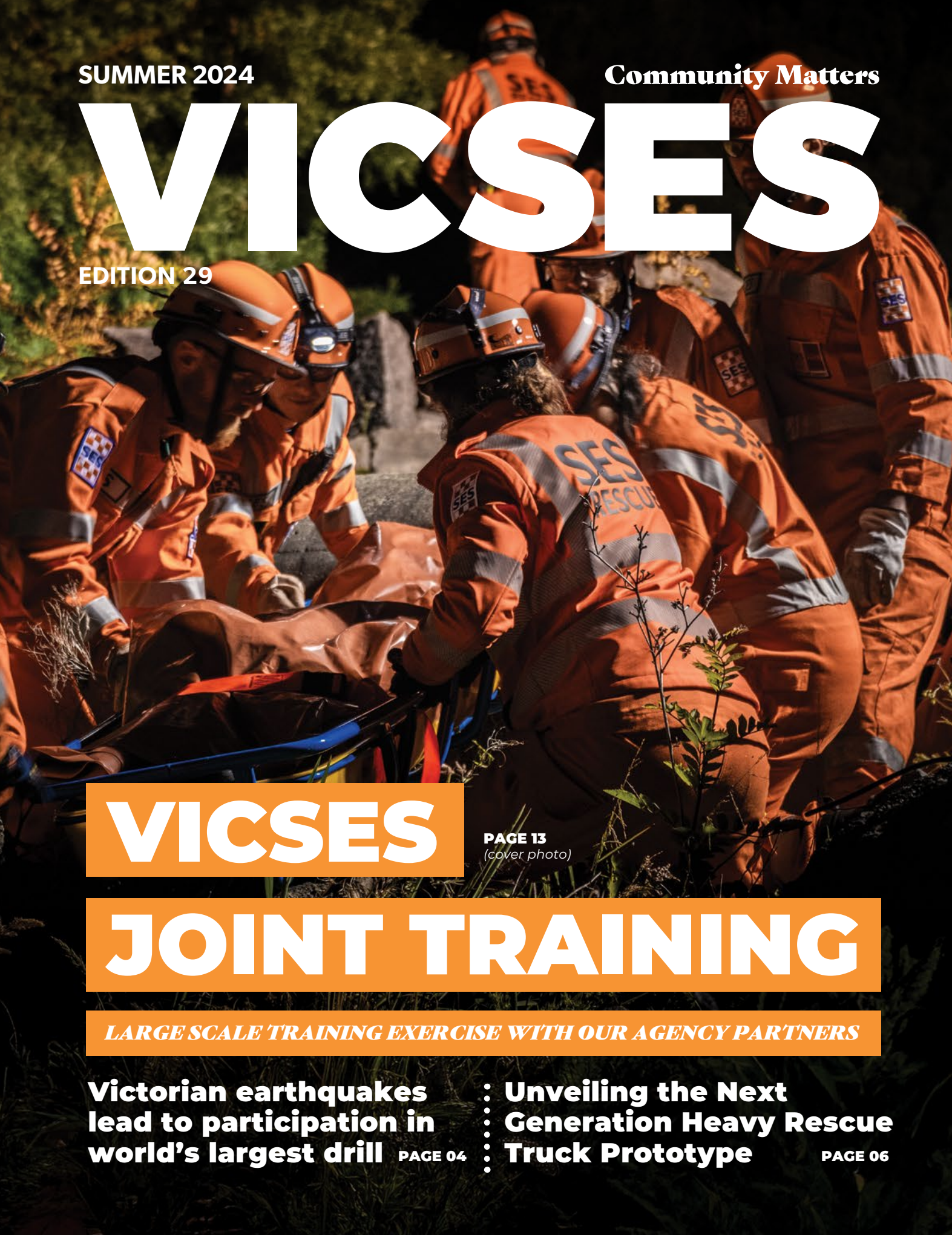


SUMMER 2024

Community Matters

# VICSES

EDITION 29



Messages

From CEO

From Minister for  
Emergency Services

Feature

General news

Campaigns  
& events

Eastern region

Western region

Operational  
updates

Wellbeing,  
health & safety

Community  
engagement

Media

Information Services  
(IS) update

**VICSES**

PAGE 13  
(cover photo)

# JOINT TRAINING

*LARGE SCALE TRAINING EXERCISE WITH OUR AGENCY PARTNERS*

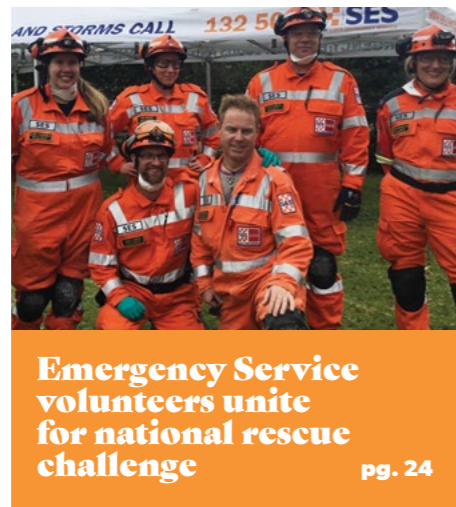
**Victorian earthquakes  
lead to participation in  
world's largest drill** PAGE 04

**: Unveiling the Next  
: Generation Heavy Rescue  
: Truck Prototype** PAGE 06



# CONTENTS

## Highlights from the summer edition



### What's happening across our regions:

- EASTERN**
  - 12** Beechworth Unit 'loafs' engaging with their local community
  - 14** Animal lovers lend a hand to feathered and prickly locals
  - 15** Gippsland Region High Angle Rescue Accreditation success
- WESTERN**
  - 18** Ben hits the ground running amidst intense Casterton storm cell
  - 19** VICSES volunteers boost community flood literacy at Elmore Field Days
  - 20** Sunbury junior member captures true essence of emergency services

**Front Cover:** VICSES joins agency partners for large-scale training exercise.



### MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER FOR EMERGENCY SERVICES

#### Community Matters summer edition, 2024

As another busy year draws to a close, it's a fitting time to reflect on the incredible contributions of our Victoria State Emergency Service (VICSES) volunteers.

Over the past 12 months, VICSES volunteers have continued to provide critical support to our communities during statewide storms, floods, and much more. Volunteers have responded to more than 35,000 requests for assistance since January 2024, including more than 19,000 for trees down, over 2,500 for flood relief, and 6,000 for building damage.

I thank all VICSES members for their remarkable efforts during this time – working together towards a safer Victoria.

On 23 October, I was grateful for the opportunity to visit the VICSES Fawkner Unit to see the new Next Generation Heavy Rescue Truck prototype in person. With a range of improvements and new features to prioritise safety, the purpose-built truck will ensure volunteers have the tools they need to best

support their local community during emergencies.

It was wonderful to see a strong VICSES presence at this year's Melbourne Royal Show – a great opportunity to directly connect with community members, raise awareness around preparing for emergencies, and highlight volunteers' role in keeping Victorians safe. As we all know, community engagement is so important for building resilience before, during, and after emergency events. VICSES' informative and engaging activation also took home the silver award for indoor exhibitors – congratulations to our volunteers on a fantastic effort. More information about this activation is available on page 10.

As we move into summer, our emergency service agencies are prepared for an increased risk of bush and grass fires, as well as summer storms and flooding, with above average rainfall expected. As always, we will continue to ensure our people are ready to support our communities, no matter what the weather conditions.

To all VICSES volunteers, I thank you for your unwavering dedication during 2024. I hope that you have many opportunities to rest and spend time with loved ones during the holiday period.

Stay safe and take care.



**Jaclyn Symes**  
Minister for  
Emergency Services

## Welcome

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

Firstly, I would like to acknowledge the departure of Greg Leach as our Chief Executive Officer (CEO) as he takes on a new role as CEO of the Country Fire Authority (CFA). During his time with VICSES, Greg made a significant impact across our organisation, advocating for our people and the integral services that VICSES provides as part of our sector and our communities. I am extremely grateful for Greg's leadership and support during his time at VICSES and wish him all the best. I look forward to supporting you all as CEO in the interim period as we undergo recruitment for this role.

During this period, I am keen to assure you that I and the Executive Team are taking a progressive focus on key matters to ensure we focus our efforts and priority works to greatest need and impact.

I am pleased to share with you that our Next Generation Heavy Rescue Truck (HRT) Roadshow has been a great success, with the prototype shown at 15 VICSES units across the state, from Ballarat to Seymour and many more in between. This was a fantastic opportunity for our members to have a first look at the brand-new prototype vehicle, equipped with a range of new and improved features to increase our service delivery and operational capability. A big thank you to everyone involved as part of this project. You can read more on page 6.

In exciting news, next year on 5 March we will celebrate our Golden Jubilee, marking our

50th anniversary since VICSES was established in 1975. This will be an important time to acknowledge and celebrate VICSES' rich historical past, and the incredible contributions of our people. We have a range of celebrations lined up which we are excited to share with you in the lead up to next year.

Entering the high-risk weather period during summer, we face an increased risk of severe weather including extreme heat and above average rainfall. As we have seen in previous years, the warmer months still pose a real risk for flood and storm impacts across our communities. I want to acknowledge the significant time members have undertaken for critical seasonal training to ensure we are prepared to respond to these weather events, in addition to supporting our fire agencies.

Last but not least, closing out another extremely busy year for our organisation, I would like to thank each and every one of our members, particularly our volunteers, for your contributions over the last 12 months. Your commitment and dedication to the service and the safety of our communities is truly remarkable. Importantly, please take the time to rest and spend time with family and friends over the holiday season, and I look forward to working with you in the new year.

Thank you and stay safe.

**Kind regards,**  
**Kate White**  
Interim CEO Victoria State  
Emergency Service

### Messages

From CEO

From Minister for  
Emergency Services

### Feature

### General news

### Campaigns & events

### Eastern region

### Western region

### Operational updates

### Wellbeing, health & safety

### Community engagement

### Media

### Information Services (IS) update



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

Authorised and published by Victoria State Emergency Service, 168 Sturt Street, Southbank, Victoria.  
© State of Victoria, Victoria State Emergency Service, December 2024.



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.





# FEATURE

## Victorian earthquakes lead to participation in world's largest drill

By Dharni Giri, Senior Media Advisor, VHO



As the control agency for earthquake emergencies, on 17 October VICSES participated in the world's largest earthquake drill, the Great ShakeOut, to encourage Victorians to learn what to do during an earthquake - drop, cover, and hold on!

Victoria recorded its largest earthquake in history on 21 September 2021. The 5.9 magnitude quake with an epicentre at Woods Point in Northeast Victoria caused approximately

\$113 million in damages (Insurance Council of Australia, 2024), including damage to shopfronts on Chapel Street in Melbourne and hundreds of calls for help to VICSES.

Over 43,000 'felt reports' were recorded across Victoria and surrounding states, including over 3,000 (9%) who indicated some level of damage ranging from cracked walls, fallen masonry, and buildings shifting off foundations. As the control agency for earthquake emergencies in Victoria, VICSES volunteers responded to over 100 calls for emergency assistance including over 40 in relation to building damage.

Over 300 aftershocks were recorded in the 24 hours following the Woods Point mainshock, though many of these were of low magnitude and not widely felt.

Aftershocks from this earthquake are still being felt today, including a magnitude 4.6 in June 2023, which generated nearly



12,000 felt reports on Geoscience Australia's Earthquakes@GA website.

Most recently, a magnitude 4.1 earthquake was recorded in August 2024, with 2,300 felt reports.

Geoscience Australia data suggests Victoria experiences an average of six magnitude 3.0 or above earthquakes each year, and one magnitude 5.0 earthquake every fourteen years.

According to Geoscience Australia's National Earthquake Alert Centre, Victoria has experienced over 200 earthquakes greater than magnitude 2.0 in the past decade.

Analysis from Geoscience Australia of felt reports following the 2021 Woods Point quake showed many people who felt the earthquake did not know, or did not take, recommended actions during an earthquake, including the three main safety steps - drop, cover, and hold on. Earthquake readiness can protect lives and communities, which is the goal of holding the annual International Great ShakeOut.

The Great ShakeOut is a day of awareness which promotes emergency preparedness and earthquake safety.

Established in 2008, the day encourages participants to undertake an earthquake safety drill to understand what to do in the event an earthquake strikes. In its basic form, it teaches people to:

**DROP** where you are and onto your hands and knees.

**COVER** your head and neck with one arm and hand, preferably under a sturdy table or desk.

**HOLD ON** until the shaking stops.

More than 53 million people worldwide participated in earthquake drills in 2023. ■



### More information

View the Geoscience Australia website for earthquakes in Victoria:

There are resources available, including for people who may not be able-bodied, via the VICSES website. For information on earthquake safety, scan the QR code.

#### Messages

From CEO

From Minister for Emergency Services

#### Feature

#### General news

#### Campaigns & events

#### Eastern region

#### Western region

#### Operational updates

#### Wellbeing, health & safety

#### Community engagement

#### Media

#### Information Services (IS) update



# GENERAL NEWS

## A new era in our rescue truck fleet: VICSES unveils the Next Generation Heavy Rescue Truck Prototype

By Nicole Bryant-Smith, Business Support Officer, State Fleet Centre

VICSES is proud to unveil our Next Generation Heavy Rescue Truck (Next Gen HRT) Prototype. In 2019, VICSES brought together over 20 dedicated volunteers for a two-day workshop aimed at advancing our rescue truck capabilities and addressing limitations in our existing fleet.

Collaborating with key representatives from our Assets, Health and Safety, and State Operations teams, the Country Fire Authority and New South Wales SES, we set out to envisage what our future rescue truck fleet would look like.



***This has been a collaborative and positive process that I believe will shape the future of VICSES and enhance how we serve our communities.***

Shaun Caulfield, VICSES Lilydale Unit Controller and Fleet Working Group Member.

Throughout the process, we discussed critical elements such as equipment placement, innovative technologies, and solutions to frustrations encountered with current vehicles. From these valuable discussions, three guiding principles emerged: the truck must be fit for purpose, safe for use, and provide value for money.

Following this workshop, a Fleet Working Group was established to further refine the design and ensure it met the operational needs of our volunteers. The invaluable feedback from the members of this working group is directly reflected in the truck we have today.

The result of this collaboration is the Next Gen HRT Prototype, which reflects our commitment to improving volunteer response capabilities. In addition to the Fleet Working Group, our internal engineers, supported by third-party experts, have conducted a range of strength and performance tests to ensure the truck meets the diverse environmental standards and regulatory compliance required for field operations.

This includes finite element analysis to verify structural integrity. Our prototype truck will undergo extensive practical durability testing to further validate the design concept and ensure it can endure the challenging conditions it will face in the field. This rigorous process will confirm the vehicle's ability to perform under various environmental stresses and operational demands.

**Some of the key new and updated features include:**

- Enhanced lighting
- Rear bucket seats
- iPad mount
- Bulbar and winch
- Dedicated 'welfare locker'
- Chainsaw workbench

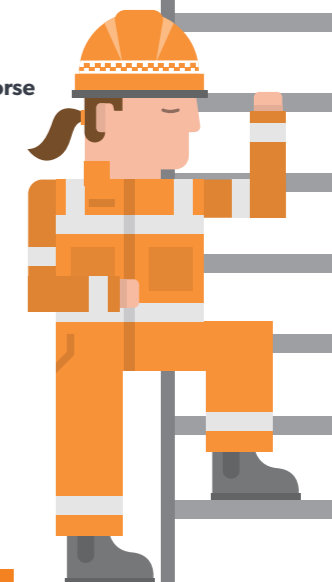
This truck stands as a testament to the collaborative effort of our teams and the invaluable input of our volunteers. We were excited to showcase this achievement during a two-week roadshow across the state, where members could see firsthand how their feedback had shaped the future of rescue operations.

We can't wait to see these trucks in action and contributing to our mission – safer communities together. ■



***The Next Gen HRT is leaps and bounds ahead of previous generations. It's the most modern, technology enabled, capable and flexible truck VICSES has built and represents a significant achievement for volunteers.***

Matthew Rankin, VICSES Whitehorse Deputy Controller and Fleet Working Group Member.



Messages

From CEO

From Minister for Emergency Services

Feature

General news

Campaigns & events

Eastern region

Western region

Operational updates

Wellbeing, health & safety

Community engagement

Media

Information Services (IS) update





# VICSES members take learnings from 2012 major regional flood event

By Ryan Malcolm, Media Advisor, VHO

VICSES volunteers and staff are continuing to learn from a major flood emergency in the state's north more than a decade on from the terrible event.



The Numurkah Staff Ride, led by VICSES in conjunction with Emergency Management Victoria (EMV), sees volunteers and staff thrust into the shoes of major decision-makers from the early-2012 flood event which saw more than 160 buildings damaged above floor level.

Members from VICSES and the Country Fire Authority (CFA) travelled to the Numurkah township, where they explored the reasoning behind the actions of key personnel during the event and worked to understand the circumstances of the emergency.

The purpose of the staff ride is to investigate ways VICSES, and its partner agencies can learn from the event and look to address shortcomings into the future, including the ways in which they can manage human factors which impact critical decision-making.

When as much as 300mm of rain fell throughout the state's northeast between 28 February and 4 March, 2012, weather forecasts anticipated a riverine flood emergency near Wangaratta, and Hume emergency crews were subsequently mobilised north

to support communities along the Ovens River.

When the Broken Creek at Numurkah overtopped at record levels in the early hours of 4 March more than 24 hours earlier than anticipated, large portions of the local community were left isolated as the railway and several major roads and arterials were cut off, while patients at the Numurkah Hospital required evacuation as the building suffered overground flooding.

The Staff Ride, which is held multiple times per year, explores the ways in which Numurkah's flood emergency escalated at the time, and encourages participants to reflect on their own decision-making processes while bolstering their incident management skills and emergency awareness.

The initiative also explores the technology available to key personnel in the time, and investigates the advancements made across the emergency services sector in the decade since the flooding event.

The Numurkah Staff Ride is open to emergency service personnel and volunteers, with the next iteration to be held in May 2025.

# VICSES Heathcote Unit set for state-of-the-art facility upgrade

By Ryan Malcolm, Media Advisor, VHO

A brand-new co-located facility for VICSES Heathcote Unit volunteers and their Country Fire Authority (CFA) partners to share is set to be developed.

Land and acquisition was announced on 15 November by Victorian Premier Jacinta Allan and Minister for Emergency Services Jaelyn Symes, with the new facility set to be developed on Herriot Street, a location selected by both VICSES and CFA.

"This will be a co-located facility for both VICSES and CFA volunteers which will only strengthen and refine emergency response for the Heathcote area and surrounds with more space available for members to respond, train and plan for future

emergencies," said VICSES Chief Executive Officer, Kate White.

VICSES Heathcote Unit Controller Darren O'Connor and local volunteers joined senior VICSES staff and their CFA counterparts at the site of the new facility on Friday.

Both agencies' current facilities were severely affected by the October 2022 floods and have experienced increased demand for emergency support in the ensuing years as the Heathcote area continues to grow.

Designed in conjunction with both VICSES and CFA, the new facility

will offer space for a combined 70 volunteers to respond, train and plan for emergencies.

Featuring seven drive-through motor bays and two ancillary sheds, the new development will also offer each agency its own administrative offices, turnout areas, laundry and stand down area as well as shared facilities including a large training room, kitchen and storage areas.

VICSES Heathcote Unit was first established in 1985 and is currently home to 25 volunteers who respond to more than 170 requests

for assistance from their community on average each year.

Volunteers are often busy responding to road crash rescues along the Northern Highway and their wider response area, turning out to 10 such incidents so far this calendar year, and have also provided valuable support during several major storm events which have impacted the local region in 2024.

VICSES Heathcote Unit's CFA neighbours have operated in the local area for more than a century, and currently boast a membership of more than 40.

Funding for the co-located facility has been provided by the Victorian Government, with construction expected to commence in 2025.



Messages

From CEO

From Minister for Emergency Services

Feature

General news

Campaigns & events

Eastern region

Western region

Operational updates

Wellbeing, health & safety

Community engagement

Media

Information Services (IS) update



# CAMPAIGNS & EVENTS



## VICSES members build community awareness at Melbourne Royal Show

By Ryan Malcolm, Media Advisor, VHO

An engaging and informative activation by VICSES members has impressed, with the service recognised as part of the 2024 Melbourne Royal Show Exhibitor Awards.

Between 26 September and 6 October, volunteers and staff were on hand at the 9News Lifestyle and Local Heroes Pavilion, showcasing a range of VICSES resources and placing a spotlight on the role VICSES volunteers play in keeping their communities safe.

The VICSES activation was complete with a brand-new rescue boat, which provided the public

an insight into how volunteers perform life-saving rescues on a daily basis, while children were kept engrossed by VICSES' tiny truck, which focussed on making safety fun through engaging flashing lights and sirens.

Throughout the 11-day event, VICSES members also shared valuable information about the training and preparation volunteers undertake to ensure they're

ready for any emergency, every day of the year.

IPads available at the VICSES activation allowed community members to provide feedback on their knowledge of VICSES as an organisation, with the data collected set to inform the ways VICSES engages with and educates the community into the future.

The VICSES activation was named the silver award recipient among indoor exhibitors, finishing second to fellow emergency service providers Fire Rescue Victoria.

VICSES' presence at the Melbourne Royal Show was boosted by Principal Community

Partner AAMI, whose partnership has played a key role in helping VICSES raise awareness and build resilience within communities statewide.

The Melbourne Royal Show is one of a number of major community engagement events VICSES attends each year, in an effort to improve hazard awareness for communities throughout Victoria.

This year's event was a major success, with more than 1,000 visitors directly engaging with VICSES members throughout to provide their insight into VICSES and its emergency response. ■



## VICSES Heidelberg Unit adds to vital R U OK? Conversation



By Ryan Malcolm, Media Advisor, VHO

VICSES volunteers and staff have shone a spotlight on mental wellbeing in their community, joining with local leaders in acknowledging the at times unspoken struggle impacting millions of Australians each year.

Almost 50 guests were in attendance at the VICSES Heidelberg Unit on 9 October to participate in the R U OK? Conversation Convoy initiative, a travelling roadshow committed to helping community members understand the role they can play in supporting the mental wellbeing of their family, friends and colleagues.

Over a supplied lunch, attendees were encouraged to share their experiences with their fellow VICSES members and representatives from Darebin City Council, and learn more about the resources and support offered by the R U OK? Initiative.

The R U OK? Conversation Convoy travels throughout Australia each year, engaging with locals by offering free interactive workshops and outdoor activations to develop mental health literacy among residents, and providing tools to promote regular wellbeing check-ins in each community.

Former Chief Executive Officer Greg Leach joined Chief Operations Officer Tim Wiebusch, executives, senior operational staff, VICSES People and Culture and Workplace Health and Safety members at the event, fostering a healthy discussion around mental wellbeing.

VICSES Heidelberg Unit has maintained a strong relationship

with the ethos of R U OK? in recent years, with volunteer Ashleigh Bartlett and former Controller Luke Francis featured as part of the charity's 2023 R U OK? Day campaign.

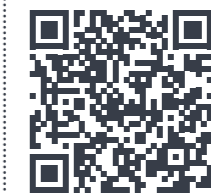
The video, which was broadcast on R U OK?'s social media channels and website, details Ashleigh's own struggles following a deployment in 2022, and how a proactive approach by her Unit Controller had allowed her to work through the situation.

Ashleigh had been slated to trek the Kokoda Trail in September as part of her partnership with R U OK? until blockages along the trail saw her journey postponed. ■



### More information

For more information about the R U OK? Conversation Convoy initiative, visit



Messages

From CEO

From Minister for Emergency Services

Feature

General news

Campaigns & events

Eastern region

Western region

Operational updates

Wellbeing, health & safety

Community engagement

Media

Information Services (IS) update







# EASTERN REGION

1 July – 30 September 2024

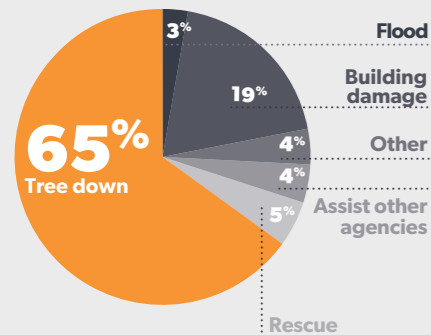


# 2,733

Volunteers

# 9,163

Requests for assistance



## Beechworth Unit 'loafs' engaging with their local community

By Glenn Mercer, Community Resilience Coordinator, Eastern Region

Beechworth Unit members joined together with Bronwyn Chapman (VICSES Hume Unit) and Garth Matthews (Volunteer Support Officer) to engage with our local community at the Beechworth Bakery's 40th anniversary celebrations on 19 October.

**T**he unit decided it was 'pie' time they had a greater public presence outside of their normal call outs and attended this celebration to make connections in their community and perhaps even inspire some to join up as a VICSES volunteer.

We received fantastic engagement and feedback from the public including the following:

- "Great to see the SES out and about."
- "Loved the discussion about one thing I can do to protect my family, even if I live in the Adelaide Hills."
- "I didn't realise there was a role for me, and the flexibility involved in being a volunteer, I am keen."

The event was a great initiative, and we now have three potential new recruits. We are excited to continue to promote VICSES as a great place to volunteer.

A highlight of the day was the pie eating contest with Beechworth Unit members Daniel Noble and Nick Lorenz participating, and Nick being crowned the winner! Nick had to compete against adults and children alike eating three Beechworth Bakery pies in the contest. Nick has been a member for three months and is enjoying the teamwork and training involved to help his community. ■



## VICSES joins with agency partners for large-scale training exercise

By Raman Sanjayan, Media Liaison Officer, VICSES Monash Unit



In October, the VICSES Monash Unit held a large-scale training scenario to simulate a structure collapse following an explosion with multiple casualties. Along with Victoria Police and Australian Search and Rescue K9, 40 members from our unit participated in various exercises within the scenario.



**F**irst, the search and rescue K9 dogs swept the rubble for casualties, and once their locations were identified, our VICSES rescue teams went in to extricate them using Urban Search and Rescue techniques. Other crews assisted in evidence searches with police for bullets and other items, as well as lighting and scene preservation.

This multi-faceted operation was an opportunity to demonstrate our own capabilities to other agencies, as well as identify how we can work together in chaotic incidents like these, where command and coordination is key in ensuring successful outcomes. We hope

emergencies like these never happen, but feel more at ease knowing there are volunteers and emergency services training hard to ensure that a smooth and effective response can be achieved when required.

A huge thank you to everyone who came to assist, especially the Rapid Relief Team who provided catering for everyone, and used this exercise as a training opportunity for their volunteers who deploy rapidly in many emergency situations (and have helped us previously in massive storm events).

Thank you to the VICSES Chelsea Unit and VICSES Knox Unit for providing a lighting tower and a mass casualty tent for this event as well! ■

Messages

From CEO

From Minister for Emergency Services

Feature

General news

Campaigns & events

Eastern region

Western region

Operational updates

Wellbeing, health & safety

Community engagement

Media

Information Services (IS) update





# Animal lovers lend a hand to feathered and prickly locals

By Lauren Castle, Corporate Communications Advisor, VHO



Our skilled volunteers were able to strategically open the drain cover and scoop the fluffy birds out when they came close enough. They used the sounds of the ducklings who had already been caught to lure the trapped ducklings to their escape route.

"Thankfully, the duck parents were hanging around and the ducklings were able to be reunited with them. It is important to keep the ducklings together and release them all at once so the parents don't wander off with only some. If the parents were no longer there our members have contacts with registered wildlife carers, or they could have been taken to be nearest vet," said Kaitlyn.

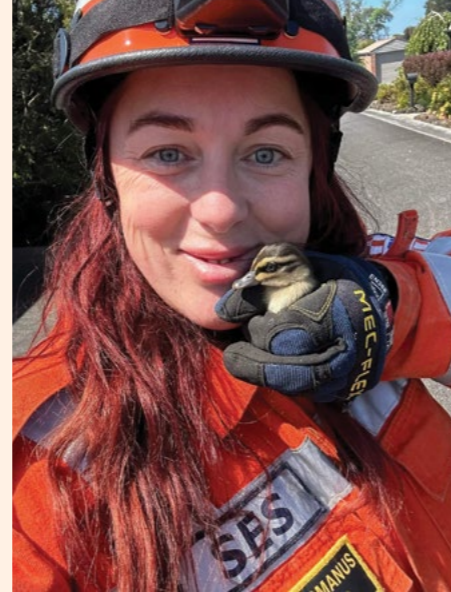
She also notes that "ducklings can also jump surprisingly high and will try to escape. A box folded closed or with a towel over the top that you can slip your hand into works best."

Ducklings aren't the only animals moseying into mischief. On 22 October, the VICSES Knox Unit received a page about an echidna which had wandered down the street outside some shops and crawled into a storm grate, only for its prickles to get stuck.

VICSES Knox Unit volunteer and local wildlife whisperer, Alan Richmond and his crew were able to dislodge the echidna's spikes from the grate and release it in a safe outdoor space. The resourceful team wore their road crash rescue gloves to protect their hands while handling their new prickly friend. "The gloves are built to protect against sharp objects like broken glass, so they make great protective wear when handling prickly echidnas," said Alan.

So, what do we need to know if we encounter trapped wildlife when we're out and about? Here are Kaitlyn's tips:

- If members of the public find trapped wildlife, their first point of call should always be to a wildlife rescue agency such as



Wildlife Victoria and Warriors 4 Wildlife, who may have volunteers who can attend.

- Sometimes wildlife rescue organisations can coach members of the public, if safe to do so, how to safely remove an animal. Of course, if no one is available or extra specialised help is required, they can call VICSES.
- Any injured animals that can be safely contained and transported can be taken directly to a vet. Vets do not charge for this. ■

We all know that VICSES volunteers provide critical support to our communities, however did you know this sometimes includes our animal friends? Spring is always a busy time for wildlife rescue and recently, a few feathered and prickly locals have found themselves stuck in some tricky places. Luckily, our versatile volunteers have been on hand to help.

On 13 October, The VICSES Hastings Unit came to the rescue when 10 Pacific Black ducklings were found in a drain, in danger of falling in through the storm drain grates. Our Hastings Unit is lucky to have members who also volunteer with Wildlife Victoria, which enabled the two organisations to collaborate.

Hastings Section Leader, Kaitlyn O'Gorman notes that "ducklings are particularly difficult animals to rescue, especially in a drain where they can move away from where their rescuer can reach, as their instinct is not to go near the giant hands reaching for them."



## Gippsland Region High Angle Rescue Accreditation success

By Merryn Henderson, Community Resilience Coordinator, Eastern Region

The VICSES Gippsland Region training team recently coordinated a very successful High Angle Rescue training course for 12 highly skilled VICSES volunteers.

The participants comprised of 10 Bass Coast Technical Response Team (TRT) personnel, one Plenty TRT member and one East Gippsland TRT member.

The course was run over two weekends during October, with attendees expanding their knowledge and skills to successfully obtain their Country

Fire Authority/VICSES multi agency endorsement as High Angle Rescue operators.

All 12 participants held Steep Angle Rescue competency, a multi agency technical rope rescue endorsement which provides the ability to rescue a casualty to a 60-degree angle.

The High Angle Rescue course included rescue scenarios where slopes exceeded 60 degrees, extending to vertical, and requiring technical rope skills to ensure individuals who have experienced a misadventure or injury can be safely raised or lowered. High Angle Rescue operators often build onsite rigging systems designed to raise or lower victims to the optimum elevation for safe extraction.

The competency training gave participants the opportunity to learn about advanced roping techniques, the effects of suspension trauma, complex mechanical advantages, as well as patient packaging for high-angle environments. This additional knowledge and skill acquired in the field of High Angle Rescue with further deepen the capability and capacity of Gippsland Region as technical rescue provider.

Technical rescue assessors Mark Helger, Matthew Webb, Dave Crane and Steven Ellis, instructed and monitored the participants, ensuring sound decision making and appropriate methodology was being applied to ensure safe operation.

A special thank you goes to the Wonthaggi Desalination Plant, who kindly made their site available for the accreditation training to take place.

Karina Osgood from the VICSES Bairnsdale Unit said "completing the High Angle Rescue training was an incredible experience. It challenged us to push our skills further and gave us the confidence to handle complex rescue situations safely and effectively. Knowing that we are prepared to support our community in these high-risk scenarios makes all the hard work worth it." ■



## Volunteers boost resilience and inspire young people

By Glenn Mercer, Community Resilience Coordinator, Eastern Region

An initiative of Alpine Shire's Resilient Alpine Youth Squad (RAYS) has been to conduct a volunteer and career expo for young people. The aim of this event was to

increase awareness of what the various emergency services agencies do, and how to join as a volunteer or even make it a career.

Along with VICSES, the Alpine Shire's "The First 72 hours" program, Australian Red Cross, Country Fire Authority, Department of Energy Environment Climate Action (DEECA), Fire Rescue Victoria, Forest Fire Management Victoria, and Victoria Police

attended the Ovens DEECA depot. Year 10 and 11 students from Bright, Mount Beauty and Myrtleford went along to hear from services and participate in range of activities.

VICSES Myrtleford Unit Deputy Controller Brooke Sacco joined with Bright and Myrtleford Unit members to discuss volunteer opportunities and take students through using the mule and throw bags. Students were engaged in

undertaking these activities and asked many diverse questions about how to join VICSES and what is involved.

There was great engagement between members and students, and it was fantastic to see this initiative in its second year by the Alpine Shire RAYS. This program will help to build resilience in young people and discuss volunteer opportunities with them. ■

**Messages**

From CEO

From Minister for Emergency Services

**Feature**

**General news**

**Campaigns & events**

**Eastern region**

**Western region**

**Operational updates**

**Wellbeing, health & safety**

**Community engagement**

**Media**

**Information Services (IS) update**



## EASTERN REGION

# Rutherglen Unit showcases skills

By Toni Harris, Operational volunteer, VICSES Rutherglen Unit

On Sunday 20 October at the 134th Annual Rutherglen Agriculture Society Show, the VICSES Rutherglen Unit was once again given the fantastic opportunity to showcase our road crash rescue skills to the public.

We are regular participants at the show and have had great success with member recruitment, community engagement, and fundraising off the back of the event. It's also a great opportunity for our members to plan and work our way through a scenario and then get on the tools to action it.

This year we demonstrated our road crash rescue skills including the removal of all four doors and hatch, a forward dash roll, roof removal and inline patient

extrication. Some of our newly qualified Crewman Two members worked alongside our more seasoned members to put on a great demonstration. The other members spoke to the crowd about what was being done in real time.

Presenting at community events is time and effort well spent as it helps to foster team connection and ability, while lifting the profile of our crew and what we do for our local community as SES members. ■



# Manningham Unit conducts extensive inter-agency exercise

By Steve Cucé, Deputy Controller, VICSES Manningham Unit

On 21 October, the VICSES Manningham Unit conducted an inter-agency training exercise. We joined forces with our local Victoria Police Unit and the Police Air Wing.

The first step in our journey back in May took us to Moorabbin, where the team at the Police Air Wing took us on a guided tour of their facility. After sharing details about how we both operate, it became apparent that each agency wasn't fully aware of the how we might be able to complement each other during real life events.

Given our pre-existing strong relationship with the Warrandyte Victoria Police Unit, we set about organising a full-scale inter-agency search and rescue scenario.

The exercise was meticulously planned and involved the search through thick bush at night and rescue of a live casualty. After the Situation, Missions, Execution, Administration and Logistics, Command and Communications (SMEACS) briefing by Victoria Police, each team began their search.

Not long after, the Air Wing helicopter arrived and began searching from the air using their night vision technology. The helicopter crew were then able to utilise the onboard radio dedicated

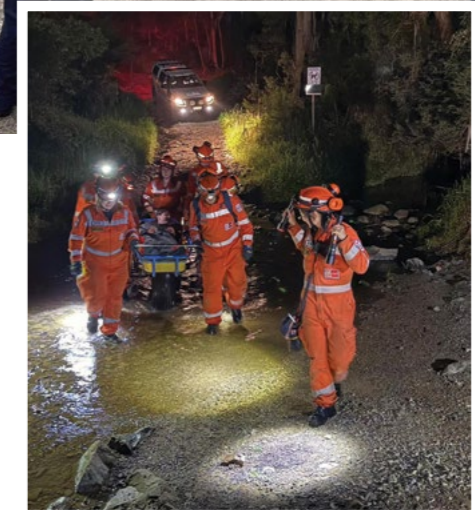
to communicating with VICSES, something they had never used before. These tools and methods between the three agencies made short work of locating the live casualty. The VICSES crew proceeded to extract the casualty, using the 'mule' across rugged terrain and back to the staging area.

During the debrief, all three agencies agreed the exercise was a highly valuable use of time which allowed everyone to practice techniques rarely used before.

The Manningham Unit couldn't be prouder of that fact that we

were able to sharpen our skillset and work so effectively with other agencies to achieve a desired outcome.

This collaboration was several months in the making and would not have been possible without the strong relationships we have built with the Warrandyte Victoria Police Unit and the Air Wing. ■



# Family fun at Gippsland Emergency Services Expo



Photo credit to VICSES Morwell Unit members.

By Allison Norfolk, Community Resilience Coordinator, Eastern Region

The VICSES Morwell Unit took part in an Emergency

Services Expo held at Latrobe Regional Airport, Traralgon on Sunday 27 October.

Over 2,000 people attended the expo to meet emergency

services, learn about their roles in emergencies, and experience live fire and rescue displays.

The event was well supported with VICSES volunteers, Ambulance Victoria, Country Fire Authority (CFA), Fire Rescue Victoria, Forest Fire Management Victoria,

Latrobe City Council, Morwell Neighbourhood House, Victoria Police, and other local community groups in attendance.

Younger members of the community were kept entertained with activities and giveaways including the VICSES mini cardboard truck model kits which were a massive hit.

Families were invited to look around and experience sitting in VICSES and CFA trucks, in the

Helimed chopper, and on Victoria Police motorbikes.

VICSES stand visitors were able to learn about VICSES vehicles and their contents and received a variety of helpful information and preparation tools to help build personal and community resilience.

A huge thanks goes to members of the VICSES Morwell Unit who worked hard to make the event a great success. ■



Messages

From CEO

From Minister for Emergency Services

Feature

General news

Campaigns & events

Eastern region

Western region

Operational updates

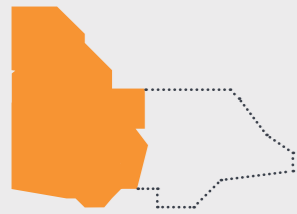
Wellbeing, health & safety

Community engagement

Media

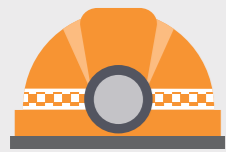
Information Services (IS) update





# WESTERN REGION

1 July – 30 September 2024

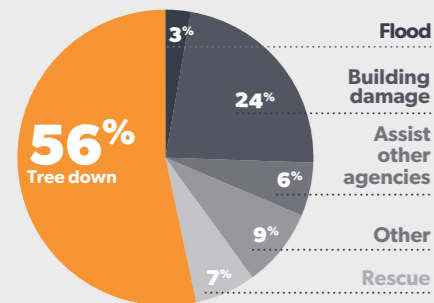


# 2,448

Volunteers

# 5,464

Requests for assistance



## Ben hits the ground running amidst intense Casterton storm cell

By Lisa McDonald, Community Resilience Coordinator, Western Region

Ben Lamb was less than two weeks into his role as the South West’s newest Volunteer Support Officer (VSO) when an intense storm cell blew into Casterton

Surrounding units including his own in Mount Gambier rallied to support the VICSES Dartmoor Unit with support from local Country Fire Authority and Victoria Police members. Ben was able to witness how well we work as one, as our team worked through a staggering 10 years’ worth of requests for assistance in just a few hours (read more on page 23).

While in awe of the intensity of the storm and the extent of the flood plan area, Ben appreciated how impressive the community response was. He was also particularly struck by the warmth and friendliness of the volunteers.

“It was great to see the members being so safety focussed, and I was extremely impressed to observe how well they worked together as a team to help their community,” said Ben. “The event really highlighted that no matter what agency you are with, everyone here works together.”

Ben is looking forward to getting out to other units and utilising his experience and skills to continue to support our amazing volunteers in the South West. ■



## VICSES volunteers boost community flood literacy at Elmore Field Days

By Ryan Malcolm, Media Advisor, VHO

VICSES volunteers added a splash of orange to one of Victoria’s largest agricultural machinery shows in October, engaging with community members at the Elmore Field Days event.

“The Elmore Field Days are a great opportunity for our volunteers to engage with members of communities from far and wide, to spread awareness on our hazards and ensure Victorians are as prepared as possible in the event of an emergency” said Layton Miller, Community Resilience Coordinator, VICSES Loddon Region.

The large VICSES site at the popular Loddon Region event featured important flood and storm safety messaging and a dedicated entertainment area for children, which was open throughout the three-day event.

The activation also featured a rigid boat belonging to the VICSES Kyabram Unit, and a Driver Reviver Engagement Van, with the latter often deployed in high-traffic areas across the state over holiday periods to encourage drivers to stop and refresh.

17 VICSES members from across Loddon Mallee lent their expertise to the event throughout, promoting flood safety and other key messaging in a region which has experienced several significant and damaging flood events in recent years. The team welcomed over 1,000 visitors at the VICSES site from Tuesday to Thursday.



Neighbouring towns Rochester, Echuca, and Kyabram were all heavily impacted by record-breaking riverine and flash flooding in late-2022, with VICSES volunteers from across the state deployed to assist in response and recovery efforts.

The activation also saw volunteers demonstrate best practice for sandbagging a property, using a two-sided cardboard façade to replicate a home at risk of flooding. “Developing an emergency kit, avoiding driving and walking through floodwater, and knowing how to effectively sandbag your property are considerations

Loddon Mallee Region locals need to be aware of, particularly in the wake of recent years, and as we approach the high-risk season ahead,” said Layton.

So far this year, VICSES volunteers in the Loddon Mallee Region have received more than 2,600 requests for assistance (RFAs) with over 700 RFAs relating to either flood or building damage.

“I would like to personally thank all those that contributed and assisted at the VICSES site at the Elmore Field Days this year from bump in to bump out and the days in between.”, said Layton. ■



### Messages

From CEO

From Minister for Emergency Services

### Feature

### General news

### Campaigns & events

### Eastern region

### Western region

### Operational updates

### Wellbeing, health & safety

### Community engagement

### Media

### Information Services (IS) update





# WESTERN REGION

## Sunbury junior member captures true essence of emergency services

By Lauren Castle, Corporate Communications Advisor, VHO



Meet Harry, a multitasking volunteer at our VICSES Sunbury Unit. He is skilled not only in helping to keep his community safe during emergencies, but also in capturing emergency services using the medium of photography. I asked him some questions to find out more about him and his passion for emergency services photography.



### Hi Harry! What is your role at VICSES and what are you trained in?

I am a junior member at the VICSES Sunbury Unit. Our junior members are part of what the unit calls *The Squad*. We attend our squad training nights on a weekly basis, training in different scenarios of search and rescue, pumping water, and many other things. We are currently working on our Crew Member Level Two qualifications together. I feel proud to be part of such an encouraging and supportive group, and I plan on being here a long time.

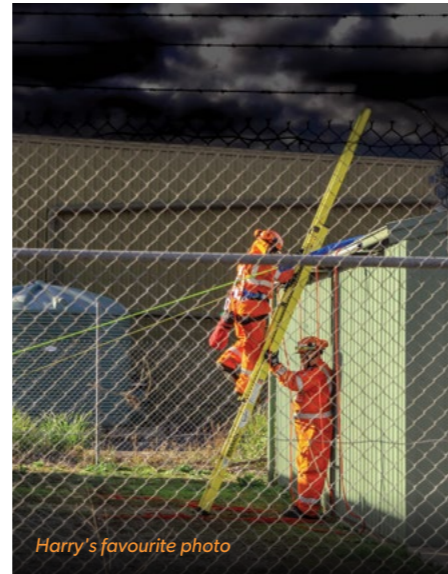
### Can you tell us about your interest in photography?

My interest in photography began in 2020 when I became interested in the lights and sirens of emergency vehicles. I would take a quick video each time I saw them in action and store it on my phone. Then in late 2022 I started investing my time into getting in touch with emergency

services around the state so I could visit them and get pictures of them working. I find that photos of emergency services show capability, integrity, and show how the real world is, rather than how some television shows portray them - with more drama. I feel like it's good for the world to see how the emergency services in our state truly work as one.

I have worked on photography with two new mates from my unit, Evan and Riley, who often come along to take photos of the service at community events, unit events, and exclusive photography sessions with units. I now have a small fan base on different social media platforms like Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok, where I share my photos.

View Harry's photography online here:



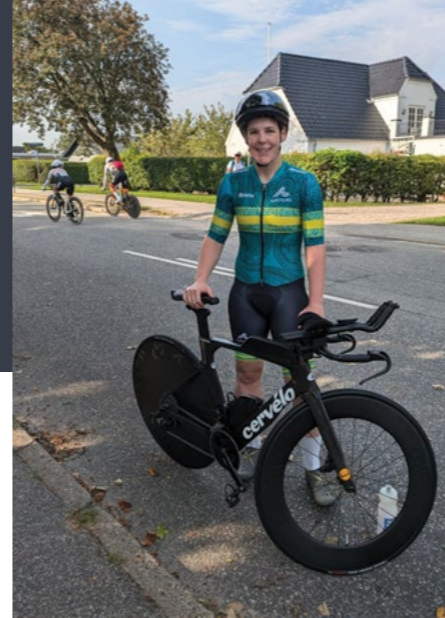
Harry's favourite photo

### What are your tips for taking a great photo?

Stabilisation. It's always important to keep your camera stable, no matter what you're using. And it is always good to go and google what camera you're using and how to make the best of your camera.

### Which one of the photos in this article is your favourite?

My favourite photo is probably one I took at a Safe Working at Heights course earlier this year hosted at our unit. It shows members from across the region practicing anchor points while working together. It shows the commitment from volunteer members of the service, and the willingness to learn and participate in discussion, to further help the community during storm and flood operations. ■



## Brimbank Unit volunteer switches gears for cycling success

By Lauren Castle, Corporate Communications Advisor, VHO

Volunteer at VICSES Brimbank Unit, Jodie Walker has recently celebrated a phenomenal achievement in her cycling ventures.

“The event was the 2024 Gran Fondo World Championships held in Aalborg, Denmark. I came eighth in my age group out of 23 other competitors for the time trial and 28th out of all 175 women competing. I completed the 33km course in just under 48mins averaging close to 42km/h. The top 10 riders were within 1.5min - that was how close it was,” explains Jodie.

“To qualify for the event, you need to come in the top 25% of your age group at races around the world. I qualified at the 2023 Amy's Gran Fondo held on the Great Ocean Road.”

Jodie has been a VICSES volunteer for five years and has her land search, safe work at heights, and chainsaw qualifications under her belt. Recently taking on roles such as Crew Leader, Unit Duty Officer and Section Leader of Training at her

unit, Jodie has begun to explore her leadership capability in her volunteering.

Jodie has also been on a few big deployments including to Queensland earlier this year in addition to a large-scale missing people and evidence land search.

For Jodie, there are many things that both cycling and being a VICSES volunteer have in common, including the ability to keep calm under pressure, set and strive to achieve goals, focus on strengths while working on improving weaknesses as well as putting herself out of her comfort zone.

With her next cycling event being the Tour of Brisbane in April, Jodie has her sights set on qualifying for the 2025 Gran Fondo World Championships which will be held in Melbourne in October 2025. There's no stopping her! ■

## Meet Unit Controller Mel Petrisevac

By Alex Suwitra, Community Resilience Coordinator, Western Region

I caught up with Barwon South West Regional Unit Controller, Mel Petrisevac about her experience with VICSES, and the important role our regional units play.

Mel has been a member of VICSES for four years and has spent almost all that time as a regional unit volunteer. VICSES regional units provide operational support to other VICSES units and our partner agencies. Outside of VICSES, Mel is a nurse, cares for two rescue cats, and loves exploring Bellarine's beaches.

### Why did you decide to join VICSES?

I've always wanted to join VICSES, but previously living in a rural area far from a unit, I knew I wasn't going to make the truck in time. When I moved to Portarlington, I decided to join the regional unit as the commitment suited my work-life balance as a nurse.

### Can you tell us about a memorable moment from during your time volunteering with VICSES?

I am endorsed as a Management Support Officer, part of the multi-agency team that comes together in Incident Control Centres (ICCs) to help manage large emergencies. I take every opportunity I get to undertake this role in an ICC, and I really enjoy working alongside our partner agencies and building relationships. During the October 2022 floods, I had the opportunity to work as the Management Support Officer in the Bendigo ICC. My focus was assisting the Operations Officer with rosters and filling in the gaps where crew were needed, and it was a good opportunity to assist in the response and to learn how other regions work.

I have also really enjoyed deploying the Field Operations Vehicle which is a mobile communications and command centre. We work closely with the VICSES Regional Duty Officer and Operational Communications Team to send this out to help VICSES crews at our incidents, firefighters on the fireground, or to assist Victoria Police with searches for missing people.



### What would you say about joining VICSES to people who are interested?

Volunteering with a regional unit is an incredible way to get to work with VICSES members from all over the state. We have a range of skills, and we get lots of recognition when we all work together as one.

I definitely recommend joining VICSES – there is a skillset and a role for everyone. Whether you join an operational unit or a regional unit, you will build plenty of skills that you can apply to your career outside of VICSES! ■

Messages

From CEO

From Minister for Emergency Services

Feature

General news

Campaigns & events

Eastern region

Western region

Operational updates

Wellbeing, health & safety

Community engagement

Media

Information Services (IS) update





**WESTERN  
REGION**

# Ballarat Unit volunteer Gail Wood awarded Peter Rabone Shield for 2024

By Samantha Lomholt, volunteer, VICSES Ballarat Unit

VICSES Ballarat Unit volunteer Gail Wood was recently honored with the prestigious Peter Rabone Shield for 2024, a significant recognition awarded annually to an exceptional member of VICSES Peer Support.

This accolade is presented to individuals who demonstrate outstanding commitment and impact in supporting members following critical incidents, or in leading training sessions with exemplary judgment, insight, enthusiasm, innovation, and excellence.

Gail earned this nomination following her involvement in a Critical Incident After Action Review in June 2024. During this

review, Gail went above and beyond in her support role, sharing essential resources and guidance on available mental health support. She provided clear and actionable information on how individuals can take care of both their own mental wellbeing and that of their peers. By openly discussing mental health support, she not only fostered a supportive atmosphere but also reinforced the importance of mental health as a pillar of overall wellbeing.

Receiving the Peter Rabone Shield came as a welcome surprise to Gail. "For the people who know me they will find this hard to believe, I was speechless, I couldn't even talk when my name was read out. I know how well-respected Peter was (and still is) within VICSES and the Peer Support program and I feel so honoured to have been considered for the award. I can't thank the people who nominated me for the award enough," said Gail.

Gail is mindful of the challenges that come with seeking mental health support and acknowledges that the different parts of our lives overlap and impact each other. "If people don't take care of their mental health in one area of their life, whether it's their family life, work life or volunteering, it flows over into the rest of

their lives. VICSES has a lot of fabulous support services for their volunteers, and I would really love it if these supports were talked about more often," said Gail.

Gail's efforts in her role have led to a meaningful shift across multiple emergency services, where members felt empowered and more confident to reach out for assistance as needed. Gail's compassionate approach and dedication have played a critical role in helping normalise mental health support within the emergency services community, creating a more inclusive and supportive environment for all.

Congratulations Gail on this extremely well-deserved recognition! ■



# Paddy the Platypus joins Portland Upwelling Festival fun

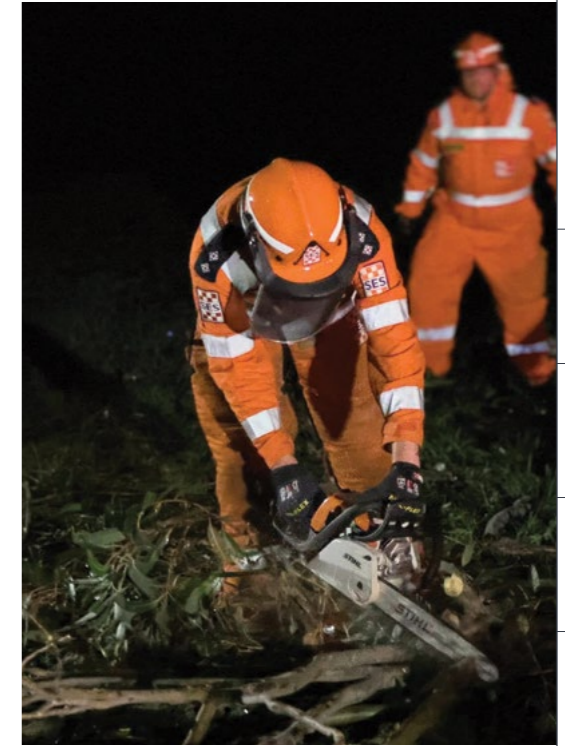
Elijah Roberts, Deputy Controller, VICSES Portland Unit

Portland's annual Upwelling Festival, held on 2 November, brought the community together to celebrate the incredible Bonney Upwelling – a natural ocean phenomenon that powers a seven-month marine feeding frenzy along the coast. The festival not only highlights the rich marine life that thrives in Portland's waters but also the area's vibrant fishing and tourism industries that depend on it.

One of the day's stars was none other than Paddy the Platypus, who spent the day mingling with locals and soaking up the festive atmosphere. Paddy was a hit in the parade, posing for selfies and even cheekily photobombing the Fire Rescue Victoria group photo.

The fun didn't stop there – Paddy also spent some time with the Country Fire Authority, learning how to handle a fire hose and getting a close-up look at the important work local firefighters do.

Community members of all ages enjoyed the day's events, learning about the diverse marine life that thrives off Portland's coast and the work that VICSES Portland Unit does in the area. It was a day of celebration, education, and community spirit – and of course, plenty of fun with Paddy the Platypus! ■



# Volunteers respond as most severe storm in 60 years hits Casterton

Elijah Roberts, Deputy Controller, VICSES Portland Unit

Casterton was hit with a once in a lifetime weather event on Wednesday 16 October, as the town was battered by large hailstones, heavy rain, and strong winds. Though the downpour lasted only a short time, the damage was extensive, with roofs torn off, trees fallen, and streets covered in debris.

The VICSES Dartmoor Unit, responsible for the Casterton area, was quickly overwhelmed with 85 requests for assistance in a short period of time. The unit called for backup, and emergency services from Portland, Hamilton, Warrnambool, Port Fairy, Mount Gambier, and countless other units answered the call, helping with temporarily fixing roofs, assisting with flood damage, and clearing trees.

Casterton's residents, many of whom are older and more vulnerable, demonstrated remarkable resilience during this event. The community,

which is well known for its strong neighbourly bonds, expressed their deep appreciation for the quick and coordinated efforts of all emergency responders.

Within 48 hours, 186 requests for assistance were logged in Casterton. Despite the severity of the storm, the unity and spirit of the Casterton community, alongside the actions of all emergency services, ensured the town could continue as normal. Thank you and well done to all those involved in this phenomenal response! ■



# Terang and Port Campbell members welcome sunny backdrop for engaging community

By Lisa McDonald, Community Resilience Coordinator, Western Region



Terang and Port Campbell members have taken advantage of the great change in weather to get out in the community, showcasing the important work they do while encouraging members of the public to consider joining their ranks.

At a recent community event, long-time volunteer Peter Younis challenged Timboon residents with tying bowline knots, a challenging exercise for rope novices but a routine task for our highly skilled ropes team.

In Terang, residents both young and old were in awe of the road rescue capability of our local team, and while many of those climbing into the rescue cab were too young to join just yet, members were bolstered by the positive reception to their recruitment campaign.

Overall, the great weather has been a welcome boon for both units, allowing for increased community engagement and recruitment efforts. While both units are currently well positioned, more members will ensure they can continue to serve and protect communities across the South West well into the future. ■

Messages

From CEO

From Minister for  
Emergency Services

Feature

General news

Campaigns  
& events

Eastern region

Western region

Operational  
updates

Wellbeing,  
health & safety

Community  
engagement

Media

Information Services  
(IS) update







**OPERATIONAL  
UPDATES**

# Emergency Service volunteers unite for national rescue challenge

By Ryan Malcolm, Media Advisor, VHO

In September, a selection of VICSES volunteers from the state’s mid-west showcased their rescue capacity on the national stage, representing Victoria at the recent National Disaster Rescue Challenge (NDRC).

**V**ICSES Ballarat Unit volunteers competed in Sydney against first responders from five other states and territories, exhibiting their skill

in responding to a wide array of simulated rescue scenarios.

Our team was accompanied by two VICSES staff trainers who

served as judges throughout the weekend, as the Ballarat Unit volunteers narrowly missed a podium place and finished fourth.

The 2024 event included a focus on simulating ‘mass casualty’ rescue operations, with volunteers tasked with safely extricating and managing casualties found trapped in a plane wreckage, immobilised under a fallen stadium roof, and pinned by a concrete road-barrier, among other scenarios.

The scenario-based exercises allowed volunteers to build their confidence in managing large-scale rescue scenarios, with members expected to respond to the incident in real-time with limited prior knowledge of the request for assistance.

To prepare, Ballarat Unit volunteers undertook a comprehensive training regime encompassing technical skill development, casualty handling, sandbagging and safe work at heights, to ensure

they were appropriately prepared for any rescue scenario.

Throughout the duration of the competition, volunteers were also given the opportunity to collaborate, learn from and network with our interstate colleagues across the weekend.

Through the initiative, VICSES volunteers were able to develop an improved understanding of how other agencies approach emergency situations, as well as gain exposure to the equipment and resources they utilise daily.

New South Wales SES was crowned the winner of the NDRC 2024, ahead of emergency service teams from ACT, Queensland, Victoria, WA and South Australia. ■



## Flood Masterclass 2024 held at VEMI

By Kellie Oates, Operations Team Assistant, VHO

**F**rom August through to November, VICSES held eight Masterclass programs, including two at the Victorian Management Institute (VEMI) in Mount Macedon, and six in the regions with the aim being to improve agency personnel understanding and capability in working with the hazard of flood, including flash flood at the more

extreme end. 202 participants’ were in attendance across the eight programs.

Our learning objectives included strengthening participants understanding of our flood readiness requirements, as well as to enhance and apply knowledge of VICSES doctrine, and the importance of the relationship

and management of other stakeholders. These objectives ensured good learning outcomes and development for the participants.

Guest speakers included Kevin Parkyn from the Bureau of Meteorology as well as Assistant Commissioner Sean Kearns and acting Assistant Commissioner Greg Swindells from the New South Wales SES.

We also had regional presentations on actual flash flooding events and the risk and consequences of management based on the Christmas Day and Boxing Day events.

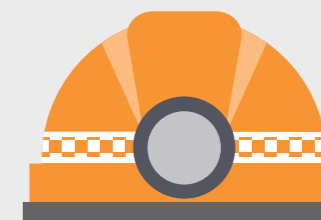
Thank you to everyone who supported and participated in this fantastic workshop. ■

# REQUESTS FOR ASSISTANCE

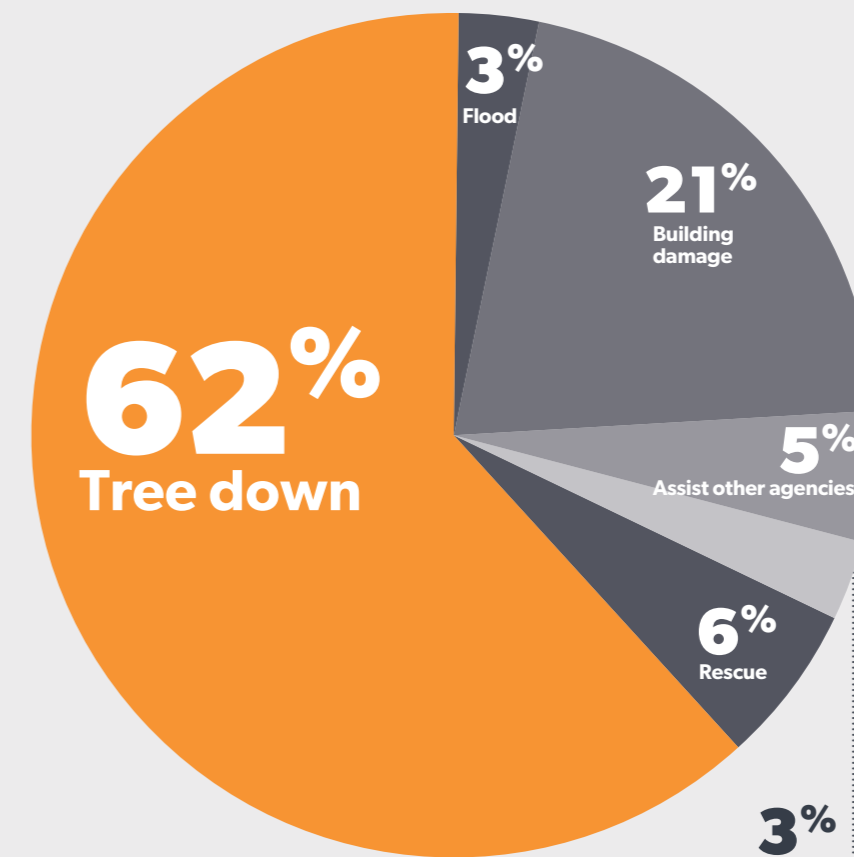
1 July – 30 September 2024

Total

14,632



Breakdown



Messages

From CEO

From Minister for  
Emergency Services

Feature

General news

Campaigns  
& events

Eastern region

Western region

Operational  
updates

Wellbeing,  
health & safety

Community  
engagement

Media

Information Services  
(IS) update





# WELLBEING, HEALTH & SAFETY

## Step it Up 2024

By Alison Wright, Health and Wellbeing Coordinator, VHO

This year our committed VICSES steppers smashed previous records with nearly 900 participants accumulating 275,676,823 steps. That's 17 million more steps than last year - enough to walk around the world more than five times!

**T**his annual simple step challenge always helps to bring people together and promote team spirit, and this year was no different. Just moving our bodies more than usual and having some fun (with a little bit of silliness mixed in) delivers so many benefits to our health and happiness.

**Congratulations to everyone who took part!**



Chelsea Cheetahs 'can-can' have fun in Step it Up 2024!



Tommy Tong from Footscray walked over 50 km to visit Heidelberg Unit



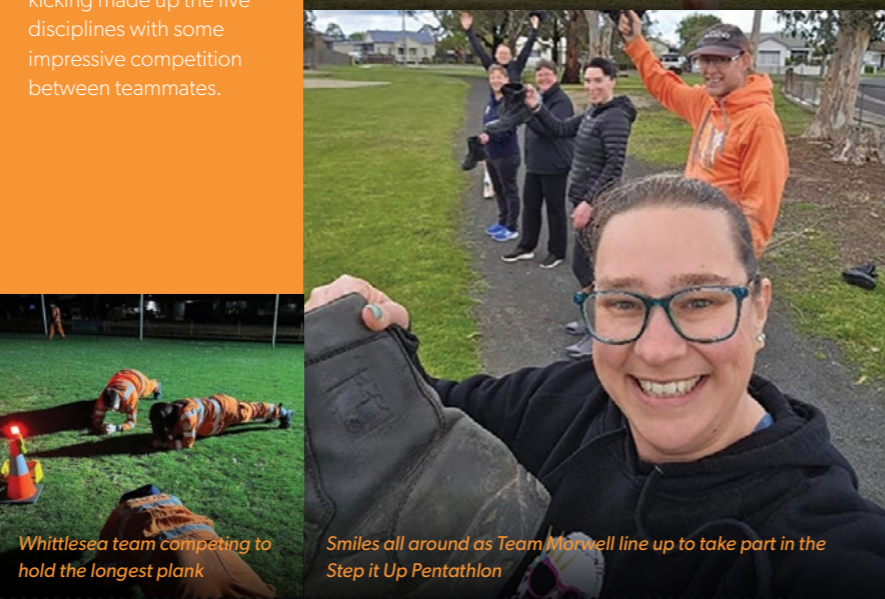
Team Sunbury stepped it up to Gisborne

### Stepping it Up to other units

Some of our steppers took it up a notch with epic walks to far off places.



Egg and spoon racing - serious business for Seymour Unit



Smiles all around as Team Morwell line up to take part in the Step it Up Pentathlon

### Step it Up and parkrun

Step it Up increased attendance at local parkruns, with many teams becoming regulars at their local event. parkrun is a fantastic way to get moving - run or walk, it doesn't matter. This free five-kilometre event happens every Saturday at 8:00am all over the world. Run by volunteers, it's a free and inclusive way to connect with friends and family whilst getting those legs moving. It's also a great opportunity to turn parkrun orange and recruit for your local unit! Check it out: [www.parkrun.com.au](http://www.parkrun.com.au)



Portland Unit showing real commitment to the Step it Up cause on a cold and rainy Saturday morning parkrun

### Everyone's a winner: Our biggest steppers

Congratulations to everyone who took part this year - all 895 of you!

The teams who won the biggest steppers award:

- Large Team:** Benalla Puddle Stompers
- Medium Team:** Melton Steppers
- Small Team:** Narre Warren Accolade 3

"Most nights we would walk as a group and it was a bit of fun. It was a challenge to myself to walk a little further each week.

I will definitely try and keep it up, maybe not as much but walking definitely clears my head. I enjoy walking on my own, it makes me feel better in myself. I've seen some lovely views around town in the process." - Shelly Birrell, winner Overall Most Improved Player 2024, Myrtles Turtles.

"...What I enjoyed most was everyone sharing their progress and being able to cheer everyone on. I felt like it gave me that extra little boost of motivation to get up and moving on days when I might otherwise have sat around.

A special mention also goes to our Hastings Heroes, who won the Step it Up Spirit Award! They didn't have the highest steps, but their campaign focused on teamwork, having fun and a commitment to being more active.

Having fun and being more active is really what it's all about! Let's give the last word to three of our overall winners.

"... As someone new to the unit, it gave me the perfect opportunity to get to know my fellow SES members and feel more connected. It wasn't just about hitting a target or tracking kilometres; it was the energy and dedication of the team that kept me motivated. The challenge wasn't just physical, it was a powerful reminder of how resilience, teamwork, and building relationships can truly make a difference." - Jonathon Gamer, winner of Overall Most Valuable Player 2024, Southern Metro Pacers.

Step it Up reminded me how much I used to enjoy just throwing the hat and headphones on and getting moving. I found I wanted to walk that little bit more, so I was and have since been looking for ways to get those few more steps in (like parking further away from work or the shops). I'm going to be working hard to turn long walks into part of my regular routine, I know my dog will thank me for it." - Megan Jeffs - winner, Overall Most Improved Player 2024, Marong Rescue Stumblers.

For the full list of winners and more photos and videos, members can visit our Step it Up intranet page. ■

## SAFETY DRIVES OUR DECISIONS



### Health & Safety inspections

Nov 2022 - Oct 2023

564

Nov 2023 - Oct 2024

331



### Hazards & near miss reports

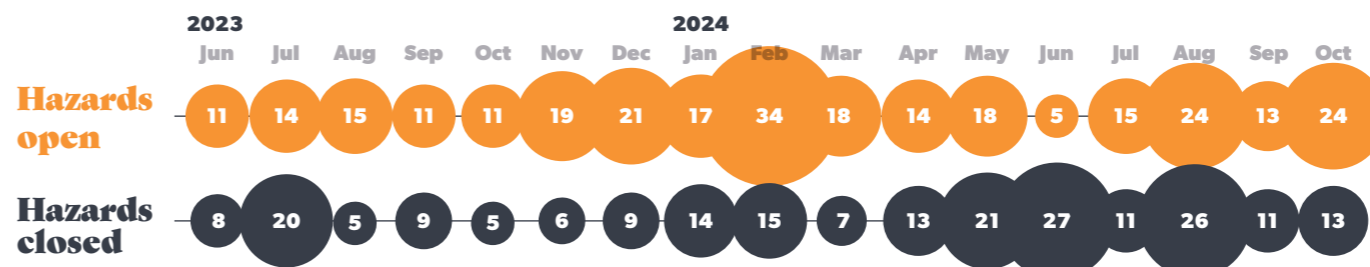
Nov 2022 - Oct 2023

356

Nov 2023 - Oct 2024

563

### YEAR AT A GLANCE



Messages

From CEO

From Minister for Emergency Services

Feature

General news

Campaigns & events

Eastern region

Western region

Operational updates

Wellbeing, health & safety

Community engagement

Media

Information Services (IS) update





# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

## Spotlight on Lyle Short, Community Resilience Coordinator

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

### Hi Lyle! What does being a Community Resilience Coordinator (CRC) mean to you?

A CRC's role is to provide guidance and support to VICSES units to plan, conduct, and evaluate localised community programs and events through successful engagement and collaboration.

### What makes a good CRC?

Creating engagement opportunities with many stakeholders including local councils, cross border

communities, and emergency services. CRCs play an important role in reviewing Local Flood Guides which are a great community engagement tool.

A good CRC has a willingness to listen, learn, and understand the specific needs of the community.

### How does a CRC provide support to units?

CRCs assist with the authorisation process of community engagement activities, collection and transfer of resources including the Driver Reviver Engagement Van and the Casualty Car, in addition to

monitoring the unit event calendar and providing social media support for units.

CRCs are our volunteer's conduit to successful community engagement, recruitment, and retention.

### How does a CRC support the community?

By building and increasing the community's awareness of emergency preparedness, while also understanding the Australian Information Warning system and having the capability and capacity to prepare and plan for

emergencies, aiming to empower communities to be resilient.

A CRC supports the community by sharing ideas and increasing awareness on who we are as an organisation, and what we do.

### What do you like most about being a CRC?

The opportunity to travel, visit, and speak to many of our broad and diverse community members and volunteers, who are located right across the state in regional and metropolitan areas. ■



## Be Storm Smart - A new illustrated campaign for storm preparedness

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

Be Storm Smart



Storm preparedness is vital, and while no one can prevent a storm from occurring, we know prepared communities can significantly reduce the risks.

To make storm preparedness more engaging, VICSES has launched a new Illustrated campaign called *Be Storm Smart*, thanks to AAMI. The campaign uses colourful, easy-to-understand illustrations to educate the public about simple storm preparedness actions.

The campaign features an interactive digital engagement tool located on the VICSES website, along with digital social media

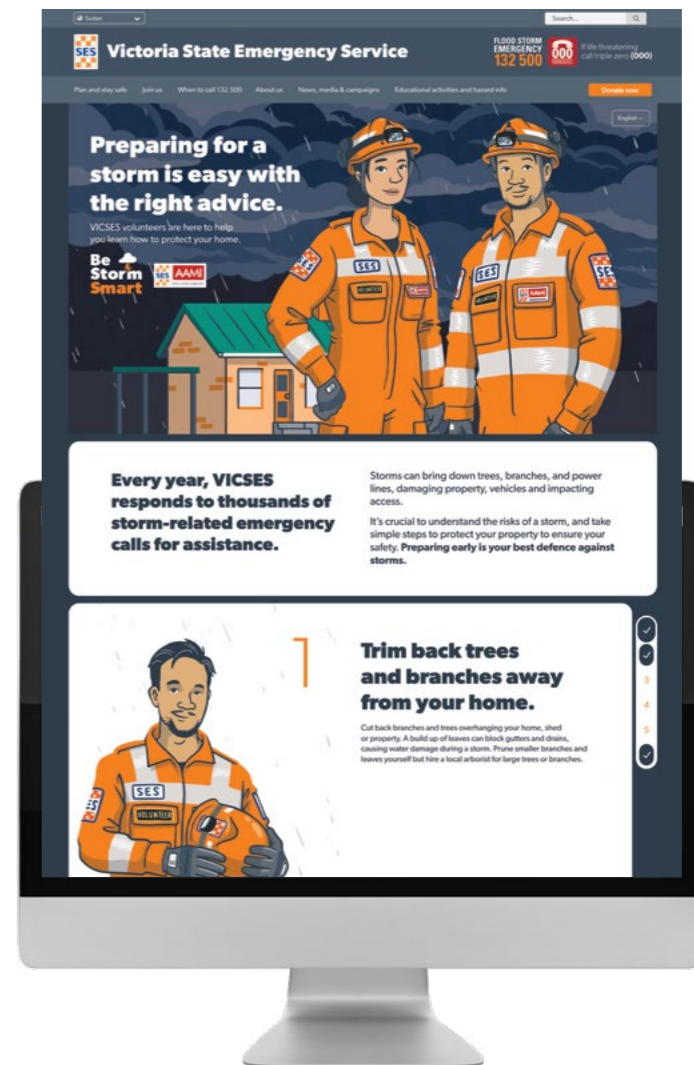
tiles for units to post on their social media channels. The webpage and social tiles are available in Arabic, Simplified Chinese, and Vietnamese.

To help translate the storm safe messaging into community action, the campaign is also supported by an interactive snakes and ladders canvas floor game. The game will help VICSES community engagers have conversations about storm preparedness and protective actions that will help keep everyone safe.

Through these creative visuals, VICSES will be able to reach diverse communities and ensure that storm safety messages resonate with a wider audience.

A big thanks to our principal community partner AAMI for their support of the campaign.

The *Be Storm Smart* campaign can be found by scanning the QR code below.



## Celebrating Inclusion and Preparedness at the 5th Annual Gippsland Pride Roller Derby

By Lee-Anne Carson, Senior Organisational Development Coordinator, VHO and Jason Clough, Business Support Officer, Eastern Region

On 10 November, the Warragul Leisure Centre was buzzing with the vibrant spirit of the 5th Annual

Gippsland Pride Roller Derby! This all-day event, hosted by the Gippsland Ranges Roller Derby, was an exciting blend of inclusivity, sport, and community which drew in spectators from all walks of life.

VICSES staff and members of the local VICSES Warragul Unit shared how VICSES champions inclusivity for volunteers and staff alike. We

were thrilled to connect with people of all ages and genders, celebrating the diverse and supportive community that VICSES fosters. The event was also a great opportunity to discuss how everyone can stay safe and prepared as we head into the summer season, with vital tips and resources shared from our team.

It was fantastic to join together with the Gippsland Ranges Roller Derby to celebrate pride, preparedness, and the power of community! ■

Messages

From CEO

From Minister for Emergency Services

Feature

General news

Campaigns & events

Eastern region

Western region

Operational updates

Wellbeing, health & safety

Community engagement

Media

Information Services (IS) update





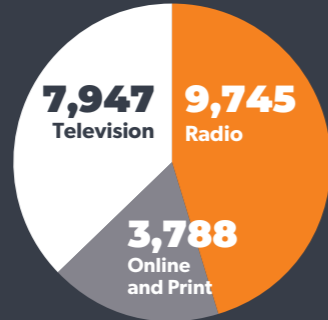
### Campaigns and events:

- Victoria Police and Emergency Services Games opening ceremony
- Melbourne Firefighter Stair Climb

### Media releases:

- July 15: State-of-the-art headquarters unveiled for VICSES Wonthaggi Unit
- July 23: VICSES working with Emergency Recovery Victoria in wake of flood and storm events
- August 22: VICSES volunteers bolster search capacity with large-scale exercise
- August 26: Major winter storm front approaches after busy few days for volunteers
- September 3: Week of destructive winds see VICSES volunteers Spring into action
- September 12: VICSES volunteers turnout to support life-changing stair climb cause
- September 16: VICSES Mildura Unit celebrates 45 years of service to Sunraysia
- September 17: Volunteers prove Stawell's gift after more than 50 years of service

### Mentions of VICSES in the news:



- September 19: VICSES members to bring competitive spark to annual sporting event
- September 24: Female volunteers build peninsula presence with networking event



## Meet the team: Ryan Malcolm, Media Advisor

### Hi Ryan! What is your role at VICSES and what does it involve?

As Media Advisor, my main responsibility is to work directly with our volunteers and staff to manage media enquiries from journalists around the state, while also writing and publishing media releases and web stories for the VICSES website. I've also enjoyed the opportunity to shoot video news releases at several major VICSES training exercises and proactive media events, highlighting the unique skills of our volunteers for local and statewide media.

### What is your career background prior to joining VICSES?

Prior to joining VICSES in March, I spent three years as a print journalist in Wangaratta covering crime and emergency services across the north east. This experience sparked my interest in telling the stories of first responders and gave me an important insight into the role these volunteers play in their communities.

### What do you like about working in media?

Media is such a fast-moving sector to work in. The demand for information, and how easily it can be made available to mass audiences, is incredible. At the end of the day, I love telling stories, and media allows me to do so in a range of creative ways.

### If you had the opportunity to get trained in any VICSES skill, what would it be and why?

Having already had the opportunity to put a steep angle harness on while filming in Marysville, coupled with my not-so-moderate fear of heights, I would say road crash rescue. The mix of precision and speed our volunteers showcase is remarkable.

### Describe your ideal weekend.

Thirty-six holes of golf somewhere by the beach, assuming the sun's out! ■

### Social media post highlights (state accounts):

#### FACEBOOK



**Impressions:**  
5,422,884

**Engagement:**  
424,623

28/07/24: Drop, cover and hold on! We're expecting a FOOTY-QUAKE with an epicentre at the MCG on AFL grand final day.

#### X (FORMERLY TWITTER)



**Impressions:**  
440,696

**Engagement:**  
12,999

25/08/24: A busy day for our volunteers with 422 requests for assistance received from 9am – 9pm.

#### LINKEDIN



**Impressions:**  
3,569

**Engagement:**  
559

07/07/2024: VICSES recognises and reflects on the history, culture and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples during NAIDOC Week.

#### INSTAGRAM



**Impressions:**  
126,460

**Engagement:**  
4,205

02/08/24: Now that's what we call wild weather! VICSES crews work through over 2,800 requests for assistance received overnight.

# OUR PEOPLE AND CULTURE

## We passed the Gender Equality Action Plan on our first go!

By Lee-Anne Carson, Senior Organisational Development Advisor, VHO

We are thrilled to announce that VICSES has passed the Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP) compliance assessment on the first attempt—a major milestone showcasing our dedication to gender equality and inclusion. This article outlines what this means and some key achievements.

**What it is:** Under the Gender Equality Act 2020, organisations must report every two years on workplace gender equality progress, including public policies, programs, and services. We submitted our Progress Report and Progress Audit, demonstrating strong progress toward these goals.

### What we needed to do:

1. **Progress Audit:** Collected and analysed data on gender indicators like composition, pay gaps, and recruitment.
2. **Progress Report:** Provided a detailed update on GEAP actions and outcomes from Gender Impact Assessments (GIAs).

### What We Have Done:

- **48 Actions Completed:** 48 out of 74 GEAP actions are complete, with 11 more in progress.
- **7 Gender Impact Assessments completed:** Ensuring our policies and programs promote equity at all levels.
- **Cultural and Capability improvements:** Initiatives include leadership development, Women in Rescue, Emergency Management Victoria

Sponsorship of Diverse Talent, and Champions of Change. We also promote awareness through our Gender Champions Working Group, Pride Network, Diversity emails, and Unity in Response online training.

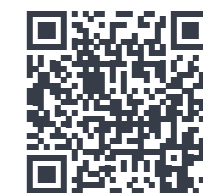
### What's Next:

Our journey continues! Upcoming initiatives include a sexual harassment policy, inclusivity-focused Toolbox Talks training, and more to drive gender equity forward. ■



## Kate Fitzgerald shares her inspiring leadership journey!

In September, we had the pleasure of welcoming Kate Fitzgerald, Deputy Secretary of Emergency Management, who joined us both in person at VHO and over Microsoft Teams, to share her remarkable leadership journey. Missed it? Don't worry—you can still watch the recording: Watch Kate Fitzgerald's Replay. ■



## Spotlight on the EMV Sponsorship of Diverse Talent: Growing Leaders, Together

By Lee-Anne Carson, Senior Organisational Development Advisor, VHO

This year's Emergency Management Victoria (EMV) Sponsorship of Diverse Talent kicked off the 2024/25 program on 16 October, marking another chapter in this inspiring initiative. With four dedicated sponsors and three ambitious sponsees, the event showcased what true collaboration and support looks like in the emergency management sector.

The sponsorship program aims to break barriers and open doors for diverse women across the

sector, providing access to senior leaders who champion their growth and development. In this year's kick-off, participants enjoyed speed networking, heard from past participants, and engaged in meaningful breakout sessions – one led by our own Diana Batley!

As always, the power of this program lies in the relationships built between sponsors and sponsees. With 95% of sponsees feeling confident about their communication with sponsors and 89% agreeing their sponsors were proactive, it's clear that this initiative is making a lasting impact. However, there's still room for improvement—only 68% of sponsees reported having a solid plan in place to continue their growth. This insight will guide future enhancements to make the program even more effective.

Overall, the EMV Sponsorship of Diverse Talent continues to empower women, strengthen cross-sector bonds, and create lasting professional growth. Whether you're a sponsor or a sponsee, this program is about more than professional development—it's about championing the future of emergency management, one leader at a time! ■





# Weather any storm with VICSES.

Be   
Storm  
Smart



**Every year, VICSES responds to thousands of storm-related emergency calls for assistance.**

It's crucial to understand the risks of a storm, and take simple steps to protect your property to ensure your safety. Preparing early is your best defence against storms.

Be Storm Smart, and check out our online interactive engagement tool on our website:

