

WINTER 2024

Community Matters

VICSES

EDITION 27

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WEDNESDAY

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MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER FOR EMERGENCY SERVICES

Welcome to the second edition of *Community Matters* for 2024.

It was terrific to celebrate Wear Orange Wednesday (WOW Day) on 22 May to acknowledge the invaluable contributions of our incredible Victoria State Emergency Service (VICSES) volunteers. Over the past 12 months, we have seen VICSES volunteers supporting our communities during some of the most challenging times – including severe flood and storm events here in Victoria and interstate, and much more.

VICSES volunteers are pillars of support for the communities we serve. WOW Day is a fantastic opportunity to come together and show our appreciation for their ongoing dedication and service as part of our emergency management sector.

On 19 April, I was pleased to visit the Echuca unit to announce the opening of the government's most recent Volunteer Emergency Services Equipment Program (VESEP) grants. The unit's new Toyota Hilux Light Rescue Vehicle, funded as part of the 2021-22 VESEP grants, will provide much-needed extra support following the recent weather events in northern Victoria. I thank our Echuca

volunteers for their ongoing efforts in supporting the local community and wider region.

The ever-growing VICSES-led Women in Rescue event was a tremendous effort again in April this year. Participation numbers increased from the previous year across six concurrent events at metro and regional locations. This is a fantastic opportunity to promote gender inclusion and diversity, and encourage the recruitment and retention of more women as part of our sector. I look forward to seeing this initiative continue to grow.

To further highlight the important contributions VICSES volunteers make to our communities, the 2024-25 Victorian Budget will deliver almost \$7 million for crucial VICSES services, with funding to support volunteer training and wellbeing services.

Thank you to the volunteers who gave up time with loved ones over the Easter long weekend to support Driver Reviver locations across the state. Driver Reviver is such an important road safety initiative in aiming to reduce driver fatigue and its often fatal consequences, and plays an integral role supporting safer roads for all Victorians.

To all the volunteers, thank you for your continued hard work in keeping our communities safe – take care.

Jaclyn Symes
Minister for
Emergency Services



Welcome

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

Firstly, thank you to everyone who joined in celebrating Wear Orange Wednesday (WOW Day) on 22 May. WOW Day is a fantastic opportunity for those across Victoria and nationally to express our gratitude to our resilient and inspiring SES volunteers. Our volunteers dedicate their lives to ensuring the safety of our communities and play an integral role as part of our emergency management sector. Thank you for all that do, every day. You truly are heroes in orange. You can read more about our WOW Day celebrations on page 6.

I would like to congratulate the Bacchus Marsh Unit for receiving a Commendation of Service, VICSES' highest award, for exceptional response. The unit has been honoured for their role in responding to the tragic Eynesbury bus incident last year, where they assisted in rescuing 45 children. Thank you for your tremendous service.

I'd also like to acknowledge our VICSES members who received their Level 3 Accreditation in Operations Officer and Incident Controller roles, at a ceremony held at the Victorian Emergency Management Institute in April. Achieving a Level 3 accreditation is not an easy feat, and I commend the recipients' dedication to their work and serving our community in times of need. Read more about their fantastic achievements on pages 22-23.

In other news, this year's Women in Rescue event held in April was our biggest turn-out yet, with around 250 women attending across six locations. I was pleased to be able to attend the event in Sale, with the day providing a fantastic opportunity for women to come together to learn and showcase rescue skills and become leaders in the rescue space. Read more on page 4.

Thank you to our volunteers who supported one of 30 Driver Reviver sites over the Easter long weekend, encouraging drivers to stop, rest, and revive to help prevent driver fatigue and incidents on our roads. This is one of many road safety roles that VICSES play as Australia's largest road rescue provider and is so important in helping to reduce the road toll.

Over the past few months, it has been a privilege to be able to meet many more of our dedicated volunteers and staff across the state and learn more about what we do well, and opportunities for change. I look forward to supporting our members through the coming winter period and meeting many more of our leaders at the upcoming State Controllers Seminars in June.

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

Greg Leach
CEO Victoria State
Emergency Service

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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 and present.

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FEATURE

Painting the state orange for Wear Orange Wednesday 2024

By Lauren Castle, Corporate Communications Advisor, VHO

On Wednesday 22 May we celebrated Wear Orange Wednesday (WOW Day) – a national day of thanks for our incredible SES volunteers.



Celebrations kicked off on Sunday 19 May ahead of National Volunteer Week as part of the state WOW Day media launch in Southbank. The launch saw Dandenong Ranges residents Megan, husband Danny, and two children Maeve and Elsa reunited with 11 volunteers from our Emerald and Lilydale Units who helped rescue Danny during the devastating storms in June 2021. The team of VICSES volunteers who put their safety on the line to save Danny were recently honoured for their bravery with a rare 'Commendation for Bravery' award.

This year there was a whirlwind of media activity for WOW Day, highlighting the important role that our volunteers play as part of their communities.

On 21 May the Today Show held a special live weather-cross with VICSES on national breakfast TV from the banks of the Murray River in Albury/Wodonga in conjunction with NSW SES, thanks to our Co-Principal Partner AAMI.

On 22 May VICSES Port Phillip volunteer Danielle spoke with ABC Breakfast about

the diverse role that the SES plays during emergencies, and in the evening weather presenters Jayde Cotic (10 NEWS) and Jane Bunn (7 NEWS) held live crosses with our volunteers as part of state bulletins.

This year's celebrations also featured a fantastic AAMI-led 'Get Ready With Me' social media campaign starring Emma Watkins from the Wiggles, which encouraged the community to dress in orange and support our volunteers. We even held an internal 'Get Ready With Me' competition for our volunteers, which saw members post videos to social media 'getting ready' for WOW Day to win one of five \$50 Bunnings vouchers, donated by AAMI.

WOW Day banner flags and billboards were on prominent display across Victoria in metro and regional locations, as well as over 80 digital roadside billboards, funded by AAMI.

Community members rallied to support WOW Day by adding a splash of orange to their outfits, hosting WOW Day themed events, donating to their local unit, and sharing their



messages of thanks on social media using the hashtag #ThankYouSES.

We'd like to express our gratitude to everyone who helped us make WOW Day 2024 such a huge success - and of course, to our wonderful SES volunteers who give their time to help us in times of need. We are thankful for every single one of you and all you do to keep our communities safe.

Bring on WOW Day 2025!
(Wed 21 May, 2025)



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GENERAL NEWS

Women in Rescue: Celebrating women in emergency services



By Tracey White, Senior Advisor Publicity, Events and Partnerships, VHO

On Saturday 16 March, nearly 250 female VICSES volunteers united across six locations statewide for the VICSES Women in Rescue (WIR) event.

This annual training opportunity established in 2018 by women for women, serves as a testament to the growing presence and significance of women in our emergency service sector. This year marked a significant milestone as the event doubled in size, emphasising its expanding impact and influence within the emergency response community.

WIR is not merely a training session; it's a celebration of women's

achievements in rescue operations and an opportunity to hone skills, build confidence, and foster camaraderie in a supportive environment. With events held simultaneously in Bangholme, Bendigo, Cobram, Geelong, Myrning (Grampians) and Sale, volunteers from diverse regions came together to share expertise and enhance their capabilities in emergency response.

For the first time in the event's history, members of the Country Fire

Authority (CFA) joined VICSES volunteers, underscoring the spirit of collaboration and mutual support across multiple agencies. This cross-pollination of knowledge and experience not only enriches individual skill sets but also strengthens the cohesion and effectiveness of emergency response efforts.

The day's agenda was packed with hands-on activities and specialised training sessions aimed at simulating real-life rescue scenarios. From live Road Crash Rescue simulations to Urban Search and Rescue scenarios, Mass Casualty handling, and Safe Working at Heights demonstrations, attendees were immersed in a diverse range of exercises designed to challenge and empower them.

The significance of the event was echoed by VICSES Chief Executive Officer Greg Leach, who expressed his delight at the increase of participant size.



Our female first responders at VICSES are incredible, and attend highly complex, challenging incidents. Our WIR event showcases their life-saving skills, using the latest rescue technology and training. It's fantastic we can provide these women with an environment to work together, train, and learn from each other," said Greg.

Mel Smith, a volunteer from VICSES Hobson's Bay Unit, shared her enthusiasm for the event, highlighting its importance in providing a platform for women to train and learn together. She reflected on the origins of the WIR initiative, tracing it back to the

Sunbury Unit's recognition of the need to encourage more women into rescue operations.

"I'm just so happy we have an event like this, for like-minded women to come together and train and learn together – each year interest grows, and we see more women join us," said Mel.

At the Bellarine unit, WIR South West saw participants engage in practical exercises, including a casualty handling scenario and an incident management exercise. The involvement of multiple agencies, including Ambulance Victoria, enriched the training experience, providing a realistic simulation of emergency situations.

Feedback from attendees emphasised the value of the event in facilitating learning in a supportive environment. One participant remarked, "Great to be part of another region's event meeting people I'd not come across previously... Well done on

organizing such a great day Rachel and for sharing your immense knowledge and skills."

As the demand for events like WIR continues to grow, so does the recognition of the importance of collaborative, inclusive training sessions in enhancing emergency response capabilities. By empowering women to reach their full potential and fostering a culture of shared learning and growth, initiatives like WIR play a crucial role in strengthening the resilience of our communities in the face of emergencies. ■



Read more

Read more about our Women in Rescue events on page 13.

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CAMPAIGNS & EVENTS

Engaging our community at Australian Formula 1 Grand Prix

By Tracey White, Senior Advisor Publicity - Events and Partnerships, VHO

VICSES once again proved their mettle at the 2024 Australian Formula 1 Grand Prix held from 21 to 24 March. With record attendance at this year's Grand Prix, VICSES played a pivotal role in ensuring safety and showcasing their vital contributions to the community.

At the heart of the action was the VICSES Innovation Hub, where volunteers and staff demonstrated their expertise in road crash rescue operations using the very latest state-of-the-art battery-operated tools. Spectators marvelled at the precision and efficiency of VICSES road crash rescue operators as they showcased their skills on the tools with spirited games of life sized 'Jenga'.

But VICSES' involvement extended beyond technical prowess. Community engagers took to the crowds, initiating conversations about road safety, with the new Driver Reviver Van serving as a beacon of awareness. Their efforts underscored VICSES' commitment to fostering a safer environment on and off the roads.

Moreover, a significant contingent of VICSES members took on shifts in the operations side of the Grand Prix. They conducted safety patrols, ensuring the grounds were secure, with our boat crews navigating Albert Park Lake.

The Australian Formula 1 Grand Prix stands as one of the largest events on VICSES' calendar. Its significance lies not only in the thrill of the race but also in the opportunity it provides to showcase the essential work our volunteers undertake in communities across Victoria. As VICSES continues to serve and protect, their presence at events like the Grand Prix reinforces the vital role they play in safeguarding the community. ■

Driver Reviver joins VICSES to promote Pitstops

By Ashley Pittard, National Manager - Driver Reviver, VHO

Like every Formula 1 Driver who must make pitstops in a race to change tyres, service their vehicle and refresh, so must Australian drivers as they journey across this vast country.

To maintain energy levels and focus, all drivers are encouraged to take a 15-minute break every two hours. Drivers are encouraged to do this at an operating Driver Reviver site in Victoria and throughout Australia with many of these activated by SES volunteers.

Members at the VICSES and Driver Reviver Innovation Hub promoted road

safety and 'take a break' messaging to sports fans and drivers. They interacted with thousands of school students who were invited enter a world of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) across the first two days of the motorsport fiesta. Members spoke to many students seeking to learn about skills and training, career paths and community development about opportunities at VICSES. ■



Get involved: VPES Games

By Gerry Sheridan, Operations Officer, VHO

The annual Victoria Police and Emergency Service (VPES) Games see emergency service personnel participate from all agencies that have a response requirement within the emergency sector. VICSES have been partaking in both the State Games and the Australasian Games since 2000.

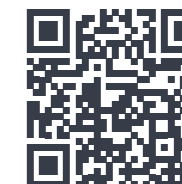
The 2024 VPES games will be held in and around Melbourne between 20 - 27 October.

VICSES members participate in many additional sporting and charitable events such as the Firefighter Stair Climb, Eureka Stair Climb and Angela Taylor Memorial Fun Run. Get on board in 2024! ■



Register

Registrations for the 2024 games will be announced soon and available via the Emergency Services Games website.



www.emergencyservicesgames.org.au

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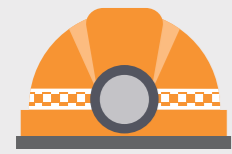
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1 January – 31 March 2024

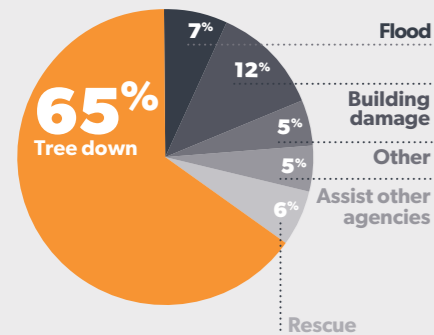


2,704

Volunteers

9,710

Requests for assistance



Officer Unit Controller Jess Rice sets up her new team for success

By Lauren Castle, Corporate Communications Advisor, VHO

The new VICSES Officer Unit is well on the way to becoming operational, and Unit Controller Jess Rice has been busy setting her team up for success to support their community.

Jess has a wealth of SES knowledge and experience behind her, with four years spent as Deputy Controller at the VICSES Emerald Unit, and six years as a member with our service in total. She comes from a corporate background in event management and community engagement, and recently graduated from a Master of Business Administration which helps inform her professional approach to her voluntary work.

Jess' vision for the Officer Unit includes a strong focus on creating a positive and inclusive culture in her team. From the get-go, she is working to set up principles of commitment, accountability, courageous conflict and trust.

Through her lived experience as a woman and person of colour, Jess has seen firsthand the importance of encouraging diversity and inclusiveness in a team environment.

"When I started volunteering at the Emerald Unit six years ago, there were 25 operational volunteers and I was one of three women in the group. I think it's really important to have representation of women in an organisation like VICSES because having an emergency management service that reflects the diversity in our community means that we have the perspective needed to make decisions that benefit our community as a whole."

It is fantastic to see up-and-coming VICSES leaders with a strong vision for aligning their team with the communities we serve.

The Officer Unit will play an important role in supporting its local community, in addition to supporting neighbouring VICSES units during emergencies. We are excited to see the impact that Jess and her new team of volunteers will have when they are fully operational. Stay tuned! ■

Little Nippers Emergency Services Fun Day

By Madeleine Smith, Deputy Controller Port Phillip Unit, Eastern Region

For the past two years our local lifesaving group has held an Emergency Services Fun Day for their Little Nippers on a Sunday in February.

VICSES Nillumbik Unit Controller receives recognition for community commitment

By Ryan Malcolm, Media Advisor, VHO

Surrounded by fellow community leaders in Melbourne's north east, Nillumbik Unit Controller Justin Kibell recently added another honour to an impressive record of service with his local unit.

Taking the stage alongside Jagajaga MP The Hon. Kate Thwaites at an intimate ceremony in Viewbank, Justin was one of a number of valued constituents presented a Jagajaga Community Volunteer Award, after being nominated by a Nillumbik Unit colleague.

Having joined the then-VICSES Eltham Unit in 1989, Justin's passion for emergency response and management quickly blossomed, with a 16-year stint as a volunteer followed by important roles at VICSES' State Headquarters.

Originally hailing from North Warrandyte, volunteering was always encouraged within the

community, but it wasn't until he engaged with an SES-run display at the Eltham Festival showcasing the unit's search and rescue equipment that Justin found his future in orange.

Volunteering while studying at university, Justin quickly rose into positions of leadership within the Nillumbik community, serving as a Duty Officer for the unit and taking on key roles in administration, training, logistics and crew leading.

His passion would then become a career with the SES in 2005, serving as State Operations Officer – Operations Planning for 10 years before an eventual move to Emergency Management Victoria.



Upon his return to volunteering at Nillumbik, Justin spent time as a Deputy Controller before being elevated into the unit's top job as Controller, one month after being honoured with a Life Membership with VICSES.

The work of Justin and his predecessors has seen VICSES Nillumbik Unit maintain proficiency in managing a range of challenging emergency scenarios, with the unit's service area requiring a blend of urban and rural responses.

Since April last year, Nillumbik volunteers have responded to more than 450 requests for assistance (RFAs), encompassing everything from downed trees, road crash rescues, to building

damage, and assisting partner agencies in challenging, physical rescues in rural terrain.

VICSES Nillumbik Unit is also one of four VICSES North West Metro Region units to attend more than 400 RFAs in the last 12 months, alongside Heidelberg, Fawkner and Whittlesea.

Justin said "As a Unit Controller, I like to see things improve, I like to see people grow, and I like to share knowledge, and this role allows me to do that while seeing our volunteers thrive."

"We volunteer because we care about our community, and we will continue to do so to provide support wherever and whenever we can." ■

This year attendees included VICSES, Victoria Police, Fire Services, and the Surf Lifesaving Drone Team.

We presented to the Nippers about the following topics:

- What we do
- What number to call if you require help from VICSES
- Highlights of the tools and equipment on the truck

We finished with an emphasis on our role as volunteers in the community and an invitation to join us when they come of age. Due to the heat and the presence of some very interesting diversions (last year it was a landing helicopter, this year it was the police boat spraying water onto the shore), we keep it light, short and sweet.

Engagement on this level has an important role. We maintain visibility to the public, engage the kids on the roles of the different emergency services, and set up interest for future visits with schools and scout groups. ■



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Sale Airshow ANZAC weekend

By Rachel Rogers, Community Resilience Coordinator, Eastern Region



VICSES volunteers from the state's eastern reaches converged at the Sale ANZAC Weekend Airshow, winning the title for the 'Best Emergency Service Display' in only their second appearance at the event.

Sale, Maffra, Loch Sport, Stratford, Rosedale and Warragul units were each represented as part of a major activation at the event, showcasing a wide array of equipment and vehicle assets used by volunteers to respond to emergencies in east Gippsland.

The extensive variety of assets on display showcased the different capabilities and roles offered to our volunteers, educated spectators on the responsibilities of our organisation, and inspired young and old to get in contact with their local unit to start their own volunteer journey. Attendees reported that it was one of the best VICSES activations they'd seen.

The team is thrilled with the result and feeling inspired to start planning for the next show! ■

Eastern Region Women in Rescue event

By Merryn Henderson, Community Resilience Coordinator, Eastern Region

This year Eastern Region members Bri Reid, Karina Osgood, and Raelene Billingsley joined together to facilitate the Eastern Region Women in Rescue event at Sale, as part of the state event working group.

They represented the women in our region, working together to plan, facilitate and deliver an amazing day to celebrate and empower women across our organisation to maintain and enhance their operational capabilities.

The aim of the WIR event was to provide a positive, welcoming and challenging learning opportunity for women in our service. We also aimed to expand the leadership capacity of VICSES women in addition to providing networking opportunities for women in emergency services.

30 women from across nine units met at the Sale Unit and participated in various challenging scenarios including the following:

- **Chainsaw:** Ben Graham from Leongatha Unit provided the opportunity for skills maintenance in the use and upkeep of chainsaws for qualified members.
- **Road Crash Rescue (RCR):** Members were given the opportunity to try out road rescue tools.
- **Virtual Reality (VR) Headsets:** Raelene Billingsley facilitated a fun training session using the VR RCR headsets. This session was a first for the region, with the kits playing a supportive training role in the lead up to a real capability test.
- **Safe Work at Heights System (SWAHS):** Karina Osgood, one of the region's subject matter leads, gave



a skills maintenance session using the roof prop to set the SWAHS system.

Participants who were untrained in the skillsets as part of the training sessions were provided the opportunity to begin their learning in a supportive and controlled environment.

Raelene Billingsley was thrilled with the success of the event.

"Our female first responders at VICSES are incredible and attend

highly complex, challenging incidents. Our WIR event highlights their life-saving skills using the latest rescue technology. Events like these would not be possible without a lot of dedication and effort by a large group of members, both volunteer and staff. A huge thankyou to all those involved," said Raelene.

We are excited to continue to build on this fantastic event next year! ■

Gippsland's remote Bendoc Unit achieves Road Crash Rescue Accreditation

By Merryn Henderson, Community Resilience Coordinator, Eastern Region

The VICSES Gippsland Training team made the huge commitment to support the very remote VICSES Bendoc Unit undertake their triannual Road Crash Rescue (RCR) accreditation.



The training involved several intensive sessions, with the Bendoc volunteers spending countless hours finetuning their skills in the lead up to the Road Rescue Capability Assessment.

The Bendoc Unit's successful accreditation on 17 April now ensures RCR capability remains in place to support the very remote, rural road systems of far East Gippsland and across the New South Wales border.

Capability assessors included Operations Officer, Gerry Sheridan and Capability Improvement and Gippsland trainer Raelene Billingsley ESM.

Raelene said "It was great to see a small, dedicated team of volunteers competently led by Unit Controller John Reed wanting to learn and hone their skills. Their willingness to improve their skills and knowledge shows true commitment to the Bendoc community." ■

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Danielle Eyssens achieves unprecedented goals

By Lauren Castle, Corporate Communications Advisor, VHO



Glen Eira Unit Controller Danielle Eyssens has reached new heights, achieving a Level 3 Operations Officer accreditation at the Victorian Emergency Management Institute awards ceremony on 18 April.

With a commendable 17 years of VICSES service behind her comprising of on-the-ground experience paired with extensive training, Danielle is our first volunteer and first woman to achieve a Level 3 Operations Officer accreditation.

Danielle first gained an interest in operations during some major storm events early on in her VICSES journey, and has continued to explore and grow in this area.

"I completed the Sector/Divisional Commander and Incident Agency Commander courses and started to learn and perform these roles at various incidents whenever I could. A few years later I was given the opportunity to apply for training in an Incident Management Team (IMT) role and was lucky enough to be selected for the Operations Officer stream in 2017," said Danielle.

"Since then, I have focused on developing my skills, attaining Level 2 endorsement and now Level 3 multi agency endorsement. The journey is not only about developing technical skills but also about seeking out and actioning feedback, self-reflection, and leadership development which can be really challenging. Going forward I will be expanding my skills to incorporate all hazards at a higher level, and I am excited to see where this takes me. Without strong support and honest

feedback from my mentors both in the SES and now in other agencies, none of this would be possible," continued Danielle.

Following Danielle's achievement, we hope to see more women and volunteers realise their goals in the operations space.

"Roles should be reflective of our community. Operations Officer, or any of the IMT roles for that matter, are not male or female specific roles. Diversity in the operations cell can bring different

perspectives to the problems faced during an incident, providing the best outcome for the incident and our community," said Danielle.

Congratulations to Danielle and everyone who achieved their Level 3 accreditation. We are grateful to have inspiring leaders like Danielle in our service and look forward to learning about her future achievements as a Level 3 Operations Officer. ■



Read more

Read more about our other accreditation recipients on pages 22 - 23.



Emerald Unit Container Deposit Scheme

In just four months, the Emerald Unit has raised over \$10,000 through the Container Deposit Scheme. Well done to Community Engagement Facilitator, Olinka Edwards who is the driving force behind getting the whole unit on board with this project. ■



Seymour Unit joins multi-agency exercise

By the VICSES Seymour Unit

On Thursday 4 April, Seymour Unit along with local emergency services participated in a multi-agency exercise hosted by Trawool Country Fire Authority (CFA).



The exercise, influenced by the 2023 Eynesbury bus incident and the 2023 Hunter Valley bus incident, involved a bus driver suffering a heart attack while transporting people from a festival in the Trawool Valley. The bus had run off the road and rolled through a campsite before coming to a stop. With St John Ambulance first on the scene and confronted with the situation, the call for assistance required a multi-agency response.

With minimal information available before arriving on the scene, crews from Ambulance

Victoria (AV), Country Fire Authority (CFA), VICSES and Victoria Police responded from the Seymour area.

Agency Commanders were under extreme pressure while trying to gain control of the scene. With up to 30 casualties needing significant medical assistance and up to 20 casualties entrapped within the bus, crews worked together well into the dark. They established an emergency management team to coordinate all personnel on-site, implementing a strategy to transport patients to the onsite field

hospital for treatment before handing over to AV.

The exercise received extensive support from landowners, local businesses and community groups including the donation of a 57-seater bus and provision of meals for all involved.

The exercise involved 90 first responders from across agencies, along with 27 students from LaTrobe University who acted as casualties. More than 30 support personnel were onsite as observers and coaches.

Seymour Unit Controller Christine Welsh reflected on the importance of VICSES volunteers being prepared for any scenario, and these exercises play a vital role in upskilling and nurturing important inter-agency teamwork.

"These relationships are particularly important in regional areas and have been an ongoing focus of Seymour Unit volunteers over the past 12 months", said Christine. ■



Southern Metro Regional Unit attend Nowruz Festival

By Tohiora James Kuru, Deputy Controller - Southern Metro Regional Unit, Eastern Region

Eight members from the Southern Metro Regional Unit attended the 1403 Nowruz Festival in Dandenong on 14 April, hosted by the Victorian Afghan Associations Network. The event was attended by approximately 15,000 people. Our members spent the day engaging with the community to spread awareness of VICSES and how to contact us in emergencies.

The Southern Metro Regional Unit assists other VICSES units right across the state at community events. We are a team of passionate members who love to engage with different communities to build local resilience. ■



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WESTERN REGION

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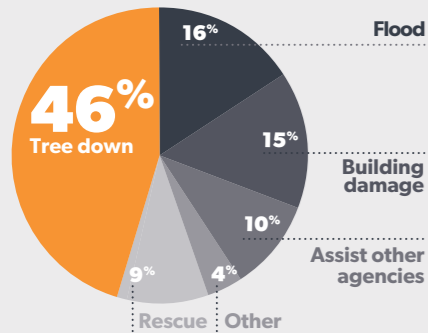


2,416

Volunteers

4,737

Requests for assistance



Newly formed Aintree Unit attends ANZAC Day service

By Selina Albert, Deputy Controller – Operations and Training, Western Region

The newly formed Aintree Unit made their first community event appearance at the ANZAC Day Commemorative Service held on Sunday 21 April at Woodlea Town Centre Aintree.

We were invited by Woodlea Community Development Manager Clair Mouser to lay a wreath which was provided to us by a small local business Mellflora.

Having our first community event being ANZAC Day was special as it's definitely something that touches all of us. Being able to show support to our fallen as a unit is something I'll remember. It was nice to meet some of the local council members that we will be forming relationships with as well as other community organisations.

As a unit we are also looking forward to attending a range of upcoming events including a community BBQ at Bunnings Caroline Springs, school and daycare visits to educate the younger members of our community, and of course the grand opening of our unit!

Our unit's volunteers are all completely new to VICSES except one transfer member, which

gives us a unique opportunity to form a unit that works for the community that we will be supporting. We have great leadership and experience in Unit Controller Micah Spedding, and the diversity of our volunteers definitely represents our community. We have a keen team that is willing to learn and brings a level of external experience that will make our unit an exciting place to be. I am excited by what is to come and very proud to be part of this unit. ■



Bacchus Marsh Unit volunteers receive esteemed Commendation of Service Award – Pentland Hills Bus Crash

By Dharni Giri, Senior Media Advisor, VHO



In April, Chief Officer Operations Tim Wiebusch presented 11 Bacchus Marsh Unit members with VICSES' highest award – the Group Commendation of Service for their response to the Pentland Hills Bus Crash of 21 September 2022.

During the early hours of Wednesday 21 September 2022, the unit received a priority 1 request for assistance to an initial report of a bus that had flipped upside down after a B-Double truck had collided with the rear of the bus on the Western Freeway near Condons Lane.

At 3:26am the first Bacchus Marsh vehicle responded and requested additional rescue be dispatched, being Ballan Country Fire Authority (CFA) Rescue.

The Pentland Hills Bus Crash presented an additional layer of

difficulty as it occurred over an embankment and down an incline. To access the scene, members had to navigate challenging terrain while carrying heavy rescue equipment from their appliances.

The sheer volume of casualties rendered this operation physically demanding, placing enduring strain on responding members.

Crews extricated the truck driver and multiple children who were either trapped in the bus and supported others back to the freeway to ambulances, including the bus drivers and remainder of

the group of 27 students and four adults as the 'walking wounded'.

Two students with upper body injuries were flown to the Royal Children's Hospital with many others treated by paramedic before being transported by road to the Alfred, Royal Melbourne, Sunshine, Western and Ballarat Base hospitals.

The Bacchus Marsh crews closely collaborated with neighbouring rescue providers, such as Melton Fire Rescue Victoria (FRV) and Ballan CFA during the Pentland Hills incident. The teams' dedication to working harmoniously with other emergency services showcased their commitment to achieving successful outcomes for all involved.

The VICSES Commendation of Service is the organisation's highest award - based on it being

about exceptional response. VICSES could not be prouder of the exceptional response provided by the 11 Bacchus Marsh members which resulted in a highly valuable commitment the community and embodies the core values of VICSES, especially our VICSES Value of being focused and adaptable.

The complexity of the scene, the coordination across a large number of multi-agency resources and their collective efforts in rescuing and providing care throughout this mass casualty incident, was above and beyond the road crash rescues that our units sadly attend on a regular basis. The Commendation of Service reflects their unwavering commitment to public safety and the application of specialist skills to the highest standards. ■



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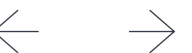
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WESTERN REGION



Auslan Day: Promoting inclusion at VICSES and in our community

By Lauren Castle, Corporate Communications Advisor, VHO



With Auslan Day celebrated on 13 April, we're highlighting initiatives within VICSES to facilitate the inclusion of those who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

Auslan (Australian sign language) is the official language of the Australian Deaf community. It is a visual form of language relying on hand gestures, facial expressions and bodily movements to convey meaning.

Gisborne Unit Deputy Controller Shanleigh Meldrum said "As a bilingual and bicultural Deaf Person, Auslan Day is an opportunity for me to celebrate Auslan and Deaf culture. It is also an opportunity to share the history and value Auslan holds to the

wider Australian Deaf Community," continued Shanleigh.

Gisborne Unit is a trailblazer in taking practical steps to promoting the inclusion of Deaf and Hard of Hearing members.

"Deaf Awareness and Basic Auslan training have been part of our unit for a number of years and largely driven by unit members wanting to be more accessible to our Deaf/Hard of Hearing members and the wider Deaf and Hard of Hearing community."

If you are feeling inspired to bring Auslan to your unit, there are a range of ways to do so.

Shanleigh informs "VICSES members can undertake Deaf Awareness and/or Auslan training through a range of different providers or modes. This can include face-to-face or online depending on their area, individually or as a unit."

"It is important that you learn from a Deaf Native Auslan user (i.e. someone who is Deaf). Many Deaf organisations can provide tailored training depending on the needs of the group they are presenting to. Some examples are Expression Australia and Auslan in the West. Units can apply for small community grants to bring this type of training to their unit if they can't fund themselves," says Shanleigh.

William Bone, Deaf member of Wedderburn Unit has some tips for learning Auslan.

"The best way to sign is to learn how to fingerspell first! Practice everywhere when you have few minutes - maybe when you're waiting for the kettle to boil, or at the traffic lights in the car, or waiting for food at a cafe. When you feel confident to move forward learning more Auslan, there are a few great online resources such as Asphyxia's Auslan lessons on YouTube and Auslan.org.au."

William notes that increasing knowledge and use of Auslan within VICSES also contributes to creating a more inclusive community more broadly.

"I just really think it's important not just as a VICSES member but as a member of the general community, to learn Auslan. It is a great everyday skill to have, because you just never know when you will meet someone who is Deaf or Hard of Hearing." ■

Bendigo Unit fundraiser a hit with attendees

By Lauren Castle, Corporate Communications Advisor, VHO

On March 15, the Bendigo Unit held a trivia night at the Bendigo RSL to raise funds for local services and facilities to support their unit. It was a jam-packed evening with activities ranging from games to auctions and even a Paddy the Platypus

appearance to break up the eight rounds of trivia.

It was a crowd-pleasing event with terrific feedback from participants. "The games broke up the auctions and the trivia. All in all, fab!" said one attendee. Congratulations to the unit on running a hugely successful event raising over \$9,500. ■



Small but mighty Echuca Unit connects with their community

By Matt Scott, Echuca Unit, Eastern Region

In April, the small but mighty Echuca Unit went on display at the Echuca Moama Discovery Day, held at the Campaspe Shire library.

Members Rima Mehta and Matthew Scott attended the information stand, fielding enquires about membership and volunteering, the role of VICSES, as well as general questions such as what to pack in an emergency survival kit.



It was a great opportunity to showcase the Echuca Unit locally and be seen among other volunteer organisations in the community. This is the third year the unit has attended the event, and we will return again in 2025! ■



Wellbeing in the West

By Emma Hayes, Deputy Controller Community Engagement and Members - Bellarine Unit, Western Region

Here at the Bellarine Unit, we identified a need for a support network for members – so we've started a social events group!

This initiative was created for our members who wanted to join in at an out-of-VICSES social activity. Our activity calendar was put together by our members, and includes mini golf, card games, BBQ dinners, movie nights, park walks, cricket matches, and the list goes on.

Some activities are held at the unit while others are off-site. They are not necessarily expensive and can be non-cost activities. There is no obligation for members to take part in these activities every two months, but the option is there and we've had great turnouts so far.

The purpose of the group is to have a safe and encouraging space to check in on each other. We can have a laugh, have a chat, ask questions, discuss concerns, bring up troubling issues all in a relaxed environment while doing a fun activity. It's also a great way to get to know each of our members.

We do so much teamwork within VICSES and knowing our teammates can benefit everyone out on the job. We are finding it very beneficial and are working hard to keep it as a regular occurrence. ■



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Sikh community appreciates VICSES members

By Jane Patton, Community Resilience Coordinator, Western Region

On 7 April, The Sikh Volunteers Australia community held their 10th Anniversary ceremony at Bunjil Place (Casey’s Civic Centre), Narre Warren.

VICSES Members from Craigieburn, Heidelberg and Narre Warren units in addition to North West Metro Community Resilience Coordinator (CRC), Malvina Tsecoutanis were recipients of an appreciation award.

All recipients received their award in the presence of the Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, Victorian Premier Jacinta Allen, and several State MPs who were in attendance. Dean Graham (CRC) received the award on behalf of Malvina.

Malvina has completed significant work in the multicultural space, working with other emergency services to develop a network of key contacts across different multicultural communities and

working to link them in with units in the areas. This has included attendance with Community Engagement Facilitators (CEFs) at multi-cultural and multi-faith events right across the Melbourne area.

Malvina has actively been involved supporting North West Metro Units in community engagement activities, running CEF workshops, and developing targeted community engagement campaigns. VICSES is fortunate to have Malvina’s expertise on board.

The prestige acknowledgement which has now been awarded to Malvina twice (in 2024 and 2022) is well deserved for her collaboration with diverse communities that VICSES volunteers engage with in delivering safety messages. ■



Kevin Willersdorf recognised for his outstanding community service



By Jason Conrad, Volunteer Support Officer, Western Region

Kevin Willersdorf has been a beloved and active member of the Murrayville community for his entire life.

Kevin has been involved in the Country Fire Authority (CFA) and VICSES since he was 16 years



Loddon Mallee Community Engagement Facilitator course bolsters skills

By Layton Miller, Community Resilience Coordinator, Western Region

The Loddon Mallee Community Engagement Facilitator (CEF) course took place from 27 - 28 April at Marong Unit. It was so popular that we had 39 nominations for the course - nearly double the places available.

The assistance from the Learning and Development team was instrumental in the success of the course during a busy weekend in Bendigo with limited accommodation available.

It was a terrific couple of days and the involvement from those that attended went above and beyond our expectations. The feedback that we have received so far has shown how beneficial this course is, as it gives our members the skills needed when engaging with their local communities.

Stay tuned for the next course which is programmed for September this year! ■

old – receiving a National Medal for CFA for 45 years of service, and National Medal for VICSES for 40 years of service. He is currently the Unit Controller for the VICSES Murrayville Unit, and his involvement is truly outstanding.

Kevin was a member that instigated the Murrayville Landcare group and has been on the committee the entire time. He has worked with various committee members and facilitators, ranging from local to further afield.

Because all this hasn’t been enough to keep him busy over the years, Kevin has also been on the Board for the Murrayville Public Hall, the South Australia Hospital Board, Victorian

Farmers Federation, Murrayville Landcare, Neighbourhood Watch and Liaison, as well as being a committee member and President of the Murrayville Community College when his kids were attending school.

Kevin is now retired from farming after 42 years, but still an active community member. In fact, this year he was named Mildura Rural City Council Citizen of the Year! Everyone knows he is only a phone call away when someone needs a listening ear, advice or help with a job. He seems busier than ever. You could say that Kevin lives and breathes Murrayville, and we are all very grateful for his love and passion for our town. ■

Members engage community in Skipton

By Lisa McDonald, Community Resilience Coordinator, Western Region

On a gorgeous bright Autumn afternoon, the Lismore Unit and the South West Unit Support Team descended on the small community of Skipton as part of a community engagement plan funded under the Victorian Floodplain Management Strategy.

We were joined by the local Country Fire Authority (CFA) brigade, the Corangamite Shire Emergency Services Team, the Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority (CMA) and local psychosocial support group Wellways. Together, we set out to understand the community’s level of flood awareness, raise that awareness, and ensure they were prepared for future flood events.

Residents were surveyed about their level of flood awareness. A number of resources were used to inform the community about

the various flood levels within the town and surrounding areas, including Floodzoom which was powered by the Driver Reviver Community Engagement Van, enabling us to focus on specific properties.

Our project will conclude in late May when we revisit those surveyed to pass on a VICSES branded family grab bag to aid in preparedness, answer any further questions community members may have, and resurvey their awareness and confidence in preparing to gauge the effectiveness of our project. ■



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OPERATIONAL UPDATES

Women lead the way: First female VICSES members graduate into key state response roles

By Ryan Malcolm, Media Advisor, VHO

VICSES volunteers and staff will be better represented in positions of responsibility in the event of a state-wide emergency, with six of the organisation's members receiving their Level 3 accreditation across a range of incident management roles.

In a ceremony at the Victorian Emergency Management Institute (VEMI) on 18 April, VICSES personnel were awarded their accreditation as either a Level

3 Operations Officer or a Level 3 Incident Controller.

The ceremony represented the culmination of an extended period of evaluation, professional development and leadership

training for each of the VICSES graduates, which will now see them able to play key leadership roles at a state level in the event of a large-scale emergency response.

Among the most recent cohort, current VICSES Metro East Region Operations Manager – Unit Support, Diana Batley, became the first female to become a Level 3 Incident Controller in VICSES' history.

Eastern Region Operations Manager Learning and Development, Brendan Corboy, also received his Level 3 Incident Controller accreditation, as did Southern Metro Operations Manager – Unit Support, Matt Taranto.



VICSES is also set to benefit from a host of recently accredited Level 3 Operations Officers, including one VICSES volunteer who currently serves as a Unit Controller in Melbourne's inner-south east.

Danielle Eyssens became the first-ever VICSES volunteer to receive a Level 3 accreditation in any capacity, with the Glen Eira Unit Controller a trailblazer among VICSES' 34% female volunteer base.

Eastern Region Operations Officer Lead Trainer Troy Milner was also elevated as a Level 3 Operations Officer, alongside Western Region Operations Manager Learning and Development, Andrew Murton.

Watching on at the ceremony was a collection of VICSES' senior management, including Chief Executive Officer Greg Leach, Chief Operations Officer Tim Wiebusch, Deputy Chief Officers David Baker, Alistair Drayton, Simon White and Ernestina Di Marco, Senior Assistant Chief Officer Ray Jasper and Assistant Chief Officer Mark Cattell.



It's fantastic to see our staff and volunteers be acknowledged for their tireless commitment to the safety of communities across the state, and I look forward to seeing our VICSES personnel play an increasingly important role in the management of major emergencies going forward," said VICSES Chief Officer Operations Tim Wiebusch.

"This accreditation highlights the countless hours this cohort has spent honing their skills to be able to enact appropriate and timely responses in a range of complex emergency scenarios. They are each leaders within our organisation and the sector, and I wish them well as they tackle their next challenge in the incident management sphere." ■

REQUESTS FOR ASSISTANCE

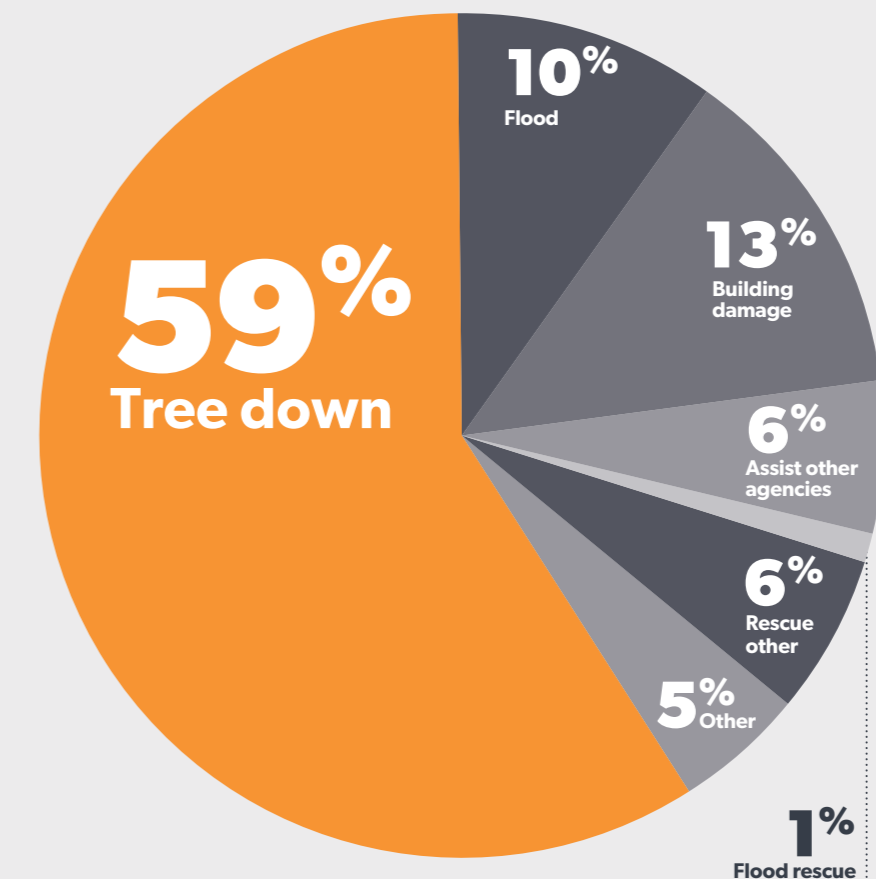
1 January – 31 March 2024

Total

14,466



Breakdown



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PROJECTS – WHAT'S NEW

New Skye Satellite Facility opens its doors!

By Tracey White, Senior Advisor Publicity - Events and Partnerships, VHO

Sunday, 26 May was a day of celebration and excitement as our VICSES Skye Satellite facility opened its doors!



The day kicked off with a buzz as the community gathered to witness the official opening. We had the pleasure of hosting State Member for Carrum (Minister Sonia Kilkeny MP), who joined our VICSES Frankston Unit volunteers to unveil the plaque and mark this fantastic occasion. The vibe? Electric!

So, what's the big deal about this new facility? Well, it's a total game-changer! This shiny new satellite facility is here to help our amazing VICSES Frankston Unit volunteers respond even quicker and more efficiently to emergencies in the Skye and surrounding areas. Imagine having essential equipment and vehicles stored at two locations—Seaford and now Skye—making our community safer.

The Victorian Government invested over \$4 million in this project, part of a broader investment in VICSES infrastructure. The Skye Facility is the first satellite in this round of investment, and what a smart investment it is! The new facility boasts:

- A two-bay motor room with a turn-out facility.
- Fit-for-purpose changeroom amenities.
- Storage space for all that crucial equipment.
- A cozy tea room for our hardworking volunteers.

Talk about top-notch!



Our VICSES Frankston Unit is one of the busiest in the state, responding to an impressive average of around 1,150 requests for assistance every year. With 126 volunteers, including 59 operational members, these heroes are trained in everything from Road Crash Rescue to storm and flood response. Plus, they're superstars at community engagement, making sure we're all resilient and ready for anything.

With this new satellite facility, our VICSES volunteers are not just better equipped for today—they're ready for the future. As VICSES CEO Greg Leach highlighted, "This new facility will not only better equip our existing volunteers to perform their role and provide additional space for training, but it will also greatly help support the retention and recruitment of new volunteers." ■



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**WELLBEING,
HEALTH & SAFETY**

Minimum Physical Fitness for Role Program

By John Bates, Trainer and Advisor - Fit for Role Project, VHO

Statewide implementation of the Minimum Physical Fitness for Role Program is now in full swing.

A series of facilitator training courses began at Lilydale in April and are continuing with more courses already scheduled across the state.

These courses are helping us train members in our units and regional offices in program implementation. You can apply for courses through the Training Portal, with the approval of your Unit Controller.

We are joining SES agencies across Australia in implementing minimum physical fitness standards because we all want our people to be safe, and to return home well after training and after every call out they attend.

The program includes explanation of minimum fitness

requirements and a series of physical assessments designed to demonstrate that members have the required minimum levels of fitness. The program has been proven to closely simulate the SES operating environment and has been received well by SES members nationally.

The Minimum Physical Fitness for Role Program will improve the way that we look after the safety of our members, providing confidence that our members can safely undertake essential tasks in all the roles where they meet the required fitness levels. It is our expectation that for most members, if you can undertake all the elements that you completed during your training for a particular role, you should

be able to meet these minimum physical fitness standards.

We know that some members may not be able to meet all the fitness requirements for some roles, for reasons including illness, medical conditions and disability. Where it is safe, those members will be able to request a Reasonable Accommodation so that they are able to actively participate in operational activities with their units, but with restrictions on the tasks that they can undertake.

We have been working closely with our Wellbeing Services and Support team, who have adapted some of their programs to help units and individual members prepare for the introduction of this new program. Check out the Healthwatch and 6-week challenge programs on SharePoint.

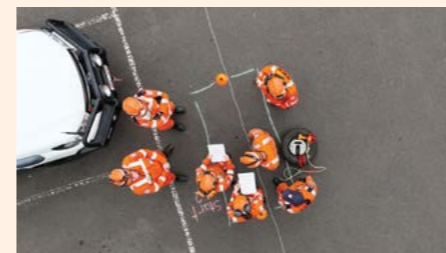
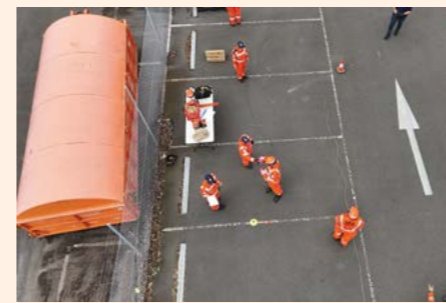
Everyone is encouraged to make use of these programs, or to undertake other activities

to maintain, or boost their physical fitness.

Some response capabilities that we provide carry higher levels of risk. To maintain safety in these roles, members will need to fully meet the fitness requirements to be able to enrol in courses or continue to operate in those roles in a hands-on capacity. These roles include high and steep angle rescue, boat operations, land based swift water rescue, alpine search and survival and wilderness search. ■

More information

For more information on the program, speak to your local Minimum Physical Fitness for Role Facilitator or have a look on SharePoint.



Supporting you through change



“Your present circumstances don’t determine where you go; they merely determine where you start.” — Nido Qubein

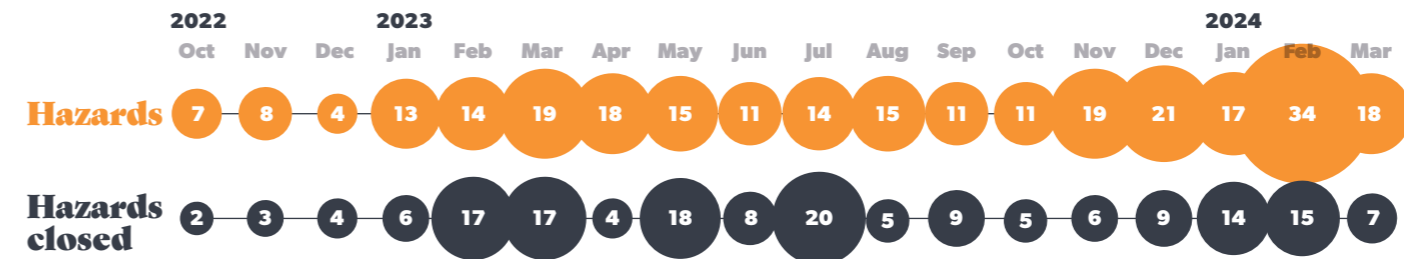
Change is a constant in our lives which can help us to adapt and grow. Embracing change can be challenging for everyone because it pushes us outside our comfort zone and presents us with a new experience. It is completely normal to feel anxious, uneasy and apprehensive about new responsibilities, tasks or roles. If you are feeling uncertain about the changes coming in for the Minimum Physical Fitness for Role requirements, there is support available to you.

Here are some resources which can support you through this period of change:

- Need to talk to someone?**
Contact Peer Support 24/7 on **1800 899 927**
- Have you booked in your free AVSMART mental health assessment with an experienced VICSES clinician?**
Book in your appointment today via SharePoint.
- Are you interested in lifestyle counselling for fitness and diet?**
Contact our Employee Assistance Program (free for all members) and request Lifestyle Counselling to be referred to an experienced clinician. To make a booking, visit **convergeinternational.com.au** or call **1300 687 327**
- Build up your fitness in the privacy of your own home with our 4 Week Building Fitness program or our Fit for Role 6 Week Challenge. Register your interest by scanning the QR code or email **wellbeing@ses.vic.gov.au**
- Book your unit in for a Healthwatch Fit for Role Familiarisation session.**
Practicing the movements and tasks required for the assessment will help set you up for success. Contact **wellbeing@ses.vic.gov.au** to book. ■



YEAR AT A GLANCE



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COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

VICSES Frankston Unit volunteers bring birthday dream to life

By Ryan Malcolm, Media Advisor, VHO

A sea of orange descended on one particular Frankston property earlier this month, as VICSES Frankston Unit volunteers realised an SES-obsessed five-year-old's dream by celebrating his birthday alongside him.

Less than 12 months after volunteers had inadvertently inspired Arthur by attending his family home to sandbag during a flooding event, Frankston volunteers came ready to party on 7 April, showcasing their equipment and helping Arthur and his classmates embrace the SES theme of the day.

Arthur, who has since taken to recreating SES rescue scenarios during his play time, couldn't contain his joy as sirens rang out along his street, and was more than happy to give VICSES mascot 'Paddy the Platypus' a high five as the party got underway.

His passion for the volunteers in orange has become well-



known among his family and classmates, further influenced by his grandfather's involvement with VICSES' Moorabbin Unit.

At kindergarten, Arthur often colours in pictures of SES trucks with the help of his teachers, and even developed an SES-themed bauble for the family's Christmas tree over the most recent holiday period.

VICSES had initially supplied themed tape and stickers for the event, however, despite being among the state's busiest VICSES units over the last six months, Frankston volunteers were more than happy to attend in their spare time to further add to Arthur's special day.

"It's nice to think our volunteers may have inspired Arthur to uphold the values we live by here at the SES Frankston Unit, and hopefully follow in our footsteps - already his

dedication shows he will make a wonderful VICSES volunteer one day," said VICSES Frankston Unit Controller Brian McMannis.

"A huge thank you to each of our volunteers who took time out of their weekend to celebrate with Arthur, and to those who continue to support their community in times of emergency," continued Brian.

Arthur's mother, Sarah Mead said "Due to some heavy rainfall and storms in 2023, it was predicted our property would flood, so we had the SES deliver some sandbags, the team filled them up and sandbagged our front yard.

Arthur stood outside in the rain absolutely in awe of their work."

This experience inspired Arthur to have an SES themed birthday party. Thank you to the Frankston Unit and everyone who was involved in making Arthur's fifth birthday extra special! ■

Premier visits VICSES units to say 'thank you' during February storms

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

On Tuesday 13 February a heavy and dark cloud blanketed the City of Monash.

hail, along with strong winds caused power outages and significant damage to residential and commercial properties, leaving a trail of fallen trees and branches throughout the south-eastern suburbs. In the days following the storm, the Monash Unit responded to over 1,000 requests for assistance from the Monash community.

Later that week, Victorian Premier Jacinta Allan and local council dignitaries visited the Monash Unit to thank the volunteers for their

significant emergency response to the storm. Moments of gratitude from the Premier where shared with the volunteers including a BBQ breakfast, conversations over coffee, and family snaps from cheerful members of the unit.

At a press conference held at the unit on that Sunday morning, the Premier Allan expressed her appreciation to the first responders.

"This crew has done a truly incredible job in keeping their community safe during such a



difficult week. It was great to meet the team this morning and give them a proper thanks for all the incredible work they do. These truly are some of Victoria's best," she said.

The catastrophic storm event in February damaged 12,000 km of powerlines across the state's electricity, causing power outages to 500,000 homes and businesses. The Cardinia Shire was heavily hit by the storm with residents in the Dandenong Ranges left without power for a week. Relief centres were set up in Emerald and neighbouring Cockatoo providing communities with the essentials in the aftermath of the storm.

On 16 February, the Premier Jacinta Allan joined VICSES Chief Officer Tim Wiebusch at the Emerald Unit to show her gratitude once again to the volunteers and emergency service partners for

their incredible and ongoing response to the storm.

At the time of Allan's visit, many roads in the eastern Dandenongs were still covered in debris and damaged houses were being assessed and many parts of Emerald and Cockatoo were still without electricity.

Volunteers from the Emerald Unit relayed their experiences to Premier Allan, many referenced the 9 June 2021 storms to convey improvements from their unit in emergency response.

"It's important to recognise the tremendous efforts and selfless dedication from the emergency service teams and volunteers, especially the Emerald SES, who jump straight into action during these disaster events." – Victorian Premier Jacinta Allan. ■

Easter long weekend Driver Reviver activations

By Ryan Malcolm, Media Advisor, VHO

VICSES volunteers encouraged motorists to break up their travels at Driver Reviver pop-up sites across the state over the Easter long-weekend, in a concerted effort to reduce

road trauma over the holiday period.

VICSES volunteers powered around 30 Driver Reviver sites alongside Lions Club, Rotary and RSL members, ahead of expected spikes

in traffic throughout the weekend, continuing a nationwide tradition which has operated for more than 30 years.

Volunteers provided free tea, coffee, and snacks at a range of roadside rest stops throughout Victoria, promoting fatigue management among motorists travelling to enjoy the Easter break. ■



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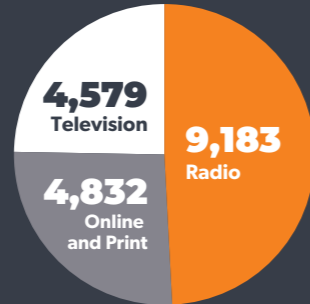
Campaigns and events:

- Midsumma Pride March
- Melbourne United Basketball: VICSES recognition game
- Women in Rescue
- Driver Reviver (Labour Day and Easter)
- F1 Australia Grand Prix

Media releases:

- 24 January: VICSES headed to Queensland ahead of Cyclone Kirrily
- 26 January: 2024 Emergency Services Medal – Sue Sheldrick
- 4 February: VICSES volunteers return for third day of search operation
- 18 February: Melbourne United Basketball – VICSES recognition game
- 8 March: SES Winchelsea Unit volunteers to operate first Driver Reviver stop in seven years
- 15 March: SES Women in Rescue event doubles in size – largest ever

Mentions of VICSES in the news:



- 22 March: Stay safe while visiting Victoria's great outdoors this Easter long-weekend
- 26 March: VICSES volunteers shine light on road safety with pop-up Driver Reviver stations across state



Spotlight on the Media Liaison Officer role

Raman Sanjayan is a Volunteer Media Liaison Officer (MLO) at the Monash Unit. We asked him some questions to get to know him and find out more about his role!

Hi Raman! How long have you been a VICSES member?

I've been a volunteer for around 2.5 years.

What inspired you to join us?

I joined because I wanted to engage in more volunteering and do something both exciting and very different to what I do as my 'day job' (studying as a medical student).

What does your role as Volunteer MLO involve?

My role involves managing the unit's social media platforms (currently Facebook, Instagram and our brand new YouTube channel). This might involve

posting about our unit activities such as community education, fundraising and recruitment events, as well as jobs that we've been up to. This means we can provide our community with an update and insight into the kinds of things we do.

I personally use this opportunity to go a bit further, as I have a passion for photography and video editing and create our own annual 'Year in Review' videos, as well as various other video productions and photo editing opportunities that come up.

Do you have any tips for identifying a great story?

I try to post things that the community would engage and identify with, especially exciting or cool jobs we've been to or interesting activities our unit members have been up to (training courses etc.). People like cool and exciting things...

you won't have to look far in an emergency service to find those stories! ■



More information

Check out Raman and his team's great work on the SES Monash Unit Facebook page.



Social media post highlights (state accounts):

FACEBOOK



Impressions: **5,218,076**

Engagement: **304,211**

07/01/24: VICSES responds after severe January storm event.

X (FORMERLY TWITTER)



Impressions: **10,177** Engagement: **452**

08/02/24: VICSES volunteers continue search operation near Ballarat East.

LINKEDIN



Impressions: **3,569** Engagement: **559**

04/02/2024: Proud and supportive VICSES members at the Midsumma Pride March

INSTAGRAM



Impressions: **5,765** Engagement: **388**

03/01/23: Thanking VICSES members who deployed to Queensland to support storm affected communities.

OUR PEOPLE AND CULTURE

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Belonging

DEIB

update

The 'E' in DEIB can stand for both equality and equity which are both approaches to promoting fairness in teams and workplaces – but what's the difference?

Equality focuses on treating everyone the same regardless of their individual circumstances. It assumes that providing everyone with the same access to resources or opportunities will result in fairness. However, this approach may not address the inherent differences and barriers faced by individuals.

Equity recognises that fairness may require different treatment for different individuals to achieve equal outcomes or the same goals. It involves providing resources and opportunities based on the specific needs and circumstances of individuals or groups to ensure everyone has an equal chance of success. Equity addresses systemic inequalities and aims to level the playing field for all.

In DEIB initiatives, equality might involve treating all employees the same way, while equity involves tailoring strategies and redistributing

By Keni Ramsay-Samrai, Organisational Development Coordinator, VHO

resources to address the specific barriers and needs of different groups.

Reflection activity:

1 Thinking about your daily life, at home or in the workplace, where can you see the differences between equality and equity? How might you creatively adjust something to shift into an equity approach?

2 In what ways can we go beyond surface-level diversity efforts to truly foster equity within our teams and organisation?

3 How can we encourage open dialogue and feedback channels to better understand the unique challenges faced by different groups within our organisation?



Examples in daily life – Equality versus equity

Team Meeting, Goal: Everyone can participate and contribute to the meeting

Equality:

All team members are expected to participate in the meeting in the same manner, following the standard format and communication style – one speaker up front and everyone sitting at tables. Everyone is expected to adapt to the standard meeting structure.

Equity:

Accommodations are made to support the diverse needs of team members, including those who may be neurodivergent. For example, the meeting agenda is provided in advance to allow individuals time to prepare, visual aids or subtitles are used to supplement verbal communication, fidget toys, stimming and auditory devices (e.g. noise cancelling headphones) are accepted, and breaks are scheduled to prevent sensory overload. This ensures that all team members can fully engage and contribute to the meeting, regardless of their neurodivergent characteristics.



MEET THE TEAM:

Jim Young (IS)

This edition, we are introducing Jim Young from the Information Systems team! We asked him some questions to get to know him better.

Hi Jim! What does your role involve at VICSES?

My role is to support capital works projects at VICSES with Information Technology matters, so generally you'll find me working on new builds, renovations, relocations and upgrades around the state.

What were you doing prior to your current role?

Before VICSES I worked on the Emergency Alerting System, which is the paging network shared by VICSES, the Country Fire Authority, Ambulance Victoria and Fire Rescue Victoria. My first VICSES role was in State Operations with the Operational Communications team and I recently moved across to Information Services.

What do you like about working at VICSES?

There is lots to like but my favourite thing is the people. VICSES is full of amazing humans and I've made some good friends here. I can't say I've met all 5000+ of you yet, but I'm sure I'll get around to it eventually.

What does the ideal weekend look like for you?

I want to say sunshine, live music and sleep-ins to recover from the sunshine and live music – but my team will read this, so I'll be honest and say these days I get most excited when I have zero plans.

Can you describe yourself in three words?

Difficult to describe (that's 3 words). ■

Messages

From CEO

From Minister for Emergency Services

Feature

General news

Campaigns & events

Eastern region

Western region

Operational updates

Projects – what's new

Wellbeing, health & safety

Community engagement

Media

Our People and Culture



A photograph of a road that has been severely damaged by a storm. The asphalt is cracked and broken, with a large log lying across it. The surrounding landscape is flat and grassy under a cloudy sky.

**You don't know
the road if**

A photograph of a road completely submerged in floodwater. The water is murky brown and reflects the overcast sky. The road surface is visible only at the very bottom of the frame.

you can't see it

A dark blue rectangular box with a white border and a small orange and white checkered pattern in the top right corner. It contains the text 'You don't know, so don't go.'

You don't know, so don't go.

Storms and flash flooding are common throughout Victoria. Water across roads can hide hazards and dangerous debris such as rocks, branches, and road surfaces that have washed away.

You might think you know the road, but you don't when it's covered with flood water.

Never drive through floodwater. Keep you and your family safe.

For more advice visit ses.vic.gov.au