

WINTER 2021

Community Matters

VICSES

EDITION 15



VICSES SUPPORTS INTERSTATE DEPLOYMENTS

Celebrating Wear Orange Wednesday 2021



*Women in
Rescue
events
held
across
Victoria*

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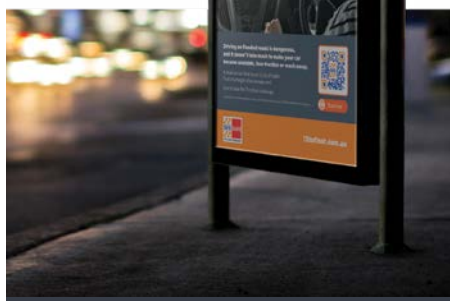
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Interested in contributing?

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

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MESSAGE FROM THE ACTING MINISTER FOR POLICE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

Welcome to the second edition of *Community Matters* for 2021.

We're almost halfway through 2021 and I'd like to acknowledge the resilience of all Victorians as we continue to face the challenges of the coronavirus pandemic.

As we brace for the winter conditions ahead, I have no doubt our VICSES volunteers will continue to be out there supporting communities across the state.

Following the onset of La Niña-generated weather patterns, Victorians experienced an intense icy blast at the start of autumn, following a wetter than usual summer.

In March, New South Wales experienced one of the biggest flooding in events in over five decades and in their time of need, VICSES was there to support our friends across the border.

VICSES deployed 24 members to New South Wales to provide additional incident management support and coordinate crucial requests.

On the opposite side of the country, residents in Western Australia braced for Cyclone Seroja, which ravaged parts of the state.

By the end of May 2021, there had been three deployments of VICSES personnel as part of a Victorian taskforce supporting the relief effort, made up of 63 volunteers and eight staff members.

I'm proud of our VICSES volunteers who didn't hesitate to help our neighbours – I know they're incredibly grateful for the unwavering support.



Back home, our volunteers have been busy. Since the start of 2021, VICSES has responded to over 9,000 requests for assistance, with over half of these for fallen trees.

Requests for assistance also included almost 1,000 call-outs for building damage, over 750 for flood, approximately 1,200 requests to support our other emergency service agencies, and over 530 road crash rescues.

It was great to see this effort celebrated across Victoria on Wear Orange Wednesday in May. Victorians were encouraged to dress in orange, an iconic part of the VICSES identity, and it was amazing to see so many displays of support across social media.

It's vital that we continue to support our volunteers in carrying out their selfless work by ensuring they have the equipment needed to keep Victorians safe during major weather emergencies.

Earlier this year, we announced the latest round of Volunteer Emergency Services Equipment Program (VESEP) grants, which includes more than \$2.35 million for VICSES units.

We also unveiled the new \$7 million site for the VICSES Chelsea Unit with a six-bay drive-through motor room, and additional storage for boats and equipment. It will also enable volunteers to assist in a wider area, taking in two-thirds of the Kingston local government area, including part of Port Phillip Bay.

I'd like to thank every one of our VICSES volunteers, who continually rise to the challenge to support communities around Victoria and across Australia.

Danny Pearson MP
Acting Minister for Police and Emergency Services



Welcome

Hello everyone, and welcome to the winter edition of *Community Matters*, our second for 2021.

Firstly, I'd like to thank everyone for your participation in this year's Wear Orange Wednesday event on the 19th of May. Our volunteers are the backbone of VICSES, and have contributed significantly over the past 12 months to the safety of communities across Victoria, and interstate. You can read more about our Wear Orange Wednesday celebrations on page 6.

In March and April, our members were deployed interstate to assist the response to severe flooding in New South Wales, as well as to support in the aftermath of Cyclone Seroja in Western Australia. Our volunteers and staff were deployed across a range of liaison, incident management and operational roles, providing crucial emergency support for our emergency colleagues and communities interstate. Thank you all for your incredible dedication.

In May we also took part in the annual Midsumma Pride March, in support of the LGBTIQ+ community. Although attendance was limited due to COVID-19, we had an overwhelming response to those wanting to participate and celebrate the diversity of our members and the community. We are an inclusive organisation, and it's a great opportunity for our members to represent us at this event.

Last year, we invited volunteers and staff to participate in workshops as part of a new VICSES Gender Champions group. Since its establishment, the group has continued to meet to build ideas and improved opportunities for our Gender Equality Action Plan and new Gender Equality Act. I look forward to sharing more information with you soon on our continued commitment to improving gender equality and inclusion for all of our members.

Finally, as we work towards a more gender balanced service, in April I was able to attend this year's Women in Rescue event at Sunbury Unit. First founded by the unit in 2018, this year's event was bigger than ever, with units across Victoria hosting their very own workshops to provide female members with a safe and supportive environment to learn new skills and encourage leadership. You can read more on page 7.

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

Kind regards,

Stephen Griffin
CEO Victoria State Emergency Service

FEATURES



VICSES supports interstate deployments

By Jessie Schleibs, Operations Business Coordinator, VHO

Over the past 18-months, our members have made significant contributions across a range of major emergency events. From the 2019-20 bushfire season, COVID-19 and local severe weather, this year VICSES volunteers and staff have also played an integral role in supporting our colleagues and communities interstate.

Here's a snapshot of our recent deployments to New South Wales (NSW) and Western Australia (WA), and the incredible dedication of our people.



WA deployment: Cyclone Seroja

Alongside deployments to NSW (page 5), VICSES provided crucial support to WA to assist in responding to the significant damage caused by Cyclone Seroja.

From 12 to 27 April, a total of 71 VICSES members were deployed to WA, encompassing 63 volunteers and 8 staff members.

Roles undertaken during this period included:

- Jurisdictional Liaison Officers.
 - Level 3 Accredited Logistics Officer.
 - Divisional Commander.
 - Taskforce Leaders.
 - Crew Members.
- 2 Medium Rescue Trucks.
 - 3 Rescue Support 4x4s.
 - Safe Working at Heights System kits.
 - First Aid kits.
 - A variety of additional consumables and tools, including chainsaws.
 - Communication caches, including mobile phones, satellite phones, antennae and associated chargers and equipment.



Utilising these vehicles and equipment, a variety of tasks were undertaken by VICSES crews, such as:

- Temporary repair of damaged buildings.
- Tree operations.
- Damage assessment and reconnaissance.
- Community welfare checks.
- Logistics and logistical support duties.

The hard work of our members was recognised by the affected communities, as well as those who responded as part of our emergency services sector, including a special message from WA Fire and emergency Services Commissioner Darren Klemm:

"I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and personally thank all of the VICSES volunteers and staff, for the invaluable assistance provided to the WA Department of Fire and Emergency Services during the response efforts following the impact of Tropical Cyclone Seroja on 11 April 2021.

The damage caused by the cyclone impacted multiple communities across a 133,430km² area. The distances involved and remoteness of many of these towns meant that multiple task forces were required to be deployed to get help to these communities as quickly as possible. The widespread loss of power and telecommunications added to the challenges of the response operation.

The assistance provided by VICSES was invaluable in enabling us to reach the affected communities, and provide an emergency response in the immediate aftermath of the cyclone impact. I also acknowledge the

challenges that the COVID-19 pandemic has placed on interstate travel, which thankfully did not deter personnel from volunteering their time to help."



Once again, thank you for your continuous support and for assisting with the emergency response to the impacted communities across the Mid-West and Wheatbelt regions of WA in their time of need."

A huge thank you to everyone involved in these deployments, and your contributions in ensuring the safety of communities across Australia.

You can read more information about those deployed from our regions on pages 14, 17 and 21. ■



NSW deployment: Flooding

During March, VICSES was part of a wider multi-agency interstate deployment to support NSW in response to major wide-spread flooding. The flooding was described as a one-in-70-year event, and was declared a natural disaster by the NSW government.

Between 21 and 29 March, VICSES deployed a total of 28 members (volunteers and staff) from across the state to the following NSW locations:

- Coffs Harbour.
- Bankstown.
- Metford.
- Taree.
- Newcastle.
- Sydney.
- Wollongong.

Our members undertook a variety of key positions, including Incident Management Team roles in operational centres, Divisional Command roles alongside our Forest Fire Management Victoria colleagues, and as part of a Jurisdictional Liaison team that was deployed to work alongside our partner SES agencies from across Australia.

On 26 March, the Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison toured one of the emergency operation centres to thank local and interstate SES volunteers for all of their efforts in responding to the event.

Volunteers and staff members from NSW SES spoke very highly of VICSES' contribution and support during the operations, with particular praise for those members who provided support in Incident Control Centre's and to the Public Information team. ■

FEATURES



Wear Orange Wednesday 2021

By Gabi Barkmeyer, Corporate Communications Officer, VHO

On Wednesday 19 May, we came together to celebrate Wear Orange Wednesday (WOW Day) – a national day of thanks for our amazing volunteers.



After an incredibly busy period with significant flood and storm events, deployments, COVID-19 and much more, this year's celebrations were a fantastic opportunity for the community to show their appreciation for our local heroes in orange.

Ahead of the Wednesday, a media opportunity to promote this year's WOW Day event was held on Saturday 15 May at AAMI Park. Speakers at the event included Penny Callaghan, the mother of Will Callaghan, who expressed her gratitude for our 100+ VICES volunteers each day, who were involved in supporting the successful search of her son on Mount Disappointment back in June 2020.

Communities across Victoria celebrated WOW Day on 19 May by dressing in orange, hosting orange-themed events with their colleagues, friends and family, and sharing special messages of thanks.

We also received video messages from actors, TV personalities and sports stars, including Aussie actor Shane Jacobson, Channel 7

weather presenter Jane Bunn, the Hawthorn and Geelong Football Clubs, and many more, which were shared on social media.

URBNSURF jumped on board to give back to our volunteers, with special discounts available for our volunteers to take a break surfing at their surf park in Tullamarine.

Our Principle Community Partner AAMI once again supported our WOW Day Pet Competition to find the best dressed pet in orange, with 5 x \$100 Bunnings vouchers for our volunteer winners. You can check this year's winners on the Hub.

Finally, as an impressive display to close-out our celebrations, locations across Victoria including AAMI Park, the Melbourne Star, the Bolte Bridge, town halls, and other great regional locations, were lit up in orange to acknowledge the fantastic work of our volunteers.

Thank you to all of our volunteers for your ongoing contributions and dedication, and to everyone who helped us in celebrating WOW Day 2021! ■

Women in Rescue

By Gabi Barkmeyer, Corporate Communications Officer, VHO

On Saturday 17 April, VICSES units across the state hosted their very own *Women in Rescue* events, providing an opportunity for the women of their unit to get hands-on with equipment, build on rescue skills, and have fun!

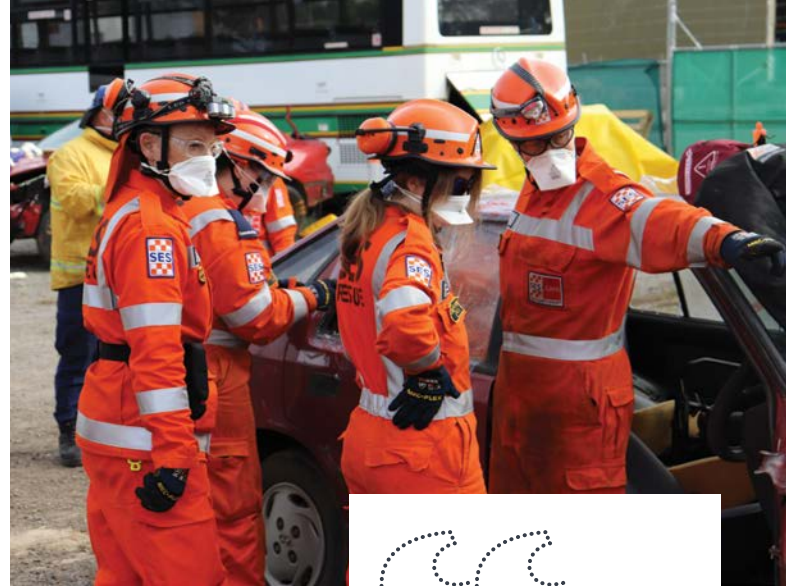
Founded by Sunbury Unit in 2018, the event was established with the aim to promote the following four key priorities:

- Building women's confidence in all roles associated with a rescue.
- Increasing familiarity with rescue tools through more 'hands on tools' time.
- Providing a positive, welcoming and challenging learning environment.
- Expanding leadership capacity and networking opportunities of women in emergency services.

Across participating units, key activities on the day included road crash rescue training, casualty handling, domestic rescue, and more.

In addition, Sunbury Unit hosted Gisborne Unit Deputy Controller Di Dale as guest speaker on the day, whose passionate and motivational talk about the contributions of women within the emergency services sector was streamed via Webex for all members.

Sunbury Unit volunteer Angela Lane has been a key organiser of the event since its beginnings, recognising the need for more opportunities for women to learn



and train in a safe and supportive environment together.

"Women in Rescue started because we wanted to show that women are part of all of it, and can use some pretty heavy duty tools," said Angela.

"Our women in orange are capable, resourceful, and highly skilled, and contribute to the safety of our community equally alongside our male colleagues."

Torquay Unit Controller Rachel Vella also spoke about the importance of the initiative, hosting the unit's own *Women in Rescue* event on the day with special guest attendee, Emergency Management Commissioner Andrew Crisp (read more on page 21).

"A lot of people assume that it's only our male members who use heavy-duty tools, drive VICSES trucks, and cut people out of

Our female first responders at VICSES are incredible, and attend highly complex and challenging incidents."

vehicles – but that isn't true. We have a growing contingent of women in South West Region who tackle a whole range of hand-on, life-saving duties and requests for assistance," said Rachel.

Thank you to everyone that was involved in making this year's *Women in Rescue* event the biggest yet – see you next year! ■





CAMPAIGNS & EVENTS

Driver Reviver Easter launch

By Gabi Barkmeyer, Corporate Communications Officer, VHO

In March we officially launched our Driver Reviver program ahead of the Easter long weekend, encouraging drivers to stop, revive, and arrive alive at their destination.

Held in Southbank, key speakers for this ministerial event included VICSES Chief Officer Operations Tim Wiebusch, Acting Minister for Police and Emergency Services Danny Pearson, Minister for Roads and Safety Ben Carroll, and Victoria Police Deputy Commissioner Libby Murphy.

VICES Pakenham Unit volunteer Andre Ackaoui also spoke to media, sharing the story of his own involvement in a serious road incident that was attended to by VICSES, and the importance of initiatives like Driver Reviver to support road safety.

Volunteers organised through Sunbury Unit attended the day, hosting a road crash rescue demonstration for the media and those in attendance.

Other attendees that supported the launch included Fire Rescue

Victoria Deputy Commissioner Gavin Freeman, Country Fire Authority Deputy Chief Officer Garry Cook, and representatives from our Principle Community Partner AAMI.

With easing COVID-19 restrictions, over 20 VICSES Driver Reviver sites were activated across the state for the Easter long weekend, providing free coffee, tea and snacks to motorists, to help prevent driver fatigue on our roads. The campaign also coincided with a new Driver Reviver video for social media, which is available for all units on the Hub under **My State > Media and Communications > Video Library**.

Thank you to all of our volunteers who gave up their time over the long weekend to support our Driver Reviver sites, and the safety of our communities.

You can read more about Andre's story on page 10. ■



By Gabi Barkmeyer, Corporate Communications Officer, VHO

In March 17, VICSES was privileged to be involved in the launch of the 2021 AFL season at the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG).

Essendon Unit volunteer Sandy Faoro sounded the 'The First Siren' at the MCG, alongside 11 other stadiums across Australia ahead of the seasons' first game.

Sandy has volunteered with VICSES for 39 years, and described the last 12-18 months as the most challenging of her time as part of the emergency services. This opportunity was a great way to acknowledge the hard work of Sandy, and all of our volunteers during this time. ■



Photo: Vladimir Dayrit

Pride March

2021 By Gabi Barkmeyer, Corporate Communications Officer, VHO

On Sunday 23 May, our members came together once again to participate as part of the annual Midsumma Pride March!

Established in 1996, the Midsumma Pride March is an annual celebration of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex community, embracing diversity and uniting thousands every year in solidarity towards equality.

VICSES is a long-time supporter and participant of the Pride March, as an event that reflects the diversity within the communities we serve, and our own organisation.

Although this year's march looked a little different due to COVID-19, our members proudly rallied alongside our emergency service colleagues in support of the LGBTIQ+ community.



"Pride March demonstrates tolerance and support for all community members, and highlights the importance of eliminating discrimination, bullying and harassment. I'm incredibly proud of our members who have attended today in support

of this fantastic event," said VICSES Chief Executive Officer Stephen Griffin, who also participated alongside members on the day.

Thank you to everyone that supported this fantastic event. Together, we are VICSES! ■



*Are you a **VICSES** member and identify as part of the **LGBTIQ+** community?*

Search for the VICSES Pride Network on Facebook



Wrap-up: 2021 Victoria Police and Emergency Service Games

By Gerry Sheridan, Operations Officer Capability Improvement, VHO

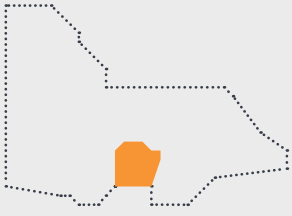
The 2021 Victoria Police and Emergency Service Games were held from 17 to 21 March in the regional city of Geelong. The short format over five days was to celebrate the 40th anniversary since the games inception. After what has been a difficult year with COVID-19 and busy operational periods, it was great to have all of our emergency services together to participate. As the 2020 games were cancelled due to the pandemic environment, this year's event was even more special for everyone involved!

VICSES put the call-out for members to participate and we were not disappointed, with this year's team having our largest contingency in over five years! In total, we had 107 VICSES members participate, with 226 individual entries across all of the sports on offer. 107 was our lucky number, with 107 medals also won across the event, including 60 gold, 31 silver, and 16 bronze. A number of members won a bag full of medals; however a standout was Maroondah Unit member Rainer Langhoff, who brought home a whopping 13 medals!

This year we also saw the introduction of our new sporting apparel, which was well received and worn with pride across the athletics track, cross fit gym, squash court, surfing, indoor rowing, and dodgeball events to mention a few.

We now turn our preparations to the Australasian Police and Emergency Service Games, which will take place in New Zealand in March 2022.

Well done to all of our participating members, and thank you for representing VICSES! ■



CENTRAL

1 January – 31 March

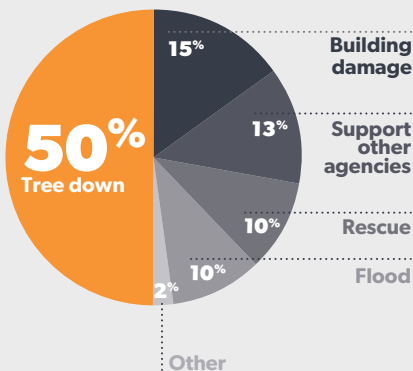


1,976

Volunteers

2,938

Requests for assistance



Brand new home for Chelsea Unit

By Gabi Barkmeyer, Corporate Communications Officer, VHO

As one of our organisations longest running units, Chelsea Unit will soon be moving into brand new local headquarters, thanks to a large government investment.

Established in 1953, Chelsea Unit currently operates out of Bonbeach Reserve with around 58 active volunteers.

Chelsea Unit will soon benefit from a \$7 million investment from the Victorian government, which will allow the unit to move to a converted warehouse at 13 Ashley Park Drive, Chelsea Heights.

The new facility will boast a six-bay drive-through motor room, additional storage for boats and equipment, as well as recently upgraded infrastructure. It will also enable volunteers to assist in a wider area, taking in two thirds of the Kingston local government area, including part of Port Phillip Bay.

The new build follows a very busy period at the unit, with members responding to 325

requests for assistance in the last financial year, including response for floods, fallen trees, damage to property, search-and-rescue operations, and more.

Acting Minister for Police and Emergency Services Danny Pearson says the funding comes at a good time.

“Chelsea Unit is one of VICSES’ longest serving units, and it’s important that volunteers have the space and resources they need to effectively respond to incidents and support Victoria Police and other emergency services,” he said in a statement.

This statement was also mirrored by Parliamentary Secretary for Police and Emergency Services, Paul Edbrooke.

“We’re continually looking at ways we can better support our current and future volunteers – ensuring they receive the training and facilities they need to do their job,” he said.

Construction on the new facilities at Chelsea Heights begins this winter, and is scheduled for completion by the end of December, 2021. ■



DRIVER REVIVER LAUNCH:

Pakenham Unit member shares story of road crash rescue

By Gabi Barkmeyer, Corporate Communications Officer, VHO

To help promote our Driver Reviver campaign and road safety over this year's Easter long weekend, VICSES Pakenham Unit member Andre Ackaoui shared his story of how his fellow VICSES volunteers saved his life after a serious road collision.

Andre Ackaoui has volunteered with VICSES Pakenham Unit for the past 10 years, since he was 17-years-old. During this time Andre has responded to many requests for assistance, including over 100 road crash rescues alongside his highly-trained unit members.

In August 2020, Andre was involved in a serious road collision while driving his truck on the Hume Freeway in Wallan. For the first time, Andre found himself as the casualty of a road crash rescue - not the first responder.

VICSES Craigieburn Unit and local Country Fire Authority members swiftly responded to the incident, involving a complex three-hour extraction.

Although finally being freed of the vehicle, Andre suffered significant injuries, and was in a coma for nine days.

Thankfully, Andre survived the ordeal and is on the way to recovery, all thanks to the assistance from his fellow VICSES volunteers and emergency service responders.

Reflecting on the trauma of the incident, Andre spoke to media at the launch of the Driver Reviver campaign to encourage the community to stay safe over the Easter long weekend by pulling over at a VICSES volunteer-run Driver Reviver location to stop, rest, and refresh.

"Sometimes being the responder is hard and you're faced with some challenging scenes, but being in the collision yourself is not something I'd want anyone to go through," said Andre.

"I've been very lucky and am making a good recovery, but I want to urge everyone out there to take care driving on our roads. If you see a Driver Reviver site on your journey, make sure you drop in and say hello and thanks to our VICSES volunteers."

Thank you to Andre for sharing his story, and we wish Andre all the best on his road to recovery. ■

Government House emergency services mural

By Gabi Barkmeyer, Corporate Communications Officer, VHO



A'thank-you' mural has been showcased at Government House in honour of our Victorian emergency service personnel, including VICSES.

The mural was commissioned by the Governor of Victoria Linda Dessau AC, and created by artist Heesco Khosnaran to encapsulate the gratitude felt by so many Victorians for those working in our emergency services.

From the devastating 2019-20 bushfires, COVID-19 and recent severe flooding, the mural is a true reflection of the dedication of our sector across the state in keeping our communities safe. Thank YOU! ■



EAST

1 January – 31 March

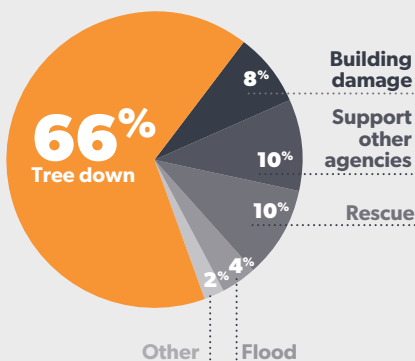


438

Volunteers

768

Requests for assistance



Gippsland enhances Road Crash Rescue and Rescue Boat Skills

By Merryn Henderson, Community Resilience Coordinator, East Region



The VICSES Gippsland Training team coordinated and facilitated their annual multi-agency Road Crash Rescue (RCR) and Rescue Boat Workshops over the past few months.

The VICSES Sale Unit hosted the Road Rescue Workshop on Saturday 17 and Sunday 18 of April. All 18 RCR units had representatives in attendance, as well as Victoria Police, Ambulance Victoria, Fire Rescue Victoria and Gerry Sheridan from our State Operations team.

These RCR workshops are held to ensure our members have the latest up-to-date information in relation to safe and effective road rescue skills, techniques and options. The training team, which consists of both staff and volunteer instructors, bring learnings in from both the State RCR Workshop and any trends from the Road Rescue Capability Assessments, ensuring that our members have the opportunity to improve and enhance their skills.

“In essence we want to ensure the training is consistent across the state, so the skills and knowledge are being conveyed the same,” said Gerry.

Topics covered in both theory and hands on scenarios included command and control, medical and patient considerations, alternative tool techniques, battery tools, ramming options, and new RCR hydraulic tool use and application. The day ended with a multi-car motor vehicle accident with a bus and mass patient scenario.

Earlier in the year, a Rescue Boat Workshop was held on 27 February at Blue Rock Lake, upstream of the Tanjil River.

VICSES deckhands, crewpersons and coxswains spend many hours on the water during the year to enable

quick and efficient responses to incidents. Regular on-water time is crucial in maintaining and enhancing their boating skills, ensuring a high-level readiness is maintained all year around. VICSES Rescue Boat Coxswain/Crewpersons have advanced knowledge and skills to enable them to confidently lead a boat and crew during rescue boat operations.

Various scenarios were held including search and rescue, emergency drills, navigation, and depth checking of river levels.

Non-boating members also attended with the regions Field Operations Vehicle to set up an Incident Control Point for communications and local command.

“These sessions will ensure that our volunteer members across Gippsland are upskilled with the latest training and information to better protect our communities when they need us,” said Anthony Matters, Gippsland Regional Trainer. ■



Dignitaries visit Leongatha and Orbost Units

By Jane Fontana, Community Resilience Coordinator, East Region

In late March, Leongatha and Orbost Units had the pleasure of separate visits from important dignitaries.

Victorian Emergency Management Commissioner Andrew Crisp paid a visit to Leongatha Unit on 31 March to attend their unit social night. Andrew spent time getting to know the members and thanked them for the work that they put into

their community. Andrew commented that our VICSES volunteers are the 'swiss army knife' of the emergency services; both in our capacity to respond to such a range of operations, and in the quality of the service that we provide. The members appreciated the personal thanks and

appreciation from the Commissioner for the important work they do.

In the same month, Governor-General David Hurley and Her Excellency Mrs Linda Hurley travelled to East Gippsland Shire to meet with local volunteers, including Orbost Unit. Both guests were struck by the volunteers' experiences and contributions – particularly over the last 18-months – and their commitment to the safety of their community. ■

Moe Unit celebrates 50 years as founders of Driver Reviver

By Jane Fontana, Community Resilience Coordinator, East Region



Moe Unit are celebrating 50 years of dedicated service to the community this year, from humble beginnings in 1971 as the Moe Civil Defence.

In the past 12 months, Moe Unit has responded to over 200 requests for assistance, including call-outs for trees down, building damage, flooding, storms, land search and rescue, and various other emergencies.

In addition, Moe Unit is also where the Driver Reviver program started its humble beginnings, before becoming a nationally recognised road

safety program. Moe Unit volunteer Steve Wandmaker, son of the units first Controller Herb Wandmaker, first came up with the idea for the initiative in the early 1980s.

Out of frustration over the carnage on highways across Gippsland, Steve hatched the idea to line the Princes Highway from Melbourne to East Gippsland with VICSES volunteers over holiday weekends. Decked out in orange overalls and holding signs and flashing orange lights, the initiative made motorists more aware of the dangers while travelling on our roads, and was a great success.

The following year, Steve suggested they set up stopovers to encourage people to stop and take a break on their journey. They asked suppliers for donations of coffee, tea and other supplies, growing the initiative into 'Operation Coffee Break'.

"From its humble beginnings and the support of some magnificent members of Moe Unit, the initiative set its roots and became a national campaign, with Driver Reviver rest stops all over the country," said Steve.

"From its humble beginnings and the support of some magnificent members of Moe Unit, the initiative set its roots and became a national event, with other states starting up Driver Reviver stops all over the country," said Steve.

Today, alongside celebrating their 50-year anniversary, Moe Unit has also recently become fully road crash rescue accredited, enhancing their contributions to road safety even more.

"Our volunteers have worked very hard to undertake all the required technical training for this to happen, and we are very proud of them," said Moe Unit Controller Brad Henry. ■



MID

WEST

1 January – 31 March

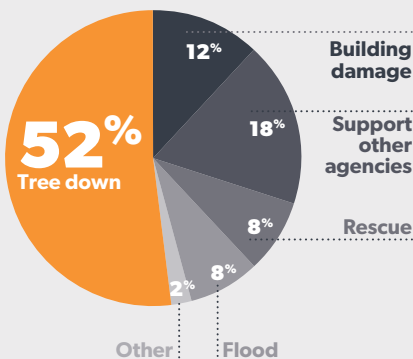


405

Volunteers

410

Requests for assistance



Ballarat Unit supports interstate deployments

By Gavin Kelly, Regional Officer Emergency Management, Mid West Region

Over the past months, volunteers and staff from Mid West Region have offered their skills and support via recent deployments to New South Wales (NSW) and Western Australia (WA).

In March, VICSES members were deployed to NSW to support the response to the state's severe flooding. The wide-spread and heavy rainfall caused significant damage to housing and infrastructure, with the NSW SES responding to over 12,000 requests for assistance during this time.

Mid West members were deployed alongside other VICSES volunteers and staff from across the state, including myself (Gavin Kelly) and Ballarat Unit Deputy Controller Cameron Maher.

While I assisted the Northern Zone Incident Control Centre (ICC) at Metford as a night shift Planning Officer, Cameron was deployed as a Divisional Commander in the Port Macquarie area.

"It's always fulfilling to know you're able to make a real

difference to communities during their time of need. The deployment was a great opportunity for me to utilise and strengthen my Divisional Commander skills," said Cameron, reflecting on his deployment.

"It was an absolute pleasure to work with the NSW SES Port Macquarie Unit. They have an amazing group of volunteers who maintained a positive 'can-do' attitude throughout the event, and provided me with fantastic support as we worked together to resupply their community with food and medication."

The following month in April, VICSES were once again asked to assist interstate, with deployments to WA to provide support for the aftermath of Cyclone Seroja. WA SES and the state's emergency services sector were

overwhelmed with requests for assistance, and turned to other states for assistance via the Australian Federal Government arrangements under AUSDISPLAN.

The request called for crews with Safe Working at Heights and chainsaw skills. Ballarat Unit promptly organised four very experienced members for deployment from 13 to 17 April.

The crew, including unit members Chris Bluett, Ben Lynch, Trent Oldaker and Wizz Rennie, first travelled by commercial flight to Perth where they stayed overnight. The following morning they flew to Geraldton via a RAAF C130 (Hercules) aircraft, to be deployed with WA SES crews to work in the response phase.

Due to the affected area not usually being at risk of cyclones, the construction of buildings was not rated to cyclone standards, resulting in the almost complete destruction of a number of houses.

The crew worked 12-hour days to support the recovery efforts, retiring in the evenings to their accommodation of army stretchers at the local basketball centre.

Overall, Ballarat Unit showcased an incredible effort across both deployments. Thank you for your hard work! ■

Climbing to new heights with Mid West Technical Rescue Team!

By Clare Mintern, Flood Project Support, Mid West Region

With almost 50 years' experience rock climbing around the world, Horsham Unit Officer and Technical Rescue Instructor Kieran Loughran plays a significant role as part of the Mid West Technical Rescue Team, responding to many dangerous rescues at daring heights.

Kieran's passion for rock climbing first began when he was 17, and has since travelled across the globe to locations including Europe, America and New Zealand to pursue his passion. One of the reasons Kieran and his family first decided to move to Natimuk in Mid West Region was to be closer to Mount Arapiles and the Grampians to continue rock climbing.

Kieran was first inspired to get involved with VICSES when he saw a series of bad accidents in the 80's and 90's, which resulted in several fatalities. As a member of the Horsham Unit since 2008, Kieran has undertaken more than 50 rescues. While also responding to road crash rescues, more than 75% of the rescue jobs that Kieran is involved in are high angle

rescues, either located at the Grampians or Mount Arapiles.

Locations like Mount Arapiles are renowned for having climbs that cater to a very broad range of skills levels. But when climbers push themselves beyond their capability, they can sometimes find themselves in trouble.

Last February, Kieran was involved with a rescue at Mount Arapiles, where a person fell and was suspended 60 metres off the ground with serious injuries. The rescue also involved assisting three other climbers off the mountain, which Kieran and the attending crew were able to successfully achieve.

Outside of VICSES, Kieran's steep angle rescue skills are renowned across Victoria within the Victoria Police Rescue Coordination

Centre and the Country Fire Authority (CFA).

"We are lucky to have 12 high angle accredited responders across VICSES and CFA in the Natimuk and Horsham area. However, if we have less than six members available for a rescue, we heavily rely on surrounding units that have high angle accredited responders from Stawell, Ararat, Hamilton, Ballarat and Warrnambool," said Kieran.

"We regularly undertake multi-agency high angle training with our local high angle operators to maintain our skills and continue to build relationships with CFA."

Kieran is constantly trying to recruit new members with high angle accreditation. More members would go a long way towards taking the pressure off their small group of high angle operators, and would enable them to rely less on surrounding units that are located a long distance from Mount Arapiles, reducing response time for casualties with critical injuries.

Looking ahead, Kieran is also hopeful that one day a joint VICSES and CFA building can be built at Natimuk to accommodate more space and better facilities, enabling continued support in high-angle rescue into the future for the local community. ■



Hepburn search at Daylesford

By Gavin Kelly, Regional Officer Emergency Management, Mid West Region

Late afternoon on Monday 12 April, a middle-aged male went missing from where he was staying in Daylesford. The following morning, Victoria Police requested the assistance of VICSES Hepburn Unit to assist in an initial search for the missing person. There was no success on the Tuesday, and the search continued until the Friday, when resources were significantly increased.

The search was led by Hepburn Unit Deputy Controller Emily Pullen, as the VICSES Commander and Liaison Officer for all of the VICSES members involved.

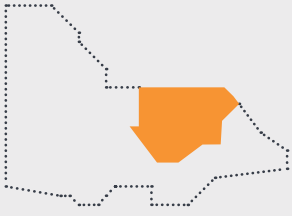
As the Operations Officer for Mid West, I was deployed to the scene to assist with command functions alongside Mid West Regional Duty Officer Marisha Patton. Volunteers were deployed from across three regions to support the event, including:

- Mid West Region: Hepburn, Ballarat, Bacchus Marsh and Regional Support Units.
- South West Region: Bannockburn, Torquay, and South Barwon Units.
- North West Region: Gisborne, Woodend, Bendigo, Maryborough, and Regional Support Units.

Members searched a wide area of the township via doorknocks, as well as handing out of flyers in the main streets of Daylesford. Members also searched adjacent bushland, as well as deploying the Hepburn Unit inflatable rescue boat onto the local lake.

Unfortunately, despite all best efforts from everyone involved, the missing person was not found. Although an unfortunate outcome, Victoria Police was most generous in their praise for all of our volunteers' efforts throughout the three-day search. Thank you to all of our involved members. ■





NORTH

EAST

1 January – 31 March

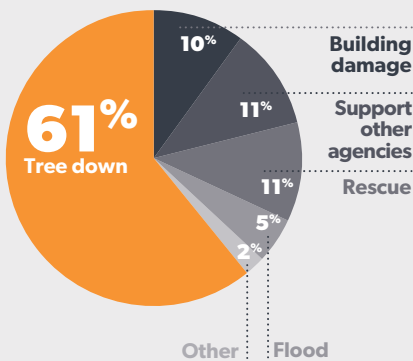


696

Volunteers

862

Requests for assistance



UNITS WITHOUT BORDERS:

Working as one with NSW SES

By Justin Greatorex, NSW SES Tocumwal Commander, and Wendy Tucknott, Cobram Unit Controller, North East Region

In February, VICSES Cobram Unit and New South Wales (NSW) SES Tocumwal Unit came together for a special dinner and presentation night, hosted to thank members and their families for their huge effort during an exceedingly difficult year.

Located just across the border, what makes these two units unique is that the volunteers both train and respond under VICSES and NSW SES.

A Memorandum of Understanding between Victoria and NSW allows us to work 40km across borders during normal business and operations. Both Cobram Unit and Tocumwal Unit operate from Tocumwal in NSW, as Cobram Unit does not have a local headquarters in Victoria. However, there is some VICSES equipment in storage sheds in Cobram for rapid response to road crash rescue and priority responses, located 18km from NSW SES Tocumwal Unit.

As a border community with NSW, the towns are separated by the Murray River on what the locals call the 'Toc Bends' on the Goulburn Valley Highway – an approximate 4km of winding bends and heavy bushland. During flooding the towns can become cut off, as flood water rises over the bends of the main road.

Due to COVID-19 and border restrictions, previously there had not been a chance for the unit members to come together to acknowledge the hard work of their volunteers. On the presentation night, awards were presented to several members, including:

- John Stave, outgoing Cobram Unit Controller, for outstanding leadership, dedication, and commitment to his role.
- Carrie Hawke, Treasurer and Finance Officer, for dedication and commitment to her role.
- The Cobram Unit, for outstanding volunteer service by all members to the community during an exceedingly difficult year.

It was great to finally be able to celebrate together, and both units look forward to continuing to work as one to support their local communities. ■



Supporting the aftermath of Cyclone Seroja

By Lisa Wise, Deputy Controller Wodonga Unit, North East Region



Wodonga Unit Controller Cameron O'Brien and I first flew out from Albury in a small four-seater plane, landing in Essendon and then onto Tullamarine, where we boarded a commercial flight to Perth.

From the moment we met up with our fellow Task Force members at Tullamarine, you could feel the energy and buzz of our orange family keen to get on with supporting those affected by Cyclone Seroja in Western Australia (WA).

We were met in Perth by some friendly WA SES members who took us to our motel for the evening, and transported us very early the next morning to the Pearce RAAF Base, where we hopped on board a C130 Hercules aircraft. Seat belts were essential to stop you from sliding around!

Landing in Geraldton, we spent most of the day waiting for the arrival of our equipment on a Globemaster aircraft. Wow, was that a huge plane - our trucks looked like matchbox cars in comparison! Five of our members were selected to drive the VICSES vehicles off the aircraft, and they couldn't wipe the smiles off their faces for days.

Base camp was basic to begin with, but the facilities improved

every day. Base Camp Manager Lynton Jackson slept on site each night and was available to us at any time, constantly checking on our welfare. We even had a barista on-site from 5:50am - I never wanted to leave!

Northampton - what an incredibly resilient community. Our team spent time undertaking rapid impact assessments, so we got to speak with the community about the cyclone and how it had affected them. Each home that we visited had some sort of damage, but the residents were so positive about the clean-up and repairs, continuously supporting each other. They had a community centre with donations piled up, and a number of fellas making deliveries to those people in need. All of the community members I spoke with were amazed that we had come from Victoria to help out.

I had a very rewarding time on my deployment, knowing that I made such a difference to the community. I feel very lucky to be part of such a great group of Victorians, and the Australia-wide emergency services sector. ■



Have boots, will fly!

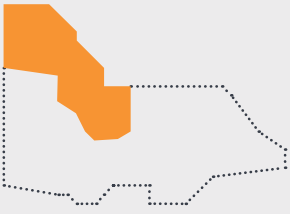
By Liz Frazer, Community Resilience Coordinator, North East Region

Over the past months our members have taken to the skies, being passengers across multiple aircraft for important training opportunities, requests for assistance and interstate deployments, including:

- Storm impact assessments in February via helicopter.
- Deployments to New South Wales (NSW) to undertake Incident Management Team roles to support severe flooding.

- Deployments to Western Australia to support the impacts of Cyclone Seroja.
- A light-plane leap-frog from Lilydale, to Wangaratta, and then on to Bombala in NSW.
- Police aircraft transport to Bendoc for a search and rescue in April.

These are just some of the great opportunities and experiences that our North East members have a recently been involved in, with many more to come! ■



NORTH

WEST

1 January – 31 March



608

Volunteers

551

Requests for assistance

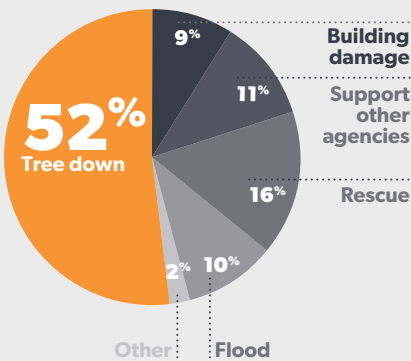


Photo: Bendigo Advertiser

A Very Good Friday

By Karen Dunstan, Community Resilience Coordinator, North West Region

This year’s Neighbour Day celebrations were extra special for the Heathcote Unit, with a mother dropping by the unit’s open afternoon event to thank them for saving her son’s life.

Sharyn Walker’s son, Jake, was in a serious car accident last year, and she wanted to let them know that he was finally being discharged from hospital following a seven-month stay. Members were able to easily recall the rescue, as it had been a long and complex event.

involved after the rescue. This rescue in particular had stayed in the minds of those unit members who had responded, with volunteer Sandra Koole describing having shivers up and down her spine when Jake’s mum Sharyn was thanking them.

It’s not every day that you have happy endings from serious incidents like road crash rescues, and Heathcote Unit will be forever grateful to know the positive outcome of one of their more memorable rescues. ■

Hearing this news, the unit hatched a plan to make Jake’s welcome home even more special by organising a Guard of Honour for him. On Good Friday, the welcoming committee included Jake’s family, friends, Heathcote Unit members, and plenty of orange balloons!

Although on average our VICSES volunteers respond to around 1,300 road crash rescues across the state every year, it’s rare to hear about what happens to those



North West Regional Headquarters Unit profile

By Andrew Stockwell, North West Regional Headquarters Unit Controller, and Karen Dunstan, Community Resilience Coordinator, North West Region

Resilient Rochester Project video series

By Karen Dunstan, Community Resilience Coordinator, North West Region

VICSES North West Region and Rochester Unit have supported the development of a series of videos, commissioned by the North Central Catchment Management Authority (CMA) and Campaspe Shire Council for the Resilient Rochester Project.

The video series was designed to accompany existing materials that were delivered to Rochester residents and businesses to help them better understand their flood risk. Some local faces appear in the series, which premiered on the Campaspe Shire Council Facebook page.

The series has something for everyone, with short clips that highlight key ideas about planning for emergencies at a personal and business level, flood history, what locals love about living in 'Rochy', along with some longer videos that outline the project.

Due to COVID-19, planned community engagement activities for the project were cancelled. However, the video series was able to assist in telling the story of the project and generate interest in locals to find out more about the resources they received.

The project celebrates the community of Rochester and the benefits of living somewhere so beautiful, while also acknowledging the risk of flood. It highlights that being aware of the risk and knowing what to do can greatly reduce the consequences – to individuals, families and businesses. ■



With the easing of restrictions, the North West Regional Headquarters Unit has been relishing the opportunity to once again get out and about. New Unit Controller Andrew Stockwell says that the unit members are excited to help support the region and local units.

"We have members who possess a broad range of skills, from specialising in utilising the Field Operations Vehicle and Incident Management tools, to OIMS operators and

Community Engagement Facilitators," said Andrew.

"The North West Regional Headquarters Unit will be reaching out to other regional units throughout the year to organise joint training, and to develop new ways to help better support them."

Recent activity includes support to:

- Hepburn Shire Unit to assist with an urban search for a missing person.
- Marong Unit at the joint VICSES Driver Reviver and TAC Pause Stops over the Labour Day and Easter long weekends.

- Bendigo Unit at Anzac Day services.
- Gisborne Unit at Open Gardens in Mount Macedon.

And that's just April!

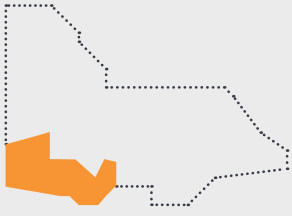
Members have been sifting and sorting through the region's recruitment and community education trailers to bring them up to speed for use at community events.

The unit has also been instrumental in supporting the region with logistics relating to deployments, including door-to-door airport

transfers for volunteers who were deployed to Western Australia. Members have also supported regional training, including communication support at a Rescue Boat Crewperson course in Swan Hill, and trainers for First Aid.



On behalf of the region, we'd like to thank the unit for their ongoing valuable contributions! ■



SOUTH

WEST

1 January - 31 March

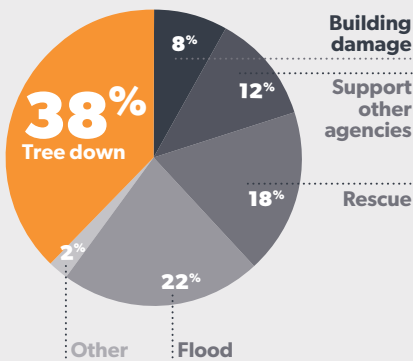


645

Volunteers

757

Requests for assistance



Women in Rescue

By Melanie Gill, Community Resilience Coordinator, South West Region



On Saturday 17 April, the Torquay Unit hosted their own *Women in Rescue* event, one of several across the state.

Volunteers from nine units stretching from Warrnambool to Pakenham convened at the Torquay Unit Local Headquarters to network, build on rescue skills, and work together as a team. Emergency Management Commissioner Andrew Crisp, VICSES Deputy Chief Officer Alistair Drayton, and Operations Manager Chris Longmore all attended and viewed the skills on display.

After a brief introduction, the Commissioner addressed the group and praised the efforts of VICSES volunteers, highlighting the many skills of our members. South Barwon Unit Deputy Controller Caroline Taylor then ran a

presentation on command and control in the context of VICSES rescue.

After this, it was time to get on the tools! Stations were set up to reflect the wide range of rescue types that VICSES members are involved in, including winning, casualty handling and road crash rescue.

The day was a huge success, with many valuable discussions throughout the day and lots of positive feedback from participants and special guests alike.

"It's brilliant to see our female VICSES leaders continue to showcase their skills through the *Women in Rescue* event,"

said Deputy Chief Officer Alistair Drayton.

Comments from attendees included that it was great to network and share techniques between units, as well as being very beneficial to have experienced women share their knowledge. All were in agreement that *Women in Rescue* should certainly be an annual event in the south west!

We would like to acknowledge the efforts of all the volunteers who helped plan the event and ensure it ran smoothly. On behalf of the South West Region, we would also like to give a huge shout out to Torquay Unit Controller Rachel Vella, for all her work in organising, coordinating, and promoting the event. ■



Cyclone Seroja: South West member deployments

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

Our South West Region members are proving that our emergency services really do ‘work as one’, contributing to two taskforces as part of the second deployment to Western Australia (WA) to support the impacts of Cyclone Seroja.

This deployment included Heywood Unit Deputy Controller Adrian Hodgens, dual Heywood and Portland Unit Controller Charlie Debono, Warrnambool Unit Controller Giorgio Palmeri, and Hamilton Unit member Bruce Farquharson. The team was tasked mainly with completing temporary roof repairs and clearing trees and debris to assist the community in rebuilding.

As many would be aware, five VICSES vehicles also made the trip by air to provide vital support to communities on the ground. Vehicles were loaded on the C-17A Globemaster aircraft at Melbourne Airport thanks to the Australian Defence Force. Giorgio was one of the members who

drove a vehicle off the plane, which was a true milestone of his service with VICSES.

Adrian was one of the newer VICSES members on the team. Being an ex-veteran himself, he was proud to see VICSES working in partnership with the Australian Defence Force. He also enjoyed the multi-agency approach and working alongside other crews such as NSW SES. He noted that many were envious of our VICSES vehicles!

For Charlie, it was his first deployment to WA. He noted that the team from South West Region “worked well together as a great crew, and had to quickly adapt to the rules and regulations in WA as they differ to ours slightly”. One of his highlights of the trip was



flying from Perth to Geraldton on a Hercules aircraft, describing it a a gob-smacking and a once in a lifetime opportunity.

When asked about the situation in WA, Bruce commented that the community of Northampton were resilient and tough – a testament to those who were so badly affected by this natural disaster.

The team came back with many stories, but there’s one that really demonstrates the resilience of the Northampton community from a local resident. The roof of the resident’s property was severely damaged; however the team were not able to get in contact with him to provide support. Later, the team discovered that this was because the local was using his own earth-moving equipment to assist other

community members, despite his own house being in shambles. This act of selflessness truly moved the team, and was a great demonstration of community spirit.

Adrian’s advice to any VICSES member thinking about putting their hand up for a deployment is simple:

“If you’re available and can make it work, do it. It’s a fantastic learning opportunity and allows you to put the various skills we train into practise.”

We’d like to thank all of our members that were deployed to WA, especially for their willingness to drop everything at short notice to support our colleagues and communities on the other side of the country #weworkasone. ■



Exercise Arbalest

By Melanie Gill, Community Resilience Coordinator, VHO

On Saturday 20 March, 35 members from South West and Central Regions joined forces at the Wyndham West Local Headquarters (LHQ) for ‘Exercise Arbalest’ - a flood and storm exercise.

The LHQ was set up as a Divisional Command Point utilising Central Regions’ Mobile Command Vehicle and the South West Field Operations Vehicle. Members had the opportunity to test the capabilities of these command vehicles and liaise with crews, attending to mock requests for assistance in the local areas.

Snap Send Solve flood observations were also utilised on the day, with members taking photographs that were then accessible at the Division Command Point. The exercise provided a good opportunity to test flood emergency

plans, local flood guides and local knowledge.

VICSES recognises the importance of emergency exercises and training opportunities, and is committed to continuing to explore opportunities to do so. Simulating incidents can be a great way to ensure readiness and currency of skills, particularly in the event of larger scale incidents.

The exercise was a great success and beneficial to all in attendance. A post exercise learnings and observations report was also completed, ensuring that all learnings are carried forward into exercises and operations in the future. ■

OPERATIONAL UPDATES

State Road Crash Rescue Workshop

By Jackson Bell, Manager Operational Improvement,
and Gerry Sheridan, Operations Officer Capability
Improvement, VHO

On March 25 and 26, the State Operations team hosted our annual State Road Crash Rescue Workshop for regional trainers. The workshop had a combination of volunteer and staff trainers, with an emphasis on upskilling trainers for regional road crash rescue workshops.



The focus elements for the workshop included command and control, wreck preparations, ramming, tool techniques, and alternatives to cutting. The workshop sessions ensured that our trainers are all receiving consistent messaging and professional development, to best support our volunteers when delivering road crash rescue training in their region.

Regional trainers will now replicate the state workshop at a local level within their regions. The themes of these workshops have originated from emerging trends identified through the road crash rescue capability

assessment program, to ensure we remain the largest capable and credible road crash rescue provider.

Video content was also captured on the day to demonstrate to the public the level of training that our members undertake, to ensure that this is recognised in the community. This is now available on the Hub under **My State > Media and Communications > Video Library**

For further information about the state or regional workshops, please speak to one of your regional road crash rescue trainers. ■



Hiking boots added to VICSES PPC&E line-up

By David Tuček, Manager Operational Capability, VHO

VICSES provides a key support role for Victoria Police in undertaking land search activities for missing persons, and to Ambulance Victoria with carrying out injured persons from national and state parks. While the current issue general purpose boots are generally suitable for use in parklands associated with urban areas, these boots are not ideal in rougher terrains associated to semi-arduous rural locations, including national and state park terrain.

Regions have identified and prioritised our units and members most in need of hiking boots, with allocation and prioritisation to members based upon the criteria of land search and rescue competency, active membership, identified prioritised units, as well as members responding from neighbouring units with a known history of assisting other units in land search and rescue.

Ensuring that hiking boots fit and are comfortable is very important. The Assets team have engaged with a panel of wholesalers to provide a range of boots that meet the SES User Requirement Statement for hiking boots. Eligible members are able to try these various styles on to determine the best fit for them, rather than just ordering from a catalogue. Best of all, boots are available in both women's and men's models.

The Assets and State Operations teams have finalised a select range of hiking boots for members who actively assist with bush search and rescue activities, and for members nominated by each region.

An approved funding allocation is available until 30 June 2021 for the initial roll-out. The Assets team has approached wholesale suppliers, and will be coordinating and ordering all boots for members under this funding program. ■



More information

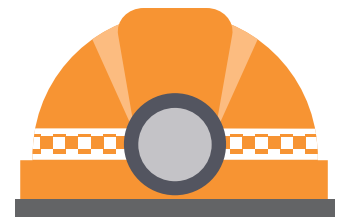
Further information can be found on the Hub under **My State > Equipment > Hiking Boots**

REQUESTS FOR ASSISTANCE

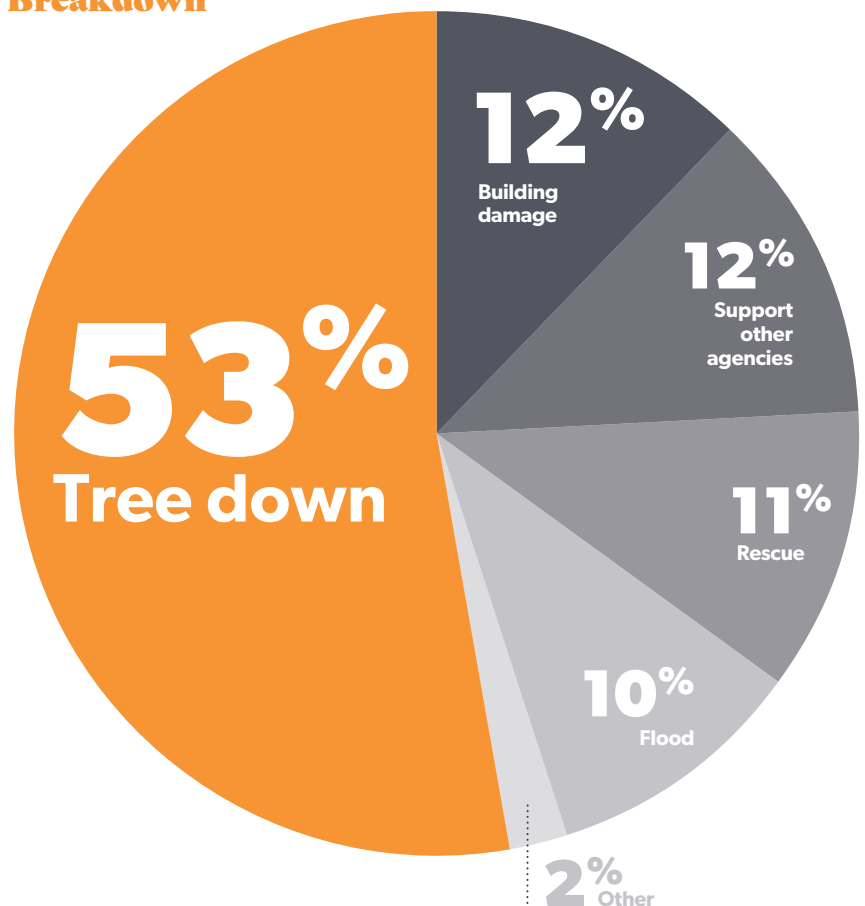
1 January – 31 March

Total

6,307



Breakdown



PROJECTS – WHAT'S NEW



Assets, Facilities and Capital Works: Projects across the state

By Rachel Carter, Capital Works Project Manager, VHO and Lynette Connor, Manager Assets, State Logistics Centre

The Assets, Facilities and Capital Works teams have been working across a number of projects over the past months. Here's a quick update on the completion of some of our most recent works:

Unit projects:

- **Leongatha Unit:** Completion of new concrete apron.
- **Birchip Unit:** Stormwater repairs.
- **Heathcote Unit:** Completion of new concrete apron, painting and signage.
- **Foster Unit:** Completion of roof works and internal painting.

Holmatro corrective action

In early February, Holmatro notified VICSES that 102 late model hydraulic rescue tools were subject to a Corrective Action Program. The affected tools were:

- 13 x 5331 RAMs.
- 89 x 5260 Spreaders.

VICSES provided our Holmatro supplier and service agent, Fire Rescue Safety Australia (FRSA), with a priority order list for the required service and repair across the state. Rectifications were also scheduled to be completed as part of the annual service program where appropriate. By early May, FRSA confirmed that all affected tools had received the necessary corrective action, and that no further action was required.

AAMI Equipment Handover Program

The final AAMI Equipment Handover Program is rapidly coming together. Orders from our 147 eligible units have been received and

processed, with the vast majority of equipment now arriving at the State Logistics Centre (SLC). The logistics staff are now commencing the tasks of picking and registering each unit's equipment in preparation for delivery to units soon. SLC staff will be in contact to confirm delivery arrangements with each unit.

New Twin Cab Support Vehicle

Following an extensive consultation and development process, the new Twin Cab Support Vehicle (TCSV) prototypes have been completed. These new vehicles feature a suite of custom-built options, along with various safety and functionality improvements such as permanent rear vision cameras, run-lock, fridge and drawer systems, ergonomic ladder slides and other small improvements. All new TCSVs come with upgraded suspension, front and rear rated recovery points, underbody protection and SmartBar.



More information

For further information on these projects, please visit the Facilities and Capital Works Service Centre on the Hub under **My State > Facilities and Capital Works**, or email the Assets team at assets@ses.vic.gov.au

Twin Cab Upgrade Program

Last year, the Twin Cab Upgrade Program began with an aim to upgrade the capability of 159 Twin Cab Support Vehicles across Victoria. With numerous challenges along the way, as of May this year, a total of 146 vehicles have received the upgrades, with the remaining 13 vehicles being removed from the program due to age and/or replacement. The final vehicle is now awaiting return to the unit, which will bring the program to a close. We would like to thank all of our members for your patience during the past two years, and we hope the improved capability enables you to better support your communities. ■



Project update: Windows Refresh Project

By Peter Gaull, Project Manager, VHO



We have now completed the do-it-yourself and in-person white glove roll-out phases of the Windows Refresh Project. The last order from Dell will arrive in mid-June, which will allow us to finalise

the installation of the Mobile Command and Field Operation Vehicles, as well as setting up the Operations Cache and casual machines across our regional offices. This will then see the completion of the 600 machines across VICSES.

CREW MEMBER TRAINING PROGRAM:

What a journey!

By Keith Mitchell, Project Officer – Learning and Development, VHO

General Rescue/Fundamentals (GR/F) training was introduced into the VICSES training portfolio in 1995 as the foundation skills and knowledge acquisition course for new members.

Over 3,100 of our active members have successfully completed the course and progressed through to many speciality areas within VICSES to respond to community emergency needs.

Since the introduction of GR/F training, there have been numerous changes to the VICSES vehicle fleet, equipment, operational approach and doctrine. Lessons have been learnt through the operational debriefing process, and new techniques and technologies have been embraced by the service as they have evolved.

In recognition of this, VICSES undertook to update the GR/F training with a more contemporary Crew Member Training Program, which is made up of three components:

- Crew Member Supervised.
- Crew Member Level 1.
- Crew Member Level 2.

Crew Member Level 2, the final course of the Crew Member Training Program, was deployed in early 2021.

The update journey commenced back in 2018 with initial scope definition, and then progressed in parallel with the VICSES Training

Portal development and deployment project, to ensure that the training content could be presented as an online, self-paced or facilitated experience.

Piloting of the program was completed at VICSES Pakenham, Narre Warren, Moorabbin, Leongatha, Warragul, Terang and Corio Units.

Initial feedback about the new program has been very positive, and the Learning and Development team are now working on Gap Training to inform and skill our existing operational members who have completed GR/F training.

Two examples of these gaps are:

- The introduction of the Systems Approach to undertaking an operation.
- An emphasis on storm and water training within the Crew Member Level 2 course.

The Crew Member training program development journey may be nearing completion, however for our members, the new Crew Member role accreditations that are an outcome of the program form the basis and entry level into the VICSES Role Pathways. And so for our members, a new journey begins. ■

In parallel, we are moving to finalise the project to complete the transition to business as usual.

The project endured many complexities and challenges, from accessing the sites, logistics and booking appointments, sourcing hardware, and safety and protection from COVID-19. Overall, the roll-out has run smoothly, and the feedback has been very positive.

Most importantly, this could not have been achieved without the support of you all. Thank YOU!

We hope you enjoy your new laptops and devices. If you require any support, please liaise with the IS Service Desk via email at ictservicedesk@ses.vic.gov.au.

For further information on the Windows Refresh Project, visit the Windows Refresh Project page on the Hub under **Library > Projects > Windows Refresh Project**, or contact laptopprinterrollout@ses.vic.gov.au. ■

Volunteer Protective Clothing Design Workshops

By Irena Jurisic, Assets Project Officer, VHO

The first three Personal Protective Clothing (PPC) Design Workshops were held across March, May and June in Essendon, Sale and Warrnambool. Upcoming workshops will be held in Bendigo and Wangaratta in June and July.

A total of 38 volunteers to date have been able to view a range of sample garments and identify features that could improve functionality into the new uniform. The inputs into the future design and overall feedback from the volunteers was fantastic.

In total there will be six workshops held across the state, and it's intended that one member per unit will attend one of these workshops. In some instances, two members may attend if there is space permitting. Additional workshops will be held for alpine, high angle and boating activities, and these are planned to take place after July.

Details for the remainder workshops are listed below. Expressions of interest are now open for the workshop in Horsham. This is a great opportunity for our volunteers to be involved in, and we encourage you to register your interest. For further information, visit the Hub under **My State > Equipment > PPC&E** or contact Assets@ses.vic.gov.au

Workshop 5

Location:
Bendigo

Dates:
Saturday 19 June –
Sunday 20 June

Workshop 6

Location:
Wangaratta

Dates:
Saturday 24 July –
Sunday 25 July



**WELLBEING,
HEALTH &
SAFETY**



Fatigue workshop

By Alison Wright, Health and Wellbeing Coordinator, VHO

In April, our Healthwatch team visited the Woodend Unit to deliver our very first fatigue workshop.

Emergency service response can be physically and mentally demanding, so understanding the causes of fatigue and the associated risks can help us to look after ourselves and those around us.

Addressing topics such as sleep, nutrition and stress, we ran several activities to explore how our mood, energy and resilience can fluctuate depending on the circumstances. We also discussed how fatigue can affect our ability to relate to people and situations, prevent us from making good decisions, and/or lower our ability to assess risk.

The structured 40-minute session was initially put together at the request of Woodend Unit Controller Kevin McNair, who believes

that understanding and managing fatigue is a very important aspect of our own personal self-awareness regarding our physical and mental health. ■



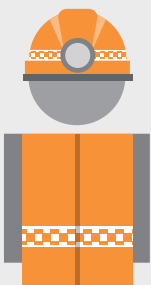
Now available

This fatigue workshop is now available for all units. Book a Healthwatch visit today on the **Hub, under My State > Health and Wellbeing > Health > Healthwatch**



An awesome night at training last night for the Woodend Unit... we all found this a very informative and well-constructed workshop."

"I would recommend and encourage members to attend when this workshop becomes available to you. It is reassuring to know that our health and wellbeing is being looked after by such a dedicated and enthusiastic group of people."



Workplace inspections

July 2019 –
March 2020

139

July 2020 –
March 2021

163



Injuries

July 2019 –
March 2020

126

July 2020 –
March 2021

113

Step It Up 2020 champions: Benalla Unit

By Alison Wright, Health and Wellbeing Coordinator, VHO



Recently our Healthwatch team was finally able to visit Benalla Unit to host a celebratory dinner and present them with their Step It Up cup and medals.

Team captain Laura Nelson led the unit to victory in a fiercely contested challenge. Congratulations Benalla Unit – our Step It Up Champions for 2020!

Who will claim the title in 2021? Don't forget to join our VICSES Health and Wellbeing Facebook page to keep up to date with all our initiatives and news! ■



'Nothing more healing than a group of people laughing with you, not at you but with you'



Our guest

Rachel Berger
Comedian, actress, writer



VICSES MindFit Podcast

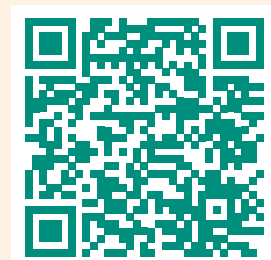
By Alison Wright, Health and Wellbeing Coordinator, VHO

The latest episode of our MindFit Podcast features comedian Rachel Berger, who chats with us about the power of laughter!

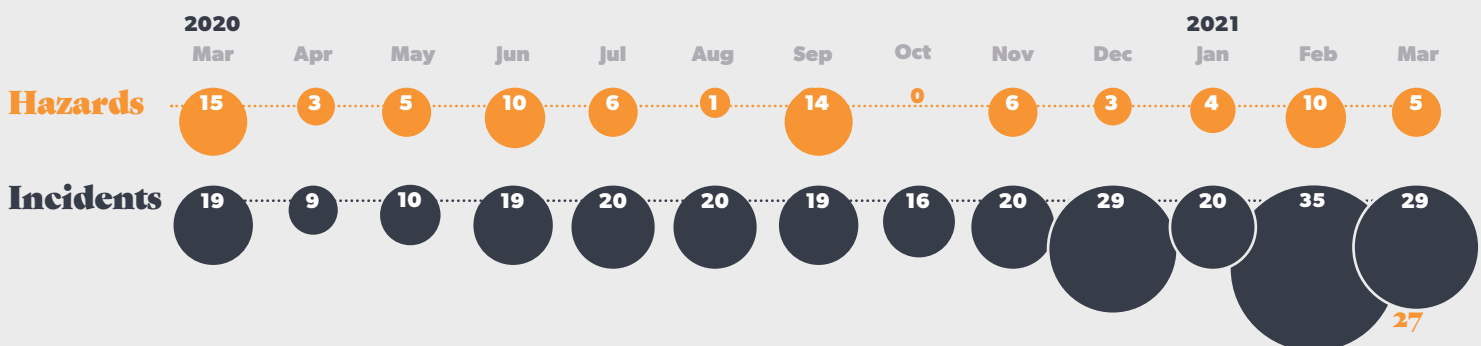
Rachel is passionate about using comedy to help people tell their stories in a different way. Having run comedy workshops with domestic violence survivors and homeless youth, Rachel discusses how laughter can be a great tool in helping people shift their perspective and move forward from trauma.

Do not miss this thought-provoking episode: Subscribe now on Spotify!

Scan this QR code to listen to our podcast!



YEAR AT A GLANCE



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



neighbour day
Sunday 28 March 2021

Your Emergency
RediPlan



Neighbour Day 2021

Amy Miles, Event and Project Officer, VHO

Research shows those who have strong relationships with their neighbours are more likely to help one another and have better outcomes when faced with emergencies.

That's why this year VICSES once again supported *Neighbour Day* – an annual celebration of community with the aim of fostering strong personal connections that last the whole year-round. *Neighbour Day* also contributes to our key strategic objectives in the Community Resilience Strategy Renewal 2019-2022, and aligns with our organisational Value, 'we are part of our community'.

2021 marked our third year participating in the campaign across the state. Emerald Unit were this year's stars, featuring as part of a *Neighbour Day* segment on Channel 9's *Today Show*. The segment showcased a unit member assisting their elderly neighbour after a large tree fell on her home, until VICSES assistance arrived.

Other activities this year included:

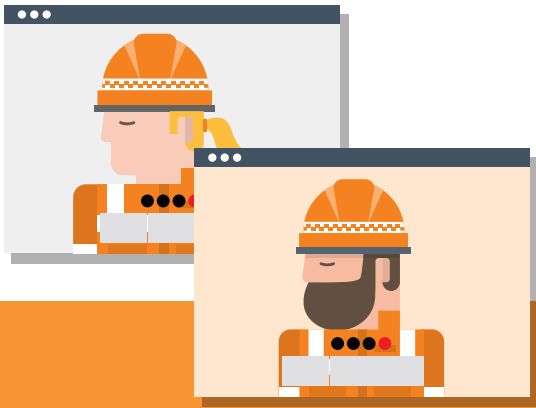
- Heathcote and Kerang Unit inviting their neighbours to join them for a cuppa and chat at their units locations.
- Wyndham West Unit participating in a community clean-up and BBQ in Truganina with Nature West.
- Gisborne Unit undertaking a road crash rescue demonstration with their local Country Fire Authority brigade.
- Members across the organisation sharing home grown produce and baked goods with their neighbours.
- Nillumbik Unit posed with *Neighbour Day* selfie signs, which were shared by across the official *Neighbour Day* social media platforms.



Victorians have showed extraordinary resilience in the last year, with Neighbour Day a chance to celebrate those valuable connections next door, or across the road," said VICSES Chief Officer Operations Tim Wiebusch.

"In an emergency, those people may save your life, your home, or become a life-long friend."

Thank you to everyone that was involved in supporting this year's *Neighbour Day* campaign – until next year! ■



Community Engagement Facilitator course

By Hannah Macdougall, Senior Advisor Community Programs and Campaigns, VHO

The Community Engagement Facilitator (CEF) course is now back up and running after a long hiatus due to COVID-19.

As we know, communities are constantly changing – changing in their demographics, social fabric, diversity, expectations, strengths, and needs. In order to engage effectively with the community, Our People require a skillset specifically focused on community engagement. The purpose of undertaking the CEF course is to begin to develop, or enhance, this skillset. An aim of the course is also to increase confidence in implementing community engagement programs.

By completing the CEF course, participants will gain an understanding of the Community Engagement Program Framework – an evidence-based program logic with practical application. Through applying the Community Engagement Program Framework, CEFs will be able to clearly connect their important work to:

- The VICSES Community Resilience Strategy Renewal 2019-22 (state goals).
- The VICSES Strategic Plan 2018-22 (state goals).
- Emergency Management Manual Victoria (Emergency Management Victoria - state goals).
- The National Disaster Resilience Strategy (national goals).
- The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and IAP2 Spectrum (international goals).

The CEF course is a blended learning experience, using both online learning modules and face-to-face delivery. Both Central and South West Regions have now facilitated the CEF course, with positive feedback including how the course is very dynamic, interactive, enjoyable, and a great opportunity for networking. ■

Take the 15 to Float challenge!

By Hannah Macdougall, Senior Advisor Community programs and Campaigns, VHO

Through our partnership with AAMI, the Community Connections team have developed an augmented reality (AR) experience based on the highly successful *15 to Float* campaign.

1 *5 to Float* is a key campaign for VICSES that encourages drivers to never drive on flooded roads, using the novel and surprising fact that it only takes 15cm of water to float a small car. *15 to Float* was highly commended at the 2018 EMPA Awards, and has been a key message for VICSES during recent mass media and geographically targeted advertising, supported by the government.

The new AR experience is a ‘choose your own adventure’, where users make critical decisions related to flood water. Importantly, users are encouraged to make a pledge to ‘never driver on flooded roads’, and share this with their own online communities. Posters will be available on the Hub, as well as a community engagement program framework to help support our Community Engagement Facilitators

(CEFs) bring this new program out into our communities.

The Community Connections team are very excited with our first step into the AR space, especially as it means we can collect excellent metrics that will help us continue to highlight the important work of our CEFs. ■



Have a go at the AR experience by scanning the QR code.



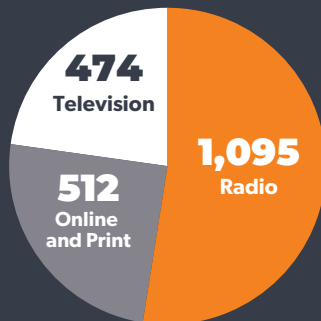
MEDIA

1 January -
31 March 2021

Campaigns and events:

- International Women's Day.
- Neighbour Day.
- Launch of AAMI Equipment Handover.

Mentions of VICSES in the news:



Media releases:

- VICSES recognises ten-year anniversary of devastating La Niña floods.
- Glenorchy sees substantial 3.5 magnitude earthquake.
- VICSES 'famous walker' hits the pavement after 2020 hiatus.
- New warning signs for Geelong flood hotspots.
- Warrnambool and Port Fairy safety signs erected following floods.
- VICSES Ballarat Unit rocked by burglary.
- Celebrating resilience, togetherness for Neighbour Day.
- Women in Rescue showcase their skills.

Ministerial events:

- Launch of Driver Reviver program.

Social media highlights:

FACEBOOK



Reach:
121,005

Post clicks:
8,320

Reactions, comments and shares:
1,521

A 3.5 magnitude earthquake recorded near Stawell.

TWITTER



Impressions:
90,361

Total engagements:
3,211

Likes, retweets and clicks:
64

A Severe Weather Warning issued on 23 March for damaging winds and heavy rainfall for parts of East and West Gippsland.

LINKEDIN



Impressions:
3,441

Clicks:
190

Reactions, comments and shares:
114

VICSES deployments to NSW to support communities impacted by severe flooding.

INSTAGRAM



Impressions: **7,969** **Reach:** **7,419**

Comments, likes and saves:
289

Footage of severe flooding on Tarra Valley Road in Gippsland.



Media Liaison Officer spotlight – Marion Petersen

Hi Marion! Can you tell us why you first decided to become involved as a Media Liaison Officer (MLO)?

I first became a MLO in November 2008. I wanted to help get information and key messages out to the community, which I achieve now using various forms of old and new media.

Are there any challenges that you've faced as an MLO during an emergency event?

During a serious flooding event on the Murray River, I was deployed to Swan Hill to assist. During this time there was also some considerable political unrest, including members of government being under considerable pressure and scrutiny. As a VICSES volunteer spokesperson during one of the many press conferences for the flooding event, the media did all that they could to get me to confirm or say that our response was being hindered by lack of resources, poor planning, funding etc. Though there was some truth to some allegations, I was able to redirect their questions and maintain my professionalism, keeping government and media happy.

What role do you think the media plays for our units and volunteers?

The media plays an essential role in keeping our organisation at the front and centre of our communities. It's possible to have productive relationships with media, particularly your local media, without comprising the services Values. But, it is a lot of hard work!

What would you say to other VICSES members considering becoming a MLO?

The MLO role is to engage with the media, to promote the service and what we do. If you can build up those relationships, then the opportunities for meaningful and productive engagement with the media will come your way. Being able to use social media is also integral to the role, and you need to be resourceful in making sure you know the ropes in this space! ■

INFORMATION SERVICES (IS) UPDATE

What happened to the summer?

Silvia Silverii, Chief Information Officer, VHO

Normally I can tell what kind of summer we've had by the number of times I get to go to the beach. While there were fewer visits due to cooler weather and COVID-19, the wet and stormy weather has still kept our organisation busier as ever.

Now – on to the drier subject of Information Services!

There are quite a few activities and projects that have concluded over the past couple of months, but I want to focus on the top three and the impacts to our units:

- 1. Windows Refresh Project:** 98% of desktops have now been replaced. This has seen every desktop replaced with laptops, including in our Incident Control Centres (ICCs), Divisional Command Points (DCPs), Mobile Command Vehicles and units.
 - **Unit procurement and support:** A big thanks to Bendigo Unit, who worked with us to conduct a trial-to-test and establish a way for units to procure additional PCs from our IS team, which will provide the means to connect them to our network and to get IS support.
- 2. Multi-Function Devices Project:** Alongside the Windows Refresh Project, this project has seen a replacement of all multi-function devices in our offices, DCPs, ICCs, and units that had old machines.
 - **Unit procurement and support for printers:** The new arrangement in place with our supplier Konica Minolta provides a means to have service and maintenance support for printers, which is paid through a usage-based

fee structure. Units will also be able to procure additional printers and support.

3. Security Solution Tender – implementation planning in progress:

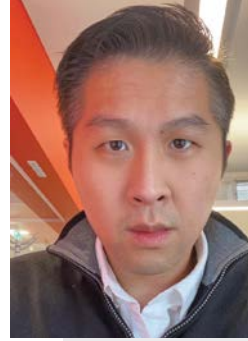
Following an extensive tender process, VICSES has secured a federated, cloud-based security system for all offices and units to join. The Facilities and Capital Works team are now working on an implementation plan, which will include the participation of two units to firm up operational, compliance and technical standards.

- Units will be able to procure site based equipment (from a local or organisation supplier), with assistance from a specialist to ensure the procurement, installation and support is compatible to join the new system. Specialists will also be on hand for those units who have existing equipment to determine if any of it can be re-used, to avoid unnecessary spend.
- I'd like to thank the Wangaratta and Yarram Units in advance, who will be participating in the implementation as pilot sites.

This is only a snapshot – keep an eye out for details on the Hub, or if you're interested to know more please feel free to email me at silvia.silverii@ses.vic.gov.au, and I'll refer you to the appropriate lead. ■

MEET THE
IS TEAM:

PETER
ONG



Hi Peter! Can you tell us a bit about your role as an IT Administration Officer with VICSES alongside the Capital Works Project?

I will be assisting the rest of the new builds team as the IT lead for the upcoming Emergency Services Infrastructure Authority (ESIA) projects, and ensuring that all IT requirements for the facilities are all covered for. I'm responsible from the planning, ordering and procurements of hardware and the managed data services, and also the physical relocation work on the IT infrastructure hardware from the existing facility to the new one.

What do you enjoy the most about working in the IT sector?

Working in IT is somewhat like doing a puzzle. There's so much problem-solving involved in this industry, and a lot of the times you're forced to constantly be on your feet to think about how you can resolve the various issues of different complexity and types that you're faced with. It can be quite challenging at times, but as you resolve each problem or you complete each project, you gain that extra bit of knowledge to possibly assist with solving the next challenging issue that comes your way, so it allows you to constantly learn new things and improve.

Looking forward, are there any challenges that you will face as part of your role?

A significant part of my role involves working with service providers and third-party vendors to get the required IT hardware and services for the facilities fulfilled, relying on their internal processes and supply-chains. Unfortunately, sometimes this could be time-consuming and may result in extended delays and impact my ability to meet my deadlines. With this in mind, I have and will look to submit the orders as early as possible to allow more time for such delays.

Outside of your work with VICSES, how do you like to unwind?

I enjoy spending time with my family and we all enjoy playing board games together, so we're slowly building a board game collection (60 games and counting so far). I am also a pretty big soccer and Manchester United fan, so I like to watch matches when I can, or at least watch the highlights and follow the news. I play badminton twice a week and have loved video games since I was 6. I've just gotten into virtual reality gaming recently, and it's mind-blowing how realistic it is even though its only in its early years. ■

**THANK YOU TO ALL
OF OUR MEMBERS WHO
HAVE SUPPORTED RECENT
INTERSTATE DEPLOYMENTS**

Creating safer communities - Together

