



Capacity Collaboration Connections

VICSES Community Resilience Strategy
Year One Outcomes Report

February 2018

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Acknowledgements

This report was developed by the Victoria State Emergency Service (VICSES) Community Resilience and Communications Team in consultation with our people – volunteers and staff – and a wide range of stakeholders. All contributions are greatly appreciated.



Foreword



On 29 July 2016, the Hon James Merlino MP, Minister for Emergency Services launched the VICSES Community Resilience Strategy 2016-2019 (the Strategy); an important element of realising VICSES’ vision of *Safer Communities – Together*.

The Strategy details VICSES’ plan for building community resilience, through:

- Making us accountable to deliver our corporate imperatives;
- How we will join and connect with communities;
- How we will develop positive partnerships;
- How we will meet our traditional and emerging accountabilities as an emergency service organisation; and
- How we will provide and share timely, effective reporting that’s meaningful.

While much of the language around community resilience is new, community education and engagement have long been part of the work of VICSES. As the impacts and costs of extreme weather events are expected to increase¹, the importance of effective education, engagement and community action will grow accordingly.

This report reviews the progress made within the first year of the Strategy, namely the 2016/2017 financial year (Year One).

I am pleased to release the Year One Outcomes Report and welcome your feedback to assist us in the delivery and evaluation of the Strategy in Years’ Two and Three.

Stephen Griffin
Chief Executive Officer

¹ Natural Disaster Funding Arrangements, Productivity Commission Enquiry Report V1, Australian Government Productivity Commission, 2014.

Purpose

The Year One Outcomes Report presents some of the key highlights, activities and outcomes from the Strategy implementation that took place during the period of 2016-2017.

The report measures our achievement against the strategic objectives, reports on the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and is intended to support continuous improvement of programs and initiatives during the lifetime of the Strategy.

Background

Community education and engagement have long been part of the work of 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 VICSES volunteers and staff (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

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.

For the purposes of this Strategy, VICSES had adopted Emergency Management Victoria’s (EMV) definition of a resilient community, as outlined in A Modern Emergency Management System for Victoria (October 2015):

“Increasing a community’s resilience involves a focus on the strength and sustainability of a community’s infrastructure and institutions, as well as building and strengthening the links between people and the services, systems and structures that support the community to function⁴.”

VICSES notes however that the EMV led Community Resilience Framework for Emergency Management released in April 2017 has updated the definition of resilience to be “the ability to survive, adapt and thrive no matter what kind of chronic stresses and acute shocks experienced⁵”.



² Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, sourced from http://www.unisdr.org/files/43291_sendaiframeworkfordrren.pdf
³ National Strategy for Disaster Resilience, Council of Australian Governments, 2011.
⁴ A Modern Emergency Management System for Victoria, Emergency Management Victoria, 2015.
⁵ EMV Community Resilience Framework for Emergency Management, 2017.

Strategic objectives, goals and outcomes

The Strategy aligns with the 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.

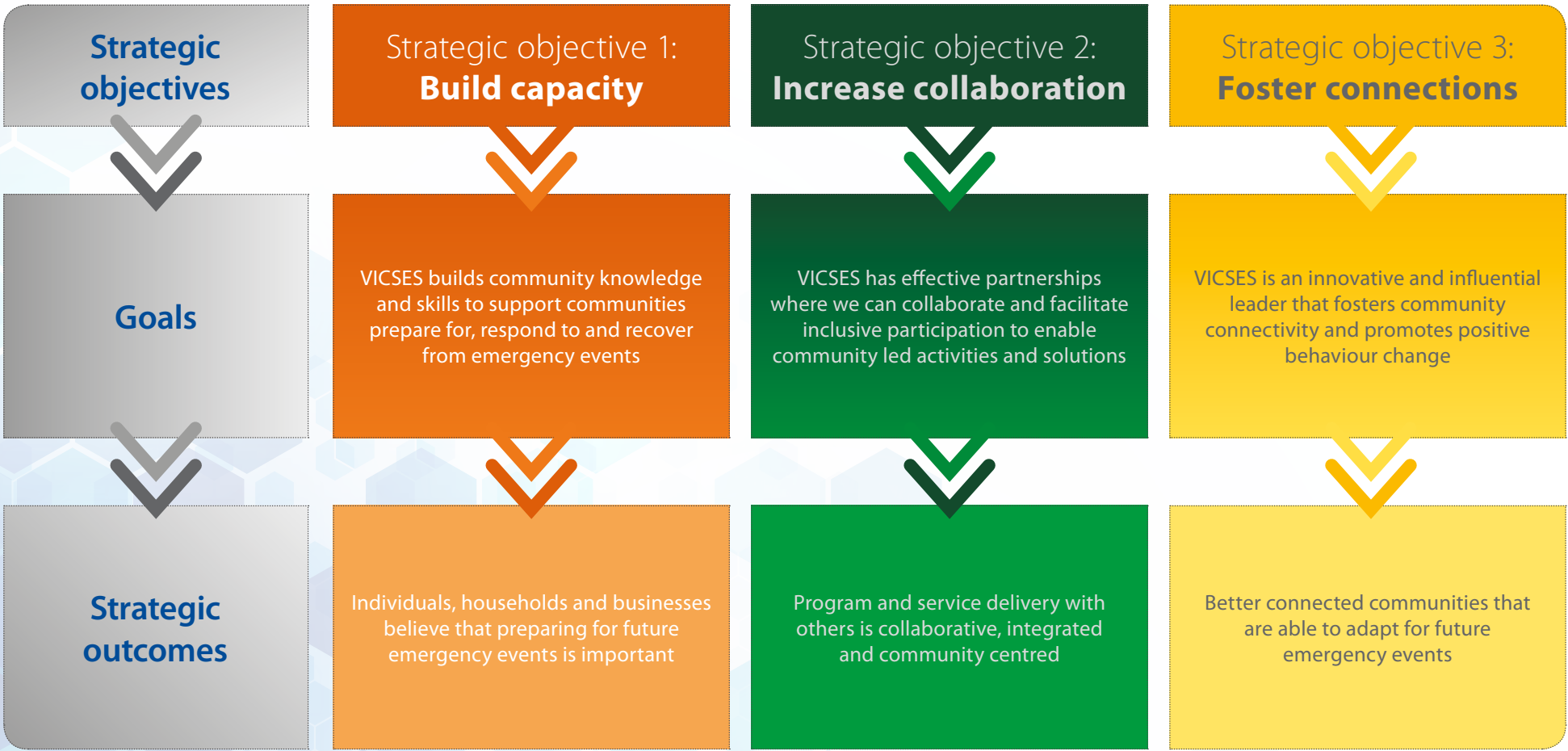


Figure 1 VICSES Community Resilience Strategy – objectives, goals and outcomes



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

For VICSES, the building of community resilience is integral to achieving our vision of *safer communities – together*. The Strategy outlines why this work is valuable and what it will achieve, and lays the groundwork from which to build activities, plans, programs and systems.

In doing so, it informs the work of all VICSES members and the way we interact with the emergency management and government sectors; and our commitment to supporting Our People to have the skills, competencies, supports and structures in place to meet our current and future needs.

To support this intent, and the transition from the previous Community Education Strategy 2011-2016, the VICSES Risk and Audit Committee engaged HLB Mann Judd (the Auditor) to undertake a comprehensive internal audit to review the comprehensiveness of the Strategy based on the following scope of works:

- Review, roll out and implementation of the consultation 'draft' Strategy design;
- Review of the adequacy of the methodology and associated resources (i.e. policies, procedures, processes, mechanisms, tools, templates, etc.) that govern the strategy;
- Review of monitoring procedures and systems to be used to monitor the status and performance of the Strategy activities; and
- Completion of a sample audit of proposed Strategy initiatives to determine whether the proposed methodology and associated resources are aligned.

The findings from the internal audit were presented to VICSES in five key phases:

- Phases 1 and 2 related to the effectiveness of the processes that were undertaken from development, consultation and adoption of the Strategy during the 2015/2016 period;
- Phases 3 to 5 proposed a pathway for implementation, monitoring and reporting of the new Strategy post scheduled launch in July 2016.

Focus areas for implementation

To ensure all of the Auditor's internal audit findings were considered, VICSES adopted an implementation approach structured under two distinct focus areas (see Figure 2). This provided VICSES with a detailed blueprint from development to evaluation stages of the Strategy, being:

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

Activities undertaken to implement the Strategy within Year One have been categorised in line with the above-mentioned focus areas.

Figure 2: Implementation blueprint



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Corporate management

In recent times, VICSES has expanded its service delivery from the traditional ‘response’ activities to include the development of a resilient community that knows what to do before, during, and after an emergency. This has involved an expansion of core business activities and a strengthening of relationships and partnerships.

The Strategy is an integral part of the overall VICSES strategy framework that supports the long-term vision of the VICSES Strategic Plan and Service Delivery Strategy 2025 (see Figure 3).

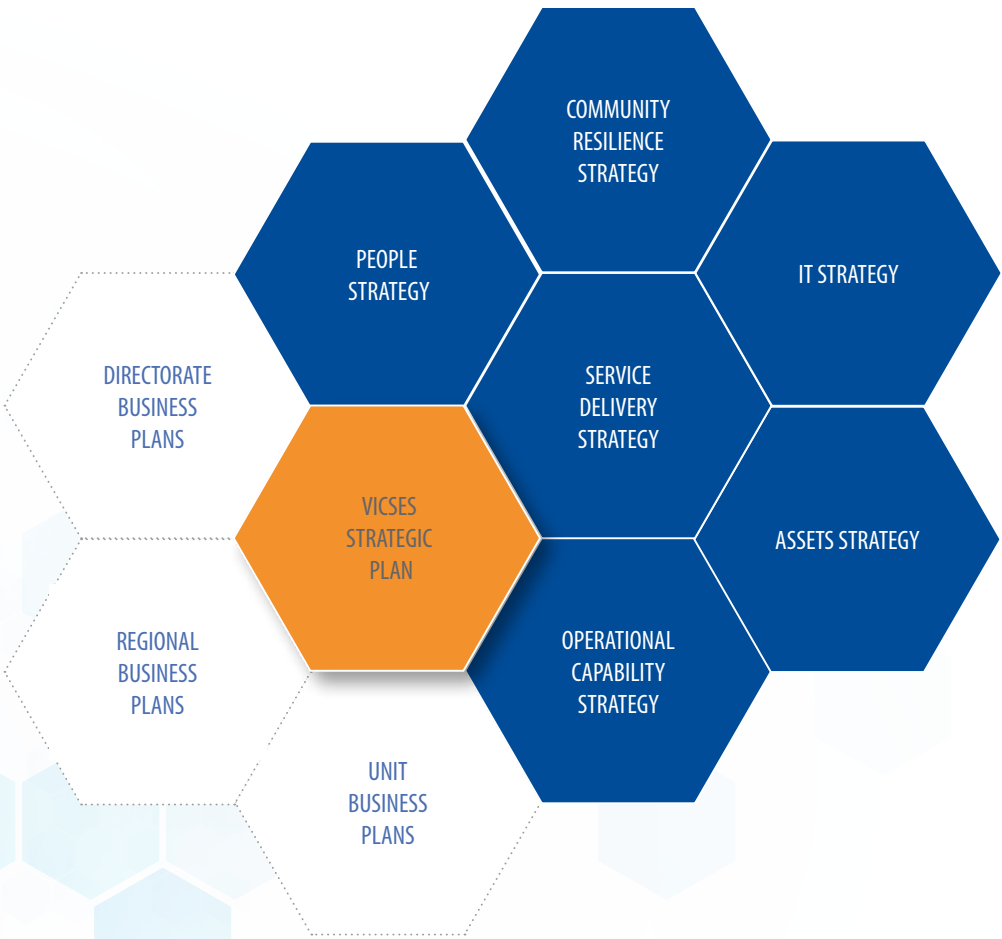


Figure 3 VICSES strategy framework

Systems and structures

Although the strategy provides a three-year road map for the future design, development, delivery and evaluation of our programs and resources, it is also important for VICSES to provide clarity to our People on roles and accountabilities, to ensure successful delivery of the overall intent and desired outcomes of the Strategy.

It was also critical for VICSES to review the systems and structures that would support the Strategy and what was further required to meet our long term needs.

A number of initiatives were undertaken in 2016/2017 to launch the Strategy and review and improve the systems and structures to carry it through:

- The Strategy was launched on 3 July 2016 by The Hon James Merlino MP at the Warrnambool SES Unit. The Strategy was also presented to stakeholders and at public forums such as the Monash University Disaster Resilience Forum, and the Floodplain Conference.
- A review of roles and responsibilities was undertaken across VICSES to meet the needs of the Strategy. This resulted in a restructure of the VICSES Community Resilience and Communications directorate in 2016, with the addition of a new ‘Community Connections’ team, with responsibility for Community Education and Engagement, Partnerships and Campaigns, Events, and Monitoring and Evaluation. New responsibilities, aligned to the Strategy, were also assigned to key staff, with updates to position descriptions and work plans.
- Business Unit annual plans were developed in accordance with the corporate planning cycle, including key program activity aligned to Strategy KPIs.

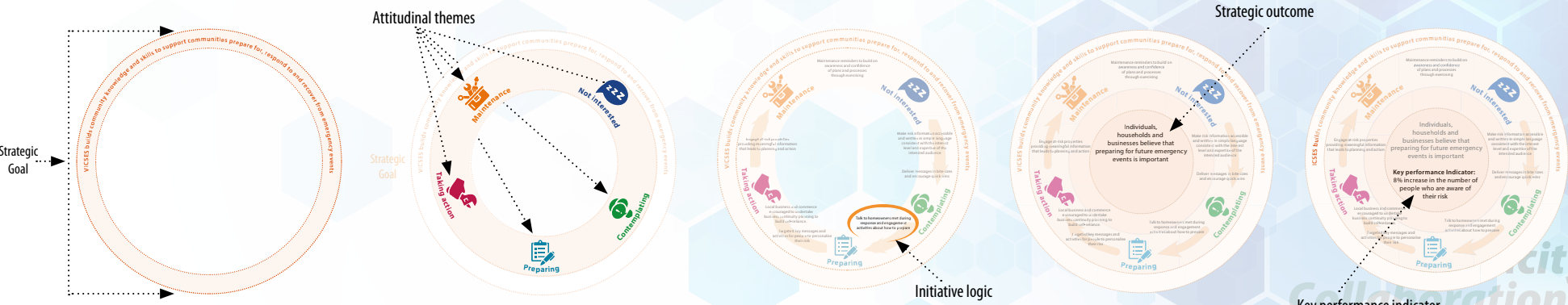


Figure 4: VICSES Resilience Models

- A new suite of resources to cater for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities was developed and rolled out across the organisation, including:
 - A guide on ‘CALD Community Engagement for VICSES Units’, to inform strategies for education and engagement of CALD communities.
 - ‘Hints and Tips to CALD Engagement’, a guide to working with multicultural community members during operational activity.
 - ‘Municipality Profiles’, including ancestry, language and household type to help inform localised community education and engagement strategies.
 - ‘Language Identification Cards’ for volunteers requiring assistance of an interpreter.
- Consultation commenced to test and confirm assumptions around flexible VICSES membership arrangements, new ‘Role and Training Pathways’ for members for clear development into various roles such as the Community Resilience and Engagement Role pathway, and considerations for a revised flexible Unit functional structure.
- A new series of resilience models were also developed as an integral part of the Strategy. Under our three pillars of Capacity, Collaboration and Connections the models provide the framework for the Strategy, and provide the ability to test the underlying assumptions in order to better understand community attitudes, associated barriers and drivers across a range of preparedness behaviours (see Figure 4).

Monitoring and reporting

A major focus during Year One of the strategy has been the development of a draft *Indicators and Evaluation Framework* to measure the Strategy outcomes. This work has focused on engaging operational partners, external stakeholders and academia, and conducting interviews and workshops with our People.

This work and its full suite of measures is intended to be finalised during the second year of the Strategy, namely the 2018/2019 financial year (Year Two) through:

- Establishing a series of Flagship Indicators that expand on the KPIs of the Strategy;
- Outlining Measurement Plans that detail how the Flagship Indicators will be measured;
- Providing guidance on the type of evaluation activities to be used throughout the delivery of the Strategy; and
- Highlighting research activities needed to support evaluation.

This work aligns directly with the Emergency Management Performance Standards. The Standards, as led by EMV, provide response agencies with objectives and minimum requirements for the emergency management functions which they collectively undertake, and clarify how these functions contribute to the shared vision of 'safer and more resilient communities'.

This includes a theme dedicated to Risk and Resilience with the objective of "a more connected and resilient community that is better able to respond to an emergency and to mitigate the consequences when one occurs".

Further works undertaken in Year One to support 'monitoring and reporting' include:

- Project scoping the development of a Community Engagement Management Tool to accurately record activity conducted by our People.
- Participation in the Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre's Research Advisory forums, conferences and Research Showcase, along with involvement in multiple project workshops on volunteering, team decision making, and child-centred disaster risk reduction.
- Working collaboratively with experts in academia and industry to better support and embed community resilience programs, such as the VICSES-commissioned review of disaster resilience literature by The Centre for Evidence and Implementation, and the categorisation model for research that has been undertaken to date to inform future community resilience building programs.

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 in 2016-2017 to achieve this commitment include updates to the competency based VICSES Community Engagement Facilitator (CEF) training. The aim of this training is to provide members with the skills and knowledge needed to plan, conduct and evaluate community education and engagement activities. On completion of training, members will be able to:

- Follow VICSES processes and procedures for planning community education activities;
- Identify various target audiences;
- Identify and set measurable objectives for community education activities;
- Develop tailored community education activity plans;
- Conduct community education activities, including presentations, demonstrations, meetings and workshops; and
- Evaluate the effectiveness of community education activities.

During Year One, VICSES established a dedicated community engagers' Facebook page as a place for volunteer members to share information and support each other in community engagement activities, attracting 145 members in its first year.

VICSES also teamed up with the Country Fire Authority (CFA) once again to deliver the annual Community Engagement State Forum with the 2016 theme of '*Working together for safer communities*'.

The event, held in Lorne over the weekend of 6-7 August 2016, has continued to grow in size each year, attracting more than 500 volunteers from across VICSES and CFA. Throughout the two-day forum, members heard from front-line community safety educators as well as leading community engagement specialists and behaviour change experts. Participants left with a greater understanding of the tools, ideas and skills needed to work in local communities to reduce the incidence and impact of emergencies, and better educate communities on disaster preparation.





Community and partners

A key and measurable outcome of the Strategy is to increase the level of interest, and support behaviour change within our communities, so that they are more aware, informed and prepared for emergencies – supporting them to understand their risk, and the relevance of taking action before, during and after emergencies.

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

VICSES research has covered:

- What are the perceptions and beliefs about emergencies?
- How and why do people prepare?
- What is required to get people to be more prepared?
- What community drivers could be used to enhance preparedness and build community capital?

The research found, as expected, that some members of the community were actively preparing and maintaining readiness for the next emergency event, while a large proportion of the community was not interested and therefore, not planning to do anything to prepare for future emergency events.

VICSES also found that hazard awareness does not necessarily translate to higher levels of preparedness or action across the preparedness chain (see Figure 5), and is influenced by a number of key drivers and barriers that can and will vary significantly across Victoria’s diverse communities.

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 5: Preparedness chain – key drivers and barriers

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Strategic objective 1: Build Capacity

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

To support an improvement in current community preparedness behaviours and practices during Year One of the Strategy, Our People attended more than 1,750 community activities, contributing more than \$3 million in resource time in creating awareness of VICSES, the risks people might face and what they can do to better prepare⁶.

In 2016/2017, VICSES continued to develop and engage local communities as part of the Local Flood Guide program to provide current and localised information to targeted communities on the floods risks in their area and how to plan, prepare and respond during flooding.

The aim of the Local Flood Guide Program is to:

- Communicate the risk of floods at a local level.
- Raise awareness of the risk of flooding.
- Encourage people develop a home emergency kit.
- Educate on the dangers of driving in flood waters.

Local Flood Guides form part of the broader FloodSafe program, aligning to the National SES FloodSafe program. The FloodSafe program is endorsed by the Australian Council of State Emergency Services (ACSES) to be conducted by SES organisations across each state and territory.

A total of 42 Local Flood Guides were either developed or enhanced during 2016/17 with over 100 at risk townships across the State now having access to a Local Flood Guide.

⁶VICSES Service Delivery Strategy, Final Report, January 2018.

Banyule, Nillumbik and Glen Eira: VICSES, Melbourne Water and University of Melbourne conduct Community Flood Education Doorknock

Following the 29 December 2016 severe weather event, VICSES teamed up with Melbourne Water and the University of Melbourne to conduct a 'Community Flood Education Doorknock' within the flood-affected areas of Banyule, Nillumbik and Glen Eira.

Over 2400 homes were visited across the three municipalities, with the objective of creating one-on-one conversations with the community on how to prepare and protect homes before, during and after flood emergencies.



**Melbourne Water / VICSES Partnership:
2016-17 Door Knocks targeting Flooding Hotspots**



VICSES also engaged with communities on emergency warning products and systems to develop awareness and shared responsibility of the risks faced by the community, and what the community can do to better prepare and take action when faced with an emergency.

On 14 November 2016, Mildura was impacted by a severe storm with reports of a tornado which resulted in over 700 requests for assistance. This was a huge job for our Mildura Unit to respond to. Reinforcements were called in, including a dedicated Community Education and Engagement Officer (CEEEO).

The CEEEO spent time riding with response crews, engaging directly with affected community members, and liaising with relief agency staff and volunteers. Being out with response crews and having a community engagement focus allowed the CEEEO to effectively share information about the risks of severe storms.

The stories, images and experiences recorded have provided insight into the value of including community engagement specialists during the response phase of emergencies. VICSES are piloting a new role and training pathway to further develop this capability among its volunteers.

Chelsea: Using media to maximise engagement

Chelsea SES utilised social media during Year One to compliment and further-leverage its earned media coverage across print, radio and TV. Using a strategy of entertainment and rich imagery and video, Chelsea SES attracted more than 130,000 hits to its Facebook page within the first 6 months of the period.





Strategic objective 2: Increase Collaboration

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

VICSES is committed to collaborating with our community and partners to maximise opportunities and provide local services to meet local needs; developing resilient communities through the development of strong connections and community partnerships.

Activity undertaken during 2016/2017 highlights a diverse range of initiatives between VICSES and partners. These programs range from collaboration with other service providers to public participation initiatives with local community.

Pomborneit and Stonyford: VICSES shares in CFA Multi-Brigade Open Day

VICSES shared in the CFA's annual Multi-Brigade Open Day which brought nine local brigades together to engage with the local community. The agencies aim to expand on the event each year, making each bigger and better than the last.

VICSES are partners of, and have actively engaged with, the Victorian Emergency Management Strategic Action Plan (SAP) project led by the Department of Education and Training⁷. This project recognises that young people are engaged in emergency management, understand issues associated with emergency events, and can participate to influence families and the broader community, including influencing families to develop household emergency plans.

The members of the project team highlighted the work undertaken to date and shared the key message about working together at the 2017 Emergency Service Foundation Conference. A video was produced to highlight this work with the broader sector (<https://youtu.be/K6BrF9cbr9k>). Key partnerships have been developed to continue this project into the future.

VICSES continued its partnership with Melbourne Water to deliver a community flood awareness, preparation and education program, delivered across all 38 councils in Melbourne Water's catchment footprint.

VICSES also entered into a new partnership with Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) to support VICSES' engagement in the effective preparation and implementation of flood programs and activities in collaboration with community, Local Governments, Catchment Management Authorities and other key stakeholders.

VICSES supported the Driver Reviver Easter launch with naming rights sponsor Toll, activation partners TAC and Lions Club, and a variety of other stakeholders including the media, product sponsors and partners Mondelez and AAMI, the Minister for Emergency Services James Merlino and the Minister for Road Safety Luke Donnellan.

Cobram: IGA Family Fun Day

The annual Cobram IGA Family Fun Day brings together local organisations and community groups to deliver live entertainment, food stalls and children's activities for local residents. VICSES and CFA partnered at the event to raise funds and increase community presence through a BBQ and raffle, and a display of VICSES and CFA vehicles and equipment.

Kongwak: Joint Open Day with CFA

A joint Open Day was held between Inverloch SES and Wonthaggi CFA in Kongwak, to engage with the local community. The two agencies have committed to work together at every possible opportunity

⁷ Emergency Management Victoria 2015, Victorian Emergency Management Strategic Action Plan 2015-2018
<https://www.emv.vic.gov.au/publications/victorian-emergency-management-strategic-action-plan-2015-2018-1>





Strategic objective 3: Foster Connections

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

VICSES is a significant contributor and leader in emergency management. Our People work within the community through preparedness and response activities; supporting them to understand their risk and the relevance of taking action before, during and after emergency events.

We acknowledge that there is no one-size-fits-all-approach: Victorian communities are diverse, speaking more than 260 languages and dialects and following 135 faiths and religions⁸. What works well for one community may not necessarily be meaningful in another, and with such diversity, opportunities for service delivery to directly engage with communities may vary considerably across the State.

VICSES is working to better understand the community drivers which could enable stronger connections and enhance preparedness behaviour. This will support VICSES to align our initiative logic for programs, actions and projects to the needs of the community and better maximise the benefits of our investment.

This approach includes work conducted together with established community networks and groups, including CALD community leaders.

Craigieburn: Community outreach

Craigieburn conducted several events within the community during the year to increase education on the role of VICSES. Events included the distribution of appreciation certificates and recruitment drives.

Maroondah: Community Engagement activities

VICSES members collaborated with Melbourne Water to deliver Community Information Sessions within the Maroondah area on the potential impacts of flooding events. Local residents learnt how to identify whether their property was at risk, and how to prepare themselves and their homes for a flood emergency.

Nillumbik: Kids Rescue

Nillumbik Unit used Community Education events to educate both parents and children on emergency preparedness, community resilience and the role of VICSES. While children played with miniature SES rescue trucks and toy equivalents of SES tools and sandbags, VICSES members educated parents on how to prepare for emergencies and when to call SES.

Geelong: Community Partnership with Geelong Cats

In a new partnership with the Geelong Cats AFL Football Club, several VICSES Units and the CFA joined together to present a community education display at the Geelong vs Fremantle game. The partnership with the Geelong Cats provided great exposure for VICSES and CFA, helping to highlight the roles the agencies play in the Geelong community and promote safety messages. VICSES and CFA plan to build on the relationship with the club to deliver further events in the 2017/2018 year.

⁸ Victorian Multicultural Commission, sourced from <http://www.multicultural.vic.gov.au/population-and-migration>, July 2016.

Evaluating our success

The Strategy includes three KPIs that support VICSES to assess our progress (see Figure 6). 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.

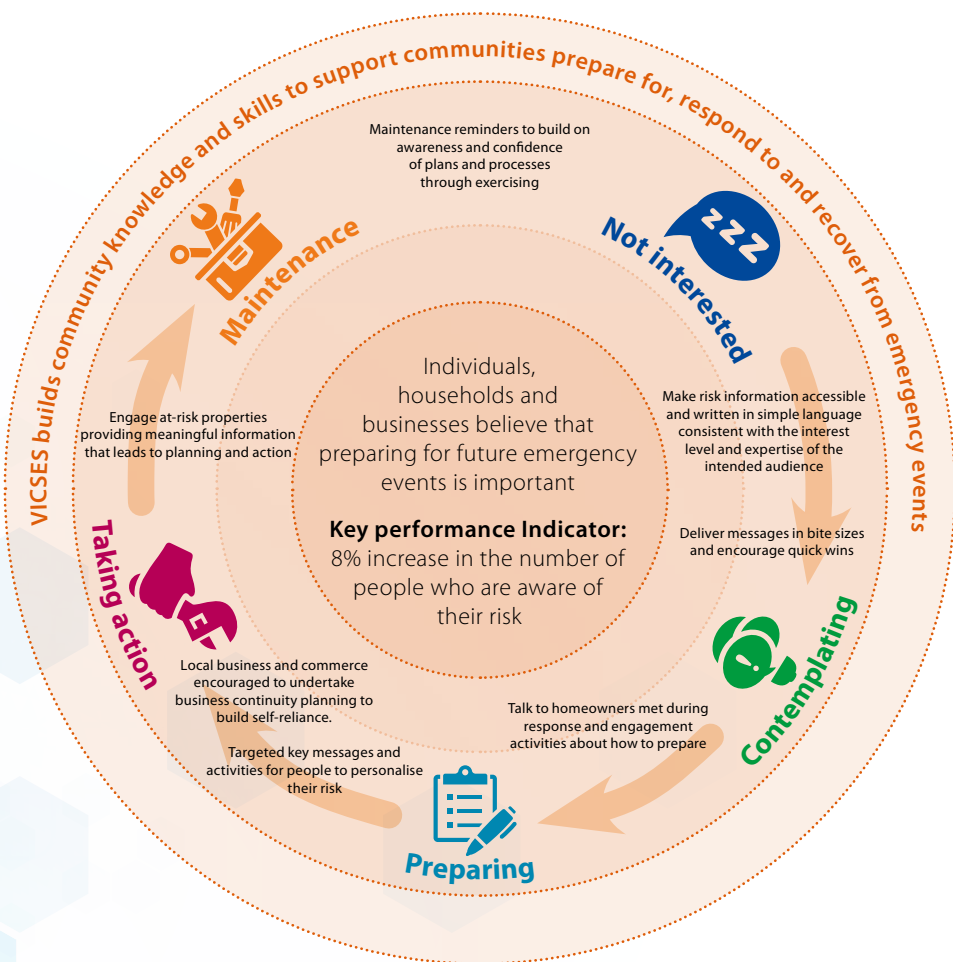
Regular evaluation and reporting to government and stakeholders against the strategic objectives, goals and outcomes is important for maintaining accountability for the Strategy.

Current work is being undertaken by VICSES to develop the way we measure and evaluate the Strategy and our community engagement and resilience-building activities. The scope of the draft Indicators and Evaluation Framework⁹ is limited to community engagement and community resilience-building activities of VICSES; however it is also designed to be flexible and scalable for the future.

VICSES does not expect a substantial change in behaviour in the first three years of Strategy implementation. Sustained behaviour change is a long-term goal requiring continued efforts over a number of years.

⁹ Indicators and Evaluation Framework released as an exposure draft at time of Year One Outcomes Report

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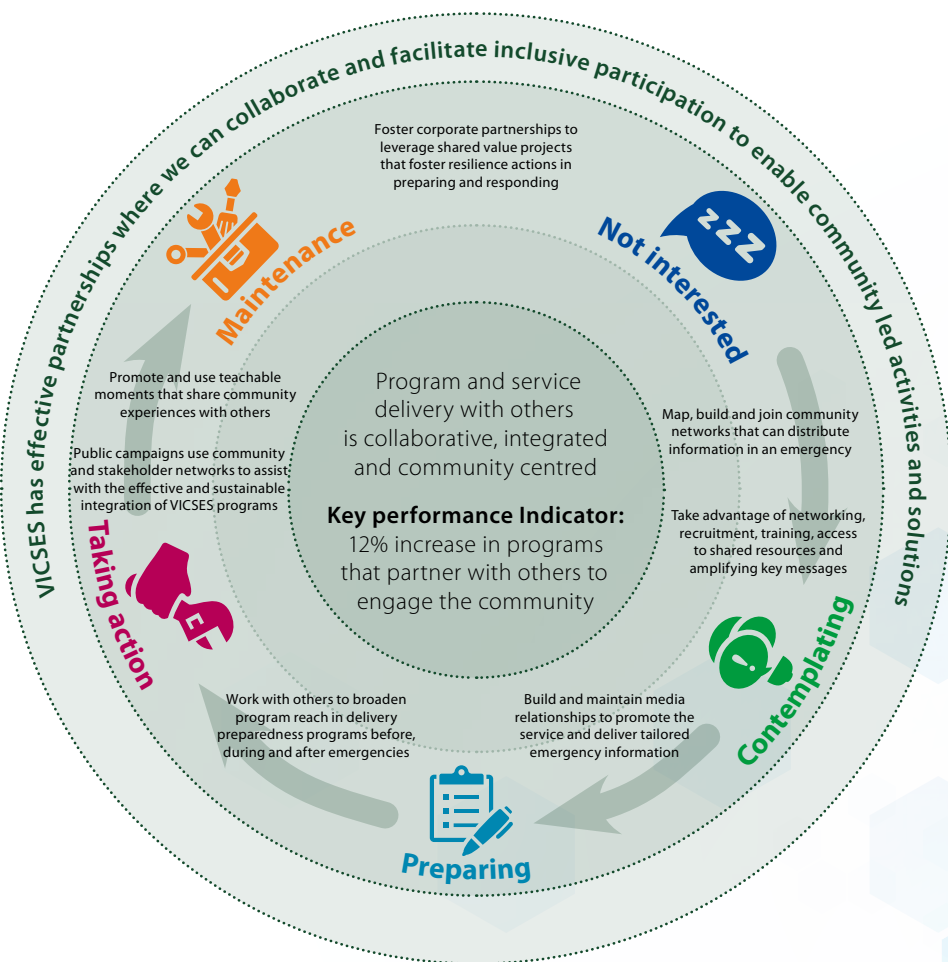


Figure 6 VICSES Community Resilience Strategy resilience models

Connections



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Contact Us

To provide feedback on the Year One Outcomes Report or the VICSES Community Resilience Strategy 2016-2019, please email resilience@ses.vic.gov.au or contact your local VICSES regional office.



Appendix A - References

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