

SPRING 2022

Community Matters

# VICES

EDITION 20



AAMI, PROUDLY SUPPORTING THE VICTORIA STATE EMERGENCY SERVICE

*We wear your support*

WHO COVERS VICES IN YOUR STORIES OF SUPPORT?

**AAMI DOES**



20TH EDITION OF COMMUNITY MATTERS

# THE EVENTS THAT MADE US

*Queens Birthday Honours*



# CONTENTS

## Highlights from the spring edition



**Severe weather sees VICSES deployments into NSW again** pg. 24



**State Controllers Seminar returns in 2022** pg. 26

### Interested in contributing?

Submit your article here:  
[publications@ses.vic.gov.au](mailto:publications@ses.vic.gov.au)

### What's happening across our regions:

**12 CENTRAL**  
AAMI launches 'We wear your support' campaign mural in Melbourne.

**14 EAST**  
Retirement of Jennie Perkins.

**16 MID WEST**  
VICSES members join in NAIDOC celebrations.

**18 NORTH EAST**  
New home opens for VICSES Chiltern Unit volunteers.

**20 NORTH WEST**  
Meet the Gee family.

**22 SOUTH WEST**  
Dunkeld x Deakin.

#### Front Cover:

Anita Lutz poses next to We wear your support AAMI campaign mural, featuring herself.



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

Authorised and published by Victoria State Emergency Service, 168 Sturt Street, Southbank, Victoria.  
© State of Victoria, Victoria State Emergency Service, September 2022.



This magazine is printed on ecoStar 100% recycled, an environmentally responsible paper made carbon neutral. It has been independently certified by the Forest Stewardship Council® (FSC®). ecoStar is manufactured from 100% post consumer recycled paper in a Process Chlorine Free environment under the ISO 14001 environmental management system.

## MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER FOR EMERGENCY SERVICES

Welcome to the third edition  
of *Community Matters* for 2022

**W**ith another spring on our doorstep, I'm grateful for the opportunity to reflect on some of the remarkable efforts of our many VICSES volunteers who dedicate their skills and time year after year.

Autumn and winter have once again highlighted how critical incidents and natural disasters are not confined to the warmer months of the year, and rather are happening with increasing urgency, intensity, and frequency across all seasons in our country and beyond. The important work that VICSES does in helping communities understand and plan for emergencies such as floods, is critical for reducing the impact of emergencies and helping people recover quicker.

In early June we marked one year since devastating storms swept across large parts of Victoria, causing widespread tree damage and significant disruption to many communities in the hills in particular.

In July it was terrible to see parts of New South Wales (NSW) impacted yet again with damaging floods, adding insult to injury for many communities already reeling from previous floods this year.

For some communities up there, it was the fourth time they had battled rising floodwaters over the past year and a half. The trauma of having to endure multiple cycles of destruction and recovery is incomprehensible to most of us – yet there's no doubt the collective, neighbourly efforts to meet such a challenge is as extraordinary as ever.



I'm proud to say Victorians had an important role to play in supporting our NSW neighbours this year in response to these flood emergencies, with dozens of our Victorian emergency service volunteers heeding the call to assist the response on several occasions.

A total of 73 VICSES members - part of a contingency of 105 Victorian emergency services personnel - were deployed to NSW from 3 - 20 July to help with complex flood response and incident management efforts following the most recent floods.

Prior to that, in March and April, almost 180 VICSES members travelled to northern NSW to help support rescue and clean-up efforts after the floods then.

There was an incredible amount of work performed by volunteers closer to home during this period. Across the state from April to July, VICSES members responded to a total of 3,409 requests for assistance, including 279 flood responses, 589 rescue responses and 751 requests to support other agencies.

The Victorian Government is continuing to ensure Victoria's emergency service volunteers receive the resources and equipment they need, which is why we invested in \$26.1 million in this year's Victorian Budget. This included funding for the replacement of 28 vehicles, vessel fleet and facility maintenance, and extra support for volunteers. We're also ensuring that volunteers have greater access to training and professional development programs thanks to a further \$2.7 million investment.

To all the volunteers - thank you once again for your selfless commitment to ensuring the safety of others close to home and further afield these past few months – you have my heartfelt thanks.

**Jaclyn Symes**  
Minister for Emergency Services



# Welcome

Hello everyone, and welcome to the  
20th edition of *Community Matters*.

In December of 2017, we launched our very first edition of *Community Matters* - aimed at celebrating the stories and achievements of our members in supporting our communities. Five years on, *Community Matters* has captured our most important moments, sharing the successes of our members, the moments of significance for our people, and the challenging environment of emergency management. I'd like to thank everyone who has been involved in contributing to this publication over the years, and the important role *Community Matters* has played in documenting the history of VICSES.

Some of the key moments have included the 2019-20 bushfire season, the June storms in 2021, and our response during the COVID-19 pandemic, just to name a few. You can read more about the moments that made us on pages 4-7.

In July, we saw our members deployed to New South Wales once again, providing much needed support for those impacted by severe weather and flooding across the state. As always, our members have answered the call for help, assisting many communities who have been re-impacted on the back of intense rainfall and floods in March and April of this year. We appreciate their efforts, taking time away from their families, work, and communities, and say thank you to all of our members who have dedicated their time and skills, as part of our Victorian deployment contingent. You

can view photos from the field, and more information on these deployments on pages 24-25.

On 1 October, we will be officially launching our new VICSES Operating Model. The renewed organisational structure reflects the growth of our organisation, and will enhance our ability to better support our volunteers, adapt to changes across the emergency management sector, align to our legislative role, and increase our capabilities to support our communities. This includes two new regions – Eastern and Western – which will replace our previous six regional boundaries. An overview of the new operating model is available on pages 10-11.

Finally, our new unit builds have continued to progress across the state, celebrating the official opening of VICSES Chiltern and Heidelberg Units in July and August. The brand-new state-of-the-art facilities ensure that our volunteers are equipped with the resources they need, to continue to ensure the safety of their local communities. Read more on pages 13 and 18.

Thank you all for your contributions in making another fantastic issue of *Community Matters*.

I hope you all enjoy this edition, and stay safe.

Kind regards,

**Stephen Griffin**  
CEO Victoria State  
Emergency Service

# FEATURE

20  
18

## 20TH EDITION OF COMMUNITY MATTERS:

# The events that made us

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

Since its launch in 2017, *Community Matters* has highlighted the challenges, successes, and achievements of VICSES and our incredible members.

**F**rom record-breaking operational periods and deployments, to campaigns and projects, and working through some of our most challenging environments yet - there have been many events that have shaped our organisation over the last five years.

In celebration of the 20th edition of *Community Matters*, here's a look at the events that made us who we are today, since our very first issue:

20  
17



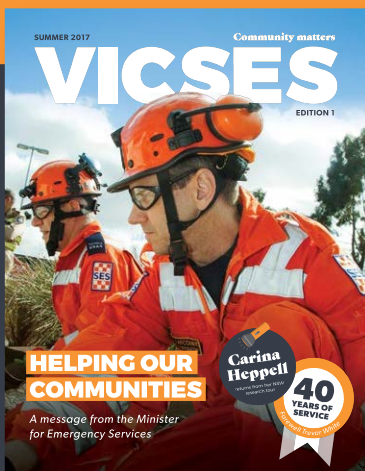
### December

## Launch of our very first edition of *Community Matters*.

- The Minister for Emergency Services, James Merlino, signs a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to facilitate long-term leases with VICSES units, helping to secure the future of VICSES units on land owned or managed by local councils.
- December begins with three days of heavy rainfall, recording Victoria's wettest December day in history. From 30 November to 4 December, VICSES responds to 3,130 requests for assistance (RFAs) – the equivalent to 10% of the total incidents recorded for the 2016-2017 financial year.

### March - April

VICSES members support the peat fires in south-west Victoria, working around the clock to assist our partner agencies and the affected communities.



20  
19



**January - March**

VICSES members support the response to ongoing fires across the state, specifically in eastern Victoria, providing an on-the-ground response and as part of Incident Management Teams (IMTs).



**August**

VICSES volunteer John Hooper is deployed as part of an Australian Government Disaster Assistance Response Team to Greece, to support the devastating fires surrounding Athens.

**November**

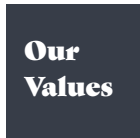
We officially launch our renewed VICSES Values, shaping the way we work together and serve our communities.

**November**

The summer bushfire season kicks off for the latter-half of the year, with VICSES members deployed to support the fire response in both Queensland and New South Wales (NSW), including IMT positions at the State Control Centres in Sydney and Brisbane. Little did we know, the impact that this fire season would soon have on our communities back home.

**December**

On 13 December, heavy rainfall causes severe flash flooding across Greater Wangaratta. Extreme overland flooding sees the Hume Highway closed for 48 hours, with approximately 120 people needing to be rescued from floodwater that had trapped their vehicles on the highway. VICSES members alongside partner agencies work with land based swift water rescue crews, helicopters, rescue boats and heavy vehicles to bring people to safety.



**We pride ourselves on our credibility**



**We are part of our community**



**Safety drives our decisions**



**Focused and adaptable**



**Together we are VICSES**

20  
20



**January - February**

An intense start to the year with fires rapidly burning across Victoria, particularly in eastern parts of the state, directly impacting many of our members and their local communities. A State of Disaster is declared for parts of Victoria, lasting 10 days. Over 1.5 million hectares is burnt. Members from 124 VICSES units provide their support, including logistics, base camp management, IMT roles, deploying air monitoring kits, reloading

aircraft, providing extra road crash rescue assistance for deployed units, and much more. An incredible survival story emerges from Cann River, with VICSES members deployed as part of Task Force Alpha and partner agencies circled by fire protecting community members at a local school. Thankfully, they make it out alive.

# FEATURE



## March

As our bushfire response eases, the COVID-19 pandemic presents a new and challenging environment. VICSES enacts our first Pandemic Plan, and we begin physical distancing, working from home, and relying on the use of technology to stay in touch. Operationally, our members provide an integral pandemic response role for the incoming months, including training members to dispatch as ambulance drivers during peak periods to support Ambulance Victoria, supporting Victoria Police for border control checks during state lockdowns, and logistics for the delivery of food and other supplies for those in public housing – all while maintaining our day-to-day emergency response for control agency hazards. This continues into 2022, re-shaping the way we work together and serve our communities.



## June

Over 60 VICSES members assist in the search for missing boy William Callaghan at Mt Disappointment, marking the biggest missing persons search in Victoria's history. Thankfully, Will is found alive and well, and is reunited with his family.



## April

VICSES members are deployed across the country, including NSW to support the state's severe flooding, as well as Western Australia to assist in the aftermath of Cyclone Seroja. Between these two events, a total of 50 VICSES volunteers and staff are deployed across a range of liaison, incident management and operational roles, providing essential support for our emergency service colleagues and community's interstate.

## August

From 27-28 August, severe weather and damaging winds result in over 2,700 RFAs in 24 hours. The incredible response from our volunteers is widely recognised, with the Premier for Victoria, The Hon. Daniel Andrews, publicly acknowledging the contributions of our volunteers.

## October:

On 2 October, the leak of a large 180 megalitre privately owned dam in Torquay threatens a number of properties. VICSES members and Victoria Police work together to evacuate approximately 110 people from nearby homes. Members work around the clock, ensuring the safety of the community.



## June

On 8 June, a predicted East Coast Low causes devastating storms, impacting communities across the state. During the period of operations from 8 June to 8 July, 128 of our units contribute to responding to a total of 10,288 RFAs. Some of our busiest units, including Emerald and Lilydale, receive a year's worth of RFAs in just 48 hours – a mammoth effort. At the height of the storm event, 320,000 people across



## October

On the evening of 28 October, damaging winds lash the state throughout the night and into the next morning, with many Victorians' waking up to see their properties and communities completely devastated. In the seven-day period from 28 October – 4 November, our volunteers respond to a total of 9,897 RFAs. An incredible effort.



## September

- On 22 September VICSES responds as the control agency to a magnitude 5.9 earthquake, declared Victoria's largest earthquake on record. The event is felt far and wide by our communities, and even interstate.
- VICSES Moe Unit is officially activated as our 104th road crash rescue accredited unit, increasing our capability as the largest road rescue network in Australia.



## March – April

During March and April, 121 VICSES members from across Victoria are deployed to support communities and our partner agencies across the border in NSW for severe flooding. Responding as part of boat and general rescue crews on the ground, as well as a wide range of IMT leadership roles, our people provide life-saving assistance for those impacted.

## March

- VICSES officially launches our new Female Personal Protective Clothing. The new uniform is a much anticipated addition, catering to the female fit and providing more functionality for our female members.
- We host our first ever state-wide *Women in Rescue* event, aimed at showcasing the incredible skills and capabilities of our female volunteers.

## July

A further 73 members are deployed to NSW to assist with the response to heavy rainfall and severe flooding once again, re-impacting many of the same communities from March/April.

## September

We announce the roll-out of our new VICSES Operating Model for 1 October, allowing us to remain a fit-for-purpose, sustainable emergency service well into the future.

the state are without power, which also affects telecommunications. By the end of the event, 135 properties are classified as damaged but habitable, and 129 properties damaged and uninhabitable. The recovery efforts of this storm would be ongoing for many months, and contribute to our busiest operational period on record.



# GENERAL NEWS

## Queen's Birthday Honours

By Dharni Giri, Senior Media  
and Publicity Advisor, VHO

Congratulations are in order for our members who were recently honoured as part of this year's Queen's Birthday Honours.

**V**ICSES Marysville Unit Controller Jo Hunter and VICSES Monash Unit Deputy Controller Kylie Trott, were both awarded an Emergency Service Medal (ESM), for their distinguished service to VICSES and their communities.

Awarded by the Governor-General, the ESM was instituted in 1999 to recognise distinguished service as a member of an Australian emergency service.

Our medal recipients have given a combined 47 years of service to the emergency management and disaster resilience sector, where their knowledge and experience has been crucial to their colleagues, and to the public. Here's a bit more about Jo and Kylie's service:



When Jo Hunter joined VICSES in 2004, she quickly became a Deputy Controller at VICSES Marysville Unit. In 2012 she would take charge of the unit as Controller, a position she still holds.



**JO HUNTER**

Jo was only 18 years old when she joined VICSES, going on to become the second youngest VICSES Controller in the state. Her relative youth belies a calm and mature leadership style. Jo is a consensus builder, and the open culture at her unit reflects this.

Jo was the Acting Controller of her unit during the 2009 Victorian Bushfires, where she distinguished herself as an outstanding leader in the Marysville community. These events led to her successful nomination for the Seward Dawson Community Service and Volunteering Award, at the Victorian Young Achiever Awards.

Jo has been involved with other rescue initiatives in her community and beyond, having assisted on deployments within Victoria such as the Kerang Floods, and numerous deployments to New South Wales (NSW) to assist NSW SES during recent storm and flood events.

Jo was instrumental in the establishment of the high-angle rescue training package, and has been actively involved in the road crash rescue working group, and the vehicle design working group for many years. We can be sure that the future of VICSES is in good hands with Jo.

Kylie has been volunteering at the VICSES Monash Unit since 1993, and has spent most of that time in a leadership position.



**KYLIE TROTT**

Kylie is valued by her colleagues, particularly for her mentoring work with new volunteers, many of whom are now in the management team at the unit.

Kylie is an incredible fundraiser, raising over \$500,000 dollars in revenue for the unit. This has enabled VICSES Monash Unit to deliver vital programs and projects of benefit to the community.

Kylie leads at the unit by championing a culture that is inclusive and professional, where members can work to their best standard, especially when working with community.

Outside of VICSES Kylie is a senior leader, bringing that experience and focus to the unit, ensuring that VICSES and her community benefits from her strategic perspective.

Kylie has also been involved in the gender equality initiative at VICSES for more than two decades, championing the development of female Personal Protective Equipment, supporting females in senior roles, and championing gender equality for our volunteer cohort.

Kylie was even awarded a lifetime membership at VICSES, for her commitment, leadership, and dedication.



A big congratulations also goes out to VICSES Deputy Chief Officer Alistair Drayton and VICSES Bendoc Unit Controller John Reed, who were each awarded the Australian Fire Service Medal (AFSM).



**ALISTAIR DRAYTON**

In addition to being positioned as a Deputy Chief Officer with VICSES, Alistair is a proud and dedicated volunteer member of the Country Fire Authority (CFA), with prolonged and exceptional service.

Alistair has distinguished himself as an extremely competent firefighter and operational commander, and he is considered an outstanding Level 3 Incident Controller.

Throughout his career, he has earned the respect and trust of his peers and of the Chief Officers of the state's emergency management agencies. He has an exceptional ability to manage the complex matrix of problems and issues that exist during major fire situations.

Alistair's deployment history includes some of Victoria's largest and worst wildfire situations. He has also been deployed to provide relief in other states, and on three occasions he was also sent to Canada and the United States of America to provide his expertise and skills. His comprehensive knowledge and experience has been leveraged to the benefit of Victoria's emergency management sector, through his willing participation in the delivery of specialist training across the organisations.

Victorians are the ultimate beneficiaries of his efforts. Alistair is an exceptional volunteer, and has contributed to advancing the knowledge and practice of Incident Management.



**JOHN REED**

In addition to being the current Unit Controller of the VICSES Bendoc Unit, John has given exceptional service to the Monaro community over the border as a NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS) firefighter for the past 45 years.

John joined the Craigie Rural Fire Brigade in 1974, and has held positions including Deputy Captain, Captain, Deputy Group Captain, and Group Captain.

As an active and engaged leader within the Monaro RFS District, John has advocated strongly both for volunteer fire fighters and his community, and is widely respected. He has made a significant contribution as Chair of the Bombala and Snowy Monaro Bush Fire Management Committees (BFMC) and has been a member the Bombala Council and RFS Service Agreement Committee, Bombala Fire Control Centre Construction Working Group, BFMC Risk Management Plan Working Group, Eastern Border NSW/Victoria Cross Border Firefighting Committee, and the Region South Group Captains Forum, among others.

John's local knowledge and firefighting experience has been critical in ensuring these forums have made appropriate decisions to benefit the community.

His operational roles include Forward Control at Delegate for the Victorian fires (2014), Divisional Commander for the Michelago/Tea-Tree (2009) and Yarrabin (2013) fires, and in multiple locations during 2019 and 2020.

John has demonstrated distinguished service through his leadership and commitment, displaying professionalism in the delivery of firefighting resources and services to his fellow volunteers and the Monaro community, over more than four decades.

***A big congratulations to all of our recipients, for their ongoing service in keeping our communities safe - together. ■***





# Introducing the new VICSES Operating Model

By the Project Management Team, VHO

The VICSES Strategic Plan 2018-2022 set a five-year strategy, with ambitious targets for the sustainability of our organisation, our community reach, and our network strength and connectivity with others to build safer and more resilient communities.

**A** key focus to realising our Vision is ensuring we are a sustainable organisation, recognising the centrality of our people (volunteers and staff) to the great work we do, and working with the community to build confidence and resilience.

Our strategic objective is to be a contemporary sustainable organisation where our people work together, with our partners and communities, to deliver our services before, during, and after an emergency to reduce the consequences of these events.

## Strategic Plan 2018-2022

### OUR FUNDAMENTAL GOALS

**1**

We will be a sustainable organisation to take us into the future

**2**

We will be an organisation of choice for people and partners

**3**

We will work with and empower the community to build confidence and resilience

### OUR KEY INITIATIVES

- 1.1** Review our operating model and scope of activities and reform our organisation structure.
- 1.2** Advocate funding needs to government through relevant budget bids and strong relationships.
- 1.3** Develop and implement a Strategic facilities management plan that supports our new operating model and structure.

- 2.1** Develop and implement Our people strategy that builds the capability of our people and strengthens our volunteer engagement.
- 2.2** Develop and implement an Information technology strategy that better supports our volunteers and incorporate Business Intelligence.
- 2.3** Work with partners to deliver shared services for the organisation.

- 3.1** Promote our brand, our role and our volunteers to community, partners and government.
- 3.2** Mainstream community resilience through our services, structure and systems.
- 3.3** Implement Operational capability strategy to deliver our services safely and effectively.

Key Initiative 1.1 of the Strategic Plan was to review our operating model and scope of activities, and reform our organisation structure. This was necessary in response to shifts in key stakeholder expectations and changes in human, social, natural, and technological environments.

We are delighted to announce that this initiative is in the final stages of implementation.

The new Operating Model will allow us to remain a fit-for-purpose, sustainable, emergency service agency.

**It delivers on the objectives to:**

- Have a volunteer focus.
- Cater for day-to-day operational response balanced with a core business focus.
- Provide consistency and a one-VICES approach.
- Be adaptable to sector wide change.
- Remain aligned to our legislative role.

Consultation with staff, volunteers, and other organisations was conducted before the new structure was confirmed.

A key change in the new structure is our improved focus on volunteer support, with the introduction of Business Partners embedded in the regions. This will mean more efficient and effective support for our regional operations.

The new model consolidates VICES from six to two regions, maintaining all our current locations across the state.

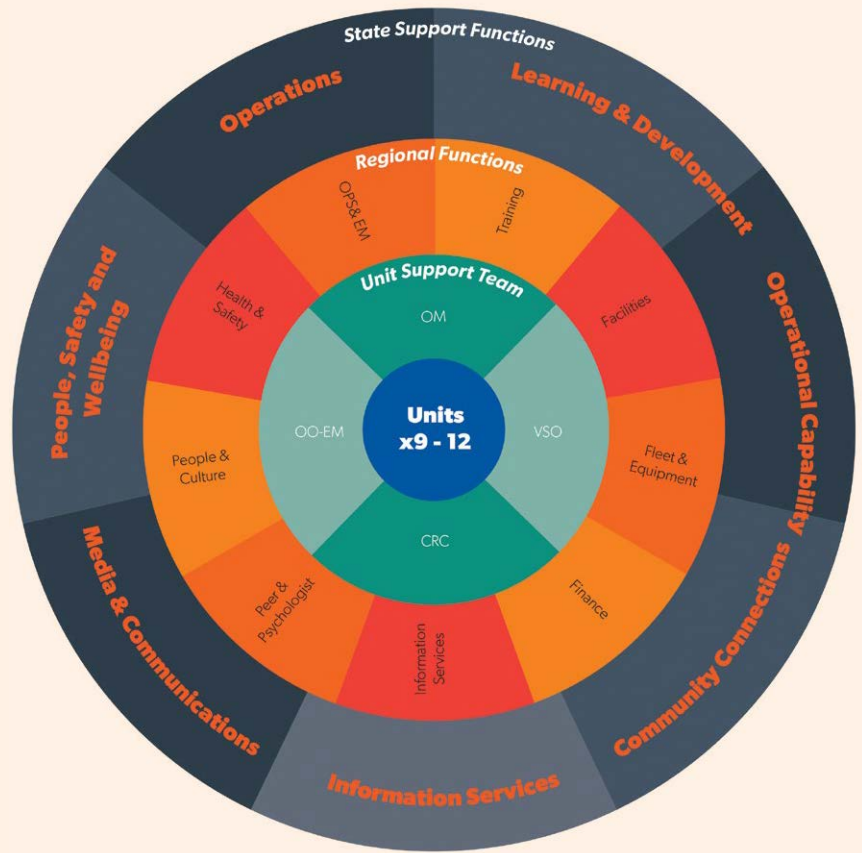
Roles in the new structure have been progressively filled using a combination of direct matching of employees into new roles and recruitment.

With the recent state budget funding, we will also be filling a few new roles to support volunteers, including Volunteer Support Officers, Trainers, Human Resource specialists, and Health, Safety and Wellbeing specialists.

An extensive program of work has been undertaken to ensure facilities, systems, processes, and protocols are in place to enable operation of the new structure.

This has been a monumental undertaking that involved the support, flexibility, and patience of our employees, volunteers, and external stakeholders. The leadership team extends its thanks and appreciation to everyone involved, and look forward to taking VICES into the future with you. ■

**Unit Support Model**



**New regional structure**





# CENTRAL

1 April – 30 June

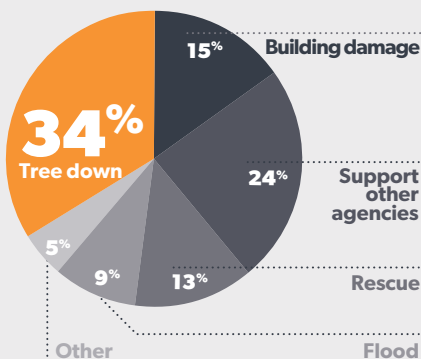


# 1,561

Volunteers

# 1,739

Requests for assistance



# VICSES Essendon Unit refurbishment works complete

By Dharni Giri, Senior Media and Publicity Advisor, VHO

In May, our VICSES Essendon Unit volunteers celebrated the official opening of their newly refurbished facility located at 9 Rutherford Street, Aberfeldie.



Operational since March 2022, the full refurbishment

includes a new Division Command Point (DCP), which coordinates emergency response activities with other emergency service agencies, and will enable the unit to continue to respond effectively to floods and storms and assist Victoria Police, Ambulance Victoria, and fire services.

The new facility also includes a dedicated boat shed allowing the unit to house two boats, and an additional office and training room, increasing operational capability.

The refurbishment also includes a new dedicated turnout area, upgraded kitchen and amenities, additional windows throughout, skylights and roof ventilation for the boat shed, bollards to the front and rear of the motor room, and new lighting and paving, all contributing to a safer and more operationally efficient facility for the volunteers.

The fit-for-purpose facility will help VICSES to recruit and retain dedicated volunteers, as well as to continue protecting the Victorian community responding to rescues, floods and storms, and

provide valuable assistance to partner agencies.

Established in 1981, the VICSES Essendon Unit has played a vital role in serving and protecting the Victorian community. The unit serves the Moonee Valley and surrounding areas, and has 59 active members who have responded to more than 500 requests for assistance in the last 12 months.

The new facility was officially opened by Minister and Member for Niddrie, Ben

Carroll MP, and Minister and State Member for Essendon, Danny Pearson MP.

Acting Emergency Management Commissioner Chris Stephenson was also in attendance, alongside Moonee Valley Shire Mayor Samantha Byrne, VICSES Chief Executive Officer Stephen Griffin, VICSES Chief Officer Operations Tim Wiebusch, VICSES Regional Manager Ray Jasper, and proud VICSES Essendon Unit Controller John Bates. ■



# New home for VICSES Heidelberg Unit volunteers

By Dharni Giri, Senior Media and Publicity Advisor, VHO



The VICSES Heidelberg Unit (formerly Northcote) is now located on Waterdale Road in Heidelberg Heights, replacing the old facility in Alphington.

**T**his state-of-the-art facility incorporates environmentally sustainable design principles and includes five motor bays, administrative offices, a training room, turnout area, and a wellbeing area for volunteers.

Volunteers from the VICSES Heidelberg Unit are among the most active in Victoria, responding to more than 1,013 requests for assistance in the 2021/22 financial

year. With 85 active volunteers, this new facility will reflect VICSES' commitment and dedication to the local community and enable an expansion of local services.

The new facility will ensure the capabilities of the unit well into the future, to continue protecting their local community in times of need.

The new facility was officially opened on Saturday 30 July by the Honourable Anthony Carbin MP,

State Member for Ivanhoe, Minister for Police, Crime Prevention, and representative for Minister of Emergency Services, Emergency Management Commissioner Andrew Crisp, alongside local

council members and VICSES Chief Executive Officer Stephen Griffin, VICSES Chief Officer Operations Tim Wiebusch, VICSES Regional Manager Ray Jasper, and proud Unit Controller Luke Francis. ■



## AAMI launches 'We wear your support' campaign mural in Melbourne

By Farwah Ahmed, Sponsorship Lead – Group Brands, Suncorp Group

AAMI has recently launched the next phase of its *We wear your support* campaign, which heroes VICSES Craigieburn Unit volunteer Anita Lutz.

**T**he team at AAMI commissioned the mural located at Melbourne Central on Latrobe Street, which shows Anita proudly wearing messages of support from community members on her uniform. These messages were collated by AAMI as part of the first phase of the campaign, which encouraged people to 'add their story to the stitching' via social media.

Themed around 'Who supports VICSES in your stories of support?', the mural shines light on AAMI's long standing partnership and support for VICSES. The mural also has a QR code that links to the website, where people can submit more messages of support for VICSES.

The next phase of the campaign will feature the VICSES volunteers who have been mentioned in these messages of support by community members. Watch this space! ■

# Heavy rain and flooding hits Gippsland

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

Over the weekend of 13-14 August, heavy rainfall across the Gippsland region caused significant flooding, particularly along the Moe River.

**F**looding impacts carried into Monday 15 August, with a Major Flood Warning issued for the Moe River at Darnum, notifying community members to move to higher ground. River levels exceeded the Major Flood Level at 4.65 metres Monday morning.

Moderate flood warnings were also issued for the Latrobe River at Yallourn to Traralgon Creek, triggering 'Watch and Act' warnings for the community.

Properties affected included low-lying farmland near the river catchments, rather than major townships in the area. Even so, eight homes became isolated due to the rising floodwater, with VICSES personnel working with the Baw Baw Shire to make communication with property owners via telephone to ensure

their safety. Many roads in the area were also closed due to the impacts of flooding.

A Regional Operations Command Centre was established at the VICSES Moe Office to support the event, with rostered Regional Duty Officers and Regional Agency Commanders working overnight shifts, supported by two operations officers from Central Region.

Local VICSES units including Moe, Morwell, and Warragul worked to respond to requests for assistance from the community for flood. In addition, ground observation crews were deployed into impacted areas to gather intelligence and photos of the flooding to upload to EM-COP, monitoring the situation from a local level.

Impacts also extended to South Gippsland and Bass Coast Shires, with Inverloch experiencing flash flooding on 13 August. Currently, there are no flood class levels in the river systems within these two Shires, and river gauges have only recently been installed to rivers within the catchments. Without any triggers (minor, moderate or major), community warnings rely on local intelligence of flooded roads to support warning messages.

Thankfully rainfall eased from Monday afternoon, with river levels slowly receding. Roads remained closed for the coming days, as water levels dropped.

Sadly, a flood-related death was recorded at Traralgon Creek during the height of the flooding. A devastating reminder of the dangers of floodwater, and why our work in community preparedness and education around floodwater is so important.

We thank everyone who supported our response to this event. ■



**EAST**

1 April – 30 June

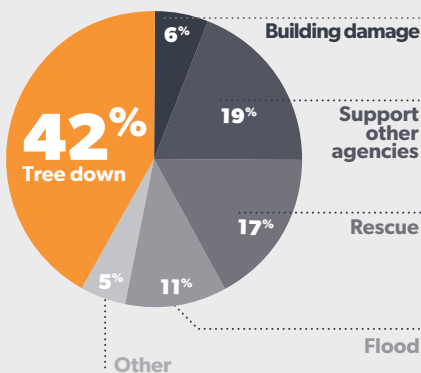


**500**

Volunteers

**391**

Requests for assistance



# East Gippsland Flood Class Level Review

By **Merryn Henderson, Community Resilience Coordinator, East Region**



The East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority (EGCMA) has commenced a review of the flood class levels set for the East Gippsland river systems.

**T**his review process identified the existing Flood Class Levels were inconsistent and, in some instances, not aligned with the Bureau of Meteorology's (BOMs) specifications of Minor, Moderate and Major flood class levels.

As a result, work began to identify heights which do accurately reflect BOM's specified impacts for these three levels of flood warnings.

Professional and technical support was engaged to survey, model and map each catchment to distinguish the appropriate heights more accurately.

Initial community consultation took place across many communities from March to May 2022, with key community members invited to attend

using their extensive local knowledge to validate, review and feedback recommendations for much needed changes and adjustments.

The community consultations were well attended, resulting in valuable feedback and a list of actions to be followed up.

While stakeholder engagement on this project is still being undertaken, once changes have been implemented by BOM and the new Flood Class Level heights 'go live', a broader consultation will take place for each community.

It is hoped the broader consultations will assist to educate and promote VICSES Local Flood Guides, and underpin the new flood class levels and associated potential impacts to community during a flood.



**The key objective is to better align community and emergency response to the impacts experienced at the various levels,"**

said Jaymie Dawes, Program Manager Community and Partnerships with EGCMA.

"We are also proposing to set up flood warning systems in localities which have previously not had such a system. These include Bemm River, Dargo and Swifts Creek," continued Jaymie. ■



## Retirement of Jennie Perkins

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

It's time to say goodbye to Jennie, as she is affectionately known, as the face of our VICSES East Region.

**J**ennie joined VICSES as a volunteer on 25 January 1984, and became a staff member in 2002. She has worked both in the Bairnsdale and Moe

regional offices and is popular among staff and unit members, as well as knowing all of the regions Unit Controllers by their names.

Jennie has volunteered with our VICSES Regional Support, Moe and Morwell Units. During her time with these units, she often supported the regional training team on weekend training exercises as a road crash rescue, general rescue, and flood boat rescue assessor.

As a Regional Administrator Officer, Jennie has been involved in mentoring and training volunteers and staff with their orientation and induction, and is always active, energetic, and ready to assist members with their queries.

"What matters most is the support we give each other, that enables us to rely on one another when an emergency arises," said Jennie.

When Jennie first joined VICSES alongside her husband in 1984, they had three young children under 10-years-old.

"As a mum of three, it took the support of my community and family networks to look after my boys when an emergency arose, and I am forever thankful to them for allowing my volunteering to be possible," said Jennie.

After 38-years of service, Jennie has decided to retire from full-time work to spend more quality time with her family. Our members at East Region will miss her immensely, and we want to thank Jennie for her outstanding commitment and service to her community. ■



# MID WEST

1 April – 30 June

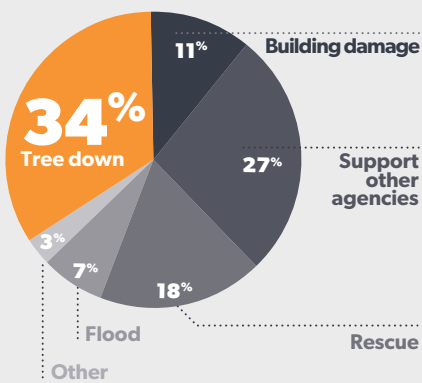


# 272

Volunteers

# 222

Requests for assistance



# VICSES Ararat Unit strengthens connections

By Jane Patton, Community Resilience Coordinator, Mid West Region

The future of VICSES Ararat Unit is looking brighter.

**D**ue to the hard work from the unit’s members in establishing new connections within the Ararat community and surrounding areas, the expression of interest to join the unit has grown. Currently the Ararat Unit has 19 operational members, and since May this year the unit has recruited eight new members alone. The new members who have joined the unit this year are from diverse background, moving to the local Ararat area from other regional and metropolitan areas, including two new members from Fiji.

Russel Graham, who has been part of the Ararat Unit for over 40 years, says he still enjoys working in a team and supporting the community. He further mentioned that it is rewarding to watch the new unit members skills develop and mature.

Ararat Unit has more recently actively participated and engaged in local community events such as the Good Friday Appeal, community markets, ANZAC Day, and Ararat Country Fire Authority (CFA) ceremonies. The unit regularly invites the Ararat Scout and Stawell/Ararat CFA junior members to visit their local headquarters on a training night to find out more about what VICSES do.

Kaydan Monro, who joined the team last year, says being a member of the Ararat Unit is like being part of a family, and having the comradery too.

Since Janet Gordon joined the unit a couple of years ago, she is glad to be able to give back to the local community, and is appreciative of the

experienced unit members willingness to share knowledge and skills in a mentoring way.

This enthusiasm demonstrated from the unit members while attending community activities and on training nights, has sparked the interest from the public to join and become a VICSES volunteer, including four members who are now dual VICSES/CFA volunteers. Dual members have commented that it’s fantastic to have the opportunity to learn and work with both agencies, to strengthen communications and relationships.



***The VICSES Ararat Unit focuses on providing opportunities to strengthen interagency cooperability,”***

said Ararat Unit Controller Jordon Bush.

We look forward to seeing the Ararat Unit grow from strength to strength, with their community connections and diverse membership. ■



# VICSES members join in NAIDOC celebrations

Clare Mintern, Community Resilience Coordinator, Mid West Region

VICSES members enjoyed taking part in a NAIDOC family fun day on Sunday 10 July, held at the Horsham Showgrounds.

**T**he event provided community members with the opportunity to learn more about the oldest continuous living culture in the world.

NAIDOC is an acronym for the National Aboriginal and Islander Day Observance Committee, and NAIDOC week celebrates the history, culture, and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. This year's theme 'Get up! Stand up! Show up!', encourages all of us to champion change, to celebrate indigenous culture, and build relationships with community partners and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

The five Traditional Owner groups involved in this event were the Wotjobaluk, Wergaia, Jupagalk, Jaadwa and Jadawadjali Peoples.

This NAIDOC event hosted many traditional customs and activities, including:

- Traditional Welcome to Country, delivered by Uncle Ron Marks.
- Smoking ceremony.
- Traditional dancing by the Wotjobaluk Dance Group.
- Yarning circle - Marngrook story reading.
- Merchandise stalls by Barengi Gadjin Land Council and Goolum-Goolum Co-operative.

- Traditional games, including an informal Marngrook football game.
- Jumping castle, face painting, canvas painting, boomerang painting.
- Traditional barbecue.

Agencies that supported the event included VICSES, Victoria Police, Horsham Rural City Council, Country Fire Authority, Koori Court, and Grampians Wimmera Mallee Water.

It was such a fantastic opportunity to support NAIDOC Week celebrations, and show our support as an agency for the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. ■



**FLOOD IMPACT  
MAPS FOR VOLUNTEERS  
HELP GUIDE RESPONSE**

By Clare Mintern, Community Resilience Coordinator, Mid West Region

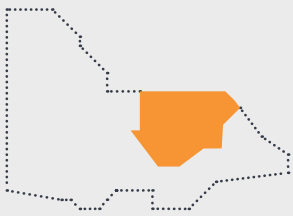
Members in the Mid West Region have recently focused on improving volunteer and external agency access to detailed flood risk information.

**T**he region has given VICSES units and Country Fire Authority Brigades large maps of buildings at risk of flooding in high flood risk locations, such as Natimuk, Halls Gap, Creswick and more. This work has provided better access to key flood risk information to enable VICSES to help guide our on-the-ground response.

Given that flooding in the Mid West Region occurs quickly, it's important that our members

and other agencies have access to detailed flood risk information, as they will be the first to respond to support their communities. When flooding occurs, our volunteers have access to maps that show what buildings are likely to be impacted to support key actions to take, including targeted door knocking for evacuations.

The Mid West Region will continue to deliver targeted flood training sessions for high priority locations in our local areas. The focus of these sessions will be to ensure our members and external agencies have the flood information needed to quickly respond and support their community during flood events. This work will raise the awareness of flood risks, to build flood preparedness, and ultimately community resilience. ■



**NORTH**

**EAST**

**1 April – 30 June**

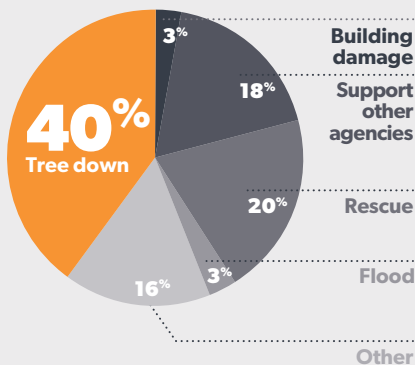


**531**

**Volunteers**

**404**

**Requests for assistance**



# New home opens for VICSES Chiltern Unit volunteers

By Dharni Giri, Senior Advisor Media and Publicity, VHO

A brand-new home for the VICSES Chiltern Unit was officially unveiled in August, at its new location of 38 Anderson Street, Chiltern.

**R**esponding to over 120 requests for assistance in the last financial year (2021/22), the new facility will better support its volunteers to train and prepare for emergencies, and ensure they can strengthen their response capabilities for the Chiltern and surrounding area.

The new local headquarters will enable the Chiltern Unit to continue to respond effectively to rescues, floods and storms, as well as serve the local community through assisting Victoria Police, Ambulance Victoria, and the fire services.

Prior to this new facility, the unit previously occupied a site located at the corner of Crawford and Howes Street, at the rear of the historic former Shire Council Building. This aging building required extensive upgrades to ensure the unit could adequately undertake training, store equipment, and run operations.

To help resolve the issues at the previous facility, Indigo Shire Council allocated land for a new site on Anderson Street, Chiltern. A fantastic example of local council working both collaboratively and cooperatively with VICSES, to ensure a site suitable for local VICSES volunteers and the important work they do.

The new facility includes comprehensively designed layouts, quality finishes, materials, and technology to suit the current needs of VICSES operations. The new 375 square metre steel framed structure has been purpose built to accommodate:

- Three motor bays – including two drive through bays (18.0 x 12.5 metres).
- Training/operations room (7.3 x 9.2 metres).
- Turn-out room (3.7 x 3.8 metres).
- Dedicated communications room and unit office rooms.
- Laundry and change amenity facilities.

The new fit-for-purpose facility will reflect VICSES' commitment and dedication to the local community and support the retention and recruitment of volunteers.

"Our VICSES volunteers are extremely dedicated, and I am proud to open this fantastic new facility, which is so well deserved by members and the community alike," said VICSES CEO Stephen Griffin, who opened the new unit on the day.



***The new and upgraded Chiltern Unit will allow our fabulous volunteers to continue their important work in protecting the community, and assisting in times of emergency," said Stephen. ■***





## The house that Norm built

By Sara-Jane Bowering,  
Community Resilience Coordinator,  
North East Region

**N**orman 'Norm' Duell has been a volunteer with VICSES Seymour Unit for three years, and is the Section Leader for Facilities.

Norm also has 47-years of experience in the building industry under his belt, and has been working around the Seymour area since he was qualified.

Our volunteers respond to many requests for assistance for building damage, including flood and storm and damage to properties, and even vehicles into buildings. Harnessing his construction skills, Norm saw the opportunity to provide members with a unique insight into building materials and construction, with a model house.

Spending approximately 20 hours building the model frame, Norm's model assists members in understanding the different building materials, techniques, and terminology, to better assist members when called to a request for assistance for building damage.

When responding to a call-out for building damage, Norm always takes the time to show new members how to provide temporary repairs in a safe and logical way, and to identify different materials used.

Most recently, Norm used his building model to explain key parts of building frames as part of a building construction training night. This allowed members to see how building frames work to weight bare cladding and roofing, and where members should place their footing when undertaking Safe Working at Heights Systems. ■



## VICSES and NSW SES compare field observation apps from both sides of the Murray

By Sue Sheldrick, Community Resilience Co-ordinator, North East Region

Over the last three years, VICSES and New South Wales (NSW) SES have been working co-operatively to improve emergency capability and planning for flood operations along the Murray River.

**T**here have been many varied discussion topics over the last few months, with our attention focused on the field observation apps that each state currently uses to gather 'near real time' intelligence and observations of flood impacts. In Victoria, we use *Snap Send Solve*, while our counterparts in NSW use *ArcGIS Quick Capture and Collector*.

The Comrie Review of the 2010-2011 Floods, recommendation 23 states that:

- "State establishes a process to provide flood information by trained volunteers during a flood event," and,
- "Real time intelligence and situational awareness... (that enables an) IMT to rapidly construct and disseminate meaningful information and warnings."

The 2016 Victorian Floodplain Management Strategy, accountability 16a also identifies that "VICSES is accountable for providing opportunities for local knowledge to be incorporated into flood emergency planning

and community education as part of the Total Warning Flood Systems services."

With these requirements and information combined, this saw the inception of the *Snap Send Solve* pilot in 2019.

*Snap Send Solve* enables real time observations (photos and comments) of flood impacts. Since the pilot in 2019, the app has grown to also capture impacts or visual information from a range of other hazards in addition to flood. To support this enhancement, the apps 'Flood Observer' role was recently renamed as 'Field Observer', and extra hazard fields added. *Snap Send Solve* observations are shown as a data layer in the Emergency Management Common Operating Picture (EM-COP), and are used by Situation and Analysis to inform decision-making and other uses.

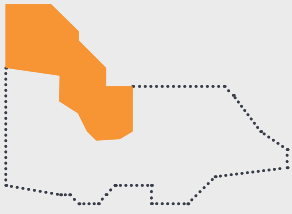
The NSW app *Quick Capture* is similar to *Snap Send Solve*, but has more 'smarts' that can be incorporated into intelligence reports, such as doorknocking status reports and visual maps of impact areas.

Following these preliminary discussions, technical and user experience comparisons were undertaken between the apps based off use during recent deployments to NSW to support flooding, and a field exercise held in Wodonga, Victoria. Both Victorian and NSW volunteers and staff that participated in the deployments and field exercise were asked to complete a Snapform survey, to capture a comparison of the apps. This information was presented at this year's AFAC Conference in Adelaide, with a focus on which app (or a combination of both), would be the best for SES nationally.

### Key points and observations include:

- What is the potential for interoperability? For example, being able to see and share data and intelligence from Victoria and NSW, especially during flooding along the Murray River.
- Which intelligence is most versatile and useful at certain phases of the emergency?
- The fact that common app use creates significant intelligence-gathering surge capacity.
- The challenges of sharing/downloading reports with poor or no connectivity.

Watch this space to track how the observation apps experiment unfolds. ■



**NORTH**

**WEST**

**1 April – 30 June**

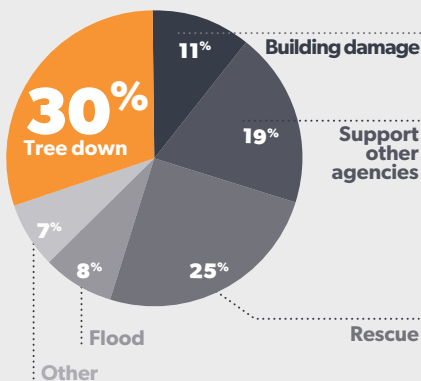


**480**

**Volunteers**

**283**

**Requests for assistance**



# Retirement of Mal Ross

By **Jamie Macri, Community Resilience Coordinator, North West Region**

Following 23 years of dedicated service to VICSES and the Victorian community, Malcolm (Mal) Ross retired at the end of June this year.

**M**al and his wife Sharon are planning to hit the road, caravan in tow, to see what Australia has to offer - a dream that has been many years in the making. Here's a look back at Mal's time with VICSES:

Upon joining VICSES Rochester Unit as a volunteer in 1999, Mal quickly stepped up to leadership roles including Unit Administration Officer from 2000 to 2008, and was then appointed Unit Controller from September 2008 to December 2011.

In 2007, Mal became a full-time staff member as one of the inaugural Volunteer Support Officers (VSO), and felt extremely privileged and grateful to be appointed in the initial group of staff. Mal's time working with the volunteers has been enjoyable, and he is thankful for the opportunity to work with and support those volunteers without whom VICSES could not exist.

Mal undertook the VSO role from 2007 until 2013, when he was appointed to the position of Regional Officer Emergency Management (ROEM). The role allowed Mal to become more broadly

involved with emergency management planning and work with municipalities and the community, while experiencing a greater level of involvement with operations.

Mal worked in the role of Operations Manager on several occasions, and retired in this role.

Mal was directly involved in many emergency events, including the 2011 floods. His recollection of the 2011 floods is that it was one of the most challenging times he experienced as a staff member, especially as his hometown and his property were significantly affected by the event.

Attending incidents at all levels locally, intrastate and interstate, Mal attended several other significant events during his time with VICSES, including:

- 2009 Victorian Bushfires
- 2015 Lancefield/ Cobaw Bushfires
- 2016 North West Floods
- 2018 Peat Fires in Cobrico (Warrnambool)

Mal also regularly performed the VICSES Regional Agency Commander role in Loddon Mallee and Hume Regions.

This, combined with his extensive work in Incident Management Teams across the state, has led to Mal being respected by colleagues from Country Fire Authority, Fire Rescue Victoria, Victoria Police, and the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, among others.

Mal says "the sense of being able to help people in need" is the most satisfactory element of his involvement with VICSES, and the memories of the many flood, storm, and fire incidents he was involved in remain with him. This is in addition to the many special friendships Mal has built across the service over the years.

Mal feels the time is right to take a step back from VICSES and enjoy his retirement after an extensive career spanning 23 years as a volunteer, and 15 years as a regional staff member.

Mal's friendly and approachable nature has made him extremely popular within the VICSES family, and we thank him for his enduring commitment to VICSES. We wish Mal all the best with his retirement, and his presence will be deeply missed in all parts of the region. ■

## A CLOSE CALL: SWAN HILL UNIT RESPONDS TO MEMBER VEHICLE INCIDENT

By Jamie Macri, Community Resilience  
Coordinator, North West Region

When Julie Jochs and Jodie Preston, both members of the VICSES Swan Hill Unit, planned to deliver a birthday present to fellow unit member Michelle Singleton, they did not expect to be in a vehicle incident or have their very own unit perform the rescue on the way.

While navigating a turn from a long line of traffic on the Murray Valley Highway, a Land Cruiser passed several cars and 't-boned' their vehicle, driven by Jodie. Such was Julie's shock; she had no recollection of the impact or the sound of the collision. While the young driver who had held his licence for two weeks was uninjured and profusely apologised, Julie was shaken and in extreme pain, to the extent she thought she was having a heart attack.

Unsure if a second or minutes had passed, Julie was finally able to comprehend that they had been involved in a car crash. Both were covered with glass; Julie's glasses had been dislodged and were on the floor, and Jodie's legs were trapped.

Sometime after managing her pain, Julie's VICSES training took over. After calling 000, she checked Jodie for the extent of her injuries seeing if she was bleeding or had any broken bones, and determined the lever level of her entrapment.

Michelle, who Julie and Jodie were on the way to visit, was contacted by Julie, so when her pager went off and gave the location of the crash as her road, she would be prepared for what she would see when she arrived at the scene.

Julie's next priority was to let the unit members she knew were attending know who was involved in the incident that they'd been called to. Letting them know they were okay, but that Jodie was trapped and how she was trapped, would prepare them for what to expect when arriving at the scene. One of the worst possible scenarios as a VICSES volunteer is to arrive at a scene and find they know the persons involved.

Next Julie called her husband, who told her, "Your pager is going off, it's a car crash." Shock finally took hold when he arrived on the scene, and she lost her composure to tears.

Even with all of Julie's experience in emergency management, nothing could have prepared her for being involved in a vehicle incident that fateful day. However, Julie's quick thinking did help to support the persons involved while they waited for the unit to respond, and everyone survived the ordeal. Michelle even received her gift from Julie and Jodie from the back seat of the vehicle while responding - talk about a remarkable delivery! ■

# Meet the Gee Family

By Jamie Macri, Community Resilience  
Coordinator, North West Region

The Gee family have a thirty-five-year, three generation, five-member connection to the VICSES Kerang Unit.



In 1987, Greg Gee became a founding member of the unit. He has memories of participating in the regions boating competitions and transporting sheep during floods. Greg has had many roles as part of the unit, but has always overseen the important job of running the units' vehicles. Greg was a truck driver his whole working life, so it doesn't matter what you ask Greg about a truck - he can tell you. Greg can also build anything, and completes any hands-on jobs at the unit. Greg's main role today is taking care of maintenance around the unit, and acting as a 'gopher' and cook.

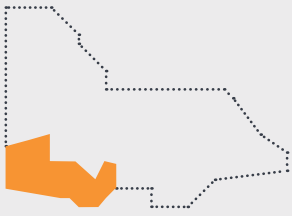
Glyndia Gee OAM, the matriarch of the family, became a member in 1998, and is now the current Unit Controller. Glyndia says she joined because she valued supporting the unit. Before she became a member, she cooked food for the units volunteers when they returned from jobs. Since joining the unit, Glyndia has held many roles alongside Unit Controller, including Occupational Health and Safety Officer, and taking on the responsibilities of public relations and fundraising. Glyndia also has a passion for boating, and is very proud to say she has a truck licence.

Glyndia is heavily involved in community engagement as part of the unit, and goes above and beyond to promote the organisation across the community with school visits, recruitment drives, road crash rescue demonstrations, and much more. Outside of VICSES Glyndia is just as busy, supporting various local organisations, committees, and even the local school canteen. Glyndia is also the proud recipient of a National Medal and Order of Australia, for her tireless work within the sector and as part of her community.

Talayah, Greg and Glyndia's daughter, joined the Kerang Unit in 2007. Taylah's two children Brylie and Bhaily have also joined the unit, cementing themselves as such valued members. Bhailey notes that he became a member to follow in the footsteps of his grandfather Greg, and his amazing work.

The Gee family have given so much to the Kerang Unit and the community. The family's commitment and passion for volunteering is an exceptional achievement, and we thank them for their ongoing dedication and support. ■





# SOUTH WEST

1 April – 30 June

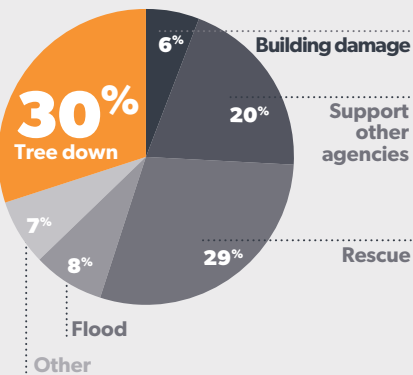


# 509

Volunteers

# 358

Requests for assistance



# Hamilton Unit's creative caricatures from Ukraine!

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



### Have you seen VICSES Hamilton Unit's caricatures posted on social media?

**J**ohn McKenzie, Unit Officer – Facilities and Assets, explained that the idea “came about while members were simply chatting at the unit one day. They thought it would be a good morale booster and a fun memento for members to have.”

The person that created the caricatures is a Ukrainian artist called Vasyl, who freelances under the name ‘PencilIllness’ on the website Fiverr. John highlighted that he was highly recommended on Fiverr, so they decided to commission one member first. They were so pleased with how it turned out that they then decided to get more members done.

“All members were pleased with their caricature, and it was great to see everyone smile and have a laugh. It’s been a great experiment and experience - this venture was completely member funded, and it was great to see the uptake,” said John.

The unit utilised the final artwork as social media tiles when profiling members for their recent recruitment drive, which prompted a lot of engagement on their posts. The artworks have also brightened up the locker area where they’ve been permanently mounted for display.

We all need some light-hearted humour sometimes, and well done to the Hamilton Unit for provoking that in its members and the wider community. ■



## Torquay Unit bowled over by Lions Club donation

By Alex Suwitra, Community Resilience Coordinator, South West Region

**I**n April, the Torquay Lions Club held a Charity Day at the Torquay Bowls Club to raise funds for VICSES Torquay Unit.

Unit members Mark, Linda and Aaron attended on the day, with over 100 bowlers participating from Torquay and surrounds. Several Torquay businesses generously donated funds and gifts toward

# DUNKELD X DEAKIN

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

On Saturday 16 July, the VICSES Dunkeld Unit provided road crash rescue and land search and rescue demonstrations, to a cohort of Deakin University Medical students in the Grampians.

**T**hese sessions from our VICSES members were well-received by Deakin students as they described them as “absolutely phenomenal”, “insightful” and “much appreciated”. It prompted students to think about their medical studies in a rural setting and witness firsthand how VICSES members operate as first-responders before casualties are taken to a hospital.

VICSES Dunkeld Unit Controller Brad Bowe and Deputy Controller Operations Doug McArthur led the road crash rescue group demonstration. They utilised the casualty car to show how VICSES

approaches a road crash rescue scene, and talked about some of the tools used for extrication, casualty handling, and highlighted the importance of safety for both first responders and the casualty. The group were thoroughly impressed with the thoroughness of Doug as a facilitator - Doug has 35 years’ experience in road crash rescue, and has trained many members at the Dunkeld Unit, including Unit Controller Brad!

On completion of the demonstration, the group had an in-depth discussion around the reality of being a first responder, and how this correlates with what



the students will see as doctors in the emergency room.

VICSES Dunkeld Unit Deputy Controller Greg Gardner led the land search and rescue session. During this demonstration, Greg highlighted the chain of command and went through the preparation of searches including equipment prep. He explained the importance of briefings and debriefings when conducting a search. Greg also demonstrated casualty handling and common injuries that they often come across during a search and rescue. Coincidentally, one of the medical students from Deakin was also a trained paramedic, so he was able to give valuable insights

into how Ambulance Victoria deals with common injuries, hypothermia, hyperthermia, and cardiac emergencies.

Overall, the day was a resounding success, with the university medical students leaving with a more informed idea of the way VICSES operates at the scene of a road crash rescue or search and rescue event. The unit was presented with a sincere thank you card from Deakin University, which included a plethora of praise for their presentations. This kind of community engagement creates safer communities together, and promotes cohesion within the sector. Well done Dunkeld Unit! ■

a raffle and silent auction, with the total amount raised coming to \$7,500 – a fantastic effort!

The Torquay Unit had the pleasure of a visit from the Torquay Lions Club in June, where our VICSES volunteers were able to formally thank them for their support and donations. Volunteers took this opportunity to display our vehicles and equipment to the members of the Lions Club, including some of the hydraulic road crash rescue tools and the ‘mule’ wheeled stretcher carrier.

“It was great to see the Lions Club run such a wonderful day for the bowls club members, which will also help the local community

so much through Torquay Unit rescue activities,” said VICSES Torquay Unit Deputy Controller Mark Heaysman.

“As the demographic of people and visitors to Torquay and surrounding areas change, so does our rescue profile. The Lions Club fundraising will support our rescue teams with specialised equipment for search and rescue activities in remote and hazardous locations,” continued Mark.

Torquay Lions Club President Colin Bellis said “VICSES volunteers do wonderful work, and these funds will be used to help ensure they have all the necessary equipment for all emergencies. Our Lions



were more than happy to support VICSES in their fundraising. With the generosity of local businesses, and the cooperation of the Torquay Bowls Club, it was a successful day.”

‘We are part of our community’ is an important VICSES Value,

and our volunteers are truly active in the communities they serve. Relationships with other community groups such as the Torquay Lions Club are integral to the work VICSES volunteers achieve across the state – and we thank you all for your support! ■

## OPERATIONAL UPDATES



# Severe weather sees VICSES deployments into NSW again

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

On the back of deployments into New South Wales (NSW) in March and April of this year, our members answered the call for help once again in July, with severe weather and flooding re-impacting parts of the state.

**F**rom 3 – 20 July, a total of 73 VICSES members out of 105 Victorian personnel, deployed to NSW to provide much needed emergency support.

VICSES, alongside our partner agencies, provided support across a range of Incident Management Team roles in three command centres, located at Wollongong, Metford, and Rhodes.



Our members also met the request for multiple taskforce deployments, with three VICSES taskforces deployed to replace resources in-the-field. This included deployed flood boat crews, storm and flood response and general logistics support, as well as providing direct support to NSW SES field operations in the Newcastle area.

Notably, our taskforce crews were also involved in resupply for isolated persons, including medical and grocery supplies, assisting with roof damage requests for assistance, and pumping of water from premises.

While many of our members had undertaken deployments previously, for some it was an entirely new experience.

"This is my first interstate deployment," said VICSES Camperdown Unit member Kylie Warren, before heading across the border.

"I am looking forward to carrying on the great work of the previously deployed VICSES volunteers, and working with the local NSW SES volunteers to assist in the Gosford/Maitland areas. It's always rewarding to put our skills and training to use to help others in their time of need," continued Kylie.

As with all VICSES deployments, we not only acknowledge the dedication of our members, but also their employers in allowing them to take leave to support our counterpart's interstate.

"I could not be prouder of each of these members for giving up their time to assist our counterparts in NSW as the flooding crisis intensified," said VICSES Chief Officer Operations Tim Wiebusch.

**I also  
thank their  
employers and their  
families at home  
for enabling them  
to deploy interstate  
and provide much  
needed assistance,"  
continued Tim.**

We hope that communities in NSW experience some dryer periods to recover from the impacts of the ongoing rainfall, and thank the incredible contributions of our VICSES members during this time. ■





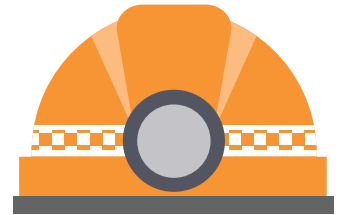


# REQUESTS FOR ASSISTANCE

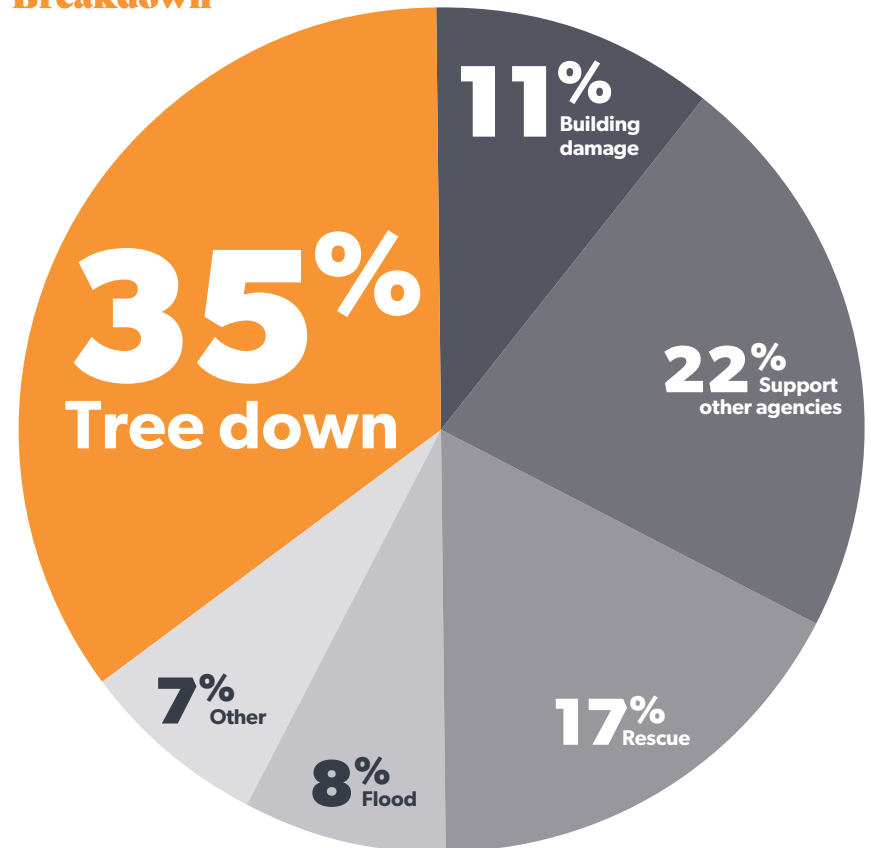
1 April – 30 June

Total

3,409



Breakdown





## State Controllers Seminar returns in 2022

By Susan Davie, Manager Community Connections, VHO

The 2022 State Controllers Seminars took place on the 18th and 25th of June, following a two-year hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The seminars were well attended by unit leaders from across the state, and the sessions were well received.

Following a Welcome to Country, our leaders heard from the VICSES Board Chair Greg Wilson, and enjoyed an interactive 'on the couch' session with Emergency Management Commissioner Andrew Crisp, VICSES Chief Executive Officer Stephen Griffin, VICSES Chief Officer Operations Tim Wiebusch, and Amy Kimber and Vanessa Rubira from the Emergency Services Telecommunication Authority.

The session's main focus included Emergency Management sector reform, funding outcomes for the sector, road crash rescue arrangements, and the volunteer reference group.

A 'Leading with inclusion, achieving diversity, equity, and inclusion for VICSES volunteers' session was facilitated by Emma Kirkwood, who highlighted the importance and the benefits of inclusive leadership. The session covered:

- Prevention and early intervention.
- Developing cultures of diversity, equity, and inclusivity.
- Unconscious bias.
- How to support diversity, equity, and inclusivity in volunteering.

The People and Organisational Development team got everyone moving around the room, splitting into four concurrent sessions that focused on:

- Healthwatch
- Mindfit AV Smart 2.0 program
- Leadership essentials
- Culture survey

The 'Funding our Future' session focused on:

- Providing feedback on the work of units regarding the 10-year financial plans and the value of these plans.
- Rationale and progress of state led advocacy strategies.
- Key themes for collective advocacy efforts.
- A case study from VICSES Port Fairy Unit.



A huge thank you to everyone involved in supporting, and attending the comeback of this fantastic event for our unit leaders. We'll see you again in 2023! ■

## VICSES returns to the 2022 Australasian Rescue Challenge

By Gerry Sheridan, Operations Officer – Capability Improvement, VHO

Members from the VICSES South Barwon and Bendigo Units recently competed in the 2022 Australasian Rescue Challenge (ARC), which was held in Tamworth New South Wales from 21-24 July, having previously been cancelled for the past two years due to the pandemic.

The event kicked off with a symposium on the first day, which saw experts from across Australasia share their knowledge and experience from various complex incidents, international disasters, and emerging technologies.

Both VICSES teams participated in three simulated road crash rescue scenarios, within a 30-minute set time frame and to exacting standards over the following three days of the challenge. On the final day, we saw excellent performances from both teams as they finished on a high, having extricated their entrapped patients well within the timeframes and demonstrating the required standards.

ARC provides an opportunity for all attendees to harness best practice rescue skills and utilise them on modern cars. Engagement with teams from across Australasia helps to promote knowledge sharing and build ongoing relationships between emergency management agencies.

VICSES volunteer teams were led by an appointed commander, supported by a medic and support medic, and technical members who are assessed in each area of competency.

16 teams representing the various fire and rescue agencies from across Australia and New Zealand took part.

The teams expressed how valuable the experience was, working with other highly experienced crews from various rescue organisations from across Australasia, and will seek opportunities to share and build on the knowledge that they have acquired.

### The overall ARC 2022 Champions were:

#### 1st place:

South Australia Metropolitan Fire Service & South Australia Ambulance Service (combined team)

#### 2nd place:

Fire & Rescue Wollongong

#### 3rd place:

Tasmania Fire – Hobart



The 2023 Australasian Rescue Challenge will be hosted in South Australia (SA) by the Metropolitan Fire Service, Country Fire Service, and SA State Emergency Service.

Further results are available on the Australasian Road Rescue Organisation website at [www.arro.org.au/challenge-results](http://www.arro.org.au/challenge-results) ■

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



## Connecting with Violet Town

By Liz Fraser, Community Resilience Coordinator, North East Region

Violet Town is a place where floods happen very quickly, with short warning times between rainfall and impact.

**T**he local topography of Violet Town and the location of freeway and train lines, means that during a significant flood event Violet Town becomes isolated. As a result, the community becomes difficult to reach by VICSES and other 'out of town' emergency services.

As an early VICSES 'FloodSafe' town, Violet Town has a dedicated action group of community members with a strong motivation and appetite to make sure their community is prepared for flood.

In early 2022 the Violet Town Flood Prep Steering Group approached VICSES to get a head start on refreshing their Local Flood Guide, sandbag arrangements, and local

response plans. This was prompted by media coverage of the recurring New South Wales flood events, and their own knowledge and experience that they could face similar consequences in Violet Town.

This community-generated approach is a 'golden goose' for the Community Resilience Coordinators in the North East Region, with the community coming to us with a strong understanding of their risk and a real motivation to improve their flood preparedness! We obviously couldn't say no, and adjusted our business priorities to make this happen for the Violet Town community.

Our work at Violet Town is not over, but to date it has included:

- Full refresh of Violet Town's Local Flood Guide, with heavy community input at a number of engagement activities and via online consultation.
- A number of local market engagement activities where community members identified their homes and workplaces on a giant fabric 1% depth and extent inundation map – prompting realisations of how a flood might impact them.
- Joint training night with VICSES and Country Fire Authority (CFA) to walk through activation and sandbagging arrangements.
- Updated inundation maps for local fire and police stations.
- Updating public information details in the municipal flood emergency plan.
- Bolstered local sandbagging cache, including instructional sandbag posters and leaflets, and a sandbagging quick-fill rack built by the local men's shed.
- Plans for artwork and information walls/signs of the historic 1993 flood depth in locations around town.
- Plans for a business engagement breakfast to engage traders in high-risk locations.
- VICSES, CFA, Victoria Police, Strathbogie Shire Council, and other community members joined together to undertake a bucket-drop to high-risk properties. The bucket contained high value flood and emergency information, including the refreshed Violet Town Local Flood Guide, VICSES Grab Bag, Red Cross RediPlan, and VICSES flood and storm toolkit.

We're thankful for the opportunity to be involved in such a rewarding local community preparedness project, and look forward to engaging with even more community members to build community resilience with our partner agencies. ■

# WELLBEING, HEALTH & SAFETY

## New Psychological First Aid online course

By Kay Czyrek, Psychologist, VHO

A new shorter and updated Psychological First Aid (PFA) online course is now available for all members.

This PFA online course includes strategies for:

- Calming down
- Problem solving
- De-escalating anger
- Helpful thinking

**L**earn what to do and say to a person after trauma or in extreme distress.

### Course details:

- **Delivery:** Online, via the Training Portal. Search 'Psychological First Aid'.
- **Duration:** 3 - 4 hours.



### Remember, PFA = PLLL:

- P Prepare:** Assess if you are feeling fit, healthy, and emotionally capable to support others.
- L Look:** Look out for dangers and immediate needs, reduce stressors, and move to safety.
- L Listen:** Gather information and allow people to share what's important for them, to help guide problem solving.
- L Link:** If further support is required, provide the relevant information and agree to follow up. ■

## VICES MINDFIT EPISODE 14:

### 'Therapy's not for every man and his dog,' with Rob Atkins

By Alison Wright, Health and Wellbeing Coordinator, VHO

In this episode we talk with Rob Atkins, former Victoria Police member and co-founder of the first responder support group, Code 9 Foundation.

**A**s a result of years of confronting call-outs, Rob found himself retired prematurely due to ill health and unable to undertake his substantive role 'on the beat'.

himself broken and void of all hope. That is until, man's best friend, a therapy dog by the name of Jimmy, came in to help restore Rob's quality of life and give some light at the end of the tunnel.

Rob's daily life was filled with nightmares, flashbacks, distress, and crippling anxiety. Talk therapy and medication had varying effects to empty Rob's cumulative trauma bucket, and he eventually found

Listen in to hear how Rob's life has changed since meeting his furry best mate, Jimmy.

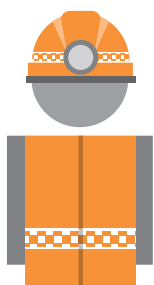
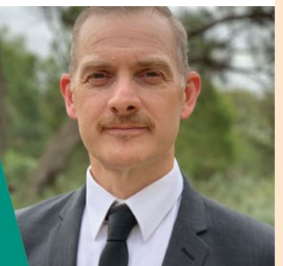
*Content warning: Contains subjects that may trigger some listeners. ■*



### More information

Scan the QR code to listen to this episode. For more information about CODE 9 Foundation, head to [www.code9ptsd.org.au](http://www.code9ptsd.org.au)

"..and I thought that was how I was going to be for life... I was going to be this pill-taking veggie on the couch"



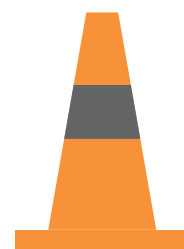
### Workplace inspections

July 2020 – June 2021

226

July 2021 – June 2022

228



### Injuries

July 2020 – June 2021

130

July 2021 – June 2022

119

# Phoenix Australia Responder Assist: Supporting your Mental Health Recovery

By Tim Peck, Deputy Director – Responder Assist, Phoenix Australia

If work has affected your mental wellbeing, talk to Phoenix Australia’s *Responder Assist* for a confidential mental health assessment.



**V**ICES volunteers, veterans and employees who are experiencing mental health symptoms are encouraged to engage Phoenix Australia’s *Responder Assist* clinical intake team. The team offers an independent and confidential service, which specialises in the mental health of emergency service personnel. *Responder Assist* is funded by the Victorian Government and run by Phoenix Australia – the experts in posttraumatic mental health.

### Why contact *Responder Assist* for help?

*Responder Assist* supports emergency workers to access evidence-based and independent help with mental health. By engaging *Responder Assist* to support your recovery, you:

- Give yourself the best chance of recovery by receiving care based on the latest available research.
- Can be assured that you will be referred to the most appropriate information, support, or treatment option for your individual needs.
- Can feel confident knowing that if you require treatment, it will be provided by a clinician who is specialised in treating emergency workers.
- Will have access to a range of treatment and support options, including clinical psychologists and psychiatrists, peer support and brief interventions, non-mental health services (such as financial advisory or union services), and other specialist practitioners (such as sleep specialists).

### To access *Responder Assist*:

Contact us on 1800 329 191 for a confidential chat with our intake team. You might also consider speaking to your GP or other health professional for a referral.

Our team will make an assessment based on your case and talk with you about the best options available to you.

We will then assist you in making an appointment with the relevant practitioner or agency, and will be available for follow-up support if required.

The *Responder Assist* clinical intake service is free of charge. Where further treatment is required, funding may be provided via a Mental Health Care Plan (through your GP) or a WorkCover claim. Treatment can also be funded out-of-pocket.

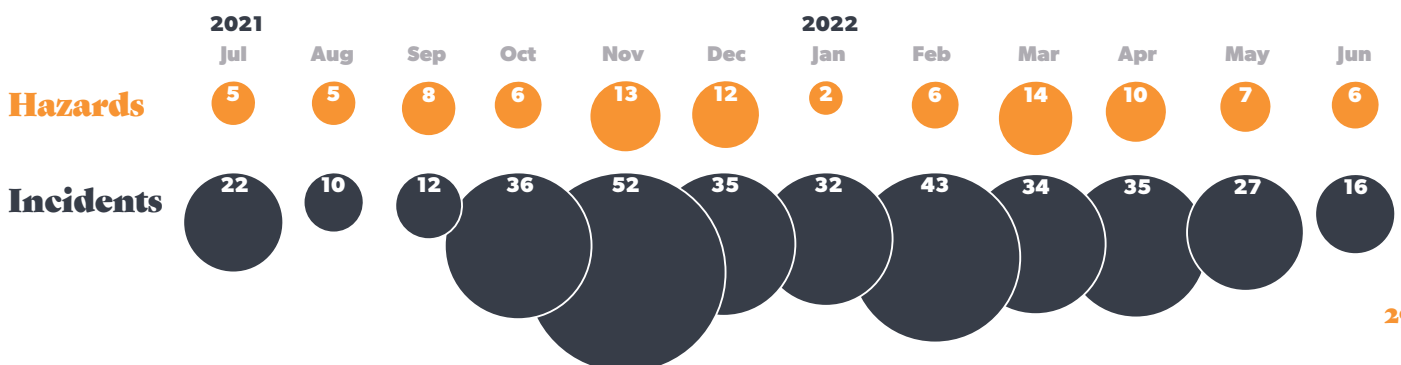


## More information

For more information contact *Responder Assist* on 1800 329 191 during office hours, or visit our website at [www.responderassist.com.au](http://www.responderassist.com.au)

You can also follow the #responderassist hashtag on our Phoenix Australia social media channels (Facebook and LinkedIn) for more updates. ■

## YEAR AT A GLANCE



# MEDIA

1 April -  
30 June 2022

## Campaigns and events:

- National Volunteer Week (16-22 May).
- Wear Orange Wednesday (18 May).
- Thank a First Responder (8 June).
- Driver Reviver (8 -13 April and 10-13 June).

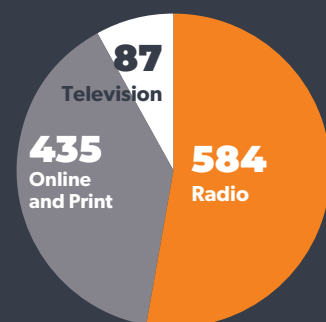
## Media releases:

- VICSES personnel continue to support flood-affected parts of NSW (1 April).
- VICSES volunteers at Driver Reviver sites across the state for Easter (8 April).
- VICSES receives significant funding boost (3 May).
- VICSES celebrated at AFL Emergency Services match (12 May).
- Thanking all of our volunteers this Wear Orange Wednesday, especially our newest recruit! (13 May).
- June storms remembered: one year on (9 June).
- Queen's Birthday Honours (12 June).
- VICSES returns to international road rescue tournament (28 June).

## Ministerial events:

- VICSES Nillumbik Unit opening event (April).
- Easter Driver Reviver launch (April).
- VICSES Essendon Unit opening event (May).

## Mentions of VICSES in the news:



## Social media highlights:

### FACEBOOK

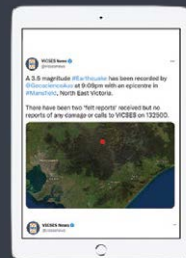


Impressions:  
**299,286**

Engagement:  
**33,595**

6 June: Magnitude  
2.6 earthquake near  
Warragul, Victoria.

### TWITTER



Impressions:  
**7,233**

Engagement:  
**647**

19 May: Magnitude  
3.5 earthquake near  
Mansfield, Victoria.

### INSTAGRAM

Impressions: **3,042** Engagement: **257**



15 May: WOW  
Day 2022 media  
launch with  
VICSES Chelsea  
Unit member  
Kimba Wall.

### LINKEDIN



Impressions:  
**5,314**

Engagement:  
**440**

4 May: Congratulations  
to our VICSES  
Emergency Service  
Medal recipients.

## Media and Communications: Resources to you support you

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

Looking for resources and support for media, social media, digital content, branded collateral, and more?

Our Media and Communications section on the Hub has all the resources you need to support your unit or business unit. Here's a snapshot of the resources that we have available, and where to find them:

### My State > Media and Communications:

- **Style guides and templates:** Find our Writing and Design Style Guides, VICSES logo, Word and PowerPoint templates, personal and corporate stationary, poster and certificate templates, device wallpapers, building signage, unit activity templates, and more.
- **Digital toolkits:** We have a huge collection of digital resources available to suit your every need. This includes:
  - Campaign digital toolkits, including social media tiles, banners, posters, and more.
  - Emergency key message tiles, including social tiles for all of our control hazards, as well as a 'Key messages for VICSES Hazards' guide, containing key messages for before, during, and after an emergency.
  - Social media support, including monthly social media content plans to support your unit pages, annual theme calendar, social media strategy, guide to social media during operations, and more.
- **Image library:** A collection of high-resolution approved images for flood, storm, earthquake, landslide, road crash rescue, community engagement, search and rescue, fleet, and more.
- **Video library:** A series of VICSES-branded videos, suitable for a range of purposes such as recruitment, social media, open days, community education events, and presentations.
- **Media and State Media Duty Officer:** Contact details for the VICSES media line, key media contacts, VICSES media release template, and information on media training.

Plus, much more!

We're always looking to expand our resources to best support our members.

If you have any feedback or questions, contact the Media and Communications team at [media@ses.vic.gov.au](mailto:media@ses.vic.gov.au). ■

## Ramping up services for our volunteers



At the end of June, the current IS Strategy was closed.

**W**hile the results of the strategy will be published soon, in the interim we wanted to provide an overview of some of the changes and improvements that were trialled and introduced during the duration of the strategy, which were specifically about providing more services to our volunteers and units.

With the new VICSES Operating Model rolling out on 1 October, our directorate was given a few more resources to continue with our provided services in a more robust way.

### After-hours Volunteer Service Desk

**OPENING NOVEMBER**

(Mon – Thu 5:00pm – 9:00pm, Sat 10:00am – 3:00pm)

This was one of the top requests from our volunteers – “we need technical support when we are most active at VICSES.”

Last year we conducted a trial for a couple of months to understand what service looked like, and what would be required to provide it ongoing.

Very soon we will be interviewing for two technical service support people. These two people will be dedicated to support for volunteers once the service in standard business hours end, and during those times that the trial identified as peak.

Of course, we will still be providing service during our standard business hours. This new extended arrangement is exclusive for volunteers.

### Technology sourcing and support

Many of our units like to contribute back to their communities by procuring technology and services locally – the IS team 100% supports this. However, we know that some units are not sure if what they have procured and the support that goes with it, is right for them. In some cases, the technical expertise of a unit may have departed, and members are not sure what they have, and what has been provided by IS or other teams.

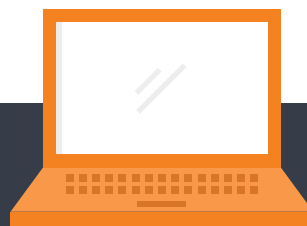
If you have this problem, come to the IS team! We are more than happy to help. Over the past years we have helped many units with a whole bunch of tech assistance, including:

- **Site inspections and meetings:** We will come to you, talk with you, and understand what you have, what your problems are, and then look at your entire set up – it doesn't matter where you got it. We will then help you re-organise, tidy-up, cable up and work with your suppliers to sort it all out, and get you back on track.
- **Procure your additional PCs from IS:** And in return, we will organise the order, set them up, provide the base operating system and anti-virus for free, hook it up to our network, and make sure they are kept up-to-date with our security update schedules. If anything goes wrong, we will support it – no extra charge.

- **Need new telephones, mobile, or phone system? – IS can help:** The IS team is able to arrange to assist with your telephony needs through our contacts at Telstra. We have helped units secure better plans and new phone systems. Once again, anything we do to help out is not charged to you.
- **The same goes for Multi-Functional Devices:** Come to the IS team, and we will use our arrangement with Konica Minolta to get you a good device that comes with support.
- **Information Management – Sharepoint for units plus:** Some of you are already using Sharepoint. However, our Information Security & Governance team is prioritising an initiative to set up a standard records management system using Sharepoint. If you are interested in knowing more about this, then give us a call or watch out for our updates as this progresses. If you're struggling with anything regarding your records management and security, come to us.

### General procurement advice

Is there tech that you want to buy, but you want to source yourself to invest back in your local community? We get that, and we support it. We have assisted many units by inspecting their quotes, talking to the suppliers and their behalf, and making sure they are right. In one case we helped a unit save \$30,000 by helping them find much cheaper equipment!



### How to get in touch with the IS Team:

You can email the IS Service Desk at [ictservicesdesk@ses.vic.gov.au](mailto:ictservicesdesk@ses.vic.gov.au), and we'll take it from there. If it's urgent or you require after-hours support, call us on **1300 737 101**. ■



# VICSES at a glance



## Who we are

### Control agency for:



Flood



Storm



Earthquake



Tsunami



Landslide



**150**

Units

**14**

Permanently  
staffed offices

**104**

Road rescue  
providers

## Our people in 2021-22



**4,867**  
Volunteers\*

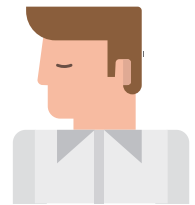
**33.9%** Female  
**66.8%** Male  
**0.2%** Non-binary

**Volunteer leadership** (Unit Controllers and Deputy Controllers)  
**36.8%** Female **62.9%** Male **0.3%** Non-binary

**292**  
Staff

**39.2%** Female  
**60.6%** Male  
**0.3%** Non-binary

**Staff leadership** (Executive team)  
**57%** Female **43%** Male



\*active & non-active

## Our agency in 2021-22



**305,636**

Volunteer hours



**Flood**  
**3,563** incidents  
(26,923 hrs)



**Storm**  
**27,115** incidents  
(200,584 hrs)



**Road Crash Rescue**  
**1,336** incidents  
(10,916 hrs)



**36,975**  
Requests for  
assistance (RFAs)



### Assisting agency

**38,787** hrs across **3,041** incidents



### Tsunami, landslide or earthquake

**315** Requests for assistance



### Rescue (other/RAIR)

**986** across **5,063** hours

**Second busiest year on record for RFAs.  
Flood incidents have increased by 63%  
year on year.**