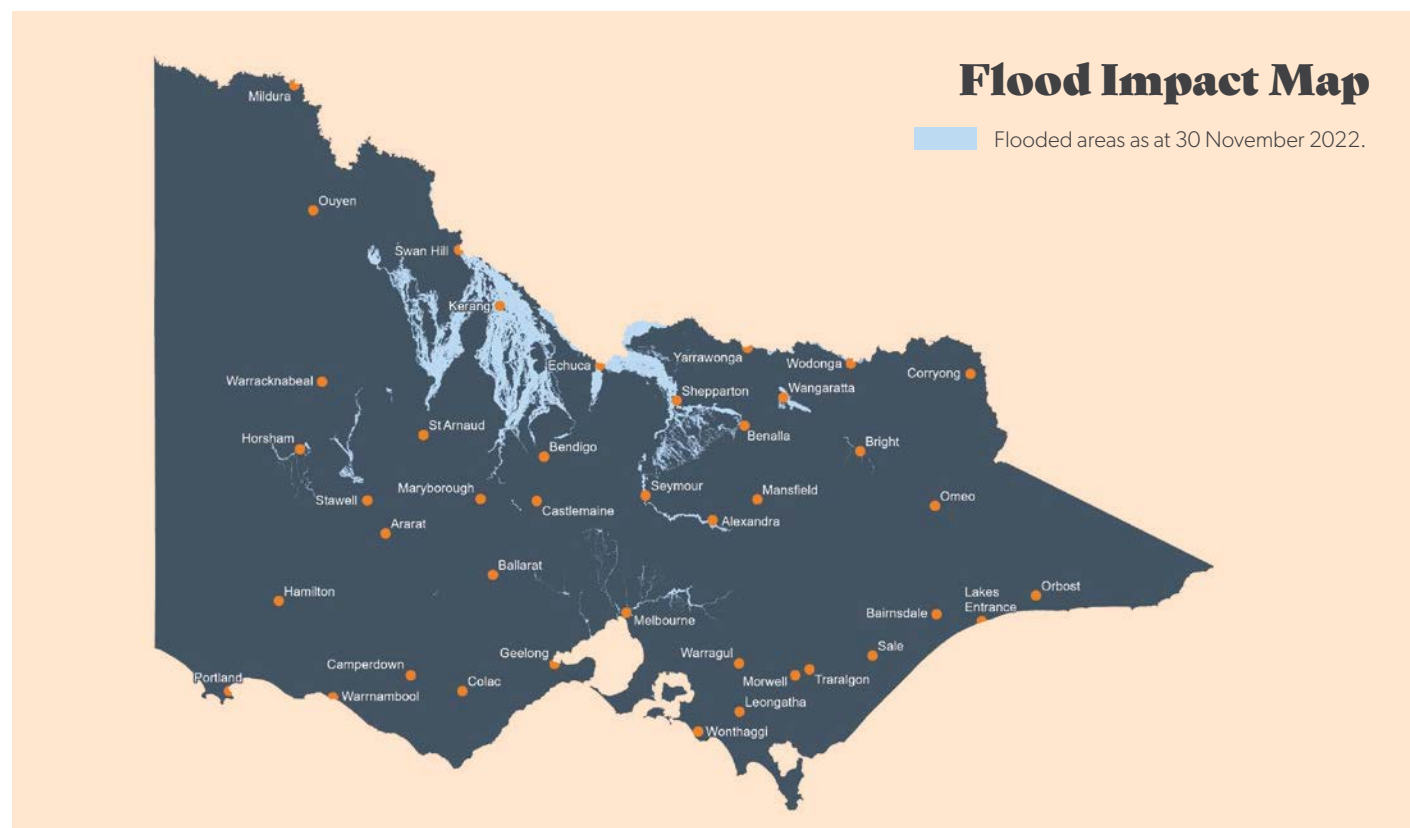


# Victorian Floods 2022

In October 2022, a low-pressure system travelled east over Australia, bringing heavy rainfall and storms. Already high rivers, creeks, and sodden catchments had little capacity to absorb the rain, which led to one of the most devastating flooding events in Victoria's history.

**E**vacuations took place along Melbourne suburbs near the Maribyrnong River, and for northern Victorian communities along the Campaspe, Goulburn and Murray Rivers including the towns of Shepparton, Rochester and Echuca. Communities lost homes, businesses, infrastructure, roads and crops.

VICSES volunteers worked around the clock to strengthen flood defences, evacuate communities, and respond to the thousands of requests for assistance, marking October 2022 as our busiest month on record. Despite the devastation of this event, we have seen incredible displays of strength and resilience, with communities rallying together to support our members' efforts. ■





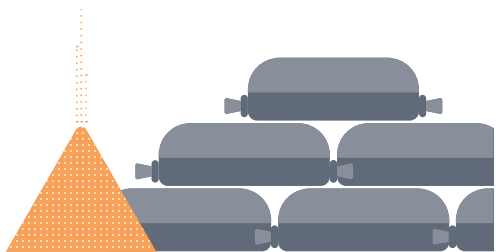
**FROM WEDNESDAY  
12 OCTOBER –  
WEDNESDAY  
30 NOVEMBER:**

**147**

**VICES  
units**



deployed to support flood  
impacted communities



**OVER**

**1.3  
million**  
sandbags laid



**372**

**Emergency  
Warnings issued**

# REQUESTS FOR ASSISTANCE

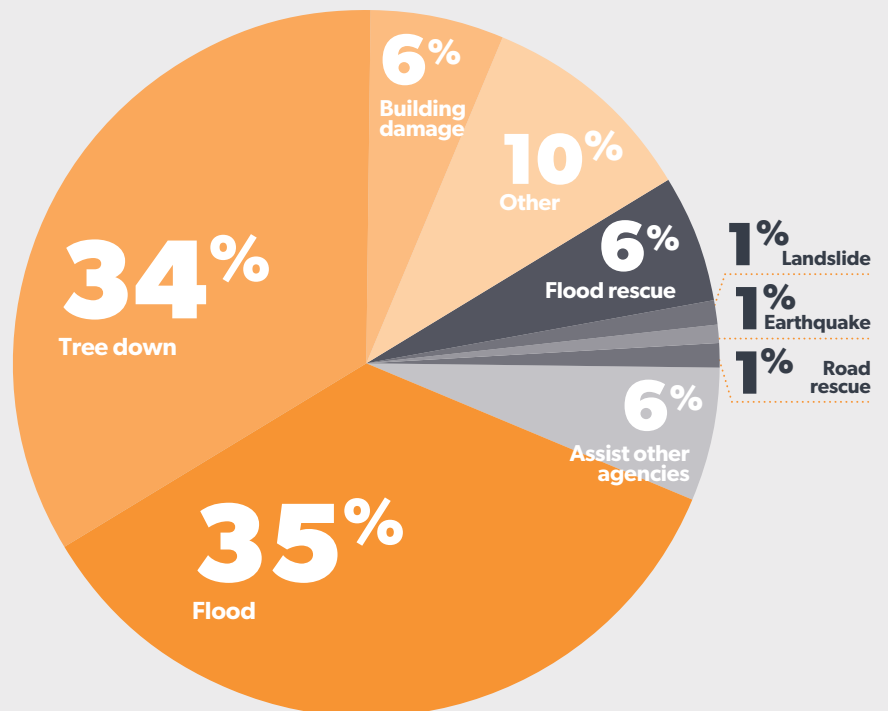
**12 October - 30 November**

**Total**

**16,103**



## Breakdown



# Messages of thanks

Messages of thanks for the hard work of our volunteers during Victoria's recent historic flood event.

## TIM WIEBUSCH

VICSES Chief Officer Operations

In the lead up to this record-breaking flood event, our members had already been busy supporting New South Wales (NSW) with flooding operations.



**F**rom mid-September, the Bureau of Meteorology confirmed a third-consecutive La Niña for Australia, coinciding with a negative Indian Ocean Dipole, which meant an increased likelihood of above average-rainfall. Engaging with flood-risk communities, we knew it would only take one decent rain event before it would be 'game-on'. And then, the rains came.

From 13 - 14 October, we saw rainfall totals between 150-300mm in parts of the state. Since then, we've seen a number of smaller, storm driven, heavy rain events that have led to localised flash flooding, keeping our river levels high.

The Bureau of Meteorology has confirmed that this year we've

experienced the wettest spring on record, with October being the wettest month on record ever for Victoria.

I'm so incredibly proud of our VICSES members and their amazing efforts over the last two months. We've passed 50 days of flood operations, having responded to over 16,150 requests for assistance (RFAs).

Notably, of these RFAs we have responded to over 900 flood rescues in support of Victoria Police, alongside our partners at Life Saving Victoria, Fire Rescue Victoria, and even fisheries and Transport Safety Victoria boat crews. Victoria Police have confirmed over 95% of these have been undertaken by our VICSES

land based swift water rescue teams and rescue boat capabilities, demonstrating the benefit of building our flood rescue skills since the 2010-11 floods.

I've heard so many positive stories of our members often going above and beyond to support our communities, whether through community meetings, door knocking, sandbag collection points, staging areas, operations in the field, on the water, in the air, or in control centres at all levels across the state. I've had no end of quite genuine and unprompted thanks and praise from the Australian Prime Minister, Victorian Premier, Minister, Governor of Victoria, local government officers, senior police, and most notably community members who I've met in flood affected communities.

I've been pleased to be able to escape the State Control Centre on occasion and touch base with our members. 145 of our units have been involved in this event, responding to many impacts including flash flooding, riverine flooding, and storms. I'd like to give a special acknowledgment to our teams located in Rochester, Echuca, Kerang, Swan Hill, Seymour, Tatura, and Murchison, who saw very significant impacts and have been responding tirelessly for weeks.

It was also terrific to see members deploy from literally every corner of the state to support our units and communities on-the-ground, as part of Control Centre or Divisional/Sector Command, or to ensure the Air Rescue Support could be maintained for weeks on end.

Tragically, we've had two flood related deaths during this event at Rochester and Nathalia. Our thoughts remain with VICSES members who have been personally impacted by this flood and storm emergency, and we will continue to provide support for them as time progresses.

While we're now starting to see blue skies and summer temperatures appear, we still have communities that will see high river levels through until the end of December. A timely reminder that we'll need to keep supporting our fellow members, and our response isn't over yet.

That being said, self-care during these prolonged events is important as it can reduce the risk of burn out and poor health. Looking after yourself is a necessity for being able to help others.

To our members – thank you, for all you're doing and continue to do. ■







**ANDREW CRISP**

**Emergency Management  
Commissioner, Victoria**

Firstly, thank you to every single one of you for the incredible job you've done responding to significant flooding across Victoria over the last couple of months.



October was the wettest month on record for our state. It's no surprise that it was also the busiest month for VICSES, which responded to more than 13,000 requests for assistance and more than 800 floodwater rescues.

I've had the opportunity to travel to some of the impacted areas - including Tatura, Rochester, Shepparton, Echuca, Bendigo, Swan Hill and Kerang. Although the recent floods have been unprecedented, there are so many good news stories, thanks to our amazing and dedicated volunteers.

It's wonderful to see multi-agency teams and community members working side by side. I've heard many stories, including volunteers from VICSES Bendigo Unit who saved a woman from drowning after her car washed away, and another timely rescue of an 11-year-old boy from a stormwater drain in Altona Meadows. My sincere thanks for all of the work you have done, and continue to do to keep our community safe. I've said it before, and I'll say it again – SES are the Swiss army knife of our emergency services - a quality product that can do so many things!

Since the start of the flooding event on 12 October, more than one million sandbags

have also been filled and laid – many by hand alongside volunteers from a range of agencies, the Australian Defence Force and the community. A huge effort from all of those involved.

I'm especially humbled by the volunteers who were out there helping the community while their own homes were flooded. Your dedication and passion for helping others is extraordinary.

Thank you to those who also work tirelessly behind the scenes in our Control Centres.

We have amazing people in the SES and I'm always proud of the way you support and work with communities in every way possible, in often difficult and challenging conditions.

This sense of spirit and community among our emergency service workers will be vital as we navigate this sustained flood event and potential for other significant weather events through summer.

Many thanks also to your families and employers for supporting you and your deployments around Victoria. ■



**GREG WILSON**

**Board Chair Victoria State  
Emergency Service**

On behalf of the VICSES Board, I would like to express my admiration and thanks for the incredible efforts of our VICSES members during the recent severe flooding across Victoria.

Our members are incredible people, who go above and beyond to support those in need. In particular, our VICSES volunteers, who are the backbone of so many of our communities.

Since the beginning of this flood event, our members have been at the forefront of the state's emergency response. Across the news we've seen our volunteers in orange on-the-ground, working tirelessly to support those in need. We've also played a prominent role in daily press conferences and interviews, providing timely information, and reassuring those most at risk.

It has been incredible to see the strength, determination, and resilience of our members during this prolonged operational period, which has highlighted the integral service that we provide as an emergency service agency.

While the peak of this flood event has passed, we know there is still a long road ahead for those impacted communities. The hard work doesn't stop here, and there will still be many ongoing challenges for our communities and our organisation into the future. I hope our members are able to take this time to rest and recover, and spend time with your loved ones.

Thank you all, for your unwavering service in keeping our communities safe – together. ■

# SUPPORTING THE FLOOD RESPONSE

Stories from across our regions

## Heroic duo save the day

By Dharni Giri, Senior Media and Publicity Advisor, VHO

On Saturday 22 October, a heroic VICSES duo from Bendigo saved a woman from drowning after her car was washed away.

**T**he woman in her 60's had managed to escape out of the window of her car and was stranded in a creek with flowing water nearly up to her knees.

VICSES Bendigo Unit officers Braden Verity and Trent Ross discovered the woman just before 11:00pm on their way to another job in Woodvale, north-west of Bendigo.

With their lights flashing and high beams on they spotted the woman flailing about and visibly struggling to stand.

Trent got out of the passenger seat, completed a dynamic risk assessment, and entered the water to assist her while Braden requested an ambulance.

Late at night and on a country road, Trent guided the woman back to

safety, who was about 100 meters away from the vehicle.

"I have no doubt she would have died had we not come along at that point," Braden said.

"If she'd fallen over, she would have drowned right there. The creek was really flowing out where she was, coming up to her knees - like something you see on a clip of white-water rafting."

Trent put his wet weather jacket on the woman and helped her into

the back of the car, waiting for the paramedics to arrive. The woman was struggling to breathe, telling the VICSES officers that her car was swept into the gully and that she barely made it out.

An off duty Micra-Paramedic, who was volunteering with another VICSES crew nearby, arrived before the ambulance and was able to provide further expertise and look after the woman. An incredible real-life story of being in the right place, at the right time! ■



## The boy in the drain: An unbelievable rescue

By David Murphy, Media Officer, VHO

When he arrived on scene and heard "excuse me, my friend is in the drain", VICSES member Justin Costello didn't believe what he was hearing.

**T**he 11-year-old boy, Jake, had been riding his bike when he was sucked into a submerged drain in Altona Meadows and washed 10-metres under the road. Managing to grab

onto a metal grate after his bike helmet caught on the structure, the boy was left fighting the powerful current to keep his head above water. Trapped and holding on for dear life.

"When it came up on the radio, I heard a boy was stuck on a gate, so didn't expect to see what I did," said Justin.

Arriving first on scene, followed by Victoria Police, VICSES Hobsons Bay Unit and with VICSES Essendon Unit en route, he acted quickly to unscrew the grates alongside a local Williamstown police officer. Thankfully his job in the State

Communications Unit meant he had an extensive socket set.

The police officer held onto Jake's hands ensuring he did not wash away, and the duo lifted the entire grate up. They pried his hypothermic hands off, which were still clinging to the underside, less than seven minutes after arriving on scene.

"Almost automatically after we pulled him out, I kicked





# Road rescue crews take to the skies during floods

By VICSES and CFA media teams

VICSES, Country Fire Authority (CFA), and Shepparton Search and Rescue adapted to the flood conditions across parts of Victoria by assembling a helicopter-based road crash rescue team to respond to incidents in isolated communities.

**A**n interim helicopter-based road crash rescue arrangement commenced on 20 October, ready to respond from Mangalore

airfield throughout the duration of the flood event.

These joint rescue services enhanced emergency service response and complemented ground crews, acting as a vital

service should crews need to respond to an incident in an isolated location with limited access.

VICSES Chief Officer Operations Tim Wiebusch said the service drew upon local VICSES and

CFA members with road crash rescue skills and qualifications.

"A multi-agency team of five members rotated through shifts to respond to locations across the state where roads may have been cut off, and communities isolated," he said.

"These members are highly skilled and trained to the same level, ready to respond quickly to the flood-affected communities that need their services for as long as these conditions last."

"Crews were equipped with the most effective, agile and lightweight battery-operated rescue equipment to allow for increased capability," he said.

CFA Chief Officer Jason Heffernan said the joint arrangement is another example of Victoria's volunteer emergency service organisations working together as one and putting community at the centre of everything they do.

"There are many communities across Victoria that were difficult to access on the ground, and the air-based road crash rescue team had the equipment required to fly over water and attend incidents on their own or provide support to ground crews when necessary."

The interim helicopter-based road crash rescue arrangement was first assembled in response to the 2019/20 bushfires, where many Victorian communities were isolated due to fire. ■

into making the scene safe," Justin said.

Paramedics treated the boy, and he was taken to hospital. His friend, also washed from his bike, managed to brace himself from getting sucked into the water.

"It just goes to show how treacherous and powerful floodwater can be. The force of the water was extraordinary, it's amazing to see how hard this boy worked to hold on, and that we have a good end result here" he said. ■







# Working as one during our Echuca deployment

By Philip Munslow, VICSES Malvern Unit Controller and Taskforce Commander, Eastern Region

In October, 23 VICSES volunteers from across the state including Gippsland and far west Victoria, came together for a six-day deployment to support Echuca during the flood emergency.

Crews were split into day and night shifts, working out of the local Incident Control Centre (ICC). Our VICSES volunteers worked together alongside members from the ICC, Country Fire Authority (CFA), Australian Defence Force Army and Navy, Victoria Police, the Department of Environment, Land and Planning, Fire Rescue Victoria, and Queensland SES boat crews from Brisbane and Townsville.

Despite wearing different uniforms, we worked as one – same skills, just different colours!

VICSES crews were tasked with responding to requests for sandbagging, rapid deployment to assist with levy or sandbag breaches, and helping out the local VICSES Echuca Unit in responding to other jobs. We also assisted the CFA with manning the 24 pumps scattered around the township.

One experience that stuck with me was the few hours we spent in Torrumbarry, which had experienced flooding from the heavy rainfall. We gathered with locals, who didn't live close to each other but came together to help each other out, and helped pump water from their properties. For many, a helping hand in fuelling their pump safely, where best to situate them, and how to keep an eye on where the water was headed, was much appreciated.

It's safe to say that after six days of 12-13 hours per day (most of it spent sandbagging!), we were exhausted.

***A huge thank you to everyone that was a part of this memorable experience. ■***





# A confronting reality in Echuca

By David Murphy, Media Officer, VHO



Echuca - a Yorta Yorta word meaning 'meeting of the waters' - lives up to its name; bound by the Campaspe River to its west flank, the mighty Murray to the north, woven in a knot with the Goulburn as it slowly arcs upstream, towards Barmah.

**T**his river system makes Echuca and its surrounding area flood-prone, with major floods affecting people, animals and property since records began in 1867. However, the severe flooding of the last months has been historic, topping out at 94.8m above sea level on 22 October, a couple of inches higher than in 1993.

During October, the residents of Echuca, and the 18 VICSES volunteers drawn from that community, worked night and day to manage the severe weather events throughout the month, the river rises and consequent inundation of the town, and to control the flow of water. Volunteers in the town laid over 195,000 sandbags in an attempt to buttress the levee.

The VICSES Echuca Unit found itself one of the busiest in the whole state, providing emergency assistance throughout the significant and extensive flooding rains, storms, and destructive winds. Of the 572 requests for assistance (RFAs) received by VICSES Echuca Unit since the beginning of the year, 532 have come since the start of October. Since the start of last month, RFAs have been mostly for flood-related incidents (330) with 27 technical rescues, and more than 20 calls to assist other agencies, including Victoria Police.

"I've been around floods before, and they go up and they go down in a few days, but this has been extraordinary," said VICSES Echuca Unit Controller Judi Cantwell.

"Seeing people being flooded, and the impact of that has been confronting. Losing your home and asking yourself, 'Where do I go? Where do I live? How do I get to an evacuation centre?' Your whole life is turned upside down. The resilience of the people of Echuca has been humbling" she said.

Of the 18 members at VICSES Echuca Unit, two are dual members with Country Fire Authority (CFA), and another three are with Echuca-Moama Search and Rescue, all of which are headquartered next door to each other, near Ambulance Victoria.

Judi credits her small unit's success to its effective working relationships with other emergency

responders, such as Life Saving Victoria (LSV) and the Australian Defence Force (ADF), as well as the CFA brigades in their response area.

"Watching LSV and ADF come in, and the number of people and organisations that came to help was remarkable. It makes you feel someone's caring about you, quite apart from the practical help, which is invaluable - it's good for the soul to see it," said Judi.

The resilience of Echuca has been ongoing, and we are truly grateful for the support of local VICSES members, partner agencies, and deployed members in supporting the Echuca community. ■



# VICSES Rochester Unit and local community pull together as entire town floods

By Dharni Giri, Senior Media and Publicity Advisor, VHO

When Rochester flooded in 2011, the odds of it happening again were one in one hundred.

**T**hen in October after heavy rainfall, the town was once again flooded with widespread damage reported.

The town sits on the Campaspe River; part of the Murray-Darling basin catchment. So, when a major flood occurs there can be a significant number of homes affected, as well as commercial properties, businesses, schools, and other community infrastructure. The 2011 flood swallowed 80% of the township.

This time around, the VICSES Rochester Unit and their crew of seven received over 350 requests for assistance (RFAs) from local community members. This included 204 floodwater joint rescue operations, undertaken in conjunction with local Country Fire Authority (CFA) brigades.

No property in the town was spared by the flooding, including the VICSES Rochester Unit facility, and the Rochester CFA Brigade facility. Unit members Judith Gledhill and Tim Williams performed the sector command roles, triaging emergency calls and setting priorities for teams on the ground. The rest of the volunteers worked throughout the response area.

In the days before the flood, unit volunteers fronted community meetings, attended by hundreds of town folk, and readied thousands of sandbags using mechanical fillers, and sometimes just a shovel.

The water level reached about 700mm at the local VICSES unit headquarters when it shorted out the floor-level power board. At the time, the VICSES crew were running two different radios to liaise with boat crews and divisional command to rescue people from

their homes. The power-cut forced Judith and Tim to evacuate on a fire truck and set up a new staging post at the sewage treatment plant.

The crews stayed out until dark, relieved by others who continued the rescue work throughout the night. The rescue operation continued the following morning, supported by CFA crews who travelled to impacted properties in their tanker trucks until it became unsafe to do so. An entire street had to be evacuated in a part of the town that had never been flooded before. VICSES volunteers were assisted by locals in their own boats, with the operation taking about 90 minutes.

For Judith, her most memorable moment came two weeks later at Elmore, as she waited in her vehicle at 4.30am for a swift water rescue team to reach a couple stranded atop their vehicle. It was then she noticed bubbles forming in the bitumen beneath her vehicle.

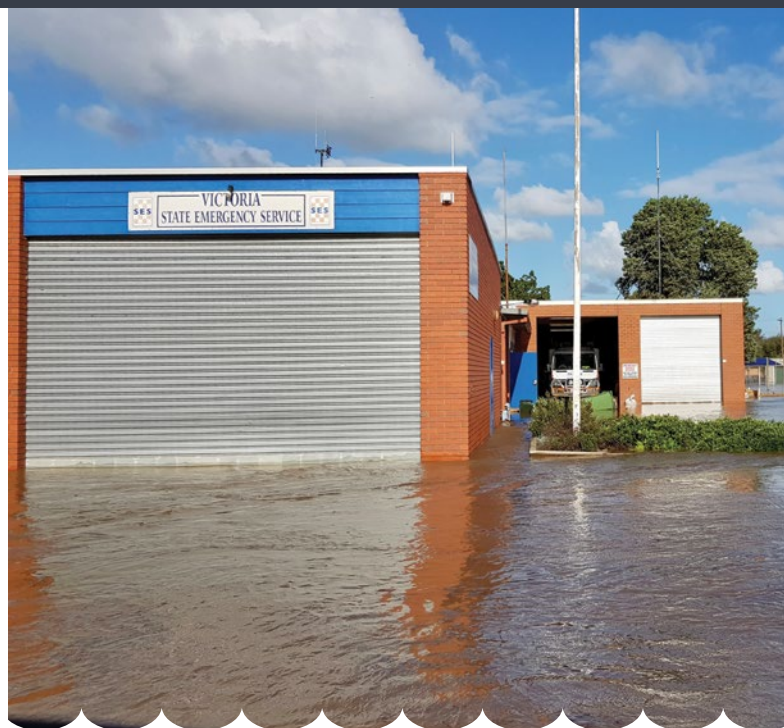
Judith and her crew were unable to reach the stranded vehicle as the water was too deep and too fast. The swift water rescue crew, activated from Bendigo, arrived 15 minutes later. Judith stayed, along with Victoria Police, in case

the swift water crew needed assistance unloading their boat.

As they waited, they had to move their vehicle three times, advising the Police to leave the scene to escape the rising water. At one point the bitumen rose in a huge bubble, which rolled away then disappeared.

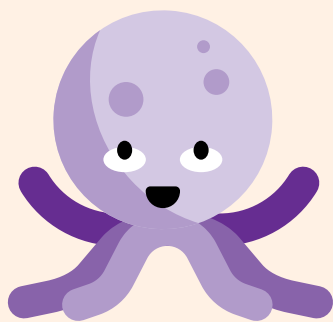
"I had never seen that before," Judith said.

Now facing the aftermath of the flood damage left behind, the local community and our local VICSES volunteers rally together, ensuring the community recovers stronger than ever. ■





## The heroic rescue of three girls and their purple octopus



By Cheyenne Keem, VICSES Section Leader Training - Tatura Unit, Eastern Region

No flood rescue is a positive one – however, we were involved in one particular rescue of three little girls who were separated from their family during the recent severe flooding.

**T**his rescue ended with the crew agreeing that ‘this is why we joined the service in the first place’.

The three young ladies were up in Shepparton spending quality time with their grandparents while their parents enjoyed a peaceful weekend. Unfortunately, the family had underestimated the emergency warnings.

Food in the home became scarce as the neighbourhood was surrounded by deep floodwater for days, and they had no means of obtaining food without a boat.

The family made the decision to request VICSES assistance to evacuate the children from the home and to their parents. The children’s parents had made their way to the Shepparton Relief Centre, and after some phone calls en route to verify the whereabouts and identity of the parents, we proceeded with the rescue.

The little girls donned life jackets and calmly sat in the rescue boat, explaining to the crew the dangers of floodwater.

Any rescue is extremely traumatic for all involved, but having these little ladies tell us that our yellow life jackets looked happy, while cuddling their squishy and soft purple octopus toy Violet, made it truly the most memorable rescue for those involved.

When we finally reunited the girls with their parents at the relief centre, tears of happiness were shed. A great outcome for everyone involved - including Violet the purple octopus! ■



## Alexandra Unit to the rescue

By Shannon Mitrow, VICSES Alexandra Unit Deputy Controller, Eastern Region

The October floods saw the biggest campaign for VICSES Alexandra Unit volunteers since the 2009 Victorian Bushfires, with 11 rescues (7 via boat), 37 tonnes of sandbags being laid in Thornton, and a further 15,000 sandbags distributed to residents with the help of Murrindindi Shire Council.

**W**ith Lake Eildon in our response area and living downstream on the Goulburn River, we received over 140 requests for assistance, including the rescue of a young Acheron family, their 5-month-old baby Ollie and their beloved pet dog and cat, after they were cut off by floodwaters.

We also assisted AusNet Services to reconnect power to Acheron after a vital power line fell next to the historic Acheron Breakaway Bridge, disconnecting over one hundred homes for two days.

The 100-year-old historical bridge suffered extensive damage with debris pushing against the bridge and flooding destroying the connecting roadway.

High angle and swift water VICSES volunteers assisted by gearing up to walk a new power line across the bridge, while AusNet Service personnel flew in via helicopter on the opposite side to catch the new power line cable.

VICSES Alexandra Unit Controller Peter Weeks also extensively campaigned to have Goulburn Murray Water releases from Lake Eildon to be included in the Bureau of Meteorology warnings, which thankfully started on 29 October.

We also had extensive assistance from VICSES Marysville and Mansfield Units, Yea Country Fire Authority (CFA), Alexandra CFA, as well as Thornton CFA and Eildon CFA - we could not have completed the calls for assistance without their unwavering support. ■



# Record flooding hits the Maribyrnong River

By Gabi Barkmeyer, Senior Advisor Corporate Communications and Brand, VHO

At 4:25am on Friday 14 October, residents of Maribyrnong (an inner-city suburb located in Melbourne), received an Emergency Alert text message asking them to evacuate due to flooding of the Maribyrnong River.

**I**n the days leading up to the event, 'Advice' and 'Watch and Act' flood warnings were issued for the Maribyrnong River on Tuesday 11 October and Thursday 13 October, with significant rainfall forecast for the catchment area. VICSES members also doorknocked around 150 at-risk properties in the Maribyrnong area to inform locals of the risk of flooding later that week.

Fast forward to the early hours of Friday morning, the Maribyrnong River began to rise rapidly from 4:00am, beginning to cause significant flooding of the surrounding residential area.

At-risk residents were once again door-knocked by VICSES and Victoria Police that morning, echoing the advice of the emergency text message to evacuate immediately.

Trained VICSES boat rescue crews from VICSES Footscray, Essendon, Pakenham and Monash Units successfully undertook 31 rescues in Maribyrnong that morning for residents who remained in the area, including over 60 people and some pets. Our volunteers were also supported by rescue crews from Life Saving Victoria, Fire Rescue Victoria, and Victoria Police.

"I'd never seen the Maribyrnong River flood so quickly – streets, vehicles, and homes were rapidly inundated by the fast-moving floodwater, giving local residents little time to leave their properties," said VICSES Essendon Unit Controller John Bates.

"Our VICSES volunteers did an amazing job despite the challenging environment – we really pulled together, and I couldn't be more proud of our efforts," continued John. ■







# Thank-you Kerang

By David Murphy, Media Officer, VHO

The community at Kerang have been preparing for a flood event like this for a long time.

**G**annawarra Shire has a history of flooding, including a significant flood event in January 2011 which impacted the townships of Quambatook, Kerang, and vast extents of rural areas resulting in extensive damage - the worst in a century.

VICSES Kerang Unit volunteers were out in force throughout this recent historic flood event, as part of a broader Emergency Management Team; triaging calls at the unit on a rotating 24-hour basis in coordination with the Incident Control Centre at Swan Hill.

**MANY  
THANKS**



Leading the response at the unit was VICSES Kerang Unit Controller, Glyndia Gee, OAM and her incredible team who were tireless in their efforts throughout the emergency.

VICSES Kerang Unit volunteers worked closely with Kerang Country Fire Authority (CFA) Brigade, Koondrook CFA Brigade, and Cohuna CFA Brigade, both inside the VICSES unit supporting sector command, and outside of the unit, filling and laying sandbags as well as responding to requests for assistance (RFAs).

10 volunteers from VICSES Kerang Unit worked with the community, with a further two volunteers working in shifts to triage calls, 24 hours a day. This included three members from VICSES Castlemaine Unit, who were seconded to provide further support.

When the big storm hit on 6 October just before the floods, VICSES Kerang Unit volunteers worked a total of 196 volunteer hours in one day, triaging and responding to calls, managing assets, and coordinating with other agencies.

Since then, VICSES Kerang Unit volunteers have responded to 190 RFAs from the community, including 165 for incidents relating to floodwater, 13 assisting other agencies - including Victoria Police, 7 for downed trees,



5 for building damage, 2 for technical rescue, and 1 for subsidence.

Since the start of their preparations for this event, the community at Kerang filled nearly 200,000 sandbags, the majority of which were used for individual households. Some have been used to reinforce the existing levee at Koondrook, and for the protection of critical infrastructure such as power and water assets.

At Kerang, every organised community group has come forward to help including Lions Clubs, football clubs, Ladies' Auxiliaries, Red Cross, and even local schools. People volunteered their time with machinery to move or unload sandbags.

Any Victorian town would be fortunate to have such an incredible turnout in its time of need, and every Victorian should be proud of Kerang and the leadership of Glyndia. ■



# Wild South West weather: We work as one

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



In the after-action review, the resounding theme was a sense of community. Everyone was able to band together during the time of need, whether that be local Warrnambool company Hire Australia, which provided a telehandler to load sandbags onto a semi-trailer, or the local employers who continued to pay volunteers contributing

their time to the operation. This demonstration of community resilience and preparedness meant that the impacts of the flood were drastically lessened.

This flood event showed the best of community spirit, learning from experience and true collaboration.

Well done to all involved in this enormous operation. ■

The strength and power of community spirit in the south west of Victoria is truly astounding.

**M**id-October, the VICSES Port Fairy Unit joined forces with the VICSES Warrnambool Unit, Country Fire Authority, Forest Fire Management Victoria, Victoria Police, local council, and several other VICSES units from the Barwon South West Region, to respond to the flood event in Panmure and Allansford.

For Stephen McDowell, VICSES Port Fairy Unit Controller, Friday the 14 of October started like any other day. He got up and went to work, with no idea that 45 minutes after a call from the Regional Duty Officer at 11:00am, he would be running a Divisional Command point divided into two sectors - Allansford and Panmure - for the next five days.

The Hopkins River and Mount Emu Creek was predicted to peak at 2011 levels or possibly higher. Bill Faucett and Hannah Morris each took on a role of Sector Commander. The Incident Control Centre (ICC) was based out of Geelong.

The community was understandably concerned at the potential of having a flood event like they had experienced in 2011. Steve did a remarkable job at being transparent about the situation and urged the locals to prepare. He utilised his wealth of flood experience (including experience at the 2011 event) to prepare

the community for the flood. Community members were utilised for local knowledge and to assist in filling sandbags which enabled far better preparation in comparison to the 2011 flood event.

Over the five days, there were three town meetings organised and over 110 people in attendance at each meeting. This is a large feat considering the small populations. The Moyne Shire and FitzMedia (a local media production company) livestreamed the meeting via their Facebook channels. Steve held three media updates per day broadcast by FitzMedia that enabled the other media outlets to gather information collectively, rather than constantly asking operational personnel about the rapidly changing situation.



## Tropical downpour drenches Yarra Valley

By Shaun Caulfield, VICSES Lilydale Unit Controller, Eastern Region



On 25 October, Lilydale Unit was impacted by a freak storm cell, dumping over 75mm of rain in 60 minutes.



# Rain, rain, and more rain!

By Leanne Klammer, VICSES Kinglake Unit Controller, Eastern Region

Like most of the state, Kinglake and the surrounding areas were severely impacted by the ridiculously wet weather.

**F**or us it started around dinner time on Wednesday 12 October. The weather gods were particularly kind to us - throwing in some gale force winds just to make it a more interesting night!

Kinglake is a small country town with a population of approximately 1,600. Our unit has a modest volunteer number: 24 members, with 19 being active. At the time of writing this article we had received over 70 calls for assistance, with almost all of them being attended by our members.

Most calls were for flooding - both flash flooding and riverine. Others were for trees down causing traffic hazards, landslides, damaged and impassable roads, dam incidents and inland water rescues. We filled and laid approximately 700 sandbags, which might not sound like a lot compared to many other units in the north, but for us, it's a big number. One of the challenges we had was getting enough sand to fill the bags.

During the second week of the weather event our unit continued to receive calls, as well as helping at other units and areas. Andrew Derwent and I were asked to travel to Shepparton to be an OIIMS operator and a radio operator at the Divisional Command Point based at Shepparton Search and Rescue.

A couple of our members were based at Mangalore Airport as part of the fly-in/fly-out road crash rescue crew to provide assistance to the north-eastern flooded area for road crashes, farming and industrial accidents, rail incidents, and more. Another of our members was sent north as a Community Engagement Facilitator.

As the Unit Controller, I couldn't be prouder of the members in our unit. They all in their own ways went above and beyond from the very first pager call, assisting our local communities and communities further north. ■



At one stage, our unit rain gauge was maxed out, showing its highest readable amount of 120mm per hour, or 2mm of rain per minute! With the ground already saturated from recent rains, flash flooding was inevitable.

VICSES Lilydale Unit alone received over 120 calls for assistance in 90 minutes, including 24 water rescue events for people trapped in cars or houses by rising floodwaters. Over the 24-hour period that followed, 220 requests for assistance (RFAs) were received.

In an average year, this would equate to around a fifth of our yearly call volume.

Mobilising all available unit resources, further assistance was received from VICSES Emerald, Monash, Manningham, and Whitehorse Units. All up, 10 vehicles and a total of 72 personnel (including 41 from the Lilydale Unit) were active in the area across a wide range of tasks, ranging from water-based rescues, sand bagging, building damage, and

assisting vulnerable community members to relocate.

Some of our crews were also tasked with assessing the extent of flooding in vulnerable areas, removing trees from roads, and evaluating several landslides; many of which were in fact not landslides, but gravel washed down from driveways and gravel roads onto major thoroughfares due to the volume of rain.

In the next few days, the unit was kept busy with three serious road

crashes (including one fatality), three more water rescue events, managing numerous requests for sandbags, as well as a tree that came down, rupturing a gas main in the process.

Over the period 12 October - 30 November Lilydale Unit received 540 RFAs, including 17 flood rescues, 214 flood related incidents, 239 trees down and 32 building damage incidents. Overall, a very busy few months for the unit, to say the least! ■



## FEATURES

# Your photos from the field



Echuca Unit



Whitehorse Unit



Echuca Unit



Epsom Incident Control Centre





Castlemaine Unit



Malvern Unit



Port Philip Unit



Seymour Unit



Bellarine Unit



# Your photos from the field



Kinglake Unit



Echuca



Castlemaine Unit



Frankston Unit



Footscray Unit



Castlemaine Unit





Essendon Unit



Kingslake Unit



Frankston Unit



Alexandra Unit



Castlemaine Unit





## OPERATIONAL UPDATES

# InterSchutz 2022

By Mark Cattell, Assistant Chief Officer Readiness, VHO

The Interschutz 2022 trade fair is recognised as the world's leading trade fair for fire and rescue services, civil protection, safety, and security.

**T**his year, an opportunity was provided for two volunteer members and two staff members to attend the event located in Hanover, Germany. Volunteers were selected by a panel from nominated members from the regions. VICSES Whittlesea Unit Controller Gary Doorbar and VICSES Morwell Unit Controller Raelene Billingsley were chosen to attend, alongside VICSES Assets Team member Ben Geurts and Assistant Chief Officer Readiness Mark Cattell from Operations.

Prior to leaving Australia, several meetings were arranged with stands that were areas of interest for the service. This included online systems for incident management, like our current Operational Incident Management System (OIMS). The availability of OIMS systems were not as comprehensive, although several of the companies engaged did discuss potential to be interested in developing a suitable system. Part of the challenge was that there was a limited availability of people with sufficient language skills to understand exactly what was needed.

Despite COVID-19 impacts, the 2022 after-show report outlined that there were still more than 1,300 exhibitors, over 2,600 products and solutions, and 85,000 visitors from 61 countries.



***It was an awesome experience to attend, I was like a kid in a toy shop. So much to see and try out, it was great to watch the Holmatro Rescue Challenge and see some world class teams work on brand new BMWs," said VICSES Morwell Unit Controller Raelene Billingsley.***

"To be selected to represent VICSES over there was certainly the pinnacle of my career as an SES Volunteer" continued Raelene.

The members who attended would like to acknowledge the service for providing this opportunity to represent VICSES at the event. All members have taken away a huge amount of knowledge and are willing to share at any opportunity, to ensure any interested parties are aware of the value of attending this event. ■





## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

# VICSES takes on the Melbourne Royal Show



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

Most of us associate the Melbourne Royal Show with fairy floss, show bags, rides and show ponies. This year, VICSES joined the fun with an interactive stall, smiling cheek-to-cheek and engaging with the community.

**F**rom 22 September - 2 October, around 500,000 show-goers stormed through the gates of the Melbourne Showgrounds to enjoy the festivities, after a two-year hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our 15 To Float message took centre stage as part of an augmented reality touchscreen, giving the community an opportunity to test their knowledge of the dangers of driving through floodwaters. This sparked conversations about

flood and storm preparedness and response, informally educating the community about VICSES and how we help the community during a flood event.

When the sugar high came crashing down, our kids colouring station proved to be a refuge for exhausted parents to rest their feet, providing an opportunity for our members to casually chat about VICSES and recruitment. The true measurement of a successful event is always evident in the VICSES kid's truck, which is a crowd favourite among the little ones.

A special mention to all our volunteers for giving up their time to cover over 100 shifts during the 11-day event. No amount of coloured popcorn and flavoured liquorice will be enough to express our gratitude for their endless commitment and time. Thank you. ■



## PROJECTS – WHAT'S NEW

# VPS Pride Award win for VICSES Moe Unit

By Erin Hegerty, Senior Organisational Development Advisor, VHO

A huge congratulations to VICSES Moe Unit and Controller Jason Clough, who was awarded the prestigious 'Regional Pride Initiative of the Year' award at the 2022 Victorian Public Sector (VPS) Pride Awards on 26 August.



Jason has pioneered the Eastern Region LGBTIQ+ Collective Pride Pilot Project, which has organised several networking and collaborative events across Gippsland. These events are designed to bring together partner emergency service agencies and community groups to better include, support, and ally with local LGBTIQ+ community members. This award is recognition of the great steps being made by Jason and the Eastern Region LGBTIQ+ Collective, to develop more impactful diversity and inclusion initiatives across the service.

The VPS Pride Awards are given out each year to VPS members who make a significant contribution to creating a more inclusive public sector. Jason received the award on behalf of the unit on the award night, supported by his fellow VICSES members in attendance.

"I was incredibly humbled and totally surprised to have won this category and received this amazing award for VICSES Moe Unit and VICSES respectively. We have only barely scratched the surface in terms of the steady progress we have made so far, but this is a fantastic achievement to have been especially recognised

for our work so early on. There's still plenty more to come, so all I can say is watch this exciting space," said Jason.

VICSES Assistant Chief Officer Anthony Mclean also offered his support for the unit's initiative.

"We are very proud to support the pride initiative in Gippsland, and see this as an incredible

opportunity to create a more diverse volunteer base which truly reflects the communities we live in. The award is great evidence this initiative is on the right track at the right moment in time," said Anthony.

Our thanks and best wishes to Jason and to all members who are working to build a better and more inclusive VICSES.



If you are interested in supporting the great work being done, or are looking at developing something similar for your region, please reach out to Erin from the VICSES People and Organisational Development team at [people@ses.vic.gov.au](mailto:people@ses.vic.gov.au). ■

## Gippsland embarks on multicultural project

By Ola Salako, Community Resilience Coordinator, Eastern Region

VICSES members in Gippsland have embarked on a multicultural project to increase awareness of our services and improve the relationship with Cultural and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities.

According to the Gippsland Regional Growth Plan, the region is projected to have a population of 345,888 by 2031. Newer community members are moving into towns like Morwell, Moe, Churchill, Bairnsdale, Sale, Warragul and Drouin.

The new community residents are made up of healthcare workers, bankers, farmers, engineers and many more. Most of these new residents speak English as a second language and are unaware of their vulnerability to natural hazards and the potential impacts of climate change in

this region. This disadvantage might affect their ability to access, interpret and respond to emergency warnings.

Language and cultural barriers are significant challenges in communicating disaster risks to migrants and CALD communities

and steps have been developed to reduce these disadvantages.

Community information sessions have now rolled out – and we have more steps coming. Stay tuned! ■



# Samples collected for floodwater contamination research

By Dharni Giri, Senior Media and Publicity Advisor, VHO

VICSES is working alongside the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) and Natural Hazards Research Australia, to better understand and characterise possible contamination issues that may be presented by Victoria's continuing flood emergency.

**A**cross Victoria, VICSES members collected samples of floodwater from impacted regions and waterways to further understand the level of risk to human health and the environment. VICSES Chief Officer Operations Tim Wiebusch said the results of this study will be "critical for emergency services and the EPA to inform community messaging and guidance for key impacted areas on the risks of floodwater contamination."

The EPA prioritised testing samples for bacteria and a range of trace elements (such as metals and metalloids) and contaminants (organic chemicals such as pesticides). Water samples were collected over the course of three weeks, with results being made available as soon as possible, along with any necessary health advice.

"We treat all floodwater as contaminated, and this testing will give us a greater understanding of what the state-wide picture looks like" said EPA Chief Environmental Scientist Professor Mark Taylor.

"Our testing of the Maribyrnong River flood waters showed a better result than was expected and hopefully that will be the same in our regions, but our advice remains the same, that you should avoid contact with floodwaters where possible."

The partnership with Natural Hazards Research Australia will ensure results are shared nationally with emergency services, helping to inform communities and emergency services regarding the dangers of entering floodwater.

According to Natural Hazards Research Australia CEO Andrew Gissing, "partnerships like this between scientists and practitioners are vital to improve knowledge for the benefit of our communities." ■



## Skills Maintenance Features in the Training Portal

By Keith Mitchell, Learning and Development Program Maintenance and Development Officer, VHO

Skills maintenance within VICSES are activities that keep members current and practiced in their formal training, supplementing acquired operational experience and knowledge.

They can be presented in two ways:

1. Skills Maintenance, as a scripted activity to represent a simulated operational experience or repetitive practice of activities used to carry out tasks, usually through exercises or competition.
2. Skills Extension, as additional training to build further knowledge from the original training.

The Portal on the Hub has recently been updated to include a Skills Maintenance access button on the landing page.

The new button gives members access to a number of Skills Maintenance activities initially centred around the Crew Member, Road Rescue, Rescue Boat and Land Based Swift Water Rescue specialised roles.

Members are encouraged to review these initial activities and if appropriate, run them as a unit activity.

By agreement with regions, there will now be an option for units to record some skills maintenance activities in the Training Portal. This is an initial step towards wider use of skills maintenance and linkages to role pathways and will assist Learning and

Development to evaluate the systems and process needed.

The skills maintenance activities that can be recorded in this initial release are:

- Road Rescue
- Crew Member

Units will find a skills maintenance attendance summary form within the new section in the Training Portal for the Road Rescue and Crew Member pathways.

Recognising that many units are already very active with skills maintenance, the Learning and Development team are asking members to share their Skills Maintenance suggestions or to share existing unit activities across all specialty roles to expand on this initial portfolio. ■



### More information

Please contact the Learning and Development team at [training@ses.vic.gov.au](mailto:training@ses.vic.gov.au) for further information.



## WELLBEING, HEALTH & SAFETY



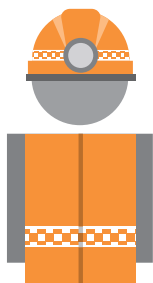
# Step It Up 2022: Round Up

By Alison Wright, Health & Wellbeing Team, VHO

It was our first *Step it Up* out of lockdown since 2019, and our teams took advantage of some good September weather to get out stepping with each other.

Once more, our Health and Wellbeing Facebook page lit up with pictures and stories of our *Step it Up* participants out and about, in the process of accumulating a massive total of 214 million steps!

This year we had over 750 people taking part to form 76 teams and represent 69 units. We set a goal for teams to participate in a parkrun to celebrate the final weekend of the challenge and the response was huge – with VICSES representing at 17 parkruns across the state.



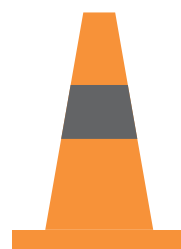
## Workplace inspections

Oct 2020 –  
Sept 2021

203

Oct 2021 –  
Sept 2022

268



## Injuries

Oct 2020 –  
Sept 2021

127

Oct 2021 –  
Sept 2022

126



**Congratulations to everyone who took part, including the winners of our team categories:**

**Small Team  
(2-5 members):**

**VICES NARRE  
WARREN UNIT**

**Medium Team  
(6-15 members):**

**VICES  
BENALLA UNIT**

**Large Team  
(16+ members):**

**VICES NILLUMBIK UNIT**

**Biggest Stepper Overall:**

**SYLVIO SEEBORUTH,  
VICES NARRE WARREN UNIT**

**Most Valuable Player  
Overall:**

**CAT SALTER, RED HOT  
CHILLI STEPPERS – VICES  
TORQUAY UNIT**

**Most Improved Overall:**

**CHARLOTTE DOWNS,  
TEAM HORSHAM – VICES  
HORSHAM UNIT**



For all results, see the *Step it Up* page on the Hub under **My State > Health and Wellbeing > Events > Step it Up** ■

**VICTORIAN FLOODS:**

# Mental health and wellbeing support services



By Rachel Treeby, Manager Wellbeing Services and Support, VHO

Floods affect people all over Australia, and the impact on communities and emergency service personnel can be long lasting.

**A**t VICES, we are committed to supporting all our members and their families. The recent flooding throughout Victoria has been an extremely difficult experience for many, including emergency service personnel who may experience a range of challenging thoughts, feelings, or behaviours.

We have extra support and services available if you, or someone you know, would like to get in contact.

VICES Peer Support is available 24/7 for volunteers and their families. Phone **1800 899 927**, select Option 3, provide your region number, and ask for VICES Peer Support to leave your contact details.

VICES Psychologists are here to provide support to all members of the organisation. You can contact the Mental Health Duty Officer on **0419 354 309**.

The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is available to all staff, volunteers, and their families. EAP provides short-term and solutions focused counselling which

aims to support and empower employees and family members through a variety of best practice counselling approaches to assist in resolving personal and work-based issues. Visit the website at **convergeinternational.com.au** or contact Converge International on **1300 687 327**.

Your GP is often a good place to start, too. Consider discussing how you are feeling with your GP, as they can provide treatment or refer you to other services that can support your wellbeing.

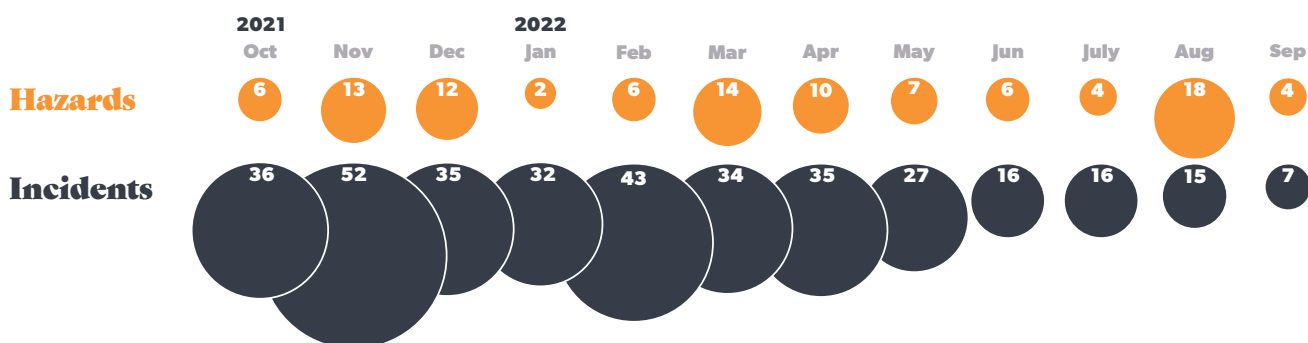


## More information

Free services are also available 24/7, including:

- Lifeline on **13 11 14** or **lifeline.org.au**
- BeyondBlue on **1300 224 636** or **beyondblue.org.au**
- MensLine on **1300 78 99 78** or **mensline.org.au** ■

## YEAR AT A GLANCE



## CAMPAIGNS AND EVENTS



# Worthwhile experience for all at the NDRC in Western Australia

By Karen Biggelaar, VICSES Ballarat Unit, Western Region

What an amazing experience it was participating in the 2022 National Disaster Rescue Challenge (NDRC)!

**V**ICSES Ballarat Unit was very pleased to have a team represent VICSES at this year's NDRC dubbed 'Exercise Fault Line', based on the scenario of an earthquake impacting the inner suburbs of Perth.

Our team consisted of new and experienced NDRC competitors, older and younger members, those with a great deal of

experience, and members with lesser experience. It was my first experience at the NDRC and I fell into the older member with lesser experience category, so trying out and making the team was an exciting adventure for me.

Our team was drawn from different VICSES Ballarat Unit crews, so with additional weekly training, we had the opportunity to get to know each other, build our teamwork,

hone our skills, and prepare for the competition stands.

The challenge consisted of twelve stands - our first involved rescuing two injured workers who had been repairing a high playground, so manoeuvrability in the confined play space was an additional challenge! The second included trapped casualties under a shipping container along with a vehicle with a wheel removed. Some of the complications of this stand included no jack, flat tyres, missing wheel nuts, and an additional casualty locked in the shipping container.

Another of our stands involved boats and getting our feet wet.

We were searching for and rescuing a person who had been seen swimming away from their sinking boat. Most stands involved search and navigation, although the one that I found most challenging was based on the Christchurch earthquake with multiple casualties requiring assistance. They had set the stand up with sound impacts in mind; a trapped dog barking, casualty cries, and phones ringing. The sounds, along with convincing injury makeup, made the scene very realistic.

At the end of the weekend, our Victorian team came in at sixth place; ahead of Northern Territory and Tasmania, and only 11 points





behind our Western Australia (WA) hosts. The winning team was Queensland, who also took out the honours for the Team Leader and First Aid Awards.

I was really pleased with our VICSES team's efforts - we completed five out of eight of the stands within the allotted time, and we didn't receive any penalties from judges' STOP calls. I was particularly proud of how we worked so well as a team; even when we were hot, tired and under pressure.

Personally, I was out of my comfort zone during this experience. However, I felt fully supported at all times during the training and

the event thanks to the amazing individuals who formed together to create our fun and professional team. Thank you also to our Team Leader Craig West and Team Manager Gordon Hicks for all their support and encouragement. I have been challenged and have come through with more confidence and a greater appreciation of how much we can achieve when we work effectively together!

I think that I can speak on behalf of the team and thank our WA hosts, VICSES, and everyone who supported our team to train and compete in the NDRC. It really was an outstanding learning experience for us all. ■



**TEAM MEMBERS:**  
**BEN LYNCH, CRAIG WEST,**  
**DREW HOLST, ELISE ASHFIELD,**  
**GORDON HICKS, KAREN BIGGELAAR,**  
**PIPER SARGENT & TRENT OLDAKER**



# MEDIA

1 July -  
30 September 2022

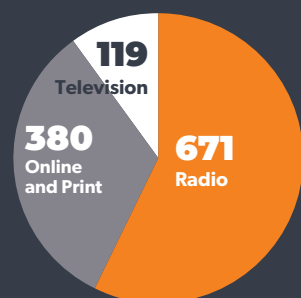
## Campaigns and events:

- Emergency Services Blood Challenge
- Deployments into NSW to assist with flood response

## Media releases:

- South-west volunteers deployed to NSW - 9 July
- Gippsland volunteers deployed to NSW - 9 July
- Volunteers from Macedon deployed to support NSW - 9 July
- South Barwon Unit to compete in Australasian Rescue Challenge - 15 July
- Bendigo Unit to compete in Australasian Rescue Challenge - 15 July
- Preparation key as cold front approaches - 2 August
- New home opens for VICSES Chiltern Unit volunteers - 6 August
- Are you flood ready this high-risk weather season? - 30 August
- VICSES volunteers take part in multi-agency evacuation scenario – Exercise Walkaway - 31 August
- VICSES led community information sessions to help locals prepare for a wet spring - 28 September
- VICSES volunteers see spike in floodwater rescues overnight - 28 September

## Mentions of VICSES in the news:



## Social media highlights:



**FACEBOOK**

**Impressions:**  
**6,045,828**

**Engagement:**  
**227,635**

17/9/22: A magnitude 2.4 earthquake reported in Port Phillip Bay near Frankston.



**TWITTER**

**Impressions:**  
**788,256**

**Engagement:**  
**12,209**

3/7/22: A magnitude 2.8 earthquake was recorded near Phillip Island.

**INSTAGRAM**

**Impressions:**  
**105,613**

**Engagement:**  
**3,361**



20/7/22: VICSES Bendigo and South Barwon Units representing VICSES in the 2022 Australasian Rescue Challenge.



**LINKEDIN**

**Impressions:**  
**59,449**

**Engagement:**  
**4,133**

10/8/22: Mural in Melbourne city-centre of Anita from VICSES Craigieburn Unit.



## MEET THE TEAM: KRYSTAL BUCKLE

**Welcome Krystal! Can you tell us a bit about your experience prior to VICSES?**

It's great to be here! Prior to VICSES, I worked overseas as a Communications Advisor for the Sexual Violence Research Initiative, based out of South Africa. Seeing how non-government organisations build and grow their platforms through communications was a valuable experience for me, particularly during the pandemic. Before this, I was part of the international policy and communications team at the Department of Defence in Canberra.

**Why are you passionate about media and communications?**

For me, communications is storytelling at its best. I have always been curious about how people tell stories and share their knowledge - and then express them. Growing up, I was a big fan of books as a means of 'travel', and I love how communications such as a feature article or even a quote can provide an escape (however small it may be) for people all over the world.

**What are you most excited for in your new role?**

Being part of such a diverse and unique organisation, I'm really looking forward to showcasing the stories that come from our units and volunteers alongside the media and communications team. On my end, it's fascinating to read the articles sent in by volunteers and to seek them out. I grew up in South Australia, so I know that I've also got a bit to learn about Victoria.

**What can we find you doing in your spare time?**

Normally, I enjoy getting out in nature and working on my French language skills. Coming into summer, I also can't wait to explore more of Victoria and enjoy the warmer weather. ■



# INFORMATION SERVICES (IS) UPDATE

## New Volunteer After-Hours Service Desk

The VICSES Information Systems team are pleased to announce the commencement of the Volunteer After-Hours Service Desk from Monday 31 October.

**A**fter the completion of a successful three-month trial and positive feedback from members, the Volunteer After-Hours Service Desk will now be a permanent feature.

Volunteers can call the Service Desk on 1300 737 101 during the following hours to receive support for VICSES IT-related issues.

**MONDAY TO  
THURSDAY**

**8:00am – 9:00pm**

**FRIDAY**

**8:00am – 5:00pm**

**SATURDAY**

**10:00am – 3:00pm**

The Information Systems Duty Officer will be available for urgent issues outside of these hours.



### More information

Support requests can also be emailed to the Service Desk at any time at [ictservice@ses.vic.gov.au](mailto:ictservice@ses.vic.gov.au) ■

## Meet the team: Danielle Bellinger

**Hi Danielle – welcome to the team!**

**Can you tell us a bit about your new role at VICSES?**

Thank-you, it is great to be joining the IS team at VICSES in the newly created role of 'Business Support Coordinator'. My role will be to support and coordinate the various activities of the team, as well as work on projects with other teams, ultimately endeavouring to support the volunteer network and make a positive impact. I hope to do this by providing timely, helpful, and practical assistance wherever is needed.

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

I am most looking forward to going out to our regional hubs, meeting lots of new people, and having an opportunity to develop my project management skills.

**What makes you passionate about working as part of our emergency services sector?**

I am passionate about helping others and doing work that is meaningful. I hope I will be able to make a positive impact in my professional life working for VICSES.

**Outside of work, how do you like to unwind?**

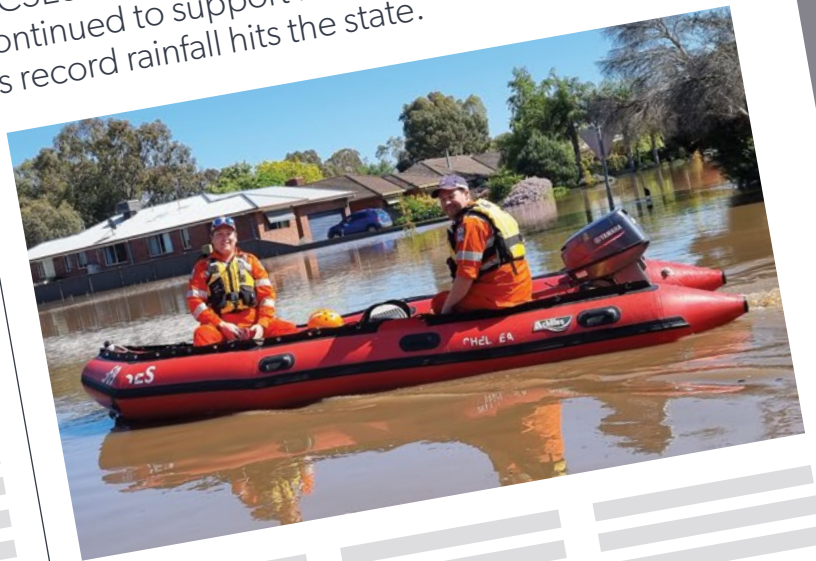
I enjoy walking my dog, and in summer love a day at the beach. My three children also play sports, and I enjoy watching their games and volunteering for the clubs. I also am a passionate home cook and don't mind a cheese board and a glass of wine on the weekend. Lastly, Go Demons! ■





# HEROES IN ORANGE SAVE THE DAY

VICSES volunteers from across Victoria have continued to support flood affected communities, as record rainfall hits the state.



*Thank you all, for your  
work in keeping our  
communities safe – together.*