



Capacity
Collaboration
Connections

VICSES Community Resilience Strategy
Year Three Outcomes Report

June 2020

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The Victoria State Emergency Service would like to respectfully acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land throughout Victoria and acknowledge their ancestors and elders, both past and present.



Acknowledgements

This report was developed by the VICSES Community Resilience and Communications Team in consultation with volunteers and staff (Our People) and a wide range of stakeholders. VICSES greatly appreciates all contributions.



Foreword



I'm very pleased to release our results from the third year of the implementation of the Victoria State Emergency Service (VICSES) Community Resilience Strategy 2016-19 (the Strategy), namely the 2018-19 financial year (Year Three).

Key highlights this year include initiatives undertaken through partnerships to build on the community engagement framework as a step-by-step approach for VICSES community safety programs.

Although we made significant progress throughout the three-year term of the 2016-19 Strategy, we acknowledge there is more work to be done to ensure communities are prepared and know what to do before, during and after emergency events.

I am pleased to advise that we will be extending this approach through the delivery of the VICSES Community Resilience Strategy Renewal 2019-22 (Strategy Renewal). The Strategy Renewal extends the Strategy for a further term of three years, and provides guidance to Our People on how we can work together to build safer and more resilient communities.

We thank our volunteers, staff, communities and partners for their collaboration in these activities during Year Three and look forward to your continued support over the next three years and beyond.

Stephen Griffin

Chief Executive Officer
Victoria State Emergency Service

Purpose

The Year Three Outcomes Report presents some of the key highlights, activities and outcomes of the Strategy's implementation during the period of 2018-19. The report measures our achievements against the Strategic Objectives and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), and is intended to support continuous improvement of programs and initiatives during the lifetime of the Strategy.

Background

Community engagement has long been part of our work at VICSES. As such, the Strategy is not so much a new direction for VICSES, but a reaffirmation and strengthening of what VICSES has always done as a community-based volunteer organisation.

The Strategy provides guidance to Our People on how we can develop positive partnerships and work together to build safer and more resilient communities, while remaining accountable through timely, effective reporting to the Victorian Government.

The Strategy enables Our People to support communities to better understand the full scale of emergency events by:

- Building competency in knowing what to do in the future – **Believe they know how to do it.**
- Increasing individual capacity and capability to respond – **Believe they can do it.**
- Increasing awareness of their role, and the role of VICSES and others in the community – **Believe everyone has a role to play.**
- Realising the positive outcomes and relevance of preparing for future emergencies – **Believe it will make a difference.**

This approach will support the long-term vision of the VICSES Service Delivery Strategy 2025 for contributing to safer and more resilient communities, by providing sector leadership on building stronger community connectivity and better engagement practices.

Benefits of community resilience

For the purposes of the Strategy launched in July 2016, VICSES adopted Emergency Management Victoria's (EMV) definition of a resilient community, as outlined in *A Modern Emergency Management System for Victoria* (October 2015).

In the Community Resilience Framework for Emergency Management released in April 2017, EMV updated this definition to, "the ability to survive, adapt and thrive no matter what kind of chronic stresses and acute shocks experienced"¹.

¹ Community Resilience Framework for Emergency Management, Emergency Management Victoria 2017





A disaster resilient community is one in which people work together with emergency services, local authorities and other organisations to understand and manage the risks that may affect them. This approach is supported by the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030² (of which Australia is a signatory) and the National Strategy for Disaster Resilience (2011)³

²Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030
National Strategy for Disaster Resilience, Council of Australian Governments, 2011

Strategic objectives, goals and outcomes

The Strategy aligns with VICSES' corporate intent, and includes a set of strategic objectives, goals and outcomes (see Figure 1) to ensure the approach is embedded in all VICSES activities, plans, programs and systems.



Figure 1 VICSES Community Resilience Strategy – objectives, goals and outcomes.



The focus for VICSES is to develop a resilient Victorian community that knows what to do before, during, and after an emergency, and to build stronger connections between Victorians and the services, systems and structures that support them.

This approach, which includes building the capability of Our People, supports activity that is community-driven with the goal of equipping communities to be better prepared to take ownership of their priorities and needs in a way that is meaningful to them; promoting 'shared responsibility' and a reduced reliance on emergency services when future disasters strike.

Implementation methodology

Implementation of the Strategy is pivotal in order for VICSES to deliver on our legislative obligations as control agency for flood, storm, earthquake, tsunami and landslide hazards in Victoria.



These hazards encompass 74% of the total cost of emergencies in the State, compared to bushfire which equates to 26%.

Stronger organisational investment in resilience supports VICSES to:

- Apply effort to reducing the impact and consequences of emergencies.
- Build knowledge and support tools for resilience-related activities.
- Utilise innovative and emerging practices.
- Foster a continuous learning culture.

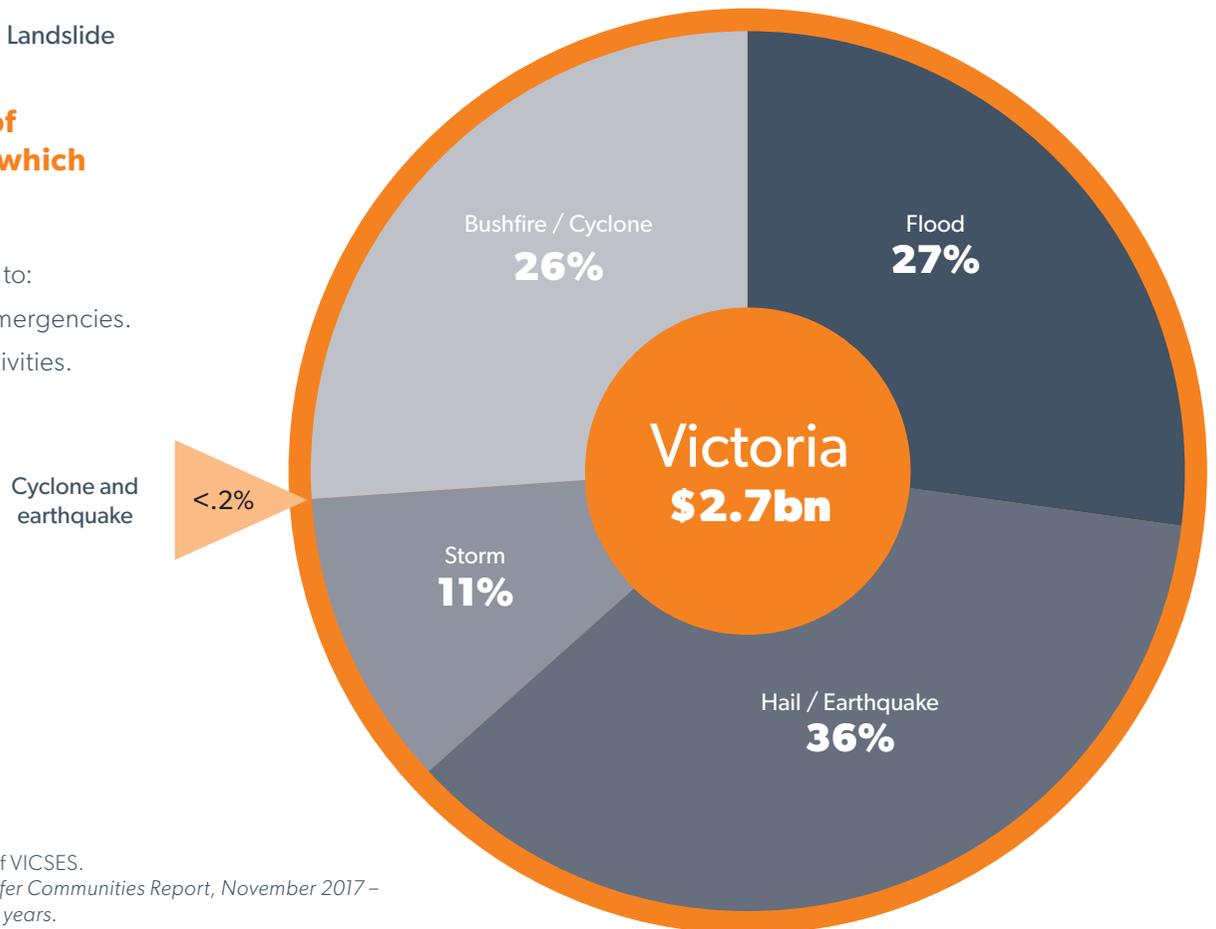


Figure 2 Economic cost of natural disasters to Victoria and value contribution of VICSES.
Source: Australian Business Roundtable for Disaster Resilience and Safer Communities Report, November 2017 – average economic cost of natural disasters in Victoria over the past 10 years.

⁴ Australian Business Roundtable for Disaster Resilience & Safer Communities Report, November 2017 - average economic cost of natural disasters in Victoria over the past 10 years.a

Focus areas for implementation

VICSES continued to adopt the implementation blueprint introduced in Years One and Two, structured according to two distinct focus areas:

- 1. Corporate management:** The internal processes, training (skills and knowledge) and controls required to ensure adequate and comprehensive policies, procedures and methodologies that exist for rolling out, recording and tracking community resilience-related activities for performance, including adequacy of training for those responsible for implementation.
- 2. Community and partners:** To support the delivery of well-researched, viable and localised community and partner activities for VICSES service delivery based on the Strategy's three strategic objectives, including emergency management planning, community risk, engagement and public information programs and activities.



Figure 3 Implementation blueprint.



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Corporate management

Community resilience is a prominent feature within the VICSES Strategic Plan 2018-22. Fundamental Goal 3 within that plan advocates that 'We will work with and empower the community to build confidence and resilience.'

This is driven by initiative 3.2 to 'Mainstream community resilience through our services, structure and systems.'

The commitments pledged by VICSES within the Strategic Plan include:

- Adoption of contemporary approaches to service delivery and capability building of our people and the Victorian community, along with the services, systems and structures that support them.
- Collaboration with community and partners to provide local services to meet local needs; to developing resilient communities through the development of strong connections, community partnerships and agile operating models – helping to keep all Victorians safe before, during and after, and reduce the consequences of, emergencies.
- Reviewing our progress annually to realise opportunities, inform decisions and positively influence the focus and direction of what we have committed to, to achieve better visibility of our performance.

Systems and structures

Capability of Our People is critical to the delivery and evaluation of our programs and resources for community resilience. This includes clarity on roles and accountabilities, to ensure successful delivery of the overall intent and desired outcomes of the Strategy.

A number of initiatives were undertaken during Year Three to improve the systems and structures in place for member to achieve clear, simple and effective communication together.

Community Engagement Program Framework

Building on the development of the Community Engagement Program Framework during Year Two of the Strategy, Year Three saw implementation and further refinement of the framework after consultation with our volunteers and partners. The framework brings together multiple evidence-based disciplines to achieve a step-by-step approach for community engagement programs.

The framework helps step our volunteers through a replicable process when they are looking to engage with communities. Importantly, the framework clearly links program objectives with helpful behaviour change for emergency preparedness. The framework ensures the target audience is identified, and key messages and calls to action are kept simple and specific. Further, meaningful engagement is created through the three steps of (1) attention, (2) interest and (3) intent. Lastly, success is generated through reporting on not only what worked well, and if the program objective was met, but also shaping a culture where we learn from programs that have not achieved their objective.

The Community Engagement Program Framework has been imbedded in the VICSES Community Engagement Facilitator (CEF) course to help build the confidence of our Community Engagement Facilitators and their familiarity with the framework. The framework has helped volunteers to visually create direction for their engagement with communities, and has been applied at a number of events during the reporting period, such as the Multicultural Festival, Cultural Diversity week, and International Women's Day. Engagement was also enhanced through the use of the chatterbox game and other resources, which use imagery and simple language to help connect with multicultural community members.

Further consolidation and application of the Community Engagement Program Framework is planned through engagement strategies that provide an opportunity to walk the talk, and bring community engagement to life.



Monitoring and reporting

Indicators and Evaluation Framework

Year Three has seen the implementation of the Indicators and Evaluation Framework. Key areas of focus during the period:

- Incorporating program evaluation into the Community Engagement Program and the re-designed CEF Course, with a focus on logic modelling, narrative reporting and perspective taking.
- Activities to champion evaluation and measurement at VICSES, including delivery of training on survey design and interpretation, and the provision of active evaluation support for projects. A key highlight of this activity was the development and implementation of an evaluation plan for the 2019 VICSES, CFA and Red Cross Neighbour Day Challenge.
- VICSES participation in the following Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre (BNHCRC) projects:
 - **Encountering Floodwater:** This project seeks to better understand the environmental, social and other influences on people who chose to enter, and not enter, floodwater. This research has involved members of the public, VICSES and other emergency services
 - **Towards protective action - Effective risk and warning communication during natural hazards:** This project aims to better understand how community members respond to risk and warning communication from multiple agencies during natural hazards.

Skills training and development

VICSES is committed to ensuring Our People have the skills, competencies, support and structures in place to meet the current and future needs of building community resilience.

Actions undertaken during Year Three to achieve this commitment:

- Design and development with the new CEF Course following a course review, as discussed in the Year Two Outcomes report.
- The development of the revised CEF course involved consultation with multiple stakeholders from a broad range of disciplines, including learning and development, marketing, leadership, behaviour change, communications and digital, community, and disaster resilience.
- The updated CEF course aims to build the confidence and skills of VICSES volunteers to engage with communities based on the Community Engagement Program Framework, and uses a blended learning approach of online and face-to-face learning, with the flexibility of modulated or intensive delivery.
- The course is designed to embed important skills for facilitating quality conversations, including listening and reflecting, and building on ideas and actions community members have around emergency preparedness. This is in contrast to the previous “informing” approach, which while useful during an emergency, may be less helpful before an emergency when there is time to build rapport, trust, and relationships with community members to encourage emergency preparedness and increase resiliency.
- Encouragingly, the South Australia State Emergency Service and Red Cross have expressed interest in the training course, helping us to continue to work as one within the sector.
- Attendance of 40 VICSES CEFs from across the state at the CFA and VICSES State Forum on 11 and 12 August 2018.
- This was the eighth annual state forum, bringing together community engagement focussed volunteers from CFA and VICSES to enhance skills, build knowledge, and celebrate achievements. The two-day event was targeted at volunteers seeking to further their skills and knowledge to better engage with their community.
- The state forum included training and development opportunities, an engagement exhibition, and guest speakers sharing research and knowledge in the community resilience space.
- VICSES volunteer and staff participation in the “Safer together – Community First” CFA training throughout 2018 and 2019.
- The Safer Together approach combines strong community partnerships with agencies and incorporation of the latest science and technology to effectively target actions. The key theme of ‘Community First’ recognises that the best decisions are shaped by the people they affect. The Safer Together – Community First training involves three different training packages to experience Community First principles, Level 1, 2 and 3, as well as a Train the Trainer.
- A total of 112 volunteers and staff completed the course during the reporting period, from areas including Benalla, Sale, Bendigo, Traralgon, Creswick, and Geelong.
- VICSES volunteer attendance at the Red Cross RediPlan training, through partnership with Red Cross.
- VICSES has transitioned to the use of RediPlan and the Get Ready app to support home emergency planning.
- The training supports our volunteers to use these two resources, in addition to strengthening our partnership with Red Cross.

⁵ EM-COP: Emergency Management Common Operating Picture or EM-COP is a web-based communication, planning and collaboration tool that has been rolled out across Victoria to enable emergency personnel to quickly share information and make strategic decisions (EMV 2016).





Community and partners

A critical component to the Strategy building blocks has been the many years' worth of research conducted by VICSES to provide scientific rigour and a base of evidence for what is proposed. This research has explored the chronic stresses and acute shocks faced by communities, along with their levels of understanding, and their attitudes and behaviours.

VICSES research has covered:

- Perceptions and beliefs about emergencies
- How and why people prepare
- Requirements for getting people to be more prepared
- What community drivers could be used to enhance preparedness and build community capital

Research has found, as expected, that some members of the community are active in preparing and maintaining readiness for the next emergency event, while a large proportion of the community is not interested and therefore, not planning to do anything to prepare for future emergency events.

VICSES has also found that hazard awareness is influenced by a number of key drivers and barriers that vary significantly across Victoria's diverse communities, and does not necessarily translate to higher levels of preparedness or action across the preparedness chain (see Figure 4).

Our three pillars provide guidance towards our commitment and enable VICSES to demonstrate our achievements during the lifetime of the Strategy.

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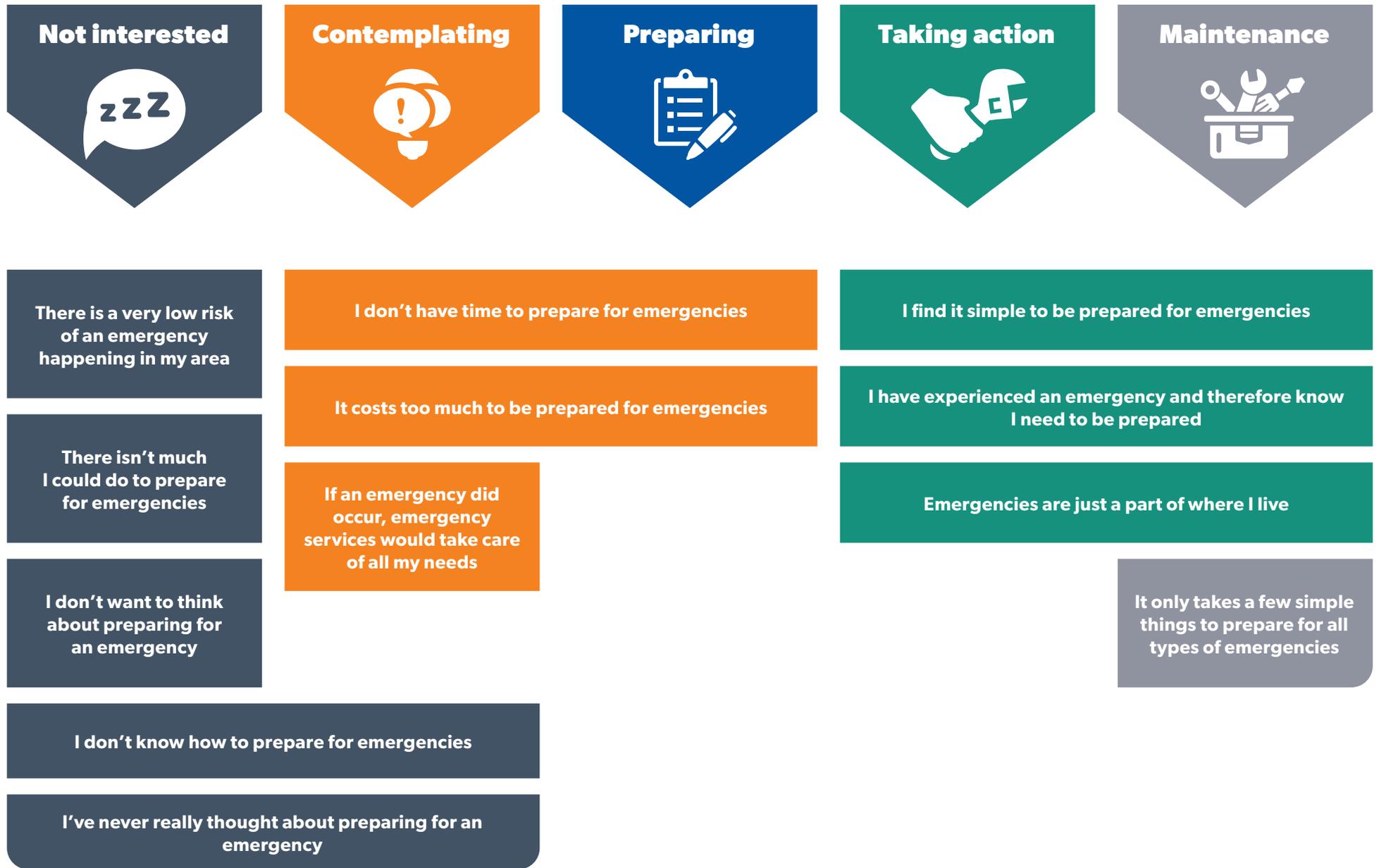


Figure 4 VICSES preparedness chain.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE



Build capacity

Goal: VICSES builds community knowledge and skills to support communities to prepare for, respond to and recover from emergency events.

VICSES support the Alpine Shire to deliver the Resilient Emergency Action Plan (REAP) Day.

The Alpine Shire REAP Day has been running for more than five years targeting all students in grades 4 and 5, and is eagerly anticipated by students at all primary schools in the Alpine Shire. Delivering hazard and safety education to students in these grades year on year means that all students finish primary school with the knowledge of what to do if they ever face an emergency situation.

The day is a hands on event, including more than a dozen child-focussed activities. Each activity aligns with the intent of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, providing students the opportunity to engage with disaster risk reduction topics that interest them. All of the activities on the day aim to be highly interactive, involving teamwork and as much fun as possible for each serious topic.

The program is guided by research and current best practice, and includes skill-based personal readiness, personal and physical safety, and even psycho-social, personal feelings and reactions that are common during an emergency. Some activities involve using technology such as the VicEmergency app, including steps for setting up 'watch zones', and the Red Cross Get Prepared app to guide the students on making an emergency plan.

The students are encouraged to share and discuss the take away messages back in their classrooms, with their peers, and at home with their families.

The REAP day success hinges on strong partnerships between emergency services, schools, the Shire and other government departments and community organisation representatives.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

2

Increase collaboration

Goal: VICSES has effective partnerships through which we can collaborate and facilitate inclusive participation to enable community led activities and solutions.

VICSES collaborates with Red Cross

With shared values and a joint goal of creating safer and more resilient communities, VICSES and Red Cross are joining forces to increase community preparedness.

A key element of this collaboration focusses on training of volunteers. Both VICSES and Red Cross have a number of programs which can be shared, including psychological first aid (PFA) training and emergency preparedness training. VICSES volunteers have participated alongside Red Cross volunteers to complete PFA training, with very positive feedback.

“It makes a lot of sense for our people to increase their skills in PFA as we often work alongside each other to help community members who may be upset or traumatised by being involved in an emergency.” – Susan Davie, Manager Community Connections.

VICSES has also adopted the Red Cross RediPlan as our endorsed home emergency plan for households, and our volunteers have undertaken joint training to ensure they are able to assist community members to use the RediPlan.

VICSES and Red Cross volunteers have also been working together to deliver a preparedness program aimed at primary school children called the Pillowcase Project. VICSES volunteers have assisted with delivery of these sessions in schools in the west of the state, where students and teachers have been learning some simple ways to be prepared for emergencies.

Collaborating with organisations that help VICSES to achieve our vision of safer communities, together is an important way to help build community resilience. Whitehorse Unit members share their thoughts on the VICSES and Red Cross partnership and joint training:

“We got the chance to understand more about the role that Red Cross plays in emergencies and how it trains and mobilises. The focus on collaborating and sharing skill sets is great because we all work for the same team to get shared results.” – Clementine Bales

“From my psychological first aid and preparedness (RediPlan) training, I learnt the structure of Red Cross and its role in an emergency situation. I recommend VICSES volunteers participate in this training as it’s a great addition to our emergency services capability, and enables us to be more helpful before, during, and after a disaster or traumatic event.” – Defei Wan

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

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Foster connections

Goal: VICSES is an innovative and influential leader that fosters community connectivity and promotes positive behaviour change.

VICSES focus on connecting with recent migrants

VICSES Greater Dandenong Unit has partnered with Chisholm TAFE and other agencies in a strategy to connect with community members from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Through the partnership, unit members are now able to meet and engage with students of the English as a Second Language class through the Adult Migrant English Program, providing the opportunity to build relationships and share important information on being safe and knowing what to do to prepare for emergencies.

Students had the opportunity to visit the VICSES unit, where they learn about what VICSES do to assist the community when emergencies occur, view the equipment used, and also hear about how emergency services work more broadly to help the community when emergencies occur in Australia.

With a focus on storms and floods, there is a chance for students to practice language skills with some activities that match words to images. Video footage is also used to convey the dangers of floods and storms and to highlight what protective action can be taken to stay safe during emergencies.

These sessions not only provide VICSES with the chance to connect with community members, they also provide some great opportunities for new migrants to practice their English language skills with regard to hazards they may face.

The approach has been a successful way for VICSES volunteers to connect with a range of community members from diverse backgrounds, and has delivered a positive experience for students of Chisholm TAFE.



Evaluating our success

Each Strategic Objective of the Strategy includes a KPI to support VICSES to assess its progress (see Figure 5). These are:

KPI 1

8% increase in the number of people who are aware of their risk.

Outcome: Individuals, households and businesses believe that preparing for future emergency events is important.

KPI 2

12% increase in programs that partner with others to engage the community.

Outcome: Program and service delivery with others is collaborative, integrated and community-centred.

KPI 3

15% increase in activities that directly engage with the community.

Outcome: Better connected communities that are able to adapt to future emergency events.

Flagship measures

The Indicators and Evaluation Framework outlines Flagship Measures for each KPI in addition to a set of measures relating to disaster impact to ensure our efforts to build community capacity focus on the longer term.

Sustained behaviour change is a long-term goal requiring continued efforts over a number of years. As such, VICSES does not expect a substantial change in community behaviour in the first three years of Strategy implementation, and understands it will take many years to observe a change in disaster impacts.

Building the evaluation capability of Our People and providing them with appropriate tools for evaluation will be a key focus for evaluating our success.

Implementation of the Indicators and Evaluation Framework commenced in Year Three with the development of new data sources, measurement activities and comparison with existing historical data for each Strategic Objective.

Figure 5 VICSES Community Resilience Strategy resilience models.



Figure 6 VICSES and Australian Red Cross partnership CHAT assessment results.

CHAT Item	Average Score (out of 5) for VICSES and Red Cross Partnership
Shared Goal	4.30
Shared Resources	4.23
Shared Authority	4.64
Shared Accountability	3.47
Whole System Engagement	3.36
Communication Flows	3.12
Buildind Adaptive Capacity	4.00
Holding/Authorising Environment	4.28

Year Three saw the pilot of the Collaboration Health Assessment Tool (CHAT) to assess the status of the VICSES and Australian Red Cross partnership. CHAT is an evidence-based tool for assessing and diagnosing the status of collaborative activities between partners. The pilot supported VICSES to demonstrate our impact for Strategic objective 2: Increase collaboration *Flagship Measure 2.1: Satisfaction of key stakeholders involved in community engagement program development, delivery, or evaluation.*

The findings provided the overall health status of the partnership, demonstrating a clear commitment to working together, and provided some guidance for areas in which the partnership can improve. Despite the value of the information generated, the collection burden proved too high for this method to be feasible for the ongoing monitoring of Flagship Measure 2.1. Reassessment of this Flagship Measure will be a key activity in the coming period. (Refer to results in Figure 6).



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Contact us

To provide feedback on the Year Three Outcomes Report or the VICSES Community Resilience Strategy 2016-19, please email resilience@ses.vic.gov.au or contact your local VICSES regional office.

Appendix A – References

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#thankyouSES



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